

**ART, DEFINED IN STRUGGLE: SOCIALIST REALISM INSIDE THE
UKRAINIAN UNION OF ARTISTS FROM THE 1950S THROUGH
PERESTROIKA**

By

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Abstract

The main focus of this research is the definition of socialist realism and its institutional implementation in Soviet Ukraine, which is approached from the perspective of Bourdieu's field analysis. The outset of the study is Perestroika when the official method of Soviet art lost its ability to embrace its relationship with the past and the present and further was not able to maintain its cultural legitimacy in the artistic field. In order to comprehend how this change occurred, this study traces the legitimate definitions of art and the artist from the early Thaw when the necessity to redefine socialism realism in correspondence with "contemporary issues" emerged.

Acknowledgments

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Notes on Transliteration

This thesis follows a modified version of the Library of Congress transliteration system, as indicated in the tables below. The author retained the distinction in the spelling between Ukrainian and Russian names (for instance, Oleksandr, Ukrainian; Aleksandr, Russian). In some cases for Ukrainian names the transliteration, indicated by the mentioned persons in their publications, was used. The names of cities are following official usage (for instance, Kyiv, Moscow).

Ukrainian (Modified Library of Congress)

а	а	і	і	т	t
б	b	ї	i	у	u
в	v	й	y	ф	y
г	h	к	k	х	kh
ґ	g	л	l	ц	ts
д	d	м	m	ч	ch
е	e	н	n	ш	sh
є	ie	о	o	щ	shch
ж	zh	п	p	ю	yu
з	z	р	r	я	ya
и	y	с	s	ь	‘ soft sign

Russian (Modified Library of Congress)

а	а	к	k	х	kh
б	b	л	l	ц	ts
в	v	м	m	ч	ch
г	g	н	n	ш	sh
д	d	о	o	щ	shch
е	e	п	p	ъ	‘ hard sign
ё	io	р	r	ы	y
ж	zh	с	s	ь	‘ soft sign
з	z	т	t	э	e
и	i	у	u	ю	iu
й	i	ф	f	я	ia

List of Abbreviations

AKhChU – the Association of Artists of Red Ukraine (Asotsiatsiya Khudozhnykiv Chervonoi Ukrainy)

AKhRR – the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (Assotsyatsia Khudozhnikov Revolyutsyonnoi Rossii)

ARMU – the Association of Revolutionary Art of Ukraine (Asotsiatsiya Revolyutsiynogo Mystectva Ukrainy)

KGB – the Committee for State Security Services (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti)

KOSH – Kyiv Organization of the Ukrainian Union of Artists (Kyivs’ka Organizatciya Spilky Khudozhnykiv)

KTM – Creative Youth Club “Contemporary” in Kyiv (Klub Tvorchoi Molodi)

OM – Fine Arts journal (Obrazotvorche Mystetstvo)

OMKh – the Society of Moscow Artists (Obshchestvo Moskovskikh Khudozhnikov)

OSA – Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives

OST – the Society of Easel Painters (Obshchestvo Khudozhnikov-Stankovistov)

RSFSR Union – the Union of Artists of Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

UCSAML – the Ukrainian Central State Archive-Museum of Literature and Art

UkrSSR – the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic

UUA – the Ukrainian Union of Artists (Ukraiins’ka Spilka Khudozhnykiv)

Introduction

In 1973, Caradog Vaughan James, in his pioneering research of Soviet art criticism, stated that socialist realism, the official method of Soviet art, embraces relationship both with the past and the present.¹ This thesis is dedicated to the exploration of the period when it started to be impossible.

Soviet art, indeed, is a fascinating subject for investigation that requires from the researcher extreme patience. The highly sophisticated functioning of numerous governmental institutions that controlled and maintained the artistic life in (once upon a time) the biggest country in the world at first glance seems to be incomprehensible from contemporary perspective. And what a wild and, at the same time, brilliant idea – to have “an official method” of art, produced within one particular country. I propose to start unraveling this entanglement, asking the question from an unconventional perspective: not “what was Soviet art” and “who were Soviet artists”, but rather “what and who they meant to be.” As each good academic research starts from the definition of the concepts, I believe that definitions convey great information about the phenomenon under investigation.

The distinctiveness of Soviet art, undoubtedly, is manifested in the method and its institutional embodiment – creative unions. In this context exploration of Soviet art inevitably implies looking at the theory and its practical implementation.

Using the privilege of a historian to learn from the other historians, I discovered that the definition of socialist realism is embedded in the particular historical context. Its central concepts “peopleness” (*narodnost'*) and “Party-mindedness” (*partiinosť*), introduced by

¹ Caradog Vaughan James, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory* (MacMillan, 1973), 1.

Andrei Zhdanov at the First Writer's Congress in 1934,² acquired meaning in correspondence with the power balance in the Party. Therefore, the investigation of Soviet art requires an approach that allows to situate artistic affairs in the political context. Pursuing this requirement, I used Bourdieu's field analysis for my study, the potential of which I uncover in the first chapter.

The outset of my research is Perestroika that introduced many challenges for Soviet creative unions. In this context, Bourdieu's field analysis provided to me fruitful explanatory tools that allow to grasp the artistic field in the condition of change. Initially I was interested in the least explored history of Soviet art – the fields of the republics. Ukraine where the Union of Artists was established already in 1938 is a prominent example of the development of art in the highly centralized artistic field of the Soviet Union. In this research I am arguing that during Perestroika socialist realism lost its ability to establish the link both with the past and present, thus was not able to sustain its cultural legitimacy. Questioning the method, consequently, led to the questioning its institutions.

As there are two tightly connected perspectives on Soviet art – theoretical (the investigation of the theory of socialist realism) and practical (the study of institutions), I have chosen to concentrate on the Ukrainian Union of Artists (the UUA) and its activities in Kyiv where the main office of the Union was located. The investigation of the theory of socialist realism implies consideration of the places where it was produced – such as journals and books on Soviet art history. In this research I concentrate on the official magazine of the UUA – *Fine Arts (Obrazotvorche Mystetstvo, OM)* that was restored in 1970. For earlier periods I used the transcripts of the relevant discussions, held at the premises of the UUA.

² Wolfgang Holz, "Allegory and Iconography in Socialist Realist Painting," in *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917-1992*, ed. Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 73.

Due to the time and resource limits, I focus on the thematic painting that as early as in 1938 was defined as the main medium of Soviet Art. I am arguing that questioning the legitimacy of socialist realism during Perestroika also led to the crisis of thematic painting.

In order to comprehend the changes in the artistic field of Soviet Ukraine that occurred during Perestroika, I had to trace earlier definitions of socialist realism and the vicissitudes of its institutional implementations. In the second chapter of my thesis I look particularly on the early Thaw years when the accent was placed on addressing “the contemporary subjects” and explore how it was redefined, along with the definition of art and artists in the 1970s. I also investigate the way in which socialist realism established a connection with the past for the case of the artist Myhaylo Boychuk.

The third and the last chapter of my thesis discusses the challenges of Perestroika where I argue that the change in the artistic field was, first of all, initiated by the change in the culturally legitimate definition of the artist and art. Here I also portray how questioning socialist realism led to the insolvency of its institutions.

Chapter I. The Struggle over Definition: Notes on Theory, Methodology and Historical Context

The spatial turn in historiography has underlined the prominence of critical reflection on the approaches applied to distinct sites and locations in the historical research. At the 2010 Ludwig Holberg Prize Symposium in Bergen, Natalie Zemon Davis presented the concept of decentred history and defined the task of decentring historian as “not [to] tell the story of the past only from the vantage point of a single part of the world or of powerful elites”, but also “[to extend] the scope, socially and geographically, introducing plural voices into the account.”³ Her perspective widely resonates with the call that has appeared recently in art historiography. For instance, Piotr Piotrowski emphasizes the necessity to elaborate new theoretical and methodological framework for the analysis of Central and Eastern European art. In his book *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* he introduces the horizontal approach to art history as an alternative to the vertical or Western one.⁴ The main problem with the latter one lies in imposed geographic cultural hierarchy that leads to the ignorance or insufficient consideration of the artistic achievements in Central and Eastern Europe.⁵ Partha Mitter indicates that “the “universalist” project of art history remains trapped within the constraints of Western epistemology.”⁶ He also insists on “the shift of the center of gravity” from Western art discourse towards “explanatory tools that adequately describe art practices and their social and cultural milieus in the so-called outlying areas.”⁷ Thomas DaKosta Kaufmann coins the concept “geohistories” in order to emphasize the necessity to take into account the peculiarities of specific places in the

³ Natalie Zemon Davis, “Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World,” *History and Theory* 50 (May 2011): 188–202.

⁴ Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, trans. Anna Brzyski. (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁶ Partha Mitter, “Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery,” *The Art Bulletin* 90, no. 4 (2008): 532.

⁷ Mitter, 540–544.

analysis of art.⁸ James Elkins raises the question about the possibility of global art history in his famous essay “Art as a Global Discipline” where he states that “it can be argued that there is no non-Western tradition of art history, if by that is meant a tradition with its own interpretive strategies and forms of argument.”⁹ Elkins asserts that art history now tends to be “a single global enterprise,” however, its division into local practices still remains “the matter of concern.”¹⁰ In response to Elkins, Ladislav Kesner, from the perspective of the researcher of Chinese art, points out that global-versus-local structure of art history is not only imposed in scholarship but also sustained by curatorial practices; however, there is a big difference between stating underrepresentation of non-Western art in publications and curriculums and assuming that Western-originated concepts obstruct comprehension of non-Western art.¹¹ For him the matter of concern is not Western art history itself, but “how to transfer the enormous capital of recently specialized, culturally sensitive scholarship on both Western and non-Western traditions...into survey books, courses, introduction and general-purpose art historical narratives that serve to educate art historians, other professionals, and the general public.”¹²

Since these debates have been altering the shape of contemporary art history, I cannot stand aside. The most pressing issue appears to be an incorporation of national art history in the world historical context. Piotrowski’s horizontal art history locates the West within the cultural and historic context as one of the regions of the art world, thus “provincializing” it. He believes it will serve as a ground for rejecting of the dichotomy “Western and the Others” in art history. Within horizontal approach Piotrowski stresses the

⁸ Thomas Dacosta Kaufmann, *Time and Place: The Geohistory of Art* (Routledge, 2017), 9.

⁹ James Elkins, “Art History as a Global Discipline,” in *Is Art History Global?* (Taylor & Francis, 2007), 3–24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹ Ladislav Kesner, “Is a Truly Global Art History Possible?,” in *Is Art History Global?*, ed. James Elkins (Taylor & Francis, 2007), 87–88.

¹² *Ibid.*, 92.

advantageousness of the transnational studies at a regional level and the necessity of applying the trans-cosmopolitan perspective in the inquires of art after the Fall of Berlin Wall. The latter also implies shift from art geography to art topography, from regions to cities.¹³ Despite the fact the term “trans-cosmopolitan” is not settled in his text which significantly obstructs its comprehension, Piotrowski is remarkably clear in defining his approach in the context of national art history: from a macro perspective, national subjects cannot be ignored, and, furthermore, they should be protected in the context of “the critique of the centre.” In contrast, at the micro level, the notion of the national subjectivity also needs to be approached critically “in order to defend marginalized culture of the national minorities against the claims of the majorities.”¹⁴

However, national art history appears to be a challenge to art historians as well. Matthew Rampley convincingly demonstrates that in Europe since the 19th century national art history was constructed in deep connection with nationalist politics.¹⁵ Notwithstanding the fact that racism in art history is commonly associated with reactionary outlooks of German and Austrian art historians, he successfully recognizes that in terms of nationalist thinking the phenomenon is expanded beyond these regions. He even points out the rise of discipline in coincidence with the emergence of theories of race.¹⁶ Rampley shows that within art history the definition of national heritage in accordance with

¹³ Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, 55-79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁵ Matthew Rampley, “The Construction of National Art Histories and the ‘New’ Europe,” in *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks*, ed. Matthew Rampley, Thierry Lenain, and Hubert Locher (BRILL, 2012), 231–48. Krista Kodres, analyzing Estonian art-historical narratives, demonstrates that the reasons behind the emergence of different geographies of Estonian art vary from political and cultural perturbations to personal interests and ideological positions of art historians, albeit the actual geographical location had not changed. Krista Kodres, “Our Own Estonian Art History: Changing Geographies of Art-Historical Narrative,” *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi*, no. 19 (3-4) (2010): 11–25.

¹⁶ Rampley, “The Construction of National Art Histories and the ‘New’ Europe,” 232. Despite the distinctiveness of the remark, I suggest that the connection would be more apparent if the incorporation of these theories into art curriculum was considered. For example, F. Graeme Chalmers traces origins of ethnocentrism and racism predominantly in British art historiography, demonstrating that even the perspective of superiority of particular races, grounded in craniometry, influenced local art education in the 19th century. F. Graeme Chalmers, “The Origins of Racism in the Public School Art Curriculum,” *Studies in Art Education* 33, no. 3 (1992): 134–43, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1320895>, 138.

politically defined state is controversial, since its geographical borders are “in continual flux”, never corresponding to the cultural boundaries that inevitably leads to the exclusion of some groups.¹⁷ He also stresses that “the national paradigm” of art history in recent decades has gained considerable power.¹⁸

In this research I am addressing particularly the issue of creation of national art history, focusing on the field of cultural production of Soviet Ukraine. The choice of this location addresses the call to introduce underrepresented areas into the broader historical account.¹⁹ My research, due to the time and resource limits, did not provide comprehensive account of the subject, concentrating only on the Ukrainian Union of Artists and art criticism and art history of the thematic painting with an accent on Perestroika.²⁰ Neither do I explore the question of national Ukrainian traditions that, undoubtedly, is extremely interesting in the context of Soviet art.²¹ Nevertheless, I believe that my investigation is a promising starting point towards deeper understanding of internal operations of the cultural institutions of the Soviet Union; both Soviet and contemporary Ukrainian art history.

As a researcher, I share Kesner’s perspective: I believe that Western-originated concepts may inform studies of non-Western art, though their application should be careful

¹⁷ Ibid., 237-238.

¹⁸ Ibid. 240

¹⁹ The most famous authors who published works about Ukrainian art in English (that is indeed *lingua franca* of contemporary academic world) are Myroslava Mudrak and Myroslav Shkandrij, but they predominantly research the 1920s-1930s. There is also one unpublished dissertation of Daryna Darewych who focuses on post-war painting. Daria Darewych, “Soviet Ukrainian Painting c. 1955-1979: New Currents and Undercurrents” (University College London, 1990).

It is worth mentioning, I largely concentrate on Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, where the Ukrainian Union of Artists was located that may be considered as “a center”. Due to highly centralized field of cultural production of the Soviet Union and distinct local contexts within the country, such limitation of the scope for this research appeared to be beneficial. The analysis of art production of other areas of Ukraine would not be possible without the preliminary investigation of Kyiv.

²⁰ In this research I occasionally address historical paintings because their in-depth analysis requires the investigation of the Soviet historiography that is beyond the scope of this work.

²¹ From my perspective, this issue can be comprehensively explored under the condition of meticulous consideration of the people’s decorative (*narodno-decorativnogo*) and “amateur” (*samodiatel’nogo*) art that in the Soviet Union were largely associated with “cultivation of national traditions.”

and thoughtful. Horizontal art history or geohistory, of course, are consequences of critical reflection towards art history as a discipline; however, the largest collection of essays *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks*, examining art histories of various countries, give us no more than a tiny hint on what ground we should stand in order to approach the issue properly.²² Thus I have looked for the theoretical framework outside the discipline of art history (but not really too far).

1. The Place of Struggle: Notes on Theory

First, I need to develop some concepts, revealing my theoretical adherence, before the actual discussion of my framework. In this research, applying the famous field analysis of Pierre Bourdieu, I examine the artistic field of Soviet Ukraine. In such context, this approach has appeared to possess great explanatory potential. In order to unveil the artistic field of the particular historical period, according to Bourdieu, a researcher should construct the space of positions and the space of position-takings (“in which they are expressed”).²³ The former is defined by possession of certain amount of specific capital and occupation of particular position in the distribution of this capital; the latter incorporates “the structured set of the manifestations of the social agents involved in the field” – artistic works, pronouncements, manifestos, polemics.²⁴ The field is not just a gathering of isolated elements, it is “a network, or configuration, of objective relations

²² As conceptual frameworks two perspectives are proposed there: Elkins’s elaboration on Kuhn’s distinction between “normal” science and the innovative inquiry and Jan Białostocki’s notion of the dual economy of art. Matthew Rampley, Thierry Lenain, and Hubert Locher, *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks* (BRILL, 2012).

²³ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Columbia University Press, 1993), 30.

²⁴ Ibid.

between positions.”²⁵ Insisting on efficacy of such relational approach, Bourdieu stresses that the fields are also “the fields of struggle”, since their structure mirrors the distribution of the capital that “governs success in the field and the winning of the external or specific profits”, such as prestige and recognition.²⁶ Due to the fact that the capital is distributed unequally, the field thus occurs as a space of dominant and subordinate positions.²⁷ Agents struggle over securing and improving their positions and over the right to introduce the definition of what we shall consider as culturally legitimate (the definition of art and literature, for instance). Bourdieu insists that in the artistic field the definition of the artist is at stake.²⁸ Consequently, the conflict emerges between those who possess the monopoly over definitions and distribution of the capital and others who attempt to occupy more advantageous positions. For Bourdieu, the opposite positions, also called orthodox/heterodox,²⁹ are especially important due to the fact they are dialectically related: being complementary, they tend to condition each other and facilitate the definition of each other.³⁰ This conflict is maintained by doxa, the belief, shared among all agents in the field (often unconsciously) that the most advantageous positions in the field worth pursuing.³¹

The artistic field is located within the field of power (the economic and the political fields) and can be more or less autonomous from it. Bourdieu argues that in case of the heteronomous principle of hierarchization of the fields the former would disappear and artists would become subjects of the laws of the field of power, and “more generally”

²⁵ Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 97.

²⁶ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, 30.

²⁷ David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (University of Chicago Press, 1997), 125.

²⁸ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, 42.

²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field,” *Comparative Social Research* 13 (1991): 25.

³⁰ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, 235.

³¹ Pierre Bourdieu, “Intellectual Field and Creative Project,” *Information (International Social Science Council)* 8, no. 2 (April 1, 1969): 89–119, <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901846900800205>.

economic field; an autonomous artistic field is called by Bourdieu *degree of specific consecration*, “when the degree of recognition accorded by those who recognize no other criterion of legitimacy than recognition by those whom they recognize.”³² In other words, producers would produce for other producers, and, despite of the fact the field of power would still affect the artistic field, the autonomy would lead to clear division between large-scale production and small-scale production (restricted production, producers for producers); the latter would be favored in the terms of the symbolic power and the former would be symbolically excluded (for instance, art historians unintentionally would not consider those artists who produce for the market in their works).³³ Field’s autonomy is particularly important because it creates the pre-conditions for the creative process, relevant to each field, and resistance to the “symbolic violence” exerted by the dominant system of hierarchization.³⁴ The relations between relatively autonomous fields are embodied in the concept homology, defined as “a resemblance within a difference.”³⁵ The homology of positions is the pre-condition of partial alliances: for instance, producers, occupying the dominant positions in the cultural field, tend to solidarize with agents, occupying the dominants positions in the field of power.³⁶

Fields may include various agents (styles, art “schools”, institutions, people). We can imagine the artistic field of the Soviet Union containing “two opposite errors”: socialist realism and “bourgeois art” (the advantage of this approach will be justified in the next subchapter). In the same manner, we can imagine the artistic field of Soviet Ukraine containing individuals who occupy dominant positions (members of the Union’s

³² Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, 39.

³³ Ibid., and in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford University Press, 1996), 124.

³⁴ Rodney Benson, “Field Theory in Comparative Context: A New Paradigm for Media Studies”, *Theory and Society* 28 (1999): 465.

³⁵ Bourdieu, Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 105-6.

³⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, 44.

administration, well-established and recognized artists) and subordinated positions (those artists that worked in the cooperative enterprises and were considered as craftsmen). The position in the field, as it has been already noted, will be defined in accordance with the possession of specific capital: economic (material wealth), cultural (knowledge, skills, educational and technical qualifications), symbolic (accumulated prestige) and social (connections).³⁷ Different types of the capital can be converted, and their convertibility is the basis for the reproduction of capital.³⁸ In cultural field the competition often is driven by the desire of the type of authority associated with recognition and prestige.³⁹

The relationships between positions and position-takings are mediated by habitus that is defined as the result of socialization within which external structures were internalized.⁴⁰ Notwithstanding the fact that the agents' position is defined in accordance with the distribution of capital, to some extent it can be shaped by the agents' habitus.⁴¹ Particularly on the convergence of position, position-takings, and habitus agent's strategies (specific orientation of practice) arise.⁴² In the field of struggle there are three different strategies: conservation (pursued by the dominant position), succession (pursued by the new entrants) and subversion (pursued by the subordinate positions).⁴³

Last but not the least, how do changes in the field actually occur? Each position-taking is defined in relation to the space of possibles (the range of available options for the agents). If the position-taking changes, even if the position remains the same, it marks "the

³⁷ John B. Thompson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Language and Symbolic Power*, by Pierre Bourdieu (Harvard University Press, 1991), 14. Bourdieu, Pierre. "The forms of capital (English version)." *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (1986): 241.

³⁸ Ibid., 248.

³⁹ Randal Johnson, "Editor's Introduction: Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture," in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, by Pierre Bourdieu (Columbia University Press, 1993), 7.

⁴⁰ David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (University of Chicago Press, 1997), 103. For famous "structured structures" definition see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990), 101.

⁴¹ Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, 123, footnote 13.

⁴² Johnson, "Editor's Introduction: Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture," 17.

⁴³ Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, 125.

change in the universe of options” that “are offered for producers and consumers to choose from”.⁴⁴ The change in the space of artistic possibles is the consequence of change in the power relations that “constitutes the space of positions.”⁴⁵ The task of the researcher, according to Bourdieu, is to describe “a state (long-lasting or temporary) of the struggles in the field” and of “the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing agents.”⁴⁶

In my thesis I am arguing that initially the change in the space of artistic possibles, and, consequently, the change in the positions, that occurred during Perestroika, had led to the questioning the supremacy of socialist realism and thematic painting as its main medium. The Ukrainian Union of Artists as the institution, the functioning of which relied on production of the socialist realist artworks, also faced a crisis. The place of art critics and art historians⁴⁷ in the artistic field of Soviet Ukraine was particularly essential as their works played prominent role in the struggle over definitions of art. I would like to conclude with Bourdieu quote, relevant to my previous remark:

The production of discourse (critical, historical, etc.) about the work of art is one of the conditions of production of the work. Every critical affirmation contains, on the one hand, a recognition of the value of the work which occasions it, which is thus designated as a worthy object of legitimate discourse (a recognition sometimes extorted by the logic of the field, as when, for example, the polemic of the dominant confers participant status on the challengers), and on the other hand an affirmation of its own legitimacy. All critics declare not only their judgement of the work but also their claim to the right to talk about it and judge it. In short, they take part in the struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, 30.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 32

⁴⁶ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁷ In my research I do not distinct between art historians and art critics to a great extent because, as we will see, it was the same individuals who engaged in both practices, and, basically, it did not influence their positions. However, the difference, of course, exists. See Elkins, “Art History as a Global Discipline,” 3–24. I also consider the speeches of the Chairmen of the UUA as extremely important for the comprehension of the institutional implementation of socialist realism.

⁴⁸ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, 35–36.

2. The Matter of Struggle: Notes on Methodology and Historical Context

In 1930, during the Sixteenth Communist Party Congress, Stalin famously stated that the culture of the Soviet Union should be “socialist in content and national in form, and would continue to exist as such until the global victory of the proletariat, at which time both of its aspects would become socialist.”⁴⁹ Apparently, he had several ideas in mind for how this “socialist in content” culture could be achieved. Firstly, the release of the decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party “On the Restructuring of Literary and Artistic Organizations” on the 23rd of April, 1932, laid the foundation for the structuring of the field of cultural production in the country.⁵⁰ In accordance with the decree, new institutions that would have united all the creative individuals, willing to take part in the socialist construction, should have been established. They were titled correspondingly – creative unions. Immediately after the decree only three organizations were founded: The Writers’ Union, The Composers’ Union, and the Architects’ Union.⁵¹ Notwithstanding the fact that the decree “On the formation the Union of Artists of the USSR” was released in 1939, the institution itself was established only in 1957 when the First Congress was convened.⁵² The underlying principle of the Unions’ membership was aesthetic and ideological conformity to

⁴⁹ Joseph Stalin, “XVI S’ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza [XVI Congress of The Communist Party of the Soviet Union]”, *Pravda*, June 27, 1930.

⁵⁰ *Pravda*, 24 April, 1932. Or In 116-119, As John and Carol Garrard point out, the revival of the term “restructuring” (*perestroika*) is indeed “an interesting example of the Party’s terminological consistency”. John Gordon Garrard and Carol Garrard, *Inside the Soviet Writers’ Union* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 224.

⁵¹ Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, “Perestroika and the Soviet Creative Unions,” in *New Perspectives On Russian And Soviet Artistic Culture*, ed. John O. Norman and Andrea McEvoy Spero (Springer, 1994), 131.

⁵² Elena Kornetchuk, “Soviet Art under Government Control: From the 1917 Revolution to Khrushchev’s Thaw,” in *Nonconformist Art: The Soviet Experience, 1956-1986*, ed. Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum et al. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 42.

socialist realism, the official method⁵³ of Soviet art that was introduced at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934.⁵⁴

Socialist realism has been provoking historians since the late 1960s when the first accounts of art in the Soviet Union occurred in the West.⁵⁵ Its analysis still appears to be a real challenge for scholars, especially in the context of mindful application of Western-originated concepts. The first in-depth investigation of socialist realism, conducted by Caradog Vaughan James, was published already in 1973.⁵⁶ In the book he examines three main principles of “Soviet aesthetics”: *narodnost'* (peopleness), “the relationship between art and the masses”, *klassovost'* (classness), “the class characteristics of art”, and *partiinnost'* (partyness or Party-mindedness⁵⁷), “the identification of the artists with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.”⁵⁸ James aspires to provide an explanation of these concepts in the way that Soviet critics did for themselves. Notwithstanding the fact that for the Soviet perspective he used only one book⁵⁹ as both primary source and authority, his research still contains valuable information on the definition of main principles of socialist realism in particular historical context. Basically, the same approach was applied by Daryna Darewych in her dissertation on Soviet Ukrainian painting from 1955 till 1979; apart from the

⁵³ Some explanatory remarks on the debates whether socialist realism was a style or a method one can find in Susan E. Reid, “Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror: The Industry of Socialism Art Exhibition, 1935-41,” *The Russian Review* 60, no. 2 (2001): 154, and footnote 6. As Reid mentions, on the First Congress of Soviet Writers socialist realism was defined as an “artistic method”. In my sources I have frequently encountered the references to socialist realism as a method and never to as a style.

⁵⁴ Kornetchuk, “Soviet Art under Government Control: From the 1917 Revolution to Khrushchev’s Thaw,” 37.

⁵⁵ See, for example: Paul Sjeklocha and Igor Mead, *Unofficial Art in the Soviet Union* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). John Berger, *Art and Revolution: Ernst Neizvestny and the Role of Theartist in the U.S.S.R.*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1969).

⁵⁶ James, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory*.

⁵⁷ “Partyness” is the translation, initially used by James. I prefer the second option, introduced in Leonid Heller, “A World of Prettiness: Socialist Realism and Its Aesthetic Categories,” in *Socialist Realism Without Shores*, ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeniĭ Aleksandrovich Dobrenko (Duke University Press, 1997), 51–75.

⁵⁸ James, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory*, 1.

⁵⁹ He used *Bases of Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics (Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoi estetiki)*, 1960 edition, published by the State Publishers of Political Literature, Moscow, Institutes of Philosophy and History of Art of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Ibid., 3.

discussion of abovementioned principles, grounded in James's research, she adds the fourth category *ideinost'* (literal ideanness or ideological commitment⁶⁰) that addresses "correct ideology of the artist as it reflected in the content of the work which must possess ideological orientation", also mentioned in James's primary source.⁶¹ In general, her definition was facilitated by two additional books, used as sources; however, she remarks that the implementation of socialist realism "into practice" were left to the leaders of Soviet cultural institutions.⁶²

The findings of these investigation are significantly altered by the perspective on socialist realism, introduced in the sources.⁶³ And, as we will see, in the different time periods there were a plethora of them, both contradictory and supplementary, as the social agents in the artistic field competed over its legitimate definition. Nevertheless, the approach of analyzing central concepts of socialist realism, called by Leonid Heller "frequently used and the most self-evident" one, still embodies a great informative potential. Particularly Heller considers those concepts through predicates of judgements of taste (Kantian term), such as the beautiful, the sublime, the naïve, the dramatic, the heroic, etc.⁶⁴ His analysis, conducted on the journals and related publications from 1948 to 1952, reveals the variety of the words, used for description of art and literature of Stalin era, what meaning they took on in particular discursive system and under what circumstances it had changed.

⁶⁰ Heller's translation.

⁶¹ Daria Darewych, "Soviet Ukrainian Painting c. 1955-1979: New Currents and Undercurrents" (University College London, 1990), 64-65.

⁶² Ibid., 67-68.

⁶³ Darewych did not really engage into the discussion of the implementation of these concepts in the institutional settings. James was criticized due to the usage of the source where one concept was particularly underlined by the editors. Edward M. Swiderski, review of *Review of Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory*, by C. Vaughan James, *Studies in Soviet Thought* 17, no. 3 (1977): 247-49.

⁶⁴ Heller, "A World of Prettiness: Socialist Realism and Its Aesthetic Categories," 51-75.

These studies, to a great extent, shaped my approach to socialist realism. Particularly I am indebted to Susan Reid and her numerous investigations on Soviet art that considerably enriched my research. As she points out, socialist realism acquired particular meaning “only through the practices of production, presentation and mediation.”⁶⁵ Jørn Guldberg, demonstrating inefficiency of visual, textual and comparative approaches to socialist realism, asserts that it is necessary to analyze actual implementation of the method in the institutional structure in order to trace its influence on Soviet art.⁶⁶ In my thesis I am mostly addressing the perspective of these authors, applying a sociology of knowledge approach to discourse, known as SKAD or Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse, to the official documents of the Ukrainian Union of Artists that include various reports (both originally written and transcribed), transcripts of the Union’s discussion and meetings and thematic plans of exhibitions. SKAD methodology was developed by Reiner Keller on the basis of sociology of knowledge of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, and adopted many Michel Foucault’s “general proposals” and Bourdieu’s notion on field.⁶⁷ It is anchored in qualitative social research. In the context of textual data Keller distinguishes four analytical units: *Deutungsmuster* (“interpretative scheme”, “frame”), classifications, phenomenal structure and narrative structure (plots).⁶⁸ The first concept refers to “typified clusters or disparate elements of meaning production, the core configuration of signs, symbols, sentences and utterances, which create a coherent ensemble of meaning”.⁶⁹ The second concept implies consideration of all kind of classifications which are performed by the given discourse.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Susan E. Reid, “Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror: The Industry of Socialism Art Exhibition, 1935-41,” *The Russian Review* 60, no. 2 (2001): 153–84.

⁶⁶ Jørn Guldberg, “Socialist Realism as Institutional Practice: Observations on the Interpretation of the Works of Art of the Stalin Period,” in *The Culture of the Stalin Period*, ed. Hans Gunther (Springer, 1990), 149–77.

⁶⁷ Reiner Keller, “Analysing Discourse. An Approach From the Sociology of Knowledge,” *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 31, no. 2 (116) (2006): 223–42.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 235-236.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 237.

Phenomenal structure includes “the concepts used to name an object, the relations between these concepts”, “causal schemes and normative settings, the dimensions, urgencies and legitimations for action” and “kind of practices considered to be suitable to a particular phenomenon.”⁷¹ To explore narrative structure means to consider all these concepts together when they are introduced as a story “which explains who is doing what and why.”⁷² In this research I concentrate on such central concepts of socialist realism as “peopleness” and “Party-mindedness” and consider them as *Deutungsmuster*.

I also applied SKAD to articles, published in the official journal of the Ukrainian Union of Artist *Fine Arts (Obrazotvorche mystetsvo, OM)* and to the books, written by Ukrainian art historians. In this context, it is worth remembering Jeffrey Brooks’s warning that concerns consideration of the phrases used in the press as equal to the artistic practices.⁷³ He notes that in publications, at the congresses and in art it implied different set of meanings and advocates the preservation of “the thrust” of the official Soviet journals, in which it has appeared to Soviet people.⁷⁴ I have the intention to preserve it in my research as well.

This long remark on approaches to socialist realism was necessary to clarify the ground upon which I stand in relation to my sources. Several scholars already noted that is far more easily to define socialist realism negatively, i.e. pointing out what it is not.⁷⁵ Truly, as we will see in the second chapter, the notion of art that was born in the struggle with formalism would be critically important for the self-positioning of Ukrainian Soviet artists. Indeed, in the terms of Bourdieu, in the artistic field of Soviet Ukraine, socialist realism was

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Jeffrey Brooks, “Socialist Realism in Pravda: Read All about It!,” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 4 (1994): 974-975, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2500842>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Heller, 60. Jørn Guldberg, “Socialist Realism as Institutional Practice: Observations on the Interpretation of the Works of Art of the Stalin Period,” 155.

an orthodoxy that existed in dialectic relationship with the artistic styles, generally associated with “bourgeois art.”⁷⁶ Formalism, the concept largely used for marking “bourgeois art”, acquired his meaning also in relation to socialist realism.⁷⁷

But let’s return to 1934, the First Congress of Writers when socialist realism was introduced. Brooks indicates that this event marked the beginning of increasing attention to artistic affairs in Soviet central newspapers.⁷⁸ The early definition of socialist realism, originally coined in the Charter of the Writer’s Union and reproduced in *Pravda*, was:

Socialist realism, the basic method of Soviet artistic literature and literary criticism, demands truthfulness (*pravdivost’*) from the artist and an historically concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development. Under these conditions, truthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic portrayal ought to be combined with the task of the ideological remaking and education of laboring people in the spirit of socialism.⁷⁹

The Writer’s Congress was also the event where the new definition of the writer was imposed – “to be a writer now meant to be committed in public to the promotion of the Soviet project.”⁸⁰ Brooks demonstrates that socialist realism in the 1930s was “a larger part of authoritative discourse developed through an interactive exchange between leaders and their supporters” that shaped definitions of the author, the subject matter and the audience.⁸¹ In other words, the cultural field significantly shifted towards heteronomous relation with the field of power, and the homology of positions in these fields acquired extreme significance. Importantly, the definition of the writer (and consequently, the artist) required

⁷⁶ In fact, Leonid Heller in his investigation of socialist realism during the Zhdanov era (1946-1953), on which his article relies on, examined the functioning of the method as “a multilevel organization of the cultural field.” Leonid Heller, “A World of Prettiness: Socialist Realism and Its Aesthetic Categories,” 71-72, footnote 7.

⁷⁷ Alison Hilton, for example, portrays how impressionism was excluded and included in the definition of formalism. Alison Hilton, “Holiday on the Kolkhoz. Socialist Realism’s Dialogue with Impressionism,” in *Russian Art and the West: A Century of Dialogue in Painting, Architecture, and the Decorative Arts*, ed. Rosalind Polly Blakesley and Susan Emily Reid (Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), 195–217.

⁷⁸ Jeffrey Brooks, “Socialist Realism in Pravda: Read All about It!”

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 977.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 980.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 991.

the definition of all cultural occupations that was exemplified in the phrase “engineers of human souls”. Brooks notes that particularly in the 1930s the metaphors of art as construction emerged.⁸²

However, the intense struggle over the definition of socialist realism proceeded. Reid asserts that the issue of techniques, historical influences and account of contemporary artistic influences were “immediate concern” of artists and critics in the 1930s.⁸³ Investigating the first All-Union art exhibition *The Industry of Socialism Realism*, she demonstrates that it was truly a battleground for two different camps: the camp of former leaders of the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR) that promoted modifications of Russian realist nineteenth-century tradition Peredvizhniki and the camp of former members of artistic groups the Society of Easel Painters (OST) that supported modern forms of figurative painting and the Society of Moscow Artists (OMKh) that were adherents of impressionism and expressionism, led by the former leader of OST.⁸⁴ AKhRR managed to impose their perspective on the exposition of the exhibition during its preparation and supported the purges of formalism in 1936-38, initiated by newly established the Committee of Artistic Affairs. However, in 1939, when the exhibition opened, their artworks became associated with hackwork and naturalism in the community of Moscow artists, outraged by long-lasting AKhRR’s monopoly on power and resources. Reid concludes that “the definition of socialist realism was always contingent on the external power relations of any particular moment.”⁸⁵

This exhibition was especially important because it introduced “the supremacy of thematic principle”: artists were expected to create artworks on particular themes, defined in

⁸² Ibid., 983.

⁸³ Susan E. Reid, “Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror: The Industry of Socialism Art Exhibition, 1935-41,” 155.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 156.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 184.

the thematic plan.⁸⁶ It also established the identification of socialist realism with the medium of oil painting with the narrative structure – thematic painting.⁸⁷ Last but not the least, it provided the new definition of the artist: they now became paid employees that were realizing “the social command” in accordance with predetermined guidelines.⁸⁸

On this historical background, the Ukrainian Union of Artists was established in 1938. In the Charter of the institution, validated in 1939, the UUA was defined as “a voluntary organization that unites on the area of the UkrSSR workers of visual arts (painters, graphic artists, sculptors, theatre artists and folk-art masters) and individuals who conduct research and critical work in the field of visual art”.⁸⁹ “Creative socialist competition of artists and mutual aid in order to promote successful growth of the creative forces, a deep and comprehensive development on the basis of socialist realism” and “further theoretical development of the issues of socialist realism and ruthless struggle with all manifestation of formalism and naturalism” were stated among the main objectives of the organization.⁹⁰ The Congress of Ukrainian Soviet artists was defined as “the supreme governing body.”⁹¹ The declared responsibilities of the Congress included discussion and elaboration of the issues of development of visual arts, affirmation of reports and work plans of central governing and revisionist bodies of the Union, incorporation of changes to the Charter, elections to the central governing and revisionist bodies, consideration of complaints and resolution about

⁸⁶ Ibid., 157.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 166.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 158.

⁸⁹ The Charter of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine, 7 September 1939. Fund 581. Case 1:2. UCSAMLA.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 2-3.

⁹¹ Ibid., 7. According to the Charter, the Congress should have been convened biyearly, however, in reality it did not happen. The First Congress of the UUA was held on the 26th till the 28th of October in 1938 in Kyiv, the Second one took place on the 3rd till the 7th of April in 1956, just right before the All-Union Congress. In the Charter of the Union of Soviet Artists, adopted during the All-Union Congress in 1957, stated that the Congress as “the supreme governing body” should be convened at least once in four years. However, the Second Congress took place in 1962, and the general tendency for both central and regional organization was to organize it in five years.

liquidation of the Union.⁹² The executive body of the Union was the Board, elected during the Congress. During the plenums of the Board, the Presidium of the Board was elected that included the Chairman and his deputy, the Secretary and the members of the Presidium. The Presidium controlled organizational activities between the plenums that were convened at least three times a year.⁹³

A revisionist commission, elected jointly with the Board, conducted examination of financial activities of the Union and affiliated enterprises and controlled the expenses of the organization.⁹⁴ The operation of the UUA tightly intertwined with Ukrainian branch of the Art Fund. The latter was established in 1940 in order to provide monetary support for artists in the Soviet Union and operated as an aiding institution for each branch of the Artist's Unions.⁹⁵ Via local organizations of the Art Fund artists all across the Soviet Union were provided with studios, art supplies, legal and financial assistance. Its area of expertise also included building of Houses of Recreation and Artistic Work where the members of the Union could stay for two months with food and lodging, provided free.⁹⁶

As we see, the membership in the Union was not obligatory; however, it provided various important resources that definitely facilitated the position in the artistic field. In order to become a member of the organization, an artist had to submit a written application, works of art or pieces of art criticism, and obtain three recommendations from the Union's members.⁹⁷ Consequently, even new members of the institution were expected to possess certain amount of cultural, social and symbolic capital. Remarkably, the Union's exhibitions

⁹² Ibid., 6.

⁹³ Ibid., 8.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 9. The members of the Board could not be the members of the revisionist commission.

⁹⁵ Kornetchuk, "Soviet Art under Government Control: From the 1917 Revolution to Khrushchev's Thaw.", 42

⁹⁶ M. Lazarev, "The Organization of Artists' Work in the U.S.S.R.," *Leonardo* 12, no. 2 (1979): 108.

⁹⁷ *Materialy Pervogo Vsesoiuznogo S'ezda Sovetskikh Khudozhnikov. 28 fevralia -- 7 marta, 1957 [Materials of the First All-Union Congress of Artists. 28 February -- 7 March 1957]* (Moscow: Sovetskii Khudozhnik [Soviet Artist], 1958).

were free of taxation,⁹⁸ and for a long time they offered the only possibility for the artists to display their artworks. Although non-members were frequently allowed to take part in the exhibitions, their work should have been examined by the exhibition committee (*vystavkom*), comprised by the Union's members who were in charge of display assortment.

As I have mentioned in the very beginning of this subchapter, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR decided to create the Union of Soviet Artists in 1939. In order to conduct preparation works for the establishment of the organization another institution was formed – the Organizational Committee of the Union of Soviet Artists of the USSR (*Orgkomitet*). According to the published report of the work of *Orgkomitet*, that was incorporated in the materials of the First All-Union Congress, in 1940 there were already eleven republic unions and fifty-three “creative collectives of the artists”, city and regional organizations.⁹⁹ By August of 1956 the general number of artists in the Unions was seven thousands and eleven.¹⁰⁰ *Orgkomitet* included thirty-eight people, and also had the Presidium as an executive body (replaced by the Secretariat in 1951).¹⁰¹ The organization functioned till the establishment of the Union of Soviet Artists. As early as in 1939, Aleksander Gerasimov, former leader of AKhRR and famous portraitist of Stalin, was elected as the Chairman of the *Orgkomitet*.¹⁰² Matthew Cullerne Bown in his biographical study of the artist, portraying him as “kind of international art-diplomat” in the post-war years, points out that in 1947 during his trip to Belgrade, Gerasimov received a letter, informing him that he had been made the President of newly-created Academy of Arts of

⁹⁸The Charter of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine, 7 September 1939. Fund 581. Case 1. UCSAMLA.

⁹⁹ *Materialy Pervogo Vsesoyuznogo Syezda Sovetskikh khudozhnikov. 28 fevralia -- 7 marta, 1957 [Materials of the First All-Union Congress of Artists. 28 February -- 7 March 1957]*, 366.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 367.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 366.

¹⁰² Matthew Cullerne Bown, “Aleksandr Gerasimov,” in *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917-1992*, ed. Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 133

the USSR.¹⁰³ To this event Reid refers as to “the shift of the balance of power”, when the artists, associated with naturalism, dominated cultural institutions.¹⁰⁴ The Academy promptly became one of the most influential organization in the field of cultural production of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁵ According to its Charter, validated on the 26th of September, 1947, the tasks of “the highest scientific institution that unites the most prominent doers of Soviet art” were the consistent implementation of the principles of socialist realism, development of history and theory of art on the basis of Marxist-Leninist methodology and the preparation of highly qualified artists in all genres and styles.¹⁰⁶

During the Thaw when the Union of Soviet Artists was established another shift in power occurred again. The agenda of the First All-Union Congress was to a great extent sharpened by the condemnation of the cult of personality.¹⁰⁷ Particularly the activities of the Academy of Arts of the USSR were sharply criticized by Myhaylo Deregus, newly elected Chairman of the UUA, in his speech at the First Congress of the Union of Artists of the USSR in 1957. From his perspective, many challenges of the development of Ukrainian Soviet art were linked with the improper operation of Soviet artistic institutions. The Chairman of UUA named as one of the reasons of ‘the decrease’ in Ukrainian art “the negative influence of the cult of personality” that distracted artists from the depiction of peoples and led to the varnishing of reality, to theatrical bombast and pomposity, and naturalistic protocolism (*protokol'nost*).¹⁰⁸ Deregus linked it with ‘the decrease of exactingness’ in the work of the Ministry of Culture, the Union of Artists, the Committee

¹⁰³ Ibid., 132-133.

¹⁰⁴ Susan E. Reid, “Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror: The Industry of Socialism Art Exhibition, 1935-41,” 183.

¹⁰⁵ Elena Kornetchuk, “Soviet Art under Government Control: From the 1917 Revolution to Khrushchev’s Thaw,” 42.

¹⁰⁶ V.G. Lisovskii, *Akademiya Khudozhevstv [The Academy of Arts]* (Leningrad: Leninizdat, 1982), 188.

¹⁰⁷ *Materialy Pervogo Vsesouznogo S'ezda Sovetskikh Khudozhnikov. 28 fevralia -- 7 marta, 1957 [Materials of the First All-Union Congress of Artists. 28 February -- 7 March 1957].*

¹⁰⁸ The Speech of the Chairman of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine M. Deregus on the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Artist of the USSR. Fund 581. Case 601: 6. UCSAMLA. The emphasis is mine.

for Stalin and Artistic Awards and the Academy of Arts. He articulated special dissatisfaction with the functioning of the latter, stating that the small group of people who occupied the governing positions in the art institute “appropriated *the monopoly right to interpret realism only in the spirit of their art*, considering their artworks as a “model” of socialist realism”.¹⁰⁹ Deregus accused them of the exercising of the “administrative pressure” that resulted in “smoothing, combing and leveling of our art in the same manner” and contradicted the Party’s directions “on the liquidation of the artistic groups, on artistic competition, artistic searches, novelty, grounded in the method of socialist realism.”¹¹⁰

Generally, Deregus’s statements resonated with earlier expressed discontent in the operation of the Committee of Artistic Affairs. Vera Tolz in her investigation convincingly demonstrates that this group did a lot during the post-war years in order to secure their well-being.¹¹¹ She introduces the letter of the painter from Moscow, Vladimir Gaposhkin, written in June 1953 and addressed to the Party leaders and the Minister of Culture, as an eloquent description of the life-style of the members of the Organizational Committee (Evgenii Vychetich, Dmitrii Nalbandian, Aleksandr Gerasimov, M. G. Manizer, Nikolai Tomsii, Georgii Motovilov and others): they “intercepted all main state government orders, exploited young artists, forced female artists into unwanted sexual relations, turned their studios in large business enterprise” and even signed the artworks created by hired staff with their names.¹¹²

Remarkably, in the speeches of Russian artists, published as the materials of the Congress by the publishing house “Soviet Artist”, the Academy and *Orgkomitet* were not criticized in a direct manner. For instance, Iosif Serebryannyi in his speech “On Painting” mentioned Aleksander Gerasimov, as well as the former Chairman of the UUA Myhaylo

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Vera Tolz, “‘Cultural Bosses’ as Patrons and Clients: The Functioning of the Soviet Creative Unions in the Postwar Period,” *Contemporary European History* 11, no. 1 (2002): 87–105.

¹¹² Ibid., 97-103.

Hmel'ko, as the artists whose oeuvre was “affected by the cult of personality.”¹¹³ Furthermore, he insisted on avoiding of oversimplified approach to the subject, claiming that these artworks “do not give any incentive to doubt sincerity of the creative motivation of these artists who frequently aspired to artistic embodiment of great and necessary social topic.”¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, in 1957 Gerasimov resigned from his position of the Chairman of the Academy.¹¹⁵ Consequently, the position was occupied by Boris Ioganson, former vice-president of the Academy, a “moderate conservative” (to quote Priscilla Johnson), who would be replaced by another Stalinist painter Vladimir Serov after the Manezh Exhibition in 1962 when another shift of power occurred.¹¹⁶

Particularly, during the Thaw the new definition of socialist realism was imposed.¹¹⁷ Importantly, the social agents in the field competed over attribution of the meaning to the newly occurred stress on “contemporaneity”, fulfilling the urgent need to specify “contemporary style.”¹¹⁸ Indeed, socialist realism was a method that embraced particular perspective on the past and the present, and Soviet art criticism and art history facilitated the redefinition of these linkages. This is the point where my research begins and ends: I will trace the accent on contemporaneity and examine the question of the origin of Ukraine Soviet art as the narrative structure in relation to the central concepts of socialist realism and

¹¹³ *Materialy Pervogo Vsesoiuznogo S'ezda Sovetskikh Khudozhnikov. 28 fevralia -- 7 marta, 1957 [Materials of the First All-Union Congress of Artists. 28 February -- 7 March 1957]*, 70.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Bown, on the ground of his conversation with Gerasimov's son-in-law, introduces the short story about the artists' dismissal: “In 1956, after Khrushchev had denounced Stalin...and a policy had been put into effect of destroying some of the paintings and sculptures devoted to Stalin, Gerasimov had an interview with Khrushchev. He declared that he and other artists created works in accordance with their consciences; to deny and destroy their art now was to deny the whole period of Soviet history. Khrushchev said that Gerasimov did not understand. Gerasimov left, banging the door behind him. That evening he was visited by Matvei Manizer, the sculptor, and Petr Sysoev, the critic, who suggested he resign as a president of the Academy on the health grounds. Gerasimov refused. The next day they returned, and Gerasimov agreed to step down. That night he sat up, drank a whole bottle of vodka, and had a heart attack. He never recovered his health”. Matthew Cullerne Bown, “Aleksandr Gerasimov,” 138.

¹¹⁶ Priscilla Johnson, “The Politics of Soviet Culture. 1962-1964.” in *Khrushchev and the Arts: The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964* (Cambridge [Mass.]: MIT Press, 1965), 8, footnote 16.

¹¹⁷ Susan Emily Reid, “Toward a New (Socialist) Realism. The Re-Engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw,” in *Russian Art and the West: A Century of Dialogue in Painting, Architecture, and the Decorative Arts* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007)

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 231-235.

show that the redefinition of them that occurred during Perestroika led to insolvency of the method and the institutions that embodied it.

Chapter II. Defining Art and Artists in the Artistic Field of Soviet Ukraine from the late 1950s till the 1970s

In the artistic field of the Soviet Union the Thaw marked the beginning of the reassessment of the definition of socialist realism, as, in the terms of Bourdieu's field analysis, the positions and the position-takings changed. The issue of the Stalinist cultural legacy in the Moscow Union of Artists was raised already in December 1955 when the discussion over Soviet art history was held.¹¹⁹ Two groups competing over definitions are frequently characterized as conservatives (former members of AkhRR group) and liberals (reformists).¹²⁰ The latter insisted on adopting a more inclusive genealogy of Soviet realist art that would include those tendencies of Russian art, associated with the Western traditions (such as the oeuvre of "Cézannist" *Jack of Diamonds (Bubnovyi valet)*, one of the artistic groups existed in the first decade of the 20th century in Russia), albeit they did not neglect the Peredvizhniki heritage.¹²¹ Remarkably, the main report on art history and art criticism, both discussion and the First All-Union Congress was delivered by the art historian Mikhail Aplatov who in 1950 was condemned because his sympathy to impressionism.¹²²

The artistic field of the Soviet Union during the Thaw is usually described by researchers in the terms of liberalization. An indeed, during the late 1950s the space of artistic possibles extended, as art of those artists, previously associated with formalism

¹¹⁹ Susan Emily Reid, "Toward a New (Socialist) Realism. The Re-Engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw," 220.

¹²⁰ Ibid., and in Priscilla Johnson, "The Politics of Soviet Culture. 1962-1964.," in *Khrushchev and the Arts: The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964* (Cambridge [Mass.]: MIT Press, 1965), 2. Interestingly, Ernst Niezvestny, famous sculptor, associated with unofficial art calls conservatives "the orthodox master of socialist realism". Ernst Niezvestny, *Govorit Niezvestny [Niezvestny Speaks]* (Frankfurt a. M.: Possev-Verlag, 1984), 8.

¹²¹ Ibid., 219.

¹²² Reid, "Toward a New (Socialist) Realism. The Re-Engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw.", 221. *Materialy Pervogo Vsesouznogo S'ezda Sovetskikh Hhudozhnikov. 28 fevralia -- 7 marta, 1957 [Materials Of the First All-Union Congress of Artists. 28 February -- 7 March, 1957]* (Moscow: Sovetskii Khudozhnik [Soviet Artist], 1958).

started to be displayed in the official museums.¹²³ The exposition of the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, reopened in 1954 in Moscow as a museum of European art, included impressionist paintings by Renoir, Monet and Degas.¹²⁴ As Reid points out, despite the fact that attitudes towards impressionism were rather ambiguous, the practices of eliminating from the display everything that may be questioned in the terms of ideology seems to be abandoned (at least for some period). The further exhibition *French Art from the Fifteenth to the Twentieth Century*, held at this museum in 1955, included the works of Cézanne, Gauguin, Matisse, and early Picasso, previously defined as formalists.¹²⁵

During the late 1950s two events happened that had an unprecedented significance for the further development of the Soviet art. The large retrospective of Picasso's works, supported by All-Union Society for Cultural links with Foreign Countries, was opened at the premises of the museum in 1956 and travelled to the Hermitage by the end of the year.¹²⁶ Michael Scammell states that the artist "seemed "safe" to the authorities because he was a renowned member of the Communist Party in France."¹²⁷ The exhibition had phenomenal attendance and the discussions of the modern art were held at the queues, halls, and even migrated to the higher institutions (by the initiative of the students) where such a risky question as "the creative freedom of the artist" was raised.¹²⁸

Another event was the VI World Youth Festival that was held in summer of 1957 in Moscow and attracted more than thirty thousands of young people from one hundred and

¹²³ It is worth reminding that, according to the Bourdieu, the extension in the artistic possibles is always linked to the changes in the field of power. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, 32.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 219.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 219-220.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 221.

¹²⁷ Michael Scammell, "Art as Politics and Politics in Art," in *Nonconformist Art: The Soviet Experience, 1956-1986*, ed. Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum et al. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 50.

¹²⁸ Reid, "Toward a New (Socialist) Realism. The Re-Engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw.", 222. On the reception of Picasso in the Eastern Europe see Piotr Bernatowicz, "Picasso behind the Iron Curtain: From the History of the Postwar Reception of Pablo Picasso in East-Central Europe," in *Art beyond Borders: Artistic Exchange in Communist Europe (1945-1989)*, ed. Jérôme Bazin, Pascal Dubourg Glatigny, and Piotr Piotrowski (New York: CEU Press, 2015), 151-64.

thirty-one countries.¹²⁹ It included two art exhibitions organized by the Union of Soviet Artists and the Ministry of Culture of the USSR: *All-Union Youth Exhibition* and *International Exhibition of Fine and Applied Arts*, providing a unique opportunity for Soviet artists to get familiar with the contemporary art tendencies in other countries. Particularly, at the latter the range of styles varied from Italian neo-realism, expressionism, surrealism to geometric abstraction.¹³⁰ The international studio, set in Gor'kii Park, where artists from all around the world could draw together and share their ideas on art matters, played also a crucial role in the widening of outlook of the Soviet artists.¹³¹

In the context of my research the VI World Youth Festival is particularly important because within it two “interpretative schemes”— “peace” and “humanism”— were originated. The festival, as Pia Koivunen stresses, was an extremely significant political event; it was launched in order to propagate new image of the Soviet Union to the world within Khrushchev’s policy of “peaceful coexistence” with the West (despite the fact it was not initiated personally by Khrushchev, it for sure had consequences, favorable to him).¹³² She also notes that the slogan of the festival, “for peace and friendship”, was considerably more neutral than slogans of earlier festivals.¹³³ Jointly with an accent on peace, in the debates at the festival, where socialist realism was putted in the international context, it was defined as the “art of humanism” that concentrates on the “problem of man in contemporary society” in contrast to the “anti-human” art of modernism.¹³⁴ Interestingly, as I will discuss in the second subchapter, the stress on these concepts vividly appears in the discourse of the

¹²⁹ Pia Koivunen, “The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival: Propagating a New, Peaceful Image of the Soviet Union,” in *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (Routledge, 2009), 50.

¹³⁰ Reid, “Toward a New (Socialist) Realism. The Re-Engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw.”, 227.

¹³¹ Ibid., Scammell, “Art as Politics and Politics in Art.”, 51. Reid, “Toward a New (Socialist) Realism. The Re-Engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw.”, 227.

¹³² Koivunen, “The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival: Propagating a New, Peaceful Image of the Soviet Union,” 54, 61.

¹³³ Ibid., 53

¹³⁴ Reid, “Toward a New (Socialist) Realism. The Re-Engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw.”, 229.

artistic field of Soviet Ukraine during Brezhnev era. In the late 1950s the members of the UUA were concerned with establishing a link with reality and strengthening the connection with people.

The large-scale preparation of the first publication on Ukrainian art history started in 1957.¹³⁵ At that time, the necessity to summarize the achievements of Ukrainian Soviet art had become a pressing issue since there was no official artistic journal in Ukraine. The publishing of the official art magazine of the UUA *Obrazotvorche mystetsvo* (*Fine Arts*) was not restored after the World War II. Two other journals *Radyanska Kultura* (*Soviet Culture*) and *Mystetstvo* (*Art*) did not satisfy the members of the UUA because they did not provide the information about the development of Soviet visual arts in a sufficient manner and did not portray the activities of the Union particularly.¹³⁶ In 1957, in an official letter to Stepan Chervonenko, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Chairman of UUA Myhaylo Deregus, insisted on the restoration of *Fine Arts*. He stated that exactly a lack of official journal was the reason of backwardness in the elaborations of the issues of theory and history of Ukrainian Soviet art (in contrast to the artistic practice). It had also obstructed “the establishment of the creative ties and the exchange of experience” between the artists.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the overviews of Ukrainian art history presented in other official publications, from the perspective of the members of the UUA, were far from being comprehensive. For instance, the artists were discontented with the description of Ukrainian art in the second volume of *History of Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic* that was prepared for the publishing by the Academy of Science at that

¹³⁵ Methodical Development and Structure of the Multivolume Publication *History of Ukrainian Art*. Fund 642. Case 9. UCSAML.A.

¹³⁶ Correspondence with the Central Committee of Communist Party of Ukraine, The Council of Ministers of The UkrSSR, the Union of Artists of the Soviet Union about the condition of preparation to the exhibition, dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the Great October, about the fulfillment of the solutions of the II Congress of the Ukrainian Union of Artists, about the events for propaganda of the revolutionary and national traditions in art, about popularization of Ukrainian Soviet art in press, radio, television and about other issues. Fund 581. Case 582: 19, 103. UCSAML.A. Hereinafter referred to as “Correspondence, 1957.”

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

times. In the seven-hundred-page book, only thirty pages were dedicated to Ukrainian art (and only two of them discussed Ukrainian visual arts). According to the extensive and detailed remarks on the publication that were listed in the official correspondence of the UUA, the “organic connection between the development of art and the historical process” was demonstrated in the book in an extremely weak way. The omission of artistic groups that “not only “aspired to” but also “aggressively imposed and promoted their views, their formalistic art practice, led the policy towards isolation of Ukrainian art from the best traditions of Russian and Ukrainian realistic art” was criticized especially sharply. From the perspective of the UUA, it deprived the statement that “Ukrainian Soviet art was created in the struggle with bourgeois nationalist ideology” of any concrete meaning. Thus, in the context of propaganda of the revolutionary and national traditions in the art the UUA promoted the creation of Ukrainian art history and its incorporation into school and university curriculums.¹³⁸

This narrative structure which I can briefly define as “art, born in struggles” would frequently reoccur in the publications that provides an outline of the Soviet Ukrainian art history. In my research I explore the case of Myhaylo Boychuk, Ukrainian artist that worked in the 1920-30s in Kyiv, and his school *boychukisty* due to the fact it was an extremely pressing issue in the discourse of the artistic field of Ukraine for three decades (*boychukisty* for a long time was associated with “formalism” and “bourgeois nationalism”).¹³⁹ Despite the fact he was rehabilitated during the Thaw as the victim of the Stalinist repressions,¹⁴⁰ the real justification of his oeuvre happened only at the times of

¹³⁸ Ibid., 71.

¹³⁹ He was born in the West of Ukraine at the end of the XIX century, studied at the Art Academy of Vienna and the Academy of Cracow, and during more than ten years after the graduation in 1905 he worked in Munich, Paris and Italy. In 1917, he became Professor of Monumental Art at the Ukrainian Academy that in 1924 was transformed in Kyiv Art Institute. He was an influential teacher, thus the circle of the followers, *boychukisty*, promptly formed around him. Boychuk was arrested and killed in 1937. Darewych, “Soviet Ukrainian Painting c. 1955-1979: New Currents and Undercurrents.”, 37-39.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 39, footnote 19.

Perestroika, as I will show in the third chapter. In 1957, during his speech at the First All-Union Congress, Deregus stated that “especially lasting and persistent struggle” Ukrainian Soviet artists had to lead with “bourgeois nationalistic group” of *boychukisty*, that objected “century-long ties” of Ukrainian art with Russian realist art and “called bourgeois art of the Western Europe and America for help.”¹⁴¹

It worth mentioning that Ukrainian art history and art criticism started to develop only during the Thaw. As Thomas Lahusen points out, theory “as such was the product of liberalization.”¹⁴² The Faculty of Art History and Theory was opened at Kyiv Art Institute in 1959 with the initiative of Petro Govdya, the art historian, educated in Saint Petersburg.¹⁴³ The first recruitment of the students was conducted at the same year. However, as Myhaylo Kryvolapov, the art historian who would later comprise the Editorial Board of restored *OM*, asserts, the Faculty immediately faced a plethora of challenges: they did not really have the experience of teaching, no one of them till 1961 had a degree, and the course of Ukrainian Soviet Art History was not elaborated. In the late fifties, the prevailing majority of Ukrainian art critics and art historians were educated either in Saint Petersburg or Moscow; and the published monographies mostly considered the artists of the pre-revolutionary or the pre-war times, thus Deregus encouraged art experts to address “contemporary issues.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ The Speech of the Chairman of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine M. Deregus on the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Artist of the USSR. Fund 581. Case 601: 2. UCSAML.

¹⁴² Thomas Lahusen, “Socialist Realism in Search of Its Shores: Some Historical Remarks on the “Historically Open Aesthetic System of the Truthful Representation of Life,” in *Socialist Realism Without Shores*, ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeniĭ Aleksandrovich Dobrenko (Duke University Press, 1997), 9.

¹⁴³ Myhaylo Kryvolapov, *Pro Mystetstvo Ta Khudozhniu Krytyku Ukrainy XX Stolittya [On Art and Artistic Criticism of the XX Century Ukraine]* (Kyiv: The Publishing House A+C, 2006), 58. From 1953, as Kryvolapov states, Govdya was the Head of the Department of Art history and Theory at Kyiv Art Institute; however, the text does not illuminate the date of its establishing. When Govdya came to the Department, there were only three professors: L.V. Sak, V.O. Denysov and Anatoliy Shpakov (who was the Head of the Department from 1952). We can assume that the Department was opened in the early fifties.

¹⁴⁴ The Transcript of the II Plenum of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine. 17-18 April 1957. Fund 581. Case 603. UCSAML.

1. To Strengthen the Linkage with People: The Challenges of the Elaboration of Contemporary Socialist Realist Painting during the Early Thaw

As I have already mentioned in the first chapter, the social agents in the artistic field of the Soviet Union were competing over attribution of meaning to the newly occurred stress on “contemporaneity”, pursuing the need of specification of “contemporary style” in painting. Supporting the new definition of socialist realism, at the First-Union Congress in 1957 Deregus stated “that it is not compatible with “dogmas and schemes”; he insisted on the cultivation of diversity in Soviet art.¹⁴⁵ This point, from his perspective, was especially significant in the context of the upbringing of the young artist who he considered as “the future of our art.”¹⁴⁶ He claimed that “some painful phenomenon among youth”, such as attraction to formalism and naturalism, “is a consequence of a weak ideological and educational work in the artistic educational institutions”, and the bad approach to the study of the history of art, particularly, of the Soviet one.¹⁴⁷ In his Congress speech Deregus also stated the difference between realism and naturalism: the former is an expression of the truth of life, while the latter is an “illusionary verisimilitude that turns artistic creativity into soulless craftsmanship”¹⁴⁸. Formalism, from his perspective, “kills the national originality of the art”¹⁴⁹ and it “helps capitalists to distract the masses from the pressing life problems into the world of abstractions.”¹⁵⁰ Particularly, the Party’s aid in ideological in the overthrow of formalists, as Deregus stated, saved Ukrainian art from “vegetating in the backyard of the Western European formalistic art”, and interconnection between the

¹⁴⁵ The Transcript of the II Plenum of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine. 17-18 April 1957. Fund 581. Case 603: 9-10. UCSAMLA. In this speech he basically used the formulation from the Party’s Greetings of the Congress.

¹⁴⁶ The Speech of the Chairman of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine M. Deregus on the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Artist of the USSR. Fund 581. Case 601: 16. UCSAMLA.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 16.

republics, especially “the influence of Russian realistic art”¹⁵¹ facilitated the development of the oeuvre of the Soviet peoples.¹⁵²

Russian art was indeed highlighted in the curriculum of Soviet art universities. Within the course “History of Soviet Fine Arts for Art Universities” the oeuvre of Russian artists was predominantly considered. Ukrainian artists were represented in the terms of numbers as the second prominent socialist realism supporters, the art from other republics featured only few artworks. In the course “History of Russian Fine Arts Universities” Russian art was defined as “progressive.”¹⁵³

During the Second Congress of the UUA in 1956, Myhaylo Hmel’ko, the predecessor of Deregus, mentioned the most outstanding artworks of Ukrainian artists, produced during post-war years: *Bread and Spring* by Tetyana Yablons’ka, *Admission to the Komsomol* and *Returned* by Sergiy Grygor’jev and *Sailors of the Black Sea (Chernomortsy)* by Viktor Puzyr’kov. In the context of the achievements of Ukrainian art, during the All-Union Congress the same names sounded in the speech of Iosif Serebryannyi and Boris Ioganson’s lecture “On the Condition and Tasks of Soviet Fine Arts.”¹⁵⁴ Particularly Tetyana Yablons’ka, who would stay the influential Soviet artist and occupy top-administrative positions till the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in her speech during the Second Congress of the UUA stated that the development of the industrial theme was in the disturbing condition because “the workers in the depictions started to play secondary role”

¹⁵¹ The same formulation was used in the thematic plan of the Ukrainian exhibition, dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution for the explanation of the historical section where the “centuries-old friendship and fraternal relations” between the Russians and the Ukrainians, jointly with “beneficial influence of the progressive Russian culture” were portrayed. Thematic Plan and the List of Artworks of the Republican Anniversary Exhibition, Dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution.1957. Fund 581. Case 625: 2-3. UCSAMLA.

¹⁵² The Speech of the Chairman of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine M. Deregus on the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Artist of the USSR. Fund 581. Case 601: 3. UCSAMLA.

¹⁵³ The Program of the Course on History of Soviet Fine Arts for Artistic Universities.1957. Fund 581. Case 589.UCSAMLA.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 63.

and were presented as “appendages to machines”.¹⁵⁵ She insisted on the necessity of the daily life communication between the Soviet artists and workers of different enterprises. As an example of proper treatment of this important subject Yablons’ka named *Young Miners* (or *After the Shift*) by Viktor Zarets’kyy, the faith of which will be discussed in detail below.¹⁵⁶

Reporting on the results of the All-Union Congress during the II Plenum of UUA in April 1957, Deregus noticed that “the remembering of the names of Ukrainian artists” in the speech of Dmitri Shepilov¹⁵⁷, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party, is a sign of “the maturity of Ukrainian art, its diversity.”¹⁵⁸ He emphasized that particularly Shepilov provided the answer to the main question of the Congress – “the question about the direction of Soviet fine arts in the future”, resolving many of “our painful doubts and artistic hopes” in such way that “some of the delegates refused to give their speeches”, other “corrected their theses” during the Congress.¹⁵⁹ Shepilov asserted that Soviet art could and would have developed on the ground of socialist realism, insisting on “the clarity of ideological positions, hardness, and adherence to principles.”¹⁶⁰ Summarizing the speech of the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party, Deregus stated that the Party denounced “pompous lacquered artworks in which the real art is replaced with naturalistic copying” and “administrative methods of governing of fine arts from the side of the

¹⁵⁵ The Report on the Second Congress of Artists of UkrSSR, April 1956. Fund 581. Case 526: 17. UCSAMLA.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Dmitri Shepilov was a Soviet politician who helped Nikita Khrushchev with his “Secret Speech.” In the summer of 1957, he joined “anti-Party group” who opposed Khrushchev’s liberalization policy and, consequently, was expelled from the Central Committee within a month. D. T. Shepilov, *The Kremlin’s Scholar: A Memoir of Soviet Politics Under Stalin and Krushchev* (Yale University Press, 2007). As far as I can assume, after this incident his speech on the All-Union Congress was not included in the published materials.

¹⁵⁸ The Transcript of the II Plenum of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine. 17-18 April 1957. Fund 581. Case 603: 13. UCSAMLA.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 12-14.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Academy of Arts.”¹⁶¹ Notwithstanding the fact this remark highly supported the points of his own speech, articulated during the Congress, the Chairman of the UUA insisted on perceiving particularly Shepilov’s ideas as a “basis for the artistic activity” and defined the preparation for the exhibitions (both All-Union and republican) as the main task for the UUA with an accent on the show, dedicated to the Fortieth Anniversary of the October Revolution (*Forty years of October*).¹⁶²

Forty Years of October was perceived quite seriously by the members of UUA. Already at the All-Union Congress Deregus put that this exhibition would be an indicator of success for Ukrainian artists.¹⁶³ Pursuing the requirement "to strengthen the linkage with people" that had become an obsessive idea in the UUA after the Khrushchev speech “For the Tight Connection of Literature and Art with Life of the People”, delivered of the Party’s meeting with creative workers in May, 1957, the UUA encouraged its members to create the artworks that depicts the life of contemporary Soviet man with a special emphasis on his working activities. During the Congress, Deregus also noted that in Ukrainian art, the hero of the present time – a Soviet man – “firmly enters the new works of artists”.¹⁶⁴ Indicating weak points of Ukrainian art, he stated that Ukrainian artists realized that their artworks still had not satisfied “the requirements of the people’s masses, of life”, and there was still a lack of depiction of “simple Soviet men, especially workers.”¹⁶⁵ Basically, the agenda of UUA in 1957 was altered by the drive of the restoration of the connection between artists and the people that also implied strengthening the relationship between Soviet artists and the

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁶² Ibid., 14-15

¹⁶³ The Speech of the Chairman of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine M. Deregus on the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Artist of the USSR. Fund 581. Case 601: 3. UCSAMLA.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 11.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 15-16

present.¹⁶⁶ In order to pursue this goal and to fulfill the requirement of “peopleness” in art, the UUA organized trips to the industrial and agricultural areas for more than five hundred and fifty artists in 1955-1956, providing for them an opportunity to get acquainted with the life of workers and collective farmers (*kolgospnykiv*).¹⁶⁷ The main idea of the anniversary exhibition was “the disclosure of the image of the Soviet man”, the depiction of her/his “rich spiritual world” and “versatility of their labor activities and civil and personal life.”¹⁶⁸

The historical paintings were also the matter of concern. In the report about the condition of preparation for the anniversary exhibitions that I discovered in the correspondence of the Union, the gap in the coverage of some important topics is revealed: there was an insufficient amount of paintings, dedicated to labor and daily life of contemporary Soviet men, a lack of depictions of the fighting for the establishment of Soviet regime, “especially in Ukraine”, and almost no works about “guiding role of the Party.”¹⁶⁹ In order to increase the coverage of such prominent topics, the republican exhibition committee, with reference to the “Party-mindedness” and “peopleness”, decided to order them, so the artists had an opportunity to get money in the case they had chosen these subjects.¹⁷⁰ In the same report one can find another eloquent statement that highlights the urgent need in specialized journal for the Union: “It can be said for sure that the preparation to the anniversary exhibitions would have developed significantly more intensive and wider under the condition of systematic and qualified illumination of the

¹⁶⁶ The Transcript of the II Plenum of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine. 17-18 April 1957. Fund 581. Case 603: 19. UCSAMLA.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ The Thematic Plan and the List of Artworks of the Republican Anniversary Exhibition, Dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution. 1957. Fund 581. Case 625: 1. UCSAMLA.

¹⁶⁹ Correspondence, 1957, 76-77.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

issues, related to the preparation, as well as problems of fine arts, conducted in a periodical press.”¹⁷¹

Similarly to the narrative structure “art, born in struggles”, the realization of *Forty Years of October* (the big collective of nine hundreds of artists was working for the show) met with a lot of obstructions. Notwithstanding the fact that preparation for the exhibition has started already in 1955 when the Council of Ministers of the USSR had issued a special decree (that basically legitimized direct provision of the money to the organizations, involved in the arrangement of the show), only in 1957, after the complaint of the UUA about a lack of relevant assignments,¹⁷² addressed to the First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, the Ministry of the Culture of the UkrSSR got involved in the enterprise by comprising the exhibition committee. Nevertheless, its activities soon were evaluated as ineffective: during the II Plenum Deregus stated that it was the move to limit the participation of the Ministry, and the members of the *vystavkom* even had forgot that they were in it.¹⁷³ The exhibition was several times postponed¹⁷⁴ and eventually opened in December, 1957. Particularly for this event the construction of big exhibition pavilion in Kyiv had been launched,¹⁷⁵ nonetheless, the building process was finished only in a year.

For the UUA this exhibition was “an attempt to create a generalized image of the contemporary.”¹⁷⁶ First of all, this goal could not be achieved without the embracing the linkage between the past and the present of the Soviet Union. The statement of Deregus about Soviet man entering the artworks was also related to historical paintings (also called

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 77.

¹⁷² Correspondence, 1957, 7.

¹⁷³ The Transcript of the II Plenum of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine. 17-18 April, 1957. Fund 581. Case 603: 13. UCSAML.

¹⁷⁴ According to the Thematic Plan, the exhibition should have been opened in July. 1957 The Thematic Plan and the List of Artworks of the Republican Anniversary Exhibition, Dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution. 1957. Fund 581. Case 625: 1. UCSAML.

¹⁷⁵ Correspondence, 1957, 121.

¹⁷⁶ The Discussion of the Republican Exhibition, dedicated to the Fortieth Anniversary of Great October. 1957. Fund 581. Case 626:9. UCSAML

“historical-revolutionary genre”). Due to the fact it was the first large show after the Twentieth Party Congress, the historical representation of previous expositions was criticized because of the influence of the cult of personality where “the people were presented as faceless passive masses, served as a background for depiction of particular persons.”¹⁷⁷ During the discussion of *Forty Years of October* held at the UUA, this shift in the artistic approach to historical subject was emphasized (particularly in the opening speech of Deregus): in correspondence to the “correct Marxist-Leninist understanding of the role of people and individual in history”, the artists were claimed to start working intensively on the images of “the common people.”¹⁷⁸

The consideration of this declared change in the artistic approach to dealing with historical subjects in the context of the Thematic Plan of the exhibition shows the actual limits of such a statement. The Thematic Plan, first introduced within the exhibition *the Industry of Socialism*, discussed in the first chapter,¹⁷⁹ provided official guidelines for the artists intended to participate in the exhibition and illuminated the range of historical subjects, the depiction of which was desirable. The historical topics generally should have covered “the century-long struggle of the peoples of our Homeland for the freedom and independence”, “eternal and immutable friendship of Ukrainian people with great Russian people and other peoples of our country” and “reunion of Ukraine with Russia.”¹⁸⁰ Russian culture indeed appears to be stressed in the whole Thematic Plan. In the subchapter on pre-revolutionary Ukrainian culture the stated task was to depict the connection between Ukrainian and Russian cultural figures and to show “salutary influence of progressive

¹⁷⁷ The Discussion of the Republican Exhibition, dedicated to the Fortieth Anniversary of Great October. 1957. Fund 581. Case 626:8. UCSAMLA

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Reid, “Toward a New (Socialist) Realism. The Re-Engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw,” 157.

¹⁸⁰ The Thematic Plan and the List of Artworks of the Republican Anniversary Exhibition, Dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution. 1957. Fund 581. Case 625: 2. UCSAMLA.

Russian culture on Ukrainian culture.”¹⁸¹ The subchapter that disclose how “people's friendship” can be portrayed even contains the statement: “Great Russian people – the most outstanding nation among all other nations that are part of the Soviet Union.”¹⁸² Remarkably, Stalin and his achievements still were present in the Thematic Plan among suggested historical figures for depiction.¹⁸³

No wonder that among “the best historical paintings” in the exposition that was mentioned in the correspondence of the UUA three of them were dedicated to Russian prominent figures (two to Lenin and one to Maxim Gorky) and only one to Ukrainian – Taras Shevchenko.¹⁸⁴ The discussion of the artworks, portraying Lenin, reveals the contradictions of the process of “simple Soviet man entering the artworks of Ukrainian artists.” The painting *Smolny.1917* of Semen Guec'kyi was highly praised by the art historian Anatoliy Shpakov because of the representation of Lenin as “extremely simple, cordial, surprisingly sensitive to people.”¹⁸⁵ From his perspective, this painting actually shows that “the revolution was made by simple, ordinary mortals and the most humane among the people – Lenin.”¹⁸⁶ The artwork was also well perceived in Russia: Boris Ioganson in his review of the All-Union exhibition disclose the overview of the topic that was the most presented at the show, i.e. depictions of Lenin, with *Smolny.1917*. His review repeated Shpakov's remark: the face of Lenin, “the most humane human” and his pose “are full of great human warmth, paternal tenderness, love and pride.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., 13.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 3-7.

¹⁸⁴ Correspondence, 1957, 37, 84. Some notes on representation of Taras Shevchenko in the official Soviet discourse will be provided in the next subchapter.

¹⁸⁵ The Discussion of the Republican Exhibition, dedicated to the Fortieth Anniversary of Great October. 1957. Fund 581. Case 626:20. UCSAMLA

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Boris Ioganson, *Vsesouiznaya Yubileinaia Khudozhestvennaia Vystavka 1957 Goda [The All-Union Anniversary Art Exhibition of 1957]* (Moscow, “Znanie”, 1958), 8.

In contrast, another painting *Lenin in the worker's family* by Myhaylo Kryvenko was criticized because the effect of the image of Lenin was “emotionally weaker” than the figure (the worker) in the front. The latter was considered to be well drawn; however, it attracted more attention than Lenin. From the perspective of Shpakov, it created “the feeling of duality” that is “of course, not desirable” (the last phrase is handwritten in the document).

In a cognate manner, the majority of artworks that were presented during the first Ukrainian youth festival were considered as portraying the present (thus they were identified as “addressing the contemporary subjects.”¹⁸⁸

Another contradiction in the institutional implementation of “peopleness” resurfaces if we consider the first Ukrainian youth festival exhibition. The distinct feature of the festival was the acceptance of those artists who were not the members or candidates for the membership of the UUA that was initially proposed by the Organizational Committee of the VI World Festival of Youth and Students.¹⁸⁹ It worth mentioning that Mykola Han who was in charge of the organization of the exhibition stated in his report that “we do not have masterpieces on this exhibition but, as life demonstrates, the exhibition will be interesting.”¹⁹⁰ The show was opened on the 27th of April and closed on the 4th of June, 1957.¹⁹¹ Among four hundred and twenty-three works that were shown during the republican youth festival, eighty-five were sent to the All-Union exhibition. Seven paintings were indicated as “the most interesting”: *Stop for Lunch and Test* by Ada Rybachuk, *The First of September* and *Pepel'ka is Going to School* by Volodymyr Mel'nichenko, *Young Miners (or After the Shift)* by Viktor Zarets'kyi, *On Elbe* by Igor Grygoriev and *The First*

¹⁸⁸ The Transcript of the Discussion of the Exhibition, Dedicated to the Youth Festival of the UkrSSR. 15 May 1957. Fund 581. Case 630: 4. UCSAML. Young artists in the Soviet Union were defined as “the artists, younger than 35.”

¹⁸⁹ The Transcript of the II Plenum of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine. 17-18 April 1957]. Fund 581. Case 603: 42. UCSAML.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 43.

¹⁹¹ Correspondence, 1957, 34.

Shoots (or the Agronomist) by Mykola Storozhenko.¹⁹² Particularly the last, according to the report of an art historian Vasil Afanasiev, was an example of successful “addressing of contemporary subjects” that “beside of talent, requires from the artist “thoughtful, hard works, audacious searches.”¹⁹³ From the perspective of Afanasiev, this artwork was intriguing because it portrayed not only “the response to the important phenomenon of our life, not the illustrative reflection of the separate phenomenon, but creative, imaginative expression of the personal impressions of the heroic deed of youth”.¹⁹⁴ Notwithstanding the fact the art historian praised “the emotional tune” of the work, he also noted that the plot was disclosed partially because “the psychological characteristics of the main character apparently concede to the strength of mood, expressed in the landscape.”¹⁹⁵

The works of Rybachyk and Mel’nichenko were generally evaluated as “brave and energetic”. Mel’nichenko’s *The First of September* was considered to be “conceived in a creative way” and “very expressive”. However, Afanasiev stated that Rybachyk’s works, despite all originality, are “a bit monotonous.” The art historian also criticized both artists for usage of the large canvases, indicating that “the aspiration to the enormous scales, especially in the first artworks, cannot be called quite healthy.”¹⁹⁶

The works of Viktor Zarets’kyi were considered to be the most controversial in the whole exposition of the youth festival. Initially, his three canvases, all dedicated to the miners of Donbas region and their activities, supposed to be included in the exhibition. However, when the Minister of Culture of the UkrSSR saw the work *After the Shift*, he decided to remove all three artworks from the exhibition, indicating that “if the youth see

¹⁹² Ibid., 35.

¹⁹³ The Transcript of the Discussion of the Exhibition, Dedicated to the Youth Festival of the UkrSSR. 15 May, 1957. Fund 581. Case 630: 4-5. UCSAMLA.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 8-9.

those grimy boys, no one will go to the mines.”¹⁹⁷ During the discussion of the youth festival, held within the UUA, Mykola Glushchenko, a famous Ukrainian artist, expressed the pity that Ukrainian artistic community did not have a possibility to get acquainted with the works of this very talented artist, withdrawn due to “ideological instability.” He also insisted on the provision of both moral and material support to Zarets’kyy.¹⁹⁸ Notwithstanding the fact that Afanasiev noted “the print of careless haste” in the context of another exposed work of Zarets’kyy *At the Loading Trunk*, he also defined the artist as “a talented painter with subtle coloristic flair.”¹⁹⁹ Nikolay Osenev, the visiting artist from Moscow, denounced the removal of the artworks from the exhibition. He stated:

We [in Moscow] did not withdraw controversial works. It is not quite right to withdraw these works. Let them hang, so we can discuss them, and if it is really the case out of the common, it is necessary to indicate what is in the core of the wrong way of the artist, what is needed to be prompted to him.²⁰⁰

Interestingly, the artwork *After the Shift* was eventually sent to the All-Union exhibition where Zarets’kyy was awarded the diploma of the first grade for its creation, though it was not exhibited during the World Youth Festival because of the intervention of the Minister of Culture of the UkrSSR.²⁰¹ After this incident Zarets’kyy had never visited the mines again. The artwork *After the Shift* had been lying in his studio for more than 30 years until it was bought at the beginning of the 1990s by Swiss collector.²⁰² In 1958 the artist was a co-

¹⁹⁷ Olesia Avramenko, *Terezy Doli Viktora Zarets'kogo [Viktor Zaretski Scales of Destiny]* (Kyiv: Modern Art Research Institute Modern Art Research Institute of Ukrainian Academy of Arts, 2011), 54.

¹⁹⁸ The Transcript of the Discussion of the Exhibition, Dedicated to the Youth Festival of the UkrSSR. 15 May 1957. Fund 581. Case 630: 39. UCSAMLA.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 7

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 55.

²⁰¹ Oles' Zarets'kyy, *Hudozhnyk Viktor Zarets'kyy. Poshuky Korinnya. Lystu, Narusy, Spogady, Statti [The Artist Viktor Zarets'kyy. The Search for Roots. Correspondence, Sketches, Memoirs, Articles]* (Kyiv: National Research Institute of Ukrainian Studies of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2009).

²⁰² There is an inconsistency in the secondary sources. In Avramenko, *Terezy Doli Viktora Zarets'kogo [Viktor Zaretski Scales of Destiny]*, 55 the year of the purchase is stated as 1989; in the published memoirs of his second wife Maya Zarets'ka the year is 1990. Oles' Zarets'kyy, *Hudozhnyk Viktor Zarets'kyy. Poshuky Korinnya. Lystu, Narusy, Spogady, Statti [The Artist Viktor Zarets'kyy. The Search for Roots.*

creator of a panel *Industrialization* (8x13m) for the main entrance of the exhibition pavilion in Kyiv, for which he was awarded “Certificate of Honor.”²⁰³ In the middle of the 1960s Zarets’kyy and his wife Alla Hors’ka, whose work *Song of Donbass* was also exhibited at the republican youth festival and generally positively evaluated by Afanasiev,²⁰⁴ were active members of the Creative Youth Club “Contemporary” in Kyiv (Klub Tvorchoi Molodi, KTM) with the branch of artists and art historians who were interested in the oeuvre of Myhaylo Boychuk and his school.²⁰⁵

Two other artists, whose works were considered “as the most interesting” during the republican youth festival, Ada Rybachyk and Volodymyr Mel’nichenko were denounced by the members of the UUA already in 1959 with the publication of the article “Mystetstvo ne Teprut’ Shumyhy [Art does not endure the noise]” in the journal *Pravda Ukrainu* (*Truth of Ukraine*), signed by Deregus and Vasyl Kas’iyan, the member of the Academy of Arts and former (and future) Chairman of the UUA. In this article, the artists were accused in formalism, *boychukism* (though they did not even know who Boychuk was), and abstractionism.²⁰⁶ The researcher of their oeuvre, Nataliya Gorova linked this publication with the preceding articles of Grygoriy Miestiechkin (the art historian who would join above mentioned group of the investigators of the school of Boychuk in the 1960s), where he highly evaluated the paintings of Rybachyk and Mel’nichenko and denounced the UUA for refusing to provide support (particularly, material one) for their trips to the North

Correspondence, Sketches, Memoirs, Articles] (Kyiv: National Research Institute of Ukrainian Studies of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2009), 139.

²⁰³ Avramenko, *Terezy Doli Viktora Zarets'kogo* [Viktor Zaretski Scales of Destiny], 60.

²⁰⁴ The Transcript of the Discussion of the Exhibition, Dedicated to the Youth Festival of the UkrSSR. Fund 581. Case 630: 7. UCSAMLA. He called her “an able artist” and stated that “subtle poetization of the specific Donbass landscape is an evidence of successful development of the author’s talent.”

²⁰⁵ Zarets’kyy, *Hudozhnyk Viktor Zarets'kyy. Poshuky Korinnya. Lystu, Narusy, Spogady, Statti* [The Artist Viktor Zarets'kyy. The Search for Roots. Correspondence, Sketches, Memoirs, Articles], 123.

²⁰⁶ Nataliya Gorova, “Yavushche Mysteckogo Sprotyvu v Kulturnomy Seredovushchi Ukrainy Drugoyi Polovyny 1950-h - Pochatky XXI Stolittya (Na Prykladi Tvorchosti Ady Rybachyk i Volodymyra Melnichenka) [The Phenomenon of Artistic Resistance in Ukrainian Cultural Environment in the Second Half of the 1950s-at the Beginning of the XXI Century (Case of the Art of Ada Rybachyk and Volodymyr Melnichenko)]” (Modern Art Research Institute of Ukrainian Academy of Arts, 2016), 42.

(Kolguyev Island).²⁰⁷ However, their artistic activities (for instance, the opening of the first museum in Naryan-Mar) were well received in Moscow, thus the artists managed to proceed to work on their art (predominantly in architecture), frequently experiencing obstructions in the publishing of illustrations.²⁰⁸

To conclude, in the early Thaw when an accent on contemporaneity occurred, the UUA stressed and promoted the necessity “to establish a link with the people” both in contemporary and historical genres of oil painting. Ukrainian Soviet art to a great extent was defined through “peopleness” that was manifested in the promotion of depiction of “a simple Soviet man.” However, as the artistic field was strongly dependent on the field power, such depictions should have followed “Party-mindedness” and encourage young people to engage actively in the construction of the communist society: in other words, to convey an ideological message.

2. Ukrainian Soviet Artist Reconsidered: Civil Duty as the Main Feature of Art in Brezhnev Era

The Manezh Exhibition, opened on December, 1 in 1962, is generally known as the event that marked the tightening of the policy of relatively liberal late 1950s.²⁰⁹ By the winter of 1962 the grudge of the conservative camp had become deeper due to the replacement of their representatives by liberal youth on different positions, particularly in the board of the Moscow writer’s organization and in the position of journal editors.²¹⁰ In this context, many contemporaries considered the situation occurred on December 1, 1962 in the Moscow’s building of the Manezh Exhibition Hall as a provocation. On that day

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 39-42.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 59.

²⁰⁹ For the detailed account of the event see Albert Leong, *Centaur: The Life and Art of Ernst Neizvestny* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 124-129. and Priscilla Johnson, “The Politics of Soviet Culture. 1962-1964,” 8-9.

²¹⁰ Priscilla Johnson, “The Politics of Soviet Culture. 1962-1964.”, 2-3.

Khrushchev eloquently defined the members of Beliutin Art group as “pederasts” and their works as “shit.” The artists who did not belong to Beliutin’s “New Reality” movement were also publicly humiliated. A sculptor Ernst Niezvestny held the discussion with the Soviet leader, within which he claimed that the whole situation is the provocation and in this context Khrushchev looks funny as he is far from being an expert in the field of art.²¹¹ The Niezvestny’s suspicion seems to be grounded: in three days after the Manezh incident Vladimir Serov, the Stalinist painter, was appointed as the President of the Academy of Fine Arts.²¹² Khrushchev’s direct command to Leonid Il’ichiov, the Chairman of the newly established Ideological Commission, was: “If they are members of the Party, kick them out of the Party. If they are members of the Union of Artists, kick them out of the Union.”²¹³ It was done forthwith. During the Party meeting with four hundred artists, writers, film makers, composers that took place on December 17, 1962, Il’ichiov denounced abstract art and stated that “abstractionist and modernists “innovations” represent a deviation from the basic line of development of Soviet literature and art” and called abstractionists “idolaters of bourgeois fashion.”²¹⁴ He also mentioned that the Party Central Committee had received several letters from creative intelligentsia where the support to abstractionist artists was expressed, accompanied by an appeal to prevent a campaign against persons looking for new forms and an emphasis on the necessity of “peaceful coexistence” of various trends in art.²¹⁵ Il’ichiov’s answer to articulated fears was: “There has not been and cannot be peaceful coexistence between socialist ideology and the ideology of the bourgeoisie.”²¹⁶

²¹¹ Niezvestny, *Govorit Niezvestny [Niezvestny Speaks]*, 12-13.

²¹² Johnson, “The Politics of Soviet Culture. 1962-1964.”, 8, footnote 16.

²¹³ *Drugoe iskusstvo: Moskva 1956-1976* [The Other Art: Moscow 1956-1976]. Moscow: Interbuk, 1991, vol. 1, 97-98, quoted in Leong, *Centaur*, 128.

²¹⁴ *Pravda*, December 22, 1962. In Priscilla Johnson McMillan, *Khrushchev and the Arts: The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964* (Cambridge [Mass.]: MIT Press, 1965), 109. The full text of article is located in book under title “Providing Ideological Framework”, 105-120.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 113-144.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

The positions in the artistic field of the Soviet Union in 1962 also changed. In the UUA Vasyl' Kas'iyanyan was elected as the Chairman for the second time. It is worth mentioning that particularly his candidature had been rejected during the elections of the delegates for the First All-Union Congress in 1956. According to the statement of an artist, whose name the transcript of the elections, unfortunately, does not illuminate, Kas'iyanyan was “a person who see only his fame and the greatness of his fame”, and who “does not love the artists and does not respect them.”²¹⁷ This proposition was widely supported, so his candidature was excluded from consideration.

In 1962 Alla Hors'ka and her husband Victor Zarets'kyi joined the Creative Youth Club “Contemporary” (Klub Tvorchoi Molodi, KTM) that in Ukrainian cultural history is generally associated with the sixtiers (*shistdesiatnyky*).²¹⁸ It was established in 1960 under the patronage of the Kyiv municipal Komsomol committee. The founder was Les' Taniuk, the young actor and the student of Kiev's Institute of dramatic art “Karpenko-Karyi” who shared a deep concern about the development of Ukrainian culture. According to his recollection of this event, the club was an attempt to unite the creative youth under aspiration of refreshment of Ukrainian culture against the old people who were “embodiment of the system.”²¹⁹ KTM relatively quickly become an attractive community for Kyiv's creative youth. Taniuk asserted that “the true history of the club” started with the entering of Hors'ka, whose studio have become “the second home” for its members.²²⁰ It also marked the transformation of the club's agenda from a “general democratic-

²¹⁷ Transcript of the Elections of Delegates for the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Artists, May, 30, 1956. Fund 581.Case 547:10. UCSAMLA.

²¹⁸ Serhy Yekelchuk, “The Early 1960s as a Cultural Space: A Microhistory of Ukraine's Generation of Cultural Rebels,” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.954103>.

²¹⁹ Quoted in Simone Attilio Bellezza, “The Shistdesiatnytstvo as a Group of Friends: The Kompaniia of the Club of the Creative Youth of Kiev (1960-1965),” accessed April 26, 2018, http://www.academia.edu/10194575/The_shistdesiatnytstvo_as_a_group_of_friends_the_kompaniia_of_the_Club_of_the_Creative_Youth_of_Kiev_1960-1965_, 72.

²²⁰ Ibid., 74.

internationalist” program to a focus on exclusively Ukrainian culture.²²¹ KTM organized readings (frequently of the forbidden authors), commemorations, concerts, discussion, theatrical performances. Zarets’kyy, Hors’ka and Miestiechkin, as I have already mentioned, engaged intensively in the exploration of Boychuk’s school.²²² The members of the club in 1962 also initiated an investigation into the mass graves in Bykivnya near Kyiv where the unidentified bodies were buried during the Stalin’s purges that, jointly with the efforts of rehabilitation of Ukrainian cultural figures of the 1920-30s, outraged the authorities.²²³ There is some inconsistency in the sources when the club was actually disbanded (at the end of 1963 or at the beginning of the 1964), but it was closed by the agents of the Committee for State Security Services (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti, the KGB) (its archive is considered to be destroyed or lost).²²⁴ Many of its members were arrested already in 1965, and accused in “bourgeois nationalism.”²²⁵

As the agents, occupying dominant positions in the artistic field, impose their definition on art, they also inflict their perspective on its “origins”. In the historiography of Soviet Ukraine, as Serhy Yekelchuk demonstrates, the figure of Taras Shevchenko, Ukrainian poet and the artist of the nineteenth century, was intensively exploited to facilitate the Stalinist

²²¹ Yekelchuk, “The Early 1960s as a Cultural Space: A Microhistory of Ukraine’s Generation of Cultural Rebels,” 52.

²²² Zarets’kyy, *Hudozhnyk Viktor Zarets’kyy. Poshuky Korinnya. Lystu, Narusy, Spogady, Statti [The Artist Viktor Zarets’kyy. The Search for Roots. Correspondence, Sketches, Memoirs, Articles]*, 123.

²²³ Yekelchuk, “The Early 1960s as a Cultural Space: A Microhistory of Ukraine’s Generation of Cultural Rebels,” 53. Benjamin Tromly, “An Unlikely National Revival: Soviet Higher Learning and the Ukrainian ‘Sixtiers,’ 1953–65,” *The Russian Review* 68, no. 4 (n.d.): 618, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9434.2009.00541.x>. The members of KTM also asked the authorities to build a memorial to the victims of the Stalinist repressions there. Bellezza, “The Shistdesiatnytstvo as a Group of Friends: The Kompaniia of the Club of the Creative Youth of Kiev (1960-1965),” 38.

²²⁴ Bellezza, “The Shistdesiatnytstvo as a Group of Friends: The Kompaniia of the Club of the Creative Youth of Kiev (1960-1965),” 81. In Tromly “An Unlikely National Revival: Soviet Higher Learning and the Ukrainian ‘Sixtiers,’ 1953–65,” 619 and Zarets’kyy, *Hudozhnyk Viktor Zarets’kyy. Poshuky Korinnya. Lystu, Narusy, Spogady, Statti [The Artist Viktor Zarets’kyy. The Search for Roots. Correspondence, Sketches, Memoirs, Articles]*, 129, the year of the closure of KTM is 1963. In Yekelchuk, “The Early 1960s as a Cultural Space: A Microhistory of Ukraine’s Generation of Cultural Rebels,” 53, it is 1964.

²²⁵ Ibid, 82.

idea of nation.²²⁶ He was at the top of “pantheon structure” as “the nation’s father”; a strong accent was made on his relations with Russian cultural figures and views that “anticipated socialism” in the official discourse.²²⁷ The members of KTM was especially discontent with such representations of Shevchenko: Taniuk in his diaries mockingly called it “the Shevchenko-ness (*Shevchenkiana*).”²²⁸

In 1964 for the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Shevchenko’s birth, the (former) members of KTM Hors’ka, Luidmyla Semykina, Galyna Zubchenko, Opanas Zalyvaha and Halyna Sevruck created a stained-glass window *Shevchenko. Mother* for the Kyiv State University hall. It depicted rather angry Shevchenko, protecting a young girl, representing Ukraine, and was signed with the poet’s quotation: “I will exalt these small, mute slaves/ I shall put the word on guard beside them.”²²⁹ As Benjamin Tromly demonstrates, the window outraged the propaganda and agitation secretary of the Kyiv Provincial Party Committee V.A. Boychenko, and when the artists refused from halting the work process on it, it was destroyed.²³⁰ The artists forthwith was expelled from the UUA; restored year after.²³¹ The small fragment of the Union’s discussion illuminates some mayor criticism, introduced to the artists. Viktor Shatalin presented the conclusions of the commission that investigated the window: “The stained-glass window – ideologically perverse work. Shevchenko behind the bars. The interpretation is exclusively formalistic. Not compatible with the image of Kobzar.”²³² Semukina’s answer was that they were trying to interpret the image of Shevchenko with contemporary means and “show his greatness, invincibility, and

²²⁶ Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (University of Toronto Press, 2004), 109.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Les’ Taniuk, *Tvory: V 60-ty tomakh*, vol.4, Schodennyky, 1959-1960 rr. (Kyiv, 2004), 338-339. Quoted in Tromly, “An Unlikely National Revival: Soviet Higher Learning and the Ukrainian ‘Sixtiers,’ 1953–65,” 619.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Zarets’kyy, *Hudozhnyk Viktor Zarets’kyy. Poshuky Korinnya. Lystu, Narusy, Spogady, Statti [The Artist Viktor Zarets’kyy. The Search for Roots. Correspondence, Sketches, Memoirs, Articles]*, 126.

²³² Excerpts from Ukrainian Artists’ Union, Monument Section, Apr. 1964. Fund 300-85-9 [Published Samizdat]. Case 26. OSA.

revolutionary rebellion spirit”, “her son-like tie with Ukraine that he defended.” She sharply condemned the “barbarian” destruction of the window. The poet’s quotation the artists incorporated was also denounced due to the fact that “the enemies” might use it. Petro Govdya supported that perspective and stated that “Shevchenko is used “there”.” He also noticed that is suspicious that the artists worked under the window in such a rush. “If they approached [the subject] essentially, they would show that the dream of Shevchenko had been realized.”²³³

Notwithstanding the fact artists were restored as the members of the UUA in a year, they soon came under vigorous attack again. In 1968, after the arrest of Vyacheslav Chornovil, their friend from KTM, the very same artists (with a notable exception of Zalyvaha who was arrested in 1965 and sentenced to labor camps for five years), including Zarets’kyy, signed “Letter-Protest 139” that was addressed particularly to the Soviet leaders, Leonid Brezhnev, Mykola Pigdornyy and Alexei Kosygin.²³⁴ The letter condemned some juridical procedures in the trials of the sixtiers.²³⁵ The authorities consequently asserted that the letter “emerged abroad” and “it is used by our enemies.”²³⁶ The transcript of the discussion held at the Kyiv branch of the UUA (KOSH) illuminates that the letter was put in the framework of “fierce ideological struggle with bourgeois ideology” and the result of bourgeois sabotage.²³⁷ The artists were proclaimed traitors of their native country. Kas’iyan even linked “anti-Soviet activity” with their oeuvre, stressing that “socialist realism is an expression of our ideology.”²³⁸ Remarkably, many of the members of the UUA referred to their experience in the World War II in order to demonstrate “guile of the enemy”, and occasionally to

²³³ Ibid. Tromly discusses how this event anticipated inform student gatherings around the statue of the poet that was (and still is) located outside the Kyiv State University. Tromly, “An Unlikely National Revival: Soviet Higher Learning and the Ukrainian ‘Sixtiers,’ 1953–65,” 620-621.

²³⁴ Zarets’kyy, *Hudozhnyk Viktor Zarets’kyy. Poshuky Korinnya. Lystu, Narusy, Spogady, Statti [The Artist Viktor Zarets’kyy. The Search for Roots. Correspondence, Sketches, Memoirs, Articles]*, 126.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid., 127.

²³⁷ Transcript of the Meeting of Kyiv’s Union of Artists. 15 June 1968. Fund 581. Cas, 1440. UCSAMLA.

²³⁸ Ibid., 17.

condemn Ukrainian nationalists. The interest in Boychuk and the attempts to place his as “the origin of Ukrainian art” were also sharply criticized.²³⁹ Ivan Litovchenko, the artist, whose daughter and wife also signed the letter, were even accused in copying Picasso. He unsuccessfully tried to read the letter during the discussion. Some other artists that signed the letter (particularly Lutsak and Dovgan’) stated that they did not realize “the anti-Soviet character” and did not expect it would be used by enemies, the only thing they cared was Soviet legislation (albeit Dovgan’ stated that even had not read it).²⁴⁰

Most of the artists were expelled from the Union, Hors’ka, Sevryk and Semukina for a second time.²⁴¹ Zarets’kyi managed to save his position (albeit he was called “nationalist”) that was necessary for the continuation of the panel *Flag of Victory*, on the creation of which he was working jointly with his wife. They also proceeded to provide support to their former KTM fellows and political prisoners. In 1970 Hors’ka with her father-in-law (the father of Zarets’kyi) were found dead, and officially the case was marked as “domestic homicide”. Zarets’kyi and his family blamed the KGB in the death of the artist.²⁴² Remarkably, he continued to create artworks that were frequently mentioned in the books on Ukrainian art history, while the first mentioning of Hors’ka would appear in the official publication only in 1990.²⁴³

In the context of my research, the debates around the letter were particularly important because within it the members of the UUA referred to civil duty and responsibility of the artist.²⁴⁴ The definition of Ukrainian Soviet artist through civil duty and his responsibility would be highly accentuated in the discourse of the artistic field of Ukraine from the late

²³⁹ Ibid., 37, 56.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 28-31.

²⁴¹ Zarets’kyi, 128.

²⁴² Zarets’kyi, 129-134.

²⁴³ “Cherez Tereny – do Istyny. Pamyati Ally Hors’koyi [Through the thorns to the truth. In the memory of Alla Hors’ka]”, *OM*, № 5, 1990, 1-7.

²⁴⁴ Transcript of the Meeting of Kyiv’s Union of Artists. 15 June 1968. Fund 581. Case 1440: 50, 56. UCSAMLA.

1960s till Perestroika. Vasyl' Boroday, the successor of Kas'ian, in 1977, before the exhibition, dedicated to the Sixtieth Anniversary of the October Revolution, stated that “the feeling of responsibility [for the ideological content and mastery] was never so developed as for the Soviet artists of the 1970s”. He further explained that the “tight organic connection of artist with the social life of the country” (result of the Party’s consistent work) altered “the development in the artistic consciousness internal requirement to create according to the calling of the heart of the citizen and patriot.”²⁴⁵ He also mentioned that fine arts of the Soviet Ukraine asserts the ideals of revolutionary humanism (the term that was used initially at the VI World Youth Festival).²⁴⁶

Describing art in the Soviet Union during the Brezhnev era, Reid used the term “retrospectivism” in order to mark “the range of thematic concerns and stylistic practices” that includes “the rethinking of Russian and Soviet history, a new use of the history of art as a manual of authoritative styles to be adapted or as a dictionary of citations.”²⁴⁷ She stresses that many artists and critics attempted to (re-)establish the link with the past.²⁴⁸ I found this concept particularly witty describing the discourse of the artistic field in Soviet Ukraine. In the 1970s, as Glib Yuhymets’ asserts,²⁴⁹ the strengthening of historical thinking of the artist and their aspiration to see the life in historical perspective was “the most vividly manifested in the thematic painting.”²⁵⁰ Reid, considering art in Moscow, states that despite “art-historical references and themes of reminiscence” were widely spread in the 1970s,

²⁴⁵ Boroday Vasyl', “Vidpovidal'nist [Responsibility]”, *OM*, 1977, №1, 2. “Responsibility in front of the people, the Party, for moral purity, life truth, aesthetic content” are listed in this article.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁴⁷ Susan Reid, “The ‘Art of Memory’: Retrospectivism in Soviet Painting of the Brezhnev Era,” in *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917-1992*, ed. Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 161.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ He was the Head of the Department of Art History and Theory at Kyiv Art Institute from 1974 till 1986. Myhaylo Kryvolapov, *Pro Mystetstvo Ta Khudozhnui Krytyku Ukrainu XX Stolittia [On Art and Artistic Criticism of the XX Century Ukraine]*, 59.

²⁵⁰ G. Yuhymets', “Obrazno-Hudozhni Dosyagnennya Ukrayins'koyi Tematuchoyi Kartyny [Imaginary and Artistic Achievements of Ukrainian Thematic Painting],” in *Mystetstvo i Zhyttya. Problemu Rozvutky Ukrayins'kogo Obrazotvorchogo Mystectva [Art and Life. The Problems of Development of Ukrainian Fine Arts]*, ed. O.M. Lopuhov et al. (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1978), 11.

“paintings about historical events themselves were rare.”²⁵¹ That was not the case for Ukrainian artists. Here I propose to extend the notion of “retrospectivism” in order to include an accent on the elaboration of historical subjects in easel painting.

I do not mean to assert that “the contemporary genre” was not developing and no one produced artworks, dedicated to “a simple Soviet man.” I am stating that an accent on contemporaneity, though occasionally resurfacing in the speeches of the leaders of the UUA, had been faded during the Brezhnev era. Boroday, for instance, in 1970 mentioned that “in recent years predominantly the artworks associated with “heroic past” became popular, however, the subject of our contemporaneity [contemporary genre] was significantly weakened. The reason for this, from his perspective, was “narrowing of the linkage with reality when a lot of artists who work in this genre, use superficial features and impressions.” He encouraged artists to go for the field trips to *kolgosps* and industrial enterprises.²⁵² Galyna Kal’chenko, the Chairman of Kyiv branch of the UUA, in 1970 also noticed that “the subject of contemporaneity” is not addressed enough at the exhibitions.²⁵³

So why did historical paintings become so widely spread from the late 1960s? Afanasiev in his book *The Features of Contemporaneity* linked the development of the historical-revolutionary genre in Ukraine with the fact that during the decade the Soviet people celebrated many prominent anniversaries such as Fifty Years of the October Revolution, One Hundred Years of Lenin’s birthday, Twentieth and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Victory in The World War Two, One Hundred Years of the birthday and One Hundred and Fifty Years of the death of Taras Shevchenko and Hundred Years of the birthday of Lesya Ukrainka.²⁵⁴ Both *Fifty Years* (1967) and *Sixty Years* (1977) of the *October Revolution* were, in fact, dedicated to Lenin (albeit only for the latter it was stated

²⁵¹ Ibid., 174.

²⁵² Boroday Vasyl’, “Vidpovidal’nist’[Responsibility]”, 2.

²⁵³ The Speech of the Chairman of Kyiv Organization of the UUA, the People’s Artist, Com. Kal’chenko G. N. at the Party’s Conference, 15 January 1970. Fund 796. Case 25:2. UCSAMLA.

²⁵⁴ Vasyl’ Afanasiev, *Rysy Suchastnosti [The Features of Contemporaneity]* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1973).

vividly in the title *By the way of Lenin (Lenins'kym Shlyahom)*. The Thematic Plan of the Fifty Years separately incorporates a large section describing how Lenin should be depicted in the context of distinct events (this document may indeed provide some interesting insights for the researchers of the Soviet historiography).²⁵⁵ In the introductory text the intention to start the history of new art in 1967 was manifested, and, from the perspective of its definition in the artistic field, it truly happened.²⁵⁶ At the same year, Kas'iyanyan, reporting on the *Fifty Years of October*, describing “the current blossom” in the oeuvre of Ukrainian artists, stated that “Ukrainian Soviet art conveys to the wide world the ideas of socialist humanism.”²⁵⁷

From my point of view, Afanasiev's suggestion seems to be convincing. As each anniversary was usually celebrated with an opening of thematic exhibition, assignments of the relevant subject should have been distributed among the artists. In 1970 when *Fine Arts* was restored as the official journal of the UUA²⁵⁸, in the greetings the Minister of Culture of the UkrSSR Rostyslav Babychyk stated the loyalty of Ukrainian artists to the principles of “Party-Mindness” and “peopleness”, defining the main subject of Ukrainian art as “the life and activities of V.I. Lenin (*sic!*), the struggle of the Party for the construction of the Soviet state and communism, labor heroism of people, current peaceful construction and the struggle for peace.”²⁵⁹

Intensive development of “historical-revolutionary genre” in thematic painting to a large extent altered both the definition of “contemporary art of Soviet Ukraine” and

²⁵⁵ Materials of Preparation of The Union of Artists of the UkrSSR and its branches to the celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Great October, 1966. Fund 581, Case 1300. UCSAMLA

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ The Speech of the People's Artist of the USSR Kas'iyanyan at the United Festive Plenum of Creative Unions of the Republic, dedicated to the 50th Anniversary of the establishing of Soviet Power in Ukraine, 12 December 1967. Fund 581. Case 1367:9. UCSAMLA.

²⁵⁸ As the journal was restored, Godvya was elected as the Main Editor of the journal, and particularly Deregus, Kas'an, Boroday, Kryvolapov comprised the Editorial Board. In *OM*, 1970, № 1. The composition of the Editorial Board would not change considerably till Perestroika. Godvya would remain on his position till 1987.

²⁵⁹ *OM*, 1970, №1, 3.

“contemporary Soviet Ukrainian artist.” As civil duty and responsibility in the narrative structure of art criticism and publications on art history became associated with “Soviet artist”, civil duty (*gromadians'kis't'*) became the concept used for defining Ukrainian art in the same manner as “Party-mindedness” and “peopleness”: already in 1970 they were considered to form the content of its images.²⁶⁰ Ukrainian art was highly praised for not being sensitive to the vacillation of fashion; its dominant feature was now defined as “*epic* (*epichnist'*) that implies mutually enriching synthesis of *heroic patheticalness* (*patetyka*) and the highest manifestation of lyric sincerity.”²⁶¹ Patheticalness was considered to be an “expression of people’s notion about its heroes, about content of life.”²⁶² The tendency among artists to portray the character of the people was also highly appreciated. As a solution of such complex task two ways were proposed: the first one was a depiction of the situation on the concrete ground and the second one, “the shortest to the audience’s feelings and consciousness”, was asserting of high moral norms of Soviet people not in the process of struggle, but in result, as a consequence. Particularly this method was linked with creation of generalized image. In contrast, the struggle with *stylishing* (*stylizatorstvo*), rejecting of life concreteness, stereotyping of heroes. In this context the artist were expected to be “responsible” for the depth of idea, life and artistic truth of the images and their embodiment.²⁶³

In 1973 Afanasiev defined civil duty as a peculiarity of Soviet art (and it always was, as he asserted).²⁶⁴ The artist in his text is defined as the person with conscious ideological and political position, which is “general progressive tendency of art of the epoch of the class

²⁶⁰ Igor Verba, “Khudozhnuku Ukrainy Do 100-Richchya Z Dnya Narozhennya V. I. Lenina [The Artists of Ukraine For the Hundred Anniversary of the Birthday of V.I. Lenin]”, *OM*, 1970, №2, 2.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 3. The emphasis is mine.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Afanasiev, *Rysy Suchastnosti [The Features of Contemporaneity]*, 13.

battles and socialist revolutions.”²⁶⁵ Civil duty is linked with the development of those themes and genre which are linked with social life and the manifestation of its civic essence.²⁶⁶ Civil pathos was perceived as a basis of the image, the feature of Soviet outlook, an organic part of the aesthetic evaluation of the event or the phenomenon.²⁶⁷ In addition, Afanasiev marked that in the past the civil duty was associated with exclusively the illustration of the established political statements and mottos, however now in the artworks one may observe “the feeling of personal responsibility of the author for everything that is happening in the world” and “passionate interest in the interpretation of the event.”²⁶⁸

The definition of socialist realism as “the art of humanism” was introduced already at the debates during the VI World Youth Festival. However, in the 1970s and the early 1980s it gained widely spread usage in Soviet art criticism and art history as the polemics with foreign art experts around the art issues had erupted.²⁶⁹ Socialist realism, and especially its central concept “Party-mindedness” was considered by Soviet critics to be vigorously attacked by “bourgeois” critics. In 1971 in the article “Party-mindedness of Art and Ideological Struggle”, published in *OM*, Volodymyr Antonenko denounced Western art historians (defined in the text as “revisionists”), particularly Ernst Fisher who condemned the connection between the Soviet art and the Party, propagating the notion of “free

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 14.

²⁶⁹ Lahusen, “Socialist Realism in Search of Its Shores: Some Historical Remarks on the “Historically Open Aesthetic System of the Truthful Representation of Life,” 5–26. Lahusen, discussing the theoretical debates on “openness” versus “closure” of socialist realism in literature, that occurred when Soviet critics was responding to Western revisionism, names few particularly influential publications: Roger Garaudy, *D’un réalisme sans rivages: Picasso, Saint-John Perse, Kafka* (Plon, 1966). Jochen-Ulrich Peters, “Réalisme sans Rivages? Zur Diskussion Über Den Sozialistischen Realismus in Der Sowjetunion Seit 1956,” *Zeitschrift Für Slavische Philologie* 37, no. 2 (1974): 291–324.

artists.”²⁷⁰ Antonenko asserted that the “neutrality” of the modernists artists is, in fact, a service to the bourgeois ideology, and it even concerns those artists who consciously reject the necessity to address social problems. The advocates of this ideology, from the perspective of the author, attempted to obstruct the “victorious course of communism”, and they use art in order to hide the exploitative nature of bourgeois society.²⁷¹ He condemned the Western concept of the individual that represents it as “a sandstone”, “pathetic creature” and contrast it to the Marxist concept of the person as “smart and proud” living being that can engage in the transformative activity. Precisely it is notion that socialist realism incorporated.²⁷² Thus Antonenko stated that “the pathos” of Soviet art “is an active humanism.”²⁷³

The concept of “humanism”, that I use as one of the interpretative schemes in this research, served as a mean to legitimate socialist realism in the international context. It supported the connection of the method with such “great masters of the past times” as Michelangelo, Titian, Rubens (Reid embraces the incentive to establish link with the past in Soviet art and art historiography in her term “retrospectivism”). The Main Editor of the official journal of the Union of Soviet Artists *Isskustvo* Vladislav Zimenko in his book *The Humanism of Art*, published in English in 1976, defined Soviet art as the zenith of a long “humanist” tradition in the world art (and particularly in the Renaissance).²⁷⁴ From his perspective, socialist realism was “a new social and methodological basis” which helped Soviet artist to “carry a great tradition of humanism inherited from the finest representatives

²⁷⁰ Volodymyr Antonenko, “Partiinis’t Mystectva i Suchasna Ideologichna Borot’ba [Party-mindedness of Art and Ideological Struggle],” *OM*, 1971, №1, 2-3. Ernst Fisher published his book in 1969. Ernst Fischer, *Art against Ideology* (Allen Lane, 1969).

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 3

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Vladislav Mstislavovich Zimenko, *The Humanism of Art* (Progress Publishers, 1976). Quoted in Reid, “The ‘Art of Memory’: Retrospectivism in Soviet Painting of the Brezhnev Era,” 167.

of mankind's artistic culture".²⁷⁵ In the 1970-1980s *OM* published a series of article, dedicated to various painters (in one of them, for instance, Albrecht Durer was called "a great humanist").²⁷⁶

The issue of continuity in Ukrainian art historiography was also important for the legitimacy of socialist realism. Generally, Ukrainian Soviet art was considered to originate from the activities of the Association of Artists of Red Ukraine (Asotsiatsiya Khudozhnykiv Chervonoi Ukrainu, AKhChU) that was defined as close to AKhRR in the terms of the notion on art.²⁷⁷ The members of AKhChU (I. Izhakevych, M. Kozyk, G. Svitluts'kyi, K. Tymoshchuk, F. Krychev's'kyi) were similarly associated with the realist tradition.²⁷⁸ As the narrative structure "art, born in struggles" required an antagonist, AKhChU was contrasted to the Association of Revolutionary Art of Ukraine (Asotsiatsiya Revolyutsiynogo Mystectva Ukrainy, ARMU) that included Boychuk and his school, *boychukisty* who, as I have already mentioned in this chapter, were so vigorously denounced for "bourgeois nationalism" by Deregus at the First Congress of Soviet Artists in 1957. Darewych notes that in the book on art history *Sketches from the History of Ukrainian Art*, published at the same year, in the chapter "The Struggle for the Consolidation of Soviet Realist Art" the clash between these groups (the only conflict that is portrayed there) is represented as a class conflict, though Boychuk came from the peasant family.²⁷⁹ In the fifth volume of *History of Ukrainian Art*, conceived in 1957 and issued in 1967, Boychuk and his legacy are largely discussed, and he is represented as the influential figure that imposed his perspective on the activities of ARMU and suppressed the realist incentives of the artists,

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ For instance: Vadym Klevaiev, "Velykyy Humanist [The Great Humanist]," *OM*, 1971, №1, 22-23, Vadym Klevaiev, "Epoha I Tvorchist' [The Epoch and Oeuvre]," *OM*, 1977, №3, 25-28, Yuriy Asieiev "Filippo Brunolleski [Filippo Brunelleschi]," *OM*, 1977, №4, 29-31, Vadym Klevaiev, "The Great Master of the Renaissance [Velykyy Mayster Vidrozdennia]," *OM*, 1977, №6, 26-28. Notably, the Ukrainian translation of Giorgio Vasari *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* was published in 1970.

²⁷⁷ Vasyl' Kas'ian et al., eds., *History of Ukrainian Art [Istoriya Ukrayins'kogo Mystectva]*, vol. 5 (Academy of Science of Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, 1967).

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Darewych, "Soviet Ukrainian Painting c. 1955-1979: New Currents and Undercurrents", 72, footnote 20.

albeit his death was condemned (he was a victim of the Stalinist repressions after all). In the 1970s in the publication on the origins of Ukrainian Soviet art in *OM* his name was omitted, and Ukrainian artists were considered to be the successors of the realist tradition.²⁸⁰ Remarkably, in the artistic fields of the Soviet Union in the 1970s books that traced the connection of socialist realistic art to avant-garde and modernism were published by the official publishing house of the Union of Soviet Artists (for instance, German Nedoshvin's *Theoretical Problems of Contemporary Fine Arts* (1972))²⁸¹. The Party's response to such publications was a decree by the Minister of Culture "On Literary and Art Criticism" (1972) that sharply condemned "the untruthful portray of the origins of Soviet art."²⁸²

The first comprehensive monograph on "bourgeois art" in Ukrainian was published in 1983 under the title *Neo-avant-gardism: Fail Without Take-off*.²⁸³ Remarkably, the author Mykola Honcharenko, in the book separated avant-garde of the 1920s from "contemporary neo-avant-garde." The former represented as an attempt to abandon the tradition of bourgeois art (but the artists in their "anti-creative practices" abandoned realist traditions).²⁸⁴ The latter was "useless felony in the best case", "in the worst case"— "conscious negligence of life-giving sources and principles of art."²⁸⁵ Honcharenko referred to the already mentioned concept of the individual that is manifested in "bourgeois art" and links it with the increase of delinquency, "especially among youth" in Western society. "From happenings with fighting to bloody massacres in Vietnam – the distance is not that far", he resumed. In the struggle with reactionary art "against socialist injustice for triumph

²⁸⁰ Glib Yuhymets' "Osnovopolozhna Tradutsia Radians'kogo Zhyvopysy [The Fundamental Tradition of Soviet Oil Painting]," *OM*, 1977, №1, 22-23.

²⁸¹ German Nedoshvin, *Teoreticheskiye Problemy Sovremennogo Izobrazitel'nogo Iskusstva [Theoretical Problems of Contemporary Fine Arts]* (Moscow: Sovetskii Khudozhnik, 1972).

²⁸² *OM*, 1972, №2, 1.

²⁸³ Oleksandr Fedoruk, "Kryve dzerkalo Neoavangardyzmu [Curved Mirror of Neo-avant-gardism]," *OM*, 1984, № 1, 27-28. The book was highly evaluated by Fedoruk.

²⁸⁴ Monograph with Editorial Revision, Honcharenko M. *Neo-avant-gardism: Fail Without Take-off*. Fund 631. Case 2194: 3. UCSAMLA.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

of humanism in artistic culture”, the progressive art (in Western societies), jointly with art of socialist countries, asserts “noble ideals, aesthetic beauty, and artistic excellence.”²⁸⁶

To conclude, the concept of civil duty that I perceive as *Deutungsmuster* and its manifestation in thematic painting – “civil pathos” or “epic”— to a large extent contrasted the rather shy tendency of the early Thaw years that stressed simplicity and condemned pompous artworks.²⁸⁷ Furthermore, “heroic patheticalness” migrated to “the contemporary genre”, and the latter soon become defined in the cognate manner, however Ukrainian art critics noted that in this context “it is united with lyrics.”²⁸⁸ Remarkably, thematic painting was also reconsidered in correspondence to civil duty: discussing the ambiguity of its definition and its main component – a plot, Yuhymets’ stressed that if one follows the developments of its application, they would be ensured that more frequently it is used for “highlighting of the depth of idea in art and civil direction of an artwork.”²⁸⁹ At the same time, Soviet critics were engaged in the debates with Western “revisionists”, where they promoted definition of socialist realism as “the art of humanism” in order to link the oeuvre of Soviet artists with “the great masters of the past.” Such representation of continuity of the realist tradition facilitated the asserting of the cultural legitimacy of socialist realism in the international context.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 213, 220.

²⁸⁷ The civil duty and pathos also occurred in numerous publications. To name just a few of them: in Anatoliy Shpakov, “Spivzvuchist’ “Duhovi Chasy [Harmony with the Spirit of Time],” *OM*, 1977, № 2, 11, civil duty is defined as “the prominent achievement” of Ukrainian art. I. I. Chulipa, *Radyans’ka Diysnist’ v Obrazotvorchomy Mystectvi [The Soviet Reality in Fine Arts]* (Kyiv: Tovarystvo “Znannya” Ukrains’koyi RSR, 1977). Alla Novoselova Hmel’nyts’ka “Mytets’-Gromadianyn,” *OM*, 1972, №2, 26-2. Glib Yuhymets’ “Heroyichyy Litopus Narody [The Heroic Chronicle of the People],” *OM*, 1975, №2, 4-8.

²⁸⁸ Afanasiev, *Rysy Suchastnosti [The Features of Contemporaneity]*, 18. Igor Verba, “Khudozhniku Ukrainy Do 100-Richchya Z Dnya Narodzhennya V. I. Lenina [The Artists of Ukraine For the Hundred Anniversary of the Birthday of V.I. Lenin],” *OM*, 1970, №2, 2.

²⁸⁹ G. Yuhymets’, “Obrazno-Hudozhni Dosyagnennya Ukrayins’koyi Tematuchoyi Kartyny [Imaginary and Artistic Achievements of Ukrainian Thematic Painting],” 9.

Chapter III. The Challenges of Restructuring: Perestroika inside the Ukrainian Union of Artists

In the artistic field of Soviet Ukraine since 1957 the changes in the definition of socialist realism and its central concepts were largely mediated by the field of power, though the positions in the field did not change much. The Editorial Board of *OM* which included the professors of the Faculty of Art History and Theory at Kyiv Art Institute, stayed the same almost for two decades. Deregus, Kas'ian, and Boroday who occupied the position of the Chairman of the UUA (and also were members of the Board) followed the Party's line in the institutional implementation of the method. Oleksandr Lopuhov who was elected as the Chairman in 1983, along with above mentioned artists, was also from the group of the painters who were considered "the greatest Ukrainian masters of socialism realism."²⁹⁰

I do not intend to initiate the debates about one group's monopoly on power in the UUA since the early Thaw (because I believe that more evidence is needed to support this statement); however, I cannot but notice the similarity of the situation that occurred in the creative unions before Perestroika. As was mentioned in the first chapter, the members of the presidiums of the creative unions, during the post-war years secured their dominant positions in the artistic field and managed to occupy them till Perestroika.²⁹¹ *Glasnost*, as Catherine Nepomnyashchy notices, has "unleashed a stream of revelations about union abuses."²⁹² In 1986, at the meeting held at the Kyiv's Organization of the UUA the

²⁹⁰ Between 1982 and 1983 the position of Chairman of the UUA was occupied by Oleksandr Skoblikov, who before was the Chairman of Kyiv branch of the UUA, however, the primary sources I currently possess do not illuminate the details of his activities. According to the official statement, published in *OM*, Lopuhov replaced him due to his own written application. As Lopuhov worked on historical subjects, he became especially influential during the 1970s. *OM*, 1983, №3.

²⁹¹ Vera Tolz, "'Cultural Bosses' as Patrons and Clients: The Functioning of the Soviet Creative Unions in the Postwar Period," 87–105.

²⁹² Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, "Perestroika and the Soviet Creative Unions," in *New Perspectives On Russian And Soviet Artistic Culture*, ed. John O. Norman and Andrea McEvoy Spero (Springer, 1994), 133.

authoritarianism of some the UUA's leaders was criticized, and the UUA was considered to be operating for the only one group.²⁹³ As those power groups were able to maintain their dominant position for several decades, one of the main challenges they faced during Perestroika was an introduction of the multi-candidate elections. In reality only several institutions implemented it. The Union of Cinematographers held elections immediately on 13 May 1986 that resulted into the assignment of liberal administration.²⁹⁴ In March 1987, the Union of Architects also elected liberal administration and adopted a new charter where for the first time in the unions' history any reference to socialist realism was omitted.²⁹⁵ However, the Writers', Artists' and Composers' Unions were far from being that decisive in movement towards restructuring (especially the first one).²⁹⁶ Sergei Mikhalkov who in March 1987 publicly condemned Perestroika from the position of the Chairman of RSFSR Union were elected as Chairman of the USSR Writers Union in 1990 and lost his post only in September 1991. Tikhon Khrennikov, the Chairman of the Union of Composers since 1948, who also denounced Gorbachev's cultural policy, was reelected at the age of 78 as the Union's co-chairman in March 1991.²⁹⁷

In Ukraine, an artist Vasyl' Gurin, in 1986 proposed to incorporate all the candidacies offered by the general meeting for a secret ballot during the further elections of the Presidium of KOSH, so for each candidature the votes could be counted, albeit his proposition was just taken into consideration.²⁹⁸ The elections of the new Presidium and the Chairman took place within two plenums in the beginning of 1987. Likewise in prevailing majority of the unions, the multi-candidate elections were mostly neglected. In

²⁹³ Protocols of the Meeting of the Section of Painting, 1986, Fund 796. Case 388. UCSAMLA.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 134. Tolz, "Cultural Bosses' as Patrons and Clients.", 90. Tolz points out that the Union of Cinematographers was somehow distinct from other unions since it was established in 1965 and "did not have any Stalinist nucleus in its leadership".

²⁹⁵ Nepomnyashchy, "Perestroika and the Soviet Creative Unions.", 134

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 138-147

²⁹⁷ Tolz, "Cultural Bosses' as Patrons and Clients.", 89-90. For the Union of Artists see footnote 28.

²⁹⁸ The Protocols №1-38 of the Presidium's sessions, 6 January- 5 November 1986. Fund 796. Case 385-69-70. UCSAMLA.

the minutes one can find that the propositions of other candidates were fixed; however, the voting eventually was conducted in the relation only to one artist, Andriy Chebukin, who was basically reelected to his old post.²⁹⁹ Chebukin proposed fourteen artists as potential representatives of the Presidium of KOSH, and they were all elected without any other offers.³⁰⁰ In contrast, during the election of the members of the Presidium of the UUA on the VIII Congress, albeit after the preliminary prepared lists of candidatures were announced, the candidates were discussed and additional candidatures were also included in the voting.³⁰¹

The Resolutions of the Twenty-Seventh Party's Congress in *OM* were represented with big pathos: a new edition of the Party's Program and Political Report of the Party's Central Committee were called "the greatest achievements of the contemporary Marxist-Leninist thought".³⁰² According to the Report, the main line of development of art and literature was defined as "strengthening the link with the people, trustworthy and highly artistic depiction of socialist reality, inspired discovering of everything new and progressive and passionate revealing of everything that obstruct the society's movement forward." Governmental institutions were largely encouraged to engage in diligent self-reflection. Remarkably, the role of the literary and art criticism in the new course on acceleration (*pryskorennia*) was especially stressed with the quotation of the Report to which the members of the UUA would frequently appeal in numerous discussions and reports:³⁰³

²⁹⁹ The Protocols of the I and II organizational plenums, 17, 26 January 1987. Fund 796. Case 393. UCSAMLA. The first plenum was led by the Chairman of the Ukrainian Union of Artists – Oleksandr Lopuhov.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁰¹ The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755. UCSAMLA.

³⁰² "Utverdzhuuychy Pradvy Sotsialistychynogo Zhyttya [Asserting the Truth of Socialist Life]", *OM*, 1986, №2, 1.

³⁰³ For instance, M. Kryvolapov, "Krytyka i Khudozhniy Protses. Problemy Perebudovy [Criticism and Artistic Process. The Problems of Restructuring]", *OM*, 1987, №1, 2.

It is time for literary and art criticism to whip off kindness and the worshipping of ranks that corrode healthy morals and to remember that criticism is a social matter, not the sphere of service of the authors' pride and ambitions.³⁰⁴

Special attention was paid to the theses of the speech "XXVII Party's Congress and Task of Socialist Culture" of Demichev, the Minister of Culture of the USSR, that emphasized the redefinition of Soviet culture in accordance with the new economic policy.³⁰⁵ Art should focus on the increasing of the authority of the man of labor, innovator and the individuals who actively transform the Party's line into the life. Additionally, the necessity of the extending the thematic range were stressed. The Party encouraged artists to rethink socialist realism in the context of the present; their oeuvre was supposed to engage the "active process of rapprochement with the people."³⁰⁶ Following the Party's Political Report and Demichev's speech, Lopuhov defined new tasks for the members of the UUA, condemning both the grand and shallowness in the painting and stated that society expect the truth of life from artists. Supporting the necessity to address contemporary subjects, he stated that the oeuvre of Ukrainian artists has been the result of their field trips, where "on the concrete material" they unveiled "the truth of life, the complex world of human feelings, memories and dreams" (though the past and the struggle for happy future would remain the significant themes in Ukrainian art).³⁰⁷

As the role of art criticism was accentuated, Ukrainian art critics and art historians were the first who came under acrimonious attack. Lopuhov blamed them for being "passive" and "resistant to changes in thinking" at the time "when constructive criticism and self-criticism become a key factor of acceleration."³⁰⁸ He also expressed

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ "Novi Horyzonty Kul'turu [New Horizons of Culture]," *OM*, 1986, №3, 1.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Oleksandr Lopuhov, "Vysoki Vumogy, Vidpovidal'ni Zavdannya [High Requirements, Responsible Tasks]," *OM*, 1986, №4, 1.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

dissatisfaction with a lack of theoretical elaborations, stating that “it is known that Ukrainian art critics do not raise theoretical issues.”³⁰⁹ The overviews in *OM* and *Kul'tura i Zhyttya (Culture and Life)*, the journal of the Ministry of Culture, were considered to be exclusively informative where an analysis was replaced by the dithyrambs.³¹⁰ The former was even labeled as irrelevant in the context of “the requirements of the present” by Yuriy Olenenko, the Minister of Culture of the UkrSSR at the VIII Congress of the UUA. The lack of art historians who “seriously” engaged with the issues of contemporary art was also articulated there.³¹¹ Deregus, still the member of the Editorial Board of *OM*, went even further and declared the absence of art criticism in the country.³¹²

The UUA functioning was also publicly condemned on the pages of *OM* sharply. Lopuhov asserted that within the Union and its regional branches one can observe the atmosphere of inertness where the financial rewards were discussed with larger enthusiasm than artistic issues what was “not a secret for anyone.”³¹³ The most pressing issue was inadequate organization of exhibitions. Notwithstanding the fact that dissatisfaction in the operating of the exhibition committees was growing during the decades, it seemed to reach a climax during Perestroika.³¹⁴ They were largely blamed for the grey and monotonous exhibitions and decrease in exactingness in the selection of artworks that encouraged artists to create “paintings in the combinat-like style”, dedicated to that subjects that allowed them to sign favorable contracts.³¹⁵ The display assortment was claimed to be frequently altered by “the preferences of the several members of the

³⁰⁹ Oleksandr Lopuhov, “Aktual'ni Zavdannya Tvorchosti [Actual Tasks of the Oeuvre]”, *OM*, 1987, №1, 1.

³¹⁰ The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755:84. UCSAMLA.

³¹¹ Ibid., 123, 135, 239.

³¹² The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755:206. UCSAMLA.

³¹³ Lopuhov, “Aktual'ni Zavdannya Tvorchosti [Actual Tasks of the Oeuvre],” 1. He insisted that in order to overcome the passivity the restructuring should be in the consciousness of artist.

³¹⁴ It is worth reminding that generally exhibition committees were comprised members of the UUA.

³¹⁵ The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755: 67, 75, 124, 203, 209, 231, 75. UCSAMLA.

Presidium.”³¹⁶ Many paintings were even abandoned by the artists after the closure of the exhibitions they were made for.³¹⁷ The low attendance at the shows was also perceived as disturbing; the events of the UUA were considered to be made by the artists and visited by the artists, and not appealing to the larger audience.³¹⁸ All in all, the UUA’s exhibitions were associated with stagnation.

In a very tight connection with the discontent in the displays, the urgency of the renewal in art was raised by the Party and even led to the considerable confusion among the cultural workers. The Party’s officials generally appealed to well-familiar for Soviet artists “the linkage with the peoples”, “the depiction of the truth of contemporary life” and “to facilitation of the Party line”. It was even supported by the decree of Ministry of Culture “On the Measures for Further Development of Fine Arts and Increasing Its Role in the Communist Upbringing of Workers”, issued in 1986 where the rallying of all cultural workers on the principles of socialist realism and irreconcilability to the its violations was highlighted jointly with a necessity of allegation of all new and progressive things.³¹⁹ The significant part of the decree was dedicated to improving the work with young artists, whose dramatic lack all the cultural organizations experienced at the middle of the 1980s. For instance, by the time of the VIII Congress the average age of the members of the UUA was sixty years.³²⁰ As young artists were conferred with greater freedom, they started to produce and display art, usually associated with formalism and abstractionism, as we will see on the example of the exhibition *The Youth of the Country*. Another origin for the renewal in art was historical revisionism in Ukrainian art history, within which many artists, excluded later from the canon of socialist realism, were rehabilitated and highly

³¹⁶ Ibid., 67.

³¹⁷ Lopuhov, “Aktual’ni Zavdannya Tvorchosti [Actual Tasks of the Oeuvre], 1.

³¹⁸ Ibid., The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755. UCSAMLA.

³¹⁹ “U Central’nomy Komiteti Partii ta Radi Ministriv USSR [In the Central Committee of the Party and the Council of Ministers of the USSR],” *OM*, 1986, №5, 1.

³²⁰ The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755:126. UCSAMLA.

praised in the press. Particularly, these tendencies stimulated questioning socialist realism already in 1987: during the VIII Congress, many members of the UUA expressed the concerns in the further development of the method and in the fate of the thematic easel painting that faced the crisis.³²¹

Perestroika not only exposed many existing problems in Ukrainian art criticism of the institutional structure of the UUA and in the field of cultural production of Soviet Ukraine. For many officials, it provided the opportunity to actually implement changes. Nevertheless, the Union was comprised different people with distinct perspectives. Thus some promoted change, some resisted it. The latter group was generally revered artists, people of older generations who have been the members of the Presidium (or associated with it) for more than decades.³²² In this chapter I would like to portray this tension between innovation and resistance.

1. Art Reconsidered: Young Artists Promoting Avant-Garde

In order to pursue the agenda of Perestroika, a convergence of necessity to attract young artists and discover the new, the most notorious change in the organization of the exhibition emerged. Following the example of the XVII Youth Exhibition of the Moscow Union of Artists, where, for the first time in the Soviet Union young artists were in charge of the organization of the exposition, in 1987 the UUA held the show *The Youth of the Country* with the exhibition committee comprised only young artists. The arrangement of the exhibition (that was totally handed to youth, including the selection of the artworks) was considered to be “open” and “democratic.”³²³ Notably, the organizers largely relied on

³²¹ The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755:238. UCSAMLA.

³²² Asserting that, I must acknowledge the limits of such generalizations. For instance, Tetyana Yablons'ka and Vasyl' Gurin, two established and honorable artists, were enthusiastic advocates of glasnost and democracy.

³²³ The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755:42, 66. UCSAMLA. As the Transcript of the VII Congress illuminates, the same strategy was later applied to the organization of the Youth Exhibition in Kharkiv.

the help of the Komsomol. Tiberiy Sil'vashi, who had become the head of the KOSH's commission in 1987 on the work with young artists³²⁴ and took part in the preparation of the display, stated that the aspiration was "to show all contemporary tendencies independently from anyone's preferences."³²⁵ Another innovation was the change in the approach to the building of an exposition: young artists tried to create the comprehensive image of the exhibition, the integral atmosphere. The hall was diagonally divided, on the one wall artworks of distinct styles were consciously clashed, the windows lacked curtains.³²⁶

The UUA members greeted the exhibition with distinct enthusiasm. It was highly appreciated for the representation of the plurality of styles in the contemporary Ukrainian art, for evocation of discussions and disputes, and, first of all, for unprecedented attendance – in the end of the show the approximate estimation reached one thousand and eight hundred viewers per day.³²⁷ However, the perception was not unanimously positive. Igor Gubs'kyi, the member of the exhibition committee who at the same time was also a participant of the display, stated:

The range of the thoughts was enormous: from limitless admiration to complete rejection. There are some of them. "It is not us on your canvases. And this is the works of young artists?!" "Splendid exhibition, a lot of interesting works." "Insolvency of young [artists] is impressive. Drawn badly, with dirty colors. A lot of darkness." "The exhibition is a success. Eventually there is true art in Kyiv." "You all are killers of art."³²⁸

Oleksandr Solovyov, young art historian, highly appreciated the display's assortment and linked it with the avant-garde of the 1920s. From his perspective, "the sociality of the

³²⁴ He was considered to be "left artist" whose works were not always accepted by the exhibition committee". The Protocols of the Meeting of the Section of Painting, 1986, Fund 796. Case 388. UCSAMLA.

³²⁵ "Suchasni Problemy Ukrain's'kogo Molodizhnogo Mystestva [Contemporary Problems of Ukrainian Young Art]," *OM*, 1987, №4, 1. Transcript of discussion, held at the UUA.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³²⁷ The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755:30, 43. UCSAMLA. Chebukin stated that more than thirty thousand of guests visited the exhibition during the whole period that was the highest score for the recent years.

³²⁸ "Suchasni Problemy Ukrain's'kogo Molodizhnogo Mystetsva [Contemporary Problems of Ukrainian Young Art]," 8.

position in the oeuvre of young artists” was a critical approach to the reality.³²⁹ However, he noted that even with such an exhibition committee ten “grand” canvases still were displayed, exemplifying “disturbing condition with the assigned painting.”³³⁰ In response to this criticism, Larion Bal’zak, the Main Expert of the Art Expert Collegium of the Ministry of Culture, stated that these canvases were created by the winners of the republican competition on the best sketch of “social-political painting.”³³¹ From his perspective, the exposition of the show was “too overloaded”, and the young artists demonstrated “lower level of quality” in comparison with previous youth republican exhibitions.³³²

Nevertheless, *The Youth of the Country* truly had a huge resonance. The transcript of the VIII Congress illuminates that many members of the UUA insisted on the application of such innovative approach to other shows and their remarks definitely were taken into the account. The exposition of the exhibition, dedicated to the Seventieth Anniversary of the October Revolution, was also made by the artists-designers (*khudozhnyky-proektantu*). The youth show was considered to be the first time when the Ukrainian avant-garde “came out from the underground.”³³³ Its appearance within the event, organized by the official institution, stimulated the revision of previous attitudes and socialist realism method in *OM* publications of 1987. Furthermore, it served as a source of inspiration for exhibition *Kyiv and Kyivans* that was opened in 1988 without the exhibition committee.³³⁴

The participants of the exhibition were personally invited to Sedniv plen airs (Sednivs’ki plenery) by Sil’vashi and Solovyov that were realized under their guidance

³²⁹ Ibid., 2.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid., 4.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Plan of the Operation of Republican Commission of Art Expertise, Art Criticism and Publishing. Fund 581, Case 2876:8, UCSAMLA.

³³⁴ “Uroky Realizmy [The Lessons of Realism],” *OM*, 1988, № 4, 1.

since 1987.³³⁵ The exhibition *Sedniv-88* which was organized as a report of their field trip was also highly debated. Young art historian Olesia Avramenko in her article highly appreciated the whole exhibition, stating that “the artists were united by metaphorical way of thinking.”³³⁶ Remarkably, she also noticed “the sharp civil duty of the artworks.”³³⁷ Avramenko traced the linkage of the artworks to the avant-garde that “exploded on the edge of the XIX and the XX centuries”, and resumed that the oeuvre of young artists was the reaction to stagnation.³³⁸ Solovyov in the article “The Space for Tolerance” condemned the notion on “humanity” in art as “something that flatters an individual.” He insisted that “contemporary art dissects, reveal the pain” and stated that is really “human.”³³⁹ In response, Oleksiy Zhuravel’, who become the Main Editor of *OM* in 1987 after the dismissal of Govdya, sharply condemned the exhibition, stating “the decline of Ukrainian art.”³⁴⁰

As a new definition of art that vividly contrasted socialist realism and was previously perceived as “hostile” claimed its right to be legitimate in the artistic field, the confusion raised among the members of the UUA. The range of reactions at the VIII Congress varied from sharp denouncement of “formalistic tendencies” (“avant-gardism demonstrates the inferiority complex”) to the propositions to establish the museum of contemporary art, where “the youth could come and look at their avant-garde.”³⁴¹ Already at that times the crisis of the thematic painting was stated.³⁴² The publications in *OM* revealed the same situation: many authors asserted “the stagnation of the thematic

³³⁵ Sendiv plen airs were the field trips to Ghernigiv region, organized by KOSH for artists.

³³⁶ Olesia Avramenko, “Sedniv-88. Poku Musteztvotsnavtsi Sperechaut’sya...[“Sedniv-88”: While Art Experts are Debating...],” *Ranok*, 1988, № 12. In Documents about the Work of the Republican Commission of Art Expertise, Art Criticism and Publications (Plan, Report), 1988. Fund 581, Case 2838. UCSAMLA.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Oleksandr Solovyov, “Prostir Tolerantnosti [The Space for Tolerance],” *Kul'tura i Zhyttya*, 1988, № 33, 5.

³⁴⁰ Oleksiy Zhuravel’, “Prostir Tolerantnosti chy Monopoliya Modernizmu? [The Space for Tolerance or Monopoly of Modernism?],” *Kul'tura i Zhyttya*, 1988, № 35.

³⁴¹ The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755:100, 122. UCSAMLA.

³⁴² Ibid., 54.

painting” and encourage “a rethinking of socialist realism.”³⁴³ Some participants of the Congress expressed disappointment in the replacement of the debates over art issues with the discussion of administrative concerns: they raised the question “what is art” and “how we now should define it.”³⁴⁴

The emergence of the new definition of art also facilitated the appearance of the new definition of the artist (albeit in the art criticism the appeal to civil duty occasionally resurfaced). At the Congress the process of the creation of artwork was already discussed in the terms of “expression of the individuality of the artist” and “not addressing contemporary issues.”³⁴⁵

In this context the exhibition *Seventy Years of October (or the Country of Soviet)*, organized by the UUA, was embodiment of the resistance. On this occasion *OM* included two contradictory articles. In the first one Neonila Rups’ka appreciated the whole exposition in the conventional terms of “addressing contemporary genre” and the depiction of “successful communist construction.”³⁴⁶ Remarkably, she stated the main line of the exhibition is “recess to the internal world of the person”, and this review lacked the references to “peopleness.”³⁴⁷ In contrast, Galyna Sklyarenko condemned the whole exposition, especially the negligence in relation to the works of young artists (for instance, the triptych of one artist was disjointed and displayed at the different places), and, resuming that the exhibition “raised more questions that answered”, stated the necessity to rethink contemporary art.³⁴⁸ The full stop in this discussion was stated by the generally positive review of Oleksandr Fedoruk, the Head of the Republican Commission on Art

³⁴³ Vasyl’ Afanasiev, “Suchashyy Zhyvopys: Dosyagnennia, Problemy, Tendentsii [Contemporary Oil Painting: Achievements, Problems, Tendencies],” *OM*, 1987, №2, 1-6. Myhaylo Kryvolapov, “Novators’ka Sutnist’ Mystetstva, Vysnazhennogo Revolutsiei [Innovative Essence of Art, Exhausted by Revolution],” *OM*, 1987, №5, 1-5. Valentyna Ruban, “Kartyny Poliny Shakalo [The Painting of Polina Shakalo],” *OM*, 1987, №5, 30-31. “Moral’ni Oriientyry Khudozhnyka [Moral Guides of the Artist],” *OM*, 1987, №6, 1.

³⁴⁴ The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755:100, 122. UCSAMLA.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 255, 156, 178.

³⁴⁶ Neonila Rups’ka, “Mytets’ i Chas [The Artist and Time],” *OM*, 1987, №6, 3-8

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ Galyna Sklyarenko, “Uroky Ekspozytsii [The Lesson of Exposition],” *OM*, №3, 9-13.

Expertise.³⁴⁹ Interestingly, Oleksiy Zhuravel', in his reflections about the republican exhibition, published in *Kul'tura i Zhyttya* condemned a lack of the works that were produced during Brezhnev period in the exposition.³⁵⁰ He questioned the possibility of "blank spots" (*bili plyamy*) at the times of the restoration of "true history of the country, the Party" in an acute way.³⁵¹ Zhuravel' also assumed that "we are still reaping the fruits of bureaucratic patronage" and "*perebudova (Perestroika)* in art should produce "a favorable atmosphere for those who are inflamed with the passion of new searches", and "to rid the oxygen of those who turned art into a means for "blooming life."³⁵² In the article, the art historian incorporated the quotation of Gorbachev in order to support his argument solidly: "democracy, trust to people, tolerance to unconventional, to searches, competency, kindness, encouragement of the initiative and novelty – key principles of the Party's operation in the sphere of culture, in the spiritual sphere of restructuring."

2. Art, Exhausted by Revolution: Historical Revisionism and Questioning the Method

The requirement for larger freedom and independence in the publications was an immediate response of Ukrainian art critics to the accusations of passivity and inertness.³⁵³ The art historian A.N. Revenko in his speech during the Congress explained "the disturbing condition of the criticism" by the incompetency that is supported at Kyiv Art Institute: art historians did not have an obligation to present the writing samples within the entrance exam, thus many "accidental people" were studying at the Faculty.³⁵⁴ Additionally, he asserted, that young art historians did not get any assignment after the

³⁴⁹ Oleksandr Fedoruk, "Pravda Zhyttya – Pravda Mystetstva [The Truth of Life – The Truth of Art]," *OM*, 1988, №1, 3-6.

³⁵⁰ Oleksandr Zhuravel', "I v Mystectvi – Bez "Biluh Plyam"! [And in Art – Without "White Spots!"] *Kul'tura i Zhyttya*, 13 March 1988.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755:92. UCSAMLA

³⁵⁴ The Transcript of the VIII Congress, 2 April 1987. Fund 581. Case 2755:138-143. UCSAMLA.

graduation from the Union, so they needed to find a job on their own. Revenko also condemned the attacks on art critics and the rebuke in being too “complimentary”, reminding that “peaceful style” until recently was the requirement for the publication, so an art expert could not make sharp statements.³⁵⁵ He also noted that artists usually keenly reacted to criticism, and concluded that the members of the UUA should not only learned how to criticize, but also had to accept the critique.³⁵⁶ Another art historian, Z.V. Fogel’, in his letter to the Presidium of the UUA, stated that “our Kyiv’s section of art criticism has been in lethargic sleep for a long time”, “the decision of the bureau usually are not implemented, and it is not controlled”, and the section was haunted by “the dead souls”, as many of its member did not take part in its operation.³⁵⁷ He also noted that, under the influence of “the general atmosphere”, he was not really active, as many of his initiatives were greeted with indifference.³⁵⁸ Fogel’ blamed the abundance of bureaucratic responsibilities for maintaining such passiveness and proposed to the Presidium to restructure the section in the way that would diminish administrative duties and vague formulations in the work plans.³⁵⁹ He also insisted on the expansion of the “operational space” for art criticism in the terms of establishing new journal (and stated that to have only one specialized magazine for the whole country is “a shame”).³⁶⁰

As in 1987 Petro Godvya was dismissed from the position of the Main Editor of *OM*, his successor Oleksiy Zhuravel’ did not satisfy the members of the UUA. In 1988, at the meeting of the section of criticism and art expertise in Kyiv, many participants expressed discontent in the publications of *OM*, noticing that it still was standing on “the

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 139.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 143

³⁵⁷ Documents about the Work of the Republican Commission of Art Expertise, Art Criticism and Publications (Plan, Report), 1988. Fund 581, Case 2838. UCSAML. Fogel’ described the situation in the Republican Commission of Art Criticism in the same manner.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 4.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

old positions”.³⁶¹ The atmosphere in the editorial office was described as “unhealthy”, and Zhuravel’ came under attack for being unable to lead the journal in the way that would incorporate “a plurality of the thoughts” instead of imposing “authoritative line.”³⁶² Particularly, Afanasiev stated that the hopes, emerged with the restoration of the journal, were not fulfilled, and he did not feel the initiative from the Editorial Board for the last twenty years.³⁶³ At this meeting, also the issue of the rehabilitation of the artists, excluded from the canon of socialist realism, restoration of so called “blank spots” was raised in the context of preparation of the new edition of Ukrainian art history.³⁶⁴

Before I examine the pages of *OM*, I would like to consider one important process, launched in Ukrainian art history during Perestroika, which I prefer to describe with the term “historical revisionism.” The process implied filling the gaps in Ukrainian art history – “blank spots”— and led to incorporation to the discourse of the artistic field those names which were previously silenced. In the end of 1987 Radio “Kyiv” informed the audience that Myhaylo Boychuk, “one of the victims of Stalin’s terror”, was rehabilitated.³⁶⁵ During the broadcast, the art historian Igor Dychenko stressed that the artist who played prominent role in the development of Ukrainian art was “internationalist of the highest sort, and being internationalist, he admired Ukrainian folk art.” He also added that “the discovering of Boychuk and his school, *boychykisty*, will be extremely beneficial for our young artists.” Ivan Dzyuba, the famous Ukrainian writer and the former member of KTM, stated that “this is the time when we are especially interested in the attempts of combination of national art tradition with the world one”, and Boychuk was one of that artists that “not only with his

³⁶¹ Documents about the Operation of the Section of Criticism and Art Expertise (Plan, Protocols), 1988. Fund 796, Case 410.

³⁶² Ibid., 3, 5, 6.

³⁶³ Ibid., 7.

³⁶⁴ Ibid. Remarkably, one of the well-established art historians Belichko Yuriy condemned the section for the attacks on the Main Editor of *OM* who “have just came in the desolate household”.

aesthetic principles, but also with the level of competence reached the level of the world art.”³⁶⁶ In this broadcast the meeting of artists dedicated to Myhaylo Boychuk’s heritage is mentioned briefly. However, already on the 3rd of January, 1988 in the magazine *Kul’tura i Zhyttya* the discussion of this event appeared where an anonymous author expressed his disappointment (in a delicate manner) in the program produced specially by the UUA, particularly in the concert and in the speech of Afanasiev who “had read his long report from the paper, spoke for a while, and, predominantly, about well-known things.” In conclusion, the author stated that “the organizers cannot be blamed for negligence. However, they should have taken into consideration the depth of the interest to the name of Myhaylo Boychuk, and built the meeting in the way that the evening would have been really informative, and brought new knowledge about one of the most wonderful and dramatic pages in the history of our culture.” The title of the article was Boychuk’s quotation “Reveal, Decode and Comprehend History” that resonated broadly with the launched process of historical revisionism.³⁶⁷

In this context Afanasiev during the radio broadcast stated that “a lot of work needs to be done” by art historians in order to restore the names that “we have forgotten” for *the Artistic Encyclopedia* that was in the process of creation. Among these “names” he mentioned only Myhaylo Boychuk who he considered to be “a really sophisticated issue.”³⁶⁸ In the album *Art, born by October*, published in the 1987 with the dedication to *the Seventy Years of October*, Boychuk’s school is mentioned as the origin of Ukrainian art:

Ukrainian oil painting is characterized by the diversity in styles. The school of Boychuk that was a part of ARMU played a prominent role in it.

³⁶⁶ “Perebudova v Mystectvi: Reabilitovany Vyznachnuy Ukrainskyi Khudozhnyk Myhaylo Boychuk, yakuy Stav Zhertvoyu Stalins’kogo teroru v 1937 [Perestroika in Art: The Prominent Artist Myhaylo Boychuk who Was the Victim of Stalinist Terror is Rehabilitated]”, transcript of the broadcasting, radio “Kyiv”, 30.12.17

³⁶⁷ Anonymous author, “Rozkruty, Rozshufuvaty I Zrozymitu Istoriyu” [“Reveal, Decode and Comprehend History”], *Kul’tura i Zhyttya* [“Culture and Life”], January 3, 1988, p.7

³⁶⁸ “U Spilci Khudozhnikiv Ukrainu [Inside the Ukrainian Union of Artists]”, transcript of the broadcasting, radio “Kyiv”, 14 April, 1988

They propagated priority of the monumental art and leaned on the tradition of old Ukrainian and Byzantine art and folk oeuvre...Independently of what formal ways the artists had chosen, the main task for them was the reflection of new features of contemporaneity, achievements of socialist construction.³⁶⁹

The UUA had established the commission for Boychuk's cultural heritage already in the beginning of 1988, and KOSH prepared an exhibition *Myhaylo Boychuk and his School* jointly with the Kyiv branch of the Central Lenin's Museum.³⁷⁰ However, the request of KOSH's Presidium to the state publishing house "Mystetstvo" on publication of the research textbook, dedicated to *boychykisty*, was officially declined.³⁷¹ Another big All-Ukrainian travelling exhibition was held in 1991; in the catalogue the vicissitudes of Boychuk legacy in Ukrainian Soviet art history is discussed extremely briefly with an accent on the figure of D. Gorbachev, the main guard of the National Museum of Ukrainian Art who collected Boychuk's artworks during the Thaw and due to this was dismissed from his position.³⁷²

The restoration of Boychuk's name facilitated rehabilitation of those artists who were sharply criticized in the 1960s. Particularly, Halyna Sevruck was renewed as a member of the UUA in 1988; in her letter to the Presidium of the 7th Congress of the Union of Artists of the USSR she stated that she would had never raised the issue of her renewal as a member of the UUA if not "the general tendency of the truthful approach to our history and culture."³⁷³ She also indicated that she did not consider herself as guilty in anything.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁹Yuriy Belichko and Sergiy Kileso, *Ukrayins'ke Radyans'ke Obrazotvorche Mystetstvo i Arhitectura. Al'bom [Ukrainian Soviet Fine Arts and Architecture. Album]* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1987), 10. To contrast,

³⁷⁰I. Dyachenko, "Nove pro Myhayla Boychuka [Something New About Myhaylo Boychuk]", *Kul'tura i Zhyttya* ["Culture and Life"], January 3, 1988.

³⁷¹Ibid.

³⁷²O.O Ripko, ed., *Boychuk i Boychukisty, Boychukism. Katalog Vystavky [Boychuk and Boychukisty, Boychukism. Exhibition Catalogue]* (Lviv: Lvivs'kyi Redakciyno-Vydavnuchiy Viddil Oblasnogo Upravlinnya po Presi, 1991). 32-31 Remarkably, in the catalogue the overview of Boychuk school in History of Ukrainian Soviet Art is evaluated rather positively.

³⁷³The Correspondence with the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Council of Ministers on Organizational and Creative issues. 8 January – 4 October 1988. Fund 581. Case 403. UCSAMLA.

Oles' Zarets'kyi, the son of Alla Hors'ka and Victor Zarets'kyi, submitted an application for renewal of her mother as a member of the UUA posthumously, and it was accepted; the previous solution was acknowledged to be unfair.³⁷⁵ Zarets'kyi's friends, though he never was truly excluded from the canon, organized his first personal exhibition in 1989 in the House of Scientists in Kyiv.³⁷⁶ At the same year, twenty-nine of his artworks were purchased during the Christie's auction.³⁷⁷

The first publication about Boychuk in *OM* appeared in 1988 under signature of Sergiy Bilokin'.³⁷⁸ After a detail account of the creative activities of the artist, the author stressed Boychuk's drive to be "a part of the construction of Soviet culture" and on the correspondence of his artwork to Soviet reality.³⁷⁹ In fact, the Editorial Board of the journal (which was changed only at the end of the 1989)³⁸⁰ was truly struggling to restructure the content of the publications. The definition of the artist and art was in the intensive process of crystalizing, as two groups of "old" and "young" agents were competing in order to impose their perspective. "Old", advocates of socialist realism insisted on following conventional requirements of elaborating of "contemporary subjects" and addressing "Soviet reality." And if the issues of 1987 demonstrated a rather critical assessment of socialist realism and encouragement of "rethinking", the issues of 1988 and 1989 occasionally reasserted its cultural legitimacy. For instance, in 1988 in the official statement of the Editorial Board the attempt to reject "classics of Ukrainian socialist realism" in the name of "avant-garde achievements" is sharply denounced and "realistic thinking" is

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 146

³⁷⁶ Zarets'kyi, *Hudozhnyk Viktor Zarets'kyi. Poshuky Korinnya. Lystu, Narusy, Spogady, Statti [The Artist Viktor Zarets'kyi. The Search for Roots. Correspondence, Sketches, Memoirs, Articles]*, 260.

³⁷⁷ Avramenko, *Terezy Doli Viktora Zarets'kogo [Viktor Zaretski Scales of Destiny]*, 241.

³⁷⁸ Sergiy Bilokin', "Kolektyvizm – Pafos Tvorchosti Myhayla Boychuka [Collectivism – Pathos of the Oeuvre of Myhaylo Boychuk]," *OM*, №1, 22-25.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 25.

³⁸⁰ *OM*, 1989, №6.

considered to be the core of the Perestroika course.³⁸¹ The issues of 1989 incorporated the interviews and discussion with the artists that were adherents of socialist realism.³⁸² Nevertheless, the tendency of criticizing the Union in the publications was increasing. It has reached its climax in 1990, after the adoption of new press law that allowed collectives of employees register as “founders” and thus become independent from the unions.³⁸³ The UUA attempted to maintain the control over the journal, and the Editorial Board of *OM* appealed to the subscribers for the support of independent press.³⁸⁴

Notably, the issues of these years lacked any reference to “peopleness” or “Party-mindedness.” Instead some reviews contained moderate critique of the monopoly of socialist realism on the definition of the artist: “realism is the term, not the indulgency or patent on the right to be an artist, as we were ensured before.”³⁸⁵ In 1989 Oleksandr Fedoruk even encouraged the members of the Union to “bravely reject art theories of the late 1950s when modernism and impressionism had the features of formalism and were interpreted as manifestations of “bourgeois rotting art.”³⁸⁶ In 1989, when the Editorial Board was changed, particularly Fedoruk and Chebukin entered the editorial office. At the same year on the united conference of the creative unions the UUA was for the first publicly denounced by the artist Mykola Malyshko:

The creative unions and the Union of Artists of the USSR were created by the fathers of totalitarianism for persecution and liquidation of the personalities, lines of thinking, and the cultures of the whole peoples. The destruction of Boychukism, physical liquidation of the artists themselves. The suffering in the sixties of Zalyvaha, Semukina, Sevruck and mysterious death of Hors’ka and hundreds of terrified artists of the Union...Nowadays the Union of Artists of the USSR realized its destructive function, thus

³⁸¹ “Uroky Realizmy [The Lessons of Realism]”, 1.

³⁸² “Valentyn Sydorov: My Virumo v Realism! [Valentyn Sydorov: We Believe in Realism!],” *OM*, 1989, №3, 1-3, “Na Shlyahy Vidrozhennya I Vidnovlennya [On the Way of Resurrection and Renewal]”, *OM*, 1989, №3, 4-7.

³⁸³ Tolz, “‘Cultural Bosses’ as Patrons and Clients.”, 91.

³⁸⁴ *OM*, № 5, 1990.

³⁸⁵ Mykola Kostyuchenko, “The New Form Required [Potribna Nova Forma]”, *OM*, 1988, №4, 4.

³⁸⁶ Oleksiy Zhuravel’, “Mystetstvozhnavstvo, Krytyka i Perebudova [Art Expertise, Criticism and Perestroika. Materials of the IV Plenum of the Presidium of the UUA],” *OM*, 1989, №1, 1. Notwithstanding the fact the article is signed by Zhuravel’, it is basically reproduction of the speeches, and Zhuravel’ represented it as the debate.

it is over. Mutilated, scalded spirit monsters, contemporary members of the Union...on the splinters of this the disgraced Union should and have to survive, to establish new associations, with new tasks and functions.³⁸⁷

In 1990-1991 the articles in *OM* mostly omit any discussion of socialist realism, stressing the national rebirth of Ukrainian art. In 1992 the Union and KOSH validated a new Charter where the main task of the organization was defined as “comprehensive assistance to the disclosure of the artist’s creative potential, fruitful development of Ukrainian fine arts and enrichment of the spiritual culture of the people of Ukraine.”³⁸⁸ “Recognition of the dignity and value of the artist's unique personality” were stated as the main criteria of the activities of the organization.³⁸⁹

Perestroika in the artistic field of Soviet Ukraine, first of all, extended the space of possibles for both dominant and subordinated positions. As we have seen, many processes, coinciding with each other and facilitating each other, launched the revision of the legitimate definition of art and the artist. Notwithstanding the fact that the Party insisted on the addressing of contemporaneity, this stress made sense in the institutional practice of the Union only when the position in the field was determined by the concrete position-taking – that is adherence to socialist realism. In my thesis I would like to accent particularly this issue in contrast to the perspective of the application of the strategy of subversion from subordinated actors. Some positions in the artistic field indeed changed (for instance, the assignment of Tiberiy Sil’vashi as the Head of the Youth Commission in KOSH) that definitely facilitated the legitimate definition for the discourse of the field, however I tend to think it was a consequence of the change in the space of possibles than vice versa (for instance, Oleksandr Fedoruk in the review of Honcharenko’s book condemned abstract art as vigorously as he defended it in Perestroika).

³⁸⁷ The Protocols of the Conference. 21 December 1989. Fund 796. Case 415:7. USCAMLA.

³⁸⁸ The Charter of KOSH. 9 August 1992. Fund 796. Case 442: 2. UCSAMLA.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

Socialist realism and “bourgeois art”, associated with formalism, were indeed in a dialectical relationship. As avant-garde tendencies slipped out of the narrative structure of the supporters of “rotten bourgeois ideology”, the method of Soviet art, socialist realism, faced the challenge of redefinition that it could not handle. Not yet in Perestroika, but later in the 1990s, after Ukraine would gain independence, socialist realism would acquire a strongly negative meaning and occupy the subordinated position in the cultural field.

The main concepts of “peopleness” and “Party-mindedness” were used as guidelines for the institutional practice, creation and evaluation of artworks among Ukrainian Soviet artists and art experts. As I have tackled in the second chapter, the shifts in their meaning altered the definition of art and the artist. They were indeed “core concepts” of socialist realism due to the fact their insolvency, represented in the rejection of “the social command” element, especially “the linkage with the people” during Perestroika and accentuation of the individual perception of the artist in the creative process, led to the questioning the method.

As socialist realism was the concept that embraced the relationship with past and the present, the issue of the origin of the Soviet Ukrainian art played a prominent part in the definition of “its contemporary style.” The case of Boychuk, discussed in both chapters, and its rehabilitation during Perestroika, facilitated the process of imposing the culturally legitimate perspective on art.

The Ukrainian Union of Artists was a voluntary organization that implied ideological conformity and imposed monopoly on the definition of the artist and art. As socialist realism was questioned, the institutions faced a crisis and, readapting to the demand, imposed by the dominated positions in the field, reoccurred in the face of the National Union. But in the terms of power and the ability to introduce culturally legitimate

definitions in the discourse of the artistic field, the institution and the method will never be the same.

Conclusions

The artistic field of Soviet Ukraine is indeed a notable case, exploration of which, as we have seen, provides many insights into the internal functioning of Soviet cultural institutions. The cultural field of the Soviet Union was diverse; furthermore, artistic production in Ukraine was also far from being monolithic – its Western areas established its branches of the UUA in the post-war years, and Deregus at the First All-Union Congress in 1957 praised artists from Western Ukraine for overcoming “formalism” in their oeuvre.³⁹⁰ The further trajectory of the elaboration of this study embraces local particularities in Soviet Ukraine.

So far, I have asserted that the examination of local features reveals the limits of the institutional implementation of socialist realism. However, due to the high centralization of the artistic field of the Soviet Union and its tendency to occupy a heteronomous position in relation to the field of power, I found it particularly beneficial to look back persistently at Moscow, to check what was happening there and to situate Ukrainian art in the context of the Soviet field. With this study, I particularly would like to raise the issue of the perception of Russian artistic field in the republics.

For this thesis I have chosen Perestroika because I strongly believe that the period of changes reveals the most intimate details of the phenomenon under investigation. In order to comprehend why the change occurred, the researcher has to unveil, first of all, the desired state of the field, its aspirations. They, to a large extent, are expressed in the definitions, imposed by the dominant positions. Once the definitions are undermined, the shift in the power balance in the field or the acts of symbolic violence from the dominant positions should be anticipated.

³⁹⁰ The Speech of the Chairman of the Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine M. Deregus at the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Artist of the USSR. Fund 581. Case 601: 4. UCSAMLA.

As we have seen in the second chapter, the notion of the “real” is truly problematic in socialist realism and its institutional implementation. In the early Thaw, with an accent on contemporaneity, the UUA stressed and promoted the necessity “to establish a link with the people” in thematic painting. Then, Ukrainian Soviet art to a great extent was defined through “peopleness” that was manifested in the promoting the depiction of “a simple Soviet man.” However, as the artistic field was strongly dependent on the field of power, such depictions should have followed “Party-mindedness” and encourage young people to engage actively in the construction of the communist society. In the 1970s-1980s Ukrainian art was redefined in a vividly contrasting manner: its main feature was “civil duty”, manifested in epic canvases and heroic characters. This definition of art facilitated the new definition of the artist who now was supposed to be “responsible” for the content of his artworks in front of the Party and the people. At the same time, Soviet critics were engaged in the debates with Western “revisionists”, where they promoted the definition of Soviet art as “the art of humanism” in order to link the oeuvre of Soviet artists with “the great masters of the past”, especially of the Renaissance. Such a representation of continuity of the realist tradition facilitated the asserting of the cultural legitimacy of socialist realism in the international context. The change in the field of power in the Soviet Union during Perestroika, and the introduction of *glasnost*’ affected the space of possibles in the artistic field of Soviet Ukraine that launched a redefinition of art and the artist. As the latter now was rather indifferent both to “Party-mindedness” and “peopleness” and stressed the individuality of the artist, the dominant position of socialist realism was jeopardized. It lost his ability to establish a link with the present and the past. The question of origins of Soviet art that was highly important for its cultural legitimacy was also revised, as was exemplified in the case of Myhaylo Boychuk. The main medium of the method – thematic painting –

also faced a crisis. Last but not the least, questioning supremacy of socialist realism led to questioning its institutional embodiment – the Ukrainian Union of Artists.

Obviously, the issues I tackled in this thesis are only a surface of extremely complex processes that occurred in the artistic field of the Soviet Union in these three decades. Nevertheless, I believe that this study hints at the ways the researchers of Soviet art may choose and where those paths could lead them.

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