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## THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PICTORIAL AVANT-GARDE IN THE CREATION OF THE UKRAINIAN ARTIST DAVID BURLYUK

### TEORIA ȘI PRACTICA AVANT-GARDEI PICTURALE ÎN CREAȚIA ARTISTULUI UCRAINEAN DAVID BURLIUK

VIKTOR KARPOV<sup>1</sup>,

doctor of historical sciences,

Kyiv Metropolitan University named after Boris Grinchenko

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3446-9187>

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*Modeling the theory of the Ukrainian pictorial avant-garde based on the study of the theoretical views of avant-garde artists is an urgent scientific task of art history. The theory of the avant-garde unites a number of concepts of co-existing artistic currents with its ideals of the human creator and constitutes a certain integral essence of various aesthetic and artistic features. Avant-garde art, as the art of a new and unknown future, needed a theoretical basis for explaining the nature of artistic creation, interpreting it as a synthesis of the conscious and unconscious, the role of the artist and the viewer in their dialectical unity, the importance of the artistic process in social progress. Davyd Burlyuk became a bright follower of the ideas of the avant-garde, which stood out in addition to artistic creativity and its theoretical justification. The Ukrainian avant-garde is built on David Burlyuk's concept of movement and change. At the center of the artist's theoretical views is the creative personality with its freedom of choice of individual self-expression. The artist's views on the essence of avant-garde art became the theoretical basis of the avant-garde in the crowd of traditional ones, which allowed the new art to occupy its own separate place. David Burlyuk's theoretical canons for the construction of the composition of the work by the method of shifted construction, multiple perspective, texture, color space, free drawing are the basis of the creation of a new pictorial language, new aesthetics and the reconstruction of the artistic space of culture and a contribution to its development. The formation of the worldview basis of the artist's creativity took place on the basis of the traditions of his own national culture in organic unity with the European trends of renewal of the artistic space, which is a significant contribution to the development of the world avant-garde.*

**Keywords:** *avant-garde theory, David Burlyuk, Ukrainian avant-garde, futurism, anthropology of art, the beginning of the 20th century*

1 E-mail: [vvkarpoff@ukr.net](mailto:vvkarpoff@ukr.net)

*Modelarea teoriei avant-gardei picturale ucrainene, bazată pe studiul viziunilor teoretice ale artiștilor de avant-gardă, este o sarcină științifică urgentă a istoriei artei. Teoria avant-gardei unește o serie de concepte ale curentelor artistice coexistente cu idealurile creatorului uman și constituie esența integrală a diverselor trăsături estetice și artistice. Arta avant-gardistă, ca artă a unui viitor nou și necunoscut, avea nevoie de o bază teoretică pentru explicarea naturii creației artistice, interpretând-o ca o sinteză a conștientului și inconștientului, a rolului artistului și a privitorului în unitatea lor dialectică, a importanței afirmării procesului artistic în progresul social. David Burliuk a devenit un adept strălucit al ideilor avant-gardei, care s-a remarcat prin creativitatea artistică și justificarea ei teoretică. Avant-garda ucraineană este construită pe conceptul lui David Burliuk de mișcare și schimbare. În centrul viziunilor teoretice ale artistului se află personalitatea creativă și libera alegere a autoexprimării individuale a acesteia. Opiniile artistului asupra esenței artei avant-gardiste au stat la baza formării teoretice a avant-gardei, ceea ce a permis artei noi să ocupe un loc separat în mulțimea diversă a ideilor tradiționale. Canoanele teoretice ale lui David Burliuk referitoare la formarea compoziției operei prin diverse metode – construcția deplasată, perspectiva multiplă, textura, spațiul de culoare, desenul liber etc. – stau la baza creării unui nou limbaj pictural, a unei noi estetici și a reconstrucției artistice a unui spațiu cultural, care contribuie la dezvoltarea operei. Formarea viziunilor proprii asupra lumii, asupra creativității artistice a avut loc pe baza tradițiilor culturii naționale în unitate organică cu tendințele europene de reînnoire a spațiului artistic, ceea ce reprezintă o contribuție semnificativă la dezvoltarea avant-gardei mondiale.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** teoria avant-gardei, David Burliuk, avant-garda ucraineană, futurism, antropologia artei, începutul secolului XX

## Introduction

Ukraine also took part in the renewal of the artistic space of European culture at the beginning of the 20th century. Ukrainian original avant-garde art grows under the influence of the ideas of the French and Italian art schools in the womb and against the background of the destruction of Russian art and the manifestation of the Ukrainian national school based on the socio-political and economic events of the beginning of the 20th century. Or, as Oleksandr Bogomazov put it, on the basis of “dynamic forces of the environment” [1]. The theory of the avant-garde unites a row|benches, rows| concepts of coexist|coexist| artistic currents, each with its own ideal of a creative person and constitutes a certain integral essence of various aesthetic and artistic features.

In studying the theoretical views of the artists of new art, clarifying the question of its national meaning is an important scientific problem in modeling the theory of the Ukrainian pictorial avant-garde. For example, Benedikt Livshyts considered this phenomenon of artistic life to be generally cosmopolitan and devoid of national color. Dmytro Gorbachev, on the contrary, seeks to isolate Ukrainian art from the Russian space and emphasizes the national significance of avant-garde art, which was created on the territory of Ukraine during the Russian Empire, despite the nationality of the artists themselves. Evgeny Kyrychenko claims that in the architecture of the concept of new art architects personified the concept of the national and were busy not so much with the search for the new as the national, appealing to the national heritage as proof of the existence of their own national tradition, which is reborn in new forms [2 p. 101]. The artists of the artistic avant-garde, in their search for something new, also turned to the original, to the national tradition, and we can state that this phenomenon is a characteristic feature of Ukrainian avant-garde art. Primitivism in art served as an expression of pure anthropological meaning in folk art, something archaic and unknown and subconscious. As Myroslav Shkandrii points out, David Burlyuk's primitivism is connected with his understanding of the emotional, unconscious and mystical, which can be felt by creative individuals. That is why domestic avant-garde art, which has absorbed the best traditions of national culture, is considered as a Ukrainian, original and unique phenomenon in the world culture. In her research, Nataliya Kanishyna emphasizes that folk art, Ukrainian icon painting, and the artistic heritage of the Ukrainian Baroque influenced the formation of the worldview of Ukrainian avant-garde artists, determined the originality and national specificity of their work [3 p. 19].

The discourse of the national in the vanguard is also possible based on the territorial feature [4], that is, the place where it was born and spread outside of Europe, but the figure of David Burlyuk with his frantic will to change the canons of artistic creation, the continuous creative boiling of the energy of his personality and inspiration raises questions and roles the artist in defining the national

in the “cosmopolitan”. His self-identification as a descendant of a Cossack family (he wore an ear ring in his right ear) was noticed by V. Khlebnikov and in 1919 he dedicated the poem “Burlyuk” to him, in which he wrote: “And, hero, you came out of the mound of your ancient homeland.” I. Savytskyi and O. Noga joined the search for the Ukrainian roots of the founder of the Ukrainian avant-garde and the father of the Russian avant-garde David Burlyuk [5]. The most complete bibliography on the topic of the study of the Ukrainian artistic avant-garde was presented by the Lesya Ukrainka Public Library [6].

### **Goal**

The purpose of the proposed article is to study the publicized views of David Burlyuk on the development of art in Ukraine at the beginning of the 20th century and the formation of the theory of the Ukrainian avant-garde.

### **Materials and methods**

Avant-garde art, as the art of a new and unknown future, required theoretical searches to explain the nature of artistic creation, its interpretation as a synthesis of the conscious and unconscious, the role of the artist and the viewer in their dialectical unity, the importance of the artistic process in social progress. David Burlyuk became a bright follower of the ideas of the avant-garde, which stood out apart from his artistic creativity and his theoretical justification of the break with academic traditions. “My stubbornness is aimed at overcoming old preferences and preaching, at bringing new art, wild beauty into life,” he wrote [7 p. 155]. Myroslav Shkandrii emphasized that David Burlyuk’s expression “wild beauty” essentially became his artistic ideal, and this wildness went hand in hand with the intensity, energy, love of life and eroticism of the artist’s personality [8 p. 113].

On his way to establishing the avant-garde, the artist painted thousands of realistic and impressionist, neo-impressionist, cubist and futuristic canvases. And it would be historically unreliable to narrow his work only to the aesthetics of futurism. Contemporaries compared him with Van Gogh, and Alexandra Ekster, within the framework of impressionism, called him the “Russian Sisley” [9 p. 138]. However, as Oleksandr Bogomazov said, under the influence of the environment, his art of “wild beauty” was filled with Ukrainian sounds.

The avant-garde was formed in the process of mutual infiltration of elements of Ukrainian and Russian cultures, the carriers of which were artists [10 p. 11]. David Burlyuk himself did not sever ties with Russian art and saw his role in it as similar to the great cleansing role of Claude Monet, which he performed on a global scale. In his opinion, the avant-garde in Russian art arose on the basis of new Western ideals and had a slow progress.

In her dissertation research, Iryna Kuzmenko also concludes that European currents have become only laboratory material for the development of the identity of the Ukrainian avant-garde [10 p. 11] and offers an intermediate category of defining the avant-garde in its national sense - the Russian-Ukrainian avant-garde and reaches a strange generalization, calling it avant-garde art Slavic [11 p. 36]. She notes that the theoretical principles of avant-garde art that developed on the territory of the Russian Empire differed from European standards. In contrast to the politically aggressive Italian futurism, the Slavic futurism revealed the social basis of its “anti-directional performances”.

We come to the conclusion that the national feature of the avant-garde is its origin, territorial existence, and in the sense of the Ukrainian narrative, the artists’ search for something new in the primacy of folk creativity. In modern historical conditions, the avant-garde emerged from oblivion and, under the influence of Ukrainian state-building, transformed into a national cultural heritage, as a part of Ukrainian art [12].

The count down to the avant-garde progress of art was set in 1899 by the “World of Art” exhibition. David Burlyuk connected the “hopes of Russian renewed art” [13 p.126] with the achievements

of Western artists, from whom the new artist from the Russian Empire drew and learned. It is enough to say that the avant-garde was established in the artistic space at the same time as the eruption of national traditions and the establishment of Ukrainian art, at the origins of which David Burlyuk stood next to other artists. However, as early as 1919, Fedor Schmidt stated the gap between the individualism of avant-garde art and the collectivism of socialists, explaining that since the establishment of their power, the destructive art of the avant-garde came into conflict with the desire to preserve what was created by socialists as a result of the revolution and was being forgotten [14].

Davyd Burlyuk highlighted the difference in the style of Ukrainian and Russian artists. The Ukrainian steppes involuntarily dictated to him the horizontal format of his paintings, he became a “singer of mares” by painting many “Ukrainian galloping horses”, he loved Ukraine “my dear Motherland”, the color of his paintings is deeply national in which yellow-hot, green-yellow, blue shades prevail. As he, himself admitted: “In my work, I must note, Ukraine has its most loyal son in me” [15 p.147]. His Ukrainian soul lived outside of Ukraine at the time of his creation. And this Ukrainian essence of the artist’s worldview is the basis for establishing the national narrative in avant-garde art.

Myroslav Shkandrii notes that the contemplation of the steppe with its countless forms of life excited David Burlyuk’s creative nature, which stimulated the artist to create a new art. Burlyuk perceived the steppe as undisturbed lands filled with traces of archaic ancient cultures [8 p. 124]. From here, the artist borrowed the idea of barbaric energy and strength for his futuristic art, the art of “wild beauty” [8 p. 108].

David Burlyuk also left his vision of the way to a break with academicism and progress towards the avant-garde. Pure painting in his understanding is the expression of its elements in a work of art. Each art has its own characteristics and features unique to it. Painting is based on its own elements such as line, color, light and shadow, planar structure and texture, which the artist uses in his work. His vision of pure art coincides with Oleksandr Bogomazov’s statement about painting and its elements. Therefore, they both see the interpretation of the role of the elements of painting, which constitute “pure art” [9 p. 128], as the starting point of the new pictorial language. And as Mykhailo Gershenfeld emphasized in March 1914 in the catalog for the Odesa Spring Exhibition of Paintings, painters in search of a new spirituality of man look for its expression in the creation of a new pictorial language [16].

David Burlyuk’s avant-garde art is based on an anthropological approach and a philosophical category of thinking. He claimed that when talking about the nature of any art, one should touch not only human consciousness, but also “the secrets of being, the depths of thinking” [9 p. 129]. Such thoughts of his in the 21st century are embodied in the theory of neuroaesthetics of Vileyannur S. Ramachandra and Semir Zeki, neuroartstories of John Onyans, neurographics of Pavel Piskarev, and neuroart of Luke Delano, Natalia Sirotynska, and Viktor Karpov [17].

Avant-garde is based on an anthropological approach to creativity. In the center of avant-garde art, objective nature no longer reigns, but man with his new consciousness. The object of pictorial interpretation is not only the visible world, but also the boundless, hidden world of the human soul. The aesthetics of the beauty of the art of painting is a means and a workshop “where a superman can be forged” [9 p. 131]. We can emphasize that David Burlyuk saw the main task of new art in promoting the creation of a superman, which directly refers us to Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of a superman, in the center of which is a free man not limited by traditional values that destroy his anthropological ability to be in nature [18].

Man in the theorizing of the avant-garde is an image collective|collective|, appears to be the central meaning-making definition of the philosophy of the avant-garde. Fundamental differences invision|vision| of a person occur |originated| as a result of the desire of each author for absolute innovation and endless |infinite| embodiment|self-affirmation| of “his” art or “his” view|vision| on the development of culture and art and self-affirmation in this new modern culture[19].

In the theory of the avant-garde, it is important to define the essence of the basic categories of “new” and “tradition” in the context of the confrontation between the new avant-garde and traditional arts. According to Tatyana Chop, the main goal of this dualism was to create a homogeneous living environment in which the artificiality of mechanistic pragmatism and the sensuality, passion of the natural world would be harmoniously combined [20].

David Burlyuk expressed his own original vision of the development of art. In his opinion, the art of painting is revolutionary in terms of its new, previously unknown forms in specific historical conditions, but in general it is “called the most complete germination, evolution” of the spreading art [9 p. 133]. New revolutionary forms of art became a rebellion against academic art. However, David Burlyuk considered new views and ideas of art development related to its avant-garde currents as a life process of art and a supplement to its existing forms in their unity despite the artistic antagonism of forms. Mykhailo Gershenfeld also emphasizes that, despite its revolutionary nature, the avant-garde plays an evolutionary role in the development of art: “when an artist tells us about his perceptions in a new and as yet unknown form, his achievements expand the external visible world” [16, 180], and therefore not deny,

Views on the evolutionary role of the development of art in general, and the role of avant-garde art in this are also shared by Mykhailo Dragan, who noted that the impressionists, who were the first to begin the search for subjective experience of the surrounding world, fragmented light and its changing movement into individual elements of colorful colors [21 p.199]. This became the basis of a new artistic concept and a new image of the world. But impressionism, having reached the limits of form, never reached the complete immateriality inherent in futurism. The subjective reflection of reality in impressionism did not reach the reflection of subjective experiences and ideas in the avant-garde. However, impressionism paved the way to the subjective self in art.

In the theoretical reflections of David Burlyuk, we find an explanation of the terms avant-garde. In particular, he considers the concept of space as a space of color in three dimensions. The artist transforms the flat beginning in painting into a spatial, three-dimensional one thanks to the texture and character of the surface of the picture, in which the painter becomes a “sculptor for an hour” [9 p. 135].

The manner of conveying movement in the avant-garde leads to the optical destruction of form, which is observed in his paintings painted between 1908 and 1930. In particular, movement is conveyed by the repetition of one form next to another in the plane of passage of a moving object, or as the decay, decomposition of the form of visible objects in cubist works. In contrast to the artists of the early avant-garde era from the “Jack of Diamonds”, Burlyuk painted paintings with meaning, pursuing a purely pictorial language by highlighting pictorial elements to which he attributes color, lines, planes and textures. The unconscious manifestation of the inner experiences of the artist with the help of colors and lines in the forefront finds a rhythm and gives birth to the meaning of the picture.

Color and paint are symbolic representatives of light in the artist’s paintings. Here, it is appropriate to mention his impressionistic painting technique, when the paint flows on the canvas, “as light pours in, washing away and removing the contours and shapes of objects.” The artist wrote that the audience will not see peace in his paintings, because they are full of movement and, in terms of compositional techniques, are hostile to geometric construction. As he put it - “progressed along the path of the Impressionists - “from the stain”. Mykhailo Gershenfeld sees in this a new artistic consciousness, which seeks to convey one’s own feelings in a simple way, resorting to generalization or taking colors in their primary bases, which have nothing to do with the local coloring of objects [15 p. 181]. The set of spots acquires its meaning, which comes from the imagination and inner world of the artist.

The Ukrainian avant-garde is built on David Burlyuk’s concept of movement and change, gleaned from his observation of the renewal of nature. “The history of art is not a sequentially unfolded tape,

but a multifaceted prism that rotates around its axis, turning to a person from one side, then from another. There was no progress in art, there is no and there will be no! Etruscan statues are in no way inferior to Phidias. Every era has the right to recognize itself as a Renaissance!" - declared the artist [21].

Davi Burlyuk's futurism consisted in the anthropological transformation of living nature by the power of imagination, sensory experiences, inspiration into a new world, a world that reflects the inner world of man in a new pictorial language. Burlyuk refers to the canon of shifted construction, to the arsenal of this language. As an example, in the portrait of Benedikt Livshyts, painted by Volodymyr Burlyuk during his stay in Chornianka and preparation for the "Knave of Diamonds" exhibition in Moscow, his left eye was moved "for greater expressiveness" to the ear. This "greater expressiveness" is manifested in the need to complicate perception, to detach it from the usual reflex, to abandon the traditional perspective and conventional perspectives. What is important in the canon of shifted construction is not the shift of constructions itself, but how things are built according to this canon. To achieve such a task, the object is laid out on the main planes, divided into small parts until the external similarity is lost, and in this way the futuristic character of the thing is revealed [22 p. 303].

Among the canons of David Burlyuk should be attributed the doctrine of multiple perspective expressed in the relativity of projection on a plane. This is when the landscape could be simultaneously transmitted from several points of view. This embodied the desire of the Cubists to find "in the fourth dimension the keys to mastering the first three" [22 p. 305]. In essence, according to this theory of cubism, space, as a concept of classical academic painting, disappeared.

The notion of the texture of a painting is of great importance in David Burlyuk's theory of the avant-garde. The texture canon requires that the surface of the work should not be calm and should have a landscape close to a bas-relief image. Benedikt Lifshits gives an example of creating such a texture - when Volodymyr, upon David's remark about the very calm surface of the work, throws the canvas into a puddle, and later covers the remains of sand, clay, and earth with a thick layer of paint [22 p. 306]. The tactile, textural quality of Burlyuk's paintings is related to his one-eyedness, Myroslav Shkandriy explains, but that is not why the artist calls the surface of the works the face and labyrinths of life. In the surfaces of his works and avant-garde works in general, he sees a dialogue with the viewer, a tactile, sensual transmission of his own aesthetic experiences built on observations of nature: "in every puddle there is the smell of the ocean, in every stone - the breath of the desert" [8 p. 116].

Next to the canons of shifted construction, multiple perspective and texture in David Burlyuk's theory there is a canon of color formation of volumes. Color and only color ruled the forms and volumes. The artist defined the pictorial space of the work as "Color Space" [9 p.135], which transitions from the planar to the volumetric principle. Color and paint become symbolic representatives of light. "When I write, it seems to me that I am a savage who rubs a piece of paint against another to get a color effect," Davyd Burlyuk admits. The artist called this color effect, the effect of sensual excitement full of one color, characteristic features and features of another, the burning effect [9 p. 137]. His paintings are full of intense contrast of colors and a mysterious and vital world opens up to the viewer.

David Burlyuk, in the explanations of his own paintings, often refers to the concept of "free drawing": "A drawing that is based on the transfer of character, outside the boundaries of academic concepts of proportions and concepts of symmetry. On this canon of free drawing, all archaic art, icons, lubok, realized sensuality of style and diversity of forms accessible to the image of a creative brush (as a set of general concepts) are built" [11].

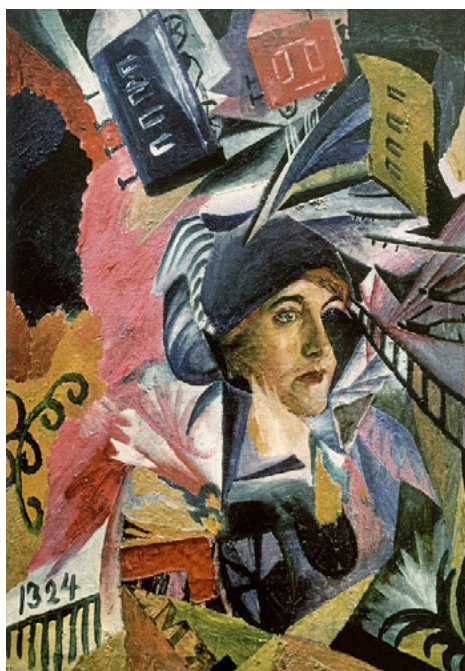
David Burlyuk himself, despite all the denial of the canon soft traditional art, did not deny the possibility of its existence, as well as other types of manifestation of human creativity. In the article "Address to Young Artists" published in the "Futurist Newspaper" D. Burlyuk writes: "We will always respect the creative personality that strives for freedom. ... All directions should be presented at a kind of competition of hearts destined for beauty" [23 p. 8].

*Drawing 1.* David Burlyuk. Roundabout. 1921. Oil on canvas.



Source: Collection of the National Art Museum of Ukraine [24, 120].

*Drawing 2.* David Burlyuk. Time. 1910s. Oil on canvas.



*Drawing 3.* David Burlyuk. Spring. 1913. Oil on canvas.



Source: Collection of the National Art Museum of Ukraine 3. [24 p. 110]. 3. Source: Collection of the National Art Museum of Ukraine [24 p. 112]

### Conclusions

So, the theory of avant-garde art of David Burlyuk is based on the anthropological concept of sensual reinterpretation of living nature by the power of imagination, sensual experiences, inspirations and creation of a new worldview, which reflects the inner world of man in a new pictorial language. In the center of the artist's theoretical views is the creative personality with its freedom of choice of individual self-expression. The artist's views on the essence of avant-garde art became the theoretical basis of the avant-garde in the crowd of traditional ones, which allowed the new art to occupy its own separate place. David Burlyuk's views on the construction of the composition of the work by the

method of shifted construction, multiple perspective, texture, color space, free drawing are the basis of the creation of a new pictorial language, new aesthetics and the reconstruction of the artistic space of culture and a contribution to its development. The formation of the worldview basis of the artist's creativity took place on the basis of the traditions of his own national culture in organic unity with the European trends of renewal of the artistic space, which is a significant contribution to the development of the world avant-garde.

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