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TENDENCIES AND ART TECHNIQUES IN CONTEMPORARY COMIC BOOK GRAPHIC DESIGN

Purpose. *Exploring of the distinctive features of modern comics, their artistic and compositional solutions, types, main trends in American, European and Asian culture. Definition of the original formation of modern Ukrainian comics.*

Methodology. *The basis of the research methodology includes integrated use of historical and comparative methods, system analysis, synthesis, generalization.*

Results. *Basing on the analysis of modern comic book content, the history of comics and its perception by the audience as a modern media text are revealed, characteristics of individual elements in comics are systematized. The specifics of the artistic and compositional system of modern comics, the nature of figurative and stylistic techniques, graphic features of American, European, Asian, Ukrainian comics are determined. Patterns which are inherent in comics as visual narratives of different socio-cultural parts of the world, as well as aspects that shape modern Ukrainian comics, are considered.*

Scientific novelty. *Characteristics of comics as an object of graphic design are determined: features of artistic and compositional design solutions in different regions of the world are systematized; leading trends in the development of specific types of comics in the United States, Europe, Asia and Ukraine are revealed.*

Practical significance. *Based on art analysis of comic book types and by identifying trends in their development within modern art the specifics of the further development of comics are determined and ideas for future creative projects are presented, features that have both artistic and commercial value are indicated.*

Key words: *comics, frames, composition, graphic design.*

Introduction. The relevance of this study is due to the growing informative richness and versatility of such a social phenomenon as comic art. Modern socio-cultural and ideological transformations have formed the rapid development of new forms of creativity, spreading both collective and individual forms of self-expression. One of the integral phenomena of this era are comics, hand-drawn stories, graphic novels-narratives, all of which combine an important amount of information and the maximum ease of its transmission through drawings. In the cultures of countries where comics are the common art form, for example, in Japan or in France, they have their own national names. Thus, in French-speaking countries, comics are called *bande dessinee* (from the French hand-drawn tape), Japanese comics called manga [1, 2].

Postmodernism maximally popularized this kind of mass graphic art in various spheres of life by large replication. Currently, comics are created in vast quantities, they are studied, analyzed, therefore improving the characters and plots. Their motifs can be found everywhere: from works of art to interior design and outdoor advertising [3]. However, the problem of comics perception as a part of graphic arts still causes serious discussions among both ordinary readers and professionals. In Ukraine, despite its growing popularity and versatility, this art form is considered to have a simple level of aestheticism and many see it as a purely children's genre.

Setting objectives. Given the mass distribution of comics, the demand for them in the world and the rapid increase of interest in them in Ukraine as well as the lack of scientific

research on this topic it is expedient to analyze the development of this phenomenon, to consider the origins of comics, its first authors and reasons of the occurrence. It is necessary to analyze patterns and structure of comics and to determine what functions and content each stylistic and compositional decision carries.

Analysis of previous researches. In scientific research, comics are a relatively new field. Recently, the study of comics in various aspects engaged such foreign and local researchers as R. Brenner [2], N. Cohn [4], T. Groensteen [5], J.-B. Renard [6], S. McCloud [7], A.I. Denysova [8], G.V. Onkovych [9] and others. Comics are still considered something new; they are insufficiently reflected and in most scientific works are considered from the standpoint of linguistics, literature or media genre. Thus, V.I. Gres [10], G.V. Onkovych and others consider aspects of the combination of literature and fine arts in the comics as media art, they analyze different comics definitions as a phenomenon of modern culture, genre features, the specifics of the interaction of verbal and pictographic comics elements and also study comics as a full-fledged linguistic text structure [3, 8]. A.I. Denisova, S.I. Petrova, Z.B. Stepanova and others consider in their works the development of comics in the specific countries – United States, Japan, Russia and others, where the history of the comic origin in these regions is studied and the factors contributing to the popularity of this art form are considered [8, 1].

Eco U. considers comics from the standpoint of educational narrative ("The Myth of Superman"). The Italian philosopher believes that creating comics about this superhero is a way to spread certain ideas of morality and patterns of behavior that are important for society [11].

The first thorough and comprehensive study of the phenomenon of comics appeared in the work Comics and Sequential Art (1985) by W. Eisner, which reveals a holistic theory of comics [12]. It is worth noting that the author in his work defines comics not as chronologically lined up one after another illustrations, but as artistically constructed sequences, practically calling comics the art of telling stories.

It is also worth noting the book Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art by Scott McCloud, successor and ideological follower of W. Eisner [7]. It contains theoretical information on the comics creation and at the same time supported by examples from the history of their creation. McCloud notes that comics should be seen as a special system that combines the maximum amounts of visual aids and is based on the direct participation of the reader in its understanding.

Results of the research. Opening the topic of our study, we note that from early times illustrations were used to create a coherent narrative, examples of which are Egyptian hieroglyphs, Greek frescoes, medieval tapestries etc. The appearance of the first works reminiscent of modern comics was closely linked with the political and social life of society. Those were William Hogarth's caricatures dating by the XVIII century, a series of drawings united by a common thought.

Seeking to expose the shortcomings of modern society, W. Hogarth created entire cycles of paintings and engravings, united by a common story, examples are his "Career of a prostitute" (fig. 1), "Career of a spendthrift" and "Fashionable marriage" cycles. Previously, mostly religious texts were accompanied by illustrations but after W. Hogarth's pieces, works containing satire and humor began to appear more often [13].

With the spread of newspapers and magazines and also because of the ease of information transfer via comic, people started using them in newspapers as campaigns to attract immigrants who did not speak English well. According to the publishers, such illustrations were also a clear way to comment on the surrounding reality which is why large publications increasingly began to publish graphic visual accompaniment for the texts.

In this regard, artists began to work on formats and create entire cycles of illustrations, united by a common plot, and since the second half of the XIX century, similar cycles started forming their own heroes and minor characters, which appeared in publications on a regular basis [9].

The next important stage in the development of the comic art was the work of Rodolf Tepffer, who became famous for his work named "The Adventures of Mr. Obadai Oldbak", which was published in 1833 and later translated into various languages. R. Tepffer created short stories in several panels and placed text under them. He chose such format because of the simultaneous love of both literature and drawing [7]. Also, a contribution into the comics history was made by William Bush, whose popular series "Max and Moritz" with black and white illustrations supported by a poetic description brought him world fame (fig. 2) [1].

Another important stage in the comics formation is considered to be the the wide use of "clouds" as the way to show the characters' words and thoughts introduced by the American Richard F. Outcolt in the late nineteenth century. Because of this, his series "Hogan's Alley", "The Yellow Kid" and "Buster Brown" are considered the first traditional comics [13].

Speaking of the comics history, it is worth considering the Asian comics as well. The first Japanese comic was a combination of four humorous stories which dated by XII century and were written by Buddhist monk Toba. These stories were about animals depicting people and monks violating the statute.

Today the current form of manga (Japanese comics) combines the ancient traditions of Japanese graphic art, tendencies of illustrated novels of earlier times and the influences of modern American and European comics. Manga began to take shape as a separate art form during World War II, when it was used for propaganda purposes and published on a good paper with the use of the state budget financing. Osamu Tezuka's manga "Shin Takarajima" (1947) was the first one to use graphic techniques that are still used nowadays for creating manga and modern comics (fig. 3) [2].

Manga is recognized both as a form of fine art and as a literary phenomenon, the popularity of which covers almost all age groups in modern Japanese society. In addition to the original manga, there is also an amateur, mostly fan made manga called doujinshi, that is often issued in smaller editions primarily for the authors' money.

In the United States, comics have now evolved into a huge phenomenon, in France and Japan, as we noted above, they are considered a separate full-fledged genre of art. Despite the fact that comics are still not fully recognized among other art genres in many countries, they are still a quite popular media among the target audience and are increasingly attracting the attention of experts in various fields of scientific activity. Among all the comics characteristics the most important are the combination of visual and verbal components, the emphasis on action rather than description and the presence of gaps or omissions in the structure of the narrative, which reader can fill with their own meaning during the acquaintance.

It is possible to deduce some patterns considering comics of different parts of the world. US comics are characterized by multi-genre, their plots can be fantastic, dramatic, detective, comedic, satirical etc., as well as a combination of them in different proportions. Most American comics have well thought-out universes and the plots often touch such complex psychological themes as transhumanism, the justification of violence in the fight against evil etc.

a   *b*   *c*

Fig. 1. Three images by W. Hogarth [14]
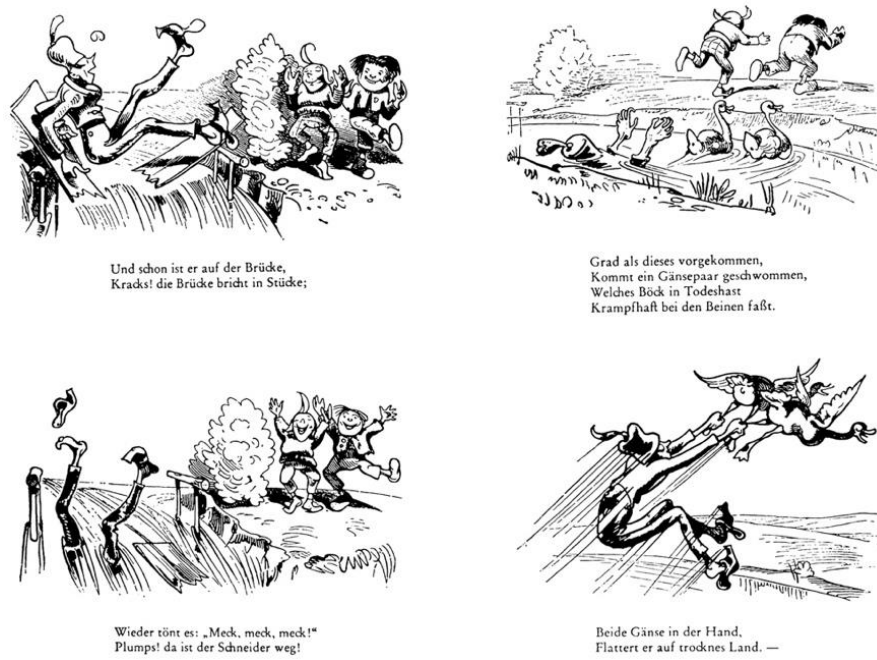

Fig. 2. Two pages from "Max and Moritz" comic by W. Bush [15]

a   *b*

Fig. 3. The cover and a couple of pages from "Shin Takarajima" by Osamu Tezuka [16]

a   b   c

Fig. 4. Examples of the *(a)* second, *(b)* third and *(c)* fourth transitions between frames [7, P. 70-71]

a   b

Fig. 5. Examples of *(a)* western and *(b)* eastern comics with combined location of frames from the book by S. McCloud [17, P. 9; 18, P. 35]

Fig. 6. "Chub: Star fable about the Cossack Chubenko" – a graphic novel by Alexander Komyakhov about the Cossack Chubenko. The comic combines Ukraine's past, present and alternative fantasy world [19]

Fig. 7. "Daogopak" is a comic-blockbuster about the adventures of Cossacks Kharakternyky from the Knight Mages order and Masters of Martial Arts of the Zaporizhzhya Sich [20]

The heroes in American comics presented mostly as the embodiment of unconscious archetypes and not so much as independent individuals. Most often, the development of their characters is quite schematic and aimed mostly at expressing a specific type, for example, a warrior or a trickster (in a sense, it's a comic ambivalent analogue of a cultural hero) [5].

European comics on the other hand are designed for an older and narrower audience, in general such comics look more solid, they are published in the form of hardcover books, mostly called graphic novels and very often have a completed plot. Given the cultural peculiarities European comics did not adopt the images and conflicts of a superhero and a supervillain which are inherent in American counterparts. Graphic novels still have a predominantly entertaining aspect. In contrast to the American comics the general pathos of the characters' behavior in European comics is also noticeably reduced, moreover a caricatures of certain characters are sometimes used to express the comic nature of some moments [5].

Japanese comics are the most different from their Western counterparts. First of all, they are characterized by the recognition of the general public, because manga in Japan is one of the main types of popular art, along with cinema and literature. It is in great demand, so there are many works that are aimed at a wide variety of audiences – from young children to the elderly. Manga has much bigger genre diversity than the Western comics, for example there are psychological thrillers, adventures, horrors, detectives, school dramas, love stories of all kinds etc. Also, in Japan censorship practically does not apply to this type of art, which gives to its authors complete freedom of choice from all the themes and plots [21].

The domestic comics market is currently experiencing a huge growth, more and more local book publishers are paying attention to comics and at the same time new comic-oriented publications are appearing. The target audience of the Ukrainian comics market that is really interested in and follows the novelties are people from 23 to 35 years old [22]. Among the works currently published in Ukraine, the vast majority are adult literature. The plots of Ukrainian comics are often patriotic, although now superheroes and fiction are gaining popularity due to the influence of the American media space. The number of humorous and children's comics is also increasing.

There is a tendency to simplify visual images in comics. Comic artists usually reflect the outer world by means of traditional realism, while the inner world is often represented in a simpler manner. This is primarily due to the fact that the simpler the style is, the easier it is for the reader to identify with the image. In this case the style is not loaded with small details and is easier to perceive and rethink it for themselves. The simplicity of the image is also of great importance because it allows the reader's imagination to "paint" something of its own, adjusting the character to themselves even more [5].

A more realistic and detailed approach to the image is possible when author needs to picture a certain image already laid down by the plot, the beauty of an object or vice versa. In many comics, there is a tendency to drawing background in great detail while the characters are drawn rather simplified for a greater contrast, which allows to form a certain way of their perception by the target audience. This is due to the need to create an atmosphere of participation of the viewer in the important accents of the comic as a narrative.

An essential component of the comic structure, as we have already noted, is the mandatory space for the manifestation of the individual viewer's creativity, due to the properties of the human psyche and therefore necessary for any target audience. The motivating basis of such an important element of the comics media text and a place for

spectator creativity is conjecture. Presence of only a single element of the object, only a moment of the whole event or only a part of the full image is already a sufficient amount of information for a person who perceives partial elements of the proposed graphics as a complete narrative. In everyday life this factor of the human psyche is almost invisible, but for the construction of comics – it is the main tool that helps reader to understand the sequence of frames and fill the white spaces between them. Frames divide comic's time and space into a series of successive moments, while the conjecture helps the reader to combine these moments and build a certain continuous story [21].

It is expedient to divide the transitions between frames into six generalized categories (fig. 4). The first category is transition from moment to moment, accordingly the action takes place almost frame by frame. The second category – from action to action, in which there is a certain change in the activities of the subject of the story. The third one is the transition from object to object within a single scene or idea. Next type of transitions are the ones from place to place which are logical transitions that help move the story to the right time or space. The fifth transition, that is from detail to detail, is necessary for the "describing" of the environment, it to some extent mimics the view of the reader, which is considering aspects of the place, idea or mood. The last category is incoherent transitions, where there is no logical sequence of frames [21].

European and American comics are dominated by transitions of actions, objects and places in different proportions, but with the greatest use of the action to action transition. This is due to the fact that such transitions help to clearly and easily tell the story, transferring the "action" to different places from time to time. Although in Asian comics generally prevails the same distribution, there is also a significant share of transitions from detail to detail, which are not

so popular in Western analogues. The reason for this is somewhat different mentality of Eastern people, that often practice meditative, inner contemplation of the environment, supporting this tradition with their culture and art.

The basis of the comic composition is a system of frames. Each image in a sequence of several such images that create a comic story is considered a comic frame. If only one frame contains all the information it became a narrative and can be called a single-frame comic. Mostly such comics can be found in newspapers where they are considered a little bonus joke. Frames in a full-fledged comic are distributed on the pages of the book and through them the image and the plot line are presented.

The size of the frame depends on the importance of the scene it depicts. Dramatic and tense scenes are usually presented in larger frames than scenes where a character, for example, is thinking about something. As we mentioned earlier, spaces between the frames in comics have a certain meaning, as they create the effect of conjecture for the reader. Because of this their role is quite important in the process of creating a composition of frames.

Composition of frames affects the images interaction with each other by controlling their number, shape, size and arrangement on the page. This, in turn, gives illustrations a more meaningful load than if they were looked at individually. Competent composition ensures smooth transitions between frames that do not confuse reader in the story, making it easier to perceive.

Composition in comics is usually planned and generally speaking is often arranged in one of two ways: in rows or in columns. In the first method, frames are read horizontally, in American and European countries from left to right, in Asian comics, mostly the opposite, which is due to their writing, in which the columns of hieroglyphs are written this way. In the second type, frames are distributed

vertically and perceived by the reader from top to bottom. Due to the fact that in the Western world it is more common to read horizontally rather than vertically, second method is more common in Asian comics. It is also possible to combine these two methods, where the frames are arranged both horizontally and vertically in different proportions (fig. 5). Frames may also not match horizontal nor vertical division and be diagonal on the page. There are also compositional exceptions, for example, frame can be completely surrounded by another image, the edge of one frame can be placed on top of another without a spacing, some elements of one frame can go beyond the border and even overlap with other frames. It is also worth noting big frames on the entire page and the frames that occupy the entire double page.

An important role in creating the page composition are playing speech bubbles, which are depicted in the form of a cloud coming out of the character's mouth, or from theirs head in the case of depicting thoughts. Author's words are usually located above or below the action frames. Bubble with the character's words is often broken into several smaller ones so that it does not take up much space on the page or to mark a pause in their speech. Sometimes bubbles are connected to each other between the different frames of the page to show that the character's speech continues while their action takes place. Composition of bubbles in Western comics is built from the upper left edge to the lower right so that the reader can easily perceive the conversation. At the same time, the vast majority of Asian comics place the characters' words from the upper right to the lower left which is due to the writing traditions of Asian people, as we noted earlier.

In summary, we can say that Ukrainian comics are characterized by an approximation in layout and subject matter to European counterparts. Due to the low prevalence of Ukrainian comics, authors are less willing to experiment and therefore rely on the

experience of the West. Also, due to the flourishing popularity of superhero films, Ukrainian comics started trying to adopt the superhero theme which is inherent in American comics, combining it with the charm of national culture (fig. 6). The national specificity of Ukrainian graphic prose provides an appeal to Ukrainian themes and images, the source of which is the era of the Cossacks (fig. 7). In Ukrainian worldview, the Cossacks are the main prototype of the national superhero. In this regard, it is expedient to talk about comics as a mythological narrative that gives society a role model, accumulates patriotism, actualizing national pride. Creating a series of comics about Ukrainian Superheroes is currently quite relevant.

Conclusions. Comics, which were just humorous magazines originally, have become a real cultural phenomenon and a universal genre over the last 100 years, extending in its use in various areas of social life. Comic uniquely combines graphics and narrative, acting as a set of motivating signs, images and symbols which generate meaning, therefore creating information patterns that the viewer interprets according to their own worldview guidelines.

Recently, there has been an incredible rethinking of comics in the media space as a way of communication in the information society. Nowadays, in addition to humorous literature in the form of comics, there are works on various topics such as medicine, history, education, politics, etc. Today, the importance of comics as an art form is almost unquestioned as in Western culture as in Japan. More and more scientists and practitioners are trying to understand its phenomenon and to realize the design potential of this type of graphic art. At the same time comics remain one of the favorite forms of postmodernist mass entertainment culture of different age groups.

Based on this study, the significant factors inherent in comics from different parts of the world and aspects that form purely

American, European or Asian comics are systematized. Also, international elements that are inherent in the comic book graphics in all regions are highlighted. This analysis allowed to identify the main global trends and aspects in this field of design which should be used by Ukrainian authors in the process of creating local comics.

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ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ І ХУДОЖНІ ПРИЙОМИ В СУЧАСНОМУ ГРАФІЧНОМУ ДИЗАЙНІ КОМІКСІВ

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Мета дослідження виявити характерні особливості сучасних коміксів, їх художньо-композиційні рішення, типи, тенденції в американській, європейській, азійській культурі. Визначити особливості формування сучасного українського коміксу.

Методологія. В основу методики дослідження покладено комплексне використання історичного, компаративного методів, системний аналіз, синтез, узагальнення.

Результати. На основі аналізу сучасного контенту коміксів, розкрита історія коміксів, їх сприйняття масовою аудиторією як сучасного медіатексту, систематизовані характеристики окремих елементів коміксів. Визначено специфіку художньо-композиційної системи сучасних коміксів, характер образно-стилістичних технік, особливостей графіки американських, європейських, азійських, українських коміксів. Розглянуті закономірності, що притаманні коміксам, як візуальним наративам, різних соціо-культурних частин світу, а також аспекти, що формують сучасний український комікс.

Наукова новизна. Визначено характеристики коміксу як об'єкту графічного дизайну: систематизовано риси художньо-композиційних дизайнерських рішень у різних світових регіонах; виявлено провідні тенденції розвитку конкретних типів коміксів в

США, Європі, Азії та в Україні.
Практична значущість. На основі мистецтвознавчого аналізу типів коміксів, виявлення тенденцій їх розвитку у межах сучасного графічного дизайну, визначено специфіку подальшого розвитку коміксів та представлено ідеї рішень майбутніх творчих проектів, зазначено риси, які мають як художню, так і комерційну цінність.
Ключові слова: комікс, кадри, композиція, графічний дизайн.

Практическая значимость. На основе искусствоведческого анализа типов комиксов, выявления тенденций их развития в пределах современного графического дизайна, определена специфика дальнейшего развития комиксов и представлены идеи решений будущих творческих проектов, указано черты, которые имеют как художественную, так и коммерческую ценность.
Ключевые слова: комикс, кадры, композиция, графический дизайн.

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