

Марына Юр
Candidate in Art Studies,
senior researcher
(Modern Art Research Institute
of the National Academy of Arts of Ukraine)

Марина Юр
кандидат мистецтвознавства,
старший науковий співробітник,
(Інститут проблем сучасного мистецтва
НАМ України)

yurmaryna@gmail.com +38 (050) 334-07-73 orcid.org/0000-0003-3487-1480

THE ARTISTIC PARADIGM OF UKRAINIAN ART OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY: FROM EXPERIMENT TO CONVENTIONALISM

Художня парадигма українського мистецтва першої половини XX сторіччя: від експерименту до конвенціоналізму

Abstract. The principles of modeling of artistic space in the painting of Ukrainian artists are considered. It is proved that in the conditions of a free experiment, various creative intentions are actively implemented. It was shown that the totalitarian system formed the conventional art within the framework of socialist realism.

Keywords: artistic experiment, Ukrainian art, modernism, socialist realism, conventionality.

Problem statement. Ukrainian art of the first half of the twentieth century is a variable by its artistic practices, the emergence of which was due to the context of European innovation art models, as well as by the inherent processes in Russian culture. Such synergy influenced the artistic situation in Ukraine, especially in the first third of the twentieth century, when the artists' reflections on the latest trends and *tendencies* of European art were forming the national version. The artistic education, which was not organized in Ukraine at the beginning of the 20th century, contributed to the integration of the latest achievements, as young artists were educated either in the Krakow, Vienna, or Munich Academy of Arts as well as various European schools and private studios. Institutions such as the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg and the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture also contributed to the education of these artists. Due to this, there was certain inertia of artistic processes in Ukraine, since the different thrusts of artists were obvious. Some of them were the adherents of Art Nouveau and modernism, some practiced realism, imitating the principles of the artists who were a part of the Society of Itinerant Exhibitions, while others developed a national school of art focusing on achievements in this area. At the same time, the complicated historical and political processes, and as a consequence, the economic conditions of Ukraine's development as a satellite of the Russian Empire, affected the cultural progress and the creative activity of many artists. The research of artists' creative methods in the context of dynamic socio-cultural processes of the first half of the 20th century will give an idea of the course of experimental artistic practice, which was based either on a system, open to new trends and *tendencies*, or, on the contrary, a closed one, focused on the ideology of the state of the Soviets, which predetermined conventionalism in art. This discourse determines the relevance of the study.

Analysis of recent research works and publications. Ukrainian art of the first half of the 20th century has been the subject of much research, related to the inherent European artistic processes or the creative activity of individual artists. The interpretations of these processes by art studies, having been carried out since *the establishment of independent* Ukraine, are a sign of a new reception of art with obvious crisis conditions that influenced the synergy of the artistic system, with the prevalence of the artistic experiment in the first two decades and the generated ideology of conventions in the works of artists over the next three decades. The art of modernism in Ukraine has become central in the discourse of the Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Odessa schools of art researchers. The phenomenon of "boychukism" has been studied substantially by L. Sokolyuk [11], Ya. Kravchenko [5]. The research on avant-garde tendencies has been carried out by O. Fedoruk [13], O. Lagutenko [6], D. Gorbachev [7]. Art of social realism and other phenomena of the first half of the 20th century have been the subjects of O. Rogotchenko's scientific works [10]. The publications of *Impressionism and Ukraine* by A. Melnik [9], *Olexandr Murashko: pages on life and work* by L. Chlenova [15] and others have been brought out. The authors have represented their own vision of artistic movements and the cultural context of the period. In order to gain a comprehensive picture, it is important to analyze the principles of modeling the artistic space in the works of artists by doing experiments, as the identifier of the new artistic paradigm.

Objectives of the study is to carry out a theoretical analysis of the functioning of experimentation in the works of artists in order to determine their influence on the modeling of artistic space, and the mechanism of changing the paradigms.

Presentation of the main research material. The Ukrainian art of the first half of the 20th century is not

unequivocal due to the transitional crisis conditions both in the state and on the Eurasian continent, generated by war, famine, and revolutions. This, in turn, could not but affect the creative intentions of artists, who reflected this situation in their works. As Ukraine was at the intersection of these processes, their influence on Ukrainian art was inevitable. However, the *succession* of traditions in Ukrainian art, which naturally offset the national context against the background of general European artistic innovations, should be pointed out. This *succession* was caused by the national-cultural processes in Ukraine, which crystallized the themes of national liberation struggles, historical and cultural transformations, and changes in the spiritual and material culture. At the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, these processes intensified the activities of the creative elite, patrons, scholars, artists, and other segments of society, to preserve the national art, particularly folk art, whose development was determined by the new conditions of being (urban environment, museums [20], exhibitions [19]). The direct involvement of professional artists, who recognized the particular features of peasant folk art through their own practice—studying, copying, reproducing and representing this knowledge and these skills at a new artistic level, was required. Thus, self-consciousness, a global outlook and attitudes of artists, in whose values the national culture occupied one of the main places, were being formed. This tendency was clearly observed in basic artistic education as well, which emerged in Ukraine in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century. Many of these artists were educated in Europe or Russia, but those who returned to Ukraine, founded the artistic educational space by forming private drawing schools. Students of different social status studied there and received a sufficiently high level of knowledge and artistic skills, which contributed to the further development of the national school of art. In 1869 the first female artist M. Raevska-Ivanova [12] opened a school in Kharkiv; in 1875 the drawing school of M. Murashko started functioning in Kyiv [4]; in 1899–1909 there was a private art school of M. Ivasyuk in Chernivtsi; in 1895 a drawing school, where K. Konstandi taught, was founded in Odessa; in 1923 the art school of O. Novakivsky, sponsored by A. Sheptytsky, opened in Lviv. Their extraordinary role in the formation of artistic education in Ukraine opened the possibility of creative realization of young artists in relation to the latest academic trends and the national culture. The dynamics of the process was attached by the organization of numerous exhibitions in Ukraine and abroad with the participation of Ukrainian artists.

The period of 1900–1917 (before the October Revolution) can be characterized as the time of “free creative experiment”, which was reflected in the numerous creative practices of artists, who mastered the methods and means of new European artistic trends, while empirically and intuitively looking for their own form and concept of visualization of the objective (real) or subjective (perceptual) world. Experiment (from Greek: *ἐμπειρία*; Latin: experiential—trial, experience) is a scientific method of knowledge, by conducting which, phenomena are investigated under certain controlled conditions, aimed at confirming the result of the hypothesis. Experiment in art is not repeated, because by the synthesis of methods, techniques and means of expres-

sion unusual, extrinsic to convection art (art leading in one or another period), generates the emergence of new diverse artistic practices, which makes it possible to update the artistic system and the change the idea of the author’s role. The artistic experiment allows a timely response to socio-cultural changes, reflecting the spirit of time in the content and original forms.

Each historical and cultural period of society’s existence is distinguished by artistic experience and the latest art practices that evolved in the bosom of the experiment, which is considered to be a “trial and error” method. Therefore, it has a wide sphere of implementation at the level of content, form, language, space, and its manifestations depend on the perception of the world at a particular time. The artistic experiment legalizes the reflexive type of aesthetic experience of an artist, who uses intuition, imagination in the creation of the new, but it should be pointed out that the experimentalism is prone to crisis states most of all and it often returns to the starting point—realism, which forms cyclicity or “fluctuation between realism and experimentalism” [1, p. 124]. The artist can work within the existing convention, or within one or more traditions, revealing or highlighting the dominant force, which prevails, distorts, or absorbs the existing aspects of the work, therefore, recording a break with tradition. In this sense, the work of art becomes a kind of empirical object, which represents an author’s perceptual picture of the world. The interpretation of reality in it acquires non-typical, unusual forms of expression, in contrast to the generally accepted and approved canon. Experimental art has outlined its space, operating with the perceptual experience of the artist and generating a constant change of the artistic context.

Demand for the new and the original is an impulse, which leads to the revolutionary transformation of the artistic expression, the search for new methods of activation of experiment, and expansion of the empirical experience. This, in turn, abets the development of art, the latest practices of which become the basis of philosophic, aesthetic theories and the theories of art study. Activation of the artistic experiment was important in the late 19th century, because of the crisis of two world outlooks—academic (conventional) and impressionistic (author’s new way of thinking and world perception [8]). Impressionism suggested an atypical approach to the reflection of the world view. Painting was subjected to radical transformation more than other forms of art, and is still in the process of constant experimentation and transformation of all its pictorial and expressive means. It was painting where long experiments began in many European countries and America. It revealed the dynamics of avant-garde, modernist and postmodern experiments and transformations, due to the influence of science on the art at its ideological and technological levels [3, p. 84]. The discovery of the theory of relativity and non-Euclidean geometry led to the revision of previous ideas of the time and space constants, which revealed the nature of their dependence on the speed of motion and the viewpoint of the observer, thus influencing the method of compositional organization of spatial elements in the first representatives of Cubism and inducing them to do innovative experiments in painting [3, p. 84].

At the beginning of the 20th century, the ideas of realism along with the “experimental practices”

of modernism and avant-garde were steadily developing in Ukrainian art. Realism preserved the genre structure and principles of space organization, based on the linear and light-air perspective. In the modernist practice there was a shift in the representation of the objective and subjective world. Impressionism brought first changes as a transitional stage between modern and contemporary art. The poetics of impressionism was based on time and space of inconsistent, sensual, spiritualized, and, in some way, mythologized reality brought by the forerunners of this trend—the painters D. Velasquez, W. Turner, E. Delacroix. Their principles of organizing the artistic space, their picturesque manner were experimentally transformed into works by E. Manet and E. Degas, later K. Monet, who suggested a new approach to the interpretation of the objective world via their own “pure sensations.” It changed the artistic reflections of artists based on intuitionism, as a non-classical way of thinking; and the “sensory space organization” of the picture changed the focus of the reality perception from the holistic view to the fragmentary one. This manifested the impressionistic vision of the artists who focused on the fluidity, the change of the natural states, which, according to P. Florensky, was represented as “a colorful, passive, unconnected, construction-deprived environment” [14, p. 29]. The painting surface, created by the use of expressive short brushstrokes, leveled out the contour of shapes, predetermining their certain deformation, making the sense of transience of the natural states more expressive. The glow of light and color became an instrument in the artists’ experiment and the principle of modeling space contributed to the discovery of a picturesque culture of color, according to its physical and aesthetic characteristics. French artists, who were united by the word “impressionism”, had a great influence on artists of the European countries and America. According to K. Monet, not all conducted such a principle of work, though.

In Ukraine, this trend has acquired various modifications: artists who were adherents of realism, preferred plenerism combined with genre motifs [2, p. 9]. N. Aseyeva observes that it was not impressionism itself, but only some approaches to it [2, p. 9] and at the same time the tasks, set by the artists—the depiction of nature, image or scene on natural background in the context of the new trend and the identification of national specificity, particularly the lyrical tone, peculiar to Ukrainian culture, that are traced in the paintings by M. Pymonenko, M. Kuznetsov, S. Vasilkovsky, P. Levchenko, M. Berkos, I. Svetlitsky, O. Kulchytska, I. Izhakevych, O. Murashko, F. Krichevsky etc. The works of M. Tkachenko, M. Burachek, M. Manevych, K. Konstandi, G. Svetlitsky, V. Krichevsky, P. Nilus, I. Trush, A. Novakivsky, D. Burliuk, A. Prakhov, M. Sergeev, O. Stilianudi and others were more experimental and closer to impressionistic searches in the changing state of the depiction of nature. Their experiments had a different implementation in the modeling of artistic space, color relations, picturesque effects, inherent to impressionism, but had a bright Ukrainian identity. For example, Boris Ehiz wrote of K. Konstandi’s manner, as one of the first plain air and impressionist artists who “solved the problems of color in his works, which were set by a galaxy of impressionists in Paris, unknown to him. He was able to depict the brightness of the flickering light and a wonderful game of reflexes in the shadows” [16, p. 134].

Although impressionism was related to realism, it mastered experimentally the laws of optics and the peculiarities of perceptual space, in particular the role of space in the artistic transformation of reality. The change in the artistic paradigm was made by postimpressionism, which intensified the role of subjectivity (perceptual) in painting. A new form of art started in which painting no longer played the role of the “window to the world”, but instead opened the inner world of the artist. The stylistic variations of this trend were developed on the subjective (author’s) vision. The artists based their experiments on the interrelation of color and form, to express the symbolic meaning in the depiction of the surrounding world. Its figurativeness was reflected in an expressive or abstract form, which would later contribute to the emergence of opposite stylistic tendencies—cubism and abstract expressionism. Cubism introduced a category of time in the modeling of artistic space, activating the “thought experiment” in the creation of non-mimetic artistic reality. Abstractionism, as the successor to cubism, made a radical attempt to separate painting from the objective world and turn it into a “pure” form of artist’s inner world expression. It implied new approaches to the organization of space, which was becoming transcendent. The artists represented their understanding of these processes by introducing another model of the universe, based on the latest scientific achievements. They visualized the world beyond its conscious, holistic perception, appealing to irrational, subjective beginnings. The micro- and macro-world showed its infinity in the works of artists via the synergy of primary elements in space.

The latest artistic practices of modernism and avant-garde (abstract art, cubo-futurism, suprematism, constructivism, neo-primitivism, etc.) are presented in Ukrainian painting by O. Ekster, O. Bogomazov, K. Malevich, V. Meller, V. Yermilov, B. Kosarev and many others. Their artistic experiments took place within the artistic, aesthetic and cultural contexts, which resulted in the synthesis of formal manner, deepening in the essence of the artistic expression of the idea. It should be pointed out that traditions and innovations, subjectivism and cosmogony of Ukrainian folklore were organically combined on Ukrainian soil. This also had an effect on space modeling and form expression. The artistic manner of folk art operates with cosmogonic signs and meanings, in which the information about the universe, the existence of man, the cycles of nature, etc. are encoded. These signs had a geometric or geometrized form, which showed their versatility both in terms of the expression of the essence and traditions of artistic reproduction, particularly to the structure of ornaments. The artists’ appeal to this cultural layer, its rethinking and transformation into abstract, non-objective compositions, made a profound impact on contemporary art via the inherent nature of the form of “primary elements in the prime space” (according to K. Malevich). Abstract art becomes an innovative stage, where spatial concepts of past epochs receive radical transformation in connection with the change of existential parameters of human existence [18, p. 57]. The new spatial thinking went beyond the reality limits, drawing on transcendental experience. Therefore, the experiment was aimed at creating the fundamental elements of painting, the identification of their time-spatial characteristics. Among them there were isotropy

(homogeneity) and anisotropy (heterogeneity), which formed new optics in the means of expression and the relation of objects in the artistic space, and showed the principles of its organization.

The synthesis of cultural traditions was characteristic to “boichukists”, the distinctive art school initiated by M. Boychuk in 1909 in Paris. M. Boychuk’s idea of the creation of a national style was realized via the asceticism of form and color, which were aimed at expressing the spiritual principle, the essence of Ukrainian culture. This concept was developed on the basis of numerous experiments in which the cultural codes of Ukrainian, European and Eastern traditions were tested. The objective of the “boichuksists” to express the national style encouraged them to comprehend the spiritual origins, world feeling and world understanding of the Ukrainian people, the mastering of the European artists’ creative method, such as P. Cezanne’s, O. Renoir’s, the synthetism of the Nabi group, the ancient Byzantine art of frescoes and mosaics, icon painting, Ukrainian folk icons, etc. As a result, the artistic style and the principle of organizing the artistic space of works, based on the rhythm of forms, were developed. “The spatial rhythm seems to be the regularity of the meeting with the next element of the series in a non-predictable moment, but in a certain place, and can unfold not only in one, but simultaneously in several dimensions” [17, p. 25].

However, the time for free experiments changed after 1917. In general, the first half of the 20th century in Ukraine was a time of constant changes both in the historical, internal and external political, economic, and socio-cultural aspects. Continuity in the statehood creation, frequent changes of the state system, external aggression, the expansion of the totalitarian regime were indicative for this time. 1917–1940 were marked by a change in the artistic paradigm, in which the role of European artistic trends was replaced by the ideology-oriented Soviet art, realistic by its stylistics, but socialist in its essence, and the place of experiment was taken by conventionalism. This process took place gradually. Year 1917 became prominent for Ukraine in its state-building movement, the activation of the national-cultural revival, the foundation of the Academy of Arts. This was a short-term period, however, which finished with the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the establishment of the dictatorship of the Soviet state in 1918. Its supervisory and regulatory policy became conventional in the relations with artists. Not only was the style conventional, but also a theme of the hero image identification, including the portrait genre, semantics in the form of heraldic signs, functioned as the identifier of the totalitarian system. Among the signs there were not only a star, a sickle and a hammer, or tools, but also images of political figures, whose depictions in works, such as applied arts, deformed their utilitarian, artistic and aesthetic function.

Socialist realism as a cultural-historical type of mass art became an opposition to the manifestation of individual, intentional, authorial art. There was a “rapture” in the ideological principles of artists. In the new conditions they had to change the experimental form of creativity, the artistic stylistics produced in the

previous period, and instead they produced the mythological ideas of the “new man”, “the hero of the period.” This deformation took place against the background of formation of two oppositions: the Soviet ideology and bourgeois imperialism. The totalitarian state of the Soviets and its repressive system grew in the context of these oppositions, which led to the tragic consequences of the physical destruction of artists, cultural figures, scholars, and numerous representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia [10]. This dramatic chapter was reflected in art with unprecedented psychology of images and scenes, which depicted the most tragic events of that time. Conventionalism substituted the essence of the artistic process in which the criteria for free creativity turned into dogmas and postulates. This affected artists’ creative processes in different ways. Some artists perceived it without resorting to the verification of ideology, others understood the consequences, which was reflected in their works. This was especially true in the works by M. Boychuk and his school, who chose their own path in art. Their works and the plots of the scenes depicted heroes of labor in the 1920s, presented in the canvas two different realities. The artist and the “hero” were from opposite sides both in the mental and socio-cultural terms.

The effect of their work was such that the spatial analysis of rhythmic structures used by M. Boychuk, working on composition in his early creations, made it possible to harmonize the combination of metric and discrete motion, the vertical accent, and the expressiveness of the inner world of the image. The recognizable iconography of workers and peasants in multi-figure compositions, replaced the emphasis from personality to the collective movement of peasants and workers. The centripetal rhythm used in this case, intensified the role of the protagonist—the plowman on the tractor, as the metaphors of industrialization and collectivization. The individual “boichukists” style was preserved, being somehow modified, though. The generalized form was enriched by halftones, which added some dimensionality to it. The conventionalism between the artist and the established authority could be seen here and by the example of M. Boychuk’s creative activity, the change in the artistic expression and modeling of space under experimentation and conventionality in the first half of the 20th century can be pointed out.

Conclusions. It can be concluded from the material above that the conditions under which artists could freely develop their creative ideas, using experiment, empirical experience, intuition, all contribute to the emergence of new forms of art, new trends, tendencies, and schools. In the Ukrainian art of the first half of the 20th century, there were radical changes. The period from the beginning of the century till 1917 was marked by numerous experiments and new artistic practices, in close association with European Modernism trends. With the change of the state system and the formation of a totalitarian one, the searches in the domain of the artistic language and form were controlled by the method of socialist realism. This led to conventionalism in art, particularly in painting.

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Марина Юр

Художня парадигма українського мистецтва першої половини ХХ століття: від експерименту до конвенціоналізму

Розглянуто принципи моделювання художнього простору у живопису українських художників. Доведено, що за умов вільного експерименту активно реалізуються різні творчі інтенції. Показано, що тоталітарна система формувала конвенціональне мистецтво у рамках соціалістичного реалізму.

Ключові слова: художній експеримент, українське мистецтво, модернізм, соцреалізм, конвенціоналізм.

Марина Юр

Художественная парадигма украинского искусства первой половины ХХ века: от эксперимента к конвенционализму

Рассмотрены принципы моделирования художественного пространства в живописи украинских художников. Доказано, что в условиях свободного эксперимента активно реализуются различные творческие интенции. Показано, что тоталитарная система формировала конвенциональное искусство в рамках социалистического реализма.

Ключевые слова: художественный эксперимент, украинское искусство, модернизм, социалистический реализм, конвенционализм.

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