

*Shklyaieva Ju., Gudkova N.*

*Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design*

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF UKRAINIAN GRAFFITI  
AS A FORM OF ART IN WARTIME CONDITIONS**

**Abstract.** *The development of graffiti in modern Ukraine has changed significantly. Nowadays the walls of the buildings, pavements and surfaces of the underground walls are covered with patriotic graffiti in support of Ukraine. It is talented Ukrainians who create incredible graffiti on the outskirts of our country and beyond. Many countries support Ukraine and convey all the will and indomitability of our country, making street art in blue and yellow colours. Artists from different parts of the planet came forward to defend the sovereignty of Ukraine, and graffiti illustrating the struggle of our people is increasingly appearing on their streets. Even children paint the walls of shelters and dungeons with patriotic pictures. The principles in life have changed dramatically, and the view of the whole environment has also changed. In this context graffiti is currently moral support for Ukrainians.*

**Keywords:** *Ukrainian graffiti; mural; street-art; design; wartime conditions.*

**Шкляєва Ю., бакалавр, Гудкова Н., к. філол. н., доцент**

*Київський національний університет технологій та дизайну*

**РОЗВИТОК УКРАЇНСЬКОГО ГРАФІТІ ЯК ВИДУ МИСТЕЦТВА  
В УМОВАХ ВОЄННОГО ЧАСУ**

**Анотація.** *Розвиток графіті в сучасній Україні істотно змінився. Сьогодні стіни будівель, тротуари та поверхні підземок вкриті патріотичними графіті на підтримку України. Талановиті українці створюють неймовірні графіті на околицях нашої країни та за її межами. Багато країн підтримують Україну та передають всю волю та незламність України, роблячи стріт-арт в блакитно-жовтих кольорах. На захист суверенітету України виступили митці з різних куточків планети, і на їх вулицях все частіше з'являються графіті, що ілюструють боротьбу українського народу. Навіть діти розмальовують патріотичними малюнками стіни сховищ та підземок. Життєві принципи кардинально змінилися, змінився й погляд на все оточення. У цьому контексті графіті сьогодні є моральною підтримкою для українців.*

**Ключові слова:** *українське графіті; мурали; стріт-арт; дизайн; умови воєнного стану.*

**Introduction.** Graffiti is known as a street drawing that decorates the walls of houses, fences and other surfaces. As an art form, graffiti is very impressive, and usually, artists paint surfaces with their imaginary drawings. That's why the vision of graffiti style in Ukraine has changed in wartime conditions. Graffiti in Ukraine is spreading as a kind of support. In addition, graffiti is an important design element of the houses in particular and the cities in general.

**Analysis of resent research and publications.** The first among Ukrainian researchers, who studied graffiti, was the scholarly traveler V. Hryhorovych-Barsky. His travelling notes contained descriptions and rare sketches of ancient Egyptian inscriptions, made from the sites he visited in 1727–1730 (Смолий, 2001). The oldest graffiti on the territory of Ukraine are Greek-Latin monuments discovered in the Crimea in 1885–1916, which was analyzed in the work of V. Latyshev “Corpus of Greek and Latin inscriptions of the northern coast of the Black Sea” (Tsetschladze, 2021). The issues of history, types, artists of graffiti and street art, theoretical explanations, regional differences and effects of graffiti and street art have been the subject of many works by modern prominent Ukrainian (Kais, 2009; Tsukanova, 2013; Korniienko, 2016; Hula, 2021) and foreign researchers (Ganz, 2006; Ross, 2016; Ayramidis, 2016; Castoro & Vasilikou, 2018).

**The aim of the research** is to investigate Ukrainian graffiti as a phenomenon, analyze its development within the period of wartime and show that graffiti as a form of street art is a means of global support and understanding.

**Results of the investigate.** Street graffiti has long become an integral part of the world. Some people perceive graffiti as part of the cultural code of people born in the 90s, as a way of self-identification and self-expression, others are indignant that graffiti spoils the appearance of buildings, decorated by the efforts or funds of utilities and residents.

Derived from the Italian word *graffito*, which means *to scratch*, graffiti refers to the oldest text inscriptions, drawings, symbolic, magical, digital signs and monograms, scratched with sharp objects on ceramic and other things of sacred, household and commercial purpose, less often – on the walls of various buildings. In ancient times these inscriptions were called *seals* or *signs*. The value of graffiti as a historical monument is great. In contrast to ancient literary, legal, and religious texts, graffiti directly reflected the everyday life of various strata of medieval society such as foundrymen, jewelers, clergymen, townspeople, prominent historical figures.

The development of graffiti in a patriotic style in modern Ukraine began to manifest itself extremely, when the war began. The reason is obvious. Before the war, people painted incomprehensible and sometimes not decent things on the walls. It is known, that street art was illegal and punishable by a fine. But nowadays, when people draw patriotic pictures, it becomes something special, unique, and important. This makes it possible to understand, that people try to support our country in different ways, and through graffiti as well. Graffiti conveys great meaning. The blue-yellow colour conveys all the will and freedom of Ukraine. People express their feelings outside the streets and underground, like in the Kharkiv and Kyiv subways, which were painted during the stay in the shelter. Following the quote “Art is our weapon. Culture is a form of resistance”, spoken by Shirin Neshat, an Iranian political refugee, photographer and film director, we realize that they are not about the art expelled from her native home only, but also about the present situation in Ukraine. After all, art forms the context and culture that decides how society will perceive certain historical events, and accordingly, which society will be the winner in the war. And this statement brings us to the Ukrainian art of the last 263 days. This is the art of information resistance.

Ukraine is supported by the whole world: murals and graffiti by street artists appear on the streets of European and American cities. The whole world is in yellow-blue colours, and the whole world admires the Ukrainians’ heroic resistance to the aggression of the Russian invaders, its desire for freedom, courage and unity. Today, the main colours of our country, yellow and blue, represent the will, unity, and democratic values of all humanity. Therefore, these colours and events in Ukraine inspire artists from all over the world to create street art to support Ukraine in its struggle for freedom.

Polish street artists rallied around the events, currently raging in Ukraine. Huge murals and graffiti in support of our state appeared in many cities of Poland: from Warsaw to Gdansk, from Lublin to Poznan. The artist Kawu depicted the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyi and the President of the aggressor country Volodymyr putin, aptly comparing them with the images of the famous Harry Potter book (Picture 1, Picture 2). In the background of the mural with Volodymyr Zelenskyi, there is Saint Sophia Cathedral and the flag of Ukraine with the inscription “Free Ukraine”. These murals are not just street pictures, but a kind of political metaphor. Moreover, the usage of the precedent phenomenon, which evokes an association with certain cultural symbols, has a great impact on people’s consciousness. Those, who have read the books or seen the movies about the young wizard, realize, who Lord Voldemort and Harry Potter are, who later defeated all the dark forces.



*Picture 1. Harry Zelenskyi by Kawu in Poznan, Poland*



*Picture 2. Voldemort Putin by Kawu in Poznan, Poland*

Ukrainian Freedom on the barricades – this is the name of a mural which appeared in the very center of Paris, near the Pompidou Center for Contemporary Art in support of the struggle of Ukraine a month after the start of a full-scale war (Picture 3). The mural appeared in honor of Ukraine and the stubborn struggle of Ukrainians for freedom and independence. The author of the mural is a Ukrainian artist Nikita Kravtsov, who lives in Paris. His masterpiece is based on the famous painting by Eugene Delacroix “Liberty Leading the People”. On the mural of Kravtsov, instead of the French tricolor “Freedom”, he holds the flag of Ukraine.



*Picture 3. Ukrainian Freedom on the barricades*

Now Ukraine is protecting universal human values, the whole of Europe, the whole world. There is a symbolic mural in the Czech Republic that best embodies the essence of this war. On the mural, a sad and angry girl protects a whole company of fairy-tale heroes in a “hut” with a Ukrainian flag draped over her shoulders. But these are not simple toys. Each of them is a symbol of the country: the American Mickey Mouse, the Czech Mole, the Scandinavian Moomin, the French Obelix, the Polish Bolek and Lolek, the Bitzer dog from the British tale about Sean the lamb, and the German bee Maya.

There is a lot of unrealistically beautiful graffiti in Ukraine. One of the most significant and patriotically meaningful is “The beauty will not tolerate it”, created by Kostyantyn Kachanovskyi from Rivne (Picture 4).





*Picture 4. The beauty will not tolerate it*

In the center of the next painting (Picture 5) there is a girl in a national costume. She is holding the coat of arms of Ukraine. On the head there is a wreath with loose ribbons. There are the border guards to the left of her, and there are the infantrymen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to the right. A soldier of “Azov” with a cat in his arms stands nearby, and on the ground there is Patron, a dog, who helps rescuers demine the territories liberated from the occupiers. This mural was created by the artists Anton Kravchenko and Oleksandr Fastovets in Poltava.

“A warrior sews the flag of Ukraine” – this mural by Oleksandr Korban from Donbass decorates the Obolon district of Kyiv (Picture 6). It depicts the hands of a military man stitching together torn pieces of the flag that symbolizes the country. The mural was created during the liberation of Irpin and Bucha.



*Picture 5. Soldiers, cats and Patron*



*Picture 6. A warrior sews the flag of Ukraine*

In Rivne, an artist from Kyiv painted a 115-meter fence with patriotic drawings (Picture 7). Each section of the fence depicts real stories that took place in Ukraine after the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation. Oleksandr Romanchuk, a fellow citizen, helps her in this.

If street art in Ukraine is very often created to the sounds of air raids and shelling, which does not have the best effect on productivity, then the safe streets of world cities have been overgrown with a significant number of art projects. Many pieces of graffiti are now have been repainted after the territories are liberated. This is of great importance, because this activity greatly affects a person’s vision to current events (Picture 8).

Not only adults but also children support Ukraine. Children of Dnipro painted the walls of temporary shelters in out-of-school education institutions (Picture 9). This is a very large contribution to the development of street art and to the victory of our country.



Picture 7. 115-meter fence with patriotic drawings in Rivne



Picture 8. Graffiti in Kupiansk



Picture 9. Children from Dnipro painted the walls of shelters

All the graffiti created during the war show that people became stronger and friendlier. Through this form of art artists and ordinary people express their faith in victory.

**Conclusion.** The world is changing and graffiti is also gaining popularity in the modern world. Moreover, it is modern ones that attract the attention of scientists and journalists, therefore, in the mind of a person of our time, the word graffiti is primarily associated with the well-known painting of buildings, corridors on floors, elevators, toilets, etc. And for now, this is a patriotic style, which, with no doubts, will continue to develop even after the victory. Despite its overwhelming illegality, graffiti can be an effective form of social advertising. A parallel can be drawn here with commercial advertisements that are illegally pasted on city fences, poles, in driveways and other surfaces. Such advertising is also a violation of a number of established legal norms, but despite this, it is difficult to deny its effectiveness. It is worth noting that in order for graffiti to become a real effective tool in the fight against social problems, it must be sufficiently creative, thoughtful, performed professionally either from an artistic point of view, or from the point of view of advertising. It is possible to increase its effectiveness, quality of execution, expand the target audience and extend the life of such social advertising messages thanks to the legalization of street art and the involvement of representatives of the graffiti subculture in the work on planned social campaigns.



## References

1. Гула Є. П. Мистецтво коміксу та графіті – сучасний світогляд у графічному дизайні. *Art and Design*. 2021). № 1 (13). С. 55–61.
2. Даркович А. Голос вулиць і 100 днів війни. Про що кричать мурали та графіті? URL: [https://lb.ua/blog/andrii\\_darkovich/518764\\_golos\\_vulits\\_i\\_100\\_dniv\\_viyni\\_pro\\_shcho.html](https://lb.ua/blog/andrii_darkovich/518764_golos_vulits_i_100_dniv_viyni_pro_shcho.html).
3. Діти Дніпра розмальовують стіни тимчасових укриттів. URL: <https://dniprorada.gov.ua/uk/articles/item/51785/diti-dnipra-rozmalyovuyut-stini-timchasovih-ukrittiv>.
4. Кайс З. В. Контрверзи релігійно-конфесійної та міжетнічної толерантності в міському ландшафті. *Вісник Житомирського державного університету імені Івана Франка*. 2009. № 46. С. 13–16.
5. Корнієнко В. В. Коридори часу: середньовічні київські графіті. Київ: Либідь, 2016.
6. Матвейчук М. Графіті в Києві: чи має сенс боротись з цією субкультурою? 2020. URL: <https://hmarochos.kiev.ua/2020/02/06/grafiti-v-kyuevi-chu-maye-sens-borotys-z-tsiyeu-subkulturoyu/>
7. Не дають забути про війну. 15 потужних графіті на підтримку України. URL: [https://life-nv.ua.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/life.nv.ua/ukr/amp/grafiti-na-pidtrimku-ukrajini-nauyaskravishi-tvori-strit-artu-u-sviti-foto-50233931.html?amp\\_gsa=1&amp\\_js\\_v=a9&usqp=mq331AQKKAFArABIIACA%3D%3D#amp\\_tf=%D0%98%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%87%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA%3A%20%251%24s&aoh=16684325084490&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&ampshare=https%3A%2F%2Flife.nv.ua%2Fukr%2Ftravel%2Fgrafiti-na-pidtrimku-ukrajini-nauyaskravishi-tvori-strit-artu-u-sviti-foto-50233931.html](https://life-nv.ua.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/life.nv.ua/ukr/amp/grafiti-na-pidtrimku-ukrajini-nauyaskravishi-tvori-strit-artu-u-sviti-foto-50233931.html?amp_gsa=1&amp_js_v=a9&usqp=mq331AQKKAFArABIIACA%3D%3D#amp_tf=%D0%98%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%87%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA%3A%20%251%24s&aoh=16684325084490&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&ampshare=https%3A%2F%2Flife.nv.ua%2Fukr%2Ftravel%2Fgrafiti-na-pidtrimku-ukrajini-nauyaskravishi-tvori-strit-artu-u-sviti-foto-50233931.html)
8. Не дають забути про війну. 15 потужних графіті на підтримку України. URL: <https://life.nv.ua/ukr/travel/grafiti-na-pidtrimku-ukrajini-nauyaskravishi-tvori-strit-artu-u-sviti-foto-50233931.html>.
9. Смолій В. Золота Книга Української Еліти: Інформаційно-іміджевий Альманах: у 6 т. Ред. О. Онопрієнко. Євроімідж, 2001. Т. 1.
10. Стрит-арт в Україні, вандалізм та авторське право на графіті: художник Віталій Dilk Грех про вуличне мистецтво. URL: <https://chernozem.info/journal/strit-art-v-ukrayini/>
11. У всьому світі з'являються мурали та графіті на підтримку України. URL: <https://theguard.city/articles/200667/murali-na-pidtrimku-ukrajini>.
12. Українські графіті-художники визнані одними з найкращих у світі. URL: <https://ukraine.segodnya.ua/amp-ukraine/ukrainskie-graffiti-hudozhniki-priznany-odnimi-iz-luchshih-v-mire-519367.html>.
13. Цуканова Г. О. Сучасне вуличне графіті як форма соціальної реклами. *Освіта регіону*. 2013. № 1. С. 193–198.
14. Як світ за допомогою графіті підтримує український народ. URL: <https://www.volyn.com.ua/news/208378-iaak-svit-za-dopomohoiu-hrafiti-pidtrymuie-ukrainskyi-narod-foto-video>.
15. Avramidis, K., Tsilimpounidi, M. (2016). *Graffiti and Street Art: Reading, Writing and Representing the City*. Taylor & Francis.
16. Castoro, M., Vasilikou, C. (2018). *Urban Artsapes: Essays on Political and Cultural Contexts*. McFarland.
17. Ganz, N. (2006). *Graffiti Women: Street Art from Five Continents*. Harry N. Abrams.
18. Putin as Lord Voldemort by Kawu in Wilda, Poznań, Poland. 2022. *Street Art Utopia*. <https://streetartutopia.com/2022/03/09/putin-as-lord-voldemort-by-kawu-in-wilda-poznan-poland/>
19. Ross, J. I. (2016). *Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*. Routledge.
20. Tsetskhladze, G. R., Avram, A., Hargrave, J. (2021). *The Greeks and Romans in the Black Sea and the Importance of the Pontic Region for the Graeco-Roman World (7th century BC-5th century AD): 20 Years On (1997–2017)*. Archaeopress Publishing Ltd.