Human Arenas
https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-023-00348-4

ARENA OF CREATION

Surovy Stil as a Reflection on the Wartime Experience in the Work of Tetyana Yablonska, a Nomenklatura Artist of Soviet Ukraine

Iryna Sytnyk[1]

Received: 7 February 2023 / Revised: 6 April 2023 / Accepted: 21 April 2023

Abstract

Socialist realism, which has already become a classic of the twentieth century art, is arousing genuine interest in the world art market. The objectives were as follows: to identify the main features of the "surovy stil" in Soviet art; to trace the appeal to the "surovy stil" in the work of Tetyana Yablonska; to characterise the artistic features of Tetyana Yablonska's works made during the "thaw", in which she turned to the "surovy stil". The research methodology is based on a set of principles of historicism, art criticism approach, and axiological, hermeneutic, ontological, historical-genetic, and historical-cultural methods of art criticism analysis. Its most significant manifestations, which have a separate, self-valuable character, are such "proletarian" phenomena by their nature as "Stalin's Empire style", "surovy stil", and "nonconformism". The scientific novelty of the study lies in the disclosure of the features of the "surovy stil" in the works of Tetyana Yablonska of the 1960s–1970s.

Keywords Socialist realism · "Surovy stil" · Tetyana Yablonska · Soviet Union · Ukraine · XX century

Introduction

"Surovy stil" is a conditional term until today, which arose in the depths of the creative method of socialist realism in the period after the Great Patriotic War. This phenomenon had a number of reasons for its appearance, and requires detailed study. After all, professing the values of the society of that time, even the leading artists who stood at the "helm" of individual mainstream trends within socialist realism had to balance at the intersection of the concepts of "artist and power" and "values of Soviet society" (Seok et al., 2021). At the same time, since the 1930s, there has been a need to closely monitor art criticism in the press, endlessly fearing for their lives and the lives of their loved ones, sometimes

✉ Iryna Sytnyk
ir.sytnyk@meta.ua

[1] Department of Fine Arts, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, 18/2 I. Shamo Blvd., Kyiv 02154, Ukraine

Published online: 08 May 2023

waiting for the arrival of a "black funnel" (a police wagon for transporting prisoners), after the arrival of which creative personalities usually disappeared in exile, prisons, and even executed. After all, any acts of creation, which then deviated from the official creative "course" outlined by the party and the government, inevitably led to clashes between the interests of the authorities and the people, as well as confrontations (obvious or hidden).

On the crest of such socio-political and artistic-cultural paradigms, however, the truly gifted, talented masters, the "titans" of their time were at the forefront at that time. A feature of their creative life was the need to become "forward-looking", who had to not only develop themselves, but also lead many people, showing their own example (Martinkovic, 2005). In the context of studying the "surovy stil" in Soviet art, it is appropriate to examine the work of Tetyana Yablonska, an outstanding Ukrainian artist who was at the forefront of this creative movement.

One of such powerful personalities in a creative way was an outstanding Ukrainian artist Tetyana Yablonska (1917, Smolensk – 2005, Kyiv), who had the mission to lead the National Union of Artists. Her creative experiments today surprise with their "strength" of writing, and amaze with the understanding that behind the energy "power" that simply "rushes" from her works, there is a real legendary Soviet woman, "squeezed" into the grip of the demands of the time, and, oddly enough, she managed to show all the nobility of her nature and an amazing understanding of the foundations of the universe of her time in contemporary high art in these "Spartan" conditions.

Many art historians in the Soviet and post-Soviet space, as well as in the countries of the former Soviet Union and beyond, have studied the heritage of socialist realism. Separate publications on the subject have also appeared in Hungary, Poland, Germany, France, Canada, the USA, and other powers. Typical examples are editions about the aesthetic affects of socialist realism (Efimova, 1997), about urban memorials made in the socialist realism style (Arandelovic, 2018), and about today's reinterpretation of the legacy of socialist realism (Moskalevich, 2020). Socialist realism emerged in the Soviet Union in the 1930s as an artistic style intended to promote Soviet ideals and values. It was closely tied to Soviet propaganda, and its realistic style and focus on themes of workers, peasants, and revolutionary heroes helped to create a positive image of the Soviet Union domestically and internationally. However, socialist realism also had a dark side, as artists were often pressured to conform to strict guidelines and were punished if their work was deemed too abstract or critical of the government. The use of grotesque imagery played a role in socialist realism, as it was often used to depict the enemy as monstrous or inhuman. The grotesque helped to dehumanize the enemy and make them easier to hate and fight against. The use of grotesque imagery in art was not unique to socialist realism, as it had flourished in Germany after World War I, as seen in the works of artists like Otto Dix. In contrast to socialist realism, surrealism emerged in the early twentieth century as a movement that celebrated the irrational and the subconscious. Surrealist artists sought to break free from the constraints of traditional art forms and to explore the depths of the human psyche. Surrealism was often critical of social and political institutions, and its imagery often subverted traditional norms and expectations. While socialist realism and surrealism are opposites, they are both important artistic movements that reflect the cultural and political contexts in which they emerged.

Separate articles were also devoted to the problems of nonconformism in Soviet art, as a way out of the norms and canons strictly regulated by official censorship. These include articles by about "cultural dissent and desertion" in the ranks of Soviet nonconformist artists (Wyszomirski et al., 1988), about the Soviet experience in the field of nonconformist art 1956–1986 (Bryant, 1996), and about cosmic inspirations

and research of Soviet nonconformists (Kolodzei, 2021). These works, as well as one article by Reznikova (1983), dedicated to the painting of the leading Ukrainian artist Tetyana Yablonska, are included in the Scopus and Web of Science databases.

However, the proper understanding of the foundations of the "surovy stil" has not yet been devoted to separate publications, the results of which would be published on these two platforms. Although some publications on this artistic phenomenon have been published in Ukraine and Russia in the last few years, in view of the individual studies of artists of the second half of the twentieth century. In Russia, above all, it is the work of Bobrikov (2003) "Surovy stil: Mobilization and cultural revolution", and in Ukraine—monograph "Century of nonconformism in Ukrainian visual art" (Smyrna, 2017). They are joined by the article "Exhumation of social realism" based on the materials of the Odessa Art Museum exhibition (Doroshenko, 2019). It attempts to understand the artistic "kitchen" of that time. Therefore, it is necessary to pay close attention to this phenomenon of art, a little part of which is reflected in international scientific usage.

At the same time, it is interesting to note that even in the 10-volume "New Encyclopedic Dictionary of Fine Art", which was published in Russia during the 2000s–early 2010s under the editorship of Viktor Vlasov, which contains articles on almost all genera, types, genres, and styles of art of different eras, the concept of "surovy stil" was not discussed. The same can be said about the latest "History of Ukrainian Art" (published during 2007–2011 at the Rylsky Institute of Art Studies, Folklore and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) (Skripnik, 2011), and "Essays on the History of Fine Art of Ukraine of the twentieth century" (published in the 2010s at the Modern Art Research Institute of the National Academy of Arts of Ukraine) (Sydorenko, 2006), where "surovy stil" was not the subject of a separate study.

The new "surovy stil" rejected the socialist realism's emphasis on propaganda and glorification of Soviet ideals, and instead focused on expressing the artists' personal experiences and emotions. The "surovy stil" drew influences from various artistic movements that came before it, including the avant garde and modernist movements of the early twentieth century. It was also heavily influenced by the work of artists who had been repressed under Stalin's regime, such as Kazimir Malevich and Wassily Kandinsky. The study of the "surovy stil" beyond the history of arts is relevant in understanding the social and political paradigms of the Soviet Union during the twentieth century. The emergence of this artistic style can be seen as a reflection of the socio-political and cultural conditions at that time, and studying it can provide insights into the challenges faced by artists who sought to express themselves while also conforming to the official creative course outlined by the government. In the case of Tetyana Yablonska, her creative experiments during the "thaw" period are a testament to her talent and dedication as an artist, and studying her works can provide a deeper understanding of the foundations of the universe of her time. Furthermore, studying the emergence and development of artistic styles such as the "surovy stil" and socialist realism shed light on the ways in which art was used as a tool for propaganda and how artists navigated the political pressures of their time. The research question of this article is "What is the influence of 'surovy stil' on Tetyana Yablonska's work during the post-WWII period and how does it reflect her wartime experiences as a Nomenklatura artist in Soviet Ukraine?" The purpose of the study is to identify the components of the stylistics of the "surovy stil" in the work of Tetyana Yablonska.

The Concept of "Surovy Stil" and Its Reflection in Artistic Creativity

The concept of "surovy stil" was first introduced by the Moscow art critic A. Kamensky in the period after the so-called Khrushchev thaw (1953–1957) in the Soviet Union (Arandelovic, 2018). Initially, this term was used to refer primarily to the art of 1957–1962. However, later, upon closer examination, it turned out that the first manifestations of such stylistics can be noticed in the second half of the 1940s, immediately after the end of World War II. And the appeal to the excessively "dry", ascetically exhausted images, which at first the artists opposed to the fake false "satiety" and "prosperity", displayed from the programme historical canvases of the "Stalinist Empire", dragged on in the works of individual Ukrainian artists until the mid–second half of the 1970s.

In fact, deviation from the course of development of painting, chosen by the "party and the government" from the late 1950s to early 1960s was an act of the second wave of modernist art and its formalism in the work of individual artists of the Soviet Union. Unable to afford experiments with modernistic manifestations of surrealism or pop art, the leading masters of Soviet painting, such as Tetyana Yablonska, who headed the Kyiv School of Painting (Svetlyakov, 2020), or her close friend A. Kashshay, who headed the Transcarpathian School of Painting, went into other qualities of art.

For example, in decorativism, linearity, flatness, and condensation of individual suggestive features of the characters, who, instead of pathos characteristic of previous eras, brought fatigue, study, frown, restraint, simplicity, bitterness of life, and even some infantilism into the world, that is, the truth, and not fake staged shots of non-existent events. After all, the post-war period in the Soviet Union was not "all roses". The time was really tough, associated with hardships, bitterness of loss, and all kinds of human limitations in the conditions of modern society. At a time when victims of the totalitarian regime began to return from Stalin's concentration camps, they were adding a new dimension to the Soviet way of life by "debunking the romantic cult" of the lumber camps, the mines, and the working lives of ordinary Soviet people.

The emergence of the phenomenon of the Sixties, who, after the Iron Curtain was lifted, rethought the binding of ordinary people's lives to their blind love of the leaders, influenced the formation of a new way of thinking of "homo soveticus". It already had a place for P. Picasso's Guernica, recalling the Boychukists, the Suprematists, the Primitivists legacy, V. Krichevsky, A. Petritsky, and the artists of the "Executed Renaissance" of the 1930s, which marked the post-war return to the second wave of modernist painting.

An important component of this art was monumentality, the silhouette of compositions marked by broad lines which revealed, through rather crude plastic modelling, a lapidary form. The canvases of the masters—adherents of this style—appealed to the heroics of ordinary everyday life of ordinary people. Sometimes they were single-figure compositions, like those of Tetyana Yablonska, who sat under their iconostasis in a traditional Ukrainian peasant house (The world of Tatiana…, 2020). At the same time, some artists also turned to a multi-figure painting, in which they tried to reflect the pathos of industrial construction and the renewal of the surrounding world in the genre of landscape.

While the artists relied on the key concept of social realism—showing the "truth of life", but in its somewhat unsightly beauty—the aesthetics of the beautiful were understood in manifestations of the sad, if not horrific, man in a sweatshirt, a small person with a big inner world in peacetime. In this "Decembrist" image, there was also mockery of one's own primitive state in this machine of the Soviet order, irony, and even resentment of the injustice of being.

The grey-brown scale, in which the reflection of the realism of the nineteenth century was visible, seemed to "smooth out" the rudeness and generalisation of plastic modelling of images, translating it into an understanding of a certain academic beginning of painting bordering on noble grisaille. The deliberate muted tones and the mournful monotony of the colour scheme were supposed to strain the viewer with their deliberate, exposed "minor".

Devoid of individualised features, the somewhat "amorphous", vague images were meant to look like ghosts of people from the past, reminding everyone of their sacred duty to them. The task of the spectator, who became an accomplice in this dynamic "neuroticism" and had to share the emphasised immense sadness for a lost world, was to search for meanings, moods and forms. These qualities of the "surovy stil", in fact, later became a springboard from permissible forms of socialist realism to nonconformism (the art of insubordination) in the Soviet art space. They also served as the beginning of the appearance of more chamber versions of social art (Smyrna, 2018). The "surovy stil" in Soviet art emerged in the 1920s as a rejection of traditional artistic forms and a move towards a more abstract, geometric style. The epistemological foundation of this style was rooted in a belief that traditional art forms, such as realism and romanticism, were inadequate for representing the new socialist reality. Instead, the "surovy stil" sought to create a new visual language that was appropriate for the new socialist society. The "surovy stil" was revolutionary in its rejection of individualised features in favour of more "amorphous", abstract forms that represented the collective rather than the individual. The emphasis on searching for meaning, mood, and form in the art was also a departure from traditional art forms that sought to represent reality as it was. This emphasis on abstract forms and the collective over the individual paved the way for nonconformism in Soviet art, which rejected the strict confines of socialist realism. The "surovy stil" was a precursor to more chamber versions of social art, which were characterised by a greater focus on individual experiences and emotions. This move towards more individualised forms of art was a departure from the collective emphasis of the Severe Style, but it was still rooted in the epistemological foundation of rejecting traditional art forms in favour of new, more appropriate forms for the socialist reality. Overall, the "surovy stil" was a revolutionary movement in Soviet art that paved the way for new forms of artistic expression.

It is believed that it was during the 1960s–1970s that two varieties of the "surovy stil" appeared. One was a response to hardships and appealed to the harsh everyday life of the post-war period. In this direction of the "surovy stil", there were clear notes of decorative ethnographism, and, sometimes, folklore. A typical example may be the work "Immortality" by the artist Tetyana Golembijevska (1973).

The second was based on the legacy of the Ukrainian modernists of the 1920s–1930s. Here, a special tribute was paid to the legacy of the masters of Mykhailo Boychuk's circle—the so-called boychukists. The special feature of their proletarian worldview was a return to the high art of the Proto-Renaissance with its pure biblical "iconography" and the "distilled" aesthetic component of the sacred culture of the Middle Ages. Such a reinterpretations of interrupted traditions, in which the notion of the "national" becomes an important measure of beauty, are works such as Moysey Weinstein's "Likbes" from the 1960s (based on developments by the boychukist Vasil Sedlyar with his understanding of the "Last Supper").

Thus, Lesya Smyrna cites the following programme works of "surovy stil" in Ukraine: "Geodesists" by Lev Vitkovsky (1963), "On the site of past battles. My fellow countrymen" by Ivan-Valentyn Zadorozhny (1964), "Tea Room" by Opanas Zalyvakha (1965), "Walk. Valya and Valentyn" by Ihor Hryhoryev (1965), "Defenders of Sevastopol" by Volodymyr Kaluga (1965), "Prodotryad" by Anatoliy Nasedkin (1967), "In the Name of Life" by Alexander

Khmelntyskyi (1967), "Commissar" by Vyacheslav Tokarev (1967), "Builders" by Galina Neledva (1967), "Relics of Brest" by Viktor Ryzhikh (1969), "War" by Oleksandr Lopukhov (1969), "Mothers' Thoughts" by Natalya Marchenko (1971–1972), "Irtysh Fishermen" by Aleksey Gubarev (1967), "Soldiers" by Sergey Gordeits (1977) (8, p. 227).

She also notes that these artists with a dramatic worldview, far from the "hurrah-parade" concept of socialist realist art, have prepared the appearance of nonconformist works made in a personal-psychological way. Such as Alla Horska, Moysey Weinstein, and Sergey Parajanov, who demonstrated the "unsteadiness of search, blurring of ideas, lack of confidence in prospects" characteristic of nonconformist aesthetics (Smyrna, 2018).

Analysis of Tetyana Yablonska's Creativity as One of the Brightest Representatives of the "Surovy Stil"

Tatyana Yablonska, a coeval of the new Soviet regime, stood at the origins of Ukrainian Soviet art at the dawn of the belief in the victory of proletarian communism, and lived through all its stages from the middle to the second half of the twentieth century. Thus, the new worldview was perceived by the artist in her student years. Being a student of the outstanding Ukrainian artist Fedir Krychevsky during 1935–1941 at the Kyiv Art Institute (painting workshop), the art of Tetyna Yablonska was formed on moving from the national to the pan-European level of skill (Parovatkina, 2017).

A few years earlier, Mykhailo Boychuk, who was in love with Ukrainian ethno-primitivism, the art of Byzantium, and the Proto-Renaissance, later accused of "Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism", taught in the same building (Smyrna, 2018). Knowledge of the fundamentals of the monumental school of Mykhailo Boychuk, enriched by its own monumentality and art deco decorativeness of the school of the outstanding Ukrainian artist Fedir Krychevsky, later became the guiding star of the work of the future chief artist of the Kyiv School of Painting Tetyana Yablonska.

Her talents were revealed during the Stalin era, when twice in a row, in 1950 and 1951, she was awarded the Stalin prizes for her outstanding creative services to the fatherland, the highest awards of the Soviet society of that time. During the "Khrushchev thaw", when the exits to international orbits were slightly opened, she was also delegated as one of the most talented masters of painting of the Soviet Union. From 1951 to 1959, Tetyana Yablonska was a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR. During this period, in 1956, she took part in the XXVII International Art Exhibition in Venice (Venice Biennale). And in 1958, her works were exhibited at the World Exhibition in Brussels. This recognition was the beginning of more than 30 triumphant solo exhibitions in Kyiv, Moscow, Budapest, London, and other European centres.

From 1964 to 1982, Leonid Brezhnev took the post of General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. During this period, Tetyana Yablonska had great power in the socio-political life of Soviet Ukraine and the entire Soviet Union, where her name took a significant place next to the legends of Soviet sculpture Josephine Dindo (author of "Reaper", "Milkmaid", "Dishwasher" of the late 1920s–1930s) and Vera Mukhina (author of the epoch-making "Worker and Collective Farmer" 1937). During the Brezhnev era, Yablonska could afford unheard-of "liberties" by Soviet standards: at the Congress of Artists of Ukraine in 1968, she criticized the excessive "guardianship" by the party organs of modern Soviet art. It was a real act of nonconformism—disagreement with the authorities.

The same period was dated by one of her first works, executed in line with the "surovy stil", which became a separate leitmotif of her work for two decades. After the "replicas" on the severity of military hardships of the second half of the 1940s ("Defending Khreshchatyk" 1945, "Evening on the Dnipro" 1946, "From work. The village of Letava" in 1948) and the 1950s ("On the construction site" in 1957), the artist from the mid-1960s began to actively develop her creative experiments in this direction of painting.

The year of the change of power in the country is marked by the milestone works "Ukraine", "Darling", "The head of a woman", "Visiting grandchildren", and "Widows" (Fig. 1) (1964). Already in them, she sacralises, in the spirit of the Sedlyar boychukist studios, images of exhausted women from the people—new madonnas-martyresses with kind eyes extinguished from pain, whom she identifies with the image of the mother Ukraine. At the same time, she uses strong plastic modelling of the portrayed, in each of which can be seen the Motherland.

With somewhat rough, lapidary lines, Tetyana Yablonska traces the edges of angular dark faces, paying tribute to Theophanes the Greek and ancient Russian iconography with assists after the Mongol-Tatar invasion. Each of these images looks as if taken from the cross, or rather, one that carries their cross with a stern frown. The tragedy and drama of the symbolic compositions are completed by a brown-grey painting with a rather gloomy colour scheme in a deliberately minor key.

Perhaps such an interpretation of reality with a hyperbolised sense of the hardships of being was consonant with the psychological post-traumatic transformations that society

Fig. 1 Tetyana Yablonska "Widows", 1964

was finally undergoing after the artificial planting of an imaginary joy of life after the end of World War II. This is a departure into metaphorism. The appearance of the "surovy style" is connected with this. This departure into metaphorism reflects the sombre metaphorical, symbolic quest of Soviet artists in the midst of socialist realism, as they searched for a rejection of the bravura of socialist realism and found within it a kind of underground-modernist approach. From a psychological perspective, this could be interpreted as a way for artists to process and express the trauma and suffering experienced during the war, as well as the difficulties of rebuilding society in its aftermath. By turning to a pre-conformist style and focusing on the everyday experiences and struggles of individuals, artists like Yablonska may have been attempting to create a more authentic representation of reality that spoke to the psychological and emotional realities of the time. This approach can be seen as a departure from the earlier, more artificially feigned "Stalinist Empire" style, which may have represented an attempt to impose a false sense of joy and prosperity on a society that was still grappling with the aftermath of war. Overall, the "surovy stil" can be seen as a reflection of the complex psychological and cultural realities of post-war Soviet society, as artists grappled with the challenges of representing the experiences and emotions of individuals in the midst of a larger social and political context.

The work of Tetyana Yablonska, a leading Ukrainian artist, was deeply rooted in local Ukrainian history and cultural identity. She drew inspiration from the neo-primitivist legacy of the Boychukists, as well as the academic grisaille painting of large programme canvases of socialist realism and national ethnographism. From a psychological perspective, Yablonska's work can be seen as an expression of the human need for connection to one's cultural identity and history. Studies in psychology have shown that individuals who have a strong sense of cultural identity and connection to their history are more likely to experience a sense of well-being and belonging (Caqueo-Urízar et al., 2021; Cavdar et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2021). By drawing on the cultural identity and history of Ukraine, Yablonska's work may have resonated with viewers on a deeper emotional level, helping to create a sense of connection and belonging for those who identified with Ukrainian culture. Additionally, Yablonska's work can be seen as an example of how art can serve as a means of cultural preservation and transmission. By incorporating elements of traditional Ukrainian art into her work, she was able to keep these traditions alive and make them accessible to a wider audience.

Significant works of T. Yablonska, executed in a "surovy stil", became several works of 1965, 1966, 1967, 1970, and 1977. These are respectively "Girl", "Visiting grandchildren" (Fig. 2), "Life. The ancestor" (which today could be interpreted as "The Goddess of the Genus", Fig. 3), "Old", "Widows" (Fig. 4), "Paper flowers", "Lonely", and "Managed".

These works most fully fall under the characteristics of the "surovy stil", in both pictorial and ideological ways. However, in them, the author sometimes turns to ethnographism, characteristics of the neo-folklore tendencies of the Sixties and artists of the period of "Youthful dreams", which are interfaced with the first line of development of the "surovy stil", ideologically close to nonconformism. In them, the author, as she said herself, wanted to get away from "tasteless stylisation", and at the same time creatively responded to the modern trends of op-art inherent in the work of Dali. It was in 1977 that Tetyana Yablonska, who two years earlier had been elected a full member of the USSR Academy of Arts, was awarded the Order of Friendship of Peoples and earned a trip to Italy. Two years later, she was also able to visit Spain and was awarded the USSR State Prize for her art. In 20 years, already in independent Ukraine, she will be awarded for her creative achievements with the highest award—Shevchenko National Prize (1998) and the title of Hero of Ukraine (2001).

Fig. 2 Tetyana Yablonska "Visiting grandchildren" (1965)

T. Yablonska wrote about herself: "Now I have come to the conclusion that in art the most important thing is the personality of the artist, their immediate feelings, the poetry of their soul, and the ability to captivate the viewer with it. There can be no self-assertion, no search for originality, no shock value here. All of that is 'from the evil one'." (Bobrikov, 2003). Thus, Yablonska's ideas can be seen as a rejection of the strict ideological constraints imposed by socialist realism, which demanded that art serve a specific political purpose and conform to certain aesthetic norms. Instead, Yablonska prioritised the individual expression of the artist and their ability to convey their innermost feelings and emotions through their work. This focus on the personal and subjective rather than the collective and objective was a departure from the dominant artistic ideology of the time, and represents a significant contribution to the development of Ukrainian art.

Art Marked by the Experience of War

With sorrow and pain, the Second World War broke into every Ukrainian home, passed through every heart, every destiny with a bloody line. The wartime, full of difficulties, grief, and wanderings, is reflected in the painting "The Enemy is Approaching" (Fig. 5) by the talented Ukrainian artist Tetyana Nylivna Yablonska (1917–2005), which was exhibited in 1945 at the 3rd Republican Art Exhibition. The canvas stands alone in the work of the artist: she never again painted paintings with a developed plot and frankly dramatic content. This work reflected her personal life experience: the difficult road to evacuation, bombing. confusion, human tragedies… Everything. what she saw then was war.

Fig. 3 Tetyana Yablonska "Life. The ancestor" (1966)

The plot is dedicated to the tragic events of 1941. The main theme of the canvas is alienation from war. Every detail speaks of her: a column of refugees, faces, a harsh sky with ominous clouds. The whole picture is imbued with sorrow, anger, and indignation. War is everywhere, it is a common enemy and evil for everyone, even if the frontline is still far away. The endless column of refugees stretches and dissolves in the twilight. The viewer is immersed in the difficult trials that befell people in the first days of the war. The canvas is made in a dark, strict colour, which fully corresponds to the ideological idea of the artist. The author brings several figures as close as possible to the viewer, thus turning him into an involuntary participant in the movement of this column, in which women and children lead hungry livestock in search of salvation from the enemy. For the first time in this painting, Tetyana Yablonska used the technique of diagonal construction of the composition, which will later be present in many of her canvases. The picture "The enemy is approaching" was highly appreciated not only by ordinary viewers, but also by critics and the government.

The tragic events of the Second World War and the Holocaust posed perhaps the most fundamental challenge to artists: how to work after Auschwitz? The German philosopher and sociologist Theodor Adorno claimed: "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbarism, and this sharpens the very awareness of why it is impossible to write poetry today." In the early post-war period, Adorno tried to formulate the consequences of the

Fig. 4 Tetyana Yablonska "Earth" (1966)

atrocities of the twentieth century for music, literature, and philosophy. He believed that the world was turning into a total prison in the open air, and he vehemently criticised traditional culture, considering it neutralised and invalid for the agenda.

In addition, it is known that collective memory is a concept that should be talked about, taking into account the media mechanisms that construct new realities and fictions. Individual events of the past are easily "extracted" from history, and become the subject of public conversations, creating dangerously distorted plots. And some plots, ideologically inconvenient for a specific community, remain behind the scenes, on the periphery of historical processes. Such a relationship with the past obviously requires a meticulous and critical view, so it is no coincidence that it is in the centre of attention of artists addressing the problems of instrumentalisation of history and memory.

Fig. 5 Tetyana Yablonska "The Enemy is Approaching" (1944)

The long occupation deformed spiritual life in Ukraine, weakened humanistic ideals and universal human values, increased cruelty and lawlessness, and not only caused unprecedented damage to the material base of culture, but also took the lives of thousands of scientists, teachers, teachers, cultural workers, and literary and artistic figures. Now, works of art were created by people traumatized by the war—former frontline soldiers, military medics, and civilians. The war ended in the outer world, but the changes in the inner world were irreversible. This can be vividly traced on the example of Tatiana Yablonska's paintings, full of pain, cruelty, pressure, and severity. People had to be strong in order to learn to live with the experience of war and to be able to rebuild what was destroyed.

Subsequently the "severe stil" also influenced later artistic movements in the Soviet Union, such as the Moscow Conceptualism movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Moscow conceptualism drew on the principles of the "severe stil," rejecting the strict guidelines of socialist realism and emphasising individual expression and experimentation. Overall, the "severy stil" can be seen as a continuation of the artistic developments that had been happening in the Soviet Union since the early twentieth century, but with a renewed focus on individual expression and artistic freedom. It also paved the way for future artistic movements in the Soviet Union that would continue to challenge the constraints of socialist realism.

Conclusions

Studying the emergence and development of artistic styles such as the "surovy stil" and socialist realism shed light on the ways in which art was used as a tool for propaganda and how artists navigated the political pressures of their time. By examining these historical and cultural phenomena, we can gain insights into the socio-political and cultural paradigms of the Soviet Union during the twentieth century. "The harsh style" epitomised the sombre metaphorical, symbolic quest of Soviet artists in the midst of socialist realism. It was preceded by a pretentious, artificially feigned "Stalinist Empire". Later, in their search for a rejection of the bravura of socialist realism, the artists found within it a kind of underground-modernist approach—a new interpretation of harsh post-war reality, devoid of the tinsel of social activity and withdrawing into themselves, their experiences, everyday life, and family. The rejection of traditional art forms and the creation of a new visual language in the "surovy stil" can be seen as a reflection of the challenges faced by artists who sought to express themselves while conforming to the official creative course outlined by the government.

In the work of the leading Ukrainian artist Tetyana Yablonska (People's Artist of the USSR since 1982), turning from the usual social art dynamism towards a pre-conformist "surovy stil" was outlined in the early 1960s, when the country was shaken by changes in the socio-political life of the "upper classes". In the case of Tetyana Yablonska, her adoption of the "surovy stil" during the post-WW II period reflected her experiences as a Nomenklatura artist in Soviet Ukraine and her desire to express herself more authentically. By focusing on themes of suffering women and the military, she stylized her works with rough silhouettes and references to Old East Slavic painting and neo-primitivism, while also drawing on the academic tradition of socialist realism and national ethnography. Through her creative experiments, Yablonska provides a deeper understanding of the foundations of the universe of her time. Tetiana Yablonska is a representative of post-war art, which had an extremely difficult task—to raise people's morale and prove that life goes on.

Data Availability None.

Declarations

Ethical Approval None.

Informed Consent None.

Conflict of Interest The author declares no competing interests.

References

Arandelovic, B. (2018). Socialist realism in art. In: *Public art and urban memorials in Berlin* (pp. 257–277). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73494-1_6

Bobrikov, A. (2003). Harsh style: mobilization and the cultural revolution. *Art Magazine*, 51/52. Retrieved October 21, 2022, form http://xz.gif.ru/numbers/51-52/surovo

Bryant, E. (1996). *Nonconformist art: The Soviet experience 1956–1986*. Thames & Hudson.

Caqueo-Urízar, A., Flores, J., Mena-Chamorro, P., Urzúa, A., & Irarrázaval, M. (2021). Ethnic identity and life satisfaction in indigenous adolescents: The mediating role of resilience. *Children and Youth Services Review, 120*, 105812.

Cavdar, D., McKeown, S., & Rose, J. (2021). Mental health outcomes of ethnic identity and acculturation among British-born children of immigrants from Turkey. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 2021*(176), 141–161.

Chen, Y., Cullen, E., Fivush, R., Wang, Q., & Reese, E. (2021). Mother, father, and I: a cross-cultural investigation of adolescents' intergenerational narratives and well-being. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition, 10*(1), 55–64.

Doroshenko, K. (2019). *Exhumation of social realism.* Retrieved October 17, 2022, form https://lb.ua/culture/2019/03/14/421976_eksgumatsiya_sotsrealizma.html

Efimova, A. (1997). To touch on the raw – the aesthetic affections of Socialist Realism. *Art Journal, 56*(1), 72–80. https://doi.org/10.2307/777789

Kolodzei, N. (2021). Cosmic inspirations and explorations by Soviet nonconformist artists. *Leonardo, 54*(1), 92–106.

Martinkovic, M. (2005). The idea of Slavic solidarity in the interpretations of the representatives of the "New School". *Filozofia*, *60*(10), 804–818.

Moskalevich, M. (2020). *Rethinking Socialist Realism. Art in America, 108*(9), 71–77.

Parovatkina, G. (2017). Tatiana Yablonska: life in bifurcation. *Mirror of the Week*. Retrieved October 20, 2022, form https://zn.ua/ukr/ART/tetyana-yablonska-zhittya-u-rozdvoyenni-_.html

Reznikova, R. (1983). Yablonskaya, Tatiana paintings. *Soviet Literature, 5*, 171.

Seok, J. O., Jeong, M. J., Seon, S. H., & Chung, J. K. (2021). Sarah Barry: A spiritual beacon in Modern Korea. *Foundations of Science*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10699-021-09805-1

Sidorenko, V. (Ed.). (2006). *Essays on the history of fine arts of Ukraine in the twentieth century*. Kyiv: National Academy of Arts of Ukraine; Institute of Contemporary Art.

Skripnik, G. (Ed.). (2011). *History of Ukrainian art*. Kyiv: Maksym Rylsky Institute of Art History, Folklore and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

Smyrna, L. (2017). *Century of nonconformism in Ukrainian visual art*. Kyiv: Feniks. 480 s.

Svetlyakov, K. (2020). *Lecture: Picturesque silences by Tatyana Yablonskaya. Course: "From the avant-garde to the present"*. Retrieved October 22, 2022, form https://magisteria.ru/avant-garde/yablonskaya?play

The world of Tatiana Yablonskaya: "I was fond of the Japanese, impressionists, Degas". (2020). Retrieved October 17, 2022, form https://www.amuse-a-muse.com/ru/2020/03/%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%8C%D1%8F%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%8F%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%8F/

Wyszomirski, M. J., Oleszczuk, T. A., & Smith, T. C. (1988). Cultural dissent and defection: The case of Soviet nonconformist artists. *Journal of Arts Management and Law, 18*(1), 44–62.

Terms and Conditions

Springer Nature journal content, brought to you courtesy of Springer Nature Customer Service Center GmbH ("Springer Nature").

Springer Nature supports a reasonable amount of sharing of research papers by authors, subscribers and authorised users ("Users"), for small-scale personal, non-commercial use provided that all copyright, trade and service marks and other proprietary notices are maintained. By accessing, sharing, receiving or otherwise using the Springer Nature journal content you agree to these terms of use ("Terms"). For these purposes, Springer Nature considers academic use (by researchers and students) to be non-commercial.

These Terms are supplementary and will apply in addition to any applicable website terms and conditions, a relevant site licence or a personal subscription. These Terms will prevail over any conflict or ambiguity with regards to the relevant terms, a site licence or a personal subscription (to the extent of the conflict or ambiguity only). For Creative Commons-licensed articles, the terms of the Creative Commons license used will apply.

We collect and use personal data to provide access to the Springer Nature journal content. We may also use these personal data internally within ResearchGate and Springer Nature and as agreed share it, in an anonymised way, for purposes of tracking, analysis and reporting. We will not otherwise disclose your personal data outside the ResearchGate or the Springer Nature group of companies unless we have your permission as detailed in the Privacy Policy.

While Users may use the Springer Nature journal content for small scale, personal non-commercial use, it is important to note that Users may not:

1. use such content for the purpose of providing other users with access on a regular or large scale basis or as a means to circumvent access control;
2. use such content where to do so would be considered a criminal or statutory offence in any jurisdiction, or gives rise to civil liability, or is otherwise unlawful;
3. falsely or misleadingly imply or suggest endorsement, approval , sponsorship, or association unless explicitly agreed to by Springer Nature in writing;
4. use bots or other automated methods to access the content or redirect messages
5. override any security feature or exclusionary protocol; or
6. share the content in order to create substitute for Springer Nature products or services or a systematic database of Springer Nature journal content.

In line with the restriction against commercial use, Springer Nature does not permit the creation of a product or service that creates revenue, royalties, rent or income from our content or its inclusion as part of a paid for service or for other commercial gain. Springer Nature journal content cannot be used for inter-library loans and librarians may not upload Springer Nature journal content on a large scale into their, or any other, institutional repository.

These terms of use are reviewed regularly and may be amended at any time. Springer Nature is not obligated to publish any information or content on this website and may remove it or features or functionality at our sole discretion, at any time with or without notice. Springer Nature may revoke this licence to you at any time and remove access to any copies of the Springer Nature journal content which have been saved.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, Springer Nature makes no warranties, representations or guarantees to Users, either express or implied with respect to the Springer nature journal content and all parties disclaim and waive any implied warranties or warranties imposed by law, including merchantability or fitness for any particular purpose.

Please note that these rights do not automatically extend to content, data or other material published by Springer Nature that may be licensed from third parties.

If you would like to use or distribute our Springer Nature journal content to a wider audience or on a regular basis or in any other manner not expressly permitted by these Terms, please contact Springer Nature at

onlineservice@springernature.com