

PETRYKIVKA PAINTING:
THE QUESTIONS OF POLITICS, AUTHENTICITY AND IDENTITY IN MODERN
UKRAINE

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A thesis submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of American Studies (Folklore).

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ABSTRACT

Iryna Voloshyna:
Petrykivka Painting: the Questions of Politics, Authenticity and Identity in Modern Ukraine
(Under the Direction of Patricia Sawin)

This thesis documents Petrykivka painting, a Ukrainian folk art technique, through the lenses of history and modernity, drawing on interviews with core contemporary artists and promoters. Petrykivka artists hold varying opinions regarding the development of the art form and the ways in which it represents both Ukrainian-ness to Ukrainians and Ukrainian culture on the international art scene. By exploring dialogues circulating in the community, I argue that Petrykivka artists feel that what they are doing today is still traditional and authentic, even though the art might look different from a century or more ago and its meaning might have changed, too. Recognizing critical debates around the concept of authenticity, I inquire into the grounds of the artists' claims. I highlight complex relationships between their flexibility regarding aspects of technique and appearance and their insistence that only an artist with deep connections to the village can create "true" Petrykivka.

«Немає в нас бандерівців та москалів, східних і західних. Всі ми – народ України.»

—*Вячеслав Чорновіл*

“We don’t have any Banderites or Moscovites, eastern and western ones. We are all – the people of Ukraine.”

—*Vyacheslav Chornovil*

To my family, whose love and support I can feel every moment, even from across the ocean.

With deep gratitude to Olena Zinchouk, who opened the world of Petrykivka to me.

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When I moved to the USA in 2016 by myself, I missed my family and friends in Ukraine tremendously. Luckily, I soon connected with the Ukrainian Association of North Carolina, and they gave me a sense of home. Oleh Wolowyna has been a motivator for many projects to study Ukraine, its history and culture, through the media of education and research at UNC and beyond. The doors to Olena Kozlova-Pates's house are always open, as she cordially hosts regular Ukrainian gatherings at her home in Wake Forest, NC. Also, her initiative in providing humanitarian help to the soldiers and their families, those fighting for the freedom of Ukraine in this very moment, deserves the highest degree of respect. I cannot stop admiring Donna Goldstein and her titanic efforts and dedication to Ukrainian culture and its representation in the diaspora.

The meeting with Olena Zinchouk was not a coincidence either. Modest by nature, she taught me so much about an aspect of Ukrainian folk art I have known so little about. During our long conversations, Olena shared the stories of her life, funny and sad, about her immigration and her work. But most importantly, she demonstrated her deep unconditional love to Ukraine. Together with her daughter Lesia, they are real gems whose artistic talents cannot be underestimated. Mainly due to their efforts, a semester-long exhibition “The Image of Ukraine (Образ України): Exploring Ukrainian Culture Through Embroidery and Painting” hosted by UNC Global was possible.

Moreover, I am very grateful to the Petrykivka artists who I met in the village of Petrykivka during my two-week stay there. Halyna Nazarenko, Valentyna Panko, Andriy Pikush, and Natalya Rybak shared with me, a complete stranger, their deepest sentiments on what Petrykivka painting means to them, to their community and to Ukraine. Valentyna and Mykola Dekas' farmstead took me back in time and fascinated with lavish Petrykivka ornaments. Ihor Lisnyi showed me a different perspective to Petrykivka through the lens of art management. Also, there are many others who helped me to get by in Petrykivka, and I am deeply thankful for that. The trip to Petrykivka village in Ukraine in the summer of 2018 was possible thanks to the Archie Green Occupational Folklife Graduate Fellowship.

My committee members and mentors at UNC-Chapel Hill gave me the courage and the tools to pursue this project. I am endlessly grateful to my advisor Patricia Sawin, and the way she walked me through the theories of folklore and patiently watched me growing slowly as a professional. Gabrielle Berlinger became the role model of a successful ethnographer and a fieldworker to me. Trevor Erlacher showed me how to view the history of Ukraine from a new, critical perspective. Glenn Hinson taught me that folklore does not end outside of the classroom, but in fact starts there. Bernie Herman's ability to listen to, and hear other people struck me to the depth of my heart. Bill Ferris and his amazing work are my endless inspiration to always develop and set higher goals. I also want to thank my peers from the Folklore program. I learnt so much from you every day, and sincerely admire your work. I am grateful to Alexey Vasilyev who proofread my thesis and helped me master my English.

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were always there for me. My grandmother Oleksandra, who passed away before I could see her again, was the one who taught me my first folk songs.

Also, I want to thank Iryna Teliukh, my teacher from the folk singing ensemble “Ladovytsi” and to all of my peers there. It all started with you.

I truly hope that this MA thesis will at least partially reflect all the hard work we together have put in it.

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LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Ihor Lisnyi – a Petrykivka native, graduate student in Art Management, author of the blog on Petrykivka painting <https://www.petrykivka.dp.ua>

Halyna Nazarenko – an independent Petrykivka artist. One of the most actively exhibited modern Petrykivka artists worldwide. Member of the Contemporary art association of Morestel, France.

Valentyna Panko – a Petrykivka artist, daughter of Fedir Panko – a former chief artist at the factory “Friendship”, later – an organizer and leader of the experimental shop in Petrykivka. Nowadays Valentyna is a director of Fedir Panko Museum in Petrykivka. Member of the National union of artists of Ukraine, and National union of folk artists of Ukraine.

Andriy Pikush – a Petrykivka artist, a founder and leader of the Petrykivka Folk Art Center. Received a number of awards – National artist of Ukraine, Distinguished folk Artist of Ukraine, Laureate of the Kateryna Bilokur prize, member of the National union of artists of Ukraine.

Natalya Rybak – a Petrykivka artist, works at the Petrykivka Folk Art Center, gives workshops and participates in the folk arts festivals in Ukraine and abroad. Member of the National union of artists of Ukraine, and National union of folk artists of Ukraine.

Olena Zinchouk – an independent Petrykivka artist, in early 1990’s immigrated to Canada, and then – to the USA. Currently lives in Wake Forest, NC. Exhibited in USSR, Ukraine, Canada and the United States of America. Member of the National union of artists of Ukraine, and National union of folk artists of Ukraine.

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Ihor Lisnyi	(over Skype)		June 1, 2018
Halyna Nazarenko	(in person)	Petrykivka, Ukraine	May 25, May 28, June 1, June 5, 2018
Valentyna Panko	(in person)	Petrykivka, Ukraine	May 24, 2018
Andriy Pikush	(in person)	Petrykivka, Ukraine	June 1, June 4, 2018
Natalya Rybak	(in person)	Petrykivka, Ukraine	June 2, June 6, 2018
Olena Zinchouk	(in person)	Wake Forest, NC	January 30, 2017
	(over the phone)		April 22, 2017
	(over the phone)		June 5, 2018
	(in person)	Wake Forest, NC	March 24, 2019

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Figure 1.1 Political map of Ukraine

INTRODUCTION

I was born in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and grew up in a newly independent Ukraine. After decades of silencing of our history and origins, my family, like many other Ukrainians, were finally free to speak up or openly talk about it. Did we start to do so right away? No. Not because there was nothing to be told, but simply because we did not know how. That was the case with the whole nation.

I developed my love of folklore on my granny's lap. As a child, I was sent to spend most of my summers with her in the village of Kodnya, Zhytomyr oblast – the historical site of the Cossack massacre Koliyivshchyna, where Maskym Zaliznyak and Ivan Honta, the leaders of the Haidamaky uprising movement, were publicly executed. My grandma Oleksandra, a former school history teacher, would tell me the stories and local legends about the history of the village. On Sunday evenings she used to go to her friends' front bench, where in the pungent aromas of summer flowers and herbs they would sing songs they remembered from their mothers. As a child, I was always looking forward to those *posyden'ky* – the sittings – and listened carefully to those songs, learned them by heart, and later practiced them with my granny in duo while helping her with chords. Grandma always said I had a good ear for music.

At the age of 14, I graduated from a secondary children's music school, where I played piano, sang in a choir, and learned music theory and music literature. Later, when I was a sophomore, I joined a folk song ensemble, "Ladovytsi." Together with our teacher, we visited the remote villages along the Dnister river, talked to the local elderly people and collected their folk songs. Then, after coming back to the city, we transcribed lyrics and music, considering all

the regional stylistic and dialectal peculiarities, learned them, and performed them at the festivals and public holidays.

That was my understanding of folklore at the time – collecting and learning close-to-extinct folk songs and narratives in remote villages – and I was pretty honored to realize what an important mission I had. However, deep down I had a feeling that something was missing. After some research, I learned that there were only three universities in Ukraine that had programs in folklore, with only one of them offering Bachelor's, Master's, and doctoral degrees in the discipline. All of the programs were based on the philological departments and often were an addition to, or under the umbrella of, the Ukrainian language and literature programs. Things like vernacular architecture, foodways, gender/ women's studies, material culture were just episodically touched upon in the syllabi of mostly language-oriented courses. Several music academies also offered a few courses in folk music.

Having a plan in mind to combine my command of the English language, interest in education, and passion for folklore, I started a graduate program in Education with a project to study how folklore is taught in the USA, in order to offer the changes to the folklore programs in Ukraine. To do my field research, I received a Fulbright fellowship to conduct my research at UNC-Chapel Hill, where I spent 9 months of 2016-2017 auditing classes, and viewing folklore from a whole new academic perspective. Then I had a thought – what better way to learn how future folklorists are trained, than to walk this path myself? Moreover, at that point I had no doubt that I wanted to connect my life with folklore, and having a degree would definitely help me advocate for it. Thus, I found myself enrolled in the Master's program in Folklore at UNC.

At first, given my background in folk music, I thought I would connect my thesis research with it. But again, willing to contribute something new to the field of folklore in

Ukraine, to offer a different lens, but also to challenge myself, I decided to step into a field totally unfamiliar to me – material culture. This decision was also partially influenced by Olena Zinchouk, an amazing woman I met through the Ukrainian Association of North Carolina. Olena is an immigrant artist from Petrykivka village, Ukraine – the motherland of the renowned Petrykivka painting. Even though I am originally from the West of the country, I have always heard about this type of folk art. Through our informal talks, I was captivated by Olena’s story of immigration, and even more by the history of Petrykivka painting, its complex relationship with Soviet influences, and the artists’ struggle to preserve what was considered to be a “true” Petrykivka painting. So, the project was right in front of me.

Having done some preliminary research, I discovered that aside from Soviet-time edited collections of Petrykivka painting and a few newer ones, scholarly literature written on the history and analysis of this kind of art is scarce, despite the wide popularity of the art itself. The major milestones in the development of Petrykivka painting are briefly mentioned in the existing exhibitions collections (Hlukhen’ka 1965; 1973), alongside a description of the style and the technical peculiarities of the painting technique. What interests me, however, is, paraphrasing V. Ochs (2007), *how* Petrykivka painting matters, *to whom* and *in what ways*.

I started my research by interviewing Olena Zinchouk, whom I mentioned earlier, for several class projects. Later, using Olena’s contacts, and thanks to the Archie Green Occupational Folklife Fellowship, in the summer of 2018 I was also able to go to Petrykivka village in Ukraine. During my two-week stay, I conducted a series of extensive interviews with four artists – Andriy Pikush, Natalya Rybak, Valentyna Panko (whose father Fedir Panko was influential in the history of Petrykivka painting), and Halyna Nazarenko, a younger artist who positions herself as an independent Petrykivka artist.

During my ethnographic research I faced a couple of problems. First of all, Olena warned me about a possible judgmental attitude toward her in the community due to her immigration. Since she left Ukraine 25 years ago, her contacts with her peer artists had weakened significantly. She put me in contact with Halyna Nazarenko, a “more progressive” artist who has established herself through a number of projects and personal exhibitions around the world. Halyna became my guide upon my arrival to the village, used her personal contacts to find accommodation for me at the dormitory of the vocational training school in downtown Petrykivka, and assisted me during my entire stay there. With other artists – Andriy Pikush, Natalya Rybak and Valentyna Panko – I had to be more diplomatic and not mention that I am friends with Olena Zinchouk, because I did not want the stigma the community put on her to affect my fieldwork in any negative way. In some moments, I had to use ethnographic research techniques really carefully. For instance, when Andriy Pikush was telling me a story that Olena had already told me earlier, I had to stay impartial and neither mention that I had already heard it from her, nor that I know her. Moreover, the events in the story – an exhibition they organized together – included Zinchouk, but Pikush never said her name, as if he omitted her on purpose.

At the end of my stay in Petrykivka, I confessed to Natalya Rybak that I knew Olena, since they used to be best friends. Natalya replied immediately that she still did not understand how Olena could immigrate and leave behind all the work they had done together.

Furthermore, I interviewed Ihor Lisnyi, an art management graduate student from Petrykivka, and an author of a blog about Petrykivka. In 2016 he initiated a campaign on social media to promote a purple flower painted in Petrykivka style by Oleksandr Opariy to become a logo of the international song contest Eurovision 2017, that was to be held in Kyiv that year. He provided me with a valuable assessment of the modern usage of Petrykivka painting. Also, I

conducted short interviews with teachers and students of the Decorative Art program at the Petrykivka vocational training school (community college) № 79 during their week of practical training in Petrykivka painting.

I also visited Folk Art Center “Petrykivka,” Museum of Fedir Panko, Petrykivka Museum of Ethnography, and a Skansen-hotel “Mykola’s farmstead,” owned and run by two Petrykivka artists – Mykola and Valentyna Dekas, and explored the ruins of the factory “Friendship.” And, of course, I used every opportunity to chat with locals and just observe the life and esthetics of the village.

Like in any other ethnography-based research, most of the information came from my consultants. It was a great opportunity that helped me establish real-life relationships with people, but also challenging for the same reason. My ultimate goal in this project was to include different pieces of the story and different voices in order to recreate as accurate a picture of the current stage of Petrykivka painting as possible. That, of course, meant that I had to interact with people whose opinions do not necessarily coincide, or that even clash. Although some people’s recreation of the past events might be more precise than the others’, or someone’s expertise is more highly estimated in the community, I felt that I had no professional nor personal right to take someone’s side. With the deepest respect to each of my collaborators, I am presenting the story that might seem controversial to someone. However, I noticed that ultimately all my interviewees raise the same questions and have the same goals – to celebrate Petrykivka painting in the community and nation-wide, find new modern ways of presenting the tradition, and in the time of unrest probably even unite Ukraine under its aegis.

Drawing most of the information from the interviews I conducted, but also having triangulated it with the existing scholarship, I will start with presenting a brief, but relatively

detailed history of Petrykivka painting starting approximately 100 years ago, as far as I could get in terms of finding oral and documentary evidence. Then, I will proceed with the current stages of Petrykivka's development – it being inscribed into UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2013, an attempt to make a purple Petrykivka flower a symbol of Eurovision-2017 held in Ukraine, etc. Most importantly, I will concentrate on how a formerly site-specific local folk painting tradition has become a hallmark of Ukrainian national identity in the newly independent Ukraine, and this will be discussed in three chapters – Place, Art, and People respectively.

The goal of my thesis is not to fall into the colonial trap of relabeling something as authentic or inauthentic. In fact, I wanted to demonstrate that Petrykivka artists feel that what they are doing today is still traditional and authentic, though the art might look different from how Petrykivka painting looked a century or more ago, and its meaning might have changed too. Recognizing the critical perspective, the concept of authenticity pushed me to inquire into the grounds of their claims – the qualities that the Petrykivka artist identify to be core when talking about the authenticity of the art form.

In my research, I deployed three lenses through which I accessed the material critically. First of all, I deploy approaches to studying material culture. The color palettes, particular strokes, types of brushes, tools and other materials used in the process painting, as well as the authorship of an artist and their belonging to the locale are all inseparable from the existing conversations about the authenticity of Petrykivka painting. Since Petrykivka painting is a form of folk art, it appears on objects' surfaces – walls, paper, wooden, plastic, fabric etc. and even digital media and human bodies, and thus its materiality is very palpable and deserves special attention. The messages people often assign to such expression have become highly political,

outlining cultural and national identity of Ukrainians. Here I referred to the works of Vanessa Ochs (2007), Henry Glassie (1995; 1999), Debora Kodish (2013), Setha Low (1994), Dorothy Noyes (1989) and others. Secondly, and probably the most extensively, I concentrate on the questions of authenticity, tradition and industrialization, researched by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1992), Deirdre Evans-Pritchard (1987), Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin (1984), Walter Benjamin (1939), Bill Ivey (2012), Lijun Zhang (2018) and others. Since in Ukrainian folkloristics the notion of authenticity is studied with a very close to Herderian romantic nationalism approach, my aim was to offer a different, modern Western view on this issue. Specifically, I looked at the re-emergence of the local folk art movement that leads to a re-expansion of Ukrainian national identity. The other questions I asked were why and under what circumstances people continue to make art. Creation of art is never completely unconstrained. In the case of Petrykivka, it was first used for protection and decoration, later it became a means of economic development of the region, and in its current stage it perpetuates local and national identity. Finally, I positioned the processes happening now in the contexts of post-colonialism and nationalism in Ukraine. At the moment of an active nation building, the folk art movement revival in Ukraine has obtained special colorings and meanings, when people try to draw the lines between Us and Them, untangling the twisted limits of cultural interactions. Relying on the works of Partha Chatterjee (1993), Dipesh Chakrabarty (2002), Ivan Dziuba (1968), Myryoslav Shkrandij (2016), Aníbal Quijano (2007), Mark von Hagen (2017), William A. Wilson (1973) and others, I tried to demonstrate the historical and political dimensions through which Petrykivka painting should be viewed.

My work is informed by three crucial concepts within the field of folklore – tradition, authenticity and group, that have been discussed extensively by folklore scholars.

Henry Glassie points out that “tradition is the creation of the future out of the past”, and that “history and tradition are comparable in dynamic; they exclude more than they include and so remain open to endless revision” (2010:176). Unlike *culture*, possessing its ahistorical and ahumanistic properties, *tradition* is usually connected with people (2010:181, italics in original). Noyes echoes this idea and juxtaposes these modern ideas of tradition as a human construct with old-fashioned understandings that presented “people as bearers, not makers, of tradition” (2010:11).

Authenticity, in its turn, is a rather complicated issue as well. Regina Bendix (1997) problematizes the notion of authenticity and calls to avoid the dichotomy of calling something “authentic” or “inauthentic” in order to understand and appreciate culture. After having dedicated her research to this concept, she boils it down to the “quality of experience”. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in her essay “Mistaken Dichotomies” (1992) directs attention away from “authenticity” as a fixed quality of an object or practice and toward “authenticators” as those who are socially empowered to claim what is authentic or not according to certain norms and aesthetic values in a community, and “authentication” as a political act of determining what is genuine.

While Alan Dundes defines a folk group as “any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor” (1965:2), Dan Ben-Amos identified two conditions that must hold “for the folkloric art to happen”: “Both the performers and the audience have to be in the same situation and be part of the same reference group” (1972:12 in Noyes 2010:11). Dorothy Noyes (2010:7) also reflects on differences between small groups – communities, and big groups – “imagined communities” (Anderson 2016), and the interrelations between them.

I approach the study of Petrykivka from these more flexible and critical perspectives. Given my devotion to the ongoing political, economic, and military struggle for Ukraine, at times it has felt threatening to loosen my hold on older, more absolute senses of group, tradition, and authenticity. I am convinced, however, and hope to persuade my readers, that these newer perspectives actually provide a more powerful tool for uniting Ukrainians in a shared understanding of our culture that contributes to the defense of our national sovereignty.

My work can be useful to those who study, work with, or are interested in folklore, folk art, material culture, but also nationalism, post-socialism, Eastern Europe, Soviet Union, Ukraine and its culture, history and politics. Since I anticipate the readers to be not limited to Ukrainians only, I include brief explanations of the key points of Ukrainian culture to make my thesis more accessible to foreign audiences.

CHAPTER I: HISTORY

Petrykivka painting is a Ukrainian folk painting technique that originated in Petrykivka village, Dnipropetrovsk oblast, Ukraine. Having thrived in its village of origin in the Eastern Ukraine since the 17th century, it soon became a hallmark of Ukrainian decorative folk art. However, during the USSR's rule over Ukraine from 1922-1991 there was a shift in using and understanding this type of art. Despite the short-term state policy of indigenization (1923-1931), offered by the Soviet authorities to increase the usage and facilitate development of local languages and promote other elements of culture in order to make the ideas of socialism more accessible to broader audiences, later there was an attempt to politicize Petrykivka and deploy it as a means of creating a Ukrainian-Soviet identity in the context of the state's aggressive anti-nationalist policy. During this time, Petrykivka artists created portraits of Soviet heroes such as V. Lenin, Y. Gagarin and Soviet red army soldiers decorated with characteristic floral ornaments and depictions of everyday life of Ukrainians. Interestingly enough, many folk artists of Petrykivka painting argue that in so doing they did not abandon the principles of its authenticity.

Contemporary Petrykivka artists say that this painting tradition is rooted deeply in the pre-historic times, even as far back as in the Trypilian Cultureⁱ. It is important to mention, that Petrykivka painting did not only appear in Petrykivka village, as many might think; it existed throughout the area in particular forms varying from one cultural center to another. There are several reasons why Petrykivka village became its "home". First of all, the village was famous for its market, that on top of being an economic hub, became the site of cultural attractions.

Secondly, the School of Decorative Art in Petrykivka village offered training in this particular art form, that almost coined the name assigned to the locale. Finally, because of the construction of the Middle Dnipro Hydroelectric Power Plant in Kamyanske, Dnipropetrovsk oblast, many villages were flooded, and people migrated to neighboring towns, bringing their cultural heritage with them.

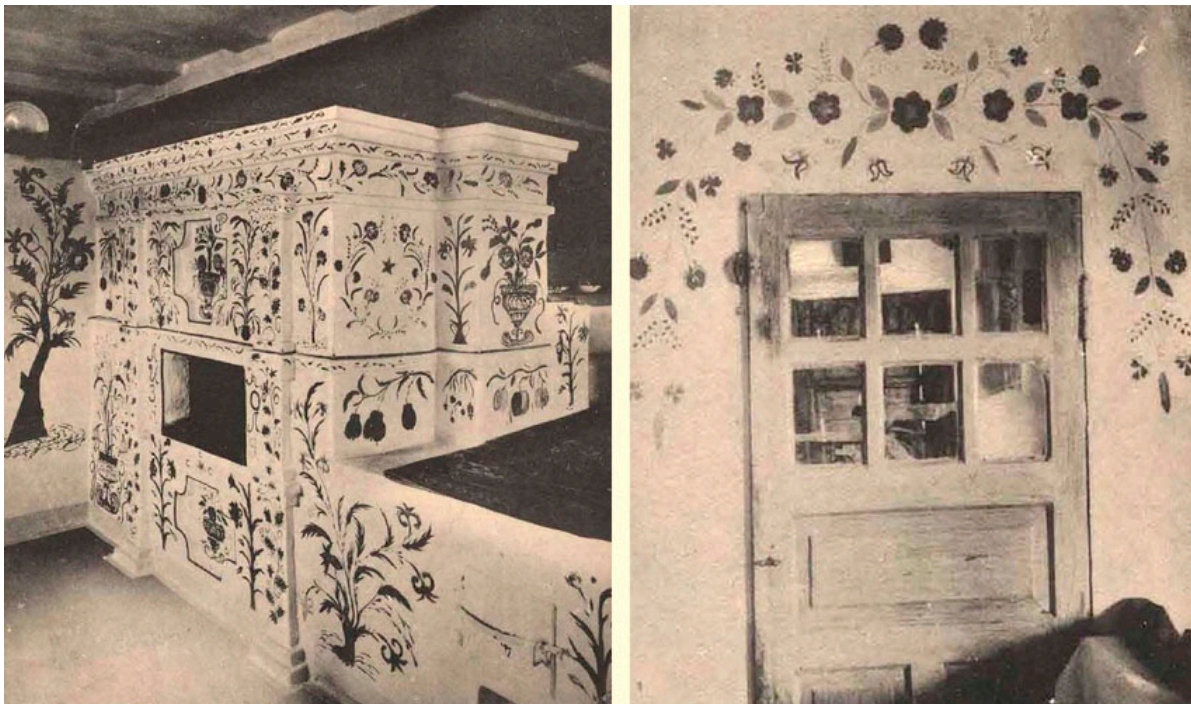


Figure 1.2 Early documented examples of interior and exterior Petrykivka painting decorations on the walls of houses. Source: www.petrykivka.dp.ua

Just like in other places in the area, people of the village of Petrykivka decorated their living quarters, household belongings and musical instruments with a style of ornamental painting that is characterized by fantastic flowers and other natural elements, based on careful observation of the local flora and fauna. According to the belief, these paintings protect people from sorrow and evil. Local people, and in particular women of all ages, were involved in this

folk art tradition. They say that every family had at least one practitioner, making decorative painting an integral part of daily existence in the community. Later, some women became more skillful painters than others, and started being hired to decorate other houses. They obtained the name “*chepurushky*” (*чепурюшки*), or tidy / neat ones, in the community, and were respected, and of course paid with money, favors or goods in exchange for their artistic skills (Panko, 2018).

Local artists emphasize the political environment that enhanced the development of this art. Describing this environment where Petrykivka painting had started in 17th century, during one of our interviews, Olena Zinchouk said: “*People never knew serfdom here, and this played a very significant role in the history of our land. For people were not enslaved, they did not have to serve anyone. So, they painted little flowers on whatever and whenever they could. They embroidered, they sang, they just had a free life*” (2017a). Thus, according to Olena, as well as my other consultants, Petrykivka soaked up and became the embodiment of the spirit of freedom – relative political independence, as well as freedom of thought and mind.

Traditionally colorful, Petrykivka painting was predominantly used to decorate the white walls of the houses, and sometimes dark-green, brown, blue or red *srkyni* – wooden chests for storing clothes or other household items. When, in the early 20th century paper became more accessible to peasants, artists expanded Petrykivka painting from the surfaces of walls and objects to paper. Consequently, they were able to profit from their work by selling these paintings at fairs and local markets.

In the 1920’s with the establishment of the USSR, Soviet authorities regarded such activities as entrepreneurship and accumulation of private property and officially banned the sale of Petrykivka paintings on paper. Andriy Pikush remembers how Petrykivka luminary Nadia

Bilokin' shared her memories with him: "The artists had to hide in the reeds on the way to the markets, so that militia didn't find them, otherwise they would have been arrested." (Pikush, 2018)

However, Moscow understood the danger of implementing any rapid changes, and in the early 1920's launched a project of indigenization, or *korenizatsiya*. It aimed to encourage the use of national cultures to create favorable conditions for the working class's creative expressions and introduce the concepts of building a communist or "proletarian" culture in local languages. In Ukraine this process received the name Ukrainization.

Also, folk "proletarian" art was seen as a good resource of income to meet the ambitious economic needs of the newly established state, and in 1936 the first exhibitions of folk art took place in Kyiv and Moscow, where folk artists were encouraged to bring their works, and the selection committee (oftentimes comprised of people who had nothing to do with any type of folk art) chose the art styles they liked the best in order to incorporate them into the developing industries.

The same year Soviet Officials opened a School of decorative art in Petrykivka on the initiative of the local Oleksandr Statyva. Folk artist Tetyana Pata became the first teacher of Petrykivka painting, and to this day they are both seen as the people who embody institutionalization of the art form. Thus, folk artists from the community for the first time got a chance to become "professional" Petrykivka artists. In 1941, because of WWII, the school was closed and didn't open even after the war as the state was recovering from the great losses, both human and economical.

It was not until 1956 when Soviet authorities initiated the founding of a factory “Friendship” («Дружба») – referring to the friendship of all Soviet nations – when Petrykivka painting was put on mass production. Many local artists, including but not limited to those who graduated from the School of decorative art, became workers of the factory. However, the idea of giving the artists full liberty to mass produce something that represented Ukrainian national identity did not correspond to the politics of the state. Many changes were introduced to Petrykivka painting.

First of all, the drafts and sketches of the products – mostly plates and little boxes made of pressed sawdust, and later, porcelain vases and china – were strictly censored and had to be approved in Kyiv by a council of artists and art historians, who, again, often had never been to Petrykivka village and had little knowledge about this specific kind of folk art. The approval process could take up to six months, despite the artists’ numerous attempts to have their own “approval council” at the factory (Pikush, 2018). The authorities were pretty happy with turning Petrykivka painting into souvenir products that were successfully exported to about 40 countries and exhibited as Ukrainian Soviet folk art all over the world.



Figure 1.3 Artist-performer at the factory “Friendship”. Author unknown. Source: www.petrykivka.dp.ua

There was also an economic side to the problem. Since the souvenirs from the “Friendship” factory became so popular and met a huge demand of providing something that could represent Soviet proletarian art and also demonstrate how the USSR supposedly supported national cultures, the orders at the factory grew enormously. Artists found themselves in conditions where the demand for repetitive machine-like actions excluded any space for creativity and individual expression. On the other hand, the jobs were very well-paid. For instance, if a highly qualified professional, like a teacher or an engineer, was making about 120 Rubles a month on average, an artist at the factory could make 140 Rubles a month, having only graduated from a secondary school of decorative art or a 2-year specialized school. The order plans grew every month – for thousands upon thousands of items of the same exact type;

working conditions left much to be desired, and the work was monotonous and exhausting.

Natalya Rybak complained to me in one of our interviews, *“As much as I liked the art, I thought I was going crazy [at the factory], and was even seriously considering changing profession”* (2018).

Thinking about Natalya’s comment, I would like to step a little bit aside here and take a closer look at this problem. If having an opportunity for creative expression is so crucial in people’s everyday work, it leads us to the question – can a person be creative in any job, even if it requires monotonous repetitive actions? In his essay “Handmaking America” Bill Ivey (2012) offers a quite new definition of craftsmen as those who follow “an enduring basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake,” meaning, in my understanding, any job. He quotes a sociologist Daniel Bell, who says, “Modern life creates a bifurcation of role and person which for a sentient individual becomes a strain.” Ivey goes on and argues, “to be happy at their work, people need three things – feel they are a fit, not do too much of it, have a sense of success... If our occupations have been corrupted by the demands of postindustrial capitalism, we must use extra leisure to engage in activities more meaningful than a modern day-job – activities that approach something like Max Weber’s sense of ‘vocation’.” In other words, Ivey emphasizes the human necessity of creative self-expression, if not at the job setting, then elsewhere.

In the Soviet factory, the traditionally white background for Petrykivka was almost totally replaced by a black background, which was not inherent to this tradition by any means. Rybak also comments that even if black color was used, it was just an interspersion, but never an accent. Some art historians trace the origins of the black background to similar Russian folk art techniques, such as Zhostovo or Khokhloma painting traditions. “Sweet little roses,” as Andriy

Pikush called them, and other floral motives, alien to the tradition, have also been used at the factory “Friendship.” Similar factories were also opened in all of these communities.

Here is what artist Olena Zinchouk (2017a) shared about professional exchanges with the Gzhel porcelain factory.

“Creative people learn from each other, and those girls [artists who were sent to Gzhel] started promoting it. And it still lives there [in the Petrykivka painting]. I can easily recognize it and distinguish it from our old Petrykivka that was based on using traditional equipment – a finger, a little stick, a cat fur brush, even with any brush – the strokes looked particular. But there [in Russian style] the transition [in the strokes] is just different. I cannot say that Petrykivka suffered from it a lot, no – it got a new, modern element, but it became more industrialized, commercialized art, not the folk, primary one. With our old Petrykivka you can be on first-name terms, but the new one had those pompous curves, when you look at that flower and you don’t know whether it was made by a person or a machine. That’s alien, that’s not ours.”

“It was a mission ... to bring it [Gzhel style of painting] to Petrykivka, so to say to re-do Petrykivka into a Russian style. That was planned, although obviously nobody spoke about it out loud, they [artists] didn’t even understand it themselves. But that was a political act to destroy our Ukrainian-ness.”

Not only the materiality, the strokes and the process of Petrykivka painting production had changes, but also the motives. In a collection of works edited by Natalya Hluhen’ka (1973), I came across this fascinating wooden chest. The sides of the chest are decorated with a Cossack – a collective image of a Ukrainian Zaporizhzhya Sich army warrior from XIV-XVI centuries – a symbol of the folk resistance – riding a trotting black horse, with his sword down. The two other sides of the chest are decorated with the paintings of the Soviet Red army soldier, this time on

the galloping white horse, his sword up, about to hit and probably decapitate a big snake or a dragon with it. Both figures were placed on a rich carpet of Petrykivka style flowers. The figure postures and the symbolism behind other characters on the paintings spoke volumes to my critical understanding of the message being sent here. Looking at the lid of the chest, I was astonished to see something absolutely fascinating – a crescent of lavish flowers below a fully-equipped astronaut, riding an unidentified beast and flying towards the moon! On the last page of the collection there was a painting of a man and a woman in folksy looking, but definitely not Ukrainian traditional outfit, that can be described by such folklore studies terms as folkloresqueⁱⁱ (Foster 2016), or folklorismusⁱⁱⁱ (Bendix 1997). The woman was holding a sickle in her hands, arms raised above her face. The man was holding a hammer in one hand, and a molecule in the other (a sickle and a hammer was a coat of arms of the USSR, and a molecule, to my understanding, represents the progressiveness of the Soviet science).

Another prominent artist Vasyl Sokolenko became nationwide and internationally famous for his political posters painted in Petrykivka style. When I asked Olena her opinion on these paintings, she replied: *Those motives in Petrykivka were pretty common in the Soviet times. No, nobody made us paint that. It was merely a way of self-defence, of giving what they [Soviet authorities] anticipated us to give, so that they could just leave us alone*” (2019). Her comment very well exemplifies hegemonic influences on the Petrykivka community, outlined by postcolonial theorists.

Of course, not everyone in the community was happy with such usage and appropriation of Petrykivka painting. Some artists took an active position in order to return Petrykivka painting back to its roots.

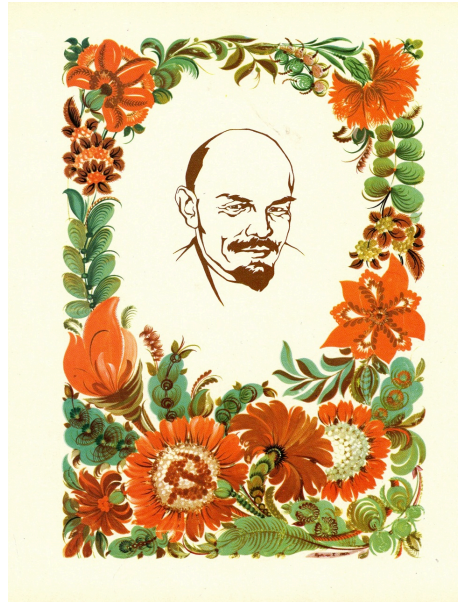


Figure 1.4 A portrait of V. Lenin framed with the Petrykivka ornaments from Natalya Hluhen'ka. *Petrykivs'ki Rozpysy*. Kyïv: Mystetstvo, 1973.

Figure 1.5 A painting of a man and a woman holding Soviet regalia from Natalya Hluhen'ka. *Petrykivs'ki Rozpysy*. Kyïv: Mystetstvo, 1973.

Ф. Панко



46
Скриня
1967

Ф. Панко



46
Деталь скрині
1967

Ф. Панко



47
Деталь скрині
1967

Ф. Панко



49
Деталь скрині
1967

Figures 1.6 – 1.8 Decorated wooden chest by F. Panko from Natalya Hluhen'ka. *Petrykivs'ki Rozpysy*.

Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1973.

From 1956 to 1970 Fedir Panko was a head artist at the Petrykivka factory “Friendship.” He was born in Petrykivka village and graduated from the local school of decorative art. He then fought in the Great Patriotic War, but was captured in Germany where he was forced to work as an Ostarbeiter. After coming back home and winning a competition among the local artists (although there are some alternative stories in the community about how he “stole” the position from Vasyl Sokolenko), he was appointed to lead a team of artists-performers at the factory. Even today some people characterize Panko as an inborn manager, who was able to negotiate well with the Soviet authorities on such a sensitive issue as folk art. However, at the time when he was holding the position a number of changes were introduced to Petrykivka painting due to orders “from above.” For a number of reasons, in 1970 Fedir Panko left the factory. He found a loophole in the legislation, and with the support of the Ukrainian Artistic Union started a new project in the village – an experimental shop. Here, in contrast to the factory, distinguished artists from the community – not just performers, but those who had developed their own style and vision of the art and earned recognition – were offered much more freedom of creative expression. Unlike the factory, the idea of the experimental shop was to become a space for encouraging development, mutual support, and – most importantly – the creation of products of a much higher quality. The condition was to produce not more than 10 items of the same kind, i.e., the same pattern. All the works were *author* works with a signature.

Through the Ukrainian Artistic Union, artists exhibited their works at art fairs of different scopes, and provided their works not for mass consumption, but for art salons and private or small collections. Every artist had their own working plan for a year ahead and a flexible schedule. With a team of around 10 people, they managed to establish an extensive network, and

providing more unique works of art, an artist could be making as much as 350-500 Rubles a month, sometimes even more, which was simply unheard of.

Artists had complete freedom of expression and were not bound by someone else's sketches or color palettes. To an extent, such "cultural cleansing" became possible in the 1970's and was inspired by the movement of *the Sixtiers*^{iv} in Ukraine. Olena Zinchouk (2017a) says:

"An already established artist Andriy Pikush, another young folk artist from Petrykivka – Natalka Rybak, a couple of other artists, and myself, started to revive the old Petrykivka, to revive those ancient traditions, our roots, in order to get rid of all that Russian that came later. We started giving absolutely different works to the exhibitions. We also communicated with a big-time art historian Victor Solovyov, a very intelligent man who cared about Ukraine a lot. He explained it to us – look at what we had, and what we got now. So, we made that wave of cleansing, and it was all for good. I haven't been to Ukraine for many years now, but I follow Petrykivka artists who exhibit their works, and I see that our wave was very powerful, they caught it. And that Moscovian [element] is much weaker, it doesn't work anymore."

In 1972 these artists under the aegis of Victor Solovyov launched an underground project of going back to the origins of Petrykivka painting in this highly politicized environment at the factory. They collected a bunch of works from the old artists in the community and juxtaposed them to the later, factory-produced Petrykivka. To demonstrate these drastic differences that Petrykivka went through over a span of just 50 years, they put together an exhibition "Petrykivka Painting: roots and modernity." For the local community, it was supposed to serve an educational purpose. This inspired some artists to revise their style of painting and to come back to the "true" Petrykivka, not affected by the Soviet politics. For the Soviet authorities it was a testimony of progress and modernity.

These underground movements were bubbling up until the early 1990's when Ukraine became independent. The collapse of the USSR led to economic crisis in many former Soviet republics, including Ukraine. The factory fell apart, and all that is left now is just ruins. The experimental shop was reformed into the Folk Art Center "Petrykivka," with Andriy Pikush as a leader. In the current condition of a war with Russia that started in 2014, the cultural sphere in Ukraine is severely underfunded. Financial support of the Center by the government is minimal, and artists mostly work relying on their own enthusiasm. However, the shift toward viewing Petrykivka painting as an inherently Ukrainian folk art has become undeniable.

UNESCO

The question of heritage preservation is incredibly pressing today, given the growing popularity of cultural tourism, or ethnotourism. In this section I will not go into much detail in terms of analysis that inscription in UNESCO's list of treasures of Intangible Cultural Heritage means for Petrykivka painting. Rather, I briefly present the sentiments that the artists have about the inscription, and its impact on the community.



Figure 1.9 Certificate confirming the inscription of Petrykivka painting to the UNESCO's list of treasures of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Photo by Iryna Voloshyna.

In 2013 Petrykivka painting was inscribed into UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage as a phenomenon of the Ukrainian decorative art, becoming the first cultural phenomenon representing Ukraine (UNESCO). The only other cultural phenomenon that

received such high recognition in Ukraine is the Cossack songs of the Dnipropetrovsk region. Despite the pride that the community of Petrykivka shares regarding UNESCO's recognition, at the same time there are mixed feelings about it. First of all, from what I learned during the interview with Andriy Pikush, it was not the Petrykivka Folk Art Center who prepared and submitted the application, but the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Council. After initiating this project, they asked Petrykivka Folk Art Center to prepare a mobile exhibition that will be displayed for a certain amount of time in a number of countries in Europe and the US, since it was a requirement from the UN. Pikush claims that no representative of the Center was invited to any of the exhibitions. Moreover, there were difficulties getting the paintings back to the Center and their authors, its employees. Without any informational support from the regional or oblast councils, not having received an opportunity to be present at the exhibitions' openings for a couple of years, and lacking access to the public information of the benefits of inscription into the Intangible Cultural Heritage list, many artists share a bitter feeling of being used, misled, or misinformed. Little if any command of the English language, no access to the explanation of UNESCO's legislation, and unfamiliarity with the specifics of work in such areas, prevent the artists from enjoying the benefits that inscription might have brought to their community and to Petrykivka painting in general. Such challenges are quite common among the artists when they are dealing with UNESCO's ICH list in many other places. Carol Silverman (2015), for instance, talks about how the Teškoto dance ensemble members in Macedonia also faced similar problems as Petrykivka painting artists.

Moreover, there is another side to this issue. With UNESCO's recognition of Petrykivka painting, its prestige skyrocketed overnight. In the era of YouTube, there is no restriction to getting the information on the basics of Petrykivka painting technique. Many beginning artists

everywhere in Ukraine and beyond taught themselves to paint in Petrykivka painting style, and started mass producing “low quality,” quoting the artists in Petrykivka, products, that just vaguely resemble the true Petrykivka painting. Counting on a twisted understanding of the art by general audiences, or sometimes lacking deep cultural knowledge about this type of art themselves, these “bootleg artists” play on the stereotypical imagination of the art, with a black background, “sweet whitened little flowers,” and mass-produced cheap souvenir products – everything the Petrykivka artists criticize so heavily, and something they have been working hard to erase for a long time. Moreover, these imitations damp down the prices for the Petrykivka painting, produced in its natural area, which the artists are extremely unhappy about, since it affects their income heavily.

In her essay “The Judgment of Solomon: Global Protections for Traditions and the Problem of Community Ownership” (2006), Dorothy Noyes raises questions that are extremely relevant to Petrykivka. Although it is unclear and confusing to the artists what exactly UNESCO’s recognition does in practice, they all agree on one thing: at least Petrykivka painting will not disappear now (Zinchouk 2019). Just like Noyes points out, “tradition, folklore, or intangible heritage, as one prefers, is assumed to stem from and therefore to belong to the “communities” (2006: 29). Thus, the inscription is viewed by the artists as a form of international legal protection of their heritage.

Despite all these controversies around UNESCO’s recognition of Petrykivka painting, the village is very proud to be honored so highly. Copies of the certificate of recognition are proudly framed in the Museum of Fedir Panko, the Petrykivka Museum of Ethnography, Household and Art, and other places. In the center of the village, one can also find a separate banner informing its reader about the prestigious rank of Petrykivka painting.

CHAPTER II: PLACE

In the case of Ukraine, colonial practices were applied by the Russian Empire long before the appearance of the USSR. Neither Russia nor the USSR have ever openly proclaimed their political strategies as colonial. However, many historians, political scientists, anthropologists and other scholars have recognized the undeniable features of Russia's imperial colonialism towards a number of neighboring and internal, later subordinate, countries and ethnic groups. In this section I will discuss how Soviet colonial methods implemented in Ukraine affected, and still affect the everyday experience of Ukrainians, specifically the physical space of Petrykivka village.

When in the summer of 2018 I visited the village of Petrykivka for the first time, I did not exactly know what to expect. It was the first time I traveled to Eastern Ukraine, an area that has long been stigmatized as heavily Russified and Sovietized, which was recently "shown" by the separatist movements that joined Russia-sponsored political sentiments in Donetsk and Luhansk, or the Donbass. It is the case that Western Ukraine has long been viewed as culturally "true" or "correct," despite heavy influences from locally living Jews, Poles, Hungarians, Austrians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Armenians, etc. Because of the scarce amount of land available to peasants (Edelman 1985), a weaker "iron curtain" that limited the migration of people in other parts of the country, as well as Soviet ideological persecution of Western Ukrainians for being predominantly Western, or European oriented, many immigrated to Western Europe and Northern America and found their homes there. Of course, people brought what was the most

important to them, and in many cases, those were their family legacy, e.g., embroidered shirts, household items, music instruments, as well as intangible heritage like songs, language dialects, traditions and so on. In the New World, Ukrainians gathered into communities, formed cultural hubs, built churches (very often Greek Catholic, because of the European religious influences) and were finally free to display and celebrate their traditional culture. Consequently, the folk heritage of Western Ukrainians is much more recognized and represented in the world, while Eastern Ukrainian folk culture was simply unknown and oftentimes mistaken for Russian, or at least heavily Russified Ukrainian. When Olena Zinchouk first came to Canada in the early 1990's and met with the Ukrainian diaspora there as a Petrykivka artist, she had to stand through a wave of reproaches about how this art is "Moscovite." Olena recalls, "Only through long conversations and educating the audiences, I managed to convey that Petrykivka painting *is* a Ukrainian art." It was very painful for her to find herself in a situation where she had to justify herself and her art's national identity, after advocating for Ukrainian culture in her native Dnipropetrovsk oblast for so many years, both as an artist and as a member of the "People's Movement of Ukraine" (*Narodnyi Rukh Ukrayiny*) political party. ^v

However, a number of modern folklore projects aimed at representing the folk culture (traditional clothes, songs etc.) of Eastern Ukraine demonstrated the other Ukrainian-ness, so little talked about before. Despite its geographical proximity to Russia and undeniable influences and interactions with Russian culture, a history of mixing ethnically Russian population with the local one by sending professional staff to work in the emerging or developing industries in the region, and, as a result, mass Russification of the cities, the villages remained less impacted by these processes. Thus, those who never really left the village for a long time, were not put into conditions to become totally Russified. In fact, the narrative about how left-bank and right-bank

Ukraine have been historically – and culturally – different has been used a lot, especially recently, by certain political forces in order to fuel the separatist sentiments among Ukrainians. Right after the beginning of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (the name the Ukrainian government and mass media initially used for the current unannounced war with Russia), there were a lot of rumors – most resembling legends, since it was impossible to trace back the original person who it happened to – circulating about displaced families abusing the kindness and hospitality of Western Ukrainians, in particular from Lviv, who offered their homes as shelters, oftentimes for free.

Anyway, even sensing the absurdity of such division and hidden intentions behind it, it was hard for many people not to fall for this ideological trap. So, when in the summer of 2018, I first came to the de-Sovietized city of Dnipro^{vi}, I was carefully observing this part of Ukraine, still unknown to me. One of the first things that caught my attention were the billboards that said in Russian “United country” (*Yedinaya strana*), that conveyed the message of the national ideological sameness of Ukraine across the language borders.

The presence of the Soviet times and values, although fading away, still are very palpable in Ukraine. In particular, when you arrive in Petrykivka village and start walking from the bus station to the downtown, there is a monument commemorating the co-villagers who sacrificed their lives during WWII, with a bright red star in front of it, marking the state (the Soviet state) that they were fighting for. As you go further, right in front of the vocational training school #79, there is another monument to the Unknown Soldier, referring to the victims of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, with a similar red star.

Upon arriving in Petrykivka, I was immediately struck by colorful floral decorations that indicated very clearly where I had come to visit. The townhall end wall is all covered with

somewhat sun-faded Petrykivka flowers printed on canvas. Likewise, the logo of the PrivatBank located downtown is also laced with ornaments. A flower kiosk, a furniture shop, a convenience store – together they form the commercial hub of the village, and each of them is touched up with a bouquet of floral decorations. A kindergarten’s playground is designed to have little houses and arbors to simulate a sentiment of the traditional, yet imaginable and whimsical Petrykivka village. The exterior walls of the pharmacy, which is located on the corner of the main crossroads of the village, boast an exceptionally creative look. A Hippocratic cup, pointing at the purpose of the establishment it is decorating, is also eloquently adorned with Petrykivka flowers. When I asked the locals about who painted all these buildings, people could not give me an exact answer. “The business owners probably hired one of our artists,” they said. It also goes without saying that places directly connected to the passing or conservation of the tradition of Petrykivka painting – like the children’s art school, vocational training school’s artistic workshop, public library, ethnographic museum, folk arts center etc. – are all emphatically marked by carpets of herbs, floral designs and magical birds. Moreover, along the highway that goes by the village, there is a long grey concrete wall that local authorities ordered to have decorated with Petrykivka painting. Sketches from traditional rural life, scenes from a wedding, harvest work in the field, traditional architecture – everything is pointing at how the local population wants to identify themselves with the art they are so proud of.

A silent dialogue created in the space of Petrykivka village, with Soviet monuments on one hand, and Petrykivka painting on the other, leads us to contemplate the ideological values in this community. Of course, probably not everyone can relate to such representation of culture and history, but the acceptance of this reality around you at least on some level proves tolerance to it. This, however, in no way demonstrates that the Soviet pride was widely celebrated in this

particular case. This would be an example of how human devotedness and sacrifice in defending their land is appreciated, and in fact is positioned beyond any ideological frames.



Figures 2.1 – 2.2 Pharmacy in downtown Petrykivka. Photos by Iryna Voloshyna.



Figures 2.3 Building entrance decorated with Petrykivka ornaments. Photo by Iryna Voloshyna.



Figures 2.4 Exterior of the stores decorated with Petrykivka ornaments. Photo by Iryna Voloshyna.



Figure 2.5 Building of the Petrykivka townhall. Photo by Iryna Voloshyna.



Figure 2.6 A monument to the “little onion” (цибулька) in downtown Petrykivka. Photo by Iryna Voloshyna.

These architectural and design narratives very much reminded me what Olena Zinchouk told me about the portraits of V. Lenin, adorned with traditional flowers. “No, nobody made us paint that. It was just a sense of ‘self-defense’ we had then.” At the same time, contemporary local artists highly evaluate and praise works of this type (the political posters of Vasyl Sokolenko, for instance) as some of the finest examples of Petrykivka painting for the technique of painting, the choice of strokes, color palette and composition.

How can Soviet regalia be totally accepted on a monument right next to the kindergarten little houses covered in magical flowers and birds, shaping a sense of identity of the coming generation?^{vii} Similarly, how can such painting of Lenin in flowers not be problematic? This is the time when we should ask the question about authenticity, something that many folklorists have stumbled upon, something many artists need to prove to be accepted in a certain artistic community, and something that scholars have problematized as a construct rather than an inherent quality.

First of all, I would outline political authenticity. Many Eastern Ukrainians in different time periods found themselves seen as somehow “less Ukrainian” than those from the West of the country. Surprisingly to many, their Ukrainian-ness turned out to be bigger than they even thought of themselves. Natalya Rybak, shared this anecdote with me. When she was giving one of her workshops in Kramatorsk, Donetsk oblast, during the days she would just sit outside and paint. As she was doing that, people would stop, chat with her on some general topics, and share their thought on the current situation in the town. One man, she recalls, confessed on behalf of all residents, that after the city was occupied by separatist troops for two months, they saw a yellow and blue flag waving on the wind on the city hall building. That was the moment they realized how much they loved it to the depth of their hearts. Such episodes of self-reflection that often

come with comparison (with either foreign occupational regime, or foreign country one finds herself in), separating the Self and the Other. Thus, if a person identifies as belonging to a certain nationality despite any geographical, cultural, ideological or other determinants, no one can prove them wrong.



Figures 2.7 – 2.8 Exteriors of the houses at “Mykola’s Farmstead”. Photos by Iryna Voloshyna.

On the outskirts of the village there is a hostel “Mykolyn Hutir” (Mykola’s farmstead) designed in a Skansen style, owned by the Deka family – Mykola and Valentyna, and their four children. It started as an inherited clay house that boasted lavish interior Petrykivka decorations, and some land around it. Later, the family managed to build several other small houses – some for living, and some to serve as small museums with historically reconstructed interiors and architecture. Hay roofs, white walls, ornamented stoves and wooden chests (*srkyni*) – every detail of the design aims to grab the visitor, put them into a time capsule and bring them to the times of the “true” Petrykivka. In the hostel, guests are offered the opportunity to spend the night on a bed with a metal spring frame, under a duvet, in a room with portraits of Ukrainian national and local heroes, like Taras Shevchenko or Petro Kalnyshevskiy, adorned with embroidered towels. The dining room is furnished with a roughly cut wooden table and benches (*lavy*) around it. The hosts serve varenyky stuffed with potatoes and cottage cheese from their own farm. For adult visitors, there is a special treat – homemade grape and plum wine, while children can quench their thirst with a dry fruit compote (*uzvar*). Everything is designed to bring a visitor back in time and give them an opportunity to *see, feel* and *taste* what life used to be like in Petrykivka. However, it is easy to forget that this all *is* happening in the very present. Since almost every member of the Deka family is a practicing Petrykivka artist, they create this space first of all for themselves, to honor the tradition, but what is even more important – to live in that tradition. It would be wrong to call “Mykolyn Hutir” hostel merely a historical and cultural reconstruction, ignoring the fact of its modern everyday use, that the family lives there and uses the space for their artistic and business projects.

There are many cases of a constructed authenticity, especially in places that use tradition as a commodity. Ethno-tourism has recently become a huge source of income, and economies

purposefully direct potential consumers to tradition hubs, no matter how traditional they in fact are and what that in fact means. Zhang (2018), for instance, talks about Honkeng Hakka Earth Building Folk Cultural Village – a UNESCO recognized ICH site in China. Since tea ceremonies are widely spread in the Chinese culture, the villagers who live mostly off of the tourist money offer drinking tea with a host as a type of entertainment. Honkeng used to be a place for tea production. However, most tea trees were dug out for the planting of persimmon trees during the 1900s. Although the tea sold in the village was bought from other places in bulk, the residents make it look for tourists that the tea was locally produced. In such a way, we observe a game in authenticity when the tradition is taken from the past, although pretty recent, and a visitor is made to believe in the locality of the product they buy for more than it is worth on the market, expecting it to possess all the qualities of being authentic that were outlined earlier.

This leads us to the realm of space preservation. If cultures are often so fluid, is there a need to attempt to keep a certain tradition in its natural habitat? And whose job is it? Who decides what to preserve, that is – what stage of the culture’s development best represents it? Setha Low identified three problems in the conservation of place when it comes to material culture and tradition preservation. She claims that a place is (1) politically as well as culturally constructed, (2) pluralistic, reflecting diversity of cultures, and (3) constantly changing, since cultures are dynamic and fluid, and therefore cannot be frozen in time and space without endangering future cultural expressions (1994). So, in other words, when it comes to introducing changes in the ways something is being made, and to the tradition in general, the community, as well as the individual artist, has to find a balance, a sweet spot, between preservation and modernization, especially in the context of resisting hegemonic influences or a “tradition cleansing.”

Summing it up, the physical space of Petrykivka village vividly demonstrates the modernity of the Petrykivka painting tradition. R. Handler and J. Linnekin (1984), for instance, discuss how tradition cannot be seen as merely a “survival” – cultural expressions can be still relevant and significant, but in a new way, having taken on new meanings. Even though floral decorations might not be directly deployed any more for their function of protection, the art reflects the value that the community has assigned to it – that is to claim the space, its historical and cultural heritage, as well as present-day sentiments of deep connection to place and celebration of its legacy.

CHAPTER III: ART

When folklore takes its most visible form, it becomes embodied in an object. Objects are accumulated, formed into categories and subcategories, genres and subgenres, according to the methods and techniques of their creation, the purpose of use, aesthetical and moral values of a community etc. All together they have gained the name of material culture.

In this section I am going to look at several aspects of material culture and present several of the discussions that folklorists, anthropologists and art historians have in this regard. First of all, I would like to concentrate on the aspect of the combination of the natural and cultural in a material object. What part prevails? Which part does it represent? What is the role of an artist in creating and decorating an object? Then, I would like to move further and talk about the philosophical meaning of material objects and a message that an artist tries to convey through their creation. Here I will also touch upon the difference between the notions of art and craft. Adding a more historical take, I want to delve into the topic of cultural hegemony, tradition revitalization and social change. At what point in the notable change of a tradition do we decide to “purify” it and to go back to its roots? It is always necessary? And what do we actually want to achieve by doing that? Finally, a question of preservation is also extremely important. Do we want to keep making objects by hand in order to call them traditional or authentic, and if so – why?

There are several definitions of material culture. Vanessa Ochs offers the term defined by anthropologist James Deetz, that is “objects used by humans to cope with the physical world, to

facilitate social intercourse, and to benefit the state of mind” (Ochs 2007, 90). Indeed, by making, decorating and using objects in their everyday life, people not only come together to create a tradition sprawling from individual understanding and viewing of the world around them, but also, to a certain extent, in an interplay of nature versus culture, draw the human-made worlds of objects resembling the natural environment. According to some of my consultants, for example, traditional decorations and ornaments on the objects reflect the natural environment with easily recognizable flowers, birds and animals, or the local landscape – smooth lines in flat geographic regions, and rough geometric lines in the mountainous regions.

Or, vice versa, the embellishment can be seen as a human touch over the surfaces on the natural material – be it cave carvings or decorations on the clay jar. As Henry Glassie puts it, the unadorned object can seem like a fragment of nature, the outgrowth of forces and counterforces at play (1995). Also, decoration of the created object demonstrates the human power and agency of an artist, who managed to tame the innate. “Art does more than satisfy. It aspires. Decoration – the unnecessary embellishment of form – is the most conspicuous index to aspiration” (Glassie 1995, 53). In such a way, an artist operates by the principle of give-and-take – taking the inspiration, resources and forms from the nature, but paying the tribute back to it by bowing to and honoring it as a prime source of everything.

In his essay “Material Culture” (1999) Glassie elaborates Ralph Waldo Emerson’s definition of art as a blending of nature and will. In such a way, material objects together grow into something even bigger, a separate entity that embodies the non-material – human thought. “Art embodies, and insistently exhibits, personal and collective identities, aesthetic and instrumental purposes, mundane and spiritual aspirations. Around art – the most human of things – material

culture gathers, blending nature and will, and beyond material culture spreads the merely material, the unhuman” (1999, 42).

Material culture has been an object of interest of researchers for a long time, but it became an academic field relatively recently. Scholars (anthropologists, archeologists, folklorists, and historians of religion, art, architecture, and technology) in the 1970s were anxious to demonstrate that material things matter, not just because they are, according to V. Ochs (2007), constituted by social worlds, but also because objects themselves serve to constitute these worlds. Currently, the focus in material culture studies has shifted to “*how things matter, to whom and in what ways*” (Ochs 2007, 91, italics in original). I would claim that those who create and use the created objects have tended to always know, consciously or subconsciously, the significance of these issues. Consequently, one of the biggest aims of a folklorist is to demonstrate and help recognize this significance to others – the outsiders of the community, and by that show the community of the artists the place of the artwork they create on a wider spectrum in the world of art. This is supposed to be a total win-win. A folklorist becomes not more than just a facilitator of this process and ideally passes the credit for their work to the artists. Debora Kodish builds off of Dorothy Noyes’s idea of folklore work as humble theory, and in her turn describes folklore work as humble practice. Fieldwork, she says, is one of the great foundational practices of folklore: a habit of paying attention to people’s life experiences and learning from and taking to heart what matters (Kodish 2013).

Materiality of the objects inevitably requires us to consider the process of production. Does using only natural paints extracted from plants make an artifact, decorated with them, more authentic? Should “real” pottery be only handmade on the wheel or even without it? Henry Glassie and Michael Monteaux touch on these issues in their essay “The Spirit of Folk Art,”

where they write that in the last century “art” and “manufacture” were still used synonymously to indicate something handmade (1995). In the era of industrialization, it is hard to resist the temptation of using more advanced tools and equipment, and only the brave ones manage to bring it to the tradition and settle it there.

The very fact of an object being handmade has become problematic nowadays. It might seem like the needs of our society have increased so much that it has become nearly impossible to meet them by offering products of manual labor. At the same time, very often such products are valued much more and regarded with bigger appreciation particularly due to the process of their making.

Noyes talks about a paradox of something called “lost art” when something widely known is practiced. In other cases, young people trying to learn a traditional art and older people anxious to find apprentices do not know where to find each other (1989). Such instances do nothing else but debunk a myth of the necessity of tradition saving, since, as we already know, it usually does not disappear, just takes a different form. Here we have to be conscious of the possible bursts of nostalgia on part of the makers, as well as on the part of consumers of such objects.

In “Material Culture” (1999), H. Glassie warns us not to be oblivious of the societies where making things by hands is one of the main methods of production. “Nobody, we say, makes things by hands anymore [...] And we forget, it seems, what a small portion of the world we represent. At work in the United States, I met old people plying their trades and young people excited by the revival, but still I tended to think of material culture in the past tense” (1999, 77-78). D. Noyes expands this statement in her “Use of the Tradition” by saying that “we could think of tradition as the part of the past that is actively valued in the present [...] But performing a tradition is more than just an act of memory. We repeat what is meaningful to give order to our

lives” (1989, 13). Thus, it seems like the unity of time and place in the process of making things that later will be called folk art should be seen as an act of human necessity to perform what is important for them.

However, not everything that has been handmade can be considered art. Some artists might agree that making a set of repetitive movements is just a craft, but conveying some more elaborated message by means of utilizing this set of repetitive movement is art. Glassie and Monteux articulate this idea very well in “The Spirit of Folk Art”:

If an object exists primarily to please the senses and stir the mind, it is art. If a utilitarian or merely decorative purpose dominates – if the artifact serves the body but not the mind – it is craft. Medium has ceased bearing the weight of the distinction between art and craft. (1995, 86)

There have also been many discussions about complicated notions of tradition and authenticity, and they are still ongoing, since there is not merely one answer to the questions they pose nor just one concrete definition. When does a repetitive action or a number of actions become traditional? What constitutes a tradition? And finally – who is to define the authenticity of this tradition and all that it entails?

In this section I want to briefly discuss how tradition and authenticity respond to the processes of industrialization and modernization.

Many folklorists have attempted to solve the mystery of authenticity over decades of scholarship. Since the notion itself is extremely problematic and cannot possibly have one exact definition, it made sense to at least describe the characteristic features related to it. Regina Bendix (1997, 13), for instance, describes authenticity “as a quality of experience” or, citing Lionel Trilling, “the state of quality of the self which we call sincerity” (16). Consequently, if the

sincerity of expression becomes central in the discussion of its authenticity, mass production of folk objects at an industrial setting, even in its historical area, becomes highly problematic.

Folklore scholars have also come to agreement that traditional expressions always adapt to the reality of the community where they are practiced, to its timely needs and conditions. In other words, tradition never stays the same. Attempts to conserve some cultural phenomenon in the form in which it was practiced a long time ago, or most likely – how it is imagined to have been practiced, with the rationale of preservation of its truthfulness, can be misleading and lead to over-romanticizing of the past. The reasons for it may vary – from heritage preservation initiatives to so-called authentication (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1992) of a cultural phenomenon with a purpose to make it more attractive for its consumers.

Although many scholars have agreed that authenticity is a construct, there is still some intuitive call when we look at some product, some scent of being “true” – be it handmade or look that way, made from natural materials, look old-style or even rough, or remind us about something familiar that we do not necessarily know or remember. This sentiment of, or even a strive for “ceasing the lost culture” in a material object, sometimes becomes a powerful tool that some artists use to attract consumers and engage them in appreciation of something that is presented as authentic.

Artistic authenticity is an extremely important issue in the case of Petrykivka painting. Every artist I interviewed was very strongly opinionated about what “true” Petrykivka is (the word “authentic” is hardly ever used). Each of them has their own set of criteria, and that has been a creating space for discussion and even causing disagreements among members of the community.



Figure 3.1 Political poster by Vasyl Sokolenko. Photo by Iryna Voloshyna.

For instance, some artists consider the black background in Petrykivka as “better looking” than white or of the color of natural wood; others see nothing controversial in the famous political posters by the highly respected artist Vasyl Sokolenko and admire his style; some judge those artists who immigrated and are not involved in the movement of (re)claiming Ukrainian national identity by means of the folk art. However, there is still a very simple, straightforward and inviolable list of things that do make Petrykivka be “true” Petrykivka on which everyone I interviewed agrees:



Figure 3.2 “Girls Are Picking Dogwood Flowers” by H. Isayeva from Natalya Hluhen’ka. *Petrykivs’ki Rozpysy*.

Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1973.



Figure 3.3 “Decorative Panel” by N. Bolikin from Natalya Hluhen’ka. *Petrykivs'ki Rozpysy*. Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1973.



Figure 3.4 “Sunflowers” by H. Pavlenko-Chernychenko from Natalya Hluhen’ka. *Petrykivs’ki Rozpysy*. Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1973.

- a) using simple tools like finger and a cat fur brush (a traditional invention the artists are particularly proud of) that enable Petrykivka painting be accessible but graceful and eloquent at the same time. A cat fur brush allows the painting to become “weightless” and “airy.”
- b) some elements that make Petrykivka recognizable are two types of flowers – “little onion” (*tsybul’ka*) – because it resembles an imprint of an onion half, and “curly flower” (*kucheryavka*) – a type of a flower with a curly crest on its top. Importantly, all the flowers in Petrykivka painting are imaginary, i.e., they may vaguely look like the flowers existing in the nature, but never repeat them (Panko 2018). These two are an example of this.
- c) Natalya Rybak says that not only flowers comprise the core set of Petrykivka motifs – birds, horses and fish are also its integral part, although unjustly forgotten. Human figures do appear on some of the paintings, but they were brought to Petrykivka by an artist Nadiya Bilokin, whose works inspired Natalya to experiment with incorporating people into her paintings. “A Ukrainian lady should look like a mountain – to be able to dig soil in the field, bring water from the well, and such. These modern Barbie dolls, like some [Petrykivka artists] paint them, skinny and sad, because they are always on a diet, – nah, that doesn’t work” (2018). She depicts scenes of everyday life of Ukrainians, with a historical prospective – family going to the church for Easter service and carrying *paskas*, or Easter bread, and *krashankas*, or painted eggs, in their baskets, a man going fishing with a fishing rod, young girls participating in the spring festivities. In other works, she portrays national epic heroes – Kossak Mamay playing kobza, Petro Kalnyshevskiyi riding a horse, etc. Halyna Nazarenko

has a painting “Wedding train,” depicting an act when a bride arrives to the house of her husband carrying a cart-full of *prydanne*.^{viii}

- d) Another element that the artists pointed out to me is a floral framing around the central part of the painting – a welt, or *bigunets*. Pikush, Rybak and Nazarenko all agree that it has a deep symbolic meaning, similar to the Greek symbol of eternity. Rybak explains the rhythmic structure of the welt by the repetitiveness of natural cycles, like seasons of a year, or life and death cycle. On the other hand, Zinchouk claims that this is a symbol of eternal life. They also complained that young artists usually ignore this element of the picture, because it takes a lot of work, but then a painting can lose a lot of its meaning.

However, although these elements are highly desired, they are still interchangeable and negotiable. For instance, not all Petrykivka is painted with cat fur brushes. Sometimes classic squirrel fur or other brushes, or fingers are used. With the arrival of modern technologies, one can paint Petrykivka on the tablet, and simply imitate the strokes and techniques using digital tools.

Artists can come up with their own types of flower and leaf shapes – in fact, they are encouraged to do so in order to develop their own unique style. Valentyna Panko (2018) told about this young student of hers, who taught herself to “paint” Petrykivka by simply copying the works of other artists. Valentyna challenged her student to create some new form – be it a leaf or anything else, without repeating anything she had seen before. She said,

“There appeared many self-taught Petrykivka artists everywhere, who think that if they “caught” the technique, they have got it all. No, that’s not how it works. Every established Petrykivka artist has their own style, something new they came up with. It is like their handwriting. Give me a

number of paintings without a signature, and I will immediately recognize their authors by their inimitable style.”



Figure 3.5 “Rooster” by O. Zinchouk

Zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figures are more rarely used, and are rather inherent to an individual artist, their style and taste, so the absence of these does not lessen the quality or meaning value of the painting in any way. The welt element is becoming popular and from my observations is frequently used in Petrykivka-inspired graphic design of cloth bags, T-shirts, mugs, etc.

Having in mind this rather flexible set of rules about the “correctness” of Petrykivka painting, let us go back to the chapter on the history and examine some issues regarding the authenticity of this type of art.

Mass production has always been juxtaposed to handmade-ness and authenticity. Repetitiveness of the action, replaceability of the maker, detachment of the artist from the work of art, and often alienation from the origin area or a primary setting of the art form's existence – these are all critiques that were presented in the early XX century and are still valid concerning industrialization. In his well-known essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” W. Benjamin states that “the whole sphere of authenticity elides technological – and of course, not only technological – reproducibility” (1939). He also articulates how authenticity of an object is connected to the here and now – that is, the time period and the place an object was produced. *“It might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualized that which is produced”* (254). Regina Bendix, referring to Benjamin's work, raises an issue of him putting art before mechanical reproduction in the realm of a worshipped cult, with all its attributes. Reproduction reduces aura, and in turn such “secularization affords authenticity the place previously held by cult value” (Benjamin (1963, 53) in Bendix (1997, 6). Such high esteem of a hand-made object versus its reproduced version immediately drops the latter's value – cultural and financial – and on some level deprives it from the right of being called art.

When Petrykivka painting was put into mass production at the factory “Friendship,” I strongly doubt that Soviet leaders, state or local art council representatives, or even the artists themselves cared or thought much about losing the attachment Benjamin talks about. In the spirit of the era, people were mostly excited about the new economic opportunities that mass production would bring them – jobs, income, as well as a cultural opportunity to spread the

knowledge of Petrykivka painting. Political leaders also presented it as a case of how much the state cared about and supported the culture of the working-class people – the proletariat.

However, the absence of space for artists to express themselves creatively took a lot from this “aura” that Benjamin is talking about. The workers at the factory were divided into two groups – artists-developers, who created sketches (usually people with some special education) and artists-performers, who were often trained at the factory and were given certain tasks in painting an ornament or even one element of an ornament, and handing an object to the next artist-performer. Moreover, the numerical requirements were raised enormously with a great demand for souvenir production. The factory’s products were frequently exhibited at the national and international exhibitions.

When, in the 1970s, the Ukrainian Artistic Fund expressed an initiative to found an Experimental shop at the village as an alternative enterprise to the factory, the flaws at the production organization at the latter became especially palpable. A more intimate, individualistic approach to the process of creation allowed the artists space for self-expression, and as a result – natural development of the art form. Of course, the presence of the state ideology and the expectations that were imposed on the artists were still very present. Again – they were not explicit, but for the work to be chosen for the exhibition (and based on the number of exhibitions an artist was accepted to the Union of Artists, or the Union of Folk Artists of Ukraine), the painting had to reflect, and more so – propagate Communist ideology.

For instance, Natalya Rybak told me this rather amusing anecdote. In preparation for the Day of Militia, it was announced to the artists to prepare their works in order to be selected for an exhibition. Some of them did, but no one’s work was selected except Natalya’s – a bouquet of lavish zinnias flowers, more known by their folk name *mayory* (a homonym for an army rank of

Major). This case is very illustrative of how incompetent and short-sighted the selection committees were.

It would be wrong to say that the experimental shop completely resurrected the primal, or even natural way of the Petrykivka painting existence. While at the factory, there was a small “elite” team of artists-developers, and a bigger, lower-level trained team of artists-performers^{ix}; then at the experimental shop this setting still existed, but in a reverse way, with a similar system of hierarchy. The majority of the artists had a professional education, or had apprenticed from one of the other artists, but there were also those who had left the factory to be artists-performers at the shop. The thing is that the production was arranged in the following manner: since the shop was an enterprise under the umbrella of Ukrainian Artistic Union, the products were disseminated mostly and primarily for the needs of the Union. Every certain period of time (annually, or bi-annually) all artists had to prepare a number of works for an Art Fair or Exposition. Directors or representatives of the art salons arrived there to choose the examples of works they wanted to order, but according to the rules an artist could not produce more than ten identical works. Thus, during such fairs the artists were “booked” for a year in advance. But that did not guarantee a stable work load for other artists, younger or less successful. There was a niche for them to do a kind of performing job – to decorate plastic plates, cheaper and requiring less professionalism products, which had a cap of 50 identical items. As a result, the division of labor had a similar, yet reversed structure in comparison with the factory, and despite the fact that it was founded as an alternative to the industrialized setting of mass production of folk objects, it indeed came to share a lot of the principles of work organization, just on a smaller scale. To add to that, it was led by the same person – Fedir Panko.

However, the idea of creating a space for “experiments” – given the very name of the experimental shop – reflected such a necessity in the community. In the context of Communist ideology and state control and imposing its power on such a sensitive issue as folk art, there inevitably appeared a conflict of interests between those who did not mind going with the flow, and those who resisted such intervention. For instance, Andriy Pikush, together with Olena Zinchouk and some other artists, became leaders of such a resistance. Referring to the older examples of Petrykivka collected from the still living folk artists in the village, they were calling to “cleanse” modern, at the time, Petrykivka painting from foreign, in their opinion, influences. Nonetheless, this “cleansing” was aimed mostly on the technical side of the painting (the use of colors, materials, strokes), while the subjects depicted were rarely criticized. For instance, a prominent artist Vasyl Sokolenko became nationwide and internationally famous for his political posters painted in Petrykivka style. His paintings dedicated to the important dates and events of the Soviet Union – 60th anniversary of the USSR, 27th Gathering of the Communist Party, the wave of electrification etc. – found support of the artistic councils, were often exhibited and highly praised for the message they carried, were soon put on massive print production and distributed all over the country, were affordable, and quickly became very popular among buyers. Moreover, to this day his style of painting is highly esteemed and admired by the local artists, and the themes of the posters are rarely challenged or judged (Nazarenko 2018, Rybak 2018).

With the collapse of the USSR, the factory as a state-owned enterprise was left unattended. The wave of privatization did not touch it, and after a period of decay, it fell into complete ruin. The experimental shop, on the other hand, was repurposed into the “Petrykivka” Folk Arts Center led by A. Pikush, the only existing institution that has artists as its workers and

produces Petrykivka painting souvenirs. The Center also offers tours and workshops for groups and individuals and has a big gallery of Petrykivka art demonstrating its development from a historical perspective. Natalya Rybak recalls that with the Independence of Ukraine, the Center was quite popular as a cultural site for tourists, both Ukrainian and international. In recent years, she has noticed a significant decline in the purchasing power of Ukrainian citizens, and spending money on art is not in their list of priorities. *“There used to be a ferry travelling from Kyiv to Dnipropetrovsk along the Dnipro River that was quite popular among foreign tourists. The travel agencies brought dozens of buses to Petrykivka, and people would buy a lot of souvenirs from their trip to Ukraine. Now, because we are so close to the frontline, tourists are afraid to come here. We lost a good chunk of our income source.”* Since the artists make the majority of their living from selling their handmade souvenirs, in this situation they have no other choice but to shift to the smaller (read: cheaper) objects, like pens, fridge magnets, tops, pendants, etc., instead of larger pieces of art. During one of our interviews, Natalya was finishing up a batch of wooden pens she had decorated earlier, for the paint to have enough time to dry out, so that she could have them ready for a school field trip the next day. Observing this situation, to a certain extent I could not help but compare it with the setting at the factory, when the quantity of the produced souvenirs was prioritized, while the role of the message an artist would like to convey through their work of art, if things were different, was diminished.

Additionally, Petrykivka art has migrated from its locus of origin, and now lives separately from it in many other places. Some artists, mostly of a younger generation, tend to experiment with it and present the folk art through different, non-conventional media, like Facebook groups, Instagram accounts, or personal websites, where they sell their products. For instance, Petrykivka ornaments now decorate china – like mugs and plates – that are catered to

give a folksy look to one's dining table. A number of newly established clothing brands offer Petrykivka painting prints on T-shirts, sweatshirts and backpacks, which actually enjoy great popularity and are sold for men and women in different places in Ukraine. It seems like by attaching a little badge with Petrykivka to their backpack, a person publicly displays their Ukrainian identity. Online, there are even examples of Petrykivka tattoos people made as a way to demonstrate their pride for Ukrainian folk culture.

In recent years, due to the war in Eastern Ukraine, many nationalist-minded people volunteered to be drafted. Some went to the frontline as volunteers to offer their humanitarian help to those fighting on the frontlines. Many of them happen to be somehow related to traditional Ukrainian culture or share traditional cultural views, either by being actively engaged in and practicing them, or paying respect to their value, especially in the moment of cultural self-identification of the nation. Halyna Nazarenko told me a story about her friend, a potter, who, like many others, volunteered to join the army. One day during a phone conversation with her, he



Figure 3.6 “Cossack Mamay” by H. Nazarenko.

asked Halyna to send him a painting of Kossak Mamay she had painted not long ago. In Ukrainian ethos, Mamay is a mysterious figure, and has been the subject of many discussions. It is unknown whether such a person really existed, but he became the embodiment of Ukrainian national pride – a warrior, with his sword down, smoking a pipe, sitting under an oak tree with his devoted horse grazing in the background, playing a traditional Ukrainian instrument, the kobza. Such combination of braveness and sensitivity, strength and vulnerability, individuality and representation of community found reflection in many variations on his figure in Ukrainian folklore. So, Halyna did send the painting to her friend. Nine months later, when her friend came back from the front line, he revealed that during the time they had her painting of Kossak Mamay hanging up, no one died in their battalion. This comment deeply touched Halyna and instantly inspired her for another project – to create another Kossak Mamay using bullet shells collected by soldiers at the front line.

The idea to create art physically on artifacts from military conflicts is not new. Helmets of the participants at the Revolution of Dignity on the Maidan were painted in light blue, and later became a mark of the heroic Heavenly Hundred. Other helmets of the revolution participants ended up at the pop-up art exhibition on the Maidan right after the bloody massacres, as a sign of hope for peace and stability after the dark times of blood-spilling conflicts.

New batches of war artifacts keep arriving from the front lines, and artists take this as a chance to keep negotiating the current political situation in the country. In the Facebook group “Military Art” (*Воєнно-польовий арт*) I came across many examples of Petrykivka painting on shells and metal boxes for storing weapons. Keeping in mind that initially Petrykivka painting was used not only as decoration, but also for protection purposes on the household’s entrances – around doors and windows, I recognize the same intentions in decorating objects from the

danger-exposed threshold of the country – the border with Russia. Subconsciously, artists and warriors reach out to the same old aegis – innocent colorful flowers.

Another important spin in the history of Petrykivka painting happened in 2016, when it almost became the official logo of Eurovision-2017, an international song contest that was being held in Ukraine that year due to the victory of a Ukrainian pop singer of Crimean Tatar heritage, Jamala, the previous year. Right after her victory in 2016 in Stockholm, the major Ukrainian media channels started planning the next year’s event. Since this is a state-run contest, the main media host must be a national TV channel; in Ukraine it is UT-1 (Ukrainian Television-1), and it consequently became responsible for all the planning and organizing, up to the very small details such as selecting a logo for the event.



Figure 3.7 “Purple Flower” – a suggested Eurovision 2017 Song Contest Logo by O. Opariy and I. Lisnyi.

At that time Ihor Lisnyi, an art management student at Lviv Art Academy and a Petrykivka native, was working on his school project for the promotion of Petrykivka painting. At the Academy, he met Oleksandr Opariy, who works at the Department of Textile Art there. Born in Sumy oblast, he taught himself Petrykivka painting, and had only occasional communication with Petrykivka artists who worked at Kyiv Souvenir Factory. As Ihor pointed out to me, Oleksandr has never been to Petrykivka village and never learned it from any of the artists there. Also, he is a well-known pysanky artist, with his pysanky collected on the highest levels, including a former President of Ukraine Victor Yushchenko. So, Opariy was experimenting, and painted a purple flower. It was unconventional in terms of colors used (bright purple is rarely used in Petrykivka tradition), and it was not a part of a bigger painting, but merely a decorative element. With Oleksandr's permission, Ihor Lisnyi posted this flower sketch on his Facebook page, saying "This could be the logo for the next Eurovision contest." Very quickly, his post was shared several thousands of times and was met with huge public support. People agreed that that flower could indeed become the official logo and represent the Ukrainian cultural and art scene. It became so popular that at one point many people thought it was already approved to be the official logo. During one of the press conferences, the minister of Culture of Ukraine, Yevhen Nyshchuk, offered his encouragement towards the flower. However, the procedure was far more complicated and needed many more steps than just posting something on social media. The logo could not be submitted by an individual artist or designer, only by a designer studio. Several designer studios applied, were selected, and offered their works to be chosen. As a result, a variation of a folk style necklace was finally chosen, and such choice caused rather controversial public reaction, leaning towards the critical side. Ihor admitted that on the level of rumors he heard that Eurovision identifies itself as a non-political contest, and the

logo should not have any political implications either. That is why it was not even included in the official list of logos and offered to the selection committee (representatives of the UT-1 channel). During our conversation with Ihor, he and I talked about how the folk style necklace is just as political as the Petrykivka flower. Moreover, Eurovision has always been political – it is especially visible when neighboring countries support each other, some countries boycott each other during the voting, etc. Also, many of the participants, including the winners, use folk motifs, instruments and melodies in their songs. Ukrainian singers, the Eurovision winners, Ruslana and Jamala both heavily deployed Western Ukrainian and Crimean folk melodies accordingly. Norwegian representative and winner of Eurovision-2009 Aleksandr Rybak’s fiddle melody was also extremely popular because of its folksy motif, as many say. It is not extremely important whether the Petrykivka flower became the official logo of Eurovision-2017 or not. What really interests me is that in public opinion it *deserved* to be one. Thus, the modern Ukrainian music scene could have been illustrated by a modified Petrykivka flower, an experiment over a traditional folk art from a village in Eastern Ukraine. This was at the time when Ukraine was represented by a Crimean Tatar singer Jamala, performing a song “1944” inspired by her family’s story about the Soviet mass deportation campaign of Crimean Tatars from the Crimean Peninsula. Such inclusiveness in the representation of different parts and even minorities of Ukrainians, or those who identify as Ukrainian citizens, gives nothing but joy and hope that Ukrainian nationalists will step away from controversial slogans like “Ukraine for Ukrainians,” heavily criticized by leftist groups, who are not in fashion in the current political situation.

It is clear that Petrykivka painting did not disappear, and will not in the near future. But where is it going in its development today? Ihor Lisnyi, a Petrykivka native and a grad student in

Art Management, identified three main trends of its modern development: tourism, graphic and souvenir art, and gallery “high” art. Let me comment on each of them separately.

Petrykivka village is located 50 km away from the oblast capital, Dnipro city, one of the major cities in Ukraine. Ihor says, and many of the artists agree with him, that the village has a great potential of becoming – again – a tourist destination. In times when green tourism and cultural tourism are developing in Europe and in Ukraine, Petrykivka village has, or could have, a lot to offer. Located on the highway leading to Kyiv, on boundless steppes, it could attract tourists not only for its culture, but also for its natural beauty and organic food from local farms. When I was planning my trip to Petrykivka, it took me a while to find a place to stay there. A couple of hostels are located outside of the village, several kilometers away. With the help of some existing connections, I was able to stay at the dormitory of the vocational training school # 79 at the center of the village, since the students were on break. Unlike the earlier days of Ukrainian independence, there are very few tours coming to the village, most of them being school trips from the elementary and middle schools from the surrounding areas at the end of the school year. However, in many cases supply creates demand. Just like I was not able to find accommodation when I wanted to visit Petrykivka, some other, less motivated visitors, might be discouraged by the absence of hotels and infrastructure, and postpone their visit indefinitely. To make it more attractive for tourists, big investments are needed. Local artists do not have this amount of money, and outsider investors either do not see the potential of the place, or prefer something that will bring a quicker income.

Because Petrykivka painting is so colorful, vivid and bright, Lisnyi claims that it could easily become a sort of a “site brand.” It is very recognizable, easy to work with in terms of applicability, and can be easily set on all kinds of surfaces. China – mugs and plates, T-shirts and

other clothes, bags, design elements for covers of the products – these are just several examples of how Petrykivka painting can be, and already is, implemented in everyday use with marketing purposes. However, sometimes designers just “think that they are using Petrykivka painting when in fact they are not.” Ihor Lisnyi expressed how he got frustrated when he encountered such unsuccessful imitations on the covers of ice-cream, sweatshirts, etc. Such observations demonstrate how little the general public knows about what is and what is not Petrykivka painting. “Whitened” random flowers on black background very remotely remind one of a Petrykivka floral design, but many artists agree that it is in fact not. Also, understanding all the flaws of the factory “Friendship,” it did produce something that was at least supposed to represent Ukrainian folk culture. A person could easily buy a souvenir and take it with them to their home country, or learn about Ukrainian folk art by attending an exhibition of Petrykivka products abroad and purchasing something there as a reminder of that experience. Ihor, expressing the opinion of many artists, and Olena Zinchouk agreeing with him, stated that having a factory producing souvenir production would not be a bad idea at all. The only thing is that this time it should be administrated locally and be a type of a co-op, belonging to the members of the community. In my opinion, such an attitude must be caused by the nostalgia for financial stability and the former existing prestige of being a professional Petrykivka artist, whereas now they barely make ends meet, and many have no other choice but to change profession entirely. It can also be fueled by a desire to promote Ukrainian folk art that is truly Ukrainian, in their opinion, and not contaminated by external influences. Whether such project is viable and realistic or not, is a topic of a different discussion.

The third trend of Petrykivka painting development, according to Lisnyi, is “high” or gallery art. Again, due to its versatility, Petrykivka migrated from walls to household items, to

souvenirs, to cell phone backgrounds, and now can easily migrate back to the walls, but this time to the walls of galleries, framed in expensive frames. He quotes Valentyna Rybak, who always insists that Petrykivka painting, despite its ancient roots and history, has changed a lot, has gained some new traits, achieved a modern stage of development, and therefore is a modern art. Halyna Nazarenko agrees with such a claim and states that Petrykivka is definitely worth public attention and can easily find its niche in many collections. *“Because it is primarily a folk art, many people stigmatize it as primitive, because it was created on a primitive level. However, there are some exceptions, as when an artist achieves a certain level of professionalism, then this folk art turns into high gallery art. This is the fault of the low-quality mass-produced souvenirs, which makes it hard to look at Petrykivka painting as deserving to be presented and included into the highest levels of modern art scene.”* Halyna Nazarenko always repeats that Petrykivka painting must find its path into the modern art market and is quite uneasy and challenged by the fact that it is folk art. Nevertheless, over years of productive work, both artistic and promotional, she managed to create her own brand “Nazarenko.” Her works can be found and purchased through her Facebook group. Her paintings adorn the embassies of many countries all over the world, and she has accomplished her goal of having her art included in many collections, too.

Olena Zinchouk agrees with these thoughts, but also adds that she would like to see Petrykivka coming back to the everyday use, i.e., be present in the routine life of Ukrainians. In the situation when everything *Ukrainian* is in fashion, it could be the perfect timing for launching Petrykivka painting to be on furniture, like beds with headboards, wooden chests and other household items. *“Technologies develop, and nowadays there are many more opportunities to make Petrykivka modern and traditional at the same time.”*



Figure 3.8 “Painting with Flowers” by V. Sokolenko, a calendar be Petrykivkapaint.

She recalls that there also used to be a particular embroidery Petrykivka style, resembling the look of Petrykivka painting. I heard people talking about it, and saw samples of such embroidery in the Fedir Panko museum in Petrykivka. In fact, the factory “Friendship” was

originally a part of the co-op “Free Peasant Woman” (*«Вільна селянка»*), which produced embroidered goods – bedding, curtains, clothes, etc. Olena’s comment reflects the desire of inclusiveness and representation of many aspects of Petrykivka painting.

Ihor Lisnyi is also quite concerned about the “fake” Petrykivka produced by self-taught artists throughout Ukraine. He blames Ukrainian legislation for being imperfect and not preserving the interests of such creative industries. In Europe, he says, there are a set of laws that articulate who and where can produce certain types of goods if they bear some cultural significance, but these laws mostly effect gastronomic industries. Champagne, for instance, can be produced only in the Champagne province in the northeast of France. All the other similar wines can be legally called only “Sparkling wine.” These measures demonstrate how the EU government protects local producers and their heritage. The same approach can be observed in cheese production in Italy and many other places. If we are talking about gastronomic industries, such specificity of place and food can be related to terroir – the grapes will not taste the same if grown elsewhere, consequently the wine will not taste the same and have the same qualities. So it is with cheese – the type of grass cows eat is reflected in the taste of milk, and later – in the taste of cheese. That is why the production of these products is so closely related to the area. But can there be a terroir in art? Why are all the artists so emphatic about this connection of Petrykivka painting and the land it originated on? Ihor looks forward to the time when Ukrainian legislation will pass a law that will protect the art, the artists, and restrict the production of Petrykivka art only to its place of origin. When I told this anecdote to Olena Zinchouk, it was like music to her ears, and gave her hope that there is already an existing model of how Petrykivka painting can be protected on the state level. Andriy Pikush, after many years of contemplating this issue, came up with an idea to lift all taxes from the folk artists in different

spheres – pottery, woodwork, art, pysanky – for a certain period of time – say, for 7 years, to allow the artists some time to accumulate the capital to invest in the development of the industries. He has been offering this plan to local and state governments, but during the current state of war in Ukraine, when many other industries are heavily underfunded, it did not meet great support.

So, the conversations about how to help folk art in Ukraine are very present and circulate among artists and those who work in the sphere of culture.

CHAPTER IV: PEOPLE

In addition to bearing many other meanings, objects also tell an absolutely different story, not only the celebratory, but one of a community's struggles, oppression and resistance. When a territory, a space, a cultural phenomenon, or all of the above, is subject to the influences of a more dominant power structure, after some period of rejecting them, people who relate to those spaces start appropriating the features of the latter and treating them as inherently their own. This is when hegemony comes into play. Setha Low explains that the process of cultural hegemony (the preeminence of one cultural group's ideas and values over another) maintains the control of middle-class values over the very definitions of what can be considered a relevant group with the power to give its own meanings to local environments (1994:68). This can be applied to material culture without any hesitation. Archeologists, anthropologists, folklorists and other scholars can easily trace the influences of one culture on the other by analyzing the ornaments, colors, materials, etc., being used over time, adding up and overlapping with each other. Nevertheless, traces of social resistance can also be recognized in such analysis. They are often called a revival of the tradition, going back to the roots, or even authentication. However, new and unexpected outcomes can appear as a result of such processes, which lead to the appearance of modern traditions, and here is when the debates in a community start. Debora Kodish in her essay "Cultivating Folk Arts and Social Change" (2013) elaborates on this:

When people live together in a community, they work out ways of satisfying their needs and dealing with each other. These habits and assumptions become common through the negotiation,

imitation and instruction. They change over time as useful innovations catch on or external influences present new options, as members of the group make both general decisions about what they value and specific decisions about handling situations. But they do not change all at once. New and old solutions exist as alternatives in a community's repertoire, for individual preference or circumstance to dictate.

In such cases, the members of the community themselves become the guardians of what they call their tradition. Dorothy Noyes provides a vivid example of peer pressure being used as a leverage of authority on those who choose not to obey the strict rules of maintaining certain rituals. An old lady in the Italian neighborhood in Philadelphia took aside a young woman who just moved to the area and “kindly but firmly” told her off for not dressing her kitchen window according to the Italian tradition. “You can’t do that. Your front window is for beauty” (1989, 66). Likewise, oftentimes older members of the community judge their younger peers for introducing innovations into their traditional creative practices, let alone abandoning them completely.

How far such changes can go and whether the culture will still stay recognizable going through them in the process of adaptation to the new needs of the society – is another question of discussion among folklorists that also interests me a lot. Low echoes Noyes’s idea and writes:

Cultural groups are fluid; even the values and beliefs of traditional societies change dramatically over time. When a place is designed, cultural elements are fixed in a physical environment that may have already changed and no longer represent the people who live in or use that environment. (1994, 73)

In her article “The Portal Case: Authenticity, Tourism, Traditions, and the Law” (1987), D. Evans-Pritchard offers an example of how the authenticity of sold goods can be claimed by a number of institutions, in her case – the Museum of New Mexico and the court. American Indian artists were bewildered when Hispanic artists started producing similar pieces of jewelry, copying the features of Native culture, and selling them side by side on the marketplace beside the supposed tradition bearers. It led to a huge scandal, when the museum officials got involved and took the side of Native artists, arguing that their selling their goods was a part of the museum program of attracting tourists to experience the true Native art. “If non-Indian craftsmen were there too, it was implied, the authenticity would be lost: co-mingling the cultures is less instructive because it fails to clarify the lines of historic development” (1987, 289-290). The facts that some of the gems were transported from Italy and the jewelry was not often hand-, but machine-made, were not brought to the public discussions. When the court made a decision in favor of Native artists, the non-Native party saw it as an act of “reverse discrimination.” In her analysis of this case D. Evans-Pritchard states that the criteria for authenticity, however usefully they are categorized, boil down to something subjective: ultimately, the authenticity of a piece of "traditional folk art" is an ascribed quality, which depends on who is looking at it, in what context, and for what purpose.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in her essay “Mistaken Dichotomies” (1992) states that authenticators are those who are socially empowered to claim what is authentic or not according to certain norms and aesthetic values in a community, and authentication is a political act of determining what is genuine. Such processes of authentication oftentimes happen to become a tool of a nationalist call for going back to a nation’s roots. Edward Shils (1981, in Handler and Linnekin, 1984) contrasts the nationalist version of tradition, for example, with “actually existing

syncretic traditions.” Since no tradition can, and probably should, be conserved and detached from interaction with other traditions and modern cultural expressions, it would be incorrect to claim there is something essential that can be lost forever or that the real authenticity cannot ever be reached again.

Over a long period of time, Petrykivka painting has created a community, or it would be more correct to say, a number of communities around it – a community of artists, a community of villagers who share pride to be born or to live in the well-known historic and cultural center – Petrykivka village, the community of people who enjoy this folk art and relate to it by visiting exhibitions, attending workshops, or alternatively – wearing or having at home a little something decorated with some elements of Petrykivka painting. These communities can overlap and coexist, and one person can belong to two or more of such groups at the same time.

The question of group is of extreme importance in this conversation, and can be applied on many levels – local level (related to the very place of Petrykivka village), artistic level (inclusion in the community of Petrykivka artists, the criteria for which are vague) and national level (connection and relatedness of an even more vague group of *Ukrainians* as a nation to Petrykivka painting). Here we can observe some incongruity that Petrykivka artists pose to those who express an interest in disseminating and spreading this tradition elsewhere. The artists want Petrykivka painting to be appreciated nation-wide and recognized as a Ukrainian (not just local) folk art. However, the artists will approve someone as a professional Petrykivka artist only if they belong geographically to Petrykivka or the neighboring villages and are actively involved in artistic communication with other members of the community. Their insistence on the local tie partly reflects economic interest—they would prefer that money flow back to them and their community—but also expresses their conviction that the only people who can create true

Petrykivka art are those who have experienced the place and interacted with the other artists who define and safeguard the tradition.

The notion of a group has been heavily discussed in folkloristics and other related fields (Latour, 2005; Noyes, 1995; Anderson, 1983 [2016]). Benedict Anderson, for instance, defines a nation as an “imagined political community”: *imagined*, because the members of even the smallest nation do not know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion. And a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (2016, 6-7, italics in original). He also cites E. Gellner on the origin of the nation as a formation, ‘Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents where they do not exist’. Bruno Latour somewhat echoes the same idea by explaining how there are “no groups, only group formation” (2005, 37), emphasizing on the fluidity and fragility of such a construct. Dorothy Noyes in her essay “Group” offers to distinguish community as a social imaginary that occasionally emerges in performance (2010).

No matter what group we are going to analyze, its members tend to have a strong feeling and understanding of its boundaries, and belonging to the group is always associated with a set of rules or accepted norms one has to meet in order to become or stay a member of the group. While my consultants disagreed about many other things, they tended to agree on the qualities they considered necessary to qualify a person as a member of the community of Petrykivka artists.

First of all, an artist must be born, or at least live a significant amount of time in Petrykivka area and be trained by a Petrykivka artist. Since the art is greatly inspired by local flora and fauna, climate and landscape, and its historical heritage, one should feel at least some

level of connection to the locale. Very often the artists shared with me that they do not want to take people coming from elsewhere to be their students. Valentyna Panko has a very solid opinion about it. *“They come, take a few classes, or even a dozen, catch some key techniques and strokes, and then leave, and think they are Petrykivka artists now. No, that’s not how it works.”* Such a purist approach is widely shared among the artists: to be a legitimate and accepted Petrykivka artist, you have to be from here. Several artists, independently from each other expressed an idea of creating a Petrykivka artistic council, where local artists, as legitimate bearers and keepers of the tradition, would approve or ban some of the emerging artists who want to relate to it. Some artists even expressed an idea of issuing some sort of certificate to those whom the council approves to be a real and legitimate Petrykivka artist.

A Petrykivka native, art management student Ihor Lisnyi agrees with such selectiveness and offers a more strictly outlined approach:

“Not everything painted in Petrykivka technique should be called Petrykivka painting. Ukraine, unlike Europe, does not have a legislative basis aimed to protect creative industries and its artists. For instance, in France only the sparkling wine produced in Champagne, can be called Champagne. Everything else is just sparkling wine. Or the same with cheese, right? So, it should be the same with art. If something is painted in Petrykivka village, by a Petrykivka artists – this is Petrykivka painting. If it is painted by someone else and somewhere else – it should be called “Petrykivka style painting.”

Supposedly, the taste peculiarities of the cheese are determined by the herbs that cows eat, with is directly connected with local climate, soil, water, etc. But such comparison of gastronomic industries with an “art terroir” is quite interesting to observe. It implies that there is an undeniable connection between the land, the place, the history and the tradition, and it is

impossible to fill any gap if there is one missing. This has become an area of dispute for a lot of people.

I encountered quite a few examples of such selectiveness on the part of Petrykivka artists towards who gets to be accepted to their ranks. For instance, Olena Zinchouk was once contacted by a journalist from Voice of America^x, who was working on a project – a book about emigré Ukrainian folk artists living in the US. Olena immediately inquired about the other artists who were going to be included in that book. To her surprise, she discovered there was another lady to be included as a Petrykivka artist, a chemist by training, who taught herself Petrykivka painting, was pretty happy with how it looked, and started hosting paid master classes in the style. Olena's opinion was rather straightforward: *“She hosts master classes, implying that she is a master. How loud of her! Even I wouldn't dare to call myself a master. Apparently, she calls it a success. But I don't see it that way. How can she call herself a Petrykivka artist, if she hasn't even ever been to Petrykivka?”* When Olena was telling me this anecdote on the phone later, she sounded quite resentful. *“Of course, I thanked her for the offer, but immediately asked her who else would be in that book. Because if she wants to include artists like that lady, I don't want to be in one book with them.”* This situation can be exemplary of how high the unspoken standards of inclusiveness are. An artist, even if she has been detached from her artistic community for decades now, has a strict innate understanding of what it takes to be(come) a member of the community of Petrykivka artists.

On a bigger scale, such special marking can be applied when looking at all Ukrainians as a nation. Earlier, in the Place section, I talked about how eastern Ukrainians have long been perceived as “less” Ukrainian compared to the rest of the country, and especially than those from its western part, because of the more palpable and longer exposure to Russian and Soviet

influences (partly because of its geographical proximity). However, in recent years folklorists in Ukraine started launching projects to demonstrate the Ukrainian-ness of the eastern region of the country. For instance, ensemble “Bozhychi” organized a series of special concerts with Ukrainian language songs they collected in Donetsk oblast during their numerous field trips. The goal of such a project was to demonstrate how Ukrainian language and culture are still very alive in the rural areas, despite a long-term aggressive Russification of the urban areas and mining industry of the region. Those who do historic reconstruction of folk costumes started giving special attention to re-creating the elements of male and female traditional clothes from eastern parts of Ukraine. In addition, I encountered sets of postcards depicting Ukrainian folk costumes of different regions, which also included Crimean Tatar costumes. In my opinion, this signifies that Ukrainians as a nation have become more inclusive to ethnic minorities that have long lived on its territories – something that has never happened before.

In the same way, from my experience I never saw anyone questioning whether Petrykivka painting was “Ukrainian enough” to be a representation of its folk culture. An example with the Eurovision song contest and a purple Petrykivka flower logo illustrates these changes towards inclusiveness in Ukrainian society, and underlines a long-wished-for process of unification of Ukrainians without division into those from right and left bank. The use of “folk” things in everyday life of modern Ukrainians has become a political statement to label oneself with a visible and recognizable element of folk art. With these changes at home, the Ukrainian diaspora in the USA and Canada also reacts and includes Petrykivka painting, along with folk arts, historically from the east of Ukraine, into a set of crafts offered at multi-ethnic folk schools, summer camps for the children of Ukrainian immigrants, and workshops of Ukrainian folk art. Hopefully, there will not be conversations like Olena Zinchouk had in the mid-1990’s about

whether or not she is a “real” Ukrainian, and whether Petrykivka painting deserves to be called a “real” Ukrainian folk art.

CONCLUSIONS

Folklore is inseparable from social change (Kodish 2013). In a place and time characterized by instability, people hold on especially strongly to something that unites them. As citizens of a young, re-emerging nation, Ukrainians go back to their cultural roots in order to draw the final line between who they are and who they are not, how they want to be seen on the international cultural scene and what they want to be represented by. In the center of debates and mutual accusations that eastern Ukrainians are too Russified, and western Ukrainians are too westernized, folklore becomes this middle ground in the conversations about, and in the formation of the identity of modern Ukrainians. Finally having a space and an opportunity to contemplate these important questions, people deploy folk art as a means of mutual understanding, reconciliation and truly – nation building.

The case of Petrykivka painting is especially vivid, in my opinion. First of all, it bears an inherent connection to the history of the land on which it originated. The people of Petrykivka have a lot of pride in relating to this form of art, to the heroic Cossack past, and to the landscape of the Ukrainian steppes. Secondly, it demonstrates how a form of folk art can be industrialized and commodified through the intervention that a hegemonic power leverages. Mass production of souvenirs decorated in the Petrykivka painting technique, heavily influenced by alien – Soviet and Russian – cultures, was conducted in the natural habitat of the art, and by the artists from Petrykivka village and surrounding areas. This rather controversial situation raises a number of

questions about the authenticity of the folk art, progress, labor rights of folk artists, cultural politics, etc.

Thirdly, the shift in understanding and using Ukrainian folk art after the country's proclamation of independence is crucial. Something that has been heavily influenced, almost to the point of non-recognition, is now celebrated and looked at from a totally different point of view. There has been a lively interest in the "nearly lost" folklore revival, among both researchers and the general public. Ukrainian folk culture has become much more well-known, more integrated into people's everyday life (for example, the appearance of folk festivals in rural settings, murals with ethnic elements in urban areas, etc.) and much more appreciated. In times of political instability, Petrykivka artists aim to draw the art onto new levels, allowing it to develop, change and obtain new forms and meanings, but this time – without any foreign dictatorship. As Halyna Nazarenko once mentioned, Petrykivka painting is a very democratic art, free-spirited and bright-colored, just like Ukraine itself (2018). Of course, Petrykivka painting has significantly changed as an art form in comparison with the early examples we have access to today. This indisputably happened due to the Soviet influences, but also because people change, technologies change, and as a result – art changes. Some welcome these changes, while some take a more nostalgic approach. Olena Zinchouk and I were once searching on the Internet and stumbled upon a video with early examples of Petrykivka painting that were presented as "old" Petrykivka. Olena smiled and said, "There is no old or new Petrykivka, there is simply – Petrykivka" (2019). This short comment demonstrates the flexibility that she as an artist has regarding the authenticity of this art form, that is not encapsulated in a certain time period, over-romanticized or alienated. To her, Petrykivka painting is still very present, very alive, very traditional and modern at the same time. As M. E. Smith (1982) has pointed out, "traditional"

and "new" are interpretive rather than descriptive terms: since all cultures change ceaselessly, there can only be what is new, although what is new can take on symbolic value as "traditional" (Handler and Linnekin 1984, 273).

Folklorists Handler and Linnekin conclude that "tradition cannot be defined in terms of boundedness, givenness, or essence. Rather, tradition refers to an interpretive process that embodies both continuity and discontinuity." Later in the article, they suggest:

"The notion of an approximate identity suggests change, however minimal, but if an object changes does it not become something new and different? One way to escape this dilemma is to invoke organic metaphors, to suggest that traditions are like organisms that grow and change while yet remaining themselves." (Handler and Linnekin 1987, p275)

On the other hand, there are many vivid conversations about what Petrykivka painting *really* is, after all. Artists are actively negotiating how the art form should be maintained, who and how one should be trained to become a Petrykivka artist, by what media it should be presented to audiences, and so on. There are many voices and opinions in these disputes in the process of reaching some sort of agreement, but the goal is one – to make Petrykivka painting speak to, or even become an integral part of national identity of Ukrainians.

Finally, Petrykivka painting unites Ukrainians across imaginary borders and divisions, and speaks to anyone who wants to identify as devoted to their national culture and heritage. An example, a Petrykivka flower almost becoming the official logo for the Eurovision-2017 Song Contest held in Kyiv, particularly the strong public support of this initiative, demonstrates the readiness of Ukrainians to stand side-by-side under something this local and eastern Ukrainian – a move that would have been hard to imagine several decades ago. Young Ukrainians wear

sweatshirts with Petrykivka painting, download Petrykivka floral background to their smartphones, and even make tattoos with Petrykivka elements – everything just to say: we are Ukrainians and we are proud of it.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ A Neolithic-Bronze Age culture that existed in Right-Bank Ukraine ca 5400 to 2000 BC. It is named after a site near Trypillya in the Kyv region uncovered by Vikentii Khvoika in 1898.

ⁱⁱ Folkloresque, a term coined by M. D. Foster, means that something looks or feels as if it is folklore, and often was created with this purpose, but in fact has no background in, does not belong to or represent any tradition.

ⁱⁱⁱ As R. Bendix states, folklorismus is defined as “second-hand folklore” in German literature, as opposed to “real folklore”.

^{iv} Sixtiers were representatives of a new generation of the Soviet and Ukrainian Intelligentsia, who entered the culture (literature, arts, etc.) and politics of the USSR in the late 1950s and 1960s – in the period of a temporary weakening of communist-Bolshevik totalitarianism and the Khrushchev Thaw.

^v A right-wing opposition political party in Ukraine, founded in early 1990s.

^{vi} Formerly called Dnipropetrovsk, combining two words – the name of the river Dnipro it is standing on, and Grigory Petrovskiy – a Communist leader and one of the Holodomor organizers (an artificial famine in Ukraine in 1932-33).

^{vii} Similar processes are currently happening in the US. The protests against, and finally – toppling of the Silent Sam statue on UNC-Chapel Hill campus, demonstrate that younger generations do not ignore the monuments that represent the values of the past and they cannot remain “a neutral part of the landscape”. This can be compared with the de-Sovietization process happening in Ukraine now.

^{viii} Embroidered clothes, woven cloths, household items - all stored in wooden chests, and sometimes cattle – everything she inherited from her parents or made on her own as a preparation to entering her new family after her marriage, and a contribution from her and her family. The more carts the newly wed had, the richer – and more respected – she was.

^{ix} Artists-developers were the artists at the factory who created the sketches and handed them on for “approval”; artists-performers were those artists who simply performed the approved decorations of the souvenir items in large masses, sometimes not even decorating the whole item, but just adding several elements – a flower, a leaf, etc.

^x The Voice of America (VOA) is a U.S. government-funded international multimedia agency. VOA produces digital, TV, and radio content in more than 40 languages (including Ukrainian) which it distributes to affiliate stations around the globe.