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## **INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO THE FORMATION OF IMAGERY IN CONTEMPORARY SMALL-FORM SCULPTURE**

**Abstract.** Contemporary small-form sculpture represents a dynamic field of artistic exploration where traditional plastic principles intersect with technological innovation and conceptual experimentation. The article examines innovative approaches to the formation of imagery in modern small-form sculpture through the interaction of material, color, texture, and patina. Color and patina are no longer regarded as decorative or secondary features but as integral expressive tools that define emotional depth and symbolic resonance. Patina is interpreted as a living surface element, not merely a trace of time but an active participant in the composition, revealing material stratification and enhancing the sensory dimension of form. Color, meanwhile, functions as a structural and spatial element that organizes rhythm, volume, and visual balance. The study highlights current artistic practices employing polymers, composites, bronze, stone, and digital technologies such as 3D printing, laser engraving, and augmented reality. These innovations contribute to the synthesis of the tangible and virtual, expanding the aesthetic language of sculpture. Ukrainian artists are analyzed in the context of integrating European tendencies while maintaining national

identity and cultural sensitivity. Their works demonstrate how color and patina transform sculpture into a medium of emotional and symbolic communication, reinforcing the connection between material and meaning. The author concludes that contemporary small-form sculpture operates as an interdisciplinary system in which technological and sensory innovations coexist with spiritual and historical dimensions. Color, texture, and patina become philosophical categories that shape a new typology of imagery, transforming sculpture into a living organism of time, matter, and memory.

**Key words:** easel sculpture, small-form sculpture, color, patina, imagery, texture, new materiality, innovative technologies, artistic form, transformation.

**Introduction.** The development of contemporary small-form sculpture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century takes place within the context of profound transformations in artistic thinking, technological innovation, and the redefinition of materiality in art. Whereas in classical sculpture the leading role belonged to volume, texture, and proportion, today these categories are complemented by color, patina, digital visualization, and interactivity. The small sculptural form becomes a laboratory of artistic experimentation, where the synthesis of the material and the virtual, the handcrafted and the algorithmic, defines a new stage in the evolution of plastic art.

The relevance of this study is determined by the need to comprehend innovative approaches to the formation of imagery in contemporary small-form sculpture, in which color and patina are no longer perceived as merely decorative elements but as independent artistic categories that determine the emotional and semantic structure of the artwork. Through the interaction of material, texture, color, and light, modern sculpture forms a new language capable of expressing the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of human existence in the technological age.

The purpose of the article is to analyze innovative techniques and technologies that influence the formation of imagery in small-form sculpture, as well as to reveal the role of color and patina in contemporary plastic thinking.

The object of the research is the process of development of modern easel small-form sculpture, while the subject is the expressive means of form creation related to material, color, patination, and digital modeling.

The scientific novelty of this work lies in identifying the function of color and patina as essential components of artistic imagery and in defining the tendencies of synthesis between traditional and digital sculpture in both Ukrainian and European contexts.

The research methodology combines comparative art-historical, analytical, morphological, and structural approaches, which make it possible to trace the interconnections between classical sculptural techniques and innovative processes of form creation.

The practical significance of this study is determined by the potential application of its results in the educational process of art institutions, particularly in the development of authorial programs on plastic modeling, color composition, and digital design in sculpture.

The study aims to reveal the specificity of the modern artistic language of small-form sculpture, where color and patina emerge not only as aesthetic accents but as philosophical categories that reflect the interrelation of time, material, and spirituality within the artistic process.

**Analysis of research and publications.** The problem of the development of contemporary small-form sculpture has gained increasing relevance in Ukrainian and European art scholarship in recent decades. Among Ukrainian researchers, the transformation of traditional sculptural language and the search for innovative means of form creation have been

thoroughly analyzed by N. Averianova [1, pp. 45-46], V. Andrushchenko [2, pp. 72-74], and T. Vlasenko [3, pp. 48-49], who define small-scale sculpture as a polyphonic phenomenon that unites precision, individuality, and technological aesthetics.

V. Zaichenko emphasizes that Ukrainian small-form sculpture actively integrates into the broader European artistic context, adopting and transforming the aesthetics of modernism and postmodernism [4, p. 78]. I. Zubar, in the monograph “New Materiality in Contemporary Sculpture”, explores the relationship between material, technology, and artistic concept, defining color, texture, and patina as fundamental components of the sculptor’s visual language [5, pp. 56-58].

S. Kovalchuk describes the use of digital tools and 3D modeling as a key innovation that expands the traditional boundaries of plastic art and opens new possibilities for imagery formation [6]. L. Lysenko notes that the search for new artistic language in Ukrainian sculpture takes place through the reinterpretation of academic tradition within contemporary cultural dynamics [7, p. 25].

The issue of genre and media synthesis in sculpture is examined by V. Odrekhivskyi, who explores the intermedial character of twenty-first-century plastic art, where the material and digital essences of sculpture coexist in a unified space [8, pp. 99-100]. Similarly, V. Petrychenko emphasizes that innovative technical approaches not only broaden the artist’s expressive means but also create a new symbolism of space and volume [9, pp. 23-25].

In his comprehensive study “Ukrainian Art in the European Cultural Space”, O. Rohotchenko analyzes the phenomenon of national identity in the context of global artistic processes, stressing the importance of preserving cultural memory in the age of technological change [10, pp. 112-114].

European authors, such as J. Armstrong [11, p. 37], T. Barrett [12, p. 85], and A. Becks [13, p. 42], explore the tendencies of small-form sculpture through the prism of experimentation with color, surface, and material. In the works of C. Bonnet [14, pp. 56-57] and T. Cragg [15, p. 61], patina is interpreted as a symbolic code that unites time, material, and the emotional dimension of perception.

Research by E. Davidson [16, pp. 74-75] and S. Farthing [18, p. 119] reveals the expansion of contemporary sculpture toward conceptualism, where material, color, and texture form a new semantic and aesthetic system. Similar ideas are found in the writings of L. Keane [19, p. 144] and L. Young [20, p. 212], who interpret small-form sculpture as a medium of communication between tradition and technological aesthetics.

Summarizing the existing research, it can be concluded that modern studies consistently demonstrate a desire to integrate innovative technologies into the field of small-form sculpture while maintaining its spiritual, material, and historical integrity. This combination provides a theoretical foundation for further analysis of the role of color, texture, and patina in shaping the artistic imagery of contemporary small-form sculpture.

**Results.** The research shows that contemporary Ukrainian small-form easel sculpture is undergoing an active process of evolution that unites academic tradition, technological innovation, and a conceptual search for new imagery. Within the artistic space of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a polyphonic structure has emerged in which classical principles of plastic art interact with digital technologies, new materials, and experimental forms. This process is especially evident in the artists' aspiration toward the synthesis of the material and immaterial, where color, patina, and texture acquire independent artistic significance.

Color and patina have moved beyond their traditional decorative functions to become carriers of emotional, symbolic, and philosophical meaning. Color performs the role of an active compositional element, defining the rhythm, dynamics, and psychological tension of the composition. Patina is interpreted as a metaphor of time and memory, a living layer of the surface that reflects the process of formation, records the material history of the artwork, and amplifies its inner energy. The use of artificial patination allows artists to combine traditional craftsmanship with modern technologies, controlling tonal depth, optical effects, and the overall emotional atmosphere of the object. As a result, color and patina act as expressive tools that emphasize the symbolic, dramatic, or harmonic essence of form.

The development of Ukrainian small-form sculpture is accompanied by the rise of a new materiality, in which traditional materials-bronze, stone, wood, and clay-interact with polymer composites, resins, metal alloys, 3D printing, and digital modeling. This integration expands the field of experimentation, generating hybrid structures in which the boundaries between physical and virtual objects are blurred. The interaction of light with colored and patinated surfaces creates the effect of spatial “breathing”, where form appears not static but dynamically alive, constantly shifting in perception.

Contemporary Ukrainian artists, continuing the tradition established by Mykhailo Lysenko’s school, develop the spiritual and philosophical dimension of plastic art, emphasizing the connection between material reality and internal intention. In the works of Volodymyr Korchovi, Zenoviya Fedyk, Viktor Volosenko, and Volodymyr Lypovka, there is a visible tendency toward the harmonization of color and texture as means of emotional generalization. Their sculptures combine intimacy, symbolism, and technological precision, forming the

contemporary visual language of Ukrainian small-form sculpture.

Within the broader European context, this process develops in parallel directions. The works of Tony Cragg, Henry Moore, and Magdalena Abakanowicz demonstrate shared foundations: the interpretation of material as a living substance that breathes, ages, and transforms; the use of color as a spatial marker; and the transformation of patina into a philosophical symbol of time. Ukrainian sculptors actively integrate these principles, adapting them to their own cultural and spiritual heritage while maintaining the intimacy and inward concentration of their imagery.

The findings confirm that modern small-form sculpture develops a new aesthetic of material being, in which color and patina function as mediators between matter, light, and spiritual meaning. They become essential factors of artistic imagery, shaping not only the visual appearance of the work but also its conceptual essence. This direction in Ukrainian sculpture reflects broader European tendencies toward the synthesis of traditional plastic art and technological innovation, while preserving its distinct identity, symbolic depth, and cultural continuity.

**Conclusions.** The conducted research has shown that contemporary Ukrainian small-form easel sculpture represents a complex and multifaceted phenomenon in which academic continuity, technological innovation, and spiritual depth are harmoniously intertwined. Its development in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries unfolds through an active dialogue between tradition and modern methods of form creation, where color, texture, and patina function not as decorative elements but as conceptual factors shaping a new aesthetic of imagery. Color and patina define the character of modern sculptural thinking, creating a multidimensional artistic space in which materiality merges with philosophical meaning. Patina appears as a

metaphor of time, a bearer of historical memory, and a sign of spiritual endurance, while color acquires symbolic resonance, serving as a means of emotional expression and formal harmony. In contemporary Ukrainian sculpture, these expressive elements not only enrich the aesthetic perception of form but also expand its semantic depth, allowing artists to convey complex psychological states, meditative stillness, and metaphorical tension.

The emergence of new materiality occurs through the combination of traditional materials – bronze, clay, stone, and wood – with polymers, resins, metal alloys, 3D printing, and digital modeling. Within this synthesis arises a distinct type of artistic thinking in which the physical and virtual coexist in harmony. Such tendencies can be observed in the works of Ukrainian sculptors Volodymyr Korchovyi, Zenoviya Fedyk, Volodymyr Lypovka, Viktor Volosenko, Oleksandr Pinchuk, Roman Petruk, Ivan Osadchuk, Nazar Bilyk, and Mykola Malyshko, whose creative approaches demonstrate a high level of experimentation with form, color, and texture while preserving national spiritual identity. Their works are characterized by intimacy, conceptual generalization, and an organic combination of traditional modeling with modern technologies, revealing a philosophical understanding of material and form.

European influences – particularly the artistic legacies of Henry Moore, Tony Cragg, and Magdalena Abakanowicz – intensify this process but do not diminish Ukrainian individuality. On the contrary, they encourage the search for new expressive means where spirituality, symbolism, and technological freedom coexist. Ukrainian small-form sculpture confidently integrates into the European art space while remaining grounded in the humanistic and material principles inherited from the national sculptural school.

Modern Ukrainian small-form sculpture asserts itself as a space of interdisciplinary synthesis in which the artist thinks not only in terms of form but also through categories of time, light, color, texture, and technological energy. Color and patina act as mediators between the material and the spiritual, forming a new artistic language that unites tradition and innovation. By integrating European tendencies while preserving their national essence, Ukrainian sculptors embody a balance between the universal and the individual, between the global discourse of contemporary art and the unique plastic and poetic code of Ukrainian culture.

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## **НОВІТНІ ПРИЙОМИ ФОРМУВАННЯ ОБРАЗНОСТІ В СУЧАСНІЙ СКУЛЬПТУРІ МАЛИХ ФОРМ**

**Анотація.** Сучасна скульптура малих форм є динамічним полем художніх експериментів, де поєднуються традиційна пластична школа, новітні технологічні можливості та поглиблений пошук нової образності. У статті розглядаються новітні прийоми формування художнього образу в сучасній скульптурі малих форм, зокрема через взаємодію матеріалу, кольору, фактури та патини. Досліджено, як колір і патина перестають бути лише допоміжними засобами декорування, перетворюючись на самостійні художні категорії, що визначають емоційно-сміслову структуру твору. Патина трактується не лише як ознака старіння або технологічного ефекту, а як елемент живої поверхні, що розкриває глибину фактури, додає історичності, підкреслює час як складову мистецького процесу. Колір, у

свою чергу, розглядається як структурна частина пластичної мови, здатна моделювати простір, визначати ритм, вагу та енергетику об'єму. У статті аналізуються новітні технології створення скульптурних форм — використання полімерів, композитних матеріалів, 3D-друку, лазерного гравіювання та доповненої реальності, що сприяють формуванню нових підходів до синтезу матеріального й цифрового. Визначено, що сучасна мала пластика функціонує у стані діалогу між традицією та інновацією, поєднуючи бронзу, камінь чи дерево з сучасними матеріалами і цифровими технологіями. Особлива увага приділяється українським митцям, які у своїх роботах інтегрують колір і патину як засоби емоційного впливу та символічної узагальненості. Підкреслюється, що інноваційні прийоми формотворення не заперечують класичних засад, а розвивають їх у напрямі міждисциплінарного синтезу. Зроблено висновок, що колір, фактура й патина у сучасній скульптурі малих форм є не лише естетичними, а й філософськими чинниками, які визначають нову типологію образності, де художній твір стає носієм часу, матеріальної пам'яті та духовної енергії.

**Ключові слова:** станкова скульптура, мала пластика, колір, патина, образність, фактура, нова матеріальність, інноваційні технології, художня форма, трансформація.

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