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Sacralisation of the female image during wartime in Ukraine and its reflection in graphic artworks

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Abstract. The purpose of the study was to analyse artistic strategies and visual mechanisms involved in the sacralisation of the female image in Ukrainian wartime graphics, particularly in posters, engravings, and illustrations from the periods of the world wars and contemporary armed conflicts. The study explored artistic techniques, symbolism, and iconographic traditions that shaped the sacral representation of women in war-related art. The methodological approach was based on a systematic analysis of artistic methods, compositional solutions, colour strategies, and stylistic features of the works examined. Findings demonstrated that the sacralisation of the female image in Ukrainian wartime graphics relied on established visual codes, which had evolved under the influence of socio-cultural and technological changes in art. A comparative analysis of Ukrainian, Soviet, German, French, and British graphic materials identified key tendencies in the depiction of the female figure, including their heroisation, mythological and religious attributes, and the use of artistic means to construct national identity. In contemporary Ukrainian graphic design, the sacred female image underwent a considerable transformation, shifting away from traditional allegorical frameworks towards expressive and personalised visual approaches. Increasingly, the female figure was portrayed not only as a national symbol or guardian figure but also as an equal participant in combat, thereby altering the visual narrative of wartime art. Contemporary posters frequently employed colour schemes combining blue and yellow, red and black, or stark monochromatic contrasts, enhancing the emotional resonance of the imagery. Digital technologies were widely utilised, enabling the integration of traditional graphic techniques with new visual strategies, including dynamic compositions, animated elements, and the adaptation of iconographic motifs to contemporary contexts. The study demonstrated that sacralisation of the female image in graphic art was achieved through the synthesis of traditional symbols, innovative visual strategies, and the reinterpretation of historical archetypes within a contemporary framework. Visual representation of women in wartime art continued to evolve, incorporating new stylistic tools and artistic concepts that expanded the communicative power and cultural impact of graphic design in the context of national identity and cultural resistance.

Keywords: poster art; artistic representation; colour theory; stylistic features; visual semiotics; iconography; graphic design

INTRODUCTION

During armed conflict, visual culture assumed particular importance, as it shapes public perceptions, reinforces national myths, and creates symbolic imagery that sustains collective identity. One of the key symbols reinterpreted and imbued with new meaning during military upheavals is the image of the woman. The sacralisation of the female image, understood as its elevation to a sacred or symbolically significant status,

has become a characteristic phenomenon in the art and national culture of Ukraine.

Female sacralisation in wartime has deep roots extending to archaic belief systems, in which women were associated with the source of life. In ancient mythologies across various cultures, the woman appears as a mother goddess symbolising birth, protection, and renewal (Crabtree, 2023). In Slavic tradition, central roles

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were occupied by deities such as Lada and Mokosh, who represented fertility, motherhood, and well-being. Similar archetypes are found in classical antiquity, where Demeter and Gaia were regarded as embodiments of life, regeneration, and abundance. These ancient associations gain renewed relevance during wartime, when the threat to societal existence elevates the image of the woman as a symbol of hope, continuity, and post-destruction renewal.

Throughout times of war, the female image has traditionally reflected two principal archetypes: the Motherland figure and the Woman-as-Warrior. As G. Golubnycha (2022) observed, in the former, the woman emerges as a symbol of the nation, the bearer of traditional values, a guardian of spiritual heritage, and frequently a catalyst for social mobilisation. In the latter, personifies struggle, active resistance, and participation in military engagement. Visual representations of these archetypes evolved throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, shaped by shifts in socio-cultural contexts, political developments, and the strategic needs of state propaganda. The relevance of this subject intensified in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine. According to I. Lokshuk *et al.* (2024), contemporary Ukrainian graphic design frequently portrays female figures in the context of heroism, resilience, and support for the armed forces, thereby contributing to the creation of new visual codes for national identity. This is evident in numerous digital illustrations, social projects, and poster art, where the female figure became a symbol of resistance and national spirit. The war catalysed a reassessment of traditional notions of women's roles, manifesting not only in artistic production but also in broader social processes, giving rise to a new visual language of resistance.

E. Wollney & M. Sternadori (2019) showed that graphic war art traditionally employed the female figure as a central element of visual communication, adapting it to the stylistic tendencies and artistic practices of its respective period. J. Tompsett (2024) noted that in British and French iconography of the First World War, the woman was most often depicted according to classical allegorical traditions, echoing academic painting and neoclassicism, emphasising monumentality and symbolic association with the state. N. Zaliotok (2023) argued that Soviet wartime graphics during the Second World War greatly expanded the use of the female image, employing realist and socialist realist approaches. These styles integrated bold, dynamic forms and diagonal compositions to enhance the sense of action. C. Kiær (2024) further added that Soviet posters frequently portrayed women in labour or military roles, conveying the idea of collective struggle through visual language. This was achieved through compositional solutions involving rhythmic repetition of forms, the use of large-scale foregrounding, and minimal spatial depth.

Ukrainian researchers also made a significant contribution to the examination of the sacred female

image. In particular, I. Zaspá (2022; 2023) analysed archetypes of women in contemporary Ukrainian visual culture, emphasising their transformation and value in national self-identification. The researcher highlighted that the woman in wartime art not only reflects social reality but also contributes to the strengthening of identity by adapting historical symbols to contemporary conditions. Some researchers additionally examined the impact of military iconography on contemporary graphic design. As noted by S. Kot *et al.* (2024), the graphic representation of women during wartime may serve various roles depending on the artistic intent and the context in which it is employed, ranging from a symbol of patriotism to a tool of manipulation. J.J. Forrest (2021) underscored that contemporary digital design altered the dynamics of wartime imagery dissemination, expanding its usage across the media landscape. This development facilitated rapid responses to current events and the creation of new visual codes within design practices.

Nevertheless, considerable gaps persist within the academic discourse, particularly regarding the evolution of the female image across different wartime periods, and its stylistic transformations in the context of the First and Second World Wars and the current armed conflict in Ukraine. Further analysis of these changes is essential for understanding the developmental trends in wartime graphics and their influence on the contemporary artistic discourse. The purpose of this study was to identify the main trends in the transformation of the sacred female image during periods of war in Ukraine and to examine their impact on contemporary art and graphic design.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analysis of visual representations of women during the First World War, particularly in posters, engravings, and illustrations, enabled the investigation of how artistic tools functioned in shaping patriotic rhetoric and national discourse. A key aspect of the study was also the comparative analysis of Soviet, Ukrainian, German, French, and British graphic materials from the Second World War. The selection of these countries was based on their active participation in the war and the stylistic diversity observed in the creation of propaganda posters.

This study was grounded in a systematic analysis of visual and textual materials depicting the sacralisation of the female image during wartime in Ukraine. The corpus included war posters, engravings, and illustrations produced during the First and Second World Wars and the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine. Academic databases such as JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar were used to gather relevant materials. Searches were conducted in English using keywords including: "sacralization of the female image in wartime", "women in war propaganda", "Ukrainian war posters", and "gender and visual culture in war".

The methodological approach was based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), which ensured a structured process for selecting and analysing scholarly sources. The initial search identified 165 records across the databases. Following a preliminary screening, 30 records

were excluded. Further review reduced the number of eligible sources to 55, of which 3 could not be accessed, leaving 52 for detailed evaluation. Ultimately, 46 sources were selected for in-depth analysis, while the remainder were excluded due to thematic irrelevance, methodological shortcomings, or incomplete data (Fig. 1).

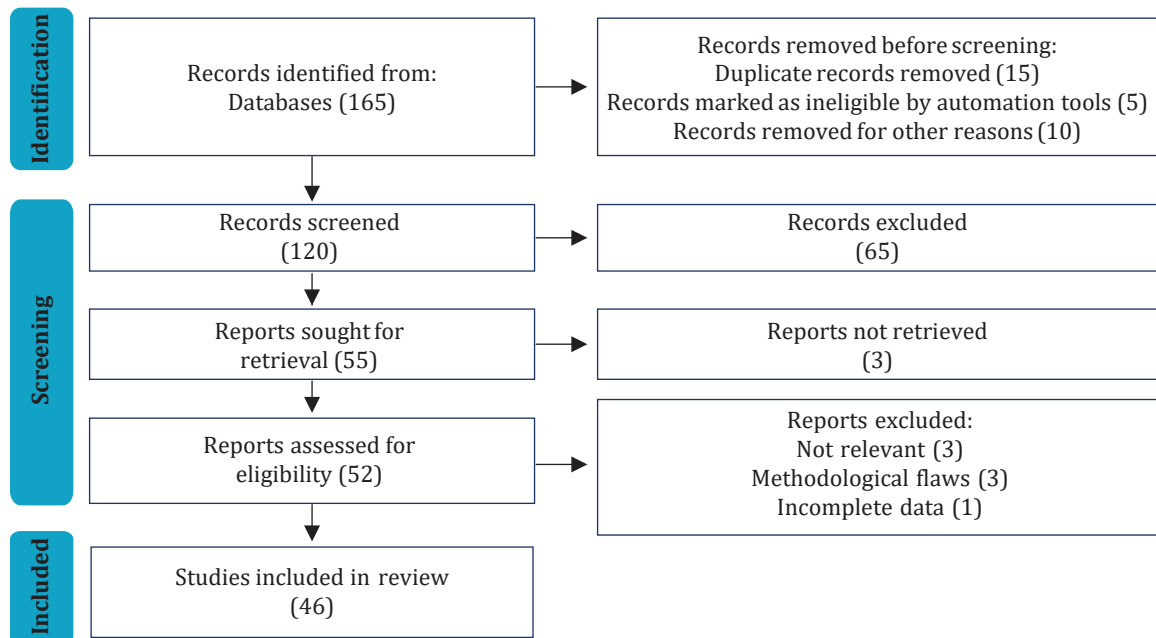


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram for the systematic selection and analysis of sources in the examination of the female image transformation in military graphics

Source: compiled by the author

The selection of sources was guided by several key criteria. The final sample included materials that aligned with the subject under study, specifically: (1) publications dedicated to the analysis of the visual representation of women in wartime art; (2) studies exploring stylistic and iconographic features of graphic design during periods of war; (3) research focusing on the evolution of artistic techniques and methods used in propaganda illustration; (4) peer-reviewed studies examining the interrelationship between graphic art and social transformation; (5) monographs offering in-depth analysis of historical changes in the compositional approaches of wartime posters; and (6) representative visual materials illustrating key artistic trends across different periods. Conversely, materials that did not meet the established criteria were excluded from the final analysis. These included: (1) publications lacking analysis of wartime graphics or focusing solely on political aspects without considering artistic and aesthetic dimensions; (2) studies with methodological shortcomings, particularly those that failed to provide clear evaluation criteria for visual content; (3) sources with incomplete or unsubstantiated conclusions; (4) duplicate records; and (5) non-peer-reviewed studies. The selected visual materials were analysed using

the following criteria: (1) thematic content; (2) stylistic features; (3) ideological messages; and (4) their role in shaping collective memory and national identity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Representation of the sacred female image in posters, prints, and caricatures of the First World War. During the First World War, visual art played a pivotal role in shaping public perception, encouraging political mobilisation, and reinforcing national identity. Amid a global conflict that affected much of the world, propaganda and agitational imagery became a central means of communication between the state and society, aiming to bolster support for the war effort (Szurmiński *et al.*, 2022). An important aspect of these visual practices was the depiction of women, who acquired a powerful symbolic function. They appeared not only as bearers of traditional gender roles but also as allegorical embodiments of the homeland and moral duty to the nation.

Across various cultures, the female figure was employed as a symbol of statehood. French iconography, for instance, made active use of the figure of Marianne, who personified ideals of liberty and patriotism. In one prominent depiction, dynamic stance, extended arm, and wind-blown garments convey a sense of motion

and a call to action (Fig. 2-a). The composition follows a triangular structure, drawing visual emphasis to the female form. The colour palette is restrained, yet the presence of vivid red highlights enhances the image's combative and motivational undertones.



Figure 2. Marianne in French military graphics during the First World War

Note: a) Illustration “La France libre” (1918) in a socialist French journal; b) Propaganda poster “Souscrivez à l’Emprunt National” (1917)

Source: Domesticating the Goddess “Liberty”... (2017), A. Gunthert (2018)

A somewhat different approach is evident in the second image (Fig. 2-b). There, Marianne is depicted in a more static pose, with raised sword and flag highlighting steadfastness and militancy. The use of a centrally balanced composition lends the image a monumental character. The background scene of soldiers reinforces leadership status and endows the depiction with a sacral dimension. A contrast between cool blues and rich red tones generates a psychological impression of struggle and tension (Cojocar, 2024). The red functions as an emotional trigger, prompting viewer

engagement, whereas the lighter shades evoke associations with hope, purity, and sacredness (Petzold, 2021). This visual strategy allows the female figure to be interpreted within religious or heroic symbolic frameworks. In American propaganda, the state was personified by Columbia (Gilbert, 2021). In the poster “Columbia Calls”, the centralised composition unites firmness with a sense of dynamism (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Columbia in United States war propaganda – “Columbia Calls” poster (1916)

Source: F.A. Halstead & V. Aderente (2020)

The figure of Columbia is presented in motion, conveying a sense of forward momentum, while her raised arm bearing the flag and the sword in her other hand underscore determination and military readiness. The colour scheme is based on patriotic hues – blue, red, and white – facilitating visual identification with national values (Suhaimi & Fauzi, 2021). Red accents intensify the emotional impact, and the white classical attire symbolises idealised virtue and moral purity. The combination of classical style with monumental form contributes to the sacralisation of the image, imbuing Columbia with symbolic significance in the context of patriotic mobilisation (Sward, 2022).

A similar symbolism was inherent in the military graphics of the Russian Empire, where the female image served as an allegorical personification of the state, embodying the ideas of imperial greatness, traditional power, and spiritual patronage (Muravska, 2021). One notable example is the illustration “Soglasie”, which employs symbolic female figures to represent the Entente powers – namely, the Russian Empire, France, and Great Britain (Fig. 4).

The composition is based on a principle of symmetry. The central position is occupied by a figure symbolising the Russian Empire, underscoring its dominant role within the military-political alliance. The figure’s pose is steady and calm, conveying a sense of monumentality.

France is represented through the image of Marianne, embodying revolutionary ideals of liberty. A key attribute is the Phrygian cap, symbolising revolutionary spirit and democratic values (Montandon, 2021). Its eyes are directed toward the central figure, highlighting the significance of the Russian Empire within the depicted hierarchy. Great Britain is depicted as the goddess Athena, who personifies military strength, strategic thinking, and wisdom. She holds an anchor, a traditional emblem of the nation's naval power. Its eyes are likewise directed toward the Russian figure. This compositional structure guides the viewer's attention to the visual interrelationships among the figures, emphasising the central image's dominance and authority. The spatial arrangement demonstrates a carefully conceived artistic concept, wherein the compositional choices harmoniously interact with the semantic content.



Figure 4. Allegorical representation of the Entente via female figures in Russian war propaganda (1914)

Source: Rare Russian WW1 propaganda posters (2012)

The colour scheme plays a crucial role in shaping both the semantic content and the emotional resonance of the work. The golden hues dominating the central figure serve as visual markers of power, grandeur, and spiritual authority, enhancing the sacral or monumental character of the image (Noémi, 2021). The colour palette of Marianne, featuring blue, white, and red, acts as a device for reinforcing patriotic rhetoric, invoking ideas of revolution, liberty, and national identity. The use of red and green in the representation of Great Britain elicits associations with military discipline, stability, and strategic strength (Cusumano, 2021). Meanwhile, contrasting colour combinations across different areas of the composition establish a dynamic rhythm and ensure balance between the symbolic meaning and formal characteristics of the imagery. A crucial element of the spatial organisation is the detailed rendering of the background, which functions as a dramatic backdrop that enhances the expressiveness

of the central narrative. The burning sky, the darkened silhouettes of soldiers, and the airships generate visual tension that contributes to the viewer's psychological engagement. This artistic solution not only deepened the iconographic context of the work but also emphasised its conceptual multidimensionality by integrating colouristic, compositional, and symbolic aspects into a unified visual structure.

The illustration thus exemplifies a tendency characteristic of wartime and allegorical graphics: the sacralisation of the female figure, presented not merely as an aesthetic construct but as a bearer of profound ideological and symbolic meaning. The visual personification of nations through female figures reinforces the idea of spiritual guardianship, moral purity, and the steadfastness of national ideals. Through its compositional structure, use of colour, and incorporation of traditional iconographic motifs, the artwork transforms the female image into a sacred symbol embodying historical mission, cultural heritage, and the collective values of the depicted nations. Another important motif in wartime illustration was female sacrifice (Hayashida, 2021). The British propaganda poster "Women of Britain say – go!" presents the woman as a sacred symbol of support and sacrifice (Fig. 5).



Figure 5. The female image in British wartime propaganda in the poster "Women of Britain say – go!" (1915)

Source: "Women of Britain say – go" (1915)

The compositional design of the poster was based on the interaction between two spatial zones. The first comprised a static group of female figures and a child positioned in the foreground, while the second features a dynamic scene of soldiers departing into the distance. This structure created a hierarchical composition in which the women appear as central figures, seemingly bestowing a blessing upon the departing soldiers. The direction of their gaze forms a visual axis between the

two pictorial spaces, intensifying the dramatic effect of farewell. The colour strategy likewise played a key role in constructing the work's semantics (Jaglarz, 2023). The use of warm, muted tones contributes to an emotionally charged atmosphere. The bright daylight symbolises future victory and hope, whereas the darker, warm interior tones underscore the safety and stability associated with the domestic sphere. Particularly significant is the yellow dress of the central female figure, which not only draws attention to the key character but also evokes associations with optimism and motivation, in alignment with the textual message of the poster (Kadlubovich & Chernyak, 2022). In this way, the poster functions not only as a tool of military propaganda but also as a manifestation of the sacralised image of womanhood in the context of war. The interplay of composition, colour, and textual message produces a visual narrative that underscores sacrifice, moral grandeur, and the role of the woman as a spiritual reference point in wartime society.

The mass mobilisation of men for combat during the First World War led to an acute labour shortage. This necessitated the extensive integration of women into various sectors of the economy, including industry, agriculture, healthcare, and administrative governance. In response, the warring states launched large-scale propaganda campaigns aimed at mobilising the female population in support of national war efforts (Chrystal, 2024). Wartime poster graphics from this period presented a broad spectrum of female representations, shaped by each country's political system, social conventions, and propaganda strategies. Within American visual culture, women frequently appeared as workers and symbols of national unity, whereas German propaganda often imbued the female figure with sacred attributes aligned with iconographic archetypes (Condell & Liddiard, 1987). The German propaganda poster "Deutsche frauen arbeitet im Heimatheer!" ("German women, work in the Home Army!") exemplified this conceptual approach. The image of a woman handing a weapon to a soldier constructs a symbolic narrative not only of economic involvement but also of spiritual participation in the war effort (Fig. 6). The female figure serves as a kind of moral guide, evoking scenes of ritualised farewell or blessing.

The chromatic palette of the poster plays a considerable role in its semantic impact. Limited to three primary tones – black, red, and white – the colour scheme draws attention to the central elements: the female figure and the accompanying text, both rendered in red. Traditionally associated with strength and action, red enhances the motivational tone and emotional intensity of the scene. The use of a monochromatic gradient aligns the visual style with linocut techniques, thereby contributing to the image's expressiveness and dramatic effect (Hughes & Vernon-Morris, 2023). The compositional arrangement relies on static interactions between the figures, each portrayed in clearly

defined poses, which emphasises the solemnity and monumentality of the depicted moment. The absence of background detail focuses the viewer's attention on the emotional core of the image – the interaction between the woman and the soldier.



Figure 6. The female figure in German wartime propaganda during the First World War (1914-1918)
Source: Lore Wolf (n.d.)

The American poster "For every fighter, a woman worker" illustrated a markedly different approach to the representation of female identity when compared with its German counterpart (Fig. 7). At the centre of this image is not an individualised female figure embodying sacrifice or moral support, but rather a collective movement that underscores the mass mobilisation of women in support of the wartime economy. There, women are portrayed as an organised labour force, fulfilling a critical role on the home front and constituting a "second line of defence".

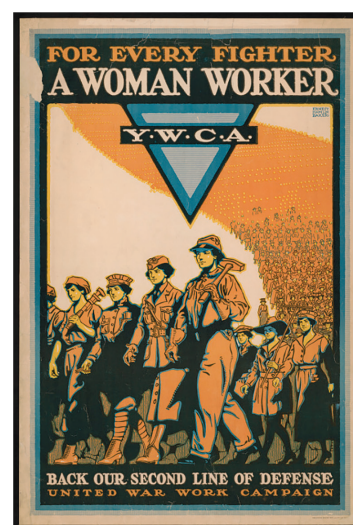


Figure 7. Visual representation of women's labour in American war propaganda during the First World War (1918)
Source: E.H. Baker (1918)

The compositional structure of the poster emphasised dynamism and forward movement. The diagonal arrangement of the figures and their synchronised stride generate a sense of relentless motion, contrasting with the static and dramatically expressive compositions characteristic of German propaganda graphics. The absence of individual emotional emphasis reinforces the sense of unity, while the generalised depictions of women contribute to the construction of a universal narrative.

The combination of navy blue, orange, and white establishes a visual balance between stability, energy, and optimism. Blue is traditionally associated with trust and order, while orange symbolises labour, productivity, and strength (Gherasim & Gherasim, 2021). The complementary nature of these colours enhances the sense of dynamism and evokes associations with progress and the future. The principal artistic distinction between this poster and the German “*Deutsche frauen arbeitet im Heimatheer!*” lies in the use of contrasting compositional and colouristic approaches to generate emotional impact. The German poster is constructed around principles of symmetry and stillness, endowing the image with a sense of monumentality and solemnity. In contrast, the American poster employs a dynamic, deep-space composition that evokes rhythm and energy, transforming the poster into a visual metaphor of advancement rather than a static image.

Ukrainian graphic art during the First World War displayed distinctive approaches to portraying the female figure, setting it apart from Western European visual traditions. Unlike the allegorical figures such as Marianne in France or Columbia in the United States, Ukrainian artists drew upon alternative visual narratives that conveyed the drama of human fate. One such example can be found in the graphic works of Olena Kulchytska, in which the female figure acquires not only emotional but also sacral significance through compositional arrangement, colour use, and expressive line-work. The graphic piece “*Under a foreign sky*” is constructed around a strong contrast of light and shadow, which produces an intense emotional effect (Fig. 8).



Figure 8. The image of the Ukrainian woman in the illustration “*Under a foreign sky*” (1914-1915)
Source: L. Kost (2022)

At the centre of the composition is a woman with an infant, serving as the visual focal point and compositional dominant. Her figure simultaneously embodies motherhood, national loss, and forced exile. While the movement within the composition is restrained, the figures appear to be walking forward; their postures and tense gestures, however, convey a sense of inner burden and helplessness. Repeating curved lines in the background heighten the atmosphere of unease, recalling Expressionist graphic techniques, where line functions not only as a structural element but also as an emotional device (Pandey, 2024).

Another of Kulchytska’s graphic works presented an even more allegorical interpretation of the female figure (Fig. 9). The central image of a woman in white clothing assumes a sacral quality through its stillness and compositional dominance. The vertical elongation of the figure creates a sense of monumentality, while her closed eyes and hands placed upon them serve as one of the strongest symbolic accents.



Figure 9. Sacralised image of a woman in the illustration “*The horrors of war*” (1915)
Source: L. Kost (2022)

The colour scheme was based on a minimalist palette of grey and sepia tones, echoing traditional graphic techniques and historical documentary imagery. The absence of bright colours detaches the scene from a specific time frame, rendering it more universal and symbolic. The background is filled with chaotically arranged figures, which generates a sense of mass tragedy. The visual structure of the composition evokes scenes from religious art, where the central figure remains static while dynamic movement unfolds around it. Kulchytska's graphic work thus articulates a unique conception of the female image within Ukrainian wartime art. Rather than focusing on idealised allegorical figures, artist's works convey profound drama through expressive form, stark contrasts of light and shadow, and symbolic composition. The use of techniques drawn from both iconographic and Expressionist traditions allows these works to be interpreted as visual metaphors for national tragedy and spiritual endurance in times of war (Bruff, 2023).

An examination of war posters, prints, and caricatures from the First World War showed shared features of the visual culture of the period, including compositional clarity, strong colour contrasts, and the symbolic significance of the female figure. Women were often employed as personifications of the state, as in the case of Marianne in France or Columbia in the United States, or as moral guides and spiritual protectors, as seen in German and Russian art. Ukrainian graphic art, particularly the works of Olena Kulchytska, departed from allegorical conventions by employing expressive line work, contrasts of light and shadow, and realistic depictions of suffering. Colour schemes were typically constructed around combinations of red, black, white, and blue, which heightened the emotional resonance of the images. Compositions frequently featured multi-layered structures in which the female figure either dominated the scene or interacted with soldiers, thereby establishing a visual hierarchy. Wartime graphics combined

elements of neoclassicism, expressionism, and poster stylisation, contributing to the sacralisation of the female figure as a symbol of national identity, sacrifice, or social engagement.

The representation of the female figure in Soviet, Ukrainian, and German graphic art during the Second World War. Wartime graphic art from the Second World War displayed a wide range of artistic approaches to the representation of the female figure, which played a central role in propaganda strategies. The visual language of Soviet, Ukrainian, and German posters varied considerably depending on the political context, socio-cultural factors, and target audiences. Nevertheless, all employed sacralised archetypes of womanhood to underscore ideals of service to the state, sacrifice, and national resilience (Acan & Aygenc, 2022). Ukrainian wartime graphics also reflected the personal experiences of front-line artists, as shown in study by T. Nedoshovenko (2023), which connected the visual legacy of World War II with the realities of the current Russian-Ukrainian war.

Soviet graphic art of this period was characterised by dynamic composition and the extensive use of saturated colours, particularly red, symbolising struggle, socialist revolution, and collective labour (Balina & Oushakine, 2021). Women were frequently depicted as workers in wartime industry or agriculture (Fig. 10). Compositional structures often relied on diagonal movement to generate a sense of visual dynamism (van Herwaarden, 2024). This was especially evident in Figure 10-a, where the female figure dominates the composition. A uniformed female worker occupies the foreground, evoking associations with military discipline and labour heroism, while the industrial landscape in the background visually reinforces the theme of industrial might (Qian, 2024). The colour palette contrasts vivid red with blue-grey tones, highlighting themes of labour endurance and discipline.



Figure 10. Representation of women's labour in Soviet wartime propaganda during the Second World War
Note: a) Poster: "We swore to our men, our heroic fighters, that we would forge their weapons day and night..." (1941); b) Poster: "A tractor in the field is like a tank in battle!" (1940)
Source: P. Erizanu (2020), V. Ivanov & O. Burova (1942)

Typography in Soviet posters also played a considerable role in visual composition. Fonts were rendered in strict geometric forms, amplifying the propagandistic effect. Bold red lettering at the lower edge of the posters not only directed the viewer's attention toward the central message but also harmonised with the overall colour scheme. In the image shown in Figure 10-b, women are depicted as collective farm workers. The poster's composition is organised according to the principle of forward perspective, with tractors moving in a single direction to create a sense of coordinated strength. Compositional lines are designed to guide the viewer's gaze from the foreground to the background, where resources are actively being transported to the front. The colour scheme combines warm hues of yellow and red, which traditionally symbolise fertility, labour, and energy.

In addition to the image of the woman as a labourer, Soviet propaganda made extensive use of another sacralised representation – the woman as a personification of the state (Vattano, 2021), who appeared in the form of the Motherland, calling the people to arms, as seen in iconic posters such as “The motherland calls!” and “For the motherland!” Irakli Toidze (Fig. 11). The main artistic emphasis in these compositions lies in a minimalist colour palette centred around red, white, and black. Red functions as a key element, symbolising Soviet identity and revolutionary struggle, and serves as an emotional trigger to intensify patriotism and militaristic fervour. The white background and dark graphic lines produce a monochromatic, agitational style that heightens the dramatic impact of the scene.



Figure 11. The sacral image of the Motherland in Soviet military propaganda during the Second World War
Note: a) Poster “The motherland calls!” (1941); b) Poster “For the motherland!” (1943)
Source: Russian WWII propaganda posters (n.d.)

The compositional structure of the posters is based on the use of diagonal lines, which enhance the dynamic quality of the call to action. In the poster “The motherland calls!”, the female figure occupies nearly the entire visual space, creating an effect of monumental grandeur (Fig. 11-a). The raised arm gesture and direct gaze convey a resolute emotional message, appealing to duty and responsibility. The vertical composition reinforces the authoritative tone, while the dynamic diagonal line extending from the military oath to the raised hand directs attention to the headline, intensifying the semantic focus of the poster. Similarly, in the poster “For the motherland!”, the main compositional emphasis is also placed on the female figure, although the narrative shifts from one of command to one of combat (Fig. 11-b). The diagonal composition is achieved through the placement of a group of soldiers in the lower section of the image, generating a sense of offensive momentum. The depiction of a woman here is not only sacralised but also emotionally heightened by the inclusion of a child in arms. This artistic device amplifies

the emotional impact on the viewer, evoking associations with protection, sacrifice, and familial values.

Within Soviet wartime poster art of the Second World War, the image of the female victim played a crucial role in shaping an emotional narrative and enhancing the propagandistic effect. Such depictions were intended to evoke viewer empathy, intensify feelings of indignation, and mobilise through emotional shock (Toon, 2022). The compositional decisions employed in these posters were constructed around a contrast between the strength of the aggressor and the vulnerability of the woman, making use of dramatic lighting, expressive gestures, and symbolic details that established a clear opposition between victim and perpetrator. The poster “Red Army soldier, save us!” serves as a characteristic example of the use of selective lighting to accentuate emotional effect (Fig. 12-a). The central focus is on the figures of a woman and child in a threatening situation. The dark background conveys a sense of hopelessness, while the brightly illuminated faces form the compositional centre,

heightening visual tension. A diagonal line is defined by the direction of the bayonet, aimed at the woman and child, embodying an immediate threat. The colour

scheme combines dark tones with red, evoking not only danger but also an urgent call to action reinforced by the textual slogan.



Figure 12. The image of the female victim in Soviet military propaganda during the Second World War

Note: a) Poster “Red Army soldier, save us!” (1942); b) Poster “Death to the Nazi murderers!” (1944); c) Poster “Kill the fascist monster!” (1942)

Source: Russian WWII propaganda posters (n.d.)

A similar compositional approach can be observed in the poster “Death to the Nazi murderers!”, where a diagonal axis is formed through the interaction between the hands of the aggressor and the woman (Fig. 12-b). An additional compositional layer is created by the background, which includes Nazi military equipment and troops, thereby amplifying the sense of mass and total threat. The poster “Kill the fascist monster!” adopts a different artistic technique, employing grotesque and caricatured stylisation (Fig. 12-c). The dark background creates a grim atmosphere, while the enemy figure, rendered with exaggerated, monstrous features, intensifies the effect of dehumanisation. The contrast between the dark figure of the enemy and the lighter female figure accentuates the symbolic division between absolute evil and innocent victimhood. A dynamic diagonal is formed through the direction of the rope leading to the hanged woman.

The image of the female victim transcends individual representation, becoming an emotionally charged symbol designed to elicit viewer empathy through powerful visual dramaturgy. This became part of a broader tendency in Soviet wartime graphic art, in which the female image was constructed within established propagandistic frameworks: as a sacral symbol of the state, as a labour reserve supporting the economy, and as the embodiment of victimhood representing the collective national tragedy. Soviet-Ukrainian wartime graphic art from the Second World War demonstrated a complex synthesis of artistic styles and propagandist strategies, merging Soviet visual codes with elements of national symbolism. Within these images, the female figure played a dual role: represented sacred sacrifice, renewal,

and hope. A key compositional device involved positioning the female figure as the central element, thereby determining the emotional impact of the poster.

The poster “Fighter, Ukraine is waiting for you!” was constructed based on the contrast between a dark, threatening background and an illuminated female figure, which heightens the dramatic effect (Fig. 13-a). The image of the woman functions as an allegory of enslaved Ukraine; the woman’s pose, bound body and facial expression evoke a sense of helplessness and expectation of liberation. The vertical format of the composition reinforces the sacred dimension of the image – the woman is tied to a pillar with the inscription “Kyiv”, which resembles the crucifixion scenes in Christian iconography. The cold tones of the background and the overall dark colour palette amplify the tragic atmosphere, while the muted moonlight symbolises hope. The use of cinematic lighting, with a focused emphasis on the woman’s face, enhances the empathic effect, drawing the viewer’s attention to her suffering. In contrast, the poster “Glory to the liberators of Ukraine! Death to the German invaders!” offers an alternative interpretation of the female image (Fig. 13-b). There, the woman appears as a rescued civilian, supported by a Soviet soldier. Her light-coloured clothing contrasts with the soldier’s dark military uniform, creating a visual emphasis on the trusting interaction between the figures. The composition assumes a static, ceremonial character, structured around a three-layered spatial arrangement. The central scene with the soldier and woman symbolises liberation; the bayonet in the middle ground reinforces the military context, while the equestrian statue in the background establishes a connection to the setting of the events.



Figure 13. The image of the Ukrainian woman in Soviet wartime propaganda

Note: a) Poster “Fighter, Ukraine awaits you!” (1943); b) Poster “Glory to the liberators of Ukraine! Death to the German invaders!” (1943)

Source: Russian WWII propaganda posters (n.d.)

Ukrainian wartime graphics during Second World War, particularly associated with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, present unique approaches to portraying the image of women, combining national identity with the war narrative. Unlike Soviet visual propaganda, where the female image often personified either the state or the victim of war, Ukrainian graphics offer alternative interpretations. Women appear as direct participants in armed resistance and as spiritual leaders of the nation. The first image depicts a female warrior in the uniform of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, positioned at the centre of the composition, emphasising leadership role in the fight (Fig. 14-a).

Her outstretched arm forms a clear diagonal, creating dynamic movement in the scene and conveying the emotion of a call to arms. The background, executed in a graphic style with contrasting black silhouettes and jagged lines, enhances the expressiveness of the image, adding dramatic tension. The contours of the figure are clear, visually highlighting her as the central element of the composition. The inscription at the top, rendered in an uneven handwritten style, imparts emotional expression and intensifies the propaganda effect. Particular attention is drawn to the national symbols on uniform, which clearly define the Ukrainian context of the struggle.



Figure 14. The female image in Ukrainian Insurgent Army propaganda postcards as the embodiment of struggle and compassion

Note: a) Postcard “Will you really sit idly by and watch brotherly blood flow?” (1939); b) Postcard “Help the wounded soldier!” (1942-1945)

Source: M. Dmitrenko (n.d.), M. Mikhalevich (1939)

The second image offers an alternative interpretation of the female role in the war – the woman is depicted as a medical angel aiding a wounded soldier (Fig. 14-b). The composition is based on the harmonious interrelationship between the characters, with the angel bending over the soldier, creating a smooth, calm rhythm that contrasts with the dynamic and aggressive energy of the first image. The colour scheme is minimalist, consisting of three primary colours – green, black, and orange. The green background evokes safety and calm, the black contours provide graphic clarity, and the orange reflects the connection to the struggle. The use of traditional Ukrainian attire in the angel's costume merges national symbolism with the idea of spiritual protection, adding a sacred meaning to the image.

The artistic techniques used, such as contrasting graphic elements, symbolic colour choices, and expressive compositional accents, create a unique visual code for Ukrainian wartime graphics that differentiates it from the dominant visual styles of Soviet and Nazi propaganda. Nazi graphics depicting female images adhered to established visual codes that emphasised

the traditional role of women as mothers, guardians of the family, and the foundation of the German nation (Boterbloem & Pine, 2025). The compositional choices, colour schemes, and stylistic elements of these posters served to sanctify motherhood, domestic comfort, and national loyalty.

In Figure 15, both images showcase the traditional female figure in Nazi propaganda, highlighting maternity, family values, and the role of women within the state hierarchy. The use of soft, harmonious colours in shades of blue, golden, and warm beige creates an effect of stability, purity, and holiness. In the poster “Mutter und Kind,” the central image of a mother with a child echo religious motif (Fig. 15-a). The composition is structured in such a way that the viewer's attention is solely focused on the interaction between mother and child. A substantial compositional device is the light accent in the form of the sun behind the woman, which distinctly highlights silhouette, creating the effect of a sacred glow, akin to the Madonna in Christian art. The tenderness of the expressions, the mother's lowered gaze, and the smooth lines of the forms create an atmosphere of calm and harmony.



Figure 15. The sacralised image of woman as mother in Nazi propaganda during the pre-war period (1930-1938)

Note: a) Poster “Unterstützt das hilfswerk mutter und kind” (1935); b) Cover of the magazine “NS Frauen warte. Die einzige parteiamtliche Frauenzeitschrift” (1937-1938)

Source: Nazi posters: 1939-1945 (2001), The frauen warte: 1935-1945 (2002)

In contrast to the first poster, the cover of “The frauen warte” magazine (Fig. 15-b) presents the woman within a broader social context. A woman is depicted alongside a male soldier and a labourer, emphasising the ideological vision of the family as the foundation of the state. The composition is structured and hierarchical: the male figure in the background dominates, while the woman occupies a stable, traditional role as mother and caregiver. Her pose and facial expression remain static, reinforcing a sense of constancy and resilience within the societal order. The colour schemes employed in these images also plays a crucial role. In “Mutter und kind”, the blue tones symbolise trust, calmness, and

maternal care. In contrast, “The frauen warte” utilises warm hues that evoke familial unity and national pride. The second image features clearly defined contours and strong contrast, contributing to a sense of structure and ideological order consistent with the overarching principles of Nazi aesthetics.

The graphic design of wartime posters during the Second World War reveals a complex interplay between artistic techniques, ideological messaging, and social mobilisation. Several general trends define the visual language of this period. Firstly, emotional expressiveness emerged as a key characteristic, achieved through the use of high contrast between light and shadow,

dynamic compositions, and expressive typography. Soviet graphic art favoured vivid, saturated colours, particularly reds, which symbolised struggle and socialist ideals. German posters, by contrast, relied on warm, harmonious palettes that underscored traditional family values and national stability. Ukrainian graphics, especially within the context of the liberation movement, employed stark contrasts reminiscent of expressionist linocuts, highlighting the dramatic nature of events.

Secondly, compositional choices reflected specific ideological content. Soviet posters often adopted diagonal layouts to convey movement and action. German images displayed centred, balanced structures, emphasising stability. Ukrainian posters frequently employed a strongly vertical construction, sacralising the female figure through monumentality and expressiveness. Overall, wartime posters of the Second World War not only conveyed the ideological imperatives of their respective nations but also represented a powerful artistic phenomenon. They synthesised graphic techniques, symbolism, and emotional impact to construct public consciousness.

Contemporary Ukrainian graphic design and the image of a woman in the context of war and national identity. Contemporary Ukrainian graphic design plays a considerable role in shaping the visual narrative of war and national identity, employing the female image as a symbol of cultural resistance, resilience, and the lived reality of conflict. Since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014, and especially following the full-scale invasion in 2022, artists have sought to reinterpret traditional female archetypes, adapting them to the emerging social realities.

In the early stages of the war, the visual narrative predominantly featured the image of the woman as a victim, symbolising the civilian population suffering under armed aggression. Such depictions made use of muted colours, cool tones, soft contours, and static compositions, which together heightened the impression of vulnerability and defencelessness (Cui *et al.*, 2023). Figure 16 serves as a representative example of the contemporary visual discourse of war. The portrayal of the woman merges traditional motifs of motherhood with themes of destruction, generating a complex visual message.

The colour palette is centred on pale, muted tones that form the background of tragedy, while the explosions and rocket fire are rendered in bright, warm hues that contrast sharply with the overall setting, symbolising the aggression of war. The composition is based on an asymmetrical balance, creating a sense of instability and helplessness. The central female figure is depicted in a static pose, which contrasts with the chaotic motion of the explosions, thereby accentuating the tragic sense of powerlessness in the face of war's destructive force.



Figure 16. The image of a woman in the work of Vlada Ralko (2013-2015)

Source: V. Ralko (2019)

As the events of the war unfolded and Ukrainian resistance strengthened, the representation of women in graphic art underwent substantial transformations, reflecting a shift in societal perceptions of the female role during wartime (Biedarieva, 2024). Initially portrayed as a symbol of vulnerability and suffering, the female figure evolved into a powerful archetype of resistance, resilience, and active defiance. Figure 17 vividly illustrates this dynamic transformation. On the left, representing the year 2014, Ukraine is depicted as a young girl wearing a blue and yellow wreath, confronting a threat. The composition is marked by stillness, reinforcing a sense of powerlessness. On the right, reflecting 2022, the image of Ukraine changes dramatically; the passive victim is replaced by a resolute woman who dominates the scene, directing a weapon towards the aggressor. The visual composition adopts a diagonal and dynamic structure; the tilt of the body and the inclined perspective generate a forward-moving momentum, conveying the internal transformation of the female figure from a target of violence to an active participant in the struggle.

Colour also plays a pivotal role in shaping emotional perception. A dark background combined with a rich red creates a dramatic effect, emphasising the intensity of the scene. Red symbolises struggle, aggression, and revolutionary fervour, and when paired with black, it intensifies the impression of determination and the inevitability of change. The contrast between the blue and yellow wreath and the dark background reinforces associations with Ukrainian national identity, which remains constant across both images despite the radical change in role.

Contemporary Ukrainian graphic art engages actively with the historical visual tradition of propaganda posters, reinterpreting it in the context of modern challenges, particularly war and the fight for national

identity. While the female figure in classic twentieth-century propaganda posters primarily represented support on the home front, in Ukrainian design, the figure

acquires new meaning, reflecting the active involvement of women in armed resistance. A comparison of two posters (Fig. 18) clearly illustrated this transformation.



Figure 17. Evolution of the image of Ukraine in contemporary graphic art

Source: H. Lubenets (2022)



Figure 18. Reinterpretation of Second World War propaganda in contemporary Ukrainian graphic art

Source: D. Romanov (2022)

The British propaganda poster “Women of Britain come into the factories” from 1941 depicts a woman as a worker providing essential resources to the army. Her pose is dynamic, highlighting the heroism of labour. The warm colour palette, combining red and yellow tones, conveys a sense of stability and inspiration, consistent with the rhetoric of wartime mobilisation art of that period. In contrast, the 2022 poster “Women of Ukraine aid the war effort” reimagines this iconography by rejecting classical compositional schemes. The central female figure is presented in a posture that emphasises personal strength. Rather than portraying conventional factory work, the woman is shown actively engaging with the realities of war, rescuing injured animals from a combat zone. This reference imbues the image with a sense of authenticity.

The colour strategy of the poster is deliberately contrasting and expressive. Cool blue-green tones in the background sharply clash with yellow fiery highlights,

evoking national symbolism. The use of expressionist stylistic elements combined with aspects of social realism intensifies the drama of the composition. The tension of the lines and emphasis on the silhouette’s expressiveness establish an emotional connection with the viewer, inviting participation in a visual discourse that extends beyond traditional propaganda.

The poster “Liberation” (2022) serves as a stylistic homage to a 1942 French propaganda poster symbolising the liberation of France from Nazi occupation (Fig. 19). Its compositional structure nearly mirrors the original, with a female figure raising arms against a backdrop of light to signify triumph, renewal, and victory. However, the contemporary version is imbued with new symbols and meanings, tailored to the Ukrainian context. The central figure is depicted in a blue and yellow dress that directly references the Ukrainian flag, reinforcing national identity. The background also underwent reinterpretation. While the French version

remained minimalist, with a crowd depicted in the midground, the modern version incorporates greater

narrative depth, showing architectural elements and a larger group of people in the background.



Figure 19. Reinterpretation of Second World War propaganda in contemporary Ukrainian graphic art
Source: D. Romanov (2022)

These examples illustrated how contemporary Ukrainian graphic art is capable of transforming classical visual codes into new, contextually relevant artistic statements. The use of expressive colour schemes, symbolism, dynamic poses, and stylistic references to twentieth-century war graphics produces a powerful emotional impact that bridges historical experience with contemporary struggle.

A clear illustration of the full integration of women into the military sphere is the poster “Joint front!” (2022), which portrays women as equals to men in a united effort (Fig. 20). The compositional structure is based on forward motion, symbolising unity, determination, and coordinated action among various participants in the resistance – soldiers, medics, engineers, volunteers, and civilians. The positioning of the characters conveys a strong sense of momentum, reinforcing the idea of collective progress towards a shared goal.

The image of a woman takes on a fundamentally new meaning, functioning not as a separate symbol but as an integral part of the collective front. Her position alongside male figures emphasises gender equality and the active participation of women in the military, technological and strategic spheres. Holding a drone – one of the key symbols of modern military technology – represents the evolving role of women in intelligence and tactical operations, reflecting the broader transformation of 21st century warfare. The styling of the figure, using sharp lines and clear contours, reinforces the sense of tension, focus and readiness for action.

The colour scheme of the poster is based on a contrast between a dark background and vivid accents. The deep yellow of the title “Joint front!” functions as a visual marker that captures attention, while the use of dark blue and greenish hues reinforces associations

with military aesthetics. The sharp outlines and graphic style, reminiscent of comic book art, contribute to the image’s dynamic quality and heroic narrative. A key compositional device involves the variation of size and positioning among the figures: those in the foreground appear larger, while those placed higher are rendered smaller. This approach intensifies the effect of perspective and collective movement, resulting in a balanced composition in which each figure symbolises a distinct aspect of the struggle, while collectively forming a united front of resistance. In this way, “Joint front!” not only visualises the contemporary transformation of women’s roles in the military context but also affirms their position as an essential element of the multidimensional national resistance.



Figure 20. The united front as a symbol of societal resistance in contemporary Ukrainian graphic art
Source: A. Yermolenko (2025)

Contemporary Ukrainian graphic design increasingly engages with the visual tradition of allegorical personification of the state through the female figure – an approach rooted in deep cultural codes and historical archetypes. The featured illustrations exemplify

this tendency, combining traditional ethnic motifs with military symbolism to forge a newly canonised image of the woman as both warrior and guardian. This dual role positions her as an ideological symbol of national resistance (Fig. 21).



Figure 21. Personification of Ukraine through the image of a warrior woman in contemporary war art
Source: R. Chaliy (2022), L. Pinko (2023)

Both works are characterised by centralised compositions in which the female figure occupies a dominant visual role. The first illustration conveys grace and strength through a poised yet determined stance, evocative of classical depictions of the goddess of victory, Nike. The white attire contrasts with red elements of traditional dress, symbolising readiness for battle, while the golden halo and floral wreath add a sacred dimension, imbuing the image with qualities of divine protection. The Ukrainian flag in the background contributes a sense of dynamism and reinforces national identity. In the second artwork, a more expressive visual language is employed. Saturated, contrasting colours, prominent flames, and stark symbolism such as skulls, underscore themes of righteous vengeance and unyielding struggle. The woman appears in a militant pose reminiscent of the goddess Kali, introducing a sense of dynamism to the composition. A shield bearing the Tryzub represents national defence, while the two-headed dead bird in hand alludes to the enemy's national symbol. The composition utilises concentric lines to generate a sense of tension.

The graphic strategies employed in both images demonstrated a synthesis of realism, contemporary digital painting, and mythologisation, positioning the female figure not only as an active participant in events but also as an ideological emblem of resistance. The use of vivid highlights, expressive colour schemes, and dynamic compositional structures contributes to the development of a contemporary visual code that merges traditional national motifs with contemporary military aesthetics.

Alongside the archetypes of the warrior-woman and the woman-as-state, contemporary Ukrainian graphic design also actively engages with the archetype of the woman as guardian, mother, and saint (Sinchenko, 2023). Within this context, one of the key artistic strategies is the reimagining of the traditional image of the Mother of God within a wartime framework. For instance, the artwork “Kyiv Madonna” fuses sacred aesthetics with the harsh realities of war (Fig. 22). The image of a mother and child taking refuge in a metro station from bombardment acquires religious connotations through the presence of a halo, stylised as a map of the Kyiv underground system. This functions not only as a visual symbol of safety but also as a profound artistic expression of the spiritual dimension of motherhood as a fortress and final sanctuary in times of war. The tonal composition, balance of light and shadow, and minimalistic colour palette create a sense of calm amid the destructive backdrop.

Another illustration that resonates with religious motifs is the image of the Mother of God holding a portable anti-tank missile system, the Javelin (Fig. 23). This depiction blends iconographic stylistics with elements of military symbolism. The artist adopts the classical visual code of Christian icons, incorporating soft lines, a frontally positioned figure, and traditional elements such as the halo and garments evocative of religious frescoes. However, the central semantic shift lies in the weapon held by the woman, which radically alters the standard interpretation of the image. The colour palette is based on a harmonious combination of green and blue hues, accented with yellow,

particularly in reference to national symbolism. The depiction of a sacred Orthodox figure bearing arms produces a visually charged juxtaposition that evokes both a sense of protection and military readiness. The artistic device of replacing the child with a weapon symbolises a transformation in traditional conceptions of women's roles during wartime. In this context, the woman is not only a guardian of life but also an active participant in the struggle.



Figure 22. The sacralised image of the woman as mother in contemporary Ukrainian war art

Source: Head of the UGCC... (2022)



Figure 23. Iconographic representation of the woman as a symbol of national resistance in contemporary Ukrainian art

Source: About "Bogoroditsa with Javelin"... (2022)

Contemporary Ukrainian graphic design increasingly adopts a minimalist aesthetic, merging satirical elements with symbolic contrast to produce striking visual messages (Fig. 24). The presented illustration is constructed on the principle of antithesis, achieved through the juxtaposition of two female figures, their attributes, poses, and stylistic treatments. This compositional technique enables the artist to emphasise not

only differing social roles but also the conceptual evolution of the image of woman in Ukrainian society under the conditions of war.



Figure 24. A satirical visual representation of the role of women in the military contexts of Ukraine and Russia

Source: O. Grekhov (2023)

The composition is structured symmetrically, with each figure occupying an equal portion of the visual space, thereby establishing a clear sense of balance. The woman on the left is depicted in a civilian guise with a relaxed posture; colour palette is soft and pastel, evoking associations with passivity and neutrality. In contrast, the female soldier on the right is distinguished by a defined and assertive silhouette. The symbolism of the military uniform and the positioning of the weapon evoke associations with agency, decisiveness, and strength. The colour background remains muted and natural, ensuring the viewer's focus remains on the central conceptual message. The absence of depth and shadow is characteristic of digital poster graphics and contributes to the overall stylised, poster-like quality of the work. The inclusion of textual elements enhances legibility and draws the viewer's attention to the satirical and socio-political commentary embedded within the image.

Contemporary Ukrainian graphic design underwent a profound transformation of traditional visual codes and archetypes. Whereas earlier representations portrayed women predominantly as victims of warfare, artists increasingly shifted towards depictions of strong, determined participants in resistance. This trend reflects a broader socio-cultural shift in the perception of women's roles during wartime, as evidenced by the research of S. Saiedzh (2025). Nevertheless, the integration of traditional sacred motifs into the wartime visual discourse is evident, manifesting through the use of religious symbolism, allegories of national struggle, and the personification of Ukraine in the form of a female figure.

The analysis of wartime graphics demonstrated the persistence of key aesthetic principles despite technological advancements. As noted by E. Perzycka-Borowska *et al.* (2023), heightened expression, strong chromatic contrasts, and compositional tension are defining features of wartime art. Contemporary Ukrainian designers effectively adapted these principles within the digital environment, thereby enhancing the communicative effectiveness of the works. Minimalism plays a substantial role in this transformation, often combined with a satirical approach, particularly in socially critical illustrations that serve to reinterpret prevailing narratives and contribute to the formation of a new visual code of resistance culture.

A notable feature of recent graphic design is its engagement with gender-equal narratives. Unlike the wartime graphics of the twentieth century, in which women were often depicted as figures of rear-line support or allegorical symbols, contemporary Ukrainian designers emphasise women's active roles in military, volunteer, and humanitarian spheres. This approach is consistent with the findings of N.S. Udris-Borodavko (2022), who observed that such imagery not only highlights the contributions of women to the war effort but also fosters a re-evaluation of traditional gender roles within the context of conflict.

The utilisation of historical archetypes within contemporary graphic art also proves significant. Findings indicate that Ukrainian design maintains a connection with classical poster-making techniques while adapting them to new technological conditions. As noted by K. Fahlenbrach (2025), the fusion of traditional symbols with digital stylistics results in visually compelling and conceptually rich imagery with high mobilisational potential. Colour plays a vital role in this process: the use of red, black, white, and blue-yellow hues enhances the emotional intensity and visual expressiveness of the artworks. Thus, the analysis of artistic strategies and visual mechanisms within Ukrainian wartime graphics allows for the identification of key approaches to the sacralisation of the female figure and its role in shaping collective consciousness. The findings offer insights into the characteristics of this phenomenon and underscore its cultural and symbolic importance in the context of wartime art.

CONCLUSIONS

The study demonstrated that female image sacralisation in Ukrainian wartime graphics constitutes a long-standing tradition, one that adapts in response to historical and sociocultural contexts. This tradition is grounded in the use of symbolic codes, artistic techniques, and compositional strategies that contribute to the creation of a sacred symbol of national struggle. Graphic works across different periods consistently employed personification, mythologisation, and allegorical motifs, all of which shape a visual language

aimed at reinforcing collective identity and mobilising society.

The analysis of wartime graphics from the First and Second World Wars indicated distinctive features in the sacralisation of the female image across artistic traditions. In French and American graphic art, the female figure embodied ideals of liberty and national greatness through centred compositions, dynamic postures, and contrasting applications of light and shadow. In contrast, Russian and German visual cultures were marked by sacred motifs emphasising the mystical and spiritual dimensions of the conflict. Ukrainian graphic art, particularly the works of Olena Kulchytska, exhibited expressionist approaches, enhancing emotional resonance through dramatic compositions and high colour contrast. During the Second World War, Soviet graphic art constructed the sacralised female image through monumental compositions, vivid colour contrasts, and clearly structured diagonal arrangements. Ukrainian wartime graphics, shaped within the Soviet tradition, integrated elements of academic realism with propagandistic stylisation. Meanwhile, underground art tended to rely on archetypal representations that symbolised struggle and sacrifice.

Contemporary Ukrainian graphic design continues the tradition of sacralising the female image, while transforming it in line with new technological and artistic possibilities. Static allegorical figures have given way to dynamic compositions, bold colour schemes, and the fusion of digital and traditional techniques. A considerable development is the incorporation of sacred motifs into the visual language of resistance. The personification of Ukraine through the female figure is achieved by means of iconographic compositional canons, strategic lighting accents, ornamental details, and golden hues. Such an approach enables the creation of symbolically rich works that merge historical continuity with contemporary artistic innovation. The principal limitation of this study lies in its focus on official wartime graphics, whereas alternative artistic initiatives, underground art, and unofficial propaganda remain insufficiently explored. Moreover, reconstructing the artistic intentions of the creators proves challenging due to the absence of direct testimonies, which may affect the accuracy of interpretation.

Future research may concentrate on digital war art, particularly its operation within social media, digital art, and interactive design. A promising area involves comparative analysis between Ukrainian wartime graphics and similar practices in other countries, which could illuminate shared artistic trends and distinctive features within the visual culture of resistance. In addition, examining typographic and compositional strategies in wartime graphics and their influence on audience perception represents a relevant area of inquiry. Further development of this subject is likely to contribute to a broader understanding of the role visual

narratives play during times of war and their impact on collective memory and social processes.

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Сакралізація образу жінки у воєнні періоди в Україні та відображення цього явища у графічних творах

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Анотація. Метою дослідження був аналіз мистецьких стратегій і візуальних механізмів сакралізації жіночого образу у воєнній графіці України, зокрема у плакатах, гравюрах та ілюстраціях часів світових воєн і сучасних збройних конфліктів. Дослідження розкрило художні засоби, символіку та іконографічні традиції, що формують сакральний вимір жіночої репрезентації у воєнному мистецтві. Методологічний підхід ґрунтувався на систематичному аналізі художніх прийомів, композиційних рішень, колористичних стратегій та стилістичних особливостей творів. Отримані результати засвідчили, що сакралізація жіночого образу в українській воєнній графіці ґрунтувалася на використанні усталених візуальних кодів, що еволюціонували під впливом соціально-культурних та технічних змін у мистецтві. Порівняльний аналіз українських, радянських, німецьких, французьких та британських графічних матеріалів дозволив визначити ключові тенденції у зображенні жіночого образу, зокрема його героїзацію, наділення міфологічними та релігійними рисами, а також використання художніх засобів для формування національної ідентичності. У сучасному українському графічному дизайні відбулася глибока трансформація сакрального жіночого образу, що проявляється у відході від традиційних алегоричних схем на користь експресивних і персоналізованих візуальних рішень. Жіноча постать дедалі частіше зображується не лише як символ нації чи берегиня, а як рівноправна учасниця бойових дій, що змінює візуальний наратив воєнного мистецтва. Колористичні рішення у сучасних плакатах використовують поєднання синьо-жовтих, червоно-чорних і контрастних монохромних схем, що підсилюють емоційний ефект зображень. Активно застосовуються цифрові технології, що дозволяють інтегрувати традиційні графічні техніки з новими візуальними стратегіями, такими як динамічні композиції, анімаційні елементи та адаптація іконографічних мотивів до сучасного контексту. Дослідження засвідчило, що сакралізація жіночого образу у графічному мистецтві досягається через поєднання традиційних символів, новітніх візуальних стратегій та адаптацію історичних архетипів до сучасного контексту. Візуальна репрезентація жінки у воєнному мистецтві продовжує еволюціонувати, інтегруючи нові стилістичні засоби та художні концепції, що розширює можливості комунікації та впливу графічного дизайну у контексті національної ідентичності та культурного протиставлення.

Ключові слова: плакатне мистецтво; художня репрезентація; колористика; стилістичні особливості; візуальна семіотика; іконографія; графічний дизайн