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**Soviet Cultural Heritage in Ukrainian Contemporary Art**

Researching the Artistic Practices of Contemporary Ukrainian Artists who Turn to Cultural Heritage of the Soviet Period in their Works

The cultural heritage of the Soviet period is an important part of the identity of modern Ukraine. Architecture and art, created in the Ukrainian Republic during the 70 Soviet years, is a valuable and unique cultural part that needs to be studied and preserved. Yet, the Soviet legacy remains stigmatized by the general public and neglected by the state heritage institutions, who barely deal with objects of the Soviet period. A critical rethinking of Sovietness happens mainly in the field of contemporary art. To examine, document and systematize the practices of engagement with Soviet heritage in contemporary Ukrainian art is the main goal of my research.

Soviet-era heritage in Ukraine faces a double threat due to Russia's full-scale military invasion. References to the Soviet Union in public space are increasingly being rejected due to the use of Soviet military iconography for war propaganda and the bombing of Ukrainian cities sites by Russian soldiers bearing Soviet symbols and slogans. Citizens, seeking to eliminate the totalitarian past from public memory, are demolishing Soviet monumental art and what they deem as imperialist monuments, even in areas with no active hostilities.

After the crimes of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, the Soviet visuality cannot simply remain in the public space, but needs to be rethought. And the Ukrainian Soviet cultural heritage must be re-appropriated in Russianness.

To preserve Soviet art, not destroy or annihilate it, we need to reassess Sovietness in the field of contemporary art. In this situation artistic practices that critically rethink Soviet heritage have become a necessary tool for its decommunization. That is because artistic interventions can illuminate the symbolic layer of these structural phenomena and foster a deeper understanding of cultural heritage in society. My research is based on art projects

from 2010-2022 that relate either to Soviet architecture and urban planning or to art in public space or soviet art represented in museums.