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ANTI-WAR POSTER IN THE COORDINATES OF CULTURE

Svitlana Pryshchenko, Professor, Dr. Sc. in Art Studies

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3482-6858>

e-mail: akademiki@ukr.net

Design Department at the State University of Infrastructure and Technologies, Ukraine, Kyiv

This study is motivated by the need to systematize and generalize the anti-war poster of the 20th to the beginning of the 21st century. The article aims to analyze the poster as a tool of propaganda and a form of sociocultural communication. To reveal the topic within the framework of a brief historical excursion, a hermeneutic approach was chosen, which can be applied in the field of culture not only for textual but also for visual information. Axiological, sociocultural, and semiotic methods are distinguished among scientific methods. A comparative method compares the past and present creative experiences of the poster artists. The author states that the poster actively forms mass consciousness, is included in the social symbolic system, has a powerful influence on public opinion, and encourages action. The scientific novelty consists in the conducted empirical analysis of the semiotic use of the red color (as symbol of communism, and now as Russian aggression) or the yellow-blue combination (Ukrainian national colors) in the poster. The practical value will be important for the awareness of the wider scientific and educational communities of the importance of visual information and imagery represented by the poster, as well as its cultural and artistic heritage. Modern media use not only such a traditional tool as a poster for public advertising in the urban environment. In the hands of designers, it is compositionally transformed into any format of static or animated Internet banners, video

advertisements in the subway, digital exhibitions, or presentations for thematic events in Ukraine and abroad.

Keywords: propaganda, public advertising, anti-war poster, media, visualization.

Світлана Прищенко, професор, доктор мистецтвознавства. Антивоєнний плакат в координатах культури / Кафедра дизайну Державного університету інфраструктури та технологій, Київ, Україна

Дане дослідження зумовлено необхідністю систематизації та узагальнення антивоєнного плаката ХХ– початку ХХІ століття. Мета статті – проаналізувати плакат як інструмент пропаганди та форму соціокультурних комунікацій. Для розкриття теми в рамках стислого історичного екскурсу обрано герменевтичний підхід, який можна застосувати у сфері культури не лише для текстової, але й візуальної інформації. Серед наукових методів виокремлено аксіологічний, соціокультурний та семіотичний. Компаративний метод застосовано для порівняння минулого та сучасного творчого досвіду. Авторкою зазначено, що плакат активно формує масову свідомість, включається в соціальну знакову систему, має потужний вплив на громадську думку, спонукає до дії. Наукова новизна полягає в проведеному емпіричному аналізі семіотичного використання в плакаті червоного кольору (символу комунізму, а тепер і російської агресії) або жовто-блакитного сполучення (українських національних кольорів). Практична цінність матиме значення для усвідомлення широкою науково-освітньою спільнотою важливості візуальної інформації та образності, які репрезентує плакат, а також його культурно-мистецької спадщини. Сучасні медіа використовують не лише такий традиційний засіб як плакат для соціальної реклами у міському середовищі, – в руках дизайнерів він композиційно

перетворюється на будь-які формати статичних або анімаційних інтернет-банерів, відеореклами в метро, цифрових виставок або презентацій для тематичних заходів в Україні та за кордоном.

***Ключові слова:** пропаганда, соціальна реклама, антивоєнний плакат, медіа, візуалізація.*

Introduction. Not only are societal problems important for public posters, but also the main anti-war topic is urgent since military conflicts in different countries have not stopped since the beginning of the World War I. The main campaigning buzzer was and remains a poster, its ideological and thematic determination. The existing problem goes beyond the history of Art, in particular the history of posters, combining socio-economic, semiotic, aesthetic, and stylistic means of analysis with new ideological constructions of the world and society understanding [1]. Mass-produced, full-color, large-format war posters were a sign and instrument of the First World War. War posters celebrated, in both their form and content, the modernity of the conflict. They also reached an enormous international audience through their prominent display and continual reproduction in magazines in every combatant nation, uniting diverse populations as viewers of the same image and bringing them closer, in an imaginary and powerful way to the war. Most war posters were aimed particularly at civilian populations [2].

Posters of the first half of the 20th century, periods of two world wars can be divided into two main groups of propaganda: heroic, glorifying feats at the front and in the rear, or reflecting the struggle of socialist and capitalist systems, and satirical, exposing financial and industrial groups involved in the production of weapons, ridiculing the enemy, etc.

During World War II the USA government launched poster campaigns that preached being thrifty with goods and services, recycling metals and other materials, growing and storing food at home, obeying price and ration

controls, and buying war bonds. Terrence Witkowski examines the consumption context, implementation, creative execution, and impact of government-sponsored poster advertising during this important point in the history of American consumer culture. He considers the significance of these campaigns in consumption and poster history [3].

Second half of the 20th century passed without global shocks, but the ideological war between socialism and capitalism remained as the main theme with preservation of visual stylistics of the past period. The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts [4] contained many examples of public Soviet posters promoting anti-war propaganda in Eastern European countries.

In modern scientific peer-reviewed journals, we didn't find relevant publications, especially articles devoted to a poster to oppose the Russian-Ukrainian war, which has been going on for 10 years. As part of the conducted empirical research, propaganda posters of the 20th – early 21st centuries were analyzed. Famous advertiser Edward Bernays investigated psychology of manipulating the masses and the ability to use symbolic actions and propaganda to influence politics, to carry out indoctrination for important social changes. He wrote that human mind is a mixture of inherited prejudices, symbols, clichés and verbal formulations received from leaders. Posters, newspaper and magazine advertisements, street banners and all other types of propaganda must be carefully planned [5]. Poster as an inexpensive and effective media was widely used for state influence and control of citizens in Eastern Europe, as well as the praise of communist allies, reproducing historical and cultural images of that period [6].

Propaganda poster is characterized by conciseness, intensity of composition, impressive abstraction of forms and decorative nature. Art critic Oleksandr Fedoruk notes that propaganda poster was issued on the occasion of official anniversaries, Party Congresses, various dates and

glorified the Bolshevik reality. The ROSTA Windows, UkROSTA and The South ROSTA Windows, arising in the 1920s, were at its sources. Satirical graphics made a significant contribution to the development of propaganda poster. The Art Workshop of the Union of Artists in Ukraine "Agitplakat" was established in 1959 and along with political posters, produced high artistic quality products, which is a great merit of many artists, namely, T. Lyashchuk, F. Glushchuk, O. Vorona, T. Khvostenko, V. Buglak and others [7].

Social being and consciousness are a combination of areas that include processes of social order, life support, economic, political and legal interaction, as well as philosophy, sociology, psychology, etc. Mental field is a spirit of culture, which influences the development of a collection of ideas, experiences and attitudes of people, peculiar to a particular culture in society. Each nation has its own psychological characteristics, and the soul of the people should be studied from both its positive and negative properties.

The article aims to analyze the poster as a tool of propaganda and a form of sociocultural communication.

Methodology. When studying the posters, it is advisable to choose an interdisciplinary approach, since the visualization of the idea is influenced by graphic art, the social and political state of the country at a certain historical stage of development. A hermeneutic approach was chosen to reveal the stated theme. Though, it can be applied in the field of culture not only for textual, but also for visual information. It comprises the following components: *understanding* of the idea, structure and semantic unity of the work; *explanation* (or interpretation) and a certain *context* (historical, cultural, social, political, economic).

Axiological, sociocultural, semiotic and comparative methods are proposed to solve the problematic issue of the essence of the poster. Poster

should be considered not only as a fact of cultural phenomenon or creation of externally attractive image, but as a derivative product determined by a complex of needs, values and norms of a particular historical period. *Axiological method* is applied to study the above-mentioned facts and phenomena. *Sociocultural method* is to study society as an integrity of culture and communications, in particular visual ones, since poster always has an ideological platform, communicative tasks and motivational attitudes. *Semiotic method* provides an understanding of poster images, which are closely intertwined with social, political, cultural and technological processes. Additionally, this method allows us to consider visual elements of poster as a certain set of signs. *A comparative method* is necessary to obtain generalized results of past and present creative experiences of the poster artists.

Lev Manovich presents a method for analysis of cultural data, with a particular focus on visual media. Cultural analytics refers to the use of computational and design methods, including data visualization, media, and interaction design, and machine learning for the exploration and analysis of contemporary culture. One goal of these explorations is to enable us to see what hundreds of millions of people around the world today create, imagine, and value [8].

Study materials. Let's trace how visual information is presented on the example of anti-war topics. Public poster belongs to non-commercial mass media. The ability to see and reflect clear idea in a poster and a poster way of thinking are main features of poster artist. Poster thinking is an excitement and ardor in the desire to convey special idea to a certain number of people. Poster artist must filter the idea through the internal analysis of himself and relevant topic in order to convey the image to the viewer simply and clearly. Poster actively forms mass consciousness, integrates into social sign system, significantly influences public opinion and encourages action,

represents past and modern creative experience, recording social, cultural and historical development of society. It is proved that semantic space of poster is a concise visualization of a significant idea, generalized reproduction of an object or phenomenon in form and color. We consider poster in the context of sociocultural communications, as noted in our previous study [9].

The turbulent events of the 20th century specified the need for a poster – an effective and inexpensive means of influencing society. In Ukraine after the Second World War, poster has already shown the image of a new country (with images of bread, sun, happy women's faces), generally, very close to the picture of “Bread” by T. Yablonska. Propaganda posters of solemn-monumental nature with strong ideological and motivating component, and glorifying a flourishing country, a man – the creator, etc. become important at that time. The widespread image of the Motherland comprised features of proud beauty and strength, romanticism, national character and Ukrainian ornamentation. Poster artists used images, color convention, compositional schemes of Ukrainian folk art as the foundation of graphic style. But the ideological expansion of the USSR deprived ethno-cultural traditions of the Baltic countries, Moldova, Belarus, the Caucasus and Central Asia very quickly. Creative guidelines of posters by V. Shostia, O. Veklenko, V. Lesnyak, Yu. Denisenko, A. Ponomarenko, Ye. Kudriashov, V. Veshtak, V. Viter, O. Mikula, V. Bystriakov, Yu. Neroslik were often in conflict with Soviet authorities.

Currently, poster is actively developing both as a graphic art and as a social project, playing a prominent role in design processes: cultural events, poster competitions, festivals, international reviews. But the main meeting place of the poster with the viewer is still exhibition halls. Poster exhibitions (thematic, regional, personal) are held regularly, but access to them is limited and not very actively reported in Ukrainian media. James Lull, an

American sociologist known for his research on the interaction between communication technologies and culture, finding out how media become an integral part of our daily lives, believes that mass culture should be considered as a big factor of influence [10].

Posters are divided into three large groups by their main functions: *commercial* (profitable), *political* (positive image of party leaders and administrative ideologies) and *public* (emphasis on social, cultural or environmental issues). Poster tends to simplify a distinct object or phenomenon to a sign system of information transmission, which helps not only to analyze the object or phenomenon under consideration, but also to reveal its essence and characteristics. Naturally, some arrangements become inevitable, sometimes it is a complete abstraction of image. These properties of poster, as well as novelty and authenticity, contribute to the rapid assimilation of the information provided. In fact, poster is the most common type of graphics with features that are determined by propaganda function. In addition, poster is an art work made on a large piece of paper that may include concise text for social, political, educational or other purposes. A person “in motion” must clearly understand the idea of poster information, which influences its form as a concise image, an easy-to-read font and bright colors.

Poster is a powerful “weapon”, a dominant tool for visualizing socially significant ideas. Visual perception in poster is closely related to the semantics of color – not only cultural, but also psychophysiological, since the process of perception combines visual reaction and thinking, a process of judgments and thoughts. Different levels of significance in a postmodern environment, using color coding and connotations, influence semiological understanding in the construction of national identity through images. Color is always and everywhere a manifestation and an expression of a certain idea, however, not in terms of quantity or form, but a quality of that property,

without which it is impossible to imagine intelligence. Colors of culture are created by Man, and visual culture, in turn, creates Man.

Poster and its evolution were influenced by many factors, including two world wars, technical progress, the logic of advertising communications, the state of cultural life in society, modern artistic trends, graphic design schools, and the influence of ideological management. Poster Art is developing along with changes in state infrastructure and cultural policy in terms of depriving Ukraine of the status of a former colony of the Russian Empire.

Modern media space requires the expansion of communication skills, competent visualization of information and a certain heroization of images. The term “communication” appeared at the beginning of the 20th century and very quickly, along with its general scientific meaning as an instrument of communication between any objects, acquired a sociocultural meaning. Sociologist Manuel Castells emphasizes that necessary conditions and structural components of communications require the presence of a common language among the subjects of communications (individuals, groups, organizations, etc.), channels for the transfer of information and certain rules for implementation of communications in the given culture (semiotic, ethical, etc.) in order to form social ties, regulate certain forms of social activity, accumulate and broadcast cultural experience. In the 21st century, communications take the first place, media have become a platform where serious strategies are played out [11]. In the current technological context, communications go beyond traditional media, poster in particular, include digital media – the Internet and mobile communications.

Understanding of “communication” characterizes a complex, symbolic process that allows its participants to express certain information or internal emotional states, status roles, etc. Considering discourse as a type of communicative activity, an interactive phenomenon, a speech stream in different forms, we emphasize its existence in a certain semantic field, aimed

at creating linguistic constructions, including visual ones. At the heart of any discourse there is always a key problem that sets a certain vector for its semantic deployment. Cultural discourse is the result of sign systems functioning, perceived as a manifestation of cultural communication (discourse of culture, modernism, postmodernism, etc.), ethno-cultural features of communication (cross-cultural, multilingual, foreign culture), cultural and historical features of communication (for example, discourse of the New Age, Renaissance). Discursive research examines the reasons for the dominance of some cultures in the global information space, discrimination of others, facts of misunderstanding due to the cultural differences and intercultural conflicts. Current situation is characterized by the presence of antagonism in almost all spheres of culture [12].

Media discourse may include a verbal component (oral or written), visual (image or video), audio (musical or noise accompaniment), tactile, taste, etc. In addition, location of poster in urban environment can be significant. The emphasis shifts from informative function to communicative one [13]. Aesthetic function is introduced in poster through the sign functions, though, semiotics and aesthetics are inextricably linked. Sociologist Robin Cohen believes that posters, placards, advertising appeals are examples of *creolization*, as they combine the verbal part with the visual, which belongs to a different sign system than language. According to him, creolization occurs when designers choose certain elements of cultures, give them new meanings and creatively combine to create new images that become products of mass culture [14].

Sociocultural system is an integrated concept that avoids one-sided sociological, technological or cultural determinism. Transition from one type of society to another generates transformation of social structures and cultural artifacts. The emergence of qualitatively different sociocultural phenomena is envisaged in the process of development. Products of artistic

activity – images – acquire social meaning only with a systematic understanding of cultural processes. Thus, a certain content in the integration of emotional and rational components is presented in the form of a sensory image, which is introduced in particular cultural and communicative contexts and associative connections. No culture exists without a society, but no society can exist without a culture. Social values express common goals, play the role of fundamental norms of behavior and communication, serve as social indicators of life quality, ensure the choice of rational actions, create the inner core of culture, spiritual quintessence of needs and interests of individuals and social groups. The value system, in turn, has a reverse effect on social needs, acting as one of the most significant stimuli for social interaction.

Semiotics contributes to the understanding of poster as a sign system: its applied value, aesthetic informativity and artistic imagery as an ideological product of design. Semiotics considers signs that represent or store information and determine systemic processes in nature, society and communications. Poster is a special form of visual communication that is rapidly conquering print and electronic media space, where information-figurative or expressive-suggestive messages of targeted nature are distributed to a wide audience. According to the criterion of “semiotic code”, the means of poster can be divided into visual, verbal and mixed. Verbal information (advertising text) dominates in commercial advertising, and visual, emotional, and non-verbal information prevails in social advertising. However, this distribution is rather conditional, since a significant emotional effect can be created with the help of text or, conversely, image can convey more precise information. The importance of visual information is growing. Rodney Jones says that media have recently spurred the development of image-centricity as they allow for the easy and intense sharing of pictorial content [15]. Visual research consists in knowledge of cultural-historical

reality, understanding life of society for the purpose of dialogue between cultures with a direct overview and comparison of objects, phenomena and processes, traditional and digital media in particular.

All signs and images as encoding of certain meanings should form a state of reliability, stability, openness to the consumer without negative meanings or interpretations. Therefore, visual code is a well-established symbolic system in graphical form. We emphasize a wide range of topics and the variety of problems in the process of design, the necessity of providing critical analysis of visual data, synthesis of professional disciplines covering numerous manifestations of this new interdisciplinary trend. Visualization provides a valuable basis for comparative analysis of advertising information tools and their impact on society (symbols, ornaments, web graphics, video advertising, printed and outdoor advertising). Visualization is a comprehensive resource for understanding the power of design research and an integral source of creative concepts development. In addition, case studies provide a link between ideas and their practical implementation. Visual language acquires independence, transmits social ideas and actively influences consciousness. Metaphor becomes basic characteristic of modern visual culture, a tool for integrating abstract and concrete concepts, interpreting complex ideas, combining images with emotions; a means of rethinking and emphasizing new meanings. The use of visual metaphors in poster indicates that they have potentially persuasive power, perhaps at a subconscious level, and, as a result, have the desired result [16].

Posters are made not only by graphic, but also by pictorial means. Many posters are created in a single copy for the exhibition or for posting outdoors, in a public place. Poster has bright, conditional, laconic graphic and color scheme, sometimes with decorative expressiveness. Specific means of propaganda are: planar image, common symbols, figurative metaphors,

spectacular combinations of colors, scales, points of view, degrees of convention, heroic or satirical images. The creative method of poster artists significantly depends on the level of aesthetic development of the target audience he addresses in his work.

Political and public (social) posters today are semantically closely intertwined, they are becoming tools of hybrid technologies and visual forms for the first front – military, the second – information and the third – cultural. The beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022 inspired Kharkiv triennial “The 4th Block” for international cooperation among students and professionals in the field of poster art under the slogan “Stand with Ukraine!”. Exhibitions were held in different countries: Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Czech Republic, Montenegro, France, Bulgaria, Spain, Slovakia, Turkey, North Korea and Japan, Belgium, Canada and the USA. Information about these exhibitions was presented on Ukrainian and foreign news sites, as well as on design web resources.

The yellow-blue explosion as a marking of Ukrainian territory and demand for its integrity, as a coding of the meaning of national identity and high moral guidelines of Ukrainian society demonstrated various creative findings, different graphic stylistics, but the only one instrument is color as a resource of the nation. Summing up, we note that it was Russian aggression that activated consciousness and creativity of artists and designers of the world in the use of Ukrainian national colors in poster.

International exhibition “Poster against the War” in 2023 was held in Wroclaw and Krakow. The main goal of the project is to publicize the events in Ukraine through graphic art, to draw attention to the threat that Russia poses to the world, and to express the steadfast position of artists from all over the world who condemn the war. A powerful exhibition consisting of 100 posters presented the works by authors from Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Germany, Armenia, Austria, Great Britain, France and Japan.

Among the creators are both well-known artists and designers, as well as very young artists whose works are distinguished by a high professional level. In their posters, the authors raise not only the problem of war, but also painful social and patriotic topics that reflect the complex interaction of Man with the World [17].

The scientific novelty consists in the conducted empirical analysis of the semiotic use of the red color or the yellow-blue combination in the poster. Students' works confirm the current negative context in the use of red as a symbol of Russian aggression, and the positive context of Ukrainian national colors as a means of self-identification and ethnicity. Philosopher Myroslav Popovych claimed to write a book about red 20th century, as by his words, it was mostly like that for us [18].

So, the poster is updated as a carrier of graphic trends and a tool of propaganda, considering it as a product of visual culture, a holistic view of the poster as a reflection of the sociocultural sphere of society is presented. The practical value will be important for the awareness of the wider scientific and educational communities of the importance of visual information and imagery represented by the poster, as well as its cultural and artistic heritage. Modern media use not only such a traditional tool as a poster for public advertising in the urban environment. In the hands of designers, it is compositionally transformed into any format of static or animated Internet banners, video advertisements in the subway, digital exhibitions, or presentations for thematic events in Ukraine and abroad.

Robin Landa has been to reflect the industry's shift from print and TV ads to fully integrated transmedia campaigns, giving insight into a broad range of media channels, new concepts, and strategies for creative content [19]. Foreign researchers rejecting the Internet as the only source of public advertising in the future, believe that mixed formats will serve as a bridge to the expected but not yet fully defined digital future. Thus, visual research of

poster materials has great potential to accompany other methods of studying and understanding the social world [20; 21].

Conclusions. Nowadays, a visual-communicative approach to media is clearly defined, which tends to be concise and should provide a quick and unambiguous perception of information. The affirmation of poster art in Ukraine as an independent type of professional design activity, the expansion of global communication space, complex political and socio-economic conditions, contradictory intercultural and ethno-cultural tendencies increase attention to effective means of visualizing social ideas. The visual language of color in poster has psycho-emotional, associative and semantic principles, combined with verbal factors, and arguing practical use of color opportunities in this effective means of modern propaganda of Ukrainian national identity. By “ecology of culture” we mean the preservation of cultural heritage necessary for social and spiritual life of a person. This is not less important task than preserving the environment, but the ecology of culture should not be confused with the restoration of art monuments, since the ecological approach, first of all, is to comprehend the genesis of the nation culture and predict its development. Understanding the means of poster visualizing (semantics, aesthetics and imagination) helps viewers acquire necessary competencies in the area of public advertising. In the future, the generalization of our research is foreseen to create a book album “The Poster as a Tool of Propaganda”.

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