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REPRESENTATION OF THE WILL, HEROISM AND BRAVERY VALUES IN GRAPHIC DESIGN PROJECTS OF CONTEMPORARY UKRAINE

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Abstract. The article reveals the component of the spiritual and mental level of the socio-cultural identity project model in graphic design, namely the most fundamental values of the Ukrainian mentality – will, heroism, and courage. These values are substantiated by historical research and the results of current surveys of Ukrainians. Examples of graphic design projects of the last 5-7 years show that designers refer to these values as a meaningful concept. In addition, they demonstrate will and heroism through visual techniques (such as composition, stylization, fonts, color), as well as the sign system. Among the most common signs are the national colors, transformed but recognizable forms of the trident, the Cossack character, and the military camouflage «pixel». The representation of the values of the Ukrainian mentality in graphic design resonates with the current social reality, which increases the effectiveness of visual communication. In addition, such projects broadcast Ukrainian identity to the international space and present a unique culture.

Key words: graphic design, socio-cultural identity, Ukrainian mentality, values, project activity, visual communications, culture.

Introduction. One of the priorities of the modern democratic world is a respectful attitude towards cultural diversity. In this worldview paradigm, a special niche is taken up by visual communication projects that reveal the identity of a particular culture. One of the basic components of cultural identity is the values supported by the majority of the culture's carriers. The topic of values has been widely studied at the interdisciplinary level for more than 100 years, with the basic theories in the field of philosophy (H. Rickert, M. Scheler, M. Heidegger), sociology (M. Weber, E. Durkheim, T. Parsons, M. Rokeach), psychology (C. Jung, A. Maslow, L. Kohlberg, S. Schwartz), marketing and advertising (F. Kotler, M. Gobe). The emphasis on values as an important factor in the field of design is considered mainly in branding studies.

In the context of the development of Ukrainian culture and graphic design as its component, it is important to analyze the correlations between the dominant values of contemporary Ukrainian society and the extent and manner in which this is manifested in graphic design projects. In finding out the most explicit, traditionally formed, researched, and confirmed values of the Ukrainian ethnos, the works of cultural studies, ethnographers, and anthropologists whose history dates back to the mid-nineteenth century (M. Kostomarov, D. Antonovych, D. Chyzhevsky, and others) are a reasonable basis. Given that the topic of national culture and Ukrainian values is quite common among humanities scholars, this article relies on the processing of historical materials by contemporary scholars (Z. Boiko, S. Poludenko, O. Stasevska, M. Starodubskaya). In graphic design, the topic of identity in Ukrainian design is presented in the studies of V. Danylenko, V. Kosiv, A. Rudenchenko, I. Syvash and others, but they mostly focus on retrospective analysis. The existing single review publications on Ukrainian graphic design projects and the manifestation of the value aspect in them need to be generalized and theorized, which is the relevance of this article.

The aim and objectives are to reveal the correlation between the dominant values of modern Ukrainian society and graphic design projects that become significant in its evolution and the formation of national features.

Materials and methods. The priority of certain value orientations of society is a dynamic concept that is influenced primarily by social, economic, and political factors. Therefore, the study combines the conclusions of basic works that have already been recognized by many followers and empirical data from current research. In addition to the scientific heritage, the article is based on the results of sociological surveys and monitoring of the current situation in 2021–2024.

The empirical basis of Ukrainian graphic design is formed by projects of the last 5–7 years, which are actively distributed in the public space and represent Ukraine at international professional competitions.

Results of the study. The value base consists of two generalized components: those values that were formed during the historical development of an ethnic group (nation) and its culture, and those that arise in the context of current events in society. According to experts, the Ukrainian mentality is characterized by a medium-high long-term orientation, which is associated with a high connection between the past and the future. This means adherence to established traditions, social obligations, and established rules, and is a necessity for logical construction of transitions between the past, present, and future (Starodubskaya, 2024, pp. 35-36). This orientation concerns primarily the current present and partly determines the need to absorb one's cultural content, practice, language, institutions, norms, and the work of previous generations. It also explains the transfer of all this to the next generation for the sake of self-preservation and self-reproduction of society. This usually happens in times of social cataclysms.

The analysis of publications has revealed a range of stable values of the Ukrainian mentality that are manifested at different stages of historical development, albeit with varying intensity. In this article, we focus on such values as freedom, heroism, and bravery, which is primarily due to the situation of a ten-year war and a three-year invasion in Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

As early as the XIX century, M. Kostomarov emphasized the freedom-loving nature of Ukrainians (Boiko, 2015, p. 74) as a significant determinant of national character. D. Chyzhevsky noted that an important feature of Ukrainians is individualism and the desire for freedom in different interpretations of this word (Boiko, 2015, p. 75). Today, this topic is also the leitmotif of many studies, especially after 2022. According to M. Starodubskaya, freedom is one of the foundations of the Ukrainian mentality, which is manifested in the ability to make important decisions independently, without pressure, in the perception of rules and restrictions as flexible and not always binding, and in the priority of freedom over equality, justice, and even responsibility (Starodubskaya, 2024, p. 289). Resistance to the invaders, which was manifested at the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014 and has become especially evident since 2022, indicates that Ukrainians have a predominant «will to fight as a disposition and decision to accept the battle, continue to fight and win in this existential war for national identity» (Ukrainske suspilstvo, 2022, p.265). Notably, this model of behavior «is based on the dignity of free people, regardless of the perception of state institutions and their effectiveness» (Ukrainske suspilstvo, 2022, p. 266).

The theoretical concept of will is based on historical analysis, but is supported by statistics and data from multi-vector annual sociological surveys, in particular by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. For example, values such as freedom of speech, democratic control of government decisions, and participation in political life experienced a rating decline in 2016-2020. At the same time, intellectual development, cultural competence, interesting work, participation in religious life, and the relevance of the values of Ukraine's state independence and democratic development remained consistently high (Ukrainske suspilstvo, 2021, pp. 293-294). In 2022, Ukrainians not only strongly supported the defense, but also had an unequivocal negative attitude toward any concessions, with almost no difference between regional worldviews (Reznik, 2022, pp. 267-272). These survey results resonate with other surveys conducted by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation: among the values offered to respondents, the highest score was given to the position of

«freedom», and it changed from 80.3% in 2016 to 83.9% in 2020 (Shcho ukrainsi..., 2021). Thus, while in internal social processes the desire to act according to one's own vision may be one of the reasons for inconsistency and constant public debate, in a situation of war with an external enemy, the value of freedom has become fundamental not only for the survival of the nation for 3 years, but also in positioning the country in the international arena.

Ukrainian graphic designers play a significant role in the developments of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which has become the dominant social context of contemporary Ukrainian design. Their diverse participation in the information and communication aspect of the struggle for victory is a manifestation of individual social responsibility. The idea of freedom as a basic value of Ukrainians is the conceptual basis of the iconic projects of the same name by Ukrainian graphic designers in recent years. The Volya font has become one of the visual tools and a symbol of resistance to Russian aggression (Fig. 1). It was developed by designer and researcher of Ukrainian typographic heritage Marcela Mozhyna in 2022 based on the lettering (“drawn” font compositions) of the chief artist of the UPA (The Ukrainian Insurgent Army) Nil Khasevych, in particular the logo of the «Za Volya Natsii» (For the Freedom of the Nation) publication. The Volya font has a distinctive character of letters and historical background of events related to the defense of the most important value of the Ukrainian mentality. Thanks to this, it became very popular in 2022 and was eventually used as one of the official fonts of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The designer advises choosing it when «it is necessary to strengthen and emphasize such qualities as resilience, determination, and courage» (Letter W. Will, 2023).



**Fig. 1. Nil Khasevych. The logo of the publication “For the Will of the Nation”.
Marcela Mozhyna. Presentation of the Volia font**

Freedom and courage as values are included in the set of key concepts of the historical and cultural development of the Ukrainian nation in the online platform «A typographic alphabet of Ukrainian identity» an innovative cultural project «aimed at reviving and promoting Ukrainian type culture, developing national identity, and supporting talented type designers» (Shrytova abetka..., 2023). The interdisciplinary approach to the concept and its implementation demonstrates the high professional level of the author's design team, modern trends, and at the same time the uniqueness of the visual system. The dominant theme of freedom, which has historical continuity, receives a modern reading and representation in the digital environment in this innovative project.

The 3rd issue of Telegraph Art Edition was published under the code word «Will» (Volya), which manifests the unifying essence of all visual and textual materials.

The design corresponds to the genre of «art magazine» and demonstrates the creative courage of the design team headed by Glib Kaporikov. The visual concept associatively reveals the concept of «will» in the context of energy for action and fulfillment: the pages are saturated, each section has its own type of layout, the content is arranged according to the principle of size and color contrast, and there are almost no empty spaces in the completed pages. This saturation is balanced by the separate pages, which divide the 13 subsections on the principle of contrast and visual pauses. The separate pages are black spreads that contain cutouts based on the principle of cut-outs. The geometric com-

positions of the slits, through which the brightly colored pages of the new sections are chaotically visible, not only refer to traditional art. They resemble a lattice that the reader «overcomes» and goes to the pages filled with information (Fig. 2). This creates an allusion to the struggle and overcoming of slavery on the way to freedom. It is worth adding that G. Kaporikov shows himself not only as a talented designer, but also as an expert who conceptualizes Ukrainian design and develops his own strategy for reproducing Ukrainian identity in projects.



Fig. 2. The cover and spreads of the art magazine «Will» (Volya)

The value of freedom as a component of the socio-cultural identity of the spiritual and mental level concerns not only protection from invaders, but also state-building as such and preservation of the individual path of development of Ukrainian society towards European integration. That is why the idea of freedom is represented in the design, which is based on the use of the signs of statehood – the Small Coat of Arms of Ukraine and the flag, or rather its colors. The trident as a visual form was used even before the full-scale invasion. However, while before 2022, the state signs (tryzub (trident), yellow and blue colors of the flag) were focused mainly on creating the project's involvement in state structures, after 2022, their adapted forms became symbols of the proclamation of Ukraine's independent existence and the struggle for it.

The reinterpretation of the tryzub (trident) as a graphic form and symbol of the country is used in visual content for social media, posters, postcards, and branded signs. Designers use the recognizable symmetrical shape as a kind of container for typographic compositions and content with story attributes or combine fragments of the small coat of arms with other graphic objects (vegetation, people, architecture). One variant is the analogy of the trident with a falcon, which reproduces horizontal flight or diving down. Numerous variations by Mykola Kovalenko are worthy of note, as he often refers to the trident grapheme in the realization of his idea «1 day – 1 poster». In fact, the designer has

used it before, in particular, in the sign «Ukrainian Design: the Very Best of» (2013), combining the outline of the trident with the outline of the crown. However, it was the events of 2022 that inspired the author to come up with diverse and unambiguous solutions. Nikita Titov is no less powerful in terms of the daily quantity and eloquence of visuals, and he produces original versions of compositions around the trident (Fig). While the first two designers use trident analogies in their thematic posters, Dmitry Simonov focuses on varying the form for the sake of a new form. He has amassed a considerable collection of modifications that can serve as the basis for signs, jewelry, prints, embroidery, etc. (Fig).

Derivative values of the global idea of freedom are heroism and bravery as a means of preserving freedom and demonstrating patriotism. In the Ukrainian mentality, heroism is irrational without options (either death or struggle) and involves making quick decisions; it is formed as a worldview and self-identification based on civilization and national and political identity in a state of military resistance. For Ukrainians, heroism is a manifestation of collective resilience and responsibility for preserving the country's independence. This worldview has evolved historically and has taken on new forms during the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The value of the Ukrainian mentality was demonstrated to the world by the Bravery information campaign, which aimed to create messages of a new image of Ukraine in the Ukrainian and foreign information space. The design concept of the project is based on a minimalist approach: the agency's designers used blue and yellow colors, a trident, a laconic KTF Jermilov font (designed by Oles Gergun and Yevhen Anfalov), and few-word slogans. Communication effectiveness is ensured by instant readability of the message, both by Ukrainian and foreign recipients. Another project with a similar approach to design by Fedoriv Agency was the United24 program.

The image of the hero accompanies a fairly large number of projects. In times of war, attention is focused on the victorious hero, who embodies the image of strength, determination, and indomitability; he also brings faith and hope to the emotional sphere of the recipients. In the contemporary space of Ukrainian visual practices, the representation of the theme of heroism is transforming and gaining renewed significance. However, traditional forms remain relevant. The sign that primarily represents the value of freedom and heroism in Ukraine is the Cossack, which has a full range of characteristic attributes. It is quite common in the design of packaging, labels, and identity. Until 2022, the Cossack was more often depicted in a calm, balanced state, as a potential defender who is currently involved in everyday life. For example, Cossacks are depicted on the labels and cans of the Khmelevus craft beer or in the identity of the «Cherkasy Region – Place of Power» brand. Instead, in the design of the Volya energy drink can released in 2023, the Cossack image acquired the features of severity, confidence and militancy (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Images of Cossacks in graphic design projects

The above projects show the continuity of heroic traditions, represented «in visual practices by analogies and connections between the Cossacks, UPA soldiers, and the Armed Forces of Ukraine, who are interpreted as descendants of their glorious ancestors» (Tymoshenko, 2024, p. 162). Modern signs are influenced by social reality. These are the camouflage of the military uniforms of Ukrainian soldiers (pixel) and weapons. The military pixel is a very effective visual technique for revealing identity, as it correlates, on the one hand, with the pixel of digital monitors and raster graphics, and, on the other hand, with Ukrainian embroidery. The projects usually include background compositions, although sometimes key elements consisting of various modifications of small square modules with olive green or yellow-blue color filling.



Fig. 4. Using a camouflage “pixel” in graphic design projects

An analogy to the value of bravery and heroism is resilience and endurance. This is extrapolated to the entire population of Ukraine, both in historical retrospect and in the present, during a full-scale invasion with daily destruction and deaths of non-combatants.

A review of graphic design projects has shown that successful designers refer to these values as a meaningful concept. In addition to the conceptual approach, designers reveal the image of freedom and heroism through visual methods: dynamic asymmetrical composition, balancing between the saturation and emptiness of project areas, heavy minimalist fonts with historical background. Values are also revealed through the sign system. Among the common signs are the national colors, transformed but recognizable forms of the trident, the Cossack character, the military camouflage «pixel» and the image of a bird. Awareness of the importance of this approach by a wide range of designers opens up the prospects for creating projects that are deep in content and imagery, but understandable and accessible to the recipients.

Conclusions. Graphic designers, as representatives of a socially influential community, are involved in the representation and consolidation of values in the minds of Ukrainian recipients. As a result, the design of branding, covers of periodicals, and advertising materials resonates with the current social reality. In addition, graphic design projects translate Ukrainian value identity into the international space and present a unique culture.

These values form the ethical and substantive basis of a significant number of project concepts. The values of will, heroism, and courage do not exhaust the entire mentality, but they gain new

levels of importance and scale depending on social events. They are cross-cutting, truly relevant to the vast majority of the population. We consider the designer's incorporation of basic goals and values that are relevant to society into the project to be the spiritual and mental level of the project model of socio-cultural identity in graphic design.

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