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DESIGN OF TETYANA POKOTYLO'S AUTHORIAL DOLLS IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY DECORATIVE ART

Abstract

The article examines the design of authorial dolls created by Tetiana Pokotylo in the context of contemporary decorative art, focusing on the transformation of traditional Ukrainian folk toys into modern artistic objects. The relevance of the study is the growing need to preserve national cultural identity under the conditions of globalization, which often imposes standardized models of mass culture and leads to the gradual loss of ethnic authenticity. In this regard, traditional forms of folk art, particularly the motanka doll, are considered as important carriers of cultural memory, symbolic meanings, and intergenerational continuity.

The research analyzes the evolution of the traditional motanka doll into an authorial artistic form that integrates archaic symbolic structures with contemporary design approaches. It is emphasized that the modern authorial doll is no longer merely a decorative object but becomes a complex semiotic system capable of expressing deep social, cultural, and philosophical ideas. Special attention is paid to the preservation of traditional techniques, such as the knot-

based construction method and the use of natural materials, which ensure continuity with historical prototypes while allowing for innovative interpretations.

The creative work of Tetiana Pokotylo is presented as a vivid example of the synthesis of tradition and innovation in ethnodesign. Her artistic practice demonstrates a gradual evolution from experimental forms to conceptually rich compositions that reflect both personal and collective experiences. The use of authentic embroidery, natural textiles, and symbolic elements contributes to the revitalization of cultural heritage and enhances the artistic value of each piece. The authorial dolls created by Pokotylo often embody patriotic, philosophical, and social themes, responding to contemporary challenges and serving as visual narratives of modern Ukrainian reality.

Particular attention is given to the symbolic and communicative functions of the dolls, which are expressed through encoded visual elements, inscriptions, and compositional solutions. The integration of traditional motifs with modern artistic language allows these works to function as tools of cultural reflection, identity formation, and emotional expression. The study highlights various thematic groups within the artist's collection, including ritual, everyday, patriotic, and literary compositions, each contributing to a broader understanding of the role of decorative art in contemporary society.

The findings confirm that the authorial motanka doll represents a complex socio-cultural phenomenon that combines aesthetic, symbolic, and educational functions. The reinterpretation of traditional forms within modern design practices not only preserves cultural heritage but also ensures its in current socio-cultural contexts. Thus, the work of Tetiana Pokotylo demonstrates the potential of ethnodesign as an effective means of maintaining cultural continuity, fostering national identity, and creating meaningful artistic expressions in the modern world.

Keywords: Ukrainian folk art, motanka doll, ethnodesign, decorative and applied art, cultural identity, traditional symbolism, contemporary design, contemporary decorative art.

Problem statement

The Ukrainian folk toy is an original and valuable phenomenon of national culture, reflecting the characteristics of a particular historical era, social environment, worldview, and folk traditions. It accumulates the spiritual experience of generations and preserves information about the lifestyle, beliefs, labor practices, and aesthetic perceptions of its creators. Depending on their functional purpose and regional characteristics, folk toys acquired various symbolic and semantic features.

Combining cognitive, educational, communicative, aesthetic, and playful functions, the folk toy serves as an important means of child development and education. Through play, a child naturally explores the surrounding world, develops imagination, emotional sensitivity, thinking, and creative abilities. Play activity is based on intrinsic motivation and voluntariness; therefore, it generates positive emotions and contributes to the harmonious development of the individual.

The folk toy represents a distinctive form of artistic and creative activity with deep historical roots and an important place in Ukrainian cultural heritage. The oldest examples of toys discovered on the territory of Ukraine, including clay figurines of humans, animals, and birds found by archaeologists, date back to the Trypillian culture period. In ancient times, such objects performed not only playful functions but also ritual and ceremonial ones. Folk tradition preserved various types of children’s toys and objects used for play, education, and ritual practices. In the cultural consciousness, the toy was perceived not merely as an object of entertainment, but as an artistic image and symbolic representation of the

surrounding world. For this reason, the folk toy has become an important subject of scholarly research in the fields of ethnography, art history, pedagogy, and cultural studies [1].

The forms, motifs, and images of folk toys are largely derived from nature. They are traditionally made from natural materials such as wood, straw, clay, and fabric, and reproduce images of animals, birds, and human figures that have long been closely connected with the everyday life of Ukrainians. The close relationship between humans and the natural environment contributed to the emergence of the folk toy as a mediator between nature and the child, helping children perceive and understand the world through play and artistic imagery. However, under contemporary conditions, traditional rural culture is gradually losing its significance, and folk toys are disappearing along with it. They are increasingly being replaced by technical and digital devices that lack distinct national characteristics and are primarily oriented toward unified globalized standards. This creates a risk of weakening ethnocultural identity and losing traditional spiritual values.

The Ukrainian folk toy is distinguished by an exceptional richness of forms, images, and artistic solutions. It encompasses a wide range of objects, from archaic and simplified clay, straw, wooden, and cheese toys to sophisticated author’s compositions created by professional artists and masters of decorative and applied arts. The thematic and figurative diversity of folk toys is determined by the worldview of their creators, the peculiarities of their creative thinking, professional skills, and local artistic traditions. At the same time, folk toys reflect the specificity of particular crafts, regional characteristics, historical conditions of development, ritual traditions, and the availability of natural materials used in their production.

One of the most common classifications divides folk toys into two main groups: plastic artistic-aesthetic objects and mechanical toys. The first group

includes dolls, figurines of birds and animals, as well as various forms of small-scale sculpture, whereas the second comprises objects whose functionality is based on movement or sound effects, such as bows, whistles, ratchets, rattles, spinning tops, and similar items. Folk toys are also classified according to the material and manufacturing technique. Wooden toys are traditionally widespread in the Yavoriv region, clay toys are associated with pottery centers such as Kosiv, Opishnia, Ichnia, and Vasylkiv, while straw and woven toys made from natural materials are characteristic of Polissia and Volyn. A special place belongs to cheese toys, which are common in the villages of the Kosiv region. According to figurative and functional features, folk toys are divided into anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, and household-object toys, including miniature furniture, dishes, means of transportation, and tools [5].

In the contemporary national and cultural space of Ukraine, despite the rapid growth of scientific knowledge and the advancement of communication technologies, a clear rupture in historical continuity can be observed, leading to the gradual loss of ethnic identity and traditional value orientations. Globalization processes increasingly impose unified standards of mass culture, standardizing both material needs and the spiritual priorities of individuals. A way out of this crisis is seen in the creative reinterpretation and practical implementation of the fundamental values of traditional culture, which, in the Ukrainian context, actualizes the aspiration to restore historical memory and ethnic self-awareness. Scholarly research in the field of socio-cultural continuity confirms that tradition is the critically important condition capable of ensuring the stability and harmonious development of society [4].

The growing relevance of traditional forms of folk art lies in their role as carriers of profound cultural meanings and as means of transmitting ethnocultural experience across generations. They perform not only aesthetic but also worldview, symbolic, and educational functions, thereby contributing to the

formation of an individual's national identity. The comprehension and interpretation of such forms within the contemporary artistic and educational space open up opportunities for their adaptation to current socio-cultural conditions without the loss of authenticity, ensuring an organic synthesis of tradition and innovation.

In view of the above, the study of the authorial motanka doll acquires particular significance as a tool for the actualization of cultural heritage and a means of visualizing national meanings. The authorial motanka doll ceases to be merely a decorative object, transforming into a complex semiotic system that combines archaic meanings with contemporary artistic strategies.

Analysis of recent research and publications

The features, origins, and functional role of the folk toy have been the focus of numerous domestic and foreign researchers. In particular, its diversity has been explored in the works of such scholars as O. Vovchyk-Blakytna, S. Ladyvir, K. Mateiko, T. Pirozhenko, and others.

Various aspects of the folk toy have been comprehensively examined in the studies of prominent Ukrainian art historians, including L. Herus, V. Danylenko, N. Kachkovska, O. Naiden, and M. Stankevych. V. Danylenko emphasizes the phenomenon of the authorial artistic doll as an intrinsically valuable work of art within the cultural space of contemporary Ukraine. Particularly profound historical and cultural insights into the image of the motanka doll are provided by the research of the Ukrainian art historian, ethnologist, and cultural scholar O. Naiden, who interprets it not merely as a toy or souvenir, but as a deeply symbolic image reflecting the anthropological and regional characteristics of a specific locality [2]. These ideas are further developed in the scholarly research of N. Kachkovska, which examines the design of both traditional toys and contemporary author's dolls within the context of modern artistic practices [6].

In the studies of L. Demydchuk, N. Roman, I. Kozlova, and other scholars, the evolution of the folk doll is traced in relation to its educational, cultural, and aesthetic impact on the child's personality. Particular attention is given to the motanka doll as a means of fostering national consciousness, cultivating respect for traditions, as well as developing fine motor skills, imagination, and figurative thinking.

A separate research direction is represented by the works of A. Stakhurska-Kozoriz, V. Stepanova, and Yu. Soloviova, in which the motanka doll is interpreted as a tool of ethnotherapy, pedagogical practice, and the affirmation of cultural identity. Such studies provide grounds for considering the contemporary motanka as an effective means of national self-awareness and a spiritual link with traditional cultural origins.

A significant place in contemporary academic and public discourse is occupied by the issue of the artistic transformation of the motanka doll. In particular, the artistic project «Portraits of Motankas» by artist M. Pitchuk represents an organic synthesis of deep symbolic meanings with a contemporary interpretation of the female image. This demonstrates a broader tendency toward the preservation of traditional forms alongside the active introduction of new stylistic solutions in color, materials, and decorative techniques. In design practice, the motanka appears as an element of contemporary culture in the form of accessories, souvenir products, and interior objects, notably in the works of O. Tsyupa, L. Teslenko-Ponomarenko, and I. Verbytska. Their works demonstrate that, while losing its original ritual function, the decorative doll retains its ethnocultural identity and symbolic essence.

Purpose of the article

The purpose of the article is to analyze the transformation of the folk toy into a contemporary author's motanka doll and to examine the artistic and

semantic features of ethnodesign based on the creative work of craftswoman Tetiana Pokotylo.

Presentation of the main material of the study

As a type of decorative and applied art, the folk toy encompasses a wide range of objects differing in form and meaning, made from natural, environmentally friendly, and safe materials. These works combine artistic expressiveness with practical function in a harmonious way. Their content is conveyed through concise means, using a generalized and symbolic image that achieves maximum expressiveness within a small form while maintaining functional relevance. A particular value of the folk toy lies in the creative concept itself, which represents both the process and the result of the master's artistic activity. The formation and development of artistic traditions of the folk toy were influenced by natural and geographical conditions, the level of socio-economic development, as well as contacts with other ethnographic groups and peoples.

Traditional ethnic toys were predominantly made from natural materials available in a specific region, such as wood, clay, textiles, straw, wicker, and wool. The choice of material was determined both by practical considerations and by symbolic meanings, as each material was associated with particular natural forces. The handcrafted work of the artisan gave each toy uniqueness and irreproducibility.

Folk toys performed an important educational function, contributing to the formation of moral values, diligence, and respect for traditions. Through play, children assimilated social roles, behavioral norms, and concepts of good and evil. Thus, the folk toy served as an effective means of folk pedagogy [3].

Folk toys, in particular motanka dolls, represent an essential component of the traditional culture of a people and reflect its worldview, aesthetic perceptions, and value system. They emerged in close connection with everyday life, beliefs, and ritual practices, fulfilling not only recreational but also educational, protective,

symbolic, and ceremonial functions. Through simple forms and generalized images, folk toys conveyed ideas about the surrounding world and the place of humans within it.

The traditional link between the folk toy and the contemporary author's motanka doll has a profound evolutionary character. Both artifacts are based on the same knotting method and needle-free technique, where the principles of wrapping fabric and securing it with thread remain an unchanged foundation. Even in elaborately designed author's works, the internal structure of the doll often preserves archaic forms, such as the column-like or cross-shaped base, which were characteristic of toys from earlier centuries.

The symbolic and semantic content also demonstrates a direct transmission of ancient beliefs, as the author's work inherits the protective function from the folk model. The use of sacred signs, such as the solar cross on the face, transforms the artifact into a medium for conveying ideas of protection and harmony.

Material affinity is reinforced through the shared use of natural textiles, linen, jute, embroidery, and other traditional decorative techniques, which creates a tangible connection between generations by preserving ancestral memory within a contemporary object.

The transformation from a simple play form into an independent art object marks a shift from collective experience to an individual author's vision; however, ethnic roots remain the primary identifier. The ability of the motanka to adapt to contemporary realities through new and modernized imagery demonstrates that this form of art is not a static museum artifact. Thus, the folk toy functions as a primary foundation, while the author's doll becomes its intellectual reinterpretation, enabling tradition to remain a living language in a globalized world.

The creative output of craftswoman Tetiana Pokotylo, artistic director of the Yaniv Cultural Center and head of the children's workshop «Creative Studio» of

the Berezivka community in the Shostka District of Sumy Region, represents an evolutionary trajectory from experimental forms to deeply meaningful examples of contemporary ethnodesign. The initial stage of her artistic practice was characterized by the use of jute and the transformation of mass-produced dolls through thread wrapping, which brought these works closer to the concept of an authorial interior doll. Subsequently, the priority direction of her work became the revitalization of antique textiles; in particular, the incorporation of fragments of authentic embroidery into doll decoration not only preserved unique ornamental motifs but also endowed the works with significant historical and cultural value. Such dolls as «Kniahynia» («Princess») and «Berehynia of the Family» («Female protective spirit») are distinguished by their monumental scale, reaching up to 80 centimeters in height.

A special place in Pokotylo's collection is occupied by conceptual, patriotic-themed images that emerge as a direct reflection of contemporary challenges. Among them is the multi-figure composition «Mother Ukraine» in which the central maternal figure, embodying Ukraine, embraces 25 smaller dolls representing the 24 regions of Ukraine and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, symbolizing the territorial and cultural integrity of the state. The philosophical line of the patriotic doll continues in the composition «Unbreakable» which employs a binary opposition technique. The figure is visually divided into two parts: one embodies peacetime through symbols of tenderness and a dove held in the doll's hands, while the other represents the period of wartime resistance, conveying the resilience of contemporary women and the use of healing herbs as protective elements.

The symbolic and communicative function of the artist's works is expressed through techniques of encoding verbal meanings, particularly through the embroidered appeal «Come back alive» which grants the doll «Hope» the status of

a contemporary protective talisman. This doll carries a unique personal narrative and is intended to support a woman whose husband has been reported missing.

A separate group in the collection consists of female images, in particular the doll «Defender» which, through the combination of a traditional structural base with attributes of military equipment and contemporary weaponry, visualizes the transformation of the Ukrainian woman's image within the context of recent historical realities. The tragedy of the present is reflected in the image «Angel of Ukraine» with scorched wings, which protects a female refugee, becoming a visual document of wartime experience.

Within the creative output of Tetiana Pokotylo, another distinct group is formed by conceptual compositions, among which the image «Bride» stands out. It is complemented by a traditional attribute – a dowry chest. An important artistic feature of this work is the wax wreath, personally recreated by the author based on an authentic wedding headdress from 1955, which emphasizes the continuity of family traditions and the deep symbolic meaning of the wreath as a national protective symbol and marker of cultural identity.

In addition to monumental forms, the collection also includes miniature doll specimens, in particular the 5-centimeter doll «Kopiyechka» which serves as a domestic talisman intended to attract financial prosperity and well-being.

The research interest is represented by a series of everyday and festive dolls, in which archetypal roles and ritual traditions of Ukrainians are revealed through artistic imagery. A separate cycle consists of ritual dolls dedicated to the Honey, Poppy, and Apple Spas (Saviour) feasts. Their artistic specificity lies in the combination of textiles with hand-painted acrylic decoration and small-scale sculptural elements made of self-hardening clay, which detail the theme of each feast through corresponding attributes such as honeycombs, bees, or symbolic key-amulets.

Regional identity and individualization are expressed in the works «My Sumy Region» and a series of personalized angel dolls. These works actively employ a stenographic embroidery technique, in which geographical names or personal names are encoded into the fabric through geometric symbols, transforming each doll into a personalized sacred object.

A humorous line is embodied in the image of the hostess doll «Mother-in-law» and the doll «Sowing Maiden» which represents spring ritual traditions through the symbolic act of sowing grain and conveys ideas of peace, agricultural abundance, and social prosperity.

The expeditionary and ritual dimension in Tetiana Pokotylo's artistic practice is further expanded through the image «Traveler» which functions as a companion for travelers. A distinctive feature of this work is the inclusion of a map of the Berezivka community through which the doll has traveled, as well as a detailed route placed in a small pouch. This transforms the traditional protective doll into an interactive ethnographic and local-history object.

The theme of the sacred calendar is further complemented by multi-figure compositions – Nativity scenes and vertep (Christmas puppet theatre) – arrangementsmade of coarse burlap and jute, which emphasize the archaic character and natural origin of the materials.

A fundamental aspect of the collection is the representation of motherhood in various states: from the image «Expecting Mother» to the figure of a multi-child mother-guardian. These dolls visualize the idea of unconditional protection and care, functioning as keepers of family well-being. Male images are represented by figures of Cossacks, in particular the Cossack Mamai. The conceptual basis of this work draws on the graphics of H. Narbut, creating an artistic link with the local history of the Hlukhiv region. The Cossack images are complemented by traditional attributes such as the bandura and the pipe, symbolizing courage and national resilience.

Sensory interaction with the works is provided by the «Herbal Women» and «Coffee Dolls». The former are filled with blends of mint, lavender, yarrow, and immortelle, functioning as natural air fresheners, while the latter feature garments tinted with coffee solution and are filled with ground coffee beans.

Seasonal cycles are reflected in the images «Spring Girl», «Bountiful Autumn» and thematic dolls inspired by natural phenomena, such as «Field Flower». A separate mystical group is formed by double-sided dolls («Day–Night»), which, through their dual structure, regulate the symbolic order of domestic space depending on the time of day.

An important place in the craftswoman's authorial collection is occupied by the literary and historical series, which recreates images of prominent figures, writers, and characters of Ukrainian culture. This includes doll-images of Taras Shevchenko and Lesia Ukrainka, as well as compositions based on their literary works («Kateryna», «I Was Thirteen Years Old», «Forest Song (Mavka and Lukash)»), and a commemorative doll dedicated to the ethnographer Pelahiia Lytvynova-Bartosz. The collection is originally complemented by Easter-themed images, where, alongside authentic embroidery, the technique of block printing is used, demonstrating a synthesis of various textile decoration techniques.

Conclusions

Based on the conducted analysis, it can be stated that the author's ethnostyle doll is a complex sociocultural phenomenon that harmoniously combines archaic folk traditions with contemporary artistic strategies. The contemporary author's doll continues to perform the function of an identifier of national culture, employing methods of textual coding and the creation of conceptual patriotic images to convey profound social meanings. An analysis of the creative output of craftswoman Tetiana Pokotylo demonstrated a high level of artistic reflection, where the revitalization of traditional embroidery and the introduction of contemporary images of protectresses or angels transform the works into visual

documents of the present era. Creative reinterpretation of tradition within the framework of design serves as an effective means of overcoming identity crises and preserving historical memory, which confirms the viability of folk heritage under conditions of its continuous renewal.

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