

UDC 003.07: 659.1:323(477)

DOI: 10.63009/cac/2.2024.55

Oksana Melnyk*

PhD in Art History, Associate Professor
Lviv Polytechnic National University
79000, 12 Stepan Bandera Str., Lviv, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1579-6705>

Viktor Shtets

PhD in Art History, Professor
Lviv Polytechnic National University
79000, 12 Stepan Bandera Str., Lviv, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2436-762X>

Typography as a means of image enhancement in wartime patriotic graphic creations in Ukraine (2022-2024)

Abstract. The relevance of this study lies in the necessity of analysing the role of typography as a visual communication tool in the works of creative resistance in Ukraine under wartime conditions. The purpose of this research was to examine the compositional, artistic, and formal techniques in the typography of patriotic graphic works within Ukraine's visual information space during the period of Russian military aggression. These techniques aim to strengthen national identity, support patriotic sentiment, and foster social unity. The study revealed that, in wartime realities, the creation of direct and easily recognisable visual representations of a patriotic, manifestational, or descriptive nature becomes increasingly significant. Such representations are designed to draw public attention to the needs and activities of the armed forces, boost societal morale, and document important events. This niche in visual communication design has been dominated by informational and motivational graphics on military themes, created as swift responses to daily events. The artistic language of these works employs a diverse range of stylistic and compositional tools. Patriotic graphics convey messages rooted in both contemporary visual culture and historically established symbolic imagery. Typography plays a crucial role in these messages by delivering specific information, articulating slogans or calls to action, and complementing visual content. These typographic elements form an integral part of the composition, enhancing the impact of the visual creation through their formal, compositional, and artistic characteristics, such as typeface, size, placement, and colour. The practical significance of this research resides in its applicability to developing visual and communication strategies for creating effective patriotic, social, and promotional materials in crisis situations

Keywords: creative resistance; patriotism; typographic composition; font; visual narrative; idea; war

INTRODUCTION

As the Russian-Ukrainian war continues, the visual media coverage of events in various forms, particularly through creative works, has become increasingly prominent within the information space. A graphic creative refers to an

advertising or informational banner published on social networks and in the media, designed to attract the audience's attention to specific events, phenomena, or products. The main characteristics of graphic creatives include

Suggested Citation:

Melnyk, O., & Shtets, V. (2024). Typography as a means of image enhancement in wartime patriotic graphic creations in Ukraine (2022-2024). *Culture and Contemporaneity*, 26(2), 55-67. doi: 10.63009/cac/2.2024.55.

*Corresponding author



Copyright © The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

emotional expressiveness, visual potency, and the ability to effectively convey essential information to the audience through illustration and typography. Patriotic graphic creatives represent a form of artistic expression that emphasises national identity, values, culture, and traditions. During wartime, patriotic-themed creatives respond to significant events on the front line in a concise and impactful manner. They address social issues, encourage support for the armed forces, and boost morale. Historically, major public events have resonated through visual messages. These forms have evolved from propaganda leaflets and posters during the First World War to contemporary internet memes, illustrated images, and creative works. This dynamic and swift response by artists and designers to current events highlights a range of works in the modern visual space, which can be interpreted based on specific features and substantive characteristics. These impactful graphic messages are increasingly recognised as a new form of mass art, engaging both renowned designers and other concerned creative individuals. A crucial element of such creatives is typographic composition, which enhances the visual message, complements the imagery, and inspires action.

Since the chronological boundaries of the phenomenon under study are set within the years 2022 to 2024, there is currently no comprehensive theoretical framework for the research topic. Some publications highlight symbolic and thematic explorations in the art and design of the wartime period. Researchers A. Budnyk & K. Hamaliya (2022) studied wartime posters and emphasised the use of artistic techniques to depict images of the enemy and the hero. T. Bozhko (2022) examined symbolic systems as cultural codes in war posters. O. Karpenko (2022) investigated the nature and trends of fine art during the wartime period in her research. The issue of fonts and typography in the context of visual resistance is an important art historical question; however, research in this area remains limited. O. Khramova-Baranova (2024) analysed the significance of new typography as a graphic font design element in creating a visual artistic image. M. Kostanda (2020) explored the typography of the 21st century within the context of the technological paradigm of recent decades. Creative aspects of designing display typefaces in advertising messages were discussed by A. Polishchuk (2020). Additionally, various online resources have published collections of visual creatives that showcase artistic responses by designers and artists to the daily events of the war (How illustrators can work with the theme of war, 2022).

These publications address individual aspects of visual message design in the context of wartime events. Nonetheless, the lack of a systematic research approach that comprehensively examines the role of typography in graphic creatives during the war underscores the need to establish a more profound theoretical foundation. This foundation should take into account both the aesthetic and functional aspects of font and typography usage in the context of wartime communication. Such an approach

would allow for an exploration not only of typography's impact on visual perception but also of its capacity to amplify patriotic messages, mobilise society, and shape national identity through design during crisis events.

The research aimed to identify the compositional, artistic, and formal techniques involved in designing typographic elements that enhance the visual imagery of Ukraine's visual information field during the period of Russian military aggression from 2022 to 2024.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research methodology employed a range of scientific and artistic analysis methods, including historical analysis, visual observation, and formal, semiotic, compositional, and content analysis. The scientific analysis method involved a systematic approach to the study, interpretation, and synthesis of collected data based on clear scientific principles. This method enabled the evaluation of the effectiveness of typography in creating emotional impact and its role in enhancing imagery and messages in wartime conditions. The historical analysis method facilitated an exploration of the broader historical context and traditions of typography usage, as well as their influence on contemporary design in Ukraine. The visual observation method enabled the examination of wartime graphics in Ukraine during the period from 2022 to 2024, identifying distinctive visual techniques and typographic solutions used to enhance images and messages. It assessed how typography contributed to the emotional impact on the audience and how the combination of fonts, colours, and composition shaped visual rhetoric relevant to the theme of wartime. This method highlighted the most effective compositional and visual solutions for reinforcing patriotic and emotional accents in wartime creatives. The formal analysis method involved evaluating the visual elements of typography based on their formal qualities, including fonts, size, line thickness, colour, and spatial arrangement. This approach helped explore how the technical aspects of typography influence the aesthetic appearance and communicative potential of graphic products. Semiotic analysis uncovered deeper meanings embedded in typographic images, revealing how these elements convey cultural or symbolic significance. The compositional analysis method examined the interaction between typography and other visual elements (such as images, colour, and graphics). It revealed how typography integrates within graphic creatives and works in harmony with other components to create cohesive and expressive compositions. The content analysis method identified the typographic elements and fonts most frequently used in Ukraine's wartime graphic creatives, highlighting the semantic and emotional accents they convey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Ukrainian society, the themes of patriotism and the struggle for freedom have always been significant. These themes become particularly salient in complex political

and social circumstances, especially when the preservation of national interests or statehood is under threat. For Ukrainians, the fight for freedom and the sense of patriotism are integral aspects of their cultural and spiritual identity. Throughout history, during times of threats to the state's existence, Ukrainians have persevered and fought for their right to exist, often drawing upon patriotic sentiments. Artistic works have long served as visual manifestations of this struggle – from the underground graphics of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army to the wartime designs of 2024, marked by open military aggression from Russia. These tumultuous historical events have represented critical turning points for Ukrainian visual design, which seeks to address the challenges posed by war. Ukraine's visual culture is undergoing significant transformations, aimed at mobilising society, representing national unity, and countering external aggression. This period has become not only a test for designers but also a catalyst for the creation of new visual paradigms, where issues of national identity, patriotism, and the struggle for freedom take centre stage. The war has also given rise to new visual genres, including the design of wartime memes and graphic creatives, which reflect the dramatic events on both the front lines and the home front. Consequently, an important question arises: how do these new visual genres and graphic solutions shape the identity of contemporary Ukraine, influence public consciousness, and bolster the morale of society?

Art has always been a mirror of its time, reflecting the events that shape history. Utilitarian visual messages and artistic works have become crucial in supporting the national spirit of Ukrainians, offering reflections on complex historical events, and expressing the struggle for freedom, dignity, and independence. During the 1940s and 1960s, the patriotic spirit of Ukrainians was bolstered by underground graphics, including leaflets and *bofons* ("combat fund" monetary documents of a specific denomination bearing the symbols of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army). These items served as a form of manifesto, conveying messages of resistance. Created under challenging

conditions, these works not only informed the public about significant events but also inspired action and helped forge a collective identity. Originally produced clandestinely and, from the mid-20th century, in exile, these graphic messages established the aesthetic and formal parameters of patriotic art, forming a foundation for subsequent generations of artists. These later artists adapted the traditions to suit evolving realities. The works of prominent figures in patriotic graphics such as Nil Khasevych, Petro Obal, Robert Lisovskyi, and Myroslav Huk incorporated national symbolism and stylistics. This included ornamentation, colours, and motifs deeply embedded in Ukrainian culture (Klymenko, 2006; Yatsiv, 2021; Skorostetskyi, 2021). Typographic elements similarly reflected national specificity through ornamental and historical forms that evoked handwritten traditions or folk art. This typographic approach not only emphasised the patriotic character of graphic works but also strengthened national identity through visual language. An important aspect of these works was that typographic elements served both an informative function and an integral compositional role, interacting seamlessly with images and symbols. The use of stylised Cyrillic and traditional colour schemes (commonly blue–yellow or red–black combinations) created cohesive visual messages that were readily identified as Ukrainian. Typography complemented the visual aspects of these works by adding emphasis and reinforcing the narrative. This integration of national symbols and typographic solutions contributed to the creation of a distinctive visual language that reflected the cultural identity of Ukrainians. The graphics of Nil Khasevych, the chief artist of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, have become enduring symbols of resilience, the fight for freedom, and loyalty to the Ukrainian state (Fig. 1). Nil Khasevych oversaw both the ideological-political and artistic-creative management of more than twenty partisan printing houses, producing impactful and artistically accomplished graphic works (Rudyachenko, 2023). Albums of Khasevych's woodcuts, such as *Volyn in Struggle* and *Graphics in UPA Bunkers* (1950–1952), have since become classics of Ukrainian patriotic graphics.



Figure 1. Ukrainian patriotic. Nil Khasevych. Woodcut, 1951

Source: based on O. Rudyachenko (2023)

The changes that occurred in the technical and communication spheres from the mid-20th century to the 2020s significantly influenced the form and style of patriotic

images. In the 2020s, these images convey entirely different visual messages, operate within distinct environments, and utilise advanced technical features. However, the core

remains consistent – calls to action, the documentation of events, support for the army, the promotion of national identity, and the consolidation of society. Graphic creatives have become tools of mass influence, and their study highlights the mechanisms by which typographic solutions interact with visual elements, demonstrating their effectiveness and their role in producing patriotic, motivational, and socially significant messages.

The creation of graphic creativity begins with an idea – a conceptual core that defines the direction and thematic focus of the future visual solution. This idea is encapsulated in a succinct and impactful verbal form, complemented by a visual image, which serves as the most immediate means of communication with the viewer. The visual image establishes the topic and content, while the font and verbal components enhance and strengthen the overall message, aiding comprehension.

Researcher T. Bozhko (2022), in an analysis of sign-symbolic systems in wartime propaganda graphics, identifies “traditional”, “innovative”, and “situational” sign forms, highlighting the contextual coding of information in images of hands, hearts, snakes, and birds, as well as the inclusion of modern symbolic elements such as the identities of prominent global brands. Researchers A. Budnyk & K. Hamaliya (2022) specifically examined two opposing thematic frameworks in wartime visual messages, analysing the use of metaphors and hyperbole to depict heroes and enemies. This study adopted a broader typology of images used in wartime graphic creatives, focusing on their semantic significance and their impact on audience perception in conjunction with typography. Through an examination of graphic creatives from social networks, media platforms, street art, and presentation spaces, an author’s methodology for analysis was developed, categorising creatives based on their visual elements that reflect the core idea of the message. The grouping includes various thematic orientations:

- **Group 1.** Symbol/symbolic compositions as markers for identifying war events (state symbols, national emblems, universally recognised anti-war symbols, abstract concepts, and ornaments).
- **Group 2.** Characters as visual carriers of the narrative (depictions of the enemy, warriors, citizens, Mother Ukraine, heroes, or prominent figures).
- **Group 3.** Plot compositions to convey the dynamics of events (depictions of significant events, political and military developments, their consequences, heroic acts, enemy atrocities, and reflections on occurrences).
- **Group 4.** Objects/attributes as visual symbols supporting the narrative (weapons, military paraphernalia, or objects that have gained iconic status in specific events).
- **Group 5.** Text as a primary means of communication (informational content, slogans, quotes, direct appeals, and captions for events).

An analysis of selections of patriotic creatives, accessible online, highlights examples where graphic images function as self-sufficient elements without verbal support.

In such instances, the power of the message lies in the symbolism of the graphics, which the viewer can easily interpret. These creatives often rely on well-known cultural or political symbols, colour associations, or specific historical contexts, allowing them to avoid unnecessary elements or textual explanations. The absence of verbal accompaniment underscores the universality of visual language, enabling the message to be conveyed through its standalone imagery. Such creatives are capable of communicating with diverse audiences, transcending language barriers, and fostering a profound emotional connection.

Creatives incorporating a typographic component use text as an additional means of enhancing the image, enabling more precise communication of content or a broader contextualisation of the message. Typography in these cases may serve as either a dominant feature or a supplementary element, reinforcing the central idea and introducing dynamism to the visual composition. Through the interplay of verbal and visual elements, typographic creatives facilitate a deeper exploration of the subject matter, while also eliciting specific associations and reflections in the viewer. In contrast, illustrative creatives are designed to evoke immediate emotional responses, facilitating the rapid assimilation of information. Although pictorial creatives are often regarded as mere illustrations, typographic creatives possess the potential to engage in a more profound dialogue with the audience, combining visual elements with meaningful messages that inspire thought, interpretation, and action. Researcher O. Hladun (2009) demonstrated that, while the imagery within graphic design conveys essential visual information to the recipient in an emotional and impactful manner, it is only through its integration with verbal elements that the message becomes structured and semantically complete.

An analysis of creatives was conducted based on groups of image-ideas identified as symbols, characters, plots, and objects/attributes. Important elements of visual creatives include images of the national flag, the trident, and widely recognisable symbols of Ukraine, such as a map, red viburnum, sunflowers, and traditional ornamentation. These images frequently serve as key markers for identifying wartime events within the geopolitical context, particularly for international audiences. The flag directly signifies the country in question; however, it is often depicted in figurative forms, such as the silhouettes of characters or objects. The trident is commonly represented as a weapon of defence or punishment – a pitchfork, a sword, or a drone. Additionally, these symbols often take on contrasting meanings when juxtaposed with elements of Russian symbolism. For instance, a trident impaling a two-headed chicken (a reference to the eagle in the Russian coat of arms) or a fist in the colours of the Ukrainian flag defeating a Russian tricolour fist. Objects or material symbols are sometimes rendered in yellow and blue hues, signifying allegiance to or support Ukraine. Such symbolic compositions frequently feature text as the dominant element. In one example, the word “Will” is stylised in the

shape of a trident and written in a font resembling elm wood. This design occupies a prominent compositional position, creating both textual and visual messaging. Additional slogans, presented in the aesthetic of Cyrillic semi-statutes, enhance the typographic compositions with a distinctly Ukrainian visual character (Fig. 2, a). The yellow and blue colour palette forms the central image in the creative “We know why and for what. The Russians don’t”. Two human heads in the centre are shaped to resemble a heart and contain the popular slogan “Everything will be Ukraine”, written in a dynamic, handwritten font. The font’s free-flowing lines emphasise the anatomical features of the human heads, adding emotional expressiveness and personalisation to the message. The handwritten

style underscores the human and living nature of communication, symbolising unity (Fig. 2, b). A review of online creatives reveals that well-known global symbols are also repurposed to acquire new (positive or negative) contexts. For example, in the “Red Cross” poster, the red cross symbol casts a black shadow resembling a grave, while the letters “SS” are replaced with the Nazi insignia. In this design, the font composition mirrors the concise and geometric nature of the image, occupying the upper section of the compositional space and adding an unexpected layer of meaning. This typographic addition shifts and complicates the focus of the image, which, when viewed independently, can evoke themes of failure or the organisation’s inability to respond adequately to critical situations (Fig. 2, c).

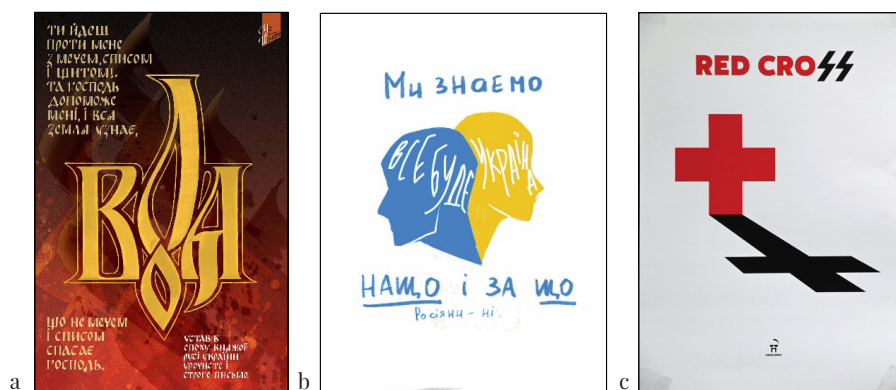


Figure 2. Symbol/symbolic composition as a marker for identifying wartime events

Note: a. – “Will”. State symbols integrated with typography inspired by elm wood; b. – “We know why and for what”. Handwritten font as an emotional element; c. – “Red cross”. Sans-serif font that introduces meaningful emphasis

Source: A series of calligraphic posters “Ukrainian handwritten script as an image of history” (2015), From all over the world: 15 illustrations about the war in Ukraine (2022), “Horde in bast shoes”. Anti-war posters from the exhibition in Odesa (2022)

Another group of creatives, where the character is the main visual image, often employs typography to reproduce their direct speech, serve as a dedication, or function as a “label” (particularly when depicting the enemy). In these cases, the font plays a pivotal role, as it clarifies the informational message. The characters depicted in patriotic illustrations and posters span a wide range of subjects: warriors, enemies, ordinary citizens of Ukraine, the image of the woman-mother of Ukraine, as well as both modern and historical heroes and prominent figures. Visual creatives featuring such images are easily perceived, evoke empathy, and often serve a motivational function. Slogans and direct speech, complement the image, help bolster morale, strengthen the fighting spirit, and exert a negative, oppressive effect on the enemy. The artistic response to the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war reveals that, alongside the universally recognised images of the Ukrainian hero – such as a Cossack, a UPA soldier, or a historical figure – heroes from contemporary times have emerged at the forefront. These include both combatants – soldiers controlling advanced weaponry, guarding against anti-missile defences, and defending heroes – as well as ordinary individuals, such as a grandmother who poisons

the enemy with tea, a man who halts a tank with his bare hands, and a woman who downed a drone with a can of tomatoes. Occasionally, such creatives may contain subtle obscene language, as the circumstances do not allow for the selection of more refined words. The font used in these creatives is often handwritten, deliberately uneven, and disproportionate, but its aesthetic quality contributes to forming the intended impression. For example, the Ukrainian Madonna – depicted as a mother holding a baby in her arms and a shoulder bag – symbolises the resilience and sacrifice of Ukrainian women during the war. Her image embodies not only maternal care but also the strength of spirit necessary for survival amidst constant threat. A font inspired by rhythmic brush writing is positioned above a symbolic nimbus at the centre, a compositional choice that evokes visual work adhering to certain canons, making the image both convincing and powerful (Fig. 3, a).

The creative featuring the warrior angel includes text that serves as an appeal to the character himself. The dynamic composition is built around two primary elements: a globe with a burning country depicted in the lower portion, and a warrior angel in the upper section. The text, positioned between these key elements, has low contrast

with the background and functions as a complement to the vibrant images, thereby completing the message's perception (Fig. 3, b). The creative featuring the Kherson tomato adopts a less solemn tone, presenting a striking, somewhat visceral central image accompanied by a direct textual message. In this instance, the slogan forms the ideological foundation of the creative. Although the brightly coloured, emotionally charged depiction of a tomato draws attention, it is the typography that anchors the viewer's focus and clarifies the meaning of the image. Through this approach, the viewer comes to understand that the tomato symbolises the heroic Kherson region, which endured occupation and fought courageously for liberation (Fig. 3, c). In all these examples, a handwritten, irregular font has been employed to create a sense of individuality and

authenticity. The irregularity of the font conveys spontaneity, evoking emotional sincerity and humanity. Furthermore, the use of a handwritten font fosters personal engagement with the viewer, highlighting the intimate nature of the message and lending it a more vivid and immediate quality. In the context of creativity, this stylistic choice helps construct a distinctive visual identity that stands out amidst more formal and standardised typographic solutions. For example, in the creative titled "Soon the rooster will go to the meat jelly", an ordinary Ukrainian woman is depicted holding a two-headed chicken, representing an element of the Russian coat of arms (Fig. 3, d). Here, a sans-serif font has been utilised to deliver a straightforward and unambiguous message, eschewing additional emotional embellishments in favour of clarity and directness.



Figure 3. A character as an image of visual creativity and a font that personifies the address (a–c), sans-serif font that conveys a clear message without additional emotional reinforcement

Note: a. – “Ukrainian Madonna”; b. – “You defended Ukraine with one wing”; c. – “Kherson tomato”; d. – “Soon the rooster will go to the meat jelly”

Source: Reaction of Ukrainian artists to the war started by the Russian Federation. Part 3 (2022), Funny pictures about Ukrainian borscht (2022), O. Hadzhiy (2022)

The active phases of the war have motivated the creative community to respond swiftly to daily events on the frontlines. Successes and setbacks have equally formed the basis of patriotic creative narratives. For example, during the early stages of the war, news of events such as the battles for Kyiv, the destruction of the Moscow flagship, the demolition of the Crimean Bridge, and the prolonged confrontations at Chornobayivka frequently dominated media coverage. Such portrayals, which glorify heroic deeds while intensifying the viewer's resentment towards the enemy, have become a significant part of the daily visual “media landscape”. Importantly, they contribute to the enduring memory of specific events. The rapid pace of military developments provides new inspirations for illustrative depictions daily. For instance, creatives such as the one illustrating an enemy drone being shot down with a can of tomatoes capture these occurrences. Typography in such works is often limited to a single striking word or slogan, frequently rendered in a hand-drawn font, symbolising a quick, responsive approach to unfolding events. A significant number of story-driven creatives focus on the daily lives of Ukrainians, illustrating nights spent in shelters, the constant anxiety of air raid sirens, enemy attacks, and the loss of loved ones or homes. These works emphasise the human tragedy and emotional

toll of war. The visuals are often infused with symbolic elements, while typography takes on an emotionally charged quality. For instance, the creative depiction of a man lying in bed, wide awake and overcome with horror about the surrounding chaos, delivers a powerful visual message. However, its full meaning becomes clear upon reading the accompanying text at the top: “I can't stop thinking that there is no safe place in my country”. The typography, rough and irregular, mimics handwriting on monumental surfaces. The stark black-and-white figure and text are juxtaposed with the red, dynamic flames of a burning city, enhancing the sense of urgency and anxiety (Fig. 4, a). In the creative “Stand with Ukraine”, the font composition adds considerable emotional intensity. The visually dense and tense illustration places a mother and child at the centre, surrounded by a protective ring of Ukrainian soldiers shielding them from a red mass of zombie-like enemies. The white typography echoes the pale faces of the mother and soldiers, while its geometric simplicity creates an immediate and impactful connection with the viewer (Fig. 4, b). The creative “We'll lay down soul and body for our freedom” portrays scenes from the early days of the war, where unarmed civilians confronted enemy tanks. Despite the painterly style of the illustration, the typography employs a clear sans-serif font. This

contrasts with the emotionally charged imagery of people risking everything for freedom. The font's lack of decorative elements highlights the simplicity and strength of the words, reinforcing the unyielding determination to defend freedom at all costs (Fig. 4, c). Thus, typography in narrative-driven creatives plays a critical role in conveying

emotions and enhancing the impact of visual imagery. In many cases, typography becomes an expressive tool for setting the tone and highlighting key messages. Handwritten or hand-drawn fonts signify a swift, personal response to events, while strict sans-serif fonts emphasise the gravity and resoluteness of the struggle.



Figure 4. Plot (fixation of an event) as an image of visual creativity: handwritten font and sans-serif typeface

Note: a. – “I can’t stop thinking that there is no safe place in my country”. Rough, irregular typography; b.- “Stand with Ukraine”; c. – “We’ll lay down soul and body for our freedom”

Source: Drawing the war in Ukraine (2022), From all over the world: 15 illustrations about the war in Ukraine (2022)

The fourth group of creatives is characterised by a central image – an object or attribute. Weapons, military paraphernalia, cultural objects, and other elements are defined as the primary visual focus. These are often synthesised into metaphors, creating more complex visual messages. For instance, the Bayraktar is perceived both as a weapon and as a symbol of the Ukrainian struggle, as well as an emblem of support from Western partners. Similarly, the tank is viewed as a weapon, a “machine of death”, and a trophy. The slogans in such creatives vary in tone and purpose; they are often threats directed at the enemy or contemptuous messages aimed to undermine them. For example, the creative titled “Ghost of Kyiv, Thank You!” features the central image of an almost mythical plane, symbolising the defence of Kyiv from enemy missiles. The childlike drawing style is further complemented by a hand-drawn font that resembles children’s handwriting. This combination effectively conveys gratitude and a sense of almost child-like admiration for the mythical plane (Fig. 5, a). Another example is a poster depicting a tank-foot sinking underwater. Here, the grotesque font not only complements the

composition but also reinforces its meaning, attaching the label “Horde in bast shoes” to the Russians, mirroring the perception held by many Ukrainians (Fig. 5, b). In the creative titled “Terrorussia”, the central object is a matryoshka doll adorned with aerial bombs and set against the backdrop of a destroyed city. The grotesque font holds a dominant compositional position, playing a primary role in shaping the viewer’s perception. The font’s red colour mirrors that of the nesting doll but operates in a more pronounced and assertive manner. In this creative, it could be argued that the matryoshka doll acts as a supporting element to the typographic composition. Together, they form a cohesive, conceptually refined message (Fig. 5, c). The matryoshka doll is also employed to represent the idea of “Russian peace”. In this iteration, the doll takes on a sinister appearance, characterised by a grotesquely exaggerated smile. The ornaments on its costume incorporate tanks, while the accompanying text block, “Russian peace”, is rendered in a distorted, figurative font. This visual arrangement further intensifies the eerie and symbolic impact of the creative (Fig. 5, d).



Figure 5. Object as an image of visual creativity

Note: a. – “Ghost of Kyiv, Thank You!”. Font imitates children’s handwriting; b. – “Horde in bast shoes”. Sans-serif font for the brevity of the image; c. – “Terrorussia”: grotesque font complements the central image; d. – “Russian peace”. A distorted figurative font highlights the concept of Russian aggression

Source: Illustrations from fallout shelters. How Ukrainian artists react to war (2022), The #terroRussia campaign is taking place in the world (2022), I’d rather not have dozens of illustration topics every day like I do now: Illustration war month (2022)

Between 2022 and 2024, significant changes occurred in the depiction of patriotic creatives. Notably, the representation of the enemy shifted from widely recognisable memes about Russia (brute force, bears, lapti, alcoholics, balalaikas, and the tricolour) to visuals depicting the consequences of war crimes, predictions of vengeance for these acts, and ongoing political processes. Correspondingly, slogans became less predictable, often highly original, and sharply responsive to daily events. Typographic compositions frequently defy established norms, taking on prominent roles in the design, adopting figurative characteristics, or even employing fonts that are intentionally difficult to read. These elements aim to evoke an emotional response and prompt immediate engagement from the

viewer. In creatives where typography takes precedence and constitutes an independent informational composition, legible and bold grotesque fonts are more commonly employed (Fig. 6). Overall, a wide variety of drawn and typographic styles can communicate either emotionally (using dynamic, hand-drawn fonts) or informational messages (employing concise, readable, and logically integrated fonts). Typography can function as the primary or supporting element of creatives. In the first scenario, it conveys the main message, while visual elements serve to reinforce it. When typography complements the primary image, its role is to enhance and contextualise the image, ensuring the message (such as a call to action or slogan) is effectively delivered and resonates with the viewer.



Figure 6. Emotional typographic compositions forming independent images (a, b) and informative typographic compositions in creatives (c, d)

Source: In Lisbon, a girl from Nova Kakhovka draws posters for rallies in support of Ukraine (2022); Anti-war minimalist posters (2022); T. Alekseyeva (2024); I. Yermak (2022), I'd rather not have dozens of illustration topics every day like I do now: Illustration war month (2022)

Slogans that serve an informational purpose require concise, legible, and logically integrated fonts within the compositional field. Conversely, slogans intended to amplify emotional impact often use author-drawn, accentuated, or deliberately less legible fonts. Hand-drawn typographic compositions create the impression of immediacy, capturing the urgency of current events. This style reso-

nates with the wartime aesthetic of air raid alerts, disrupted communications, and limited resources. Fonts inspired by ancient Ukrainian scripts, such as the Narbut font, convey a more formal and solemn tone. Sans-serif fonts constitute another critical group, associated with declarations and the aesthetics of protest. These fonts are easy to read and convey information objectively (Table 1).

Table 1. Effects of typographic elements based on font characteristics in wartime patriotic creatives

A visual idea of a creative message	Formal characteristics of the font		
	Cursive, hand-drawn font	Ukrainianised font with serifs	Sans-serif font
Group 1. Symbol/symbolic compositions as markers for identifying war events state symbols, national emblems, universally recognised anti-war symbols, abstract concepts, and ornaments	Adds emotional expressiveness	Serves as a tool for cultural identification and reinforces national identity	Functions as an effective tool for amplifying the main message, providing it clarity, directness, and emotional impact
Group 2. Characters as visual carriers of the narrative heroisation, human tragedies, depictions of the enemy, warriors, citizens, Mother Ukraine, heroes, or prominent figures	Highlights the character's personality, inner state, or direct speech	Emphasises Ukrainian heritage and traditions (e.g., Cossack imagery, historical figures)	Delivers a direct and clear message without additional emotional reinforcement, focusing on clarity and determination

Table 1. Continued

A visual idea of a creative message	Formal characteristics of the font		
	Cursive, hand-drawn font	Ukrainianised font with serifs	Sans-serif font
Group 3. Plot compositions to convey the dynamics of events depictions of significant events, political and military developments, their consequences, heroic acts, enemy atrocities, and reflections on occurrences	Acts as an emotional commentary on the visual context, helping the viewer better perceive the atmosphere	Underlines the significance of events for national consciousness	Stresses the seriousness of the topic and facilitates a clear perception of information
Group 4. Objects/attributes as visual symbols supporting the narrative weapons, military paraphernalia, or objects that have gained iconic status in specific events	Creates a sense of closeness and intimacy, attributing significance to even simple objects	Enhances the importance of objects and attributes that reflect Ukrainian cultural heritage	Ensures the meaning of objects/attributes is clear and unambiguous to the viewer
Group 5. Text as a primary means of communication informational content, slogans, quotes, direct appeals, and captions for events	Conveys a sense of urgency, representing the rapid capture of an actual event, aligning with the aesthetics of wartime	Establishes a formal and solemn tone, reinforcing national identity	Ensures readability and effectively communicates information, allowing for the expression of protest aesthetics and aligning with slogan declarations

Source: developed by the authors

Analysis of the formal characteristics of font compositions revealed that in creatives where the symbol is the main element, handwritten fonts add emotional expressiveness; Ukrainianised fonts function as powerful tools for cultural identification and the reinforcement of national identity; and sans-serif fonts serve as effective tools for reinforcing the main message, imparting clarity, directness, and emotional impact. In creatives where a character is the main element, handwritten fonts emphasise the personality of the character, their inner state, or direct speech. Ukrainianised fonts are particularly effective in contexts that highlight Ukrainian heritage and traditions, such as depictions of Cossack imagery or historical figures. Sans-serif fonts convey a direct and clear message, avoiding additional emotional embellishments while emphasising clarity and resoluteness. In creative works where plot composition reflects the dynamics of events, handwritten typography acts as an emotional commentary on the visual context, helping the viewer to better experience the atmosphere. Ukrainianised fonts highlight the significance of events for national consciousness, while sans-serif fonts underscore the seriousness of the topic and promote a clear understanding of the information. In creatives where objects/attributes serve as visual symbols to support the narrative, handwritten fonts create a sense of intimacy and closeness, lending importance to even simple items. Ukrainianised fonts enhance the significance of objects and attributes, reflecting Ukrainian cultural heritage. Sans-serif fonts clarify and unambiguously communicate the meaning of objects/attributes to the viewer. In creative works where text is the key means of communication, handwritten fonts create the impression of immediacy, capturing a quick response to an actual

event and aligning with the aesthetics of wartime. Ukrainianised fonts establish a formal and solemn tone, reinforcing national identity. Sans-serif fonts, being easy to read, objectively convey information, support the aesthetics of protest, and are associated with declarations and slogans.

In addition to formal characteristics that influence the effectiveness of visual creatives, compositional and artistic features also play a significant role. These include the balance between font and image elements, rhythm, proportions, and colour palette, as well as the symbolism and metaphorical qualities of the images. Composition is crucial for appropriate accentuation: an active font block in the centre of the composition becomes dominant, dictating the viewer's perception of the message (Group 5). Fonts positioned outside the centre of the composition often complement the image and are perceived as additional clarifications. In the analysed creatives, such fonts enhance the message (Groups 1–4). Occasionally, the font is so detached from the main image that it functions almost independently. This compositional approach serves to first engage with the primary emotional image, followed by a subsequent clarification of its content. Artistic features, including the style of execution, the use of light and shadow, or additional graphic elements, enhance the accuracy of the conveyed message and evoke appropriate associations in the audience. These methods are particularly characteristic of poster art. However, as the essence of creative work lies in providing a rapid response to events, most typographic compositions achieve consistency with the image through their compositional and formal characteristics.

In the 2020s, the subject of military graphics and posters has increasingly attracted researchers, leading to its

exploration in scientific publications. Several works have addressed the problem of visual image formation within artistic practices during wartime. Researcher O. Karpenko (2022) examined the main trends in modern Ukrainian painting from the standpoint of wartime, highlighting graphic and figurative features and drawing parallels with artistic phenomena of the 20th century. The article by V. Monsevykh (2023) analysed the influence of historical and military themes on modern Ukrainian painting, focusing on how artists interpret military events and national history through the prism of contemporary artistic practices. Researcher N. Averyanova (2021) investigated techniques and images of battle scenes in both foreign and Ukrainian art history. Similarly, V. Mykhalchuk (2022) explored war motifs and figurative interpretations of plots in the graphic work of the Ukrainian artist Olena Kulchytska. The issue of reproducing patriotic intentions in modern visual design has also been revisited. For instance, V. Osaula (2019) examined the role of visual design in fostering national identity and social cohesion during crises. While the author did not focus on semantic or formal-compositional connections within graphic compositions or advertisements, they emphasised communicative approaches, concluding that wartime fosters heightened patriotism and a return to fundamental values associated with national unity. In their article, researcher T. Bozhko (2022) articulated a more detailed analysis of visual design objects. The author examined how socio-historical events are encoded through iconic and symbolic images, summarising traditional symbols (such as state emblems, hands, and hearts) alongside innovative ones (such as transformations of the trident and logos of famous brands depicted as weapons). Researcher T. Shevchuk (2024) focused on the metaphorical and satirical language of political caricatures and posters during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Similarly, the research of A. Budnyk & K. Hamaliya (2022) examined the posters of the group “Creative Resistance of KNUKIM/KUK”, identifying artistic techniques and means used in visual messages to contrast opposing ideas. In particular, the authors addressed the problem of depicting enemies and heroes through hyperbole, associative methods, and metaphorical devices. In the publication “Modern Ukrainian poster as an artistic chronicle of resistance to Russian aggression”, authors O. Donets & A. Budnyk (2024) considered the modern Ukrainian poster as a chronicle of war events, analysing its subject matter, artistic and stylistic features, and graphic techniques. Several Ukrainian scholars have explored the subject of wartime posters. Researcher O. Hladun (2018) investigated the visual and plastic language of Ukrainian posters from the war of 1939–1945, examining their communicative and artistic aspects. O. Lukovska (2022) studied the creative activities of artists during wartime. L. Lehasova (2009) focused on the artistic language of posters from both world wars. Scientists A. Strus & O. Melnyk (2024)

analysed strategies of visual impact in political poster design during the First World War. Meanwhile, O. Zalevska (2023) examined the plastic language of the Ukrainian poster in the context of the development of the national graphic school. Foreign scholars have also contributed to this field. P. Paret (1992) traced the role of visual communication in war and revolutionary posters, while art historian J. Aulich (2014) emphasised the influence of military contexts, propaganda issues, and the formation of cultural memory in visual media.

While these studies have explored the figurative components of visual messages, typography and font elements have been addressed only briefly and require further in-depth study.

CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that in Ukraine during 2022–2024, a significant niche in the design of visual communications was occupied by informative messages and motivational visual creatives on patriotic themes. These were aimed at drawing society’s attention to the needs and activities of the army, raising general morale, and recording important events. Such graphic design objects exhibit distinct features that visually differentiate them from other advertising messages. The realities of wartime have created a demand for direct, easily recognisable images and impactful slogans, often developed as quick responses to current events. The following factors influencing the formation of typographic elements in wartime creatives within Ukraine’s visual information field during the period of Russian military aggression were identified: the visual image itself (its content) and the slogan, which serves an informative or emotional function. It was found that typography plays a critical role in conveying information and enhancing the visual impact of patriotic creatives due to their formal, compositional, and artistic characteristics. For creatives with informational and instructional purposes, clear geometric typography – typically sans-serif, clean serif, or a modernised Ukrainian historical font – is employed. To enhance emotional impact in motivational creatives, handwritten and drawn graphic typography was found to be the most effective.

The prospects for further research include expanding the analysis of how typographic compositions of visual resistance influence diverse audiences, as well as studying changes in the perception of patriotic and social messages in response to the evolving dynamics of war and societal challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

REFERENCES

- [1] "Horde in bast shoes". Anti-war posters from the exhibition in Odesa. (2022). *Těty.org.ua*. Retrieved from <https://texty.org.ua/fragments/106249/laptnoha-orda-antyyvovenni-plakaty-z-vystavky-v-odesi/>.
- [2] A series of calligraphic posters "Ukrainian handwritten script as an image of history". (2015). *Behance*. Retrieved from <https://www.behance.net/gallery/23862631/Calligraphic-posters>.
- [3] Alekseyeva, T. (2024). Nikita Titov, poster artist: You can't lie with a poster, you have to say what you feel. *ArtHuss*. Retrieved from <https://www.arthuss.com.ua/books-blog/nikita-titov-plakatyst>.
- [4] Anti-war minimalist posters. (2022). *Metkere.com*. Retrieved from <https://metkere.com/2022/06/antiwarposters.html>.
- [5] Aulich, J. (2014). Graphic arts and advertising as war propaganda. *e-Space*. doi: 10.15463/ie1418.10463.
- [6] Averyanova, N. (2022). *Themes of conflicts and wars in Ukrainian art history*. In *Proceedings of the MCND conference. Development of scientific thought of post-industrial society: Modern discourse* (pp. 240–245). Vinnytsia: MCND.
- [7] Bozhko, T. (2022). Sign-symbolic systems as cultural codes: Recognition and interaction of symbols. *Demiurge: Ideas, Technologies, Design Perspectives*, 5(2), 171–187. doi: 10.31866/2617-7951.5.2.2022.266900.
- [8] Budnyk, A., & Hamaliya, K. (2022). Images of "hero" and "enemy" in posters of the war period. *Demiurge: Ideas, Technologies, Design Perspectives*, 5(2), 188–200. doi: 10.31866/2617-7951.5.2.2022.266901.
- [9] Donets, O. & Budnyk, A. (2024). Modern Ukrainian poster as an artistic chronicle of resistance to Russian aggression (collection of posters of the design group "Creative resistance of KNUKiM/KUK"). *Manuscript and Book Heritage of Ukraine*, 1, 78–98. doi: 10.15407/rksu.32.078.
- [10] Drawing the war in Ukraine. (2022). *The Economist*. Retrieved from <https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/04/28/drawing-the-war-in-ukraine>.
- [11] From all over the world: 15 illustrations about the war in Ukraine. (2022). *Elle*. Retrieved from <https://elle.ua/ludi/novosty/z-ush-kutochkv-svtu-15-lyustracy-pro-vynu-v-ukran/>.
- [12] Funny pictures about Ukrainian borscht, which does not give rest to Russians. (2022). *Radio Lux*. Retrieved from https://lux.fm/smishni-kartinki-pro-ukrayinskij-borshch-yakij-ne-daye-spokoyu-rosiyanam_n120762.
- [13] Hadzhiy, O. (2022). In order not to cry, I laughed: A selection of war memes. *Chytomo*. Retrieved from <https://chytomo.com/shchob-ne-plakat-ia-smiialas-dobirka-memiv-vijnv/>.
- [14] Hladun, O. (2009). *To the problem of the visual language of graphic design of Ukraine*. *Bulletin of the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts*, 5, 42–46.
- [15] Hladun, O. (2018). Ukrainian poster of the Second World War: Content and form. *Art History of Ukraine*, 18, 39–45. doi: 10.31500/2309-8155.18.2018.152366.
- [16] How illustrators can work with the theme of war. (2022). *Skvot*. Retrieved from <https://skvot.io/uk/blog/illustration-war-theme>.
- [17] I'd rather not have dozens of illustration topics every day like I do now: Illustration war month. (2022). *Suspilne. Kultura*. Retrieved from <https://suspilne.media/culture/221281-a-bi-ne-hotiv-mati-desatki-tem-dla-ilustracij-kozen-den-ak-zaraz-misac-vijni-v-ilustracijah/>.
- [18] Illustrations from fallout shelters. How Ukrainian artists react on war. (2022). *Chytomo*. Retrieved from <https://chytomo.com/en/illustrations-from-fallout-shelters-how-ukrainian-artists-react-on-war/>.
- [19] In Lisbon, a girl from Nova Kakhovka draws posters for rallies in support of Ukraine. (2022). *Times.ŹT*. Retrieved from <https://times.zt.ua/u-lisaboni-divchyna-z-novoi-kakhovky-maliuie-plakaty-dlia-mitynhiv-na-pidtrymku-ukrainy/>.
- [20] Karpenko, O. (2022). *Analysis of the main tendencies of modern Ukrainian wartime painting and artistic parallels*. *Bulletin of the National Academy of Managers of Culture and Arts*, 2, 127–134.
- [21] Khramova-Baranova, O. (2024). *Aesthetic aspects of typography: Font design*. In *Proceedings of the XXII international youth scientific and practical conference "History of the development of science, technology and education"* (pp. 131–134). Kyiv, Ukraine.
- [22] Klymenko, O. (2006). *Underground printers in the Ternopil region in 1941–1952 and their participation in the production of bofons*. In *Collection of works TB SSS* (Vol. 2, pp. 132–154). Ternopil: Merkiuri-Ternopil.
- [23] Kostanda, M. (2020). Classification of typography beginning 21st century: Technological paradigm. *Actual Issues of Humanitarian Sciences: Art History*, 1(33), 89–95. doi: 10.24919/2308-4863.1/33.215707.
- [24] Lehasova, L. (2009). *World wars in the language of the poster*. *Bulletin of Book Chamber*, 9, 49–50.
- [25] Lukovska, O. (2022). Exhibition activity of Ukrainian artists during the war. *Ukrainian Culture: Past, Present, Ways of Development*, 42, 21–27. doi: 10.35619/ucpmk.vi42.553.
- [26] Monsevykh, V. (2023). *Historical and military themes in modern Ukrainian painting*. In *Proceedings of the all-Ukrainian scientific and practical conference "Latest research in culture and art: Explorations, challenges, and prospects"* (pp. 85–86). Kyiv: NAKKKiM.

- [27] Mykhalchuk, V. (2022). The motif of war in the graphic work of Olena Kulchytska. *Art Platform*, 6(2), 168–200. doi: 10.51209/platform.2.6.2022.168–200.
- [28] Osaula, V. (2019). Patriotic advertising: Essence and role in modern Ukrainian society. *Visnyk of Kharkiv State Academy of Culture*, 55, 82–91. doi: 10.31516/2410-5333.055.07.
- [29] Paret, P. (1992). *Persuasive images: Posters of war and revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- [30] Polishchuk, A. (2020). *Creative aspects of designing an accidental font in advertising design*. In *Actual problems of modern design: A collection of materials of the international scientific and practical conference* (Vol. 2, pp. 105–108). Kyiv: Kyiv National University of Technology and Design.
- [31] Reaction of Ukrainian artists to the war started by the Russian Federation. Part 3. (2022). *Ukrainer*. Retrieved from <https://www.ukrainer.net/ilustratory-pro-vyynu-3/>.
- [32] Rudyachenko, O. (2023). Nil Hasevych. Dürer of the rebels, or the image maker of the UPA. *Ukrinform*. Retrieved from <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3676867-nil-hasevich-povstanskij-durer-abo-imidzmejker-upa.html>.
- [33] Shevchuk, T. (2024). *Visions of war in modern Ukrainian political cartoons and posters*. In *Abstracts of the all-Ukrainian scientific and practical conference "Scientific and methodological organisation of the training process for specialists in the system of art and pedagogical education: Experience and prospects"* (pp. 109–116). Odesa: State Institution "South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushynsky".
- [34] Skorostetskyi, V. (2021). Nil Hasevych – the creator of the world image of Ukrainian insurgents. *ArmyInform*. Retrieved from <https://armyinform.com.ua/2021/11/28/nil-hasevych-stvoryuvach-svitovogo-imidzhu-ukrayinskyh-povstancziv/>.
- [35] Strus, A., & Melnyk, O. (2023). Strategies of visual influence in the design of a political poster of the First World War period. *Ukrainian Art Discourse*, 6, 98–104. doi: 10.32782/uad.2023.6.12.
- [36] The #terroRussia campaign is taking place in the world. (2022). *Stozhary*. Retrieved from <https://svitua.org/2022/07/18/u-sviti-prohodyt-kampaniya-terrorussia-golovna-meta-yakoyi-vyznannya-rf-derzhavoyu-terorystom/>.
- [37] Yatsiv, R. (2021). Vision of the "Motherland" as an ideological vector of activity of the Ukrainian art circle "Spokiy" in Warsaw (1927–1939). *Ethnological Notebooks*, 5, 1096–1103. doi: 10.15407/nz2021.05.1096.
- [38] Yermak, I. (2022). Our bullets in the information war. Designer: "We will win". *Credo*. Retrieved from <https://credo.pro/2022/03/314102>.
- [39] Zalevska, O. (2016). *Visual and plastic language of the Ukrainian poster of the 20s–early 30s. Traditions and the Latest Technologies in the Development of Modern Art*, 3, 44–46.

Оксана Мельник

Кандидат мистецтвознавства, доцент
Національний університет «Львівська політехніка»
79000, вул. Степана Бандери, 12, м. Львів, Україна
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1579-6705>

Віктор Штець

Кандидат мистецтвознавства, професор
Національний університет «Львівська політехніка»
79000, вул. Степана Бандери, 12, м. Львів, Україна
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2436-762X>

Типографіка як засіб посилення образу в патріотичній графіці воєнного часу в Україні (2022–2024)

Анотація. Актуальність цього дослідження полягає в необхідності аналізу ролі типографіки як інструмента візуальної комунікації у творчому спротиві в Україні в умовах війни. Метою цього дослідження було вивчення композиційних, художніх та формальних прийомів типографіки патріотичних графічних творів у візуальному інформаційному просторі України в період російської військової агресії. Ці прийоми спрямовані на зміцнення національної ідентичності, підтримку патріотичних настроїв і сприяння соціальній єдності. У дослідженні встановлено, що в умовах війни створення прямолінійних та легко впізнаваних візуальних представлень патріотичного, маніфестаційного чи описового характеру набуває особливої значущості. Такі представлення мають на меті привернути увагу громадськості до потреб і діяльності збройних сил, підвищити моральний дух суспільства та документувати важливі події. Ця ніша у дизайні візуальної комунікації була заповнена інформаційною та мотиваційною графікою на військову тематику, що створювалася як швидка реакція на щоденні події. Художня мова цих творів використовує різноманітні стилістичні та композиційні засоби. Патріотична графіка передає повідомлення, що ґрунтуються як на сучасній візуальній культурі, так і на історично встановленій символіці. Типографіка відіграє важливу роль у цих повідомленнях, надаючи конкретну інформацію, формулюючи гасла чи заклики до дії та доповнюючи візуальний контент. Ці типографічні елементи є невід'ємною частиною композиції, посилюючи вплив візуального твору завдяки своїм формальним, композиційним та художнім характеристикам, таким як шрифт, розмір, розміщення та колір. Практичне значення цього дослідження полягає в його застосуванні для розробки візуальних та комунікаційних стратегій створення ефективних патріотичних, соціальних та рекламних матеріалів у кризових ситуаціях.

Ключові слова: творчий спротив; патріотизм; типографічна композиція; шрифт; візуальний наратив; ідея; війна
