

Collage as the Art of Responding to the Challenges of the Time in the Conditions of the Full-Scale russian Invasion

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The aim of the article is to analyse the thematic content and technical methods used in the Ukrainian collage created after the full-scale russian invasion on 24 February 2022. *The results* are the analysis of the student exhibition project of design collages *Beyond*, created within the discipline "Design-projection" and dedicated to the theme of russian aggression. Following the subject of practical tasks of the course — visual metaphor and visual allegory — young designers managed to create works that have been exhibited both domestically and internationally. *Scientific novelty*. The corpus of graphic collages created mainly by the young generation of designers during the war and which capture the artistic reflections on the tragic events of 2022 are described, analysed, and introduced into scientific circulation. The main thematic directions are defined, the style and technical method of execution are diagnosed. *Conclusions*. The works analysed in the article are a priceless manifestation of time, because they are made in stressful conditions: under shelling, without proper technical equipment, however, they are emotional reflections of reality, transferred to paper in the style of a collage. There is a revival of the Ukrainian collage tradition of the 1920s and 1930s, which emerged under the influence of constructivism and absorbed the best achievements of the Bauhaus school and was mostly used in publishing. Today, thanks to the development of computer technologies, collage demonstrates the ability to reproduce a wide range of thoughts and experiences of our contemporaries in an expressive manner of media art faster than other classical and established forms of visual art. Using such traditional forms of its existence as a paper work from newspaper and magazine clippings, collage masters also use modern graphic editors to create both two-dimensional and three-dimensional, and moving art objects. In the field of distribution of collage works, changes are taking place from physical display as part of practical exhibition activities to virtualisation through distribution in social networks.

Keywords: collage; photo montage; russian aggression; design education; exhibition activities

For citation

Budnyk, A., & Golub, O. (2023). Collage as the Art of Responding to the Challenges of the Time in the Conditions of the Full-Scale russian Invasion. *Bulletin of KNUKіM. Series in Arts*, 48, 144–150. <https://doi.org/10.31866/2410-1176.48.2023.282477>

Introduction

Each stage of the formation of the Ukrainian nation and state requires careful study, especially when it comes to the pivotal moments in Ukraine's history, such as the russian aggression and the people's resistance to the military invasion. Every layer of society resisted the way they could, so this study is dedicated to artistic and design resistance. At a time when the

invaders destroy culture and take away museum collections, documenting any manifestation of cultural resistance is very important from both a historical and an art studies perspective.

Recent research and publication analysis. The source database contains articles written during the conditionally "peaceful" period of Ukrainian society's existence. The terminology of the concept, classification, and issues of studying were considered by the

researcher H. Kolisnychenko (2011). I. Pedan (2015) analysed the historical formation of the collage technique in the visual arts of the early twentieth century. V. Shcherbatiuk and O. Kolhan (2020) wrote about the use of the photo collage in the education system, noting that "... one of the techniques that help to properly organise and analyse the educational information received in literature classes is the use of collage visualisation". The use of collage in design education was discussed in the study by N. Udris-Borodavko (2018). O. Golub (2022a) partially considered the issue of collage within digital art in her article on digital art, but it did not cover the works of artists of the young generation of Ukrainian graphic design.

From a public point of view, there was a revival of forgotten names of Ukrainian design in the 1920s and 1930s, when collage influenced by constructivism was almost one of the dominant trends in the design of printed publications, from posters to multi-page periodicals such as *Kino* and *Vsesvit*. This is illustrated by the article about Yuriy Kryvdin, which establishes the authorship of previously unexplored collages from the *Kino* magazine published by the All-Ukrainian Photo Cinema Administration (Budnyk, 2020).

A certain marker of the genre reincarnation became the release of art publications with collages, such as *The Age of Collage* (Busch et al., 2013); organisation of numerous exhibitions, in particular in the programme of *The Book Arsenal* (Vasylenko et al., 2021); holding other events of a similar nature; creation of art groups (*Cutout Collage Festival & Studio, Cutout-lovers*); genre popularisation in such profile groups in social media as "Salt-Salt", holding auctions for the sale of collage prints for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The aim of the article is to analyse the thematic content and technical methods of performing Ukrainian collage after the full-scale Russian invasion on 24 February 2022.

The research uses art studies and comparative methods. The empirical basis is a series of collage projects created before the start of the hostilities, which were presented in various locations around the world in the period close to 24 February 2023. The foundation is the collection of the *Creative Resistance of KNUCA¹ and KUK²* group, based on practical tasks within the discipline of "Design-projection".

Results

Recently, there has been a flourishing of various types of graphic design used to demonstrate public re-

sistance to aggression and occupation, both in exhibition spaces and on social media. In particular, the genre of collage, presented at domestic and international locations, received new content.

According to the authors, the renaissance of collage art in recent decades was caused primarily by the requirements of the time, and technically, by the availability of graphic editors like Adobe Photoshop. The emergence of a significant number of authors without proper academic art education led to the explosive development of the collage genre due to the absence of the need for manual drawing, for example, of a human figure and the possibility of replacing it with a figure removed from a photograph or other work of art. The same applies to other plot components, including symbols of material culture — things, architecture, locations, or landscapes, as well as signs of an emotional state. However, the above did not negate the participation of professional artists, members of creative unions, and students of specialised design universities in the process of developing collage art.

From the 10th of February to the 10th of March, the exhibition *The Year of Invincibility* took place at the Kyiv Central House of Artists of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine. Curators Andrii Budnyk and Hanna Lavrekha, together with 25 participants, implemented the project, attracting the majority of young people who tend towards concise and aphoristic expression, typical of the poster and collage genre. As noted by art expert Hanna Lavrekha during the exhibition announcement, with this project, we present the art of collage, which is experiencing a certain renaissance in the artistic life of Ukraine. After its flourishing period in the 1920s and 1930s under the influence of Bauhaus, the current surge is probably the most powerful in a 100-year period. The only correction is the advent of computer technologies that allow you to make collage works faster and more expressively. And this is precisely what the current military situation in Ukraine requires when newsbreaks appear every minute (Kyivskiy natsionalnyi universytet kultury i mystetstv, 2023).

Quick reactions to events, myths, and thoughts of the present are characteristic of both artists and viewers, who, through joint efforts, are bringing victory closer. Looking at Oleksandra Matvieieva's poster, we are outraged by the insidiousness of the enemy, who pretends to be innocent, but in fact sharpens his wolf's teeth; we call the onslaught not by people but by orcs, as on the poster of Viktoriia Nakonechna; we write, like Anastasiia Noskova, "Crimes of Russia" (Fig. 1) with a small letter, emphasising how insignificant and morally impoverished the aggressor country is.

¹ KNUCA — Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts.

² KUK — Kyiv University of Culture.

Russian culture is condemned by the print of Yelyzaveta Baiier (Fig. 2), where the notorious quartet of ballerinas from the "bolshoi theatre" perform a corps de ballet to z-marked military equipment solo. Viktoriia Petrova considers serious political aspects in her work (*Z-Manipulator, What Difference Does It Make?* 2022).



Fig. 1. Anastasia Noskova. Crimes of Russia. 2022.



Fig. 2. Yelyzaveta Baiier. Russian Culture. 2022.

So, the art of collage attempts to visualise what cannot be expressed in words — the sorrow that the year of war brought to our people. Looking at Anastasiia Maliarenko's work, we remember the wonderful people who passed away, as their lives were abruptly cut short by the merciless enemy's weapons. Many works of young people are devoted to the lost joys of childhood — these are prints by Daria Dykaliuk, Daryna Denezh (Fig. 3), Yelyzaveta Liutenko, Polina Lind (Fig. 4). The devastated fates of women with unsung songs and unborn children cause heartfelt grief and at the same time anger at brazen aggression (works by Oleksandra Hrantkovska, Anhelina Zhuravel, Nataliia Lomaieva, Melissa Luhova). The works of Yelyzaveta Krotova (Fig. 5), Oleksandra Kulishenko, and Anastasiia Kurash demonstrate the experience of uncertain and scary situations together with our people under occupation.



Fig. 3. Daryna Denezh. The Border. 2022.



Fig. 4. Polina Lind. Window. 2022.

The overall sentiment of the exhibition, which defines the general compassion for war victims, is the work of Andrii Budnyk, curator, teacher, and mentor of many exhibition participants, who have embraced his concept: The war in the centre of Europe in the 21st century is: - beyond reason; - beyond human consciousness; - beyond human capabilities; - beyond life towards death; - beyond civilisation; - beyond borders, countries, and continents. Young Ukrainian artists and designers attempt to



Fig. 5. Yelyzaveta Krotova. Eyes. 2023.

visualise all these aspects in the technique of collage and photomontage... (Kyivskyi natsionalnyi universytet kultury i mystetstv, 2023).

To create the collage, Andrii Budnyk drew a visual analogy between the photo of a man tortured by the occupiers in Bucha (in the negative version) and a 15th-century painting by Andrea Mantegna *The Lamentation of Christ*, over whose wounds loving women cry. The martyrdom wreath combines the two images and evokes double compassion (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Andrii Budnyk. Christ From Bucha. 2023.

Hanna Novitska skillfully used quotations from world classics in her works to draw public attention to the rescue of Ukraine. She marks details of famous masterpieces by Gustav Klimt, Edvard Munch, Vincent Van Gogh, Jan Vermeer, Salvador Dali, and others with markers of our national symbols and military iconography. Her provocative approach disrupts indifferent contemplation of famous works and focuses attention on today's issues. Thus, the following narrative unfolds behind the painting *The Birth of Venus* by Sandro Botticelli: a young Ukraine is supported on the left by an allegory of Poland with its flag, although the evil winds on the right with the Russian tricolour, are ominously trying to harm it (Fig. 7).

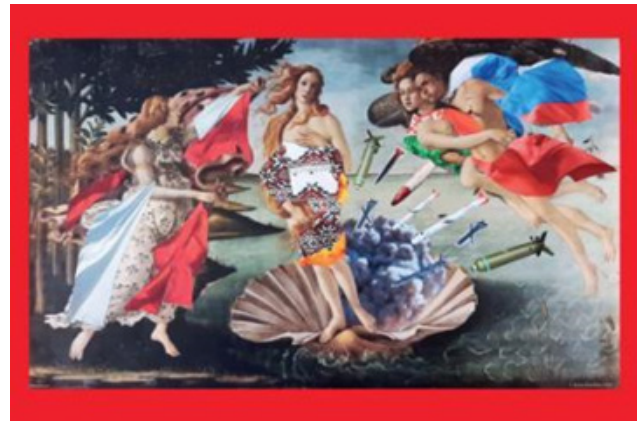


Fig. 7. Hanna Novitska. Rebirth of Venus. 2022.

Tetiana Totska's work *Dream Big* is filled with an optimistic view of the future, in which the artist, looking at the ruins, draws a beautiful new house on the canvas.

Kateryna Siroshstan's print *A Country Begins With Borders* reminds us of what the map of Ukraine should be for the whole world, the restoration and integrity of which is being fought for by the glorious Armed Forces of Ukraine.

A series of four-sheet collages *Under the Sky of War* by Olena Golub is created using a mixed technique that combines her own graphics transformed by Photoshop and photo documents of war taken from the Internet (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Olena Golub. Under the Sky of War – 1, 2, 3, 4. 2022.

The artist gives meaning to the relationship between the images of an ornamentally rhythmic universe and the horrifying scenes that disrupt the harmony of heaven and earth. The bright and colourful environment seems to dissolve the soot of the unpleasant artefacts, including destruction, graves, wild animals that feed on corpses, etc., and, ultimately, the belief in the victory of beauty and light dominates. The artist pays great attention to the theoretical

foundations of her works, denying the dogmatic-manipulative approach prevailing in the enemy camp. She notes: "The best Ukrainian contemporary artists demonstrate a high ethical standard in adhering to the current civic position, especially necessary during the war between light and darkness, truth and fake" (Golub, 2022b).

Although collage was originally born as an analog paper work, digital technologies gave the genre new opportunities through replication: the collage collection presented in Kyiv was simultaneously exhibited in printed form in the Bulgarian city of Ruse (Ruse Art Gallery) (Kyivskiy natsionalnyi universytet kultury i mystetstv, 2023; *Ukrainski avtori pokazvat*, 2023). The curators decided that it would be appropriate to demonstrate it abroad, as in Europe, they still do not well aware of and do not feel well enough about what is happening in Ukraine. This is evidenced by the refusal of the Bulgarian organisers to use Oleksandra Heimur's poster (which was exhibited in Kyiv) because it depicted the "Kremlin amid explosions" (Fig. 9). Instead, Daryna Chornobai's poster was accepted, although it contained wartime symbols — planes, anti-tank hedgehogs, explosions, but without indicating the specific culprit of the aggression (Fig. 10).



Fig. 9. Oleksandra Heimur. The proposed version of the poster Beyond. 2023.



Fig. 10. Daryna Chornobai. The accepted version of the poster Beyond. 2023.

Previous exhibitions of posters by the student design group *Creative Resistance* in Bulgaria (despite the country's membership in the EU) were also accompanied by unpleasant incidents — therefore, the relevance of the struggle on the art front does not diminish and similar collage projects outside Ukraine have considerable political weight.

On the occasion of the anniversary of the beginning of the Russian aggression, a wave of collage exhibitions on war themes swept through other exhibition halls in Ukraine: *Me and the War* at the Museum of History of Kyiv (February 2023), *Thinking of the Enemy* in Drohobych (February 2023) (Puzanova, 2023). Collage exhibitions as a form of escapism from the horrific events of war continue - such as, for example, the textile collage exhibition at the Lviv Green Couch gallery (January 2023). It is noteworthy that these exhibitions feature both analog paper and textile collages, as well as digital photomontages, and moving collages on monitors in exhibition halls.

The popularity of the collage genre is also evidenced by its significant spread on social media. For example, the series *New Russian Museum* by Aleks Aleksiev is dedicated to the re-evaluation of Russian cultural values, where characters from well-known works of Russian painting perform new roles - they light cigarettes and ran away from our "bangs"; they senselessly kill not only their closest neighbours, but also their own children, like Ivan the Terrible in the famous painting by Ilya Repin. The positive response from society to the series is evidenced by the number of likes and reposts.

Conclusions

The works analysed in the article are a price-less manifestation of time, because they are made in stressful conditions: under shelling, without proper technical equipment, in the absence of electricity and the Internet, however, they are emotional reflections of reality, transferred to paper in the style of a collage.

There is a revival of the Ukrainian collage tradition of the 1920s – 1930s, which emerged under the influence of constructivism and absorbed the best achievements of the Bauhaus school and, was mostly used in publishing. Today, thanks to the development of computer technologies, collage demonstrates the ability to reproduce a wide range of thoughts and experiences of our contemporaries in an expressive manner of media art faster than other classical and established forms of visual art. Using such traditional forms of its existence as a paper work from newspaper and magazine clippings, collage masters also use modern graphic editors to create both two-dimensional and three-dimensional, and moving art objects. It should be noted that the collage masters do not remain aloof from the current tragic events and use the speed of production and the possibility of digital reproduction of their works for exhibition activities in Ukraine and abroad.

The scientific novelty of the article consists in introducing into scientific circulation the results of the description and analysis of graphic collages created during the war, which record the artistic reflection of the tragic events of the last year. The main thematic directions and features of the visual language and performance technique are defined.

The prospects for further research lie in recording new examples of collage art, and their analysis, as well as in focusing art studies attention on a new type of collage — animated motion collage, which began to appear in the art space.

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Колаж як мистецтво реагування на виклики часу в умовах повномасштабного російського вторгнення

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Мета статті – проаналізувати тематичне наповнення й технічні способи виконання українського колажу періоду після повномасштабного російського вторгнення 24 лютого 2022 р. *Результатами дослідження* є аналіз студентського виставкового проєкту дизайнерських колажів «За межами», створеного в курсі дисципліни «Дизайн-проекування» і присвяченого темі російської агресії. Відповідно до тематики практичних завдань курсу – візуальна метафора й візуальна алегорія – молодим дизайнерам вдалося створити роботи, які було продемонстровано на вітчизняних і міжнародних локаціях. *Наукова новизна*. Описано, проаналізовано й введено в науковий обіг корпус графічних колажів, які створило здебільшого молоде покоління дизайнерів під час війни і які фіксують мистецьку рефлексію трагічних подій 2022 р. Визначено основні тематичні напрями, діагностовано стилістику й технічний спосіб виконання. *Висновки*. Описані твори є безцінним виявом часу, оскільки зроблені в стресовій ситуації: під обстрілами, без належних технічних умов, проте вони є емоційними відбитками реальності, перекладеними на аркуші в стилістиці колажу. Спостерігається відродження традиції українського колажу 1920-1930-х рр., який виник під впливом конструктивізму, увібрив у себе найкращі досягнення школи Баугауз і застосовувався здебільшого у видавничій продукції. Сьогодні колаж завдяки розвитку комп'ютерних технологій демонструє здатність швидше, ніж інші класичні й усталені різновиди образотворчого мистецтва, відтворити широкий спектр думок та переживань наших сучасників в експресивній манері медіа-арту. Використовуючи такі традиційні форми свого існування, як паперовий твір із газетно-журнальних вирізок, майстри колажу вдаються також до опанування сучасних графічних редакторів для створення як двовимірних, так і тривимірних та рухомих мистецьких об'єктів. У сфері поширення колажних творів відбуваються зміни від фізичного експонування в межах практичної виставкової діяльності до віртуалізації через поширення в соціальних мережах.

Ключові слова: колаж; фотомонтаж; російська агресія; дизайн-освіта; виставкова діяльність

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