

## HISTORY OF ART

### INTUITIVE CREATIVITY OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS AGED 10–17 IN KHARKIV: BEFORE AND DURING THE WAR

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-498-6-11>

Art is a powerful tool for emotional expression, allowing individuals to process complex feelings that may be difficult to articulate verbally. Through creative activities such as drawing, painting, or sculpting, participants can achieve a sense of relaxation and focus, reducing stress and anxiety. Additionally, art fosters self-awareness and personal growth by encouraging introspection and exploration of inner experiences. Engaging in artistic practices is particularly effective for children and adolescents, helping them navigate emotional challenges and build resilience.

Intuitive art is a creative process based on spontaneity and the free expression of feelings and ideas without a specific plan or predetermined rules. This approach focuses on the act of creation itself rather than the final piece, allowing individuals to explore their inner state, express emotions, and connect with their subconscious. According to dr. Malchiodi, “expressive arts add a dimension to therapy that deepens self-exploration, expression, active participation, imagination, and mind-body connection” [1, pp. 8–9].

The primary focus of this research is the analysis of intuitive art among children and adolescents aged 10–17 in Kharkiv during 2024 – the third year of Russia’s full-scale military invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, the research aims to compare this art with that created in 2021, the year before the invasion, 2014, the year the war began, and 2010.

The importance of this paper lies in its focus on intuitive creativity, which is not predetermined by any specific idea, motive, or theme. Dr. Rappaport notes in her monograph that “a sense needs time to form”. “Sometimes this process may be brief, like a pause, just enough time to observe your awareness within your body. The amount of time required depends on your experience with focusing, the problem you are addressing, as well as the physical, emotional, and spiritual factors influencing your current state. There is no competition to quickly find a sense. It is crucial to allow enough time for the

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sense to emerge” [2, p. 30]. Intuitive creativity provides an opportunity to observe and understand the feelings of children, both conscious and subconscious, which have been shaped over an extended period of time. This approach offers a clear picture of the emotional state of children and adolescents of several generations.

For the research, 8 exhibitions from 2024, 7 from 2021, 8 from 2014, and 12 from 2010 were analyzed. According to the exhibitions’ notes, these art shows were based on open themes, and the works were not subject to selection by art school teachers or galleries’ staff.

In 2024, children predominantly paint landscapes with tranquil scenes and empty streets. These artworks notably lack depictions of people. Despite the beauty of nature, the houses portrayed – whether in villages or cities – show no lights in the windows or smoke rising from the chimneys.

Imaginative paintings often depict angels welcoming sunlight or guardians shielding cities with their hands from above. Still-life compositions have lost their former richness in colors and narratives, now featuring only 1–3 elements. Steam often rises from cups of tea, and candles are frequently used as one of the key components.

In illustrations of fairy-tale and forest animals, children portray loving families.

It is particularly striking those portraits painted by children aged 10–17 no longer feature childish faces. The children they depict have thoughtful, serious, and focused expressions, and smiles are absent from these works.

In cityscapes, urban streets are portrayed in black and white, appearing empty. Subways frequently feature in the compositions, reflecting their role as shelters during the bombings of Kharkiv.

In decorative and applied arts, children sculpt figures of Cossacks in battle, Japanese samurai, and ninjas, reflecting themes of resilience and courage.

In 2021, children’s drawings were filled with vibrant colors and dynamic scenes, showcasing lively streets, blooming nature, and cheerful gatherings of people. Still-life artworks were more detailed, featuring an abundance of elements, while landscapes often depicted bustling cities and sunlit villages. The artworks radiated a sense of hope and vitality, reflecting a brighter emotional outlook.

In 2014, children’s artworks followed three main directions. The first featured bright colors, depicting fantasy scenes and still life. The second reflected somber surrealism or black-and-white abstraction, predominantly created by children displaced to Kharkiv from the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The third focused on depictions of people in street scenes and portraits, often with tense expressions. An underlying sense

of anxiety was palpable in these works, conveyed through the choice of colors and composition.

In 2010, all the paintings were vivid and expressive, rich in detail and storytelling. Ukrainian folklore, with its wealth of imagery, was often depicted. Mystical themes were enchanting rather than frightening. The artworks portrayed peaceful Ukrainian life, with people in traditional clothing and blooming gardens. Still-life compositions were filled with abundance, featuring a variety of fruits, dishes, statuettes, and often depicted the emblem of Kharkiv. Many paintings featured the sea, families, friends, and Ukrainian landscapes. Bees and butterflies were frequently included hovering over flower fields or vases of flowers. There were no somber or contemplative works – every face in the paintings smiled, except in those created for didactic purposes, a trend absent in later years.

The evolution of children's artworks over the years reveals the profound emotional impact of war, and shows how deeply it affects the youngest and most vulnerable members of society. While earlier works were filled with joy, vibrant colors, and smiling faces, the later years, especially 2024, depict emptiness, seriousness, and a loss of innocence. The once-vivid and hopeful images have been replaced by serious, contemplative faces and muted tones. The absence of smiles and the dominance of somber tones reflect how war has already taken away children's joy and is eroding their hopes and dreams.

The lack of carefree expressions and the dominance of themes connected to survival and resilience underscore the emotional burden on children. This emphasizes the urgent need to provide special attention to children, supporting their mental well-being, and calls for immediate action to support their mental health, providing safe spaces for expression and healing. Prioritizing the emotional well-being of children is not only a moral imperative but also an investment in a future.

#### **References:**

1. Malchiodi, C. *Expressive Therapies*. New York, NY: Guilford, 2005, 220 p.
2. Rappaport, L. *Focusing-Oriented Art Therapy: Accessing the Body's Wisdom and Creative Intelligence*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2009, 250 p.