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**KITSCH IN MODERN UKRAINIAN ART AND DESIGN:  
CAUSES AND POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES  
ROZHAK-LYTVYNNENKO K.**

Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava

*The main content of the research is to clarify the essence of the phenomenon of modern Ukrainian kitsch, which had acquired new characteristics after the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The author outlines the reasons for the emergence of kitsch in contemporary Ukrainian visual art and design, among which the desire for the manifestation of national identity is dominating. The potential negative consequences of spreading the kitsch pieces of art outside of Ukraine will also be considered and possible ways to avoid them will be proposed.*

*Key words: kitsch, art, design.*

**Introduction.** From February 24, 2022, after the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of the territory of Ukraine, an active process of manifestation of the national identity of Ukrainians has begun. It became necessary for people to realize that they are part of a strong, indomitable Ukraine, which will surely defeat the Russian onslaught. In view of the war events, this reactionary mass culture could not fail to appear. People needed to vent their emotions from shared grief, fear, and rally around something. This creativity of resistance, on the one hand, seems to be a kind of therapy for the performer (often emphasizing what the author has experienced or seen), on the other hand, it is a way to raise the mood or fighting spirit of the viewer. Unfortunately, a lot of such works are downright kitsch.

**Results.** The active appeal to patriotic symbolism, the use of the national flag, emblem and national palette in the field of fine art and design is becoming so widespread and commercialized that the appropriateness of it is often questionable. In this way, there is a total vulgarization of national symbols, which are everywhere — from underwear to the facades of buildings.

With the beginning of a full-scale war, on the rise of patriotism, mass culture began to exploit the same images that became symbols of a new stage of the war — for example, the Turkish drone "Bayraktar" or the Patron minelayer. Due to excessive and often unjustified repetition, these images become banal and turn into kitsch. In addition, the true historical meaning of these terms is reduced [1]. The so-called «bairaktar» mass cult reached such a peak that in March 2023, the parliament even registered a draft law that should limit the use of military-patriotic themes in advertising [2].

While historically we have many regional versions of the folk costume, the kitsch variant distorted by the communists, which is as far from the authentic ones as possible, continues to be popularized. A variant that was created for the purpose of imposing on Ukrainians a sense of their own provincialism and inferiority. Despite all the wealth of Ukrainian embroidery, the ornament and colour of which could unmistakably determine the region of a person's origin, in 2022-23, primitive, simplified motifs, most often red in colour, remain massively replicated.

Such parasitism based on ethnic motives is especially characteristic of traveling exhibitions that take place with the assistance of diplomatic institutions in support of Ukraine abroad. Most often, the purpose of such actions is the sale of works of art to obtain funds for the needs of the front and/or temporarily displaced persons. They are in great demand among the public, are patriotic and unambiguous, and usually successfully carry out the mission assigned to them. However, narrowing the perception of our culture not only by foreigners, but also by us.

Most often, kitsch in modern art manifests itself in this way - the artist finds the simplest national image and applies it in the most primitive way. There is a kind of speculation on fixed symbols, expressions, names, without an attempt to delve into the culture and critically rethink it. At the same time, all this is presented as something «traditionally Ukrainian». Among the most popular are viburnum, Ukraine, homeland, strong, indomitable, home, borscht, embroidery, doll «motanka», which acts as a folk amulet, appeals to images of Ukrainian paganism, characteristic Cossacks, Molfars, etc. (Fig.1.)



Fig. 1. K. Tkachenko «Motanka» 2022

If the sign and symbol itself is important in a high artwork, then in a kitsch work the symbol is manipulated, it is needed to evoke simple and unambiguous emotions. Hence, kitsch is often considered a "transparent sign", which has no aesthetic interest. This is a very important argument of many kitsch researchers. For something to become "not kitsch", there must be an aesthetic interest, not an ethical one. There should be a need to use the sign as a work of art, not as something that leads to something else, hidden [3]. Such a product creates a distorted understanding of modern Ukrainian art among foreigners. Kitsch is also criticized by people with more discerning artistic tastes.

**Conclusions.** In view of this, it is worth paying more attention to the popularization of truly valuable and competitive works of art and design samples, to cooperate with state institutions, to conduct educational and explanatory work aimed at popularizing Ukrainian historical heritage in modern art. It is necessary to spread the concept that parasitizing the national symbols is a way of spreading the inferiority complex imposed on Ukrainians, which was formed due to aggressive oppression and prohibitions. This phenomenon aims to commercialize Ukrainian culture, replacing its elements with a bright, albeit often sad in content, wrapper. It is possible to eliminate it only by studying the true history of Ukrainian art, getting acquainted with alternative projects that contain elements of critical reflection.

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