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EMBODIED URBAN MEMORY: WALKING, RUINS, AND THE AESTHETICS OF CARE
IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINE (TIACHIV CASE STUDY)

Background. This article explores contemporary Ukrainian urban experience through the frameworks of embodied aesthetics, phenomenology, and memory studies, conceptualizing walking as both a diagnostic and an aesthetic practice. In the context of post-Soviet legacies and wartime transformations, Ukrainian cities are approached not as rationally designed totalities but as heterogeneous assemblages shaped by temporal ruptures, affective tensions, and layered absences. Drawing on phenomenological and environmental aesthetics (Berleant, Paetzold, Lehtinen), the study situates walking within debates on presence, negative aesthetics, and urban perception, emphasizing the role of the sensing body in mediating between personal memory and collective amnesia.

Methods. The study combines phenomenological description with historiographical and artistic analysis. Walking is employed as an embodied research method that foregrounds sensory attention, spatial orientation, and affective response. The analysis integrates close readings of contemporary Ukrainian artistic projects that engage walking, documentation, and care as strategies of reflection and civic engagement. In addition, the article includes an auto-ethnographic case study based on repeated walking practices in the town of Tiachiv (Zakarpattia region), allowing for a situated examination of hybrid urban space shaped by Jewish, Soviet, and post-Soviet layers. Results.

Results. The analysis reveals that Ukrainian artists – including Nikita Kadan, Zhanna Kadyrova, Yevgenia Belorusets, Ivan Melnychuk, Daniil Revkovskiy, Vova Vorotniyov, and the DE NE DE collective – use walking to activate ruins, monuments, and vernacular objects as mnemonic surfaces. These practices expose the intersections of individual memory and collective forgetting within the politics of decommunization. Artistic research platforms such as *Creating Ruin*, alongside projects like Melnychuk's *Forms and Contents* and Futymyskyi's *Continuance of Ruin*, articulate an aesthetics of care that privileges attention to decay, material detail, and presence over spectacle or monumental narratives.

Conclusions. The article argues that walking operates as an ethical and aesthetic practice of care in contemporary Ukrainian urban contexts. Through embodied engagement with fragmented and vulnerable urban environments, walking becomes a mode of witnessing, resistance, and cultural continuity amid war and transformation.

Keywords: urban aesthetics, walking, presence, decommunization, memory, Ukrainian contemporary art, vernacular design.

Background

Examining contemporary Ukrainian urbanity through the lens of embodied aesthetics and phenomenological presence, I argue that walking functions as a diagnostic medium for reading the city's fractured temporalities and conflicted memories. Building on critiques of modernist functionalism (Jacobs; Rowe & Koetter) and conceptualising the city as a collage of heterogeneous fragments (Paetzold, 2013; Berleant, 2012), the study asks: How do practices of walking, documenting, and caring disclose the afterlives of Soviet modernity and the politics of decommunization in Ukraine? The theoretical frame integrates phenomenology (Heidegger; Merleau-Ponty), environmental aesthetics (Berleant; Lehtinen; Blanc), and presence studies (Gumbrecht; Leddy) to articulate how negative aesthetics – disruption, irregularity, and decay – structure urban perception in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro and beyond.

I combine phenomenological description (corporeal attentiveness to terrain, surfaces, rhythms) with a historiographical art-critical approach (Roelstraete, 2013) to analyse artistic practices that traverse and reframe urban memory. Case materials include the flâneur-like strategies of Ukrainian artists – Nikita Kadan, Mitya Churikov, Ivan Melnychuk, Daniil Revkovskiy, Andriy Rachinskiy – alongside long-distance and expeditionary projects (Vorotniyov's *ZA/S_xid*; *DE NE DE*). These are read together with curatorial-archival platforms such as *Creating Ruin*, and with recent scholarship on post-memory (Hirsch, 2012), cultural memory and forgetting (Assmann, 2011), and urban trauma (Griniuk, 2023). By foregrounding walking as method and motif, the article reconceives monuments, pavements, and vernacular artefacts not as inert heritage

but as mnemonic surfaces where presence, loss, and care are negotiated in the everyday.

Methods

Contemporary urban aesthetics has shifted beyond the modernist paradigm of rational design toward an understanding of the city as a space of experience, memory, and corporeal presence. Following the strong critique of Le Corbusier's functionalist urbanism in the 1960s, theorists such as Jane Jacobs, Colin Rowe, and Fred Koetter redefined the city as a collage of heterogeneous fragments rather than a coherent whole. As Heinz Paetzold (2013) observes, the urban architect is less a "technician" than a bricoleur – one who engages with the political and aesthetic culture of a place. Similarly, Arnold Berleant (2012) asserts that the city "does not exist" as a unified entity but rather as a fragmentary fiction of history and mythology.

This reorientation toward lived experience and embodied perception also extends to walking as an aesthetic practice. Scholars such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and David Macauley have explored the interrelation of landscape, body, and place, while Sanna Lehtinen, Arnold Berleant, and Nathalie Blanc have analyzed engagement with the city as a sensory, ethical, and existential act. From a phenomenological standpoint (Heidegger; Vihanninjoki), walking situates the human Dasein in its environment, mediating between familiarity and estrangement. The notion of presence, elaborated by Heidegger, Gumbrecht, and Leddy, emphasizes being-in-the-world as a dynamic relation of perception and movement.

Walking through the city constitutes an inherently aesthetic practice – synesthetic, embodied, and temporally layered. It unifies perception through bodily motion while

exposing the walker to disruption, irregularity, and fragmentation. In the context of post-Soviet Ukrainian cities, walking assumes a distinctly negative aesthetic form (Berleant, 2012), revealing the ruptures and scars inscribed within the urban fabric. Traversing Kyiv, Kharkiv, or Dnipro entails negotiating disparate textures of time: cracked Soviet mosaics beside glass façades, unregulated advertisements, makeshift repairs, remnants of war damage. These incongruities provoke sensations of disorientation and bodily distrust – "the incessant alterations in terrain and elevation foster a sense of insecurity in one's own footing" (Paetzold, 2013, p. 44). Yet these very scars testify to the collision of epochs and to a cultural condition where forgetting prevails over remembering, alienation over belonging, carelessness over care.

Through the methodological frameworks of phenomenological psychology and negative aesthetics, walking becomes a diagnostic gesture: it reveals how sensory experience translates social transformation into bodily affect. Ukrainian artists such as Nikita Kadan, Mitya Churikov, Ivan Melnychuk, Daniil Revkovskiy, and Andriy Rachinskiy employ flâneur-like methods – walking, observing, documenting – to expose the paradoxes of urban memory, fragmentation, and neglect.

Results

The Lithuanian artist and researcher Marija Griniuk (2023) connects urban landscapes to collective memory and socio-political trauma. Her study demonstrates how "constructions in public spaces embody memory and how their demolition impacts the narrative of presence within absence" (p. 12). The notion of placeness thus becomes a form of resistance, where the traces of a painful past refuse to be erased. Griniuk's claim that "aesthetics can be a way to talk about the unspeakable" (p. 16) resonates profoundly with Ukrainian artistic practices that negotiate the Soviet legacy through gestures of remembrance, erasure, and re-inscription.

The fragile and painful "now" in Ukraine provokes society to resort to the destruction of monuments of the recent past. This past – burdened with collective traumas – has produced political inertia and alienation. Contemporary artists respond to the state policy of decommunization by exploring the mechanisms of collective memory within the public sphere. The term presence – meaning both "being in a place" and "existing now" – is central to these practices. In the Ukrainian context, presence involves being simultaneously in time and in space, acknowledging oneself as a descendant while reinterpreting the remains of Soviet modernity. It also implies a critique of the modern cognitive model of reflection, aligning with Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's (2004) "Production of Presence".

Artists employ historiographical and mnemonic strategies to reconstruct and question the past. Dieter Roelstraete's (2013) "The Way of the Shovel" problematized the "archaeological imaginary" of artists who dig into history to avoid confronting a terrifying present. Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan was among the first to frame this as a "historiographical turn", arguing that the past has been weaponized to exercise power over the present. His works criticize both the state's iconoclastic policies and the collective amnesia they engender.

Monuments in Ukraine have become symbols of the decommunization policy, which gained momentum in 2015 with the passage of four "decommunization laws". Researcher Yevheniia Moliar (2021) identifies three phases of this process – from the selective dismantling of monuments after 1991, through the "adequate" stage of the 2000s, to the radical Leninfall of 2013. In this changing landscape, artists such as Nikita Kadan, Zhanna Kadyrova, and Yevgenia Belorusets explore the relationship between absence and memory.

Kadan's "Pedestal. The Practice of Displacement" (2009–2011) presents an empty plinth reaching the ceiling, leaving no room for the monument itself. The accompanying list of destroyed monuments transforms documentation into a performative act of mourning. Kadyrova's "Monument to a New Monument" (2009), a concrete structure hidden beneath ceramic tiles, alludes to a future commemoration that will never come. Belorusets's "Let's Put Lenin's Head Back Together Again!" (2015) collects fragments of dismantled statues, giving up on trying to make something out of them. These gestures document the disappearance of the body of memory, revealing the void left by ideological cleansing. They also redirect attention from destruction to the aesthetics of care – a practice of preservation, maintenance, and attentive observation.

The practice of walking offers a vital counterpart to these historiographical gestures. As Yannis Ziogas (2013) argues, walking arises from "the expansion of the artist's body in space" (p. 9) and leads to an exploration of both self and environment. In "ZA/S_xid" (2017), Vova Vorotniiov walked over 1,000 kilometers from Chervonohrad to Lysychansk, carrying a lump of coal as a ritual of reconciliation. This act united the country's western and eastern regions through embodied motion and shared materiality. His Instagram documentation captured the tension between care and neglect in the post-industrial landscape, where Soviet monuments and vernacular artifacts coexist as fading yet persistent signs of everyday life.

Similarly, the collective initiative "DE NE DE" has, since 2015, conducted spontaneous expeditions across Ukraine, examining remnants of Soviet modernity. Their flâneur-like journeys – through markets, museums, and discos – produce a participatory archive of places and stories. The project's Instagram series "@ero_heroes" presents photographs of WWII and Soviet monuments, emphasizing their sculptural beauty and local significance rather than propaganda. As Moliar (2021) explains, these monuments "have lost their ideological purpose and have become mere objects of commemoration" (p. 34).

Through walking, documentation, and playful observation, these artists reframe public monuments as aesthetic rather than ideological objects, situating memory within the realm of bodily and spatial experience. Contemporary Ukrainian artists thus turn to presence as a means of both witnessing and surviving. Their works embody post-memory in Marianne Hirsch's (2012) sense – an afterlife of trauma carried by a "generation after". They are not direct witnesses to Soviet commemorative practices but live amid their material and ideological remnants. Artistic documentation of absence and decay does not aim to deify or to deny the past but to acknowledge it as both painful and formative. Following Aleida Assmann's (2011) reflections on art at the threshold between memory and forgetting, these practices create a shared aesthetic field where mourning and reinterpretation coexist.

In the Ukrainian context, the aesthetics of urban experience merges with the aesthetics of care: both are oriented toward sustaining fragile connections – between body and place, past and present, loss and attention. "Creating Ruin" – a hybrid artistic, archival, cartographic, and phenomenological platform – curates and publishes art- and research-driven works that address "ruins, fragments, and everyday detritus" across Ukrainian contexts. For example, one entry titled "Some Landscapes of the Left-Bank Ukraine" (Method Fund & Reading International, 2018) shows how the artist travelled in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, collecting materials for miniature landscape paintings of war- and economic-ruin-affected buildings: "some of the

buildings ... were plagued by war, while others were ruined due to economic decline". Another entry engages the musical underground in Ukraine, combining archival records, musician recollections, and present-day reflections.

Ivan Melnichuk's "Forms and Contents" (2018) – published on the "Creating Ruin" platform – explores the relationship between architectural structure and social memory in post-Soviet urban space. Through a series of photographs and conceptual models, Melnichuk (2018) documents fragments of Kyiv's everyday architecture – stairs, fences, façades, industrial remnants – treating them as "forms" that have lost or transformed their original "contents". In the context of city-memory research, the project functions as an archaeology of the present: it traces how material details preserve traces of former functions and ideologies. Melnichuk's background as both architect and artist allows him to read the city phenomenologically, showing how spatial residues embody collective amnesia and adaptation. The work aligns with theories of vernacular design and negative aesthetics, illustrating how the aesthetics of incompleteness and decay can reveal hidden layers of social history. Ultimately, "Forms and Contents" transforms ordinary architectural fragments into mnemonic surfaces – records of transition where memory, utility, and form continually overwrite one another, mirroring the instability of Ukrainian urban identity after the Soviet collapse.

Yaroslav Futymyskyi's "Continuance of Ruin" (2019) appears on the "Creating Ruin" platform as part of its archival collection of art and research dealing with ruins, urban debris, and memory-sites in Ukraine. Futymyskyi's work addresses how the condition of ruin is not a singular event but an ongoing process – a continuation of decay, presence, absence, and memory in urban and territorial landscapes. He treats ruin not simply as the aftermath of destruction, but as an active terrain of memory where the past is not fully gone but persists as continuance. The title itself emphasizes that ruin is not closed; it lives on. This expands urban-memory research by shifting attention from monumental heritage or curated memory-sites to the vernacular, neglected, wounded urban fabrics – such as abandoned industrial frames and scarred façades in Uzhhorod. As Futymyskyi (2019) writes, "people here are ruin. they all crumble, smoulder away, dry out. vestiges of empires are blended with construction waste. vestiges of modernity are dismantled, fit with glass, rebuilt, disguised".

Within the framework of my research, I attempted to reproduce the practice of documenting a city and its elements in a manner similar to that employed by the artists mentioned above in their photographic series. I conducted this work in the town of Tiachiv, in the Zakarpattia region, the place where I found myself as a result of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Eventually, I lived there – with intermittent trips to Kyiv and abroad – until August 2024. Over these two years, I grew deeply connected with this small town and the people who were either born there or, like myself, had arrived from the more eastern regions of Ukraine because of the war. I rented a flat, raised a small child, volunteered, taught, and continued my academic work. Yet I also sought to understand the town itself – its history and its present condition.

Tiachiv possesses a complex and fascinating history, and today it is home to a diverse range of ethnic communities – Ukrainians, Hungarians, Romanians, Roma, and others – professing Orthodoxy, Greek Catholicism, Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, and other Christian denominations. The town maintains three schools: "Hungarian", "Ukrainian", and "Russian", designations inherited from the Soviet period according to the language of

instruction. At present, the first still operates in Hungarian, while the other two teach in Ukrainian. The town lies in a lowland area near the river Tysa, which periodically overflows and causes flooding. Tiachiv has experienced six major floods – the latest in 2001 – that partially destroyed the city's architecture (Hrad, 2017, p. 6).

From time to time during my stay in Tiachiv, I paid attention to my bodily experience while walking through the town, as well as to particular architectural elements. In "How Societies Remember", Paul Connerton (2004) writes that collective memory is embodied both in commemorative ceremonies and in bodily practices (p. 22). He speaks of the constitution of the body, formed within cultural practices and rituals, including those of remembrance. In my research, however, I employ bodily experience as the experience of a subject not embedded in local practices of remembering. I am a guest in this town, and my experience is that of a foreign body. I therefore focus on the perception of four urban elements of Tiachiv – the old cobblestone pavement, the synagogue building, the space of the city park, and the area of the old Greek-Catholic church and cemetery. These urban elements serve as mediators through which the city retains traces of the past, forgotten or neglected as a result of tragic historical events, the Soviet regime of oblivion, and post-Soviet memorial confusion.

As in many towns across Zakarpattia, one can still find extensive fragments of the old cobblestone pavement dating from the nineteenth century, when the town belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. One of the main streets, Koshut Street, the town market, and a number of smaller streets and alleys still preserve the pre-Soviet surface of urban life. This sensation is first and foremost kinetic: while walking through the town, one's feet constantly register the transition from cobblestone to asphalt, from asphalt to new paving slabs, and so on. These transitions are strikingly perceptible, preventing one from acquiring a stable walking rhythm and demanding constant attention to the pedestrian surface.

The junctures of epochs and political regimes are thus transmitted into the unevenness and multi-levelled structure of the town's pedestrian and traffic routes. Sometimes stones of the old pavement are uprooted by cars, forming holes, or these depressions are patched with contemporary paving blocks, producing a peculiar effect of glitch or visual distortion within the city's surface texture. As Lehtinen (2023) observes, impressions of the city "are however also non-linear, accidental, and full of glitches: while walking, the aesthetically attuned senses must tolerate interruptions of both pleasant and unpleasant surprises and anomalies" (p. 368). Occasionally one stumbles upon an old manhole cover or remnants of a demolished foundation. In this way, the fragmentary, hybrid, and patchwork paving of Tiachiv's streets and open spaces reveals its complex history – at once preserved and neglected. The old cobblestone is neither removed nor restored; it is simply left as it is, in the condition in which it has survived. Thus, it functions as a vernacular historical monument, a silent witness of the town's layered past.

When speaking of the city's architectural monuments, the former synagogue building deserves particular attention. Since Soviet times, it has been used as a school of martial arts. As stated on the official website of the Tiachiv City Council (2020), the presence of a Jewish community was traditional for Zakarpattia, as in other western Ukrainian towns. In the mid-nineteenth century it was very small – only nine persons – and the present synagogue, built in the twentieth century, does not belong to the second period of the town's development. The synagogue was erected

in 1906. The Jewish community of the town grew rapidly from the end of the nineteenth century: in 1880 there were 142 Jews, whereas in 1921, during the Czechoslovak period, there were already 1,042. According to testimonies by the long-time resident Karlo Langer, trade in the town was in Jewish hands – Jews bought apples from local orchards, and most of the few automobiles existing in the town also belonged to them (Danyliuk, 2012, pp. 49–50). In 1941 Jews comprised about one quarter of Tiachiv's total population ("MyShteti"). In 1944, under the direction of the Hungarian State Secretaries of Internal Affairs, within just a few days the Jewish population of Maramorosz, including Tiachiv, was stripped of all property and deported to Hungarian and German concentration camps (Danyliuk, 2012, p. 57). The synagogue stands on the main street; next to it is a Jewish cemetery invisible to passers-by. In the city, the tragedy of the local Jews during the Second World War – when Tiachiv was under Hungarian occupation – remains unspoken in the city landscape. During the subsequent Soviet period the history of this community was silenced, and the synagogue, as in all Soviet towns, was repurposed for secular use. One of its long windows with thick figured glass now holds a plastic door; another contains the opening of an exhaust vent. The rear windows have plastic frames, and the roof is covered with metal tiles. Despite this inappropriate "restoration", the building has not lost its aura and remains unlike any other in Tiachiv. To me, as a guest in the town, it was difficult to perceive this structure outside the context of the Holocaust and of forgetting. As Assmann (2012) writes, "Centres of Jewish life and Jewish culture were destroyed together with their people and levelled with the ground. Little hope remained for the memory of places. It is more appropriate to speak here of 'the forgetting of places'. Just as the surface of the water becomes smooth when a stone sinks, so too the wounds of places heal; new life and new needs make the scars almost invisible" (pp. 344–345).

Another enigmatic element of the town is the territory of the city park. The park itself appears neglected and abandoned. At its centre stands a pedestal bearing the names of Red Army soldiers buried in a mass grave beneath the monument. In 2023, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine granted the Tiachiv City Council permission to relocate the Soviet "Obelisk on the mass grave" from the city park to the municipal cemetery and to re-inter the remains of the Soviet soldiers (Tiachiv City Council, 2023). The park has long received no maintenance: the entire area is overgrown with weeds and wild grass. Elements of the pedestrian paths – some old cobblestone, some Soviet-era concrete slabs, some new paving tiles – are covered with moss and inter-tile vegetation. Residents of the town say that in 2022 the municipality was supposed to receive state funds for a major renovation of the park, but the money was redirected to the Ministry of Defence. Today the park functions only as a transit route, a shortcut from the main street to the city bus station. Its history is recalled solely by the entrance gate, a delicate wrought-iron lattice entwined with bird-cherry branches.

The final element of the town that deserves attention is the territory of the old wooden Greek-Catholic church, built in 1751, and the adjacent old Roman-Catholic and Reformed cemeteries. The church was destroyed by fire, and a new one was constructed closer to the railway station in 1889. The cemetery remained in use until the 1960s. During the Soviet period, the site ceased to serve its original purpose and, following the collapse of the USSR, fell into neglect. In 2017, activists of the Hungarian Association for

the Preservation of Military and Cultural Heritage "Vigyázók" and members of the town's Hungarian community began restoring the historical cemetery site and creating a memorial park there. Their work included the restoration of tombstones and crosses (in consultation with relatives of the deceased), the laying of paths to surviving graves, the removal of dead trees and planting of new ones, and the construction of a brick Wall of Memory with nameplates embedded in it. During this process, six burials of Hungarian soldiers who died during the Second World War were found on the cemetery grounds ("Zakarpattya", 2017). On Google Maps, this area is now marked as "Memorial Park". The territory of the old cemetery is almost undeveloped – only a small chapel of the Greek-Catholic Church and a canopy for parishioners have recently been built there. Occasionally, services for adults and teenagers of this religious community are held on the site. Most of the surviving gravestones are neglected. On some of them, Hungarian names can still be deciphered. Only two neighbouring monuments from the 1950s – one with a Hungarian name, the other with a Ukrainian one – appear to be cared for, visited by the descendants of the deceased. Some tombstones are covered in ivy, others gradually tilt toward the ground and vanish in the tall July grass. The area is enclosed by a modern metal fence. Around its perimeter stand a hospital, private houses with small shops, a military barracks with dormitories, and a vocational school. People walk and ride bicycles and cars around it – life is in motion – but within the cemetery itself there is emptiness and silence. Time seems frozen, suspended. The town neither fully releases the old cemetery, preserved only through the efforts of the Hungarian community and the financial support of the Gábor Foundation in Hungary, nor is it prepared to integrate it into the sphere of collective remembrance and conscious historical reflection.

Ultimately, when speaking about Tiachiv, I can repeat the words written by Arto Haapala about London: "it has several layers of time, and also incorporates various new building programmes ... there is both history, the present, and the future involved in this city" (Haapala, 2013, p. 16). Yet the aura of this town – in the sense in which Aleida Assmann borrows the term from Walter Benjamin – radiates an unknown past. It reveals itself through temporal and spatial distance, through estrangement, oblivion, and the gradual recovery of memory.

Discussion and conclusions

The analysis demonstrates, first, that walking in post-Soviet Ukrainian cities is an inherently aesthetic and epistemic practice: synesthetic and time-thick, it translates social transformation into bodily affect. The "glitches" of urban fabric – patched cobbles, provisional repairs, scarred façades – produce a perceptual field in which negative aesthetics (disorientation, hesitation, insecurity of footing) becomes legible as an index of historical rupture (Paetzold, 2013; Lehtinen, 2023). Second, the study shows that artistic practices of documentation and displacement – from Kadan's empty plinth to Kadyrova's deferred monument and Belorusets's fragments – shift attention from iconoclasm toward an aesthetics of care: maintenance, witnessing, and the slow labour of describing what remains. Third, the politics of decommunization emerges not only as a legislative project (Moliar, 2021) but as a reconfiguration of presence in public space – being-in-place and being-now (Gumbrecht, 2004).

Artists counter both erasure and nostalgia by reframing monuments and ruins as sites of embodied learning, where memory is neither sanctified nor denied but treated as

work-in-progress. Platforms such as "Creating Ruin" and projects like Melnychuk's "Forms and Contents" deepen this shift, reading ordinary architectural fragments as archaeologies of the present that mediate between form and (lost or shifting) content.

These findings suggest broader implications for urban humanities and heritage policy. If the city is apprehended through corporeal presence and care, then strategies of preservation and public programming should privilege situated, low-threshold practices (walking, mapping, minor repairs, community archiving) alongside institutional interventions. Limitations of this study include its focus on selected artists and urban episodes; future research might expand comparative fieldwork across smaller towns and frontline localities, integrate participatory methods with residents, and examine how post-memory travels across generations and media. Ultimately, the Ukrainian case clarifies a general proposition: to walk is to think with the city, and in contexts of rupture, walking discloses how fragments become forms of life – where attention itself is a practice of remembering and caring.

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ВТІЛЕНА МІСЬКА ПАМ'ЯТЬ: ПРОГУЛЯНКА, РҮЇНИ ТА ЕСТЕТИКА ТУРБОТИ В СУЧАСНІЙ УКРАЇНІ (КЕЙС ТЯЧЕВА)

Вступ. У статті досліджується сучасний український міський досвід у межах втіленої естетики, феноменології та студій пам'яті; ходіння осмислюється як одночасно діагностична й естетична практика. В умовах пострадянської спадщини та воєнних трансформацій українські міста розглядаються не як раціонально спроектовані цілісності, а як гетерогенні аsemblages, сформовані часовими розривами, афективними напруженнями та нашарованими відсутностями. Спираючись на феноменологічну й екологічну естетику (Берлеант, Пецольт, Лейтінген), дослідження вбудовує ходіння в дебати про присутність, негативну естетику та міське сприйняття, наголошуючи на ролі чуттєвого тіла як посередника між особистою пам'яттю та колективною амнезією.

Методи. Дослідження поєднує феноменологічний опис з історіографічним і мистецтвознавчим аналізом. Ходіння використовується як втілений дослідницький метод, що акцентує сенсорну увагу, просторову орієнтацію та афективну реакцію. Аналіз охоплює close reading сучасних українських мистецьких проєктів, у яких ходіння, документування та турбота постають як стратегії рефлексії й громадянської залученості. Додатково стаття містить автоетнографічний кейс, оснований на повторюваних практиках ходіння містом Тячів (Закарпатська область), що дозволяє ситуативно розглянути гібридний міський простір, сформований єврейськими, радянськими та пострадянськими нашаруваннями.

Результати. Аналіз засвідчує, що українські художниці – зокрема Микита Кадан, Жанна Кадирова, Євгенія Белорусець, Іван Мельничук, Данііл Ревковський, Вова Воронцов і колектив DE NE DE – використовують ходіння для активзації руйн, пам'ятників і вернакулярних об'єктів як мнемічних поверхонь. Ці практики виявляють перетини індивідуальної пам'яті та колективного забування в межах політики деколонізації. Мистецькі дослідницькі платформи на кшталт Creating Ruin, а також проєкти Forms and Contents Івана Мельничука і Continuance of Ruin Футимського, формують естетику турботи, що віддає перевагу увазі до занепаду, матеріальних деталей і присутності, а не видовищності чи монументальним наративам.

Висновки. Стаття стверджує, що ходіння в сучасних українських міських контекстах функціонує як етична та естетична практика турботи. Через втілену взаємодію з фрагментованими й уразливими міськими середовищами ходіння постає як спосіб свідчення, опору та культурної тяглості в умовах війни й трансформацій.

Ключові слова: міська естетика, прогулянка, присутність, деколонізація, пам'ять, сучасне українське мистецтво, вернакулярний дизайн.

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