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Iconography of the 2022 war

The response of Ukrainian graphic artists

Graphics as a form of visual response are used for a range of purposes: from social advertising to promotion of ideology or total propaganda in society. Since the first days of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, we have witnessed a boom in related drawings, posters, and cartoons in the public space and in social networks.¹ The instant dissemination of these media means that such artifacts can be viewed by all manner of different audiences with varying levels of perception, but both viewers and artists have found themselves in a new reality. These new circumstances immediately changed not only many social practices but also the actual art discourse. Preliminary observations indicate that society is attuned to sharp black-and-white contradictions: aggressor vs. defender, hero vs. villain, fear or laughter, tragedy or farce, prayer or curse, etc. Similarly, it is to be expected that at the core of the actual artworks is the idea of conflict, sometimes expressed in idiosyncratic iconographic forms.

Overall, this text sets out to offer a kind of review of field materials collected recently, a review from the perspective of particular art history methods. The first attempts to analyze and understand the works that appeared in the initial weeks and months of the war showed that an iconographic focus of study could help to determine what motifs and themes artists use to construct visual images of the war, in accordance with the information flow from the news. This method also helps to see how viewers design their own contemporary set of symbols, related to the current agenda.

By revealing the symbolic meanings of images, iconographic analysis in particular helps to establish links between the art of the past and the present. Iconography enables us to analyze how artists and after them society rethink the meanings of historical images and transfer old symbolic characters into the new, military context.

Sources at the intersection of disciplines such as iconology and visual studies, with particular emphasis on certain works by Ernst Gombrich, Jan Białostocki, William T. J. Mitchell, and David Freedberg, and critical rethinking of their works, provide the methodological basis for the observations in this paper.

Iconological analysis, a method initiated by Erwin Panofsky, suggests that viewers look at art through their own personal experience, and that historical

¹ I am sincerely grateful to my students and artist colleagues, who have been helping me to build up this visual art archive since the first days of the war.

and cultural knowledge and values play an important role.² Thus, it offers an affirmative answer to Mitchell's question of whether the image is a territory where political struggle takes place and a new ethic is defined.³ Mitchell has also analyzed specific issues of violence and war in the field of visual culture, discussing how this imagery was used and what kind of social impact it had in a such crucial context.⁴

It is important to point out that visual messages vary depending on who expresses and who perceives them. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is perceived by most Ukrainians as another attempt at colonial enslavement, a conflict inherited from previous centuries. Accordingly, if such an understanding dominates, then visual images that address the essence of the conflict will also be focused on certain historical visual archetypes and symbols. By appealing to Jan Białostocki's concept of 'iconographic gravity' in turn, we can explain the new assessment and the current meaning of some topics and pictorial motifs in the artworks under analysis.⁵

Focusing on the power of images, David Freedberg acknowledges the impact of context on responses to art, and identifies the method of amplification of images using canonical heroes/characters/symbols.⁶ The practice of formalist criticism as reconsidered by Freedberg also expands the scope of analysis for particular artworks.⁷

However, Ukrainian society is relatively progressive and modern, and in its thirty years of independence, several generations of young people have grown up who have their own visual culture integrated into the global community. I will attempt to show how modern Ukrainian graphic art combines these two perspectives – the national and the global. In reference to Mitchell's work *What Do Pictures Want?* (2005), which focuses on the will of pictures, we examined two of his fundamental claims: that about the power of images within and beyond a certain community, and that about the long-term effect of the image. Mitchell

2 BIAŁOSTOCKI (2008 a), 33–46.

3 GORI (2017), 42–44; MITCHELL (1986), 7–24.

4 ERWIN (2017), 36; MITCHELL (2011), 3–4.

5 BIAŁOSTOCKI (2008 b), 126–130.

6 FREEDBERG (2005), 1–25.

7 FREEDBERG (2009), 2.

made an inspiring analysis of stereotypes as an important type of ‘living image’ between fantasy and ideology.⁸

One of the first modern attempts to visualize and comprehend the war in Ukraine at the symbolic level was a children’s book, *The War that changed Rondo* (2014), written and illustrated by Lviv artists Andriy Lesiv (ukr. Андрій Лесів) and Romana Romanyshyn (ukr. Романа Романишин). This was the most impressive example of Ukrainian graphic design on the military conflict to emerge in the immediate aftermath of Russia’s first, well-camouflaged invasion of Donbas, in 2014. This powerful illustrated book has received many international awards, including a Special Mention in the ‘New Horizons’ category at the 2015 *Bologna Ragazzi Awards* (Fig. 1).⁹ It also is one of the most vivid and humanistic stories about the war, built on apparent confrontations and expressive characters.

In describing the imagery in Lesiv and Romanyshyn’s book and subsequent pictures and posters, we need to establish the difference between picture/illustration and image. In my distinction between pictures and images, I use ‘pictures’ to mean material artifacts and ‘images’ as visual ideas that constitute our understanding of the inventory of the war.

War is shown in this book as a relentless mechanical force opposed by three main characters named Danko, Fabian, and Zirka (Star). Danko is made of glass, with a transparent, fragile body. Fabian is a dog, made of balloons, and Zirka is a paper bird. Targeting children’s audiences, this imagery is comprehensible through its visual and haptic parameters. The three actors, who are not heroes at all, are made of such fragile materials that it is easy to hurt them and destroy their world. ‘Their fragility and sensitivity correspond to our own feelings in the face of war’, say the artists in their explanation of their idea.¹⁰

Because the authors explained their intentions and art process in their blog quite clearly, what is left to us is to emphasize other important and eloquent details of the work connected with the wider retrospective view. By this I mean an interpretation of the symbolic meaning of some of the images and shapes. The name of the fictional city, Rondo (a word that is understood in the geometric con-

⁸ MITCHELL (1987) 151–157; MITCHELL (2005), 77–90.

⁹ dPICTUS (2015).

¹⁰ dPICTUS (2015).



Fig. 1 Andriy Lesiv, Romana Romanyshyn, *The War That Changed Rondo*, cover 2015. URL: https://blog.picturebookmakers.com/post/160979819916/romana-romanyshyn-andriy-lesiv?fbclid=IwAR1Puey_MIBuzAg9DeS8gObRL9-4AE1bZ_JdDYomJda1eHYAoi4SiLfs8, Illustrations © Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv.

text to represent a circle, and musically as a recurring leitmotif – **Fig. 2**), could be interpreted as a symbolic reference to the Ukrainian territory, whose sovereignty, peaceful life and progress have for centuries been under attack: a suggestion that this historical process was entering a new circle of confrontation.

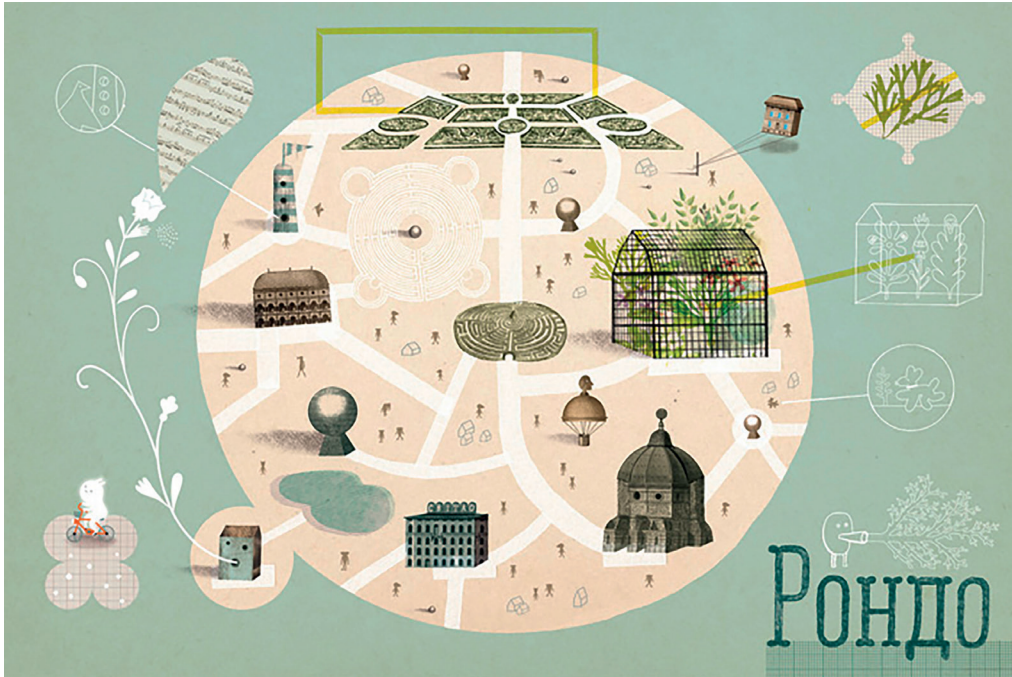


Fig. 2 Andriy Lesiv, Romana Romanyshyn, *The War That Changed Rondo: ‘The Fictional City,’* 2015. URL: https://blog.picturebookmakers.com/post/160979819916/romana-romanyshyn-andriy-lesiv?fbclid=IwAR1Puey_MIBuzAg9DeS8gObRL9-4AE1bZ_JdDYomJda1eHYAoi4SiLfs8, © Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv.

The essential symbolic, even pictorial idea of the book is the conflict between darkness and light, an almost profound ontological conflict but also a keen artistic contrast. The resistance of the earth’s vital force and fertility to the cold power of weapons is mutually represented in the plot and the illustrations. The sharp black thorns that fill the free living space like the all-too familiar ‘barbed wire’, a tool necessary for restriction and imprisonment (**Fig. 3**), are almost tactile. For the predominantly religious Ukrainian society, these sharp thorns are



Fig. 3 Andriy Lesiv, Romana Romanyshyn, *The War That Changed Rondo: 'The Cold Power of Weapons,'* 2015. URL: https://blog.picturebookmakers.com/post/160979819916/romana-romanyshyn-andriy-lesiv?fbclid=IwAR1Puey_MIBuzAg9DeS8gObRL9-4AE1bZ_JdDYomJda1eHYAoi4SiLFs8, ©Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv.

also strongly associated with the thorns of the Passion. In Ukrainian art and literature of the 20th century, the nation's suffering was often compared to Christ's Passion. This reference to Gospel imagery shows how religious iconography can take on new historical meaning. After many trials, the story of Rondo has a happy ending, with the victory of goodwill, light, and humanity. The red poppies depicted on the covers symbolize the victims of World War II and call to mind the slogan 'Never again'. In Ukrainian oral folk tradition they also resemble bloody losses (**Fig. 1**). Hence, the illustrated story about Rondo was the first visual equivalent of a mythologized narrative about the military confrontation of 2014. It demonstrates an emotional rather than a rational approach by the authors, especially in comparison with Andriy Lesiv's more recent posters. One example of such a poster depicts the claim: *All Ukrainians are fighters* (**Fig. 4**),



Fig. 4 Andriy Lesiv, *All Ukrainians Are Fighters*, March 2022. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10225086874311851&set=a.2618886004258>, © Andriy Lesiv.

using quite contradictory imagery – the outline of an embryo holding a sword between its frail arms and legs. This graphic is more solid and acute in its rhythm and line, reflecting a strongly tuned will. The iconography of resistance has changed – kindness must be replaced by determination and even cruelty, otherwise death awaits ...

An analysis of artworks from the first days of the Russian invasion reveals very characteristic differences in the samples from Lviv (Ukr. Львів) and Kharkiv (Ukr. Харків). These two cities, at opposite ends of Ukraine, are in quite different military situations. At the same time, they have close intellectual links and their respective art milieus are well connected. Faced with a terrible military threat, people united and developed an efficiently organized civil society.

Just before the Russian invasion, the department of graphic design at the Ukrainian Academy of Printing in Lviv (ukr. Українська академія друкарства

у Львові) had been preparing an exhibition of students' posters dedicated to prominent figures in Ukrainian culture (Fig. 5). The students' works had already been hung in the exhibition halls and the opening was scheduled for March 1, 2022. From the first days of the war, Lviv was transformed into a huge hub for refugees. At once, the large local exhibition space in the Palace of Art was converted into a volunteer center to help people trying to escape the war.



Fig. 5 Exhibition of students' posters in the hall of the Lviv Palace of Art, March 2022, photo Olga Borysenko.

The students' posters are thus now hanging on the walls of the gallery where the assistance centre for temporarily displaced persons is located. From the posters on the gallery walls, images of our outstanding writers and artists look down at their audience, setting the current agenda in these intense and distinct graphic messages. Even in such circumstances, where these Ukrainian citizens need to get over their shock and simply survive, the posters remind them of essential things, that we are defending the right to our own identity. Before a long, possibly one-way journey to European countries, refugees receive a brief, important message about what the fight is for ...

In analyzing other posters and drawings created by students in the first days of the war, as an immediate response to the actual events, we should highlight several fundamental aspects. What are these posters about? What kind of war iconography do they represent?

Since our graphic design students are residents of different cities and regions of Ukraine, they do not return to their classrooms during wartime. Separated and frightened, they must now stay either in Lviv or in their home towns for an unknown period. These posters are expressions of condensed emotions and demonstrate our common shock and fear at the inhuman cruelty being suffered by Ukrainian adults and especially children. Our students, who only yesterday were children themselves, are very sensitive to this fear. With their posters, they try to “reach out” to the whole world, to show what the war is like and how defenseless people are in the face of it. One good example is the poster by Maria Kocherova (Ukr. Марія Кочерова) from Kremenchuk (ukr. Кременчук) (Fig. 6), in which dense rows of bombs and shells are targeted at a narrow strip of the

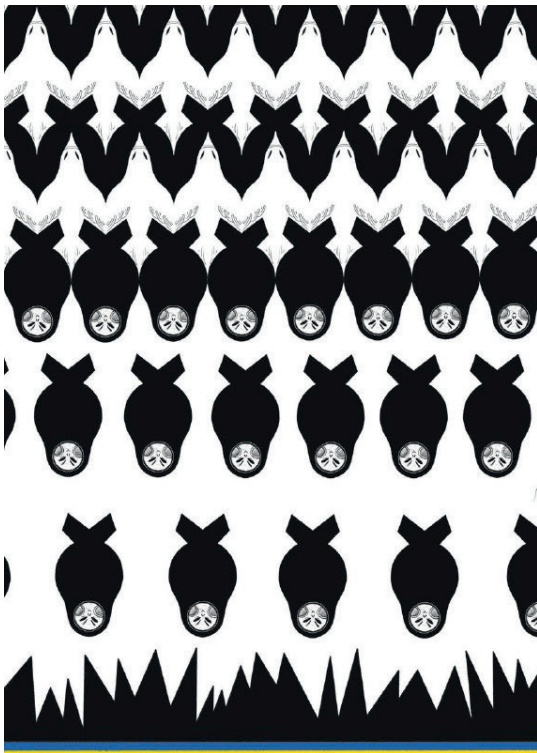


Fig. 6 Maria Kocherova, *Missile Attack*, March 2022, photo Maria Kocherova.

Ukrainian national flag's colors. This poster almost screams in horror at our own helplessness ... When you are forced to go down and hide in the shelters of a hitherto peaceful city several times a day, you understand exactly what it is like to feel the 'breath of war' ... The symbolic and emotive blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag, represented differently in different parts of the composition (as a strip or an arrow, a square or a rectangle, or a spot), spell out the geopolitical context of the message.

The fate of children at the epicentre of the hostilities is the message of Anna Kovalchuk's (Ukr. Анна Ковальчук) poster, made a few days after the news of the killing of 16 children (Fig. 7). To date, more than 200 children are known to



Fig. 7 Anna Kovalchuk, *Children Suffer*, March 2022, photo Anna Kovalchuk.

have been killed and 400 wounded ... This poster displays the terse slogan *Children suffer*, which not only states the obvious but explains the need for adults to fight for the lives of children even at their own expense. Children must not suffer, children are not to blame for anything, and we must protect them for the future. Ukrainians are a peace-loving nation, which has fought exclusively against the invaders, defending its children. This is the message of this poster.

The power of a good poster is manifested in its potential to be subversive and to raise strength, give confidence and courage, show faith, and inspire love. Some of these clear and expressive posters also show the deceptive nature of the Putin regime, laying bare its colonialist intentions.

Olga Borysenko's (Ukr. Ольга Борисенко) poster entitled *The ice will break* (Fig. 8) represents the symbolic geography of Soviet colonialism (or even earlier Russian imperial colonialism). The poster by Bozhena Kolotay (Ukr. Боже́на Коло́тай) is a fitting pendant to it, because it demonstrates the kinship of past and modern fascism and totalitarianism against a brightly-colored, bloody background (Fig. 8). Borysenko's poster has several iconic features – its colors, shapes, and typography. Russia is represented as a giant area against a bright

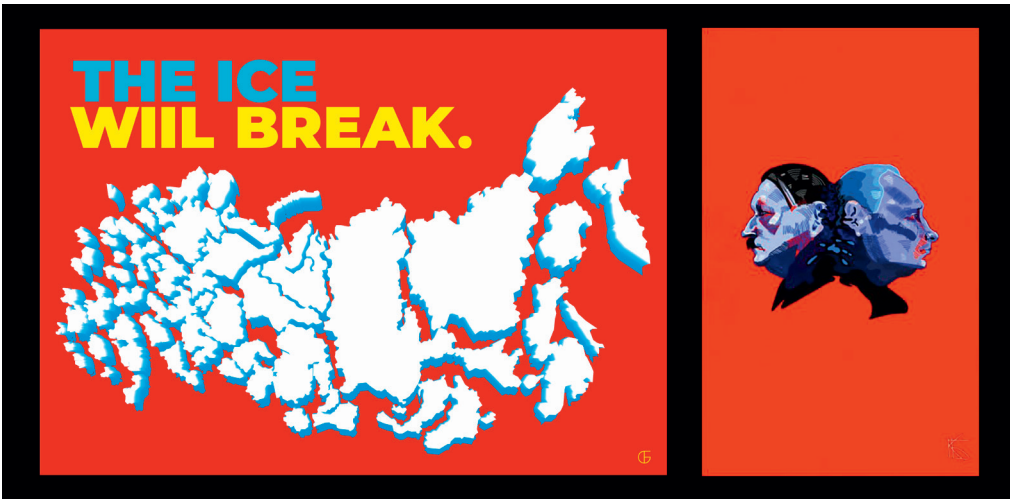


Fig. 8 Olga Borysenko, *The Ice Will Break* & Bozhena Kolotay *The Double Face of Tyranny*, both March 2022, photo Olga Borysenko, Bozhena Kolotay.

red background, symbolizing the bloody communist past of the 20th century. The cracked white shape of the map resembles a huge glacier. This glacier is perceived as something frozen and archaic, like the idea of maintaining the imperial order of the past. The process of the ice breaking is outlined in the typography in the blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag. ‘Freedom Blue’ and ‘Energizing Yellow’ have been promoted by the Pantone Institute as the two most inspiring colors of 2022.¹¹

¹¹ Комунікація кольором [Komunikaciya koliorom/Communication by color] URL: <https://official-online.com/all-news/blue-freedom-yellow-action-Pantone-published-a-post-in-support-of-Ukraine/> (version 04-03-2022)

Lviv artist Mykhailo Skop (Ukr. Михайло Скоп) was one of the first authors to respond actively to the events of the war. All his works have gone viral on social media, and the author permitted their free distribution (excluding commercial circulation) so that they could encourage Ukrainians and ridicule the attackers.

In his series of posters dedicated to the war, he is guided by several motives. The series, which continues to be updated in real time, has the potential to become a kind of graphic epic of this war, a visual equivalent of the military chronicles of the past.

Several of Skop's posters from the first day of the war show the dynamics of his personal and graphic response. The first one, a kind of prediction of future events, is called *Hey kid! Stop making war!* (Fig. 9). A stern mother (Ukraine) reproaches her naughty son (Putin) for his dangerous pastimes and unacceptable



Fig. 9 Mykhailo Skop, *Hey kid! Stop Making War!*, March 2022, photo Mykhailo Skop.

behaviour. The poster contains an allusion (well understood by Ukrainians) to the historical priority of Ukraine as the successor of the history of Kievan Rus, which Moscow usurped in a later period. While referring to Kyiv as the ‘Mother of Rus’ cities’ in the medieval period, Putin’s ideology and protagonists simultaneously consider Ukraine to be the ‘younger brother’. This poster hints that the time to end this humiliating discourse has come. Despite the important and deep message, the visual form of the poster is narrative and tongue-in-cheek. The woman is holding a carpet beater, as if she wants to spank the brawler. So, Mommy will not leave dangerous games unpunished. The bitter irony lies in the way that most Western countries viewed these ‘war games’. Thus, the poster also could be seen to be addressing not only Ukrainians but also other countries that tried to play down the danger.

The next poster, entitled *No Fear. A True Man* (Fig. 10), appeared in the first week of the war. It depicts a ‘wall’ made from strong and fearless men figures who have stopped an enemy armada. This reflects the courage of the volunteers, those who stood up to defend the country from its enemies. It could be considered a knightly mission. Although the men depicted on the poster have no



Fig. 10 Mykhailo Skop, *No Fear. A True Man*, March 2022, photo Mykhailo Skop.

weapons or armour, they stand their ground firmly. The author clarified that they were all Ukrainians, without any outside support, as was the case in the first days of the war.

The poster *Stand with Ukraine* (Fig. 11) was conceived as a reference to an archetypal Ukrainian holy image. The central part of the composition resembles a blue ellipse (like a mandorla), in the centre of which stands a woman with a baby (who brings to mind the Mother of God), both of whom are protected by tightly grouped military figures. The central part of the composition refers overtly to the iconographic type ‘Спас у славі’ (literally ‘The Savior in glory’) or ‘Christ the Savior Enthroned in Glory’ in Ukrainian icon painting (Fig. 12).

Mykhailo Skop (#neivanmade), a professional connoisseur of icon painting and the founder of the website www.icon.org.ua, made this deliberate reference for the Ukrainians, who have endured enemy invasions for centuries and have always prayed for protection before the icon of the Madonna. This historical and religious image is set in opposition to an image from modern pop culture and modern cinema – the image of a zombie. Many Russians have become zombies because of their uncritical attitude to the authorities and their assimilation of propaganda clichés. Distortion and deception, and the language of hate, have turned people into instruments of violence. In contrast to the crowd of zombies, the warriors form a close circle, a protective human shield that repels the red invasion from all sides.

The *Ghost of Kyiv* (Fig. 13) poster shapes a new mythology of resistance, dedicated to the legendary Ukrainian pilot who shot down enemy planes every day. The visual scheme of this image also combines contemporary iconographic prototypes and images of mass culture from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Most young and adult Ukrainians are familiar with the supernatural comedy *Ghostbusters*, which features positive ghost characters who help people. The ghost of Kyiv embodies a collective image of the Ukrainian Air Force and is an invisible avenger who serves the forces of good and protects the city from bombs and missiles.

From a historical perspective, the foremost patron saint of Kyiv (ukr. Київ) is the Archangel Michael. Highly revered in the Middle Ages as the patron saint of warriors, he is depicted on the city’s emblem (Fig. 14). One of the main Kyiv monasteries, Saint Michael’s Golden-Domed Monastery (ukr. Михайлівський золотоверхий монастир), is consecrated in the name of this saint. Icons and mosaics venerating St. Michael are widespread inside and outside churches.



Fig. 11 Mykhailo Skop, *Stand with Ukraine*, March 2022, photo Mykhailo Skop.



Fig. 12 *Christ the Savior Enthroned in Glory*, 16th c., Volyn region, Museum of the Volyn Icon in Lutsk, photo Mykhailo Skop.



Fig. 13 Mykhailo Skop, 'The Ghost of Kyiv,' March 2022, © Mykhailo Skop.



Fig. 14 *Archangel Michael*, coat of arms of the Kyiv Voivodeship in the 16th–18th c. URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1597_Bielski_Kyiv_Voivodship.svg. Alex Tora after Marcin Bielski, *Kronika Polska*, Krakau 1597
© Alex Tora, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

This monastery became a refuge for the protesters on the night of the brutal pogrom by police on the Kyiv Maidan on November 30, 2013 (Fig. 15). Skop's hero is like a modern incarnation of the saint. A winged ghost with a sword, so skill-

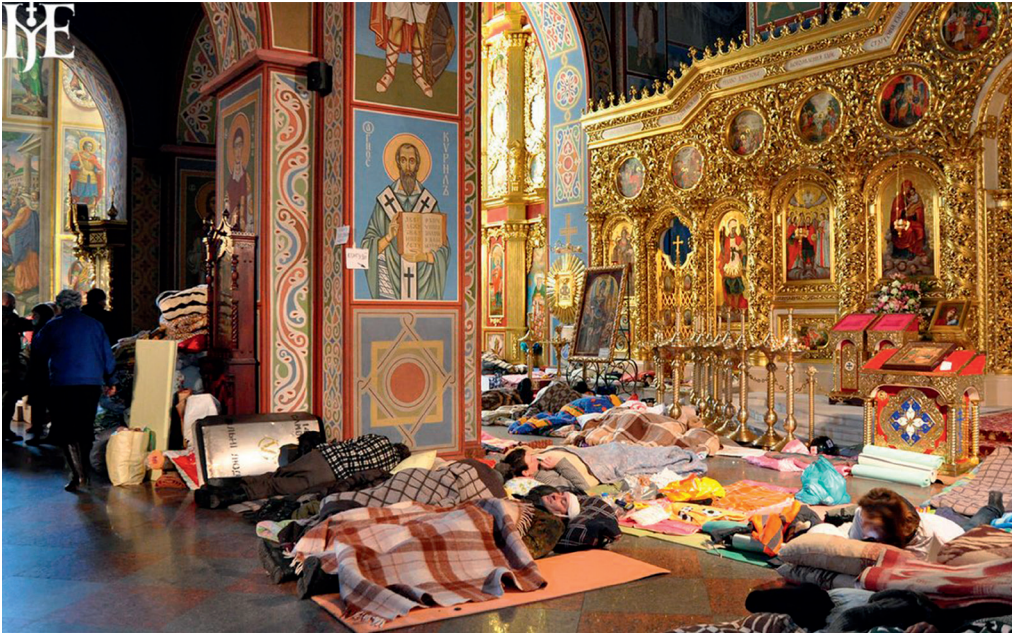


Fig. 15 Shelter for protesters in the Saint Michael Golden-Domed Cathedral, December 2013. URL: https://risu.ua/uploads/770x433_DIR/media_news/2021/12/61a74ff303fee019171091.jpg, © risu.ua.

fully slicing down enemy planes, is exactly the image needed to instil faith in the army among the citizens terrified by the airstrikes. The next poster, called *Shield of Europe – Shield of Freedom* (Fig. 16), has a heraldic element: the Ukrainian state emblem as a trident composed of the figures of the Ukrainian armed forces. The trident is placed in a shield on a white background and resembles an ordinary military chevron. This poster is supplemented by its caption. This caption also has direct historical parallels, which are more obvious to those who are familiar with Ukrainian history and the history of the Cossacks. When the Ukrainian Cossacks were part of the troops of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, they considered themselves ‘Antemurale Christianitatis/Bulwark of Christen-



Fig. 16 Mykhailo Skop, *Shield of Europe – Shield of Freedom*, March 2022, photo Mykhailo Skop.

dom'.¹² This was a label used for (and by) any country or ethnic group defending the frontiers of Christian Europe from the Ottomans, or to denote 'the West' in cultural confrontation between West and East, or in a more metaphysical struggle between backwardness and modernity such as the situation which we are witnessing at present.

In addition to symbolism and heroism, Skop's posters reflect the horrors of war – like the 'ruined city'. People deprived of both past and future are represented against the silhouettes of their devastated houses. Painted in a dark color scheme, predominantly black and a muted red, this poster does not have the same decorative power of color as the previous ones.

The artistic response of artists from Kharkiv, whose motto could fairly be the words *Kharkiv is alive!* is completely different. The current situation in Kharkiv has been described by Kharkiv designer Andriy Skripka (Ukr. Андрій Скрипка) as follows: 'All my previous commercial projects have been cancelled. Many of my friends (musicians, poets, actors, and artists) are experiencing the same.' He and his family left Kharkiv for Lviv after a week of shelling. He said: 'With the help of Kharkiv teachers and my contacts in Lviv, I was able to evacuate my family, transport them to Poland, and stay in Lviv. All I have is my tablet as a tool with which I can draw. All I have been able to continue is my private project, which has been going on for 14 years. It includes sketches of people on public transport. One series of sketches were drawn on the evacuation train taking me and the other passengers into complete obscurity' (Fig. 17). This is just one episode of this war chronicle. This kind of graphic is self-reflection, an attempt to recognize an ordinary in new, dramatic circumstances.

The shattering reality of the war interrupted public artistic activity in Kharkiv in the first days of the hostilities, but could not stop artists imagining and creating. Now artists are making videos about the war, and helping and supporting each other. Everything has come down to individual attempts to reflect on reality. After all, some artists cannot create in isolation from their context and environment. As long as the site or venue where a planned project was to be implemented exists, and the space of the city, with its iconic landmarks and mood,

¹² See e. g. this description of the *The Bulwark of Europe and Antemurale Christianitas* program at Münster University. URL: <https://www.uni-muenster.de/Religion-und-Politik/en/forschung/projekte/b15.html>

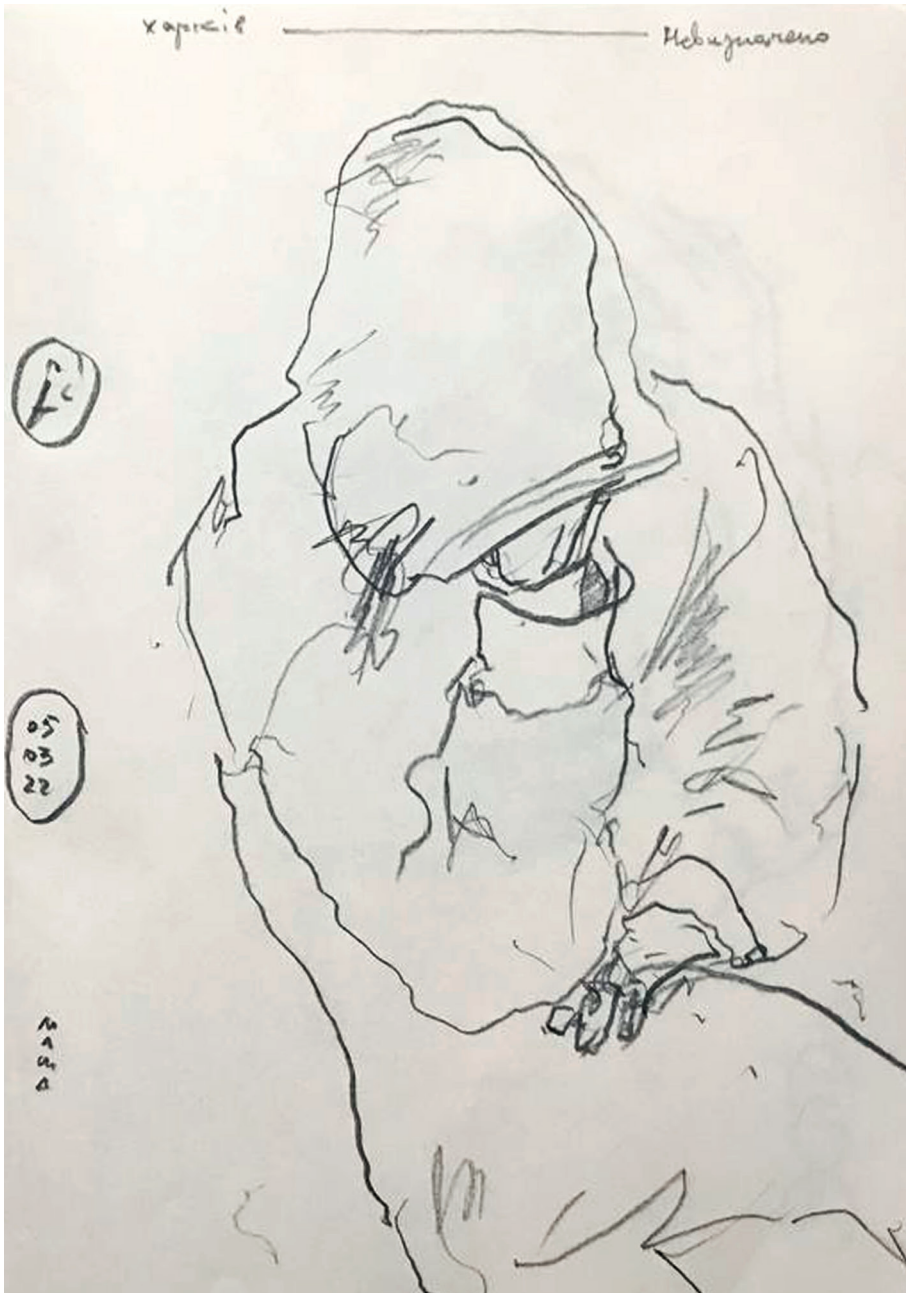


Fig. 17 Andrew Skripka, sketchbook *Kharkiv – Uncertainty*, drawing *Obscurity*, March 5, 2022, photo Andrew Skripka.

is not destroyed completely, such artists will continue to turn darkness and pain into light and hope.

It is worth taking a closer look at the painted messages in the artworks of Dasha Daria Khrisanfova (Ukr. Даша Хрисанфова), who remains in Kharkiv under the air and missile attacks and continues to paint. Of particular significance here is her extended cycle of drawings created since the beginning of the war. Khrisanfova has stayed in Kharkiv and does not intend to leave the city, even though its residential neighborhoods are being targeted. On the second day of the war, a missile hit Daria's house, and her apartment was practically destroyed (**Fig. 18**). She suffered concussion and was taken in by her friends.



Fig. 18 Daria Khrisanfova, *We Are at Home*. Kharkiv, March 7, 2022, photo Daria Khrisanfova.

Khrisanfova formulates her current life strategy very simply: ‘to remain calm and be useful to others.’ So between the periods of missile attacks, Daria draws on A5 sheets with whatever tools she has at her disposal – black pen, colored pencils, or felt-tip pens.

She supports her students and paints with them remotely when there is an internet connection. She assigns routine tasks to her students, who then send her their drawings. These are not just standard assignments, but support, and the aspiration to help overcome fear, and cultivate optimism and humanity.

After the first airstrikes, she painted *The sky is within you* (**Fig. 19**). The refrain that runs throughout Daria's drawings is the statement: ‘We are in our own home. We are not going anywhere.’ She does not depict the chaos, destruction, and death caused by the war, but turns to the natural elements: water, earth, plants, and air. In her paintings, light opposes darkness, and the vital power of trees embodies the pulse of life. A good illustration of this is her drawing: *We are*

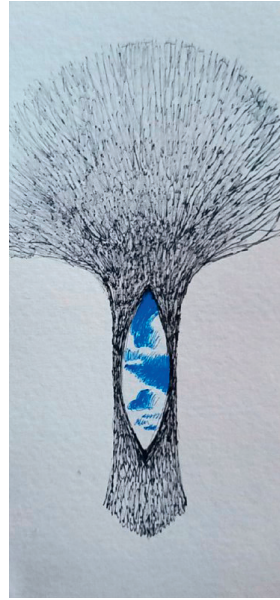


Fig. 19 Daria Khrisanfova, *The Sky Is Inside of You*.
February 25, 2022, photo Daria Khrisanfova.

a wall of warm trees. They will not pass (**Fig. 20**). In her drawings, there is only light, optimism, and the firm confidence that Kharkiv will survive. A great power is contained in these small drawings.



Fig. 20 Daria Khrisanfova, *We Are the Wall of the Warm Trees. They Will Not Pass*, March 5, 2022, photo Daria Khrisanfova.

Daria Khrisanfova's war iconography is definitely different than the above-mentioned style referencing religious or historical cultural prototypes. Her iconography is more universal, global, and modern, because it draws on human mental and physical ecological awareness. This imagery, without depicting people, nevertheless declares that war is a product of human imperfection and lack of harmony.

As the first attempt to discuss a selection of the graphic artifacts constituting the visual response of Ukrainian artists to the war, this article restricted itself to proffering some names and samples of work from the country's two art centers, Lviv and Kharkiv. A brief analysis of the artists' motivations and purposes (beyond this text) could help to outline some common features and peculiarities of the artworks discussed.

Since the very first days of the invasion, these artworks have reflected contrasting themes, inspired by different personal and collective drivers, such as pride and faith in victory; anger, hatred, and contempt for the enemy; fear of the horrors and brutality of war and the inevitability of casualties; and fear of the lack of a future. However, we did not explore here the psychological factors in these pieces, beginning from the most basic iconographical level of 'what is depicted', only analyzing 'what it could mean' in the current context and 'how it is connected with previous Ukrainian art'.

Perhaps the foremost conclusion drawn from the field material is that the current Ukrainian graphic response reflects the bifurcation of the visual messages both on the universal human level and on the level of national identity. That defined as the universal level is represented in posters by some Lviv and Kharkiv students, and in Daria Khrisanfova's drawings. The various artists use contrasting categories of imagery, such as the opposition between vital forces of nature and human-made artificial tools that cause death. The iconography of war is largely formed from images that reflect not the war itself (its tools or consequences), but what opposes it, whether natural life-giving forces, the human will, or the intervention of celestial forces.

Paradoxically, the mostly private sketches by Andriy Skripka could also be attributed to the universal level. Despite the intimate character of these sketches, the gallery of characters and situations depicted by Skripka has a lot in common with the positive or traumatic human experience. Another level of graphic artwork represents a more ideological, specifically Ukrainian national liberation narrative, aimed at mobilizing patriotic forces. Posters on this ideological level

primarily address Ukrainians, to whom the coded messages are easy to decipher. The need to overcome the colonial dependence narrative and establish a nation-building discourse that had already been formulated and can now be upgraded is the leitmotif of Olga Borysenko's poster, for instance.

By analyzing Mykhailo Skop's posters through the 'iconological optic', we can argue that the iconic form has been reframed to correspond to the new, current agenda. The drawings and posters discussed here are clearly embedded in the national cultural context, as artifacts that refer to Ukrainian icon paintings and the folk imagery of past periods, and place this new experience in the historical continuum. In this way, a great historical narrative is created, transferring the actions of participants (soldiers, volunteers) into a symbolic space, as is typical for an icon or a folk painting. At the same time, the significant impact of pop culture on images of modern visuality prevents these artworks from moving into the archaic. Hence, these new artworks are the inherent creation of a new mythology, a new pantheon of heroes, designed to motivate, strengthen, and support. The capacity to transcend the limitations both of real context and the historical memory of the viewer is the essence of the agency of these artworks.

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Іконографія війни-2022: відповідь українських художників-графіків

АНОТАЦІЯ 24 лютого 2022 Україна зазнала вторгнення окупаційної російської армії. Росія звинуватила українців (владу і громадян) в нацизмі, етнічному переслідуванні та розпалюванні етнічних і супільних конфліктів. Це очевидний фейк і про це вже дізнався весь світ. Українська політична нація динамічно розвивалися протягом останніх 30 років Незалежності. Люди різних національностей – українці, росіяни, євреї, поляки, угорці, румуни, роми, люди, які розмовляли різними мовами та мали різні політичні погляди, тепер об'єдналися для захисту суверенітету країни, власної свободи та життя.

Презентована стаття є попередньою спробою оцінити активну миттєву реакцію українських художників-графіків на російське вторгнення в Україну протягом перших тижнів спротиву. У статті порівнюються твори художників із двох крайніх культурних центрів України – західного Львова та

східного Харкова, щоб показати різноманітність осмислення теми війни візуальною мовою.

Це мистецтво творилося в режимі реального часу, під ракетними ударами в розбомбленому Харкові та відносно безпечному Львові, який став притулком для багатьох українських біженців. На прикладі проаналізованих плакатів та рисунків, можна виділити основні теми та здійснити інтерпретацію головних повідомлень, які автори адресують до співгромадян. Вивчення та аналіз обраних творів, як феноменів, що виникли і діють у актуальному суспільному контексті, базуються на методах іконології та студій візуальної культури.

Попередній огляд дозволив сформулювати висновки щодо особливостей іконографії теми війни, яка у творах українських митців має універсальний та національний виміри. Характерно, що іконографія війни значною мірою формується з образів, які відображають не саму війну (як індекс її знарядь чи наслідків), а те, що їй протистоїть – природні життєдайні сили, людська воля, втручання небесних покровителів тощо. Так твориться новий історичний наратив, який переносить дії учасників (воїнів, добровольців) у символічний простір, як це характерно для ікони чи народного живопису. Водночас значний вплив поп-культури, що втручається в ці образи, не дозволяє вказаним творам перейти в архаїку.