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HISTORICAL IMAGE IN THE WORK OF OLEKSIY SHTANKO

Abstract. The article talks about the formation and creative pursuits of the graphic artist, teacher, honored artist of Ukraine Oleksiy Volodymyrovych Shtanko; the development of stylistic and formal features of the most iconic works of the artist is analyzed, his achievements as an artist are summarized. Historicism, a unique style and a masterful combination of traditions and modern artistic trends are characteristic features of the artist's creativity. Book illustration, movie poster, historical portrait, postage stamp, created by the master, have become a kind of historical document that transmits the greatness, power, achievements, preserves the memory of the greatness of the Ukrainian people. The research methodology is based on a set of scientific methods, the leading of which are iconographic, comparative-historical, cultural-historical and historical-biographical, which contributed to the comprehensive study of the creative work of Oleksiy Shtanko. **The purpose of the article** – is to study the work of Oleksiy Shtanko: easel graphics and book illustrations, poster design and small-form graphics. **Research methods.** The organization of O. Shtanko's visual arts is based on a holistic perception and principles, in particular on the application of historical-cultural, comparative research methods, systematization, classification, synthesis, figurative-stylistic and art-historical considerations. **Results.** The artist's works were studied by types of graphic arts, theme, genres and aesthetic-stylistic features, chronology and typology in historical-cultural and artistic sources.

Key words: O. Shtanko, poster, book illustration, postage stamp, historical portrait.

ІСТОРИЧНИЙ ОБРАЗ У ТВОРЧОСТІ ОЛЕКСІЯ ШТАНКА

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Анотація. У статті йдеться про становлення та творчі пошуки художника-графіка, педагога, заслуженого діяча мистецтв України Олексія Володимировича Штанка; проаналізовано розвиток стилістично-формальних особливостей найбільш знакових творів художника, узагальнено його надбання як митця. Історизм, унікальний стиль та майстерне поєднання традицій і сучасних художніх тенденцій – характерні ознаки творчості художника. Книжкова ілюстрація, кіноплакат, історичний портрет, поштова марка, створені майстром, стали своєрідним історичним документом, що передає нащадкам велич, силу, надбання, зберігає пам'ять про велич українського народу. Методологія дослідження ґрунтується на сукупності наукових методів, провідними з яких є іконографічний, порівняльно-історичний, культурно-історичний та історико-біографічний, що сприяло комплексному вивченню творчого доробку Олексія Штанка. **Мета статті** – дослідження творчості Олексія Штанка: творів станкової графіки та ілюстрації книги, дизайну плакату і графіки малих форм. **Методи дослідження.** Упорядкування образотворчої діяльності О. Штанка базується на цілісному сприйнятті і принципах, зокрема на застосуванні історико-культурного, порівняльного методів дослідження, систематизації, класифікації, синтезу, образно-стилістичного та мистецтвознавчого обмірковування. **Результати.** Досліджено твори митця за видами графічних мистецтв, темою, жанрами та естетико-стилістичними ознаками, хронологією і типологією в історико-культурних та мистецьких джерелах.

Ключові слова: О. Штанко, плакат, книжкова ілюстрація, поштова марка, історичний портрет.

Problem statement. The main trends of Ukrainian graphics of the 1980s – 1990s of the 20th century reflected a transitional period in art, associated with social and political changes in the country. The key features of the mentioned period were the search for new expressive means in art – artists sought to move away from the canons of socialist realism, experimented with techniques, styles and composition, revived national traditions, turned to folk art, ethnic motifs, Ukrainian symbolism and historical images. The graphics have progressed and changed. This period is characterized by the emergence of original non-standard approaches to engraving, printmaking, and book illustration. Due to the expansion of the thematic spectrum, artists tried to explore deep philosophical, historical, environmental and social themes. At this time, bookplates, miniatures, and prints became popular, allowing artists to embody their own ideas in compact forms.

Along with the traditional techniques of etching, linocut, woodcut, lithography, monotype, collage, and airbrushing are actively used. Under the influence of postmodernism, irony, quoting classical styles, and combining various artistic languages became characteristic of graphic works of that time. In the 1990s, artists actively used graphics to criticize social phenomena and to comprehend post-Soviet reality as a means of artistic protest.

Among the iconic figures of this period, the graphic artist O. Shtanko, whose innovative and expressive approach to solving creative tasks has gained wide recognition.

Analysis of recent research and publications. With pan-European trends and national features of the development of Ukrainian graphics of the 20th century. we are introduced to the book of art critic O. Lagutenko [1], in which the history of Ukrainian graphics is presented for the first time in modern Ukrainian art history. The article by associate professor of the Department of Graphic Arts V. Perevalsky highlights the problems of the development of the book publishing process in Ukraine, the presence of highly educated talented artistic personalities and at the same time the existence of «flashy» template covers and the pitiful internal design of books [2].

Despite the significant achievements of O. Shtanko, his creative work has not yet been properly studied. There are some brief reviews of the artist's work, but mostly these are concise autobiographical materials [3;4], as well as publications that he illustrated [5;6;7]. The short dictionary-reference «Professors of NAOMA

(1917–2012)» briefly indicates the milestones of the artist's biography [3, p. 251]. Mentions in social networks only informatively acquaint art fans with the works of the artist, presented at exhibitions or with his illustrations. However, these materials are scattered, highlight individual pages of O. Shtanko's multifaceted and fruitful work and cannot be considered exhaustive. An important part of the source base for writing the article was O. Shtanko's creative works.

An overview of the main material. The mainstream of the creative inspiration of the graphic artist O. Shtanko was the national-historical context, the leading link of which was the definition of the Ukrainian cultural tradition, the historical and local history view of important historical events through the prism of the present. The thematic range of the artist combines both the religious and philosophical worldview of the artist and historical knowledge, in particular the heraldry of song creativity, customs, rituals, weapons, everyday life, traditions and clothing of the Ukrainian people, archetypes of monuments, the definition of the activities of historical figures, science, culture and art of Ukraine. A cross-section of the figurative and stylistic solutions used by the artist is multifaceted – from realistic interpretation to the implementation of a symbolic stylized and decorative direction with the weaving of characteristic features and images of folk art. The works of easel and consumer graphics are distinguished by their bright authorial discoveries, outstanding direction, and artistic, aesthetic, and compositional compilations.

The artist's love for the history and identity of the Ukrainian people is due to a close connection with his native land, with the centuries-old history of his people. O. Shtanko was born on August 19, 1950 in the village of Piya, Rzhyshevskiy, now Obukhiv district, Kyiv region in the very center of Trypillia culture.

From the age of 14 he studied at the Kyiv Art and Industrial College. He graduated from the Kyiv Art Institute (now NAOMA). He studied with T. Lyashchuk, V. Perevalskyi, V. Chebanyk, A. Chebykin. Since 1979 he has taught drawing and political posters at the Department of Drawing, and since 1989 at the Department of Graphics - graphic design, drawing, fonts. In the poster workshop he made series on acute social topics, but his main preference has always been history. Both posters, books, and stamps - everything is mainly on a historical theme. He was interested in the following periods: Proto-Slavic civilization on the island of Rügen, Kievan Rus, the Lithuanian period, and the Hetmanate [8].

The artist's work immerses in a whirlpool of images, stories, and events, in which one feels a deep immersion in the historical and philosophical themes of Ukrainian art. Formulating a visually eloquent interpretation, based on the main principle, an aesthetic expressive idea, the historically authentic nature of events, and the ease of the idea, the artist evokes a harmonious feeling of perfection and a fundamental level of the concept of graphic language, form, and content in relation to the work of art. O. Shtanka's fascination with historical sources, monographs, magazines, and old books, and the study of the historical layer are reflected in the author's ideas when creating figurative-stylistic and illustrated series of books, portraits of graphic works, etc.

Fanatical devotion to the history of Kyivan Rus' connection with Scandinavia, the culture of Iceland, and Byzantine sources influenced the artist's work, in which outstanding historical events from the time of the Kyiv princes and the author's spiritual and artistic vision were closely intertwined.

While still a student, O. Shtanko studied the historical works of B. Grekov, «The Origin of Rus» by Harvard professor O. Pritsak, and books by O. Subtelny devoted to the history of Ukraine. Despite the existing censorship and rewriting of history, O. Shtanko studied various studies and historical facts. The artist's worldview changed and expanded. With the emergence of new and progressive sources that differed from the interpretation of history in Soviet times, in particular about the history of the Cossacks, an evolutionary transition and rethinking of worldview positions, specifics in the interpretation of the historical image, path, and historiography in general, took place.

One of his first posters was a work for the Young Theater, a bold depiction of the leader of the Soviet period, I. Stalin, as the personification of the repressive system. In those days, it was a brave confrontation with the nomenclature-political system, a bold statement about his different attitude to the ruling regime. But at that time, censorship did not allow such liberties in the interpretation of ideas.

Book graphics, advertising posters, posters, postage stamps, envelopes — applied graphics of small forms play an extremely important role in society. Detailing, democratic interpretation of form, careful processing of a large amount of archival material, in particular, a detailed study of historical events characterize the works of O. Shtanko. One of the admirers of his approach

to work for a long time was the publishing house «Veselka».

The artist illustrated the editions of «Gold of the Incas» by A. Lielaïs (1986), «The Constitution of Pylyp Orlyk» (1994), and M. Hrushevsky's «How the Ukrainian People Lived»: «Princess Olga», «Prince Oleg», «Ostroh Printing House» (1999) [7].

In «The Constitution of Pylyp Orlyk 1710» (ill. 1), he created a whole series of portraits of hetmans and figures of Ukrainian culture, starting from Kyivan Rus, «Russkaya Pravda». These images were so convincing that they are still used by authors in their creative work. This is a unique phenomenon in Ukrainian visual art and an unexpected interpretation in the modern history of art. Detailed depiction of costumes, research into everyday life, and Cossack customs characterize his portraits of Ukrainian figures in the style of parsuna, a type of portrait painting in Eastern Europe of the 16th–18th centuries that preserved the techniques of icon painting. Parsuna became a transitional genre from icon painting to secular portraiture. The heroization of a historical figure, the stylization of the hero's costume, give these illustrations a deep historical subtext («Dmytro Vyshnevetsky», «Pylyp Orlyk», «Bohdan Khmelnytsky», «Ivan Mazepa» and others).

Portraits of iconic great personalities (Ivan Mazepa, Pylyp Orlyk, Metropolitan Hilarion



Ill. 1. «Ivan Mazepa». Illustration for the publication «The Constitution of Pylyp Orlyk 1710». Paper, gouache. 1994. [4]

and others) are not an impersonal crowd of personalities, but a combination of different, individually unique figures, each of which has its own historical value and state significance.

The artist's works reveal a certain decisive strategy and intention, compositional modeling and stylistic charisma, unique figurative thinking. An interesting approach to achieving an expressive and atmospheric interpretation in a historical context: symbolism, successful, not stereotypically selected color scheme, tonal grapheme of the entire work.

Multi-figure composition «Ostroh Printing House» (ill. 2), illustration for the publication of M. Hrushevsky, dedicated to the founder of the printing house K. Ostrohsky, is an organic ensemble, where the main group of participants-printers of the first plan are combined with each other in combination with the characteristic types of applied art of a specific historical period, revealed in the interior. It is simple in perception and rational in its idea and artistic expression. Each form (printing press, furniture, costume, utensils) retains its everyday everydayness and at the same time is captured by the eye as a whole, making the composition expressive and easily accessible for viewing. This technique reveals the artist's bold intention and allows you to give the composition a special monumental significance to

the historical event. The general atmosphere of the illustration conveys the importance of book printing for the development of Ukrainian culture, and the color scheme adds solemnity and historical truth to the scene.

When designing the illustrations for the postage stamp, the artist used a cursive font. O. Shtanka's postage stamps are distributed all over the world: «Princess Olga», «Roksolana» (both – 1997), «Anna Yaroslavna», «1000 years of chronicle and bookmaking in Ukraine» (both – 1998), «Halshka Gulevichivna», «Yaroslav the Wise», «Metropolitan Hilarion», «800 years of the Galician-Volyn State» (all – 1999), «Marusya Churai», «Prince Volodymyr the Great», «2000 years of Christianity» (all – 2000) – their themes and internal content create the image of Ukraine and popularize it in the world.

Recalling the work of O. Shtanko, his teacher, master of fine arts V. Perevalsky, noted that the artist was mostly engaged in applied graphics, there was less easel graphics in his work. But the artist's mastery of easel compositions captivates and amazes. O. Shtanko's soul is closely connected with his works. We observe the tendency towards research topics in the lithograph «Self-portrait» (ill. 3), where the artist depicts himself in a diver's armor, dressed for exploring the depths of the sea. In this way, the artist revealed his interest in research, expressed his natural desire to study and comprehend the depths, his worldview, his ideological and philosophical position and the opposition of the elements to the spiritual aspiration of man to know the world. Close to a square, the stable and expressive format of the



Ill. 2. «Ostroh Printing House». Illustration for the publication of M. Hrushevsky «How the Ukrainian people lived». Paper, gouache. 1999. [4]



Ill. 3. «Self-portrait» 1980s. Lithography. [Photo from the collections of the Department of Graphic Arts]

work, of almost regular geometric shape, creates a feeling of balance, harmony of man and nature. The rhythms of the waves crashing behind the hero, the rhythmic flapping of seagull wings, woven into the folds of the waves, fill the space of the work with sounds and bird chatter. They evoke memories of long-gone times, emotions and premonitions that moved the artist and unexpectedly inspired him to create. A branch of coral in his hand reveals the essence of the experiment, its significant significance in the knowledge of nature and the disclosure of the secret plan in the symbolism of the depths – it becomes a reward and at the same time a valuable prize in the competition between man and nature. However, the found relic can symbolize not only a scientific discovery, but also the need for a careful attitude to the environment. Such an interpretation prompts reflection on the role of man in the natural world, on his ability not only to conquer, but also to preserve. This work can also be perceived as a metaphor for an inner search – a man's journey to the depths of his own consciousness. Dark waves can symbolize anxieties or fears, while seagulls can symbolize hope and the desire for freedom.

Compositionally, the work is constructed in such a way that the viewer's gaze first focuses on the human face, then smoothly moves to the hands with the plant, and then to the moving waves and birds.

In his work, the artist does not remain just a contemplative, but in a special way, deeply reveals the essence, penetrating the observer's consciousness and demonstrating the work of art from different sides. Each time, appropriate allegorical forms are found for a figurative solution, which unexpectedly reveal the artist's intention. Aesthetic categories such as light, color, sign, image, symbol permeate works with Christian motifs, which occupy a worthy place in the artist's work. These are such works as «To Kill the Dragon» (1988), «To the Fallen Heroes» (1990s), related to the spiritual and philosophical life of society. They exhibit an artistic mix of ideas of religious mysticism, ideas of Christianity; they contain a wide spectrum of awareness of worldview resonance. The figurative interpretation of these works is saturated with sincerity and emotionality and is distinguished by dramatic tension. The thematic relevance of the plot is preserved in our time, regardless of the dates of execution of the works – aesthetics and integrity, artistic expressiveness eloquently trumpet through time. The artist's appeal to such interesting plots and careful selection of graphic language, artistic

and figurative techniques are manifested in the individualization of the author's face and the author's position.

Thus, the composition of the poster «To the Fallen Heroes» (ill. 4) is deeply symbolic and expressive. The artist turns to the language of symbols: without depicting faces, he generalizes the images of the fallen heroes, next to whom candles burn. On the one hand, O. Shtanko reminds that candles burn as long as our memory is alive, on the other hand, candles resemble spears. The reflection of the flame on the metal enhances the effect of the relationship between life and death: the candle as a traditional symbol of memory of the fallen, and the spear – a symbol of war and struggle. The background of the poster is dark, which emphasizes the tragedy of the topic and emphasizes the light of the candles, which seems to break through the darkness. All details are subordinate to the transmission of the idea of the feat and sacrifice of the heroes who gave their lives.



Ill. 4. Poster «To the Fallen Heroes». Hardboard, tempera. 1990s. [4]



Ill. 5. Poster «To Kill a Dragon». Hardboard, gouache. 1988. [4]



Ill. 6. Poster «Danilo – Prince of Galicia». Hardboard, tempera. 1987. [4]

The movie poster for the film «To Kill a Dragon» (ill. 5) has a distinct symbolic composition that conveys the idea of the fight against evil and tyranny, focusing the viewer's attention on the problem of self-knowledge and getting rid of inner darkness. It is not for nothing that the artist drew an analogy with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ: just as the Son of God was crucified for the sins of humanity, so everyone must cleanse themselves of the evil within themselves. The artist aptly revealed the authors' intention and their message that «everyone must kill the dragon within themselves», only then will everyone be free.

Originality and author's solution characterize the movie poster «Danilo – Prince of Galicia» (ill. 6). O. Shtanko creates a composition full of dynamics and symbols. He does not reproduce a realistic portrait of the prince, but turns to a symbol – the image of a falcon – the personification of the wisdom, strategic thinking and military power of Prince Danylo of Galicia. The bird's gaze is directed forward, which symbolizes the determination and unwaveringness of the prince's decisions. Behind him is a faithful army fighting the enemy, cavalry, banners and weapons. The warriors are depicted in motion, which enhances the dynamics, conveying the epicness of the event. The color scheme of the poster is not accidental, because the intertwining red, blue and black colors enhance the drama of the scene, conveying

the tense atmosphere of the battle. The artist successfully combined symbolism (the falcon as the personification of the prince) and historical authenticity (the depiction of the battle) in the composition, conveying the greatness and power of the figure of Danylo Halytsky.

O. Shtanko is undoubtedly a wonderful master of the poster, he skillfully influences the viewer's consciousness, determines the main goal, subordinates secondary elements to it, in his characteristic manner, for a deeper understanding of the idea embedded in the work.

Main conclusions and prospects for using the research results. O. Shtanko is one of the most prominent Ukrainian graphic artists of the second half of the 20th century, whose work is distinguished by deep historicism, a unique style and a masterful combination of traditions and modern artistic trends. His works are not just images, but a deep understanding of Ukrainian history and culture, recreated through carefully constructed composition, symbolism and attention to detail. The uniqueness of O. Shtanko's work lies in his ability to convey the era, character and mood through graphics. He worked in the genres of book illustration, movie poster, historical portrait, postage stamp, and everywhere his style remained recognizable. Each of his works is not just a visual image, but a kind of historical document that opens up new facets of Ukrainian heritage.

Shtanko's significant contribution to the art of illustration was manifested in his works for historical publications, such as «The Constitution of Pylyp Orlyk» and the works of M. Hrushevsky. The artist skillfully combined documentary accuracy with artistic expressiveness, which allowed viewers not only to see the past, but also to feel its spirit. A series of portraits of Ukrainian hetmans, Cossack leaders and cultural figures became the standard for visualizing Ukrainian history.

Another feature of his work is the use of elements of Ukrainian Baroque and pan-European artistic traditions. This gave his works dynamism, decorativeness and at the same time philosophical depth.

O. Shtanko not only developed graphic art, but also formed national identity through visual images. His work has become an important component of the cultural memory of Ukraine, and today it remains a source of inspiration for new generations of artists and researchers of Ukrainian history.

The information and conclusions presented in the article can be used in the creation of a monographic publication about O. Shtanko, as well as in the process of studying and researching the creative work of artists of the second half of the 20th century.

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