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Корчина Наталія, аспірантка кафедри ТІМ НАОМА
(науковий керівник: кандидат мистецтвознавства, доцент Т. Р. Тимченко)

Нищення радянських та російських пам'ятників у 2022 р. в Україні як виокремлення «свого» від «чужого» в колективній пам'яті українців

Анотація: Задля виокремлення «свого» від «чужого» в колективній пам'яті українців з публічних просторів міст та селищ України необхідно демонтувати меморіальні та меморативні твори російського імперського та радянського періодів, незважаючи на художню цінність пам'яток та віртуозність їхніх авторів, оскільки вони викривляють перебіг історичних подій, пропагують комуністичні ідеї та узаконюють імперські амбіції Росії. Ці твори мають зберігатися в окремих місцях – у музеях тоталітаризму.

Ключові слова: колективна пам'ять, свій-чужий, радянські пам'ятники, російські пам'ятники, меморіальні твори, меморативні твори.

Nataliia Korchyua, PhD student, NAFAA
(academic mentor: Doctor of Arts, Associate Professor Tetiana Tymchenko)

Dismantling of Soviet and Russian monuments in Ukraine in 2022 as a separation between 'us' and 'them' in the collective memory of Ukrainians

Key words: collective memory, 'us and them', Soviet monuments, Russian monuments, memorial art works, commemorative art works.

The mass dismantling of Soviet and Russian monuments on the territory of Ukraine since April 2022 can be seen as the fulfillment of the desire of the Ukrainian people to separate “us” from “them” in their collective memory. Increasingly, Ukrainian citizens comprehend that erecting monuments to Russian imperial figures is nothing more than a mechanism for visualizing the propaganda of foreign semiotics on their territory. The fact that these monuments were usually created by talented Ukrainian sculptors and architects commissioned by the Soviet authorities is a controversial issue. Ukrainian authors have turned “foreign” into their “own”, external into internal. In other words, they produced an internal, “domestic” product full of national features although its essence remained “alien”, i.e. Soviet, saturated with Great Russian chauvinism and propaganda of Imperial greatness.

The large-scale war started by the Russian Federation against Ukraine in February 2022 showed Russia's real attitude towards Ukrainians, which was no longer covered by slogans about “friendship of brotherly peoples”. Right now, the genocide of the Ukrainian people and the capture of important economic and geopolitical territories of Ukraine is taking place. When thousands of Ukrainians are dying in a cruel and insidious war, it is extremely difficult for the natives to admire Ukrainian sculptural heritage of the communist period

Section 4. Problems of modern art and art management

and monuments dedicated to prominent Russians. Therefore, Ukrainians are now answering the question whether they need this foreign product. If so, why? What new meaning can they fill it with, leaving it for posterity? If it glorifies the culture of the occupiers or promotes principles contrary to theirs, do they need to keep it in their public space?

One can see the acts of vandalism in toppling a bronze bust of the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin (by Russian sculptor Robert Bach, 1899) in Kyiv uptown Pechersk district or in dismantling a two-figure composition of Russian and Ukrainian workers who held in their outstretched arms the Order of Friendship of Peoples under the arch of the same name, dedicated to the so-called “reunification of Ukraine with Russia” (by Ukrainian sculptor Oleksandr Skoblikov and architect Igor Ivanov, 1981). But aren’t those art connoisseurs putting form over substance in the current context? Exalting the artistic manner of prominent authors, regardless of the impact of their monuments on the consciousness of fellow citizens, can be compared to fetishism. Monuments in any urban space always emphasize certain aspects of collective memory. And when Ukrainians verbally condemn the ideology of the occupier and bypass the visual images that planted this ideology, they either show their negligence and apply double standards, or sabotage the Decommunization Law of Ukraine adopted in May 2015.

Ukrainians will not destroy their enemy with the ritual overthrow of Russian and communist idols. But by doing so, they will distinguish their collective, historical and cultural memory from that of the occupier, not only in written and oral culture, but also in visual images that adorn their public space. Without this, Ukrainians will not be able to finally free themselves from the influence of Russian imperialist propaganda. Despite the artistic value of the commemorative and memorial works of the imperial and Soviet period and the virtuosity of their authors, they distorted historical events, promoted communist ideas, and legitimized the imperial ambitions of Russia. Therefore such monuments should be dismantled from the public space of Ukraine and kept in separate locations – in museums of totalitarianism.

