

THE ENVIRONMENT CONTEXT IN ANNA SYDORENKO'S WORK

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to study the activities of contemporary Lviv artist Anna Sydorenko. *The study's research methodology* is the general scientific principles of historicism and the systematic approach. The source study method is used to identify the conditions that influenced the formation of ideological and philosophical foundations when creating land art objects by the artist; the complex method and the method of analysis are used to determine the place and importance of the works in the system of contemporary Ukrainian art. *Results.* It's noted that the artist's training in the Department of Easel Graphics at the Kharkiv Art and Industrial Institute affected the artist's projects with graphic linearity and clarity of spatial works (Sedniv, 1992). The formation of the artist's method is considered through the analysis of artistic quest and realisation of ideas in land art projects, in particular, *Still Things* (Berlin, 1993), *Laboratorium* (Poprad, 1994), *ArtsLink* (California, 1998), *Land art in Gars am Kamp* (Horn, 2004). Anna Sydorenko's observations, participation in land art events and interviews enabled us to reveal an intuitive and philosophical basis in the artist's use of the history of the event location and the symbolism of natural materials in her compositions. It is noted that the study of A. Sydorenko's works contributes to the identification of national environmental art on the background of international experience. The research materials can be used to teach the history of contemporary Ukrainian art, the history of Ukrainian design, the history of landscape art, the design of recreational areas, and park environment design. *The scientific novelty* of the work is that, for the first time, the analysis of Anna Sydorenko's creative contribution to environmental art has been introduced into art studies. Scientific research materials deserve special attention since the phenomenon of Ukrainian land art has been studied superficially, and art historians are only looking for approaches and criteria for determining its specifics.

Keywords: Anna Sydorenko; land art; Ukrainian contemporary art; environmental art; context of environment

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INTRODUCTION

Art Studies in Ukraine still lacks fundamental research on the characteristics of national environmental art. Single articles in periodicals do not reveal the principles of its formation and describe the unique features that separate Ukrainian land art from its older foreign counterpart. The works of Anna Sydorenko, who has been a representative of Ukrainian environmental art for many years, are also not considered by specialists and theorists.

ANALYSIS OF THE LATEST RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Although the beginning of land art in Ukraine dates back to the late 1990s, the existing sources give only a general description of the creative formation of the movement in Ukraine, outlining the features of national stylistics on the example of separate projects. An album edited by P. Bevza and H. Hidora (2010), *The Environmental Art: Ukraine 1989–2010*, has become significant for understanding the environment of Ukrainian land art. In addition to photo fixation of objects invaluable for land art, the publication in-

cludes texts with the author's vision of artists P. Bevza, V. Kaufman, O. Nykytiuk, N. Kokhan, H. Hidora A. Sydorenko, A. Bludov, V. Bakhtov and others. A significant event in the exploration of environmental art in Ukraine is also the added introduction by P. Bevza and the material with a historical analysis of the artistic phenomenon in Ukraine by Gh. Vyshe-slavskyi. Among the most important creative works from 1989 to 2010, A. Sydorenko's projects include a statement about the contextual component of the works and the specifics of their artistic embodiment from the artist.

In the article, Ukrainian Land Art is 36 Years Old!, art historian H. Vysheslavskyi (2008) considers the evolution of national environmental art from the first practices to the institutionalisation of land art as a synthesis of environment, performance and happening. The researcher analyses the works of Ukrainian artists, in particular projects from the early 1990s.

Art historian N. Kokhan (2019) in her dissertation Land Art in the Context of Modern Landscape Design, attempts to outline the works of environmental artists as a branch of landscape art and gives examples of foreign and Ukrainian artists, including the projects by A. Sydorenko, which were realised at the Area of a Frontier in Mogrytsya international land art symposium (Sumy oblast).

The study's relevance highlights unknown aspects of Anna Sydorenko's creative work through the analysis of separate artistic projects, which will contribute to a further understanding of the uniqueness of national land art and its distinctive features on the background of the global phenomenon.

The purpose of this study is to outline the creative legacy of Anna Sydorenko in the field of environmental art, highlighting the originality of Ukrainian land art on the example of her works. One of the most important tasks is to cover the current state of the land art research in Ukraine.

The research methodology of the study is the general scientific principles of historicism and the systematic approach. The source study method is used to identify the conditions that influenced the formation of ideological and philosophical backgrounds when creating land art objects by the artist; the complex method and the method of analysis are used to determine the place and importance of the works in the system of contemporary Ukrainian art.

The main information source for studying A. Sydorenko's works is archival materials, including photo documentation from the artist's personal archive N. Lisova's private archive of recordings of A. Sydorenko's interviews in 2021. An analysis of the sources as mentioned above provided an opportunity to analyse the artist's works, trace the stages of the

artist's creative style formation and identify the factors that influenced it.

RESULTS

Anna Sydorenko's oeuvre is marked by the breadth of search implemented in various mediums: environment, site-specific art, land art, installation, object, video and photography. The artist's artistic language is shaped by a particular research approach where, working with the environment, the images are the result of analysing both the properties of natural materials and the history of the project realisation place. It is this author's method that distinguishes the artist's practice within the Ukrainian movement of environmental art.

A. Sydorenko was born in 1958 in Yenakiieve, Donetsk oblast, has lived in Lviv since 1995, has been a member of the Union of Artists of Ukraine since 1993. At this time, she became one of the first Ukrainian artists to start working in land art. Over the years of active artistic activity, the artist took part in numerous residences, both in Ukraine and abroad, created dozens of projects, managed Gary Bowman Art Gallery for 10 years, enriching the cultural life of Lviv with exhibitions of contemporary national and foreign authors, supported young artists in the realisation of their experimental ideas.

The search for the artist's artistic language occurred in the context of the transition of Ukraine to the formation of its independence and democracy. The new cultural policy resulted in the establishment of the Centre for Contemporary Art in Kyiv with the support of the Soros Foundation, owing to which Ukrainian artists gained access to grants, contests, visited international exhibitions of contemporary art, and acquainted with foreign colleagues.

Training in the Department of Easel Graphics at the Kharkiv Art and Industrial Institute (1982–1987) left its mark on the creative interaction of the artist with the environment, which reflected in the graphic linearity and clarity of spatial works for innovative symposia in Sedniv (Chernihiv oblast). Using dark ice and snow cover contrast, A. Sydorenko and C. Yakunin created geometric shapes, circles, rectangles, and spirals on the Snov River's icy surface. The authors called this project Water Signs (1992) (Fig. 1).

The artist's first international creative experience in site-specific art was her participation in the Still Things exhibition (Berlin, Germany, 1993), collaborating with the German artist Akelei Sell. It was there that, for the first time A. Sydorenko decided to discover the peculiarities of space, searching for everything necessary for her project on the city's

streets: paving stones, chalk, paper. Forming a dialogue with the gallery space, the artist presented three black manuscript canvases covered with paper and burnt by fire, hanging above the circles of hundred pebbles (Fig. 2).



Figure 1. Anna Sydorenko, Serhii Yakunin. Water sings. 1992. Action in the Environment. Snow, ice. Photo from the archive of A. Sydorenko.



Figure 2. Anna Sydorenko. No title. 1993. Installation. Fabric, paper, stones. Photo from A. Sydorenko's archive.

Working on the project, the artist opened the work format by complementing and borrowing between open and closed, artificial and natural spaces. In her further work, the artist prefers to get acquainted with the environment, which “prompts ideas and dictates conditions” for the vector of artistic search. For example, at the Laboratory in Poprad international symposium, Slovenia (1994), the artist explored the parking space until she found the necessary stones in a mountain stream, which she decided to tie together with a red rope (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Anna Sydorenko. No title. 1994. Action in the Environment. Stones, rope. Photo from A. Sydorenko's archive.

She didn't realise why she'd done it. Just as the birds fly south, she felt she wanted to connect these pebbles (2021). Identifying and emphasising the features of a certain environment is an important component of the artist's work and becomes clear and tangible only in the context of the location of the project creation, which brings the artist's activity closer to the contemporary art form environment.

In 1998, Anna Sydorenko and her colleague Serhii Yakunin became the first Ukrainian participants of the ArtsLink International Fellowships in California, USA. Artists were placed in forts and barracks along the Pacific coast abandoned after the 1989 earthquake. Among other things, there was a gym, bowling alleys, but everything around, according to the artist, was half-survived, imbued with an atmosphere of desolation and anxiety. There, among the mountains, at an altitude of 740 metres, A. Sydorenko came across a concrete platform. Reflecting on the information field of her place of residence, she decided to combine an artificially formed plane with a view of the endless ocean in a spatial installation. With S. Yakunin, the artist brought ten bowling balls, which she had painted bronze in advance, and placed them on the platform. The creative process of “secret contact with the place” lasted only one day. The authors recorded the work *Homo Ludens* (from Latin “Playing Man”) on film, and in the evening, returned the balls to the primary base, leaving the space clean, but their ideas were realised (Fig. 4).

During the Land Art in Gars am Kamp symposium (2004) in Austria, A. Sydorenko noticed a large cluster of trampled trails in the forest. In response to the chaotic routes, the artist attempted to capture a straightforward trajectory of her movement, marking each step with stones and naming the work *99 Steps* (Fig. 5).



Figure 4. Anna Sydorenko, Serhii Yakunin. Homo Ludens. 1998. Object in the environment. Bowling balls, concrete platform. Photo from A. Sydorenko's archive.



Figure 5. Anna Sydorenko. 99 Steps. 2004. Action in the environment. Stones. Photo from A. Sydorenko's archive.

Later, the artist depicted the idea, which she had found earlier, in *The 24th Year* project (2006) on a residence at Ujazdowski Castle in Poland. Two paths led through the parking area to the castle, and she placed stones along with one of them. Anna Sydorenko was unaware that a French artist planted lavender in front of her installations a few years ago. With her ability to structural analysis and creative sense of the environment, the artist responded to her French colleague with one natural material for another as if by a refrain.

Having practised environmental art for a long time, Anna Sydorenko considers herself an artist of

space. The artist believes that land art exists to work with natural structures and materials provided by the environment itself. An artist only has to highlight the idea programmed by nature. Striving for contact with the land, the artist prefers the significance of a certain place, its history, the naturalness of the landscape in her works. The ocean, as A. Sydorenko (2021) states, is always the ocean. The sea, the shore, the lake, every detail has a story in them, or at least an element of its history, which is always the most interesting for her.

CONCLUSIONS

The phenomenon of Ukrainian land art has been studied quite superficially today, and art historians are only looking for approaches and criteria for determining its specifics. The work of Anna Sydorenko, whose artistic activity dates back to the formation of Ukrainian statehood, is represented by research in various contemporary art fields, among which land art stands out. It has been ascertained that A. Sydorenko started working in environmental art on the eve of the emergence of land art events in Ukraine and was one of the first national artists. The artist's training in the Department of Easel Graphics affected the artist's projects with graphic linearity and clarity of spatial works (Sedniv, 1992).

The indisputable authorial innovation in A. Sydorenko's creativity is her method of preliminary research of the history of the project realisation place and the properties of available natural materials. An analysis of the context of the environment outlined in the artist's works and a certain sense of natural materials should guide further identification of the activities of representatives of national land art and serve in determining its originality and place in the contemporary art system of Ukraine.

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КОНТЕКСТ СЕРЕДОВИЩА У ТВОРЧОСТІ АННИ СИДОРЕНКО

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Анотація

Мета статті — дослідження діяльності сучасної львівської художниці Анни Сидоренко. *Методологічною базою* роботи є загальнонаукові принципи історизму та системного підходу. Джерелознавчий метод застосовано для виявлення умов, що вплинули на формування ідейних та філософських засад у процесі створення художницею ленд арт об'єктів; комплексний метод та метод аналізу — для визначення місця й значення творів у системі сучасного українського мистецтва. *Результати*. Зазначено, що навчання мисткині на відділенні станкової графіки Харківського художньо-промислового інституту позначилося на проектах художниці графічною лінійністю та чіткістю просторового рішення (Седнів, 1992). Становлення власного методу мисткині розглянуто через аналіз творчого пошуку та реалізації задумів у проектах напрямку ленд арт, зокрема, «Still Things» (Берлін, 1993), «Laboratorium» (Попрад, 1994) «Artslink» (Каліфорнія, 1998), «Land art in Gars am Kamp» (Хорн, 2004). Власні спостереження, участь у ленд арт заходах та інтерв'ю Анни Сидоренко дозволили виявити інтуїтивно-філософське підґрунтя у використанні художницею в композиціях історії місця події та символіки натуральних природних матеріалів. Відзначено, що дослідження творів А. Сидоренко сприяє виокремленню вітчизняного мистецтва доквілля на тлі міжнародного досвіду. Матеріали дослідження можуть бути задіяні в процесі викладання історії сучасного українського мистецтва, історії українського дизайну, історії садово-паркового мистецтва, під час проектування зон відпочинку та оформлення паркового середовища. *Наукова новизна* роботи полягає в тому, що вперше в мистецтвознавчий обіг введено аналіз творчого внеску Анни Сидоренко в мистецтво доквілля. Матеріали наукової розвідки заслуговують на особливу увагу, оскільки явище українського ленд арту на сьогодні є малодослідженим, а фахівці мистецтвознавства тільки шукають підходи та критерії до визначення його специфіки.

Ключові слова: Анна Сидоренко; ленд арт; українське сучасне мистецтво; мистецтво доквілля; контекст середовища

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