Artistic explorations of Lviv artists of decorative and applied arts in small-scale plastics of the second half of the 20th century: image of a human being

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Abstract. The present article examines the special characteristics of the development of small-scale sculpture as an independent phenomenon in Lviv fine arts of the second half of the 20th century within the framework of the interpretation of a human being image, since the following problem has not been sufficiently studied in Ukrainian art criticism. In particular, the research focuses on the specific features of artistic experiments of the representatives of decorative and applied art in the field of anthropomorphic sculpture; traces characteristic features of conceptual and modelling solutions; identifies artistic and stylistic features and peculiarities of the representation of a human being image. The author stresses upon the role of Lviv Ceramic and Sculpture Factory that largely set trends in the development of small-scale sculpture. In addition, as based on works of famous representatives of Lviv school of decorative arts, the author identifies the variety of interpretations and wide range of modelling means as well as traces the most vivid anthropomorphic designs.

Keywords: *Lviv sculpture, artists of decorative and plastic arts, small-scale sculpture, image of a human being, anthropomorphic motif.*

Introduction. In plastic arts of the second half of the 20th century one can notice changes in the arrangement of themes, the process of enrichment with new approaches towards the understanding of the specificity of plastic arts and broadening of genre framework and interpretation of the image of a human being. In the 1970s and at the beginning of 1980s indoor and small-scale sculpture started neglecting monumental means of modelling: sculptors and in particular artists of decorative and applied arts even more often now appeal to indoor arts and anthropomorphic motifs in quest of compositional and spatial accuracy in its new meaning. The sculpture of this period becomes intimate and contemplative; it turns to the inner world of a person, trying to penetrate into their deep intellectual and inherent values. These artworks are marked with close attention of artist to the existence of a human being, their individual mental world and value in the society. These features are clearly visible in the art of prominent representatives of Lviv school of applied and decorative art. Consequently, the profound research of the specificity of their artistic exploration in the small-scale sculpture of the second half of the 20th century within the framework of the representation of a human being image becomes a topical issue which needs proper scientific penetration.

Overview reference sources. Ukrainian sculpture of the second half of the 20th century has been frequently in the focus of attention of art historians. For example, professor Orest Holubets made fundamental research of exactly Lviv artistic group sculpture. We consistently used his works while conducting this scientific research (3-6). It is also worth to mention monograph of the famous researcher Maryna Protas which is dedicated to the issues of development of Ukrainian sculpture of the 20th century (8). Then, Mykhailo Bokotey (1) studied the activity of Lviv Experimental Ceramic and Sculptural Factory. But still these authors mostly speak about general context of the development of Ukrainian sculpture (Orest Holybets, Maryna Protas) or just one style of decorative and applied arts (Mykhailo Bokotey) and do not pay special attention to the image of a human being in the small-scale sculpture

especially in the works of Lviv artists.

Aim. The following scientific paper is aimed at a comprehensive research of the specificity of the development of small-scale sculpture style in the works of Lviv representatives of decorative and applied arts of the second half of the 20th century and determination of the key models of artists' vision and direction of its further development.

Sources and methods. This article is based on monographs, thesis papers, scientific researches, albums and catalogues which demonstrate the aspects of the development of visual and decorative and applied arts of Lviv in the second half of the 20th century in small-scale sculpture style in particular. The methodology is founded on the principle of systematic approach to the objective description of modern artistic phenomena as based on the study of a vast amount of identified theoretical sources. The above mentioned principle guided the research to the usage of general scientific and specific artistic methods, analysis and synthesis in particular.

Findings and discussion. In the 1960s, Lviv saw the emergence of a group of young artists who greatly laid down the guidelines for the development of the local art for the next years. The division of arts into official and unofficial, in plastic arts in particular, was coming to its end. Large works marked with a specific theme were central in the official art of that time, whereas small-scale and indoor sculpture usually consisted of intimate and tiny works; official artworks were focused on ideology and propaganda, while small-scale sculpture — on the elegance of forms and ideology-free images; official aesthetics tended to be simple and understandable in its artistic expression, whereas small-scale and indoor sculpture were full of metaphors, allusions and mixed stylistic lines which acquired really deep meaning (4, p. 106).

For a long period of time the important centre in the development of Lviv small-scale sculpture was Lviv Experimental Ceramic and Sculptural Factory. A lot of prominent city's pottery designers had been working there. This factory made it possible to manufacture works of various plastic forms. Usually these were quite realistic

statuettes or multi-figured compositions. Among the most popular were historical images and animalistic genres. The first were often marked with such recognizable motifs as various representations of horsemen, ancient musicians and dancers. In the 1960s, Lviv pottery designers mostly work with pieces for mass production, small-scale sculpture in particular. At the same time, they continue developing the indoor sculpture and decorative designs for interiors. In addition, there is a development of anthropomorphic crockery, works of plastic arts with practical function and anthropomorphic small-scale sculpture made of ceramics (Yaroslav Sheremeta, Vasyl Kondratyuk, Mykhailo Hladkyi etc). Pragmatic nature and decorative rendering of folk art traditions are key features of these works.

These tendencies are vividly illustrated in the works of pottery designer Mykhailo Hladkyi who ornamentally renders figures of human beings. In the multi-figured composition *Triple musicians* (*Troyisti muzyky* — Ukrainian folk ensemble usually consisting of three musical instruments) the author reproduces basic body proportions, however — without excessive details. Figures of musicians are generalized in their movements and tightly connected with their musical instruments. Subtle hint on gently modelled faces and hands of the characters are successfully complemented with delicate lines of clothing.

Hryhorii Kichula belongs to that range of pottery designers whose works are inseparable from folk art traditions. Among his works are decorative and applied ceramic works (vases, candlesticks, painted plates), small-scale sculptures and paintings. All of his ceramic ideas he put into practice on Lviv Experimental Ceramic and Sculptural Factory. His artworks are deeply saturated with knowledge of folk art and its customs. In his small-scale sculpture (maiolica, stoneware, coal clay or chamotte) Kichula represented the themes inspired by folk rites and folklore — *Koliadky* (Ukrainian Christmas songs), *Hayivky* (*Spring songs* — folk songs sung by girls during spring), *Folk musicians*, *Obzhynky* (*Harvest songs* — songs that marked the end of the harvesting), *Fife melodies*. He constantly experimented with technological capabilities of ceramics. His greatest technological achievements were ceramic plates made of stoneware with portrait images painted with salt solutions and enamel. His fellows said about him — “Folk song, embroidery, fairytales, pysanka (painted Easter egg) and hard-working people rich in folk wisdom, truth and humour were the artist’s school which led him to the vast world of art and life. His connection with immortal folk heritage and eternal culture secured him artistic success, world view, understanding and representation of the world in his works» (Hryhorii Kichula: catalogue, 2005., p.10).

A significant contribution to the development of Lviv sculpture of that period was made by graduates of Lviv ceramic school. Years spent studying in Lviv State Institute of Applied and Decorative Art clearly formed their spatial and compositional vision of a piece, as well as a delicate sense of form. Here one should mention the names of Andrii Bokotey, Taras Drahan, Mariia Savka-Kruhlova, Bohdan Halytskyi etc. They actively studied unique forms of folk decorative and applied art, extensively reinterpreting and transforming them in their art-

works. The one who was looking for new ways of sculptural modelling was Taras Drahan. His explorations were supported with learning of new kinds of medium and ways of their treatment and modeling. Small-scale sculpture marked with compositional accuracy and laconic means of expression takes an important place in creative heritage of the artist. Very often Drahan’s sculptures represent the image of a human being — either realistic or decorative. The mood of his artworks also varies from a tense expression to the ironic hints. This is clearly demonstrated with his decorative candlestick *The Old Man* (Ukr. *Diduhan* 1967, ill.) which is made of chamotte. The head is solid and mounted on a square neck-base. Face features are incised figuratively in sunken relief. A faint smile hidden behind a big moustache in combination with squinty eyes gives an impression of naiveté and good nature.

For instance, completely different in its emotional meaning is the candlestick *The Arkan* (1967, ill.). The composition is arranged in the form of circle with repeating men’s figures performing wild Hutsul dance called *arkan*. Well-structured spatial composition, utility and accuracy of decorative form (despite the absence of painted elements on the piece) are successfully combined with the massive size of the construction and natural structure of chamotte. In general, Taras Drahan makes good use of knowledge of the specificity of the medium he uses in his artworks. In particular, he mainly used chamotte, moulding solid and generalized forms, playing with the texture of the surface. Such artworks can be associated with folk art, primarily due to their archetypical origin.

The image of a human being is also developed in the sculptures of Maria Savka-Kachmar, famous Lviv pottery designer, whose works of ’60s are special and unique. For instance, the author reinterprets traditions of folk plastic arts, which stipulates narrative character of her compositions. Savka-Kachmar usually supplements her scenes with landscapes or other elements. Her artworks with multicoloured paintings are close to folk naïve sculpture. Associations with folk pictorial art, ceramic toys, motanka-doll (Ukrainian handmade toy) which appear while looking at the artist’s works give their images special meaning. Particularly, it becomes apparent in her works from the 1960s and ’70s (for example, in the following works — *The Mothers*, *Dovbush* (Ukrainian historical character), *Shadows of Forgotten ancestors*, *The Wedding*). Colour design of her compositions strengthens their decorative and emotional richness.

Small-scale sculpture of Taras Levkiv is also inspired by traditions of folk ceramics, which is partially determined by the usage of pottery wheel. The artist works at the boundary of traditional craft and modern plastic arts using various ceramic techniques and mediums. Emmanuil Mysko noted that “Taras Levkiv asserts himself everywhere as exactly the representative of Ukrainian ceramic art. He does that in a new and interesting fashion. And whatever he does, his works always find their target audience. This is where his power lies” (4). The same as his teacher Taras Drahan Taras Levkiv often gives his works humorous sounding. The compositions are a combination of handmade elements and elements made on pottery wheel.

Using an ancient technique of pottery wheel in his

works, Levkiv reassesses the capabilities of ceramics. The artist transforms natural forms and human figures, subjecting them to his own sculptural vision. His unique artworks reflect national themes, ethnic identity and folk art. Clear individualization of the characters is strengthened with the attention to details (*The Potter on the Market, Musicians, The Family* — all made in the '60s). However, the artist almost does not use painting in his sculptures, choosing natural texture of stoneware and terracotta which he frequently makes use of. His candlesticks and large sculptures demonstrate the natural beauty of the medium. This could be even a combination of different textures — rough as well as smooth. Levkiv's works *Triple musicians, Aeneid, Chuhayster* (mythological character of the Ukrainian Carpathians), *The Army of Halychyna* symbolize his views on that times.

The works made during the 1970s have folk flavour and original stylization. Within this context one should mention decorative compositions *Motifs of Podillia, Spring has arrived, The Shadow*, sculptures *The Universe* and *The Festival*, decorative reliefs, clocks and candlesticks. The medium and techniques used by Levkiv at that time are impressively various. For sure, clay is prevailing. But in composition aspect, the medium he uses is quite often complemented with wood and porcelain.

Levkiv's works are always unique the same as the image of a human being is. The latter in his works is often represented in a very surprising manner. As Hryhorii Ostrovskyi said — «...one could be in dispute with the works of Taras Levkiv, one could accept or reject his works but no one could blame his own conception of being incomplete and inconsistent. Intellectual loading and spirituality make his art connected with the most important processes which characterize development of art pottery at that time» (2). Explorations of Taras Levkiv lie deeply in his childhood, in the direct perception of the reality, ancient customs and traditions of folk art, weaving in particular. His artistic ideas are embodied in the images which he creates on the basis of a folk art (composition *Spring has arrived*). Besides, his artistic talent was influenced by the period of activity of «generation of the '60s» (*shistdesiatnyky*) in Lviv, when pottery designers managed to unify substantial artistic forces with the aim of preserving basics of freedom in the sphere of art.

The artist is able to see and originally reproduce at the first glance ordinary phenomena. He does not copy classic examples, but confidently moves towards new forms of expression through learning the secrets of techniques. The compositions of Taras Levkiv are decorative and ceramic pieces made for usage in a certain architectural space. The uniqueness of his artworks is deliberate and intended. The scope and characteristics of the artist's wheel thrown ceramic is close to pictorial arts and sculpture. His compositions *The Cherry Tree, The Curls, The Fern, The Circular Trajectory* demonstrate the forms of intensive plasticity and impromptu. His artworks preserve the sense of frankness and authenticity.

The author always demonstrates his pursuit of widening of horizons and learning new techniques and mediums. Orest Holybets remarks that “The activity of Lviv pottery designer Taras Levkiv is notable for complex and fruitful combination of traditional and modern elements.... His achievements resulted from his hard-

working nature and his unique talent.... His compositions are marked with special fluency of creation of decorative forms as if they are free of artist's reflections, artistic exploration and sentiments” (4).

Using simple forms (sphere, cylinder, cone) the author achieves almost cubist interpretation of space, for instance in his works *The Wisp, The Dandelion, The Reflection, The Oasis*.

In the 1980s, space motifs, representation of higher order and harmony appear in the works of Taras Levkiv. This is in particular demonstrated in his works *Space Octopus, Space gifts, Planet Restoration, The Small Planet* etc. Space theme is revealed not only in dimensional and spatial ceramic compositions. The author supplements it with graphic works and intarsia.

In the 1970s and '80s, the range of works of Lviv Experimental Ceramic and Sculptural Factory has been moving towards unique wheel thrown products. The pottery designers first work out the spatial composition of the product, applying the principles of the sculptor's work, his plastic vision and sense of medium. Colour and sculptural décor are prevalent in the small-scale sculpture. There is a permanent appeal to local traditions in combination with image and technological innovations. In addition, the artists start using glass and bronze, which significantly expands the range of compositional solutions. The level of factory production increases significantly due to the prevalence of individual creative approaches of certain artists, especially in the field of indoor sculpture, ornamented utensils and small-scale sculpture (3, p. 43). What is meant here is the original images and peculiar means of artistic expression in the works of Roman Petruk, Zinovii Flinta, Olha Bezpalkiv, Yaroslava Motyka, Uliana Yaroshevych etc. Modelling of candlesticks and various forms of crockery is still popular. However, the image of a human being is not very much typical for the works of this period. But still those rare examples impress with the deepness of their design.

In particular, Uliana Yaroshevych, Olha Bezpalkiv and Yaroslava Motyka in their works advert to the traditions of folk art and reproduction of folk images.

An attempt to embody an image of a human being in small clay statuettes is demonstrated in a decorative composition called *Folk Theatre* made by Olha Bezpalkiv. Made of chamotte it can change its spatial design as the result of different combinations. Here the artist using hollow ceramic figures represents the characters of folk theatre called *vertep* giving them allegoric interpretation. Such statuette-vessel stands somewhere in between anthropomorphic plastics and utilitarian product. Handles are made in a form of hands, while the lid is made in a form of head. The elements of the composition are designed quite dynamic, which is strengthened with multi-coloured painting. ‘Humanization’ of utensils completely transforms the representation of the image of a human being in ceramics (6).

Yaroslava Motyka in her works advert to ancient achievements of traditional folk pottery, in particular — to black-glazed ceramics. Traditional elements are combined with modern principles of compositional modelling. Besides, one can notice that her works are inspired by other things, for instance plastic arts of African and Trypillia cultures as well as constructivism stylistics.

Constant feeling of archaism that one should have while looking at her works is enhanced with clarity of the expression, solid architectonics, accurate stylization and delicate plastic design. The original decorative compositions are simple and elegant at the same time. One of the favourite objects of the artist are simple images of old countrywoman, countryman or animal. One can always feel deep personal attitude of the author towards her characters, which often look like folklore characters.

Skilfully presenting the character of the used medium and traditional techniques of pottery Yaroslava Motyka creates the figures of people and wild animals in combination with different elements of landscape. This tendency is demonstrated in her decorative composition *In the forest* (1980) which depicts two people carrying a tree trunk. The bird which is sitting on the trunk is interpreted figuratively the same as people. Such stylistic design reminds traditional folk plastics. Additional effect is produced with the contrast of generalized geometrized forms and tiny moulded elements. Yaroslava Motyka mostly focuses attention on face features of her characters, leaving visible inequalities in their bodies. In this way, she intensifies the emotional sounding of her composition.

In the composition *Halia made of clay* (1983) the ceramist successfully reproduces plastic modelling of the figure, liveliness of body and shape. In general, in many of her works Motyka uses openness of the construction, naturally combining elements of different backgrounds. It seems, then, as if such artworks penetrate into the surrounding environment. Their surface is actively involved in the shaping of the image of a human being, giving it inner tension and expression despite its outer static character. This kind of freedom in modelling solutions partly results from her choice of naïve and genuine folk art as a source of artistic inspiration.

Yaroslav Sheremeta, famous pottery designed and painter, has dozens of ceramic works which were on mass production of Lviv Experimental Ceramic and Sculptural Factory. They are tea and coffee sets, decorative plates, vases and other decorative items. Quite interesting is his series of decorative compositions *Winter, spring, summer and autumn holidays*. This author belongs to that group of Lviv artists who revived forgotten genres and kinds of decorative and applied art, in particular ceramics and its technological aspects, means, secrets and traditions of image representation. Yaroslav Sheremeta demonstrates extraordinary and unconventional approach towards the solution of artistic problems, uses unique means of modelling, combines old and modern elements.

While researching anthropomorphic motifs in plastic arts, one should also mention the activity of glass artists who worked on Lviv Experimental Ceramic and Sculptural Factory at that time. Apart from making pieces with anthropomorphic motifs for mass production, they also created original small-scale sculpture items. First and foremost, they are professional artists such as Andriy Bokotey, Franz Cherniak, Ivan Apollonov, Albert

Balabin, Lidiia Mytiaeva, Oleh Hushchyn, Sviatoslav Martyniuk, Bohdan Halytskyi, Zinoviia Masliak. At the same time, along with these masters, other blow glass artists worked on the design of pieces for mass production on factories. They were Yosyp Huliansyi, Mechyslav Pavlovskyi, Petro Semenenko, Petro Dumych, Oleksii Hera, Viktor Drachuk, Roman Zhuk, Bohdan Valko, Yaroslav Matsievskyi, Ihor Matsievskyi, I. Shumanskyi etc. In Ukrainian art history their works are treated as original and unique artworks, however most of these pieces were introduced into production and can also be researched within the context of small-scale plastics (1, pp 9-10). In particular, among the compositions of Andriy Bokotey and Franz Cherniak made at that time, the image of a human being becomes the central one. The artists skilfully interpret the image within the complicated medium and give it special clarity and deep meaning. Generally speaking, the study of the image of a human being in the works of glass artists of the second half of the 20th century needs separate profound scientific research.

Conclusion. Starting from 1980s Lviv small-scale plastics has been marked with new explorations which were reflected in the artists' desire to depict the processes of renovation of all spheres of cultural life which took place in Ukraine. Notably, these explorations revealed themselves not, for instance, in portrait but in exactly thematic composition which due to its specific features appeared to be more suitable for figurative interpretation of the events and thus actively and acutely responded to its appeal.

One can trace that the logic of the process of "*sculpture becoming indoor*" and the choice of small-scale art forms defined new attitude of the authors towards the medium. These tendencies were particularly vivid in the works of the artists of decorative and applied arts. Whilst decorative features in the works of monumental style were obtained through the expressiveness of compositional methods, now decorative nature goes somewhere in the deep. Aesthetic value is now obtained by the medium, its texture and colour. Notably, in technological aspect artists start favouring such medium as chamotte, wood, glass, ceramics which allow them to experiment with colour using different methods of surface treatment achieving required textural effects.

In conclusion, creative explorations of Lviv artists of decorative and applied arts in small-scale plastics of the 1960s and '80s acquire new conceptual forms within the context of the research of human being image. Particularly, one can trace prevalence of existential ideas, immersion into person's inner world, ethnic and traditional features and folklore. In works for mass production as well as in original works, the authors try to make the compositions more dramatic and the images more impressive. They also want to reproduce complex emotional states of a person intensified with that time atmosphere and at the same time demonstrate their inner freedom.

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