

La cultura ucraniana después del 24 de febrero de 2022: ¿Una víctima condenada a la guerra o un ave fénix que renace de sus cenizas?

Artículo de reflexión

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Detail) Church personnel inspect damages inside the Odesa Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa, Ukraine, Sunday, July 23, 2023, following Russian missile attacks. JAE C. HONG (AP). Fuente: <https://n9.cl/6sl35n>



La cultura ucraniana después del 24 de febrero de 2022: ¿Una víctima condenada a la guerra o un ave fénix que renace de sus cenizas?

Resumen

El objetivo del artículo es esbozar el estado de los procesos artísticos en Ucrania desde el 24 de febrero de 2022, fecha en la que inició la invasión a gran escala de Rusia. Se caracteriza un breve período de conmoción, una especie de silencio en la cultura, durante el cual los artistas se vieron confrontados con una encrucijada —ser o no ser—, así como con la cuestión de la autoidentificación y la determinación de perspectivas: ¿Formar un nuevo sistema de orientación nacional, un código cultural, o dirigir la energía a la supervivencia y la transformación de los objetivos, abandonando el arte a su suerte? Se considera el complejo grupo de aspectos que condujeron a un auge de la actividad artística a mediados de 2022 y la primera mitad de 2023, al tiempo que se esbozan los factores formadores de cultura y los estímulos de la vida artística de los ucranianos. Se analizan también los procesos que actualmente sostienen la escena artística ucraniana: la constante desaparición de obras de arte existentes y la organización de exhibiciones dentro de Ucrania en aras de preservar la vida artística del país.

Palabras clave

arte; cultura ucraniana; gráficos; guerra; proyecto

Ukrainian Culture After February 24, 2022: A Victim Condemned to War or a Phoenix Rising from the Ashes?

Abstract

The article aims to outline the state of artistic processes in Ukraine since February 24, 2022, the date on which Russia's full-scale invasion began. It characterizes a brief period of upheaval, a kind of silence in culture, during which artists were confronted with a crossroads, of being or not being, as well as with the question of self-identification and the determination of perspectives: To form a new system of national orientation, a cultural code, or to direct energy to the survival and transformation of goals? abandoning art to its fate? It considers the complex set of aspects that led to a boom in artistic activity in mid-2022 and the first half of 2023 while outlining the culture-shaping factors and stimuli of the artistic life of Ukrainians. It also analyzes the processes that currently sustain the Ukrainian art scene: the constant disappearance of existing works of art and the organization of exhibitions within Ukraine to preserve the artistic life of the country.

Keywords

art; Ukrainian culture; Graphics; war; project

La culture ukrainienne après le 24 février 2022 : une victime condamnée à la guerre ou un phénix qui renaît de ses cendres ?

Résumé

L'objectif de l'article est de décrire l'état des processus artistiques en Ukraine depuis le 24 février 2022, date à laquelle l'invasion à grande échelle de la Russie a commencé. Il caractérise une brève période de bouleversement, une sorte de silence dans la culture, pendant laquelle les artistes ont été confrontés à un carrefour de l'être ou du non-être, ainsi qu'à la question de l'auto-identification et de la détermination des perspectives : former un nouveau système d'orientation nationale, un code culturel, ou diriger l'énergie vers la

survie et la transformation des objectifs ? Abandonner l'art à son sort ? Il examine l'ensemble complexe d'aspects qui ont conduit à un boom de l'activité artistique à la mi-2022 et au premier semestre 2023, tout en soulignant les facteurs et les stimuli de la vie artistique des Ukrainiens. Il analyse également les processus qui soutiennent actuellement la scène artistique ukrainienne : la disparition constante d'œuvres d'art existantes et l'organisation d'expositions en Ukraine afin de préserver la vie artistique du pays.

Mots-clés

art ; la culture ukrainienne ; Graphisme; Guerre; projet

Cultura ucraniana depois de 24 de fevereiro de 2022: ¿Uma vítima condenada à guerra ou uma fênix ressurgindo das cinzas?

Resumo

O objetivo do artigo é descrever o estado dos processos artísticos na Ucrânia desde 24 de fevereiro de 2022, data em que começou a invasão em grande escala da Rússia. Caracteriza um breve período de agitação, uma espécie de silêncio na cultura, durante o qual os artistas foram confrontados com uma encruzilhada do ser ou não ser, bem como com a questão da autoidentificação e da determinação de perspectivas: Formar um novo sistema de orientação nacional, um código cultural, ou direcionar energia para a sobrevivência e transformação de objetivos? Abandonar a arte à sua sorte? Considera o complexo conjunto de aspetos que levaram a um boom da atividade artística em meados de 2022 e no primeiro semestre de 2023, ao mesmo tempo que descreve os fatores e estímulos que moldam a cultura da vida artística dos ucranianos. Também analisa os processos que atualmente sustentam a cena artística ucraniana: o constante desaparecimento de obras de arte existentes e a organização de exposições dentro da Ucrânia, a fim de preservar a vida artística do país.

Palavras-chave

arte; cultura ucraniana; gráficos; guerra; projeto

Imasam kausamkuna kai chapu Llagtapi ucraniana kai 24 de febrero 2022 llariska uramanda ¿kai llakiikunawa kaugsangapa u sug pisku tukuspa ucpamanda llugsingapa?

Maillallachiska

Kaipi munanakumi kawangapa imasam sakiskakuna kai ruraikunata ucrania suti alpapi kai killapi febrero 24 kai watapi 2022, kaipi challamusakuna sug llagta, Rusia sutimanda, chiuramanda kawai kallariskakuna allilla katichingapa, tiaskasi Achka chapu kausagkuna. Kankunachu o manach kankuna, tapuchinakumi kamkunach kanguichi kaimanda chasa ruraskunata katichisunchi, kaipi sakiska tiaskakata? Kawanakumi llakiua kai ruraikunata mana tukuchiska sakiskata kai kagpi watapi 2022 i kauaripa chagpikama 2023, chillapi sakiskakuna, kai ruraikunata i kausaita ucraniapi. Chi nispa kawanakumi imasa katichingapa kai wachukunata tiaskata kai alpa ucrania sutipi.

Rimangapa Ministidukuna

Ruraikunata; ucrania chapukuna kausai; ruraikuna; llakiikuna; wachu katichii

Introduction

Ukraine's contemporary art has a heterogeneous, rather vibrant character. Its recent history formally began in 1991, when Ukraine embarked on writing its own art history outside of the confines of the Soviet context. Undoubtedly, the Ukrainian segment of the artistic culture of the Soviet period holds immense significance. Nevertheless, it constitutes a categorically different phenomenon, one of considerable importance, yet with its own set of incentives, driving forces, and evaluative characteristics. The developmental stages of contemporary Ukrainian art in the early 21st century have become shorter. The most recent stage, which began on February 24, 2022, with the full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine, has lasted a year and a half thus far. Indeed, the war has become the Rubicon, separating the versatile yet steady course of Ukraine's former artistic process from the current one — a madly pulsating phase characterized by shifts in its value orientations.

At the end of February 2022, Ukrainian culture faced a Shakespearean choice — to be or not to be — as the sudden upheaval in the political arena forced every citizen of the country to build the algorithm of his/her life anew. Among those most affected were artists, musicians, and performers, who found themselves particularly vulnerable and prone to being influenced by external factors. The artistic life of many Ukrainian cities stalled for some time: Dnipro, Kyiv, Kryvyi Rih, Mariupol, Poltava, Odesa, Sumy, Kharkiv, and Kherson plunged into a storm of events that made them forget about lofty matters for a time. The country's artistic life felt into a state of shock. It just froze. People tried to come to their senses... some settlements were simply wiped off the face of the earth, they ceased to exist. Since the beginning of the war, about 12 million people have left the country... a catastrophic figure. Some accepted the status of refugees, some, temporary asylum for up to two years. About 900 thousand men returned to Ukraine after February 24, 2022. According to certain polls, approximately 90% of those who left are going to return after the end of military action, but there are also less optimistic forecasts, at about 52%. Now, however, the country is in the hot phase of the war. And, given the experience of the Second World War, in reality no more than half of those who left the country will return. Not only there is the gene pool of Ukraine diminishing, cultural monuments are disappearing too.

The cultural heritage of Ukraine is on fire

One of the egregious factors that has caused Ukraine's cultural development to regress for decades is the destruction of its cultural and artistic heritage. The death of museums, architectural structures, and historically valuable necropolises is the

death of cultural memory of the state... More than 30 museums and about 380 cultural monuments were completely destroyed or badly damaged in just the first four months of the war ('Nazvano kolichestvo', 2023). As of November 2022, there have already been 564 cases of destruction of the cultural heritage of the country ('Razrusheniye kul'turnogo', 2022). By the end of June 2023, 582 destroyed cultural objects have already been recorded out of a total of more than 1500 affected objects. Most of the destruction occurs in the Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Odesa, and Kherson regions, but this wave of destruction has swept all across Ukraine. On February 25, 2022, the local history museum in Ivankovo was burned down; the collection of paintings by Maria Primachenko was saved by employees who carried the canvases out themselves. On March 1, 2022 the Museum at the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center in Kyiv was also damaged. The next day the local history museum in the now infamous long-suffering Borodyanka was partially destroyed. In the first days of March the estate of Prince Golitsyn was practically destroyed in Trostyanets. On March 12, 2022, the Svyatogorsk Lavra was damaged. On March 16, 2022, the Mariupol Drama Theatre was destroyed. On the night of May 7, 2022, the literary and memorial museum of Hryhoriy Skovoroda in the Kharkiv region was on fire as a result of shelling. On June 12, 2022, during the shelling of Mykolaiv, the Museum of Military Memory was destroyed. On November 10, 2022, several museums in the center of Kyiv were destroyed by rocket attacks. The building of the Arkhip Kuindzhi Museum in Mariupol was destroyed and the collection was looted. Already at the time of writing this article, on July 20, 2023, the historical center of Odesa, including the famous Archaeological Museum of South Palmyra, was damaged during rocket fire. At the moment, as we write these words, there is another large-scale shelling of the "Pearl by the Sea" — Odesa, city under the blows of "calibers", "Iskanders", "onyxes" and "X-22" —. On the night of July 22, 2023, the 18th Transfiguration Cathedral, a monument under the protection of UNESCO, was almost destroyed (Figure 1).

And these are just the most terrible, blatant examples of destruction of what has been created by thousands of people over the centuries.

Efforts to preserve cultural heritage are made, of course: art works have been evacuated to safe places, works transferred from permanent exhibitions to funds, monuments protected from shelling, lined with sandbags or shielded with boxes (Figure 2).

But many things are beyond repair. The Ukrainian Cultural Foundation initiated the creation of an interactive map of our disappearing artistic heritage. Unfortunately, it is updated almost daily with new objects ('Mapa kulturnyh vtrat', 2023).



Figure 1. Ruins of the 18th century Transfiguration Cathedral in the city of Odesa. Photo posted on social media by the Odessans on July 23, 2023.



Figure 1. Ruins of the 18th century Transfiguration Cathedral in the city of Odesa. Photo posted on social media by the Odessans on July 23, 2023.

The resumption of the Ukrainian art world's cultural pulse: external vector

However, the state of shock, when time stopped and the whole of life flashed before the eyes of every Ukrainian, did not last long. It was a kind of state of cultural coma or clinical death, when the body was still alive, but fettered by inactivity, paralyzed. Soon processes began to seethe again, blood flowed furiously through veins of artists again...

Only, from now on the processes were sharply divided into two vectors: external and internal. Over time, some of those Ukrainians who left began to work outside the country. Temporary shelter, refugee, internally displaced person — various statuses provided to victims of the war who poured out of Ukraine gave them the opportunity to survive. But bodily life is not always fulfilling without a freely breathing soul: such is the Slavic mentality. Many who left Ukraine, especially people of art, vulnerable and easily injured, often feel remorse for saving their children and themselves, leaving their country in a difficult, crucial moment.

There are many who create the “phenomenon of the victim”, promoting the idea of their misfortunes, although they left the country in the very first days of the conflict, never having been in any real danger, nor experiencing hunger, the destruction of their homes, the deaths of loved ones. They did not happen to experience what it is like to sleep in a corridor on the floor following the “rule of two walls”, to take children and elderly people to shelter several times a day, to conduct zoom classes while hearing the sound of sirens, and defend a thesis in a bomb shelter when communication are interrupted by missile attacks. They were not terrified by lack of medicine, water, food, did not suffer difficulties without electricity and communications technologies.

Thus, one of the categories of Ukrainian cultural figures, artists, entertainers, musicians was formed, whose psychological state required self-justification for being far from their Motherland at a critical moment. They found a saving grace to allow their souls to survive: charitable work.

Apart from a huge segment of true popularizers of Ukrainian culture whose life goal was to draw attention to the problem of war in Ukraine, there also appeared those who do not know what it is like to hear the sound of a drone flying and exploding or being shot down nearby, but who travel around countries as ambassadors of peace, spilling tears for Ukraine, calling themselves patriots and bringing to the masses the idea that they are outside the country in order to preserve its cultural gene pool and to return after victory to rebuild the state. Meanwhile, fundraising with the aim to help the country became a goal. Unfortunately, history has long known examples of “remote”

patriotism, which is based on long-term plans and the monetization of high-profile slogans. But we will leave this phenomenon outside the scope of the analysis of this article; false patriotism is a point of interest subject to independent studies.

However, there is also a large number of those in the art community who are actively engaged in their work NOW, not only helping financially, but also by raising the fading spirit of others. People lose loved ones every day, some are left homeless, injured. Their spirit is no less crippled than their body. The main nerve of today's Ukrainian cultural layer is PAIN. To calm it down, to extinguish it, cultural processes are needed, which are actively taking place beyond the country's borders as well. However, protest rallies with expression of solidarity are not enough. People need art therapy, a cure for fear, pain, and hatred. Their spirits are wounded and their souls in need of mending... This is where artists help. Healing together with those whom they are trying to save from despair. Ukrainian spirituality, unexpectedly strong for many, has proven robust and formidable, tempered to its utmost, swiftly forging an updated cultural code in record time, resolving the quandary of national self-identity through a collective conscious choice. The war has become a distorted mirror, magnifying hidden essences and bringing the unconscious to the fore, surfacing it for examination.

After the initial shock of the war, musicians began touring with concerts, the circus community, many representatives of which found themselves in different countries of the world (mainly in Hungary and Germany), started giving performances, funds were raised either for the needs of the Ukrainian armed forces or to help people who suffered from shelling, who were wounded, homeless, or bereaved. Artists began to bring patriotic art projects to different countries, drawing public attention to the problem of war. There are many such examples and their number is growing. Projects are often mobile, created very quickly. Between 2022 and the first half of 2023, the dominant plot of works of all kinds of art changed greatly and radically. Patriotic problematization has become the cornerstone since then. Ukraine in its pain, the war, has become the hero of all creative projects, centering the death of children, the destruction of cultural monuments, our crippled destinies, but at the same time, the strength of the spirit, moral integrity, the power of the cultural code of Ukrainians who found strength in themselves not to be broken by the war, who became a living shield for their country.

Ukrainian musicians took part in Eurovision 2022 and won first place. Circus performers represent their country in shows. Indeed, the Ukrainian circus school, which has traditionally been one of the strongest in the world, did not fade away, but conversely, continued to develop; a new festival of circus art under



Figure 3. Project "Stand with Ukraine" Vienna, August 2022

the patronage of the world circus legend Lyudmila Shevchenko is in the process of being prepared. In April 2022, young Ukrainian circus artists, students of the Kyiv Municipal Academy of Circus and Performing Arts, acted at a charity show organized at the Princess Grace Theatre of Monaco in Monte Carlo where five charity shows with their participation were held. This young generation of circus performers brought prestigious awards from the circus festival in Monte Carlo. In April 2022, circus youth also took part in the show of the Monbijou Theater on the streets of Berlin. In May 2022, they participated in the international charity evening "Stojime za Ukrajinou" organized by the TV Nova company in Prague, and were actively involved in the show "Roads" organized by the Czech capital Cirk La Putyka. Ukrainian pop artists travelled with charity concerts throughout Europe. Artists came to their senses after the shock.

At first, they were silent. Numbness gave way to an outburst of indignation and surge of exhibition projects. Art, DESPITE adversity, championing life, creation, and the triumph of spirit, has become the credo of the artistic processes of Ukrainian masters in 2022-2023. Artistic production began to take shape so quickly that sometimes the professional standard suffered, sacrificed in the name of addressing the topic of the day. Unfortunately, there are many who speculate on pain, putting patriotic themes at the forefront, hiding behind

it like a shield, considering themselves inviolable for criticism. However, the majority consists of those who present ideas to the general public, combining the quality of artistic material with contemporary issues.

The formed and strengthened cultural cord, with the national idea and the self-identification of Ukrainians as its core, manifested itself in dozens of art projects from the wartime period born outside the country. They were originally programmed for display outside Ukraine; the material was presented in such a way as to be understandable and accepted by an audience with a different context and mentality. The main goal was achieved: the world's attention is now riveted on Ukraine's troubles. Such projects often became collaborative efforts or were initiated by foreign activists from the world of art. This is also a significant form of assistance which is very actively provided by many countries to Ukraine amidst the flames of war.

In August 2022 a Ukrainian art project by curator Yuriy Kotik, "Stand with Ukraine" (Figure 3), was presented in Vienna, which consisted of cycles of works by the artists Ostap Kovalchuk, Volodymyr Kozyuk, and Volodymyr Stasenko. Its goal was to focus society's attention on the problem of the war in Ukraine, a kind of appeal, a cry for help. The project was shown in several countries, and was exhibited in Madrid and Budapest within several months.



Figure 4. Denysenko O. "Successful Hunting". 2021. Gesography. Source: https://artchive.ru/news/2994~Magija_grafiki_Vystavka_1%27vovskogo_khudozhnikacharodeja_Olega_Denisenko_v_N%27juJorke

Everything was important, from the plot of each work to the materials used in its creation. One artist used wood as a base, employing boards salvaged from a house destroyed by rockets. Among the artworks were icons crafted on damaged boards and flags bearing the handprints of children who suffered from shelling...

Lviv graphic artist Oleg Denysenko has also become a mouthpiece for his country, groaning in pain but not broken. His exhibitions also took place in the USA during the period starting from the end of February 2022, more specifically, May 20 to June 19, 2022, at the Ukrainian Institute of America in Manhattan. The exposition of works by O. and A. Denysenko, entitled "Antiquitas nova", was presented. It was dedicated to the idea of the eternal struggle between good and evil, as old as the world, but the interpretation of this topic by the artists was contemporized.

The gesography "Successful Hunting" (2021) became a key work which acted as the leitmotif of this entire exhibit and the exhibition activities of the artist in wartime on the whole. It is now read as an allusion to confrontation, the thirst for victory, and the invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine (Figure 4).

In the summer of 2023, the Japanese collector Masachito Sakamoto organized in the city of Kamakura, Japan, an exhibition of Ukrainian masters of small-scale graphics, representatives of the schools of Kiev, Luhansk, Lviv (R. Agirba, K. Kalynovych, R. Romanyshyn, among others). The name of the project speaks for itself: "Art is my weapon". Mini-print has always been very beneficial in such cases due to its portability, ease of transportation, and simplified exhibition despite the nuances of presenting graphic sheets. Notably, even pieces created before 2022 have been reinterpreted, offering fresh perspectives and contributing to the country's current cultural code. The organizer single-handedly coordinated the exhibition, a feat made more challenging as the majority of the authors do not leave the country due to martial law; their mobility around the world is now restricted.

Artistic processes inside Ukraine after February 24, 2022

Just a couple of months after the start of active military action, the art scene in Ukraine was compelled to undergo not only a shift in the thematic focus but



Figure 5. "Cockerel from Borodyanka" as brooches, pendants, bracelets. Source: <https://insider.ua/ru/brend-gunia-project-predstavil-kollekcziju-pivnik-posvyashhennuyu-stojkosti-ukrainskogo-naroda/>

also a change in the composition of its creative elite. Many artists found themselves either on the front line or in the ranks of the territorial defense. But guns did not silence the muses. Those masters who remained immersed in life on the home front continued to work with redoubled activity, if not to call it aggression. They were driven by pain, hatred, desire to win, to liberate the country, to protect their loved ones. "Freedom", "independence", "victory", "peace" became key messages. Many previously mundane categories have acquired a completely different semantic content, such as, for example, "silence", the value of which is now "worth its weight in gold" in Ukraine. Silence now means the absence of missiles, drones, fighters, and the sound of sirens piercing the air. There were many musicians, artists, actors, filmmakers at the forefront for whom weapons are now the main tool of self-expression. But their colleagues who have not taken up arms have turned to art as their weapon. Consequently, a cultural front has been formed, with an equal influence on the viewer's mind. Visual art shifted its focus towards plot: there were no more complicated philosophical meanings in the works. Instead, there appeared a call, a cry, pain, but the main idea conveyed to the public in countries around the world became the power of spirit, the moral strength

of a people who resist the horrors of wartime.

The national principle was tempered by the fire of war. A cultural code, forged in its crucible, was finally formed and strengthened. Blue and yellow became the most popular colors of cultural space, the trident and viburnum branch, the most popular symbols, and national dress, vyshyvanka, became unprecedentedly popular. The already legendary "cockerel from Borodyanka" (Figure 5), a majolica figurine by P. Bidasyuk, which survived after the rocket attack when almost everything around was destroyed, has become one of the symbols of the invincibility of the spirit. Now it has been adopted as a popular theme, its variations in different incarnations have spread all over the world in figurines, magnets, and pendants. The legendary cockerel from Borodyanka is now present in almost every Ukrainian home as a kind of amulet, a symbol, an element of cultural code.

Ukrainian artists are trying to glorify their country by all means available to them, with patriotic themes overshadowed everything else. Wartime romanticism also takes place, but lyrics of Ukrainian culture smells like gunpowder. Icons are painted on burnt boards or boards of boxes for cartridges, fragments of shells



Figure 6. Stamps sheet "Russian war ship". 2022. 2023. Author of image B. Grokh. Photo from open sources.



Figure 7. Souvenir cup "Dog Patron". Photo from open sources.

and cartridge cases from the battlefield are used for creation of works of arts and crafts...

Exhibition activity, which had been quiet for a while, now is raging again. Ukraine found the strength to participate even in the Venice Biennale and to organize projects within its own borders. This includes the Painting Triennial 2023, the Sculpture Triennial 2023, and personal projects of many masters. The motto of each such art event is the slogan "Despite!". Numerous examples abound: since March 2022, the international art action "Volnanova" commenced; simultaneously, the All-Ukrainian Biennale of Levkas was held under the auspices of the "White World" Contemporary Art Center. In May 2022, the significant art project "The Art of Unconquered Cities of Ukraine" was held, including the exhibition "Kryvyy Rih—the iron heart of Ukraine"). Similarly, from September to October 2022 the XVI All-Ukrainian art exhibition "Magic colors of Dnipro" took place.

The following year saw an increase in pace: on April 23, 2023, the exhibition of 11 icons painted on boxes by A. Klimenko and S. Atlantova was presented in the St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv; in June 2023, a competition of drawings and art projects "Cultural de-occupation. The City of St. Mary" dedicated to restoration of Mariupol was announced; in June, the exhibition of paintings by O. Karpenko "War and Victory" was held in Kyiv and later continued in Kanev; on July 6, 2023, the exhibition of works by Y. Khymych "Ukraine Cathedral" opened; the most recent projects include "War

and Us" by S. Biruk in the White World Gallery of Kyiv (July 20 – August 6, 2023), as well as an exhibition of works by O. Petrova which opened in July 2023. This is just a small part of examples of artistic restlessness of Ukraine during the war period.

The art of design, especially graphic design, is also being popularized; political caricature, propaganda posters, stamps, calendars, postcards, and envelopes are in demand (Figure 6). Similarly, patriotic symbols have filled the vast majority of outdoor advertising space and flooded various types of souvenir production (Figure 7).

In addition to mass production of souvenirs, printing materials of the Monnaie are also in demand. The National Bank of Ukraine has enabled numismatists to replenish their collections with commemorative coins, the most popular of which is a five-hryvnia coin designed by artist D. Kryvonos and brought to life by sculptors S. Ivanenko and V. Atamanchuk (Figure 8).

Masters of arts and crafts in today's Ukraine are probably facing the most challenging circumstances. Their works are most often created from rather expensive materials, requiring significant time and effort. Meanwhile, the purchasing power of the country's population has dramatically declined, alongside a significant decrease in domestic and foreign tourism. As a result, these masters are struggling to survive while preserving themselves in art. Nonetheless, they continue to work and exhibitions serve as evidence of their resilience.



Figure 8. Commemorative coin “Oi U luzi Chervona Kalyna”. D. Kryvonos, S. Ivanenko, V. Atamanchuk. 2022. Photo from open sources.

The work of Ukrainian jewelers during the war may indeed be considered the most striking example of it. Who needs the luxury of jewelry amidst the flames of war, one might wonder? But the jewelry business of Ukrainian masters continues to live. Moreover, non-standard experimental searches appear and sometimes become so successful that they find keen demand and are quickly popularized. A jeweler is not only able to capture an image or emotions as painters and graphic artists do, but also possesses the unique ability to encapsulate the memory of an event which a person wants to immortalize in their soul, keeping it constantly nearby even at a tactile level—so that it can be felt and touched at any moment. Jewelry aptly fulfills this desire.

On May 27, 2022 a one-day virtual exhibition by Tatyana Chernaya was organized, which presented artefacts created with the use of fragments of shells, mines; from June 22 to 25, 2022, a jewelry exhibition was held in Lviv; from October 20 to November 6, 2022, the Treasury of the National Museum of History of Ukraine hosted the exhibition of jewelry art “Ukraine which is fighting”—messages of artists-goldsmiths to society concentrated

in pieces. The exposition was held within the framework of the First International Festival “Jewelry in Videos” organized by the German jewelry art magazine SMCK Magazine. It is a beautiful transformation from a terrible anti-war themed jewelry, sometimes using non-standard materials. This practice has become very popular—any owner of a piece of jewelry, even if it looks beautiful but was created using such materials, will never forget the horrors of war when touching it.

This method is used by the jeweler S. Drokin, who alongside V. Khristenko created the “Forget-Me-Not” brooch (Figure 9). A fragment of a shell decorated with several flowers has become the base for this piece. The brooch became popular flaunting on the chest of the First Lady of Ukraine, wife of the President, Olena Zelenska.

Horror transformed by the craftsman into beauty is also embodied in another piece of jewelry by the Kharkiv master S. Drokin. During the war he created a ring using technique that synthesizes gold and fragments of a shell: the ring “Ferauria” was created using



Figure 9. S. Drokin. "Forget-Me-Not" brooch. Fragment of a shell, titan, bronze. 2022. Photo: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1907497006306153&set=a.558690897853444>



Figure 10. S. Drokin. "Ferauria" ring. Fragments of a shell, gold, garnet, citrine. Photo: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/UkrJArt>

750 gold standard gold metal, steel fragments of a missile, spessartine garnet and citrine (Fig. 10).

To perpetuate the memory of horrors of this war Kyiv jeweler V. Beliberdin uses non-standard materials in his works too ('Zbroya yak mystetstvo', 2023). He uses shell casings in his works (Figure 11)—melted pieces of brass become exquisite women's jewelry. The symbolism of what is happening is obvious: the artist turns a weapon into beauty, demonstrating that art can also be a weapon, and a weapon, under the onslaught of talent, is forced to bow its head and to serve art.

In July 2023, an exhibition was held in memory of one of the most famous jewelers of Ukraine, who passed away on May 9, 2023, Igor Lobortas, the founder of the Lobortas Jewelry House, whose works are present in collections of many VIPs around the world.

Conclusions

Ukrainian art of the last year and a half represents the pain and longing of people who may lose everything at any moment... In the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, while writing this article, large-scale air raid alerts were announced about a dozen times; this text was written to the sound of sirens...

But in times of war, an artist must be the mouthpiece of his country. He is needed not AFTER but FOR victory. The country needs help not AFTER but NOW, and an artist must also help it by means of those weapons he has at his disposal—a brush, a pencil, a word. Patriotism cannot be either delayed or distant...

And Ukraine felt it: the artistic front opened quickly. The system of values changed dramatically. A clear thematic orientation of works of art of all kinds crystallized. A clear cultural code was outlined in which



Figure 11. V. Beliberdin. Process of creation of a piece of jewelry from casings. Photo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2qu4TCuDaQ>

the national principle clearly dominates and pseudo-landmarks are strictly separated from true values. Everyone made his/her choice.

The art of Ukraine after 24.02.2023 is a process of national affirmation and self-identification that takes place in a short time, in wartime conditions. Footage from a documentary has preserved the sand sculpture created by a soldier by hand right in the trench, and the game of military musicians on the road near anti-tank barriers, and the graduation waltz taking place amidst the bombed school in Kharkiv... Ukraine has retained the power of its spirit largely due to the artistic front – art has become a weapon aimed at protection and creation.

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