The Decolonised Body: Corporeality, Violence, and Resistance to Objectification in Recent Ukrainian Art

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The Evolution of Ukrainian Art, 2014–2023

Over the last ten years, including the year 2022 – which was the most traumatic in terms of human loss and destruction – the narratives and methods artists have used to address the reality of war events in Ukraine have evolved. I propose that this evolution of resistance through art can be classified into three dimensions, which have permeated all layers of Ukrainian society: from the public sphere to the private level, and further, into intimate space. These three different stages of art production have been reflected in artworks and represent epistemological transformations taking place in Ukrainian society.

First, on a public level, the rise of documentary practice occurred after the beginning of the war in 2014, resulting in what I call the emergence of documentary art as a unity between artistic practice and documentary media such as film, photography, and reportage.[1] This also included archival work: the reinterpretation of existing historical archives, particularly those of eastern Ukraine and Crimea, and the creation of archives of the ongoing war, which aimed to transform the politics of memory. Works by Piotr Armianovski, Mykola Ridnyi, Yevgenia Belorusets, Dana Kavelina, Andrii Dostliev, and Lia Dostlieva, among many others, were key in the development of this stage of documentary practice.

In 2014, artists were conduits reflecting the situation on the front lines for audiences outside the warzone. The extensive development of documentation practices in art and film reflected the epistemological shift brought about by the war as a production of new knowledge and a further reconsideration of identity and memory by Ukrainian society. This shift marked the beginning of the dismantling of entan-

1 I discuss Ukrainian artists' shift to documentary art practices after 2014 in the following work: Svitlana Biedarieva, "The Documentary Turn in New Ukrainian Art", in: Svitlana Biedarieva (ed.), *Contemporary Ukrainian and Baltic Art: Political and Social Perspectives*, Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2021, 53–78.

glements with postcolonial narratives, aiming for full decolonial release instead.[2] Here, I use the classification proposed by decolonial scholar Madina Tlostanova, who distinguishes between postcoloniality and decoloniality not only from a paradigmatic point of view, such as the postcolonial theory that was largely developed by Indian theorists, such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak and the decolonial theory by Latin American scholars Walter Mignolo[3] and Aníbal Quijano, but also from a chronological perspective.[4] The postcolonial condition in this model, and as used in this text, immediately follows the anticolonial resistance and the resulting downfall of an empire, when a society of a newly independent country reworks, rethinks, and recombines recent colonial experiences. Stuart Hall describes the 'postcolonial' as a shift from the anticolonial binary forms of representation to their rereading within cultural translation and transculturation.[5] The decolonial stage, however, goes one step further by seeking liberation from any colonialism-related elements by producing new, disentangled narratives that need not pass the translation process and rather focus on history in the making.[6]

The second, private level of interpretation of personal experience was marked by the immersion of the artists in war events after the beginning of the full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022. The artists' positions transformed into those of active participants in the events because of the all-involving character of the invasion. The genre of reportage from the front line was substituted with personal diaries depicting the uneasy reality that the artists and their closest circle were witnesses

2 I define 'decolonial release' as decoloniality exercised in full, as a complete disentanglement from colonial narratives.

3 Walter Mignolo's support of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine raises an important question about the methodological and conceptual gaps existing between decolonial theory in Latin America and its applicability to the Ukrainian case. This paradoxical example proceeds from the vision of Western capitalism and neoliberalism as the main sources of colonialism, while omitting the fact that the work of Russian neocolonialism in post-Soviet spaces largely claims the legacy of the socialism of the past (while in reality it relies on the same capitalist essence of Russian authoritarianism). See: Walter Mignolo, "It is a Change of Era, No Longer the Era of Changes", trans. Giovanni Tosti-Croce, Allison Madigan, and Walter Mignolo, *Postcolonial Politics*, 29 January 2023, https://postcolonialpolitics.org/it-is-a-change-of-era-no-longer-the-era-of-changes/ [accessed: 05.08.2024].

4 Madina Tlostanova, "The Postcolonial Condition, the Decolonial Option and the Post-Socialist Intervention", in: Monika Albrecht (ed.), *Postcolonialism Cross-Examined: Multidirectional Perspectives on Imperial and Colonial Pasts and the New Colonial Present*, London: Routledge, 2020, 165–178, here 165.

5 Stuart Hall, "When Was 'the Post-colonial'? Thinking at the Limit", in: Stuart Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism*, Gregor McLennan (ed.), Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021, 293–315.

6 Tlostanova, "The Postcolonial Condition, the Decolonial Option and the Post-Socialist Intervention", 165.

to. The realisation of imminent danger from the Russian army also played a role in the reconsideration of artists' agency in these events. Reported speech – a report of the distant events characteristic of documentary practices between 2014 and 2022 – turned into the direct speech of immediate eyewitnesses of the violence, permitting entry into their private spaces. This process can be observed in works by Alevtina Kakhidze, Vlada Ralko, and Yevgenia Belorusets, which I discuss later in this chapter.

The last, intimate level included reflections on the trauma of violence, including sexual violence, and the necessity to oppose the objectification of the human body brought about by the war atrocities. It prompted the creation of works addressing the topics of corporeality and resistance to aggression, simultaneously constituting the presence of violence and denying its power of reduction of personality through the lens of victimhood. The artists challenge objectification through violence by putting its dehumanising qualities into focus, moving this topic from the periphery to the centre. This tendency became visible in works by Maria Kulikovska, Kinder Album, Kateryna Lysovenko, Danylo Movchan, Roman Khimey, and Yarema Malashchuk. Although informed by documentary practice, such as photography and film, these artists' methods turned to more symbolic expressive means, presenting a more advanced degree of the interpretation of the events, in contrast to documentary practice as the initial process of knowledge production. In this process, it is particularly important to avoid what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls 'image mirroring' as a possible direction of a decolonial process of epistemological production:[7] this means avoiding binary oppositions such as borrowing from the language of the aggressor, and instead reestablishing the value of a repressed body through a pluralist approach, described by decolonial scholars as 'aesthesis' – a liberating ability to perceive through the senses as a result of emancipation from the oppressor.[8] Aesthesis is opposed to aesthetics as a colonial notion, turning to forgotten (or nonexistent) models of perception that have been censored or suppressed.

Intimate space and its transgression became the main topic of artists' attention in the second half of 2022, as Ukrainian society attempted to comprehend the effects of the brutal invasion. The bodily and gendered dimensions of violence caused by Russian war crimes against Ukrainians, and the questions of objectification and dehumanisation brought about by violent deaths, were addressed by many artists following the traumatising events in the Kyiv suburbs and the east and south of the country in the spring of 2022. In this text, I will discuss how works by Ukrainian artists reflect on the impact of war atrocities on personal and intimate space and

7 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018, 5.

8 See, for example: Madina Tlostanova, *What Does It Mean to Be Post-Soviet? Decolonial Art from the Ruins of the Soviet Empire*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018, 26.

how they use decolonial optics to challenge the objectification and dehumanisation of the human body in the aftermath of the invasion.

Bodily Integrity and Ways of Addressing Unrepresentable Violence

To illustrate the shifts between the levels of interpretation and expression in Ukrainian art before and after the beginning of the full-scale invasion, I want to address works by Ukrainian emerging photographer Artem Humilevskiy.[9] He made his series *Giant* (2021–2022) before the beginning of the full-scale invasion. It presents the figure of the artist, who appears at the same time as a model in the centre of the image. His nude body is a landmark for the steadiness in the image, while the photographer observes the disaster unfolding in the distance. He watches a burning field with detachment from the local catastrophe and contemplates the violent destruction of the ecosystem that occurs in front of him. At first sight, the monumental, static figure of the artist that responds to the title of the series – *Giant* – appears here as a celebration of the invulnerability of the human body in the face of disastrous events; however, it also ironically connotes the absurdity of the situation depicted in the image, turning it into a pastiche of its own messages. As Tlostanova proposes, "the decolonial sublime acts through parody, irony, canonical counter-discourse, deliberate and aestheticized nostalgia, grotesque, chiasmus, overlay".[10] We can observe all these elements and methods in recent Ukrainian art, which discusses and opposes the war's deadly effects through reclaiming bodily value as a part of a larger desired image of disentanglement and victory.

Humilevskiy abandoned the series with the beginning of the full-scale invasion and began a new one, *Roots* (2022). In several digitally manipulated photographs from this series, the artist attempts to morph into the natural landscape, such as a tree destroyed by lightning (Fig. 28). The damaged trunk of the tree symbolises the destruction that envelops every person in Ukraine. The body of the artist is at the same time exposed by the split in the wood and protected by the trunk, becoming its continuation and shelter. His figure represents an encounter of the living with the lifeless – or the dead – while at the same time exploring the profound connection between the two. No detachment is visible any more in this work, which manifests a full immersion in situations of vulnerability and rootedness. Through *Roots*, Humilevskiy presents a reflection on the relationship between human beings and the natural world in the midst of conflict and destruction. The photograph invites us to

9 See the artist's website: Artem Humilevskiy, official website, https://humilevskiy.com/ [accessed: 11.04.2024].

10 Tlostanova, *What Does It Mean to Be Post-Soviet?*, 32.

contemplate the fragility of life, the resilience of the human spirit, and the ability to employ irony, which endures even in the face of the most extreme challenges.

The works that turn from the idea of the integrity of the human body to questions of violence are less ambiguous. This has to do with the dehumanising quality of the war. The astonishing number of dead people flattens our perception of reality. A human body affected by extreme war violence loses its agency – and a war action that has the restoration of coloniality as its final aim intends to turn it into a lifeless object, by both denying its identity and agency and threatening to physically destroy it. The artistic practice that opposes this objectification of war victims and war witnesses faces an impasse where the fact of death is final, and its irreversibility blocks any possible ambiguous interpretation, converting each artwork into an individual anticolonial statement. The artists reflect on the violation of the limits of the human body by war atrocities and turn to the discourse of anticolonial resistance, both in response to the shock of the unfolding of the military action and as an intention to oppose this action through available means. The fresh and ongoing trauma provokes only the possibility of a direct response when the art takes a straightforward anticolonial approach using categorical binary oppositions. This is what has happened to Ukrainian art after the invasion, with its amplified attention to the organic matter of death and suffering and the questions of the objectification of devalued human life.

Figure 28: Image from the series Roots

Image by Artem Humilevskiy, 2022. Image provided courtesy of Artem Humilevskiy.

Figure 29: Interview with Adorno

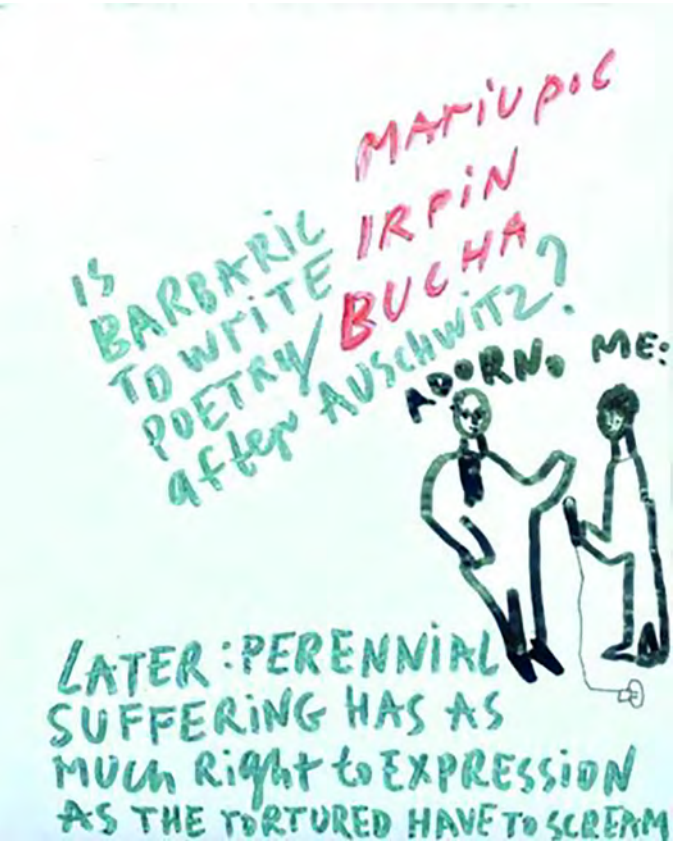

Image by Alevtina Kakhidze, 2022. Image provided courtesy of Alevtina Kakhidze.

The drawing *Bucha. Me. 47 Minutes by Car* by Alevtina Kakhidze depicts the impossibility of visually recording the extreme violence that occurred in Bucha, a town near Kyiv that was heavily affected by the Russian occupation, with more than 300 civilians killed by the Russian army and buried in mass graves.[11] The artist's body is bent in sorrow, shown in front of a vast red blot, which marks the site of Russian

11 For more on Kakhidze's work, see: Svitlana Biedarieva, "Alevtina Kakhidze", *Burlington Contemporary*, 27 July 2022, https://contemporary.burlington.org.uk/articles/articles/alevtina-kakhidze [accessed: 11.04.2024]. Also see the artist's website: Alevtina Kakhidze, official website, http://www.alevtinakakhidze.com/ [accessed: 11.04.2024].

soldiers' massacre and rampant rape of civilians. This work directly addresses the irrepresentability of violence – an important notion that entered the European scholarly and philosophical discourse in the aftermath of World War II and the atrocities of the Holocaust. Kakhidze's work echoes German philosopher Theodor Adorno's famous statement that "to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric", as every artistic representation of death became excessive and unnecessary after the horror of the unspeakable.[12] The artist addresses this phrase directly in another drawing, *Interview with Adorno* (2022) (Fig. 29), where she asks the question, "Is it barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz, Irpin, Mariupol, Bucha?"[13]

Ukrainians' immediate experience of the war brought about the idea that any attempts to represent this violence are inevitably reductive and that the only way to truly confront its horror is to acknowledge its irrepresentability. From a decolonial point of view, this irrepresentability presents a problem of forming a decolonial epistemological basis as a set of new disentangled narratives because the creation of new knowledge is obstructed by the impossibility of visualising the events – and, consequently, a comprehension of their magnitude. Therefore, the violence and suffering can often be silenced or ignored by still-dominant (post)colonial narratives. The task of Kakhidze, in this work, is to return representability to them through addressing them and by representing her own life experience of proximity to the massacre: not showing the trauma itself but the artist's reaction to it, condensed into a seemingly naive reflection. Such a decolonial gesture challenges the vision of irrepresentability that, according to Jacques Rancière, deprives victims of their image in politically engaged art practices, turning instead to the depiction of the atrocity as a rhetorical figure, actualised by communication between the artist and the event, as a relative connection between them.[14]

Vlada Ralko's *Lviv Diary*, a series of drawings named after the city in which she found shelter after the outburst of violence with the full-scale invasion, explores the profound trauma of war by merging erotically charged images with depictions of extreme violence (Fig. 30).[15] The drawings are excessive and grotesque in their manner, as the artist fills nearly the entire paper with sketches of male and female, and, in some cases, cupid-like figures, who represent different stages of a struggle with a

12 Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Samuel Weber, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997, 34.

13 Alevtina Kakhidze, *Interview with Adorno*, drawing, 2022.

14 Jacques Rancière, "El teatro de imágenes" ("The Theatre of Images"), in: Nicole Schweizer (ed.), *Alfredo Jaar: La política de las imágenes* (*Alfredo Jaar: The Politics of Images*), Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Metales Pesados, 2008, 69–90, here 77.

15 Vlada Ralko and Milena Khomchenko, "Lviv Diary: Is it Convenient to Know?", Shcherbenko Art Centre, https://www.shcherbenkoartcentre.com/en/publications/vlada-ralko-en/lviv-diary-is-it-convenient-to-know/ [accessed: 11.04.2024].

two-headed pigeon-like eagle. At times, it is only the decapitated head of this monster that appears in the drawings; at other times, we witness an epic fight as part of the heroic narrative. Informed by religious iconography and pornographic imagery, this series draws on the figurative and bodily reinterpretation of the colonial entanglement between Russia and Ukraine. The Soviet symbols that occasionally reemerge in the drawings imply that this fight is a final and irreversible battle that will dismantle not only the falsified pseudo-imperial narrative used by Russia but the entire post-Soviet space, or, at least, Ukraine's belonging to it. The decolonial perspective is incorporated in this work through the interplay of power positions that the sides repeatedly exchange as the military situation changes. The series offers a detailed exploration of the deep wounds inflicted by war and the ongoing struggle for decolonial release. The fusion of erotic and violent imagery creates a visceral and emotive response in the viewer, highlighting the intensity and complexity of the trauma experienced by those caught up in the war situation.

Art's Resistance to Objectification and Transgression

In the search for an explanation for the violent transgression of intimate bodily space brought about by Russian war crimes, the artists turn to visual methods that at times intersect, aiming to convey the scale of the trauma and its impact on both individuals and communities affected by the violence. For example, Kateryna Lysovenko's works tackle the topic of extreme violence that marked the Russian invasion of Ukraine.[16] Her painting explores the complex relationship between epic narratives of the war drawn from classical mythology and the death and violence that occur in real life.

Instead of talking about her large-scale works, I will focus on smaller watercolours by the artist. In Lysovenko's watercolour *Being under Knowledge* (2022), the inner organs of children are exposed, a commentary on the violent nature that touches everyone living in Ukraine, including children. The vulnerability of children and the violation of their bodily limits also allude to the violation of the state border of Ukraine when the entire country became exposed to pain, trauma, atrocity, and ruin. Physical violence goes hand in hand with epistemic violence, which permeates all aspects of life and exposes its fragility. The artist often uses binary oppositions in her work to address the topic of the trauma of the war as expressed through bodily experience. In the work *A Woman and Death* (2022) (Fig. 31), a woman embraces the double-headed figure of death in a kind of dance. In addition to its usual monstrous appearance, death here has an emphasised irregularity that highlights its grotesqueness and deformity. The parallels that can be drawn to the Russian state

16 *Secondary Archive*, "Kateryna Lysovenko", https://secondaryarchive.org/artists/kateryna-lysovenko/ [accessed: 11.04.2024].

emblem – and that are also used in the work of Ralko, where an eagle with two skulls frequently appears – depict the deadly encounter with evil, which takes a concrete form. Both in Lysovenko's and Ralko's works, this encounter between human and nonhuman (yet anthropomorphic) figures is characteristic of the artists' vision of the hybrid appearance of the enemy who has crossed the ambivalent border between the all-unifying (yet concrete) human image and the allegoric portrayal of the official image and policy of the aggressor state.

Figure 30: Image from the series Lviv Diary

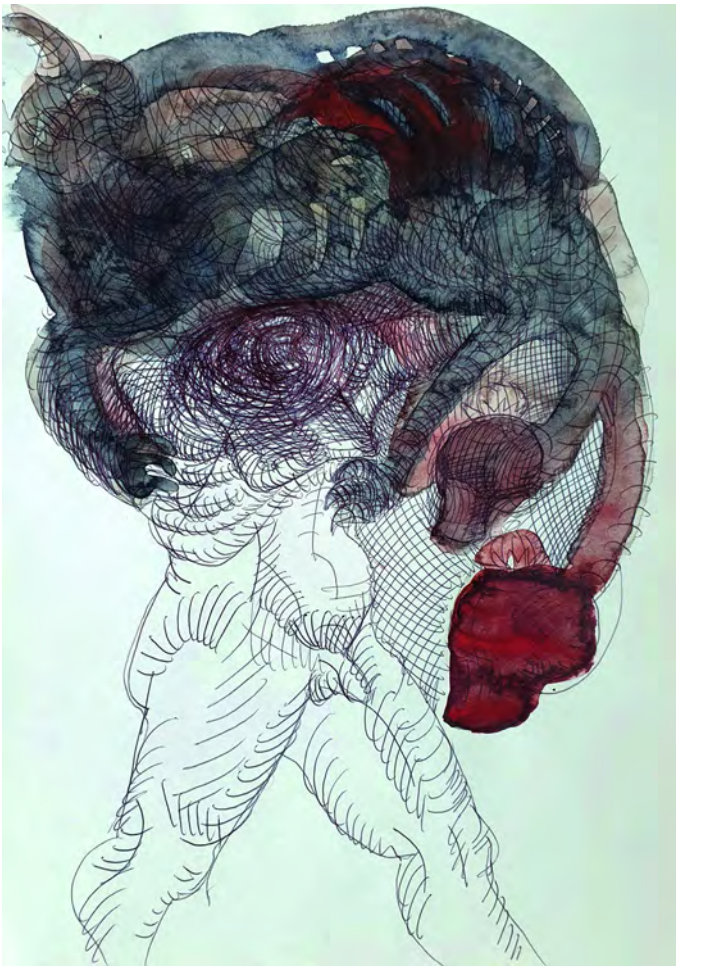

Image by Vlada Ralko, 2022. Image provided courtesy of Vlada Ralko.

Figure 31: A Woman and Death

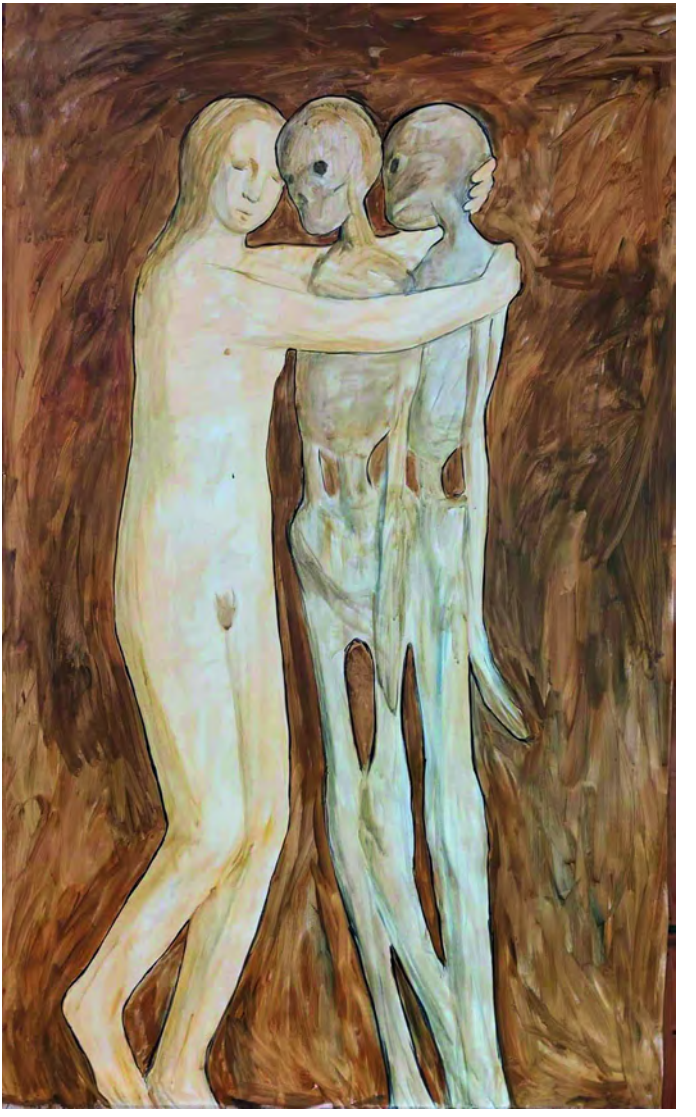

Image by Kateryna Lysovenko, 2022. Image provided courtesy of Kateryna Lysovenko.

Figure 32: Nitrogen Explosion

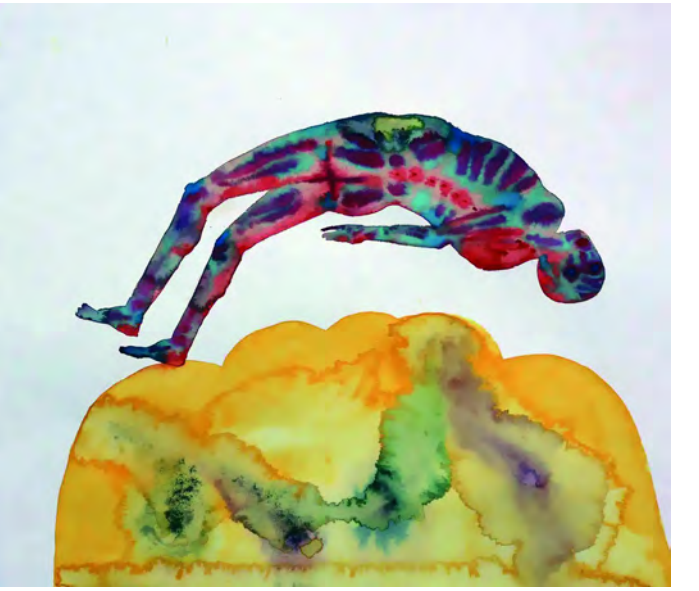

Image by Danylo Movchan, 2022. Image provided courtesy of Danylo Movchan.

Danylo Movchan's works employ a similar watercolour technique that uses transparency to expose the inner organs of the figures, showing their inner structure as a sign of the absence of defensive limits or a testimony to physical violence and death.[17] Movchan, originally an icon painter, depicts stylised figures against a plain background, making references to religious iconography and thus placing the images of victims of the war in a religious or mythological narrative. The work *Nitrogen Explosion* (2022) (Fig. 32) depicts the moment of death as it presents the body thrown upwards by an explosion wave, convulsing in agony. The watercolour *Two Bodies with Hidden Faces* (2022) outlines the bodies of men or women with their faces invisible and unrecognisable, reflecting in this way the all-unifying logic of the war that depersonalises its victims. After Russians left behind mass graves of civilians across the territories of Ukraine liberated from the invasion, the question of the identification and recognition of war victims took central place as a new discourse of the formation of the newest historical memory and a sign of emancipation from this objectification of war victims through an acknowledgement of not only the existence of a historical trauma but the agency of each person who fell victim to the

17 Ukraine Ablaze, "Danylo Movchan", https://www.ukraineablaze.art/en/artists/danylo-movchan/ [accessed: 11.04.2024].

aggression. The identification of every victim contributes to their repersonalisation, by opposing the postcolonial logic of the irrepresentability of evil.

The topic of the anonymity of violence and the objectification of its victims was also addressed by the performance artist and sculptor Maria Kulikovska in a reflection that linked physical violence with the destruction of cultural objects across the country.[18] The concept of the work was based on real events that occurred in Donetsk. Kulikovska exhibited soap sculptures from the *Homo Bulla* and *Army of Clones* series (2012), modelled after her own body, at the IZOLYATSIA Platform for Cultural Initiatives in 2012. In 2014, the art centre was captured and looted by pro-Russian militants from the unrecognised Donetsk People's Republic and has become an illegal political prison since then.[19] Following the seizure of the centre, a group of pro-Russian terrorists used these sculptures as targets for shooting. In 2019, reflecting on this trauma, Kulikovska set up a performance where she shot replicas of her sculptures. The artist carried out this performance for the Ukrainian–Swiss film *The Forgotten* (2019) by Daria Onyshchenko (Fig. 33). This destruction of the artist's own image mirrors the killings that occurred widely in the east of Ukraine after 2014 and represents the artist's consideration of herself as being in the place of female victims, as no more than another object of the atrocity.[20]

In her new work *The Table of Negotiations* (2022), Kulikovska responds to this intention of objectification brought about by Russian war crimes, as well as attempts to resist it, by bringing the question of dying back to the limits of perception. This exaggerated, unpleasant work in a series of three-dimensional tiles presents a feast of death, a nightmarish collection of images that has been following Ukrainian society since they learnt about crimes against civilians in Bucha, Mariupol, Izium, and other Ukrainian cities. Ceramics, the material of the work, is testimony to the fragility of the human body. The appearance and statement of this work are reminiscent of the human organs served on a plate in Judy Chicago's famous *Dinner Party* (1974–1979) and the direct visual experience of the aftermath of slaughter in Marina Abramović's *Balkan Baroque* (1997). Kulikovska's aggressive work aims to trigger viewers' emotions and to involve them in an elaborate game of apprehension and obsession with ongoing trauma. The decolonial aesthesis as a liberated return to formerly taboo senses and feelings resurfaces here as a method of resistance, as a demythologisation of both topics in the face of war through a discussion on violence and explicit corporeality emerging in Ukrainian society.

18 Maria Kulikovska and Oleh Vinnichenko, official website, https://www.mariakulikovska.net/project-page/homo-bulla---human-as-soap-bubble [accessed: 11.04.2024].

19 For example, see: Stanislav Aseyev, *Torture Camp on Paradise Street*, trans. Zenia Tompkins and Nina Murray, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022.

20 See also: Svitlana Biedarieva, "Art Communities at Risk: Ukraine", *October* 179, 2022, 137–149.

Figure 33: Screenshot of Maria Kulikovska's Homo Bulla. Replica

Still from *The Forgotten*, a film by Daria Onyshchenko, 2019. Image provided courtesy of Daria Onyshchenko.

Figure 34: Image from the series Bones

Image by Kinder Album, 2022. Image provided courtesy of Kinder Album.

Kinder Album takes a similar approach to examining trauma through its corporeality. She sculpts human and animal bones in ceramics, and the resulting burnt and damaged carcasses morph into floral adornments. The artist challenges death and dismemberment as she turns to heal the wound through vegetation as a symbol of revival. The decorative aesthetics of her sculptural work, as in the *Bones* series (2022), becomes a practice of regeneration as the artist turns to the restoration of agency through growth (Fig. 34). This resurrection, however, remains incomplete, as the bones do not fully transform; rather, they remain in disaccord with the seemingly excessive floral decoration. This project argues for the possibility of regaining one's perception, even if it is that of pain and grief, and discusses and opposes the war's deadly effects through reclaiming bodily value as a part of a larger desired image of disentanglement. This practice of regeneration responds to what Tlostanova considers a decolonial strategy of 're-futuring', where the agency of the oppressed victims and witnesses of the war is reclaimed through aesthesis as a possibility to regain one's own perception, even if it is that of pain and grief.[21] An orientation to this resurrection through a comprehension of the uneasy reality and its reinterpretation or reworking marks the turning point in Ukrainian art's concerns of reestablishing bodily agency as an anti-objectifying decolonial gesture.

Resurrection, as resistance to cruel acts of war, is also the topic of Dana Kavelina's unfinished film, *Mother Srebrenica, Mother Donbas* (2021–), which the Kyiv-based artist had to stop at the beginning of the full-scale invasion.[22] In this film, the violence of mass atrocities is reinterpreted through a comparative perspective on the Holocaust, particularly the Lviv pogroms of 1941, the Srebrenica massacre, and the war in the Donbas. The artist reimagines the story of the war as one where the victims of the Holocaust are not exhumed after their violent death but are resurrected by means of placing a slip of parchment in their mouths. This reference to the 17th-century legend of a golem, who was resurrected after receiving a slip with a name, calls for an epistemic change in the recognition of the victims of war-caused violence, their identification, and finding their role in history. The hope for resurrection expressed by the artist is hope for postwar reconstruction and regeneration, as well as the effective preservation of the memory of those who suffered from aggression. Kavelina's film, therefore, attempts to return to the frames of the representability of violence, challenging what Rancière calls a threnody of the "unrepresentable/intractable/irredeemable, denouncing the modern madness of the idea of a self-emancipation of mankind's humanity and its inevitable and

21 Madina Tlostanova, "Decolonial AestheSis and the Post-Soviet Art", *Afterall Journal* 48, 2019, 100–107, https://www.afterall.org/article/decolonial-aesthesis-and-the-post-soviet-art [accessed: 11.04.2024].

22 *Secondary Archive*, "Dana Kavelina", https://secondaryarchive.org/artists/dana-kavelina/ [accessed: 11.04.2024].

interminable culmination in the death camps".[23] One of the most important statements produced by Kavelina, following the experience of the war, is the reversal of the visions on the bodily dimensions of violence formed after World War II. This statement brings in new narratives that mark the creation of new epistemologies – which inevitably will be converted into new methodologies for addressing the trauma.

Conclusions

The new Ukrainian art produced after the second half of 2022 calls for resistance to the objectification of those affected by the war, making a statement against the anonymity of violence and insisting on seeing the scale of injustice. Recent art practices emphasise art's capacity for resilience and resistance in the face of disaster, and mark the decisive break with colonial narratives, creating instead their own narratives drawing on the epistemological basis gathered in the first stages of artistic documentation of the war from 2014 to 2021. The decolonial statements proposed by the projects discussed in this text focus on the human body as one of the first targets of war-related violence and, at the same time, as the most powerful tool of resistance to the aggression.

Ukrainian wartime art shows a profound transformation in its execution and methods of expression: from detached documentation preceding the full-scale invasion to the eyewitness accounts of the first months of the invasion and, finally, to the artists' interpretation of complex issues of bodily limits, survival and death, and the fundamental right to human agency. These works show the ongoing decolonial transformation that guides Ukrainian culture and art and ensures its endurance and development as resistance to the threat of human loss caused by the war.

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23 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill, London: Bloomsbury, 2013, 24.

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