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Performative Practice and Sculpture The GAZ Art Group (Ukraine)

Перформативна практика та скульптура Творчість мистецької групи GAZ (Україна)

Abstract. The paper examines the works of the GAZ art group, a Ukrainian creative duo of Vasyl Grublyak and Oleksii Zolotar¹. In the context of modern art in Ukraine, their pieces exemplify the relationship between two genres of art: performance and sculpture. The main conceptual principles of the art actions *RuTyna* (2014), *Ritual of Approval* (2014, 2015), *Armory Room* (2014), and their practical implementation were considered; interpretation options were suggested. It was hypothesized that despite the obvious socially-critical orientation of the GAZ group's art actions, the ideas of experimenting with space and analysis of its transformations are at the essence of their creativity. The connection between the artistic activity of the GAZ group and the current sociopolitical context was established, with a perspective for interdisciplinary study within the academic programs of spatial art, aimed at exploring a wide range of options of three-dimensional form, including installation art, sculpture, performance art, multimedia, and digital production.

Keywords: performative practices, visual art, sculpture, Ukrainian artists, works of the GAZ art group.

Introduction

In the practice of contemporary art, the meaning of *sculpture* now includes not only static objects but also movement, sound, video, and in some cases even performance art. The artists, contemplating on form, on the human body, on space, and on the interplay between them, go beyond the established limitations of one of the earliest forms of art. Among the telling results of this process is, for instance, that the artists turn to “three-dimensional art” increasingly often, with the latter concept incorporating various expressive means and being a much wider notion than the traditional understanding of the object in space.

During the twentieth century, many variants of the interplay between performance art and sculpture emerged, each producing art pieces that changed the notion of art and its role in society. Combinations of the elements of artistic language stimulated many artistic discussions, which focused on specific points of social tension. Oskar Schlemmer's Bauhaus legacy, the practice of Joseph Beuys and the concept of social sculpture coined by him,

the phenomenon of a “living sculpture” (e.g., the art practice of Gilbert & George, who are self-professed “living sculptures”), and other examples of combining various media and expressive means broadened the horizon of viewers' perception and transformed entrenched ideas about the essence of art, modified the reaction on the current art events and on the sociocultural transformation, including overcoming the national-scale trauma (as was the case of the German society after the Second World War).

The new period of Ukrainian history that started after 2014, also marked a radical turn to acknowledging the need for decolonization and for reorienting the general development of the Ukrainian state in the European direction. These tectonic processes gave impetus to entire cultural sphere of Ukraine. This is the wider context for the art practice of the GAZ art group, which mostly is three-dimensional art incorporating the elements of other expressive means.

Literature Review

RoseLee Goldberg was one of the first scholars who studied artists' different attitudes to space. In her publication “Space as praxis,” she analyzes the point of interaction between performance art, sculpture, and conceptual art from the standpoint of the various conceptions of space. In the paper, the tendency for diffusion of different arts is specifically

¹ In 2022, Oleksii Zolotar changed his surname, abandoning the Russified version of Zolotariov, which was formed by adding the Russian suffix *-iov* to the Ukrainian suffixless surname Zolotar (literally, a goldsmith).

stressed (Goldberg, 1975). Art researcher Hannah Abdullah focuses on Anselm Kiefer's and Joseph Beuys' performances in the context of addressing its traumatic national history by the post-war German society. In her study "Kiefer and Beuys: Cathexis and Catharsis," the common ethical and historical background is highlighted, which is similar in the works of both artists (Abdullah, 2016). Abdullah concludes that they had a common aim, namely acknowledging and accepting the Nazi-era past, and describes the role of performance art in creating certain social, psychological, and political effects. A collection of 13 essays *Articulate Objects: Voice, Sculpture and Performance* edited by Aura Satz and Jon Wood, focuses on understanding spatial art in its interconnections with the other art forms, using multidisciplinary approaches from the domains of art history, cultural history, comparative literature studies, and art, theatre, and curatorial practices (Satz & Wood, 2009). The monographic research *New Ukrainian Sculpture* by Galyna Sklyarenko presents a unique assessment of the development of this plastic art in Ukraine. Sklyarenko provides the analysis of the works by eight Ukrainian sculptors: Nazar Bilyk, Dmytro Grek, Petro Gronsky, Egor Zigura, Oleksi Zolotar, Illya Novgorodov, Vitalii Protosenia, and Daniil Shumikhin (Sklyarenko, 2021). Ukrainian curator and art researcher Kateryna Ray collaborated with the GAZ art group during the various stages of the realization of their projects; also, she participated in the management of the Radius art space by contributing significantly to its communication with the audience and conveying the articulated messages to the professional community and the viewers. In many of her accompanying texts (Art city, 2014, October 30) and videos (Art city, 2014, October 30; Art city, 2014, October 29) for the GAZ art group actions, Ray captured the standpoints of Grublyak and Zolotar, in which their artworks were rooted in, thus prompting further, more through studies of their art practice. In addition, this paper cites several personally conducted interviews with Vasyl Grublyak (V. Grublyak, personal communication, May 15, 2016). and Oleksii Zolotar (O. Zolotar, personal communication, May 17, 2016).

Aim of the paper

The present paper outlines and discusses the manifestations of performance art and their interplay with three-dimensional art, as exemplified in the practice of the GAZ art group.

Results and Discussion

This paper is the first academic study of the art practice of the GAZ art group. This Ukrainian art group was founded in 2013 by the artists Oleksii Zolotar and Vasyl Grublyak during their shared residency at the Biriuchyi Island in Southern Ukraine. They aimed at fulfilling a wide range of art ideas that emerged during their personal communication. RoseLee Goldberg in her seminal monograph *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* mentions

the ethical motive as one of the stimuli for the development of performance art in post-war Europe. According to Goldberg, "Only ten years after a debilitating major war, many artists felt that they could not accept the essentially apolitical content of the then overwhelmingly popular Abstract Expressionism" (Goldberg, 1988, p. 140). Accordingly, even before the Revolution of Dignity (2013–2014) in Ukraine, Zolotar's and Grublyak's desire for a more articulate expression of their civic convictions resulted in the creation of the GAZ art group.

In contemporary scholarly studies, the concept of "creativity" is being replaced by the concept of "practice" increasingly often. The latter notion enables incorporating into the wider idea of artistic creativity the factors influencing the artist or an art group that previously were omitted and considered irrelevant by scholars. Hence, the augmented context for the artwork emerges that may include its various manifestations, interpretations, social reactions to it, and its aftermath, the nature of which goes far beyond the purely artistic context.

Thus, it can be suggested that the practice of the GAZ art group in an unexpected manner combines working with space, form creation, and different variants of organization of space; with the most precise definition for their corpus of their work being *spatial art*.

Art history provides a large number of examples of artworks, in which the established boundaries between traditional arts, for instance, sculpture and performance, were blurred. It can be hypothesized that the art experiments with space and its dynamics were the key element of this interaction. Oskar Schlemmer's art practice exemplifies these experiments, all the more so with regard to his considerable contribution to the development of what would later be labeled performance art. Schlemmer complexly explored space in its different dimensions: from the two-dimensional space in fine art, three-dimensional space in sculpture and objects, and up to space-time, which in physics is a component of the general theory of relativity and describes our physical reality. These experiments were manifested in theatre productions, which subsequently were marked as setting the groundwork for the performance art form of the future. Analyzing Schlemmer's legacy, Goldberg mentions that, "'Space: as the unifying element in architecture' was what Schlemmer considered to be the common denominator of the mixed interests of the Bauhaus staff. Indeed what characterized the 1920s discussion on space was the notion of *Raumempfindung*, or 'felt volume,' and it was to this 'sensation of space' that Schlemmer attributed the origins of each of his dance productions" (Goldberg, 1977, p. 34).

Over the years of active work, the GAZ art group created various art objects and realized a number of art actions. This study focuses on their artworks where the main expressive means were turning to actionism, happening, and to the elements of contemporary performance art forms.

In his art practice, Oleksii Zolotar mostly uses the artistic language of clear forms. This, on the formal level, reminisces with the traditions of the Ukrainian avant-garde, which Zolotar himself listed as his inspiration (O. Zolotar, personal communication, May 17, 2016). Such ambition to continue this art dialog is characteristic of Zolotar, who strives, among other objectives, to establish art communication with his predecessors in the history of sculpture in Ukraine, namely with the historical avant-garde and with the Soviet monumental sculpture. The art forms of these dialogs vary greatly.

The complex trajectory of the development of sculpture in Ukraine during the twentieth century, on the one hand, was full of ideologically grounded monumental projects, and on the other hand, had a lot of space beyond these projects. The latter includes the legacy of the Soviet Ukrainian sculpture, both realized pieces (preserved or destroyed) and existing only in sketches, which remains a little-known page of Ukrainian art. Simultaneously, without sufficient processing of the legacy of the previous era, the new Ukrainian sculpture develops (Sklyarenko, 2021). Viewed through this asynchronous perspective, the 2020 project of the GAZ art group—*Wind Rose. A Document*—is aimed at initiating a dialog concerning the phenomenon of “Twentieth-century Ukrainian sculpture.” It may be suggested that in his art practice, Zolotar strives to claim the space, while he is yet to realize the monumental form there (at least, this was the impression from his works created before the large-scale Russian invasion to Ukraine). The search for a focal point, for a locus of concentration by the means of creating a certain dominating volume is central in Zolotar’s experiments. His fulfilled projects (at the time of this publication), namely *Movement of Suprematism* (2011), *Horizon of Events* (2021), and *Geometrical Archaic* (2022) prove his progress in this direction.

Between 2018 and 2022, Vasyl Grublyak actively engaged the idea of light in his works, making it a main formative element in creating his imagery. Minimalism and a function are the characteristic ideas of his works. Grublyak asserts, “*I am interested in light as a media, as if a potter works with clay.* Equally interesting is its ‘vocabulary’ potential—as a universal non-semiotic way of communication between the living beings” (V. Grublyak, personal communication, May 15, 2016). It may be assumed that the artist creates a “text” with the lights, which in his pieces are not the means of illumination but a subject matter and an object, similarly to the works by the members of California’s Light and Space Movement. For instance, in 2019, Grublyak was included in the M17 Sculpture Prize nominees list with his *Egregore* project, in which he contemplates the problem of interaction at the level of community, as well as the ethical issues of development of artificial intelligence. The solution, which Grublyak found for all these ideas, is shaped as a voluminous structure with an open contour that rather represents infinity than a complete form. For creating an image that is vivid, Grublyak turns

to a concept of “*egregore*,” popular in the nineteenth-century occult belief systems (marginal from the contemporary scientific standpoint). In the dimension of art, turning to such analogies allows broadening the association chain that opens the door to understanding the art concept as a hypothetical interconnection of society and nature, which is close to the ideas of Volodymyr Vernadsky.

In their major works, the GAZ art group focuses on multi-level experiments with space, cultural landscape, social interplay, and transformation of society. Among their milestone projects, which are to a large extent a practice of actionism with the elements of performance, the following ones should be noted:

- *RuTyna*, in the framework of the “Biriuchy” symposium (2014);
- *Armory Room*, in collaboration with “University,” with participation by Andriy Zelinskyi (2014);
- *Ritual of Approval*, in collaboration with Oleksiy Sai, exhibited in Kyiv and Mariupol (2014, 2015).

Yet, despite the close links of these artworks with their socio-political context, this does not define the GAZ art practice as merely a socially critical one. An in-depth analysis of space may be a primary foundation for the idea of each project; hence, taking this into account, the art practice of the GAZ group may be considered a valuable contribution to the development of spatial art in Ukraine.

Their first action with the elements of performance was *RuTyna* (a pun for “Russian” and “routine”). The project was realized during the symposium of contemporary art at the Biriuchy Island during the fall of 2014, the first year of the hybrid phase of the Russian invasion to Ukraine. The series of shocking aggressive acts by the Russian Federation, including the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula on March 18, and active warfare in the Donbas region since April 12, started a long-term process of restructuring the collective consciousness of society and ultimate acknowledgment of this neighboring state as a hostile one. In this context, the art symposium was to be held, with regard to the new reality of existing on the potential new border/frontline status of the Kherson region, where Biriuchy Island is situated.

In a week, Grublyak and Zolotar constructed a 6-meter structure, the outline of which resembled the Lenin’s Mausoleum in the Red Square. This structure was a direct reference to the first temporary wooden tomb that was hastily built after one of the initiators and organizers of the Red Terror, a central figure for the personality cult in the Soviet system of hierarchies passed away.

This multi-stage project (that included performance) focused on the problematization of the idea of power in general and the ideological symbols in particular, as well as on the realization of this desire for power through the “purification by fire” ritual. The wooden structure was erected in the midst of the steppe on the Biriuchy Island split. Grublyak’s and Zolotar’s positioning of the letter combination “*RyTyna*” corresponded to the placement of the letter

combination “Lenin” in the original wooden tomb. I intentionally refer to the word “Lenin” as a letter combination, as during the Soviet rule, this word became sacred in many dimensions of life of several generations, signifying occupation and being a central symbol for the personality cult and ideology. *RuTyna* was solemnly burned on the closing day of the symposium. This act of burning was titled “Confusion”,¹ with Zolotar recalling, “We had many ideas about how to destroy the artifact. In the end, we decided to symbolically purify it by fire” (O. Zolotar, personal communication, May 17, 2016).

The artists’ ambition “to raise the level of consciousness in society”, declared in a number of their texts, may be viewed in the framework of opposition of the social and the private. For example, Zolotar, whose works demonstrate a search for a point of concentration (sculptures *Wind Rose*, *Encounter*, *Event Horizon*), engages into ongoing work with a structure and contour. In its art practice, the GAZ group experiments with a structure and contour of social interaction. Wikipedia, which may be viewed as a set of reflections of various national collective consciousnesses, in its Russian version states that “Vladimir Ilyich Lenin’s Mausoleum (during 1953–1961—Lenin’s & Stalin’s Mausoleum) is a as mausoleum, a resting place within the Kremlin wall on the Red Square in Moscow, where the body of Vladimir Lenin is preserved since 1924 in a transparent sarcophagus” (Mavzolei Lenina, n. d.). This sentence contains an abundance of symbolic meanings, with the nouns “resting place–sarcophagus–body” fitting into a certain semantic structure. The aim of *RuTyna* was to establish an interplay with this highly ideologically and emotionally loaded symbol, symbolically annihilating this matryoshka-structured matrix as an embodiment of the hierarchy of violence.

In the conceptual description of *RuTyna*, this was declared as a “liberation,” which automatically implies the previous “oppression” of the Ukrainian society by the Soviet reality (as those who are already free do not need any liberation). Therefore, this project may be viewed from the perspective of the post-colonial discourse. This performance, realized a year before the Law of Ukraine No. 317-VIII “About condemning Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and banning propaganda of their symbols” was officially adopted (Law of Ukraine No. 317-VIII, 2015), outlined in the dimension of art the themes which later became dominant on the public discourse. The stages of realization of this art action were the following: the process of creating the object with a certain symbolic load and the act of its annihilation, during which the energy of destruction was released. The latter is symbolically perceived as a concentrated release that provides relief and liberation.

¹ The title is a reference to the well-known quote of Vitaly Churkin, Russia’s ambassador to the United Nations, who infamously referred to the MH17 crash as to a “confusion,” not an act of terrorism.

Andriy Zelinskyi with his piece “Fighter” participated in the *Armory Room* project of the GAZ art group. The core themes of the project were defense and weapons viewed from the standpoint of interplay of the individual and the collective, from the standpoint of a search for the “demarcation line,” which delineates the borders, and in the artistic sense—defines the structure of the social discourse that shapes this contour. The format of this event was a touring exhibition. In a van, the key objects of the action were presented—the plaster casts of the automatic weapon. They became the starting point for inspiring interaction with the audience (a communicative aspect). “Turning to the well-known forms of artistic expression, using the charm of ‘visual aids,’ being as laconic and readily accessible as a textbook through the absolute form of a military artifact, the participants of the action ‘assign’ the homework both for those ‘who acknowledges’ and for those ‘who are yet to grasp’ the transformation that our state is going through” (Art city, 2014, October 30). The format of “Armory Room” is closer to happening that implies events or situations with the participation of the artists, yet not totally under their control. Happenings often include improvisation and, unlike performances, do not have a scenario.

The choice of plaster from the Donetsk Basin, and more specifically, in then-Artemivsk², as a medium for the automatic rifles was coincidental. “We as artists view the automatic rifles not as a weapon to kill but, probably, as a sculptural form. Maybe, rather as a form that has specific connotations (O. Zolotar, personal communication, May 17, 2016). The concept of a ‘negative’ form is significant in the artists’ practice. In Ukrainian art, Nazar Bilyk previously turned to realizing a negative form with the means of art; however, for Grublyak and Zolotar a negative form is a concept to be explored as a metaphor of denial. In the ‘Armory Room’, the plaster casts, which are its central objects, are the result of a technological process that included molding as one of its stages. This was, in fact, a process of creating a ‘negative’ volume, when the shape of the automatic rifle practically ceased to exist. After this symbolic ‘annihilation’ back as in the studio, this form was filled, in a symbolic dimension, with the other senses; in the physical dimension, it was filled with Ukrainian plaster from what would later become Bakhmut, known worldwide for its fierce battles and heroic defense operation. According to the latest scientific data, the deposits of gypsum in Ukraine are ‘practically inexhaustible’ and are comparable to the deposits in the United States and Canada” (Lyalko & Popov, 2017, p. 197). This connection opens another possibility for the *Armory Room* interpretation, namely the ecological discourse.

The *Ritual of Approval* was realized twice in 2015. The first time was in Kyiv, at the building of former tram

² As of 2014, the city was still Artemivsk. The historical name of Bakhmut was reinstated in 2016.

depot; the second time—in Mariupol, under the auspices of the IZOLYATSIA foundation, in the framework of the interdisciplinary ZMINA platform. The range of problems raised in the project encompasses several aspects of the interplay between society and an individual, including individual choice and decision-making. “We filled the main hall with the spot lighting, smoke, and placed a vacant presidium table. As the soundtrack, the artist used the recordings of applause back from the 1930s and 1960s that were a must at all the meetings of the Central Committee of the CPSU and signaled greetings and ‘approval’ to all the speeches of the General Secretaries during the Soviet era. In the artists’ opinion, ‘the applause was playing an important socio-political function for a long time—it is a symptomatic link between the ‘victim’ and the leader. This way, the ‘power hierarchy’ of sorts is produced, lacking which that state, supposedly, would collapse. On the one hand, the aim of the applause is to express oneself as an expert authority and to claim certain social status. On the other hand, by joining the ‘applauding’ audience,” an individual loses the possibility to preserve personal secrets” (Art city, 2014, October 29). The accompanying text for the video mentioned a “hierarchy of power” as one of the elements. This symbol, in the artists’ opinion, is an axis of two-way influence in a totalitarian society. In this art project, the notion of a “vertical” is reinvented, signifying a hierarchy in the broad sense, which is built with a certain collective action. Dwelling on the practice, common in Soviet society, the artists actualize the problem of personal choice and responsibility in modern Ukraine.

The central form for most of their art actions is a ritual, with the artists actively participating, taking on a position comparable to the position of a pagan priest, responsible for the course of the ritual. These art actions, despite them being deeply rooted in a play, demonstrate the search for a structure for the cultural space of Ukraine in the future. In particular, the agency of the Ukrainian society in shaping its own history and culture is underlined. For the analysis of such artistic vision, the theory of Victor Witter Turner is applicable, who stated that in any society a “social drama” permanently happens; thus, a ritual is an instrument for regulation, when the social drama reaches its peak. By turning to a method of art action, at times with the elements of performance, the artists problematize the totalitarian past and the phase that Ukrainian society is undergoing now—a post-totalitarian phase. In this context, their practice may be considered an art of post-totalitarian reflection (Sydorenko, 2008, p. 134) that developed in Ukraine during the 2000s. Still, a tendency for a “delayed” reflection has become more pronounced only after 2014, with the new generation of artists, and to a certain extent retrospectively.

In her book *New Ukrainian Sculpture*, Galyna Sklyarenko explores Zolotar’s works in detail, drawing interesting analogies and comparisons, i. e. with the trends of the 1960s Western plastic art and their contemporary interpretation in regard to the form. In addition, she provides

a description of several fulfilled projects by the GAZ art group. Sklyarenko observes that, “in parallel to the purely sculptural pieces, since 2013 another trend developed in his [Zolotar’s] work, when the motifs of social criticism are realized in the forms of installations, art actions, and assemblages” (Sklyarenko, 2021, p. 168). This statement seems rather controversial, as the collaboration within the GAZ art group is not parallel to the artists’ solo creativity. Their pieces conceived and realized collectively result from processing certain ideas. Despite the outwardly play-based nature of their creativity and extensive use of provocations (that may be perceived as a counterpoint to a “serious activity”), a carefully crafted balance of a social gesture in its many manifestations and of an art action with the elements of performance are inherent to the works of the duo. Performative practices broaden the understanding of the core idea of a piece both in the individual and in collective work by Zolotar and Grublyak, which is a search for a form to express the full potential of space. Interpretation of their collective work should not be limited to mere analogies to irony because irony, as a satirical means counterpoising the true sense to the one expressed, is uncharacteristic of their practice.

The art actions by the GAZ art group are rather inverse in relation to their separate artistic activities. As a creative duo, the GAZ art group undertakes a search for the perfect structure at the level of society, achieving this with certain artistic acts, radical in their expressive form: annihilation (burning, as in *RuTyna*), disorientation (*Ritual of Approval*), and coercion (*Armory Room*). “Working in a group differs from solo work significantly. The concept, its realization, the sense and form are envisioned in the dialog and discussions. It is a living process. For that reason, we leave some room for the last corrections to be made directly at the venue of the performance. The viewers are not only present at the performance but participate in it. Their reactions to the events is always different and hardly foreseeable. This produces an energy boost originating from the events during the art action. Also, in our opinion, one of the features of performance art is its flux, its ‘ephemerality,’ when only photos and videos prolong its existence in the future” (V. Grublyak, personal communication, May 15, 2016).

As for the latter statement, the previous literature already raised the issue of documenting performance art; thus, existing academic approaches to this process and the concepts for further study of performance art through its photographs, videos, and other sources of information were analyzed. In view of the consistent focus on post-colonial issues, the art actions of the GAZ art group of this period are worth to be “reactivated”. Philip Auslander, a renowned researcher of performance art, suggests recreating this type of works (Auslander, 2018). For the spatiotemporal pieces of the GAZ art group, this approach, in the new socio-political context of the full-scale Russian invasion against Ukraine, could be a new impetus to activate their collaboration, to appeal to a larger, global audience.

In the context of studying the crossover points between the art forms of sculpture and performance, the Radius art space significantly contributed to merging these two arts. This art residency, founded by Oleksii Zlotar in 2019, was aimed at intensifying international cross-cultural interaction and establishing strong links throughout the art community. The residency was specifically focused on experimenting with three-dimensional art and on working with volume in its many representations. In the context of interplay between performance art and sculpture in Ukraine, the joint project by Oleksii Zlotar and Alexander Holm should be mentioned. It was titled *Gennem et specielt Glas* (“Through the special glass”). The combination of performance art and sculpture creates an environment for the interplay of sound, form, and performance art. As a result of interaction of these elements, a rich artistic image of the contemporary art community emerges, which can be experienced on several sensory levels. In the project, the chronotope of the Ukrainian early Middle Ages suddenly crashes into the contemporary challenges produced by globalization and the rising impact of the Internet. The project addressed the categories of time and space, their transformations, metamorphoses, and performed artistic reflections on the most topical contemporary understanding of the time-space continuum. According to Zolotar, at the beginning of their collaboration, he and Grublyak have not fully apprehended the common ground of their separate art practices (namely, sculpture and performance art), which is a telling sign of the potential for interplay between these arts (O. Zolotar, personal communication, May 17, 2016). Eventually, this project reveals the very essence of the transformational processes reflecting the current understanding of the world.

It should be noted that the contribution of the Radius art space in the Ukrainian art process during the years 2019–2021 suggests opportunities for future research. The present study only captures and documents the ongoing dynamics of the artists’ collaboration in the cross-cultural dimension, not only resulting from a co-existence of different art forms in the same space but also at the level of senses.

Conclusions

In sum, the GAZ art group was formed for meeting a number of plastic objectives and for creating the compositions rich in imagery. In the studied projects, in the context

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of performative practices, the following common traits may be emphasized: tendency for actionism and direct action; experiments with space; clearly articulated messages for the projects, which are distinctively socio-politically oriented.

It was determined that in Zolotar’s and Grublyak’s separate practices, as well as in their collaboration within the GAZ art group, they question the issue of Ukrainian identity and experiment with the expressive forms for their vision in the dimension of art. The impulse that may emerge in the process of contact and communication between the audience (participants) of their art events inspires the urge for social change, to an extent possible in the sphere of functioning of art ideas. This method is the most correspondent to the ideas of social sculpture as Joseph Beuys understood it, and this is the appropriate vantage point to analyze the art practices of Grublyak and Zolotar. However, this social critique is not the main component of their creativity but rather an additional direction to channel their creative efforts by combining various genres of art, in this case, performance and sculpture.

In their projects, the authors aim to search for the visual form that would illustrate the social relations in Ukraine with the vocabulary of artistic imagery adequate for the transformational changes brought by the new phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2014¹. Putting emphasis on a certain social aspect, for instance on liberating from the totalitarian past, on the need for protection, or on the struggle between the personal and the collective, the artists create a complete artistic image—an entire “piece of reality” that hosts some art events and actions. In their practice, the form is undergoing the processes that may be described as a transformation and refraction (combining both the form of social consciousness and the spatial form), and their experiments with space are concordant with the *Raumempfindung* ideas, as it was envisioned in Bauhaus.

The practice of the GAZ art group, with its turning to the artistic vocabulary of the art action, with the elements of performance art and happenings, may be rightfully considered in the context of postcolonial studies.

¹ The Russian aggression against Ukraine may be formulated in terms of multi-phased war that includes the layers of information/propaganda campaign, various hybrid actions, staged realization of first local and then a full-scale invasion.

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Яцик І.

Перформативна практика та скульптура. Творчість мистецької групи GAZ (Україна)

Анотація. Проаналізовано діяльність мистецької групи GAZ, яку утворили два українські художники — Василь Грубляк та Олексій Золотар. Досліджено зв'язок двох видів мистецтва (перформансу та скульптури) на прикладі творчості цього колективу в контексті сучасного мистецтва України. Розглянуто основні концептуальні засади мистецьких акцій «RuТина» (2014), «Ритуал схвалення» (2014, 2015), «Збройна кімната» (2014) та їхнє практичне втілення, запропоновано варіанти інтерпретації. Висунуто припущення, що попри очевидну соціально-критичну спрямованість акцій групи GAZ, в основі їхньої творчості закладено ідеї дослідження простору та аналізу його трансформацій. Виявлено зв'язок мистецької діяльності групи GAZ та актуального соціополітичного контексту з перспективою для міждисциплінарного вивчення в межах академічних програм просторового мистецтва, які спрямовані на дослідження широкого спектру варіантів тривимірної форми, включно з мистецтвом інсталяції, скульптурою, мистецтвом перформансу, мультимедіа та цифровим мистецтвом.

Ключові слова: перформативні практики, візуальне мистецтво, скульптура, українські художники, творчість мистецької групи GAZ.