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Modern Forms of Portraiture as an Instrument for Creating a Banner Memory

Сучасні форми портретування як інструмент творення рекламної пам'яті

Abstract. At the turn of the 21st century, portraiture underwent significant transformations. While there were many attempts to “re-invent” the portrait as a genre, it has been flourishing in a new status—now as an instrument for image creation. Being one of the important forms of preservation and transmission of the memory of an individual, portraiture is influenced by the algorithms of advertisement. At present, the fixation of our memories through portraiture becomes the vehicle of the image ideology that changes perception and a general understanding of the role and place of man both in history and in the modern highly competitive symbolic field of culture. The paper considers new forms and means of portraiture in connection with the layering of advertising search queries. In addition, the paper analyzes the approaches to preserving the cultural memory of an individual through portraiture within the mass culture and in the context of the development of digital technologies.

Keywords: portraiture, artistic image, visual image, banner memory, social media, selfie.

Introduction. Mass culture as a type of culture that operates simulation and manipulation, defines the symbolic cultural space of the current era. The mass culture creates virtual worlds that allure with the promises of “universal” happiness produced by the glamorous philosophy. All of this is achieved by the means of deepening the processes of commodification, forming thin-slicing and blink thinking as well as the fragmented vision of a person and changing the values, the moral and ethical orientations. Hence, marketing and ideology crossbreed. In this context, almost all spheres of life, including our memories, are processed through the filters of advertising algorithms. Being an agent of the image ideology, portraiture as a form of preserving and spreading the memory of an individual undergoes significant transformations, changing our sense of time and space and fixating, at the level of visual symbols, an approach to an individual as a construct, the certain elements of which can be replaced, corrected, strengthened or ignored in order to influence the mass audience. The digital environment turns out to be the most comfortable for conveying the image ideology, i.e. through the portraiture; it amplifies these effects and gradually captures our material identity for the purpose of its complete digital simulation. Hence, humanity faces new challenges, including the development of a technocratic society isolated from a humanitarian basis of civilization. Understanding the transformations of the personal memories and cultural

memory about an individual becomes a topical issue: the new forms of portraiture are viewed through the lenses and filters of advertising search queries.

The **aim** of this paper is to analyze the influence of advertising algorithms on the processes of formation of individual memory, as well as the forms of self-representation through portraiture as an integral element of the symbolic field of culture in the era of digital technologies.

Literature review. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research were the studies on the history of the portrait by A. Sidorov, on the theory of modern art by K. Grovier, research works on the postmodern cultural situation by G. Andreyeva and on memory studies by A. Assmann, as well as the investigations covering the specifics of the present-day media environment by G. Pocheptsov and V. Sidorov. Materials from the artists' websites and scientific articles on the analysis of technological innovations were also used.

Results and Discussion. In the digital dimensions of modernity, the forms of representation of an individual are changing significantly. Equally, the approaches to preserving the memory of an individual through portraiture are undergoing transformations, as portraiture since the dawn of civilization has been directly linked to these processes.

Through a portrait that historically was used as a tool for creating a long-term memory of an individual, the dominant reason to record the achievements of the ancestors was

preserving family pride and securing inheritance. Ancestral galleries created in noble estates and monasteries are exemplary of how the mechanisms of cultural memory worked through portraiture that performed the function of inscribing an individual in history, fixating and transmitting a lasting memory from generation to generation. Thus, since ancient times, portraiture has played an important role in maintaining the “memory of outstanding and admirable deeds” (Assmann, 2012). So that it is not surprising, that in history the struggle for power over memory unfolds from time to time, with portraiture always being a powerful tool in this battle.

In this context, it is worth noting that certain advertising or proto-image characteristics have been long incorporated into the process of portraiture-making. A. Sidorov points out that during the era of Alexander the Great there were portrait-advertisement and portrait-propaganda, “Both Alexander the Great and Napoleon brilliantly found their way to the centers of mass imagination with the use of the portrait: spreading certain professional lies with their portraits and convincing people that they already were well-known personalities” (Sidorov, 1927, p. 12). Nevertheless, within the history of portraiture as an art genre, the memory of the subject as a unique representative of certain spiritual qualities and social status has been implemented. In the portrait, certain advertising signals existed within a sophisticated complex of artistic characteristics, with the help of which the personality was depicted and received holistic and multi-faceted coverage. Since the mid-20th century, this paradigm has undergone significant changes. First, the crisis of the portrait genre becomes obvious, and second, portraiture rapidly gains a new status—as a vehicle of the image ideology.

The main feature of postmodern society in the situation of commercialization and rationalization of existence is the transformation of a subject into an object, when, according to the logic of market relations, the subject becomes an object of economic demand and a “commodity on the highly competitive market of individuals” (Bezugla, 2019, p. 5). In the context of new forms of portraiture, these transformations are most successfully visualized through the dichotomy of the concepts “artistic image—visual image.”

As Yekaterina Andreeva notes, at the end of the 20th century it becomes obvious that “the word ‘obraz’¹ associated with traditional aesthetics, should be replaced by the word ‘image’ which is a more changeable, unstable, conditional, unreal entity that embodies “the lure of a new brave world” but by comprehending the essence of which it becomes clear that this is “the temptation of a wrap, a shimmering surface, the lure of a television screen that broadcasts the dreams of prosperity to society, an urban paradise mixed with a string

of catastrophes and politics, with the tricks of the latter performed by the rapidly changing personages” (Andreeva, 2007, p. 117).

The commercialization of all spheres of life gave rise to a new phenomenon: portraiture becomes an instrument for creating a “visual image.” Free from the complex synthesis of the “artistic image” as a “visual image,” such portrait is widely used in advertising, in the public media space, and in social networks. Portraiture as an instrument for creating a visual image is thriving within the mass culture that is the softest option of mass management. Certain ideologies are legitimized through mass media that operate the body images, standards of beauty, gender and ethnic issues, etc. Portraiture is becoming a current everyday practice that meets the needs of commercial industries: healthcare, wellness, entertainment, media, etc. Thus, portraiture is now free from the limitation of art practices and concentrates on implementing the social needs of “a new politics.”

With the development of technologies and the formation of a specific media environment where an individual gets increasingly immersed, the present-day culture is going through a number of significant transformations including “the transformation of the formats of showing events and phenomena from slow and linear to fast and instantaneous” (Eriksen, 2003, p. 126). As a result, there is a disintegration of continuous thinking. In this situation, the truth crumbles into thousand truths, out of which the individual chooses the one that will provide him a comfortable existence. Memory also undergoes a number of changes. If earlier it served as an important means of self-determination for a person, demonstrating the inheritance of past, present, and future, since the middle of the 20th century, under the influence of social changes, memory is no longer perceived as a coherent entity and demonstrates multiplicity of forms and manifestations.

The concept of a person undergoes similar transformations: in the dimension of contemporary time it is split into many images. Portraiture becomes the vehicle of the image ideology, filling the virtual media space, and demonstrating the superiority of “the superficial culture of a one-time personality and a changeable image” (Grovier, 2019).

Thus, portraiture in modern formats reinforces the gradual shift from traditional to simplified forms of social life. Using myths and modeled external effects, a new social and communicative environment is being formed, where the visual image becomes a necessary element of socialization and social recognition of a person. Visibility and orientation to purely external characteristics is now the code of successful socialization in an era when “the image becomes more important than the reality it represents, a copy than the original, visibility than existence” (Debord, 2000).

At the same time, the monetization of art threatens the integrity of the art world and becomes an obstacle to critical thinking. Hence, the commercialization of all spheres of existence leads to the transformations of art, of the vision of a person, and of our relations to history and memory. This way advertising algorithms cover the entire territory

¹ The transliteration is used here instead of translation as a more correspondent variant for revealing the broad range of meanings for the English word “image” in Slavic languages. Subsequently, the definitions “artistic image” and “visual image” will be used to specify the semantic difference.

of the visual, acting within the framework of creating both artistic and a visual images, demonstrating a specific connection with the processes of preserving and spreading the memory of an individual in the “post”-era of post-truth, post-history, post-human.

Ukrainian artist Ilya Chichkan vividly articulates the transformations of the view on art, history, and the authorities of the past with inherent postmodern irony in his works. Having created his iconic character—a person with a monkey’s face—the painter lets this personage go on a remarkable philosophical journey along the paths of mass culture embodied in the images of famous political leaders, television personalities, and celebrities. Balancing on the boundary between the low and high culture, Chichkan successfully “surfs” the waves of modernity, full of contradictions, distrust to the past, and delight with the alluring horizons of the glamorous future. Reinterpreting Darwin’s ideas and their bizarre manifestations in current culture in his unique way, the artist creates a series of exhibitions that he named “Psycho-Darwinism”. Thus, the exhibition “Psycho-Darwinism: Museum Jungle” offers to review the cultural heritage of the past and reflect on the legacy of the Tretyakov Gallery in a new way. Inscribing the face of his popular monkey character instead of people’s faces in the most famous iconic painting masterpieces, Chichkan mocks museumification of art and museum pathos. However, such an invasion of a present dynamic and ironic view of history and an attempt to reinvent it in a new way at the same time exposes the situation on the verge of a fiasco, because thereby the author states that a digital-age individual who is much less spiritual, surrounded by mass culture formats, and lulled by bright screen reality perceiving it as a truth, turns out to be simply unable to extract any senses from the past, instead leaving there his marks in the form of ironic monkey face.

Rethinking “the inviolable value of cultural codes” from the point of view of practical humanism that is based not on the ideas of anthropocentrism but on the rights of the individuals, Chichkan is ironic about the past and history because the right to preserve one’s own self, visualized in the present-day philosophy of individualism, is full of contradictions and lacks a holistic vision and value orientations. This way, the artists demonstrates the success in transformation of traditional aesthetics into a commercial one, that underwent the branding processes, and reveals the rules of the game of a banner memory. The latter compensates with irony and self-irony the lack of serious understanding of history, ultimately leaving a person to face the postmodern void alone.

Declaring the post-truth era a new stage of the development of civilization, G. Pocheptsov points out that the design principle is dominating in the present-day media reality. Post-truth and glamour become the territory of the trans-reality, where the play with reality happens. “This artificial reality unfolds in such a manner so that the viewer does not lose comfort. What is happening is not the modeling of the truth, as it is occurs in the movies, but the construction of the truth according to very clear patterns that make it comfortable and friendly to the viewer” (Pocheptsov, 2019, p. 111).

Portraiture as an instrument for creating a visual image becomes a bridge of sorts to the alluring virtual world of glamour. The focus shifts from the process of understanding and self-understanding of the individual to the process of construction and self-construction. In the new dimensions of existence, portraiture, involved in constructing the “truth” about an individual, obtains such characteristics as modification and correction of reality, imitation of integrity, manipulateness, and focusing on purely external characteristics. Image ideology that operates with stereotypical and simplified constructs, instructs the viewer to rely on external characteristics as they are easier to master in the process of mimicry.

In postmodern reality, the interpretation of the content of memory also moves into the media environment and “into the realm of ‘mass culture’: memory is simplified, adapted to the political stereotypes of the present, it loses its drama and depth of valuable content...” according to V. Sidorov (Sidorov, 2019, p. 71).

In combination with the power of digital technologies and algorithms of the virtual metaverse, advertising reaches large audiences. Modern forms of portraiture illustrate these effects in the everyday life of an individual who, with the help of social networks, discovers digital content of his own life.

With the emergence of the digital avatar, when digital identity enters the field of socio-cultural relationships and plays an increasingly important role in society, portraiture becomes a wide field for digital control and various manipulations including the fake identities circulating on social media, where the verification process is quite difficult. In addition, deep fake reality, created with the means of neural networks, rapidly spreads in virtual space. Thus, recently Franziska Giffay, a mayor of Berlin, had a conversation with the “deep fake” mayor of Kyiv Vitaliy Klichko (Romashenko, 2022). The number of such examples is on the rise which indicates significant “side effects” from possible total virtualization.

Nevertheless, portraiture in the form of the present-day cult of selfies is embedded into the “digital ecosystem,” into the complex architecture of Internet connections that operate serving the interests of large corporations. Image ideology flourishes within the framework of “the digital economy” and nourishes it.

Characterizing the communication habits that a person acquires in the present-day media reality, I. Zubavina states that “getting used to the superficial ‘removal’ of information provokes a gradual reprogramming of a person’s receptive skills: Homo Sapiens is reborn into Homo Netus—a network human” (Zubavina, 2021, p. 287). Hence, such digital environment forms a new type of a person who has a habit of shallow thinking, a habit to the simulative integrity of the screen world which is gradually replacing the real one.

Plunging into the metaverse of a screen reality, a person loses any connection with the past experience. Young people remain detached from the experience and memory of previous generations because their access to digital technologies and social networks is much more limited than that of the so-called “Generation Z.” Thus, technologies not only

contribute to the idea of an “open” society with free access to information but also become an effective tool for detachment from the experience of past generations and history. Even at the level of access to technologies that is essentially not universal, a certain picture of the universe is formed, where the banner memory becomes the dominant form of all.

Shallow perception and lack of an analytical approach to reality enable effective implementation of the policy of oblivion. Along with the development of high technology, the transformation of our time-space landmarks occurs. The tempo of life accelerates. Still, as G. Pocheptsov points out: “There is a reverse side to speed—it is also an accelerated process of forgetting” (Pocheptsov, 2019). In the context of speed, the practice of selfies is indicative. Unlike the Renaissance era, where the self-portrait became a symbol of the growing self-awareness of the artist and where the creative person represented the humanistic ideals of the time, today selfie culture symbolizes the special role of the mass-human, the “global majority” that due to the democratization of the audio-video production processes creates their own reality.

Within the practice of selfies, the category of time is vividly revealed in the dichotomy of the concepts “artistic image—visual image”. If an artistic image involves thoughtful contemplation and considers different interpretations, the visual image meanwhile is designed for speed contemplation, and its result is calculated in advance. An artistic image is a tool for entering history. The success of a visual image is determined here and now, by an instant reaction. Therefore, such a new form of portraiture as a selfie demonstrates a person’s presence in an altered time-space reality. In a selfie, time collapses to an instant moment of existence in a digital equivalent, teaching us to forget in a way, because within the limits of a selfie there exists only such category of time as “now.”

Characterizing the current society of individualism, M. Yatsino emphasizes that “many people found themselves in a situation of the absence of traditional value reference points, first, being too disappointed in traditional ideals and strategies, and second, being influenced by the manipulation of commercial ‘mass culture’ structures that promote hedonism and narcissism” (Yatsino, 2012). G. Lipovetsky comments, “From now on, everyone wants to live this exact moment, here and now, staying young and not wanting to make a new person out of themselves” (Lipovetsky, 2001). Modern individuals find themselves among a multitude of life opportunities, having to be independently responsible for themselves and their choice. However, this choice appears to be socially determined and shaped by the soft power of the modern symbolic space that meets the demands of the “consumer society.” Memories turn into momentary flashes that become superficial, quickly changeable, not carrying any semantic load, and able only to reflect certain forms of embodiment of relevant mythologies instead of the actual memories of a certain person.

The principles of modification and human self-construction embedded in the image ideology, enhanced by the possibilities of digital technologies, create the space

for the formation of our memories. The social request to play with one’s identity, to assemble it according to one’s own desire and free will, leads to the loss of a holistic idea of the individual, and thus to the loss of the permanent process of transferring the memory of a person as a unique and unique individual with a complex inner world. Therefore, one of the priority problems of a present-day individual is self-construction. According to K.J. Gergen, “there is nothing material in being a woman or a dark-skinned person. There are constructed objects that can be deconstructed” (Gergen, 2001, p. 175). The process of self-construction that occurs under the influence of advertising and self-marketing algorithms, turns into the construction of a simulated or imaged reality consisting of fragments that are perceived as new integrity.

The works by the Belgian photographer Charlotte Abramov may be considered a bright illustration for such vision when the advertising approaches to memory are consolidated through portraiture. Her works include the most common and popular topics and approaches to the representation of a person through the lens of current “models” of vision. The artist gradually reveals the topics of age-related changes in the female body and gender characteristics, trying to change the focus of the vision of the female body and, in general, the perception of women in society. Abramov seeks to change the way of existence of the female body beyond its sexualization, emphasizing that women are not objects but agents in their own right. Her photo projects “Opening one’s eyes” and “Marshmallow” turn to female body as a part of nature. The viewer sees the female body as clouds, landscapes or marshmallows, etc. However, despite the attention to the important themes of the presentation of the feminine, at the same time, the holistic vision of the individual personality is imperceptibly blurred. For example, the projects “Vulvotopia” and “The real boobs” present a series of photos of female genitals and breasts, emphasizing their difference and uniqueness. A visual atmosphere is created where the holistic image fades away. Under the veil of quite important feminist visual expressions in the struggle to lift a taboo and develop a balanced attitude to female nature in present-day society, in reality, the image of a person is torn apart by physical and physiological features. The personality becomes only the representative of certain distinctions, in this particular case—physiological ones, which can also ultimately become the subject of the individual’s personal choice or undergo the process of construction as a form of implementation of the demands of the “new politics” of current individualism.

In general, within the current trends in approaches to the representation of an individual in advertising or creative projects, it may be observed how a person changes the position from being a main character and a center of the portrait to being just a background or a blank canvas open to realization of any whim: be it technical or creative transformations.

For instance, in the project “Abstract Geometry” by the Greek photographer Vasilis Topouslidis, the model’s face serves as an obedient background for the realization of the author’s bright geometric fantasies, and in the series

of photo portraits from the project “White Renaissance” by Alex Malikov, it undergoes color transformations designed to revive Renaissance approaches to a present-day unified person. An interesting view of the dominance of technological approaches to a person may be observed in the project of the Italian photographer Rafaeolo De Vito “Face_#” where the images are processed through a number of popular photo filters. The face of a specific person with distinct individual features becomes a background for digital modifications. In one image, instead of a face after “filtering”, a spot with watermarks remains, in another—a pixilated face spreads in different directions, sometimes turning into unrecognizable layers of human flesh subjected to technological processing. Such interpretation of an individual in the current dimensions of human being, on the one hand, points to certain limits and warns about the possible consequences of constructing human nature. On the other hand, it prepares the audience for more radical changes of the individual as a candidate for the world of bio-digital convergence as an evolutionary step in the human-machine society of the future. In both cases, it demonstrates the room for the intervention of advertising algorithms. Hence, here opens an opportunity for a split personality to construct oneself and one’s memories, according to the patterns of social demands of the “consumer society.”

Digital dimensions of reality require individuals to make endless efforts in order to constantly confirm their existence in a digital equivalent. The pictures change like flashes of emotions and disappear like “footprints on the sand.” Banner memory needs constant updating, infusion of new emotions, and creation of new symbols so that the individual is able to stay in the focus of public attention here and now. Memory is split into hundreds of thousands of fragments of moments that do not produce a complete picture. Collecting a superficial section of impressions, a person grows accustomed not

to look for the essential characteristics of a phenomenon, a person, or an event. Thus, portraiture falls into the symbolic circle of the processes of the formation of banner memory, when impressing, capturing the attention of the participant of social networks, receiving likes, embedding oneself in the digital dimensions of existence become the dominant factors in the formation of one’s personal image. The virtual world operates according to its own algorithms, where the preservation of memory turns into a flash-like chaotic activity to fill in specific digital space and time.

Conclusions. In the situation of dominance of the visual symbolic field of culture, within the framework of the formation of the individual’s visual image as a simplified message, consistent with current social demands, the memory of a certain personality becomes a subject to a number of influences and processes that enable its correction. With the development of technologies and the spread of mass media, a person gets used to a quick and superficial dealing with information that eventually reduces the analytical approach to reality to the minimum. The method of construction represented by image-making pervades all spheres of the current socio-cultural life. Our memories also pass through the process of image-making and thus are placed into a zone of a banner memory that becomes a wide field for manipulation. The construction of reality or its image-making, enhanced by the possibilities of digital technologies, narrows the possibilities of verifying events, phenomena, ideas about an individual, etc. It is this illusory virtual reality that becomes a basis for constructing our memory and for forming both a vision of the past and strategies of for future on this basis. At present, portraiture as an instrument for creating a visual image is joined with the processes of artificial construction of our memory and thus becomes an effective instrument for creating a banner memory, with a maximum level of falsification within the latter.

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Сучасні форми портретування як інструмент творення рекламної пам'яті

Анотація. На рубежі ХХ–ХХІ століть портретування зазнає суттєвих трансформацій. На тлі спроб «перевинайти» портрет як жанр розквітає портретування в новому статусі — як інструмент творення іміджу. Як одна з важливих форм збереження та трансляції пам'яті про індивіда портретування підпадає під вплив рекламних алгоритмів. Фіксація наших спогадів через портретування сьогодні стає провідником іміджевої ідеології, що змінює наше сприйняття себе та розуміння ролі та місця Homo Sapiens як в історії, так і в сучасному висококонкурентному символічному полі культури загалом. У статті осмислено нові форми та засоби портретування у зв'язку з нашаруванням рекламних запитів, а також проаналізовано підходи до збереження культурної пам'яті про індивіда через портретування в межах масової культури та в контексті розвитку цифрових технологій.

Ключові слова: портретування, образ, імідж, рекламна пам'ять, соцмедіа, селфі.

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