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WORKS BY ANDRII LEVYTSKYI FOR THE “HOMAGE À TROIS” PROJECT (BARCELONA, SPAIN)

Анотація / Abstract

Андрій Левицький – відомий київський графік, визнаний майстер глибокого друку (інталію). Від 2021 року митець регулярно бере участь у проєкті «Homage à trois» («Данина трьом»), який здійснюється в м. Барселоні (Іспанія) з ініціативи Міжнародної асоціації Duana de les Arts – AIDA. Учасниками проєкту можуть бути тільки майстри графічного мистецтва. Проєкт має вшанувати пам'ять трьох літературних діячів з нагоди річниць їхнього народження, причому з трьох запропонованих персоналій художники мають обрати щонайменше дві. Інталію 2021 року, задовольняючи умови проєкту, водночас органічно продовжують теми й мотиви, характерні для доробку Андрія Левицького загалом. «Поема про хінне дерево (Жан Лафонтен)» дещо несподівано та парадоксально, але природно пов'язана з улюбленими митцем зображеннями дерев. «Гравець» розвиває теми протистояння, гри, суперництва, які також виникають, зокрема, в інталію «Motus Animi Continuus» (2021). Три роботи 2022 року, виконані в техніці комп'ютерного дизайну, відзначаються яскравим і разом з тим елегантним колористичним вирішенням. Художник надихається темами театру й ширше – карнавальної культури («Маски Мольєра»), мистецтвом Японії («Потік Ігійо Хігуті»). Особливо ж несподіваним є твір до ювілею легендарного німецького романтика Новаліса («Спитаю у Барона: релігія – опіум для народу?»). У 2023 році Андрій Левицький знов-таки повертається до техніки інталію й воднораз відмовляється від кольоровості. Твори, присвячені Федеріко Гарсія Лорці («О п'ятій годині пополудні») та Віславі Шимборській, лауреатці Нобелівської премії («Кіт у порожній квартирі»), є роздумами художника над

темою смерті, тоді як робота «Сон. Моя Антонія» (за романом Вілли Катер) пом'якшує їхній трагізм. Роботи українського художника, присвячені Мольєру, Новалісу та Віллі Катер, були номіновані та нагороджені організаторами «Homage à trois». Беручи участь у міжнародних мистецьких проєктах, а тим паче перемагаючи в них, вітчизняні художники активно сприяють створенню позитивного іміджу держави. Адже культура України складається не лише з історичної спадщини, але й із творів сучасних майстрів.

Ключові слова: Андрій Левицький, українська графіка 2020-х років, проєкт «Homage à trois» («Данина трьом», м. Барселона, Іспанія), інтальо, комп'ютерний дизайн.

Andrii Levytskyi is a well-known Kyivan graphic artist, a recognized master of gravure printing (intaglio). The artist has been participating regularly in the “Homage à trois” (*Tribute to Three*) project, which takes place in Barcelona (Spain) on the initiative of the Duana de les Arts – AIDA International Association – since 2021. Only masters of graphic art can participate in the project. It should commemorate three literary figures on the occasion of their birthday anniversaries, and the artists should choose at least two of the three proposed personalities. Intaglio 2021, satisfying the conditions of the project, at the same time continues seamlessly the themes and motifs peculiar to Andrii Levytskyi's heritage in general. *Poem about a Henna Tree* (Jean Lafontaine) is somewhat unexpected and paradoxical, but naturally connected with the artist's favourite images of trees. In the *Player* the themes of confrontation, game, rivalry are developed. They are arisen, in particular, in the intaglio *Motus Animi Continuuus* (2021). Three works of 2022, made in the computer design technique, are distinguished by a bright and at the same time elegant color solution. The artist is inspired by themes of the theater and, widely, carnival culture (*Molière's Mask*), Japanese art (*Ichiyō Higuchi's Stream*). The work for the anniversary of the legendary German romantic Novalis (*Ask Baron: Is Religion the Opium of the Peoples*) is especially unexpected. In 2023, Andrii Levytskyi has returned to the intaglio technique again and at the same time abandoned color. The works dedicated to Federico García Lorca (*At Five O'clock in the Afternoon*) and Wislawa Szymborska, winner of the Nobel Prize (*Cat in an Empty Apartment*), are the artist's reflections on the theme of death, while the work *Dream. My Antonia* (based on the novel by Willa Cather) softens their tragical essence. The Ukrainian artist's works dedicated to Molière, Novalis and Willa Cather have been nominated and awarded by the organizers of “Homage à trois”. Taking part in the international artistic projects, and even more so winning in them, Ukrainian artists contribute actively to the creation of a positive image of the state. After all, the culture of Ukraine consists not only of the historical heritage, but also of the works of modern masters.

Keywords: Andrii Levytskyi, Ukrainian graphics of the 2020s, “Homage à trois” project (*Tribute to Three*, Barcelona, Spain), intaglio, computer design.

Formulation of the problem. The culture of Ukraine consists not only of the historical heritage, but also of the works of modern masters. Andrii Levytskyi is one of the leading modern Ukrainian graphic artists. He has been participating in the international project “Homage à trois” (Barcelona, Spain) during 2021–2023. The artist is awarded for three times in various categories. However, this fact hasn't attracted attention of Ukrainian art critics.

Relevance of the chosen topic. Andrii Levytskyi's works for the “Homage à trois” project (Barcelona, Spain) have remained actually unnoticed by researchers, but the artist is one of the winners in 2023.

Analysis of recent research and published works. Publications about Andrii Levytskyi are mostly of popular [1; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 10; 12; 15] or reference [16] nature. The papers in professional editions [2; 3; 9] relate mainly to the exhibition activities of the artist. Articles by the authoress of the

submitted study [11; 13] have become the first scientific published works about the heritage of one of the leading modern Ukrainian graphic artists.

The article is aimed at the analysis of the works of Andrii Levytskyi, submitted by him for the “Homage à trois” project (Barcelona, Spain) during 2021–2023.

Description of article's main material. Andrii Levytskyi ¹ is a well-known Kyivan graphic artist, a recognized master of gravure printing (intaglio). He has been participating regularly in the “Homage à trois” (*Tribute to Three*) project, which takes place in Barcelona (Spain) on the initiative of the Duana de les Arts – AIDA International Association – since 2021. Only masters of graphic art can participate in the project. “We understand ‘graphic art’ in a certain sense, limited to engravings and photographs on paper” ², – the organizers of the project remark. They define the purpose of “Homage à trois”

in such a way: “It is intended to honour three literary figures on the occasion of their birth anniversaries”³. The participants can choose one, two or all three proposed personalities.

The Ukrainian graphic artist has chosen, of course, first of all Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695) among the heroes of the day in 2021. The latest is known as the author of the *Poem about a Henna Tree*, because, as Hanna Kvitka testifies, “as far as I remember, Andrii Levytskyi depicts trees” [2, p. 79]. This is, indeed, if not the leading, then definitely the artist’s favorite topic⁴. Even the sheet entitled *My Life* (2014) is signed actually *Only Trees*. So, it is not surprising that the famous fable writer of the *era of Louis the Great* (in a traditional lush wig and an equally traditional Steenkerque tie) forms an organic whole with ... the object of his poem on Andrii Levytskyi’s printmaking!⁵

The second work for the same project, *Player*, is dedicated to another celebrant and is constructed somewhat differently. In general, *people* (unlike *trees*!) are quite rare guests in the artist’s graphic space. And yet, we can remember the sheet *Motus Animi Continuuus* (*Continuous Movement of the Mind*) created in the same 2021, where also (close-up as well) somewhat mysterious *players* or rather – super players, *puppeteers* appear, as well as more the motive of rivalry, confrontation and playing at the same time.

Andrii Levytskyi brings the image of the game to the maximum expressiveness uniting the characters at the card table and adding the letters *vs* (that is, *versus*, *one against the other*) in the signature. But it is interesting that the artist’s heroes, unlike the *players* of *Motus Animi Continuuus*, actually... do not play: they just wait *as the card lies*, and the *game* process itself does not depend on them in any way. Does it depend on anyone at all? If the game is fair, no. But is it honest? In fact we only see the hands of the mysterious *banker*, and these hands, frankly speaking, do not deserve trust – what are their long nails or, better to say, claws worth at least... Or maybe they are just women’s hands? So, the banker is a woman: Luck, Fate, Death? And the

heroes just watch the game in fascination... In the end, is it so important who of them will be lucky at last?..⁶

Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, 1622–1673), Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772–1801) and the Japanese writer Ichiyō Higuchi (1872–1896) are honoured by “Homage à trois” in 2022. Andrii Levytskyi has responded to all three *anniversaries*. Unlike the restrained black and white *intaglio printing*, the technique of new, brightly colored sheets, called GCD (general computer design) includes “live” works, scanned, processed in Photoshop and printed (digital printing).

The necessary atmosphere is created with the help of this technique in the *Mask of Molière* not even just theatricality, but carnivalism of what is happening. In addition, this carnival is somewhat... surreal: from all four sides there are profiles, two sad and two smiling, and at the same time an allusion to the sad and smiling masks – a symbol of the theater, and to the well-known “The whole world is a theater” (because in *Mask of Molière* Theater is literally both Heaven and Earth!), and, finally, a memory of the complexities and confrontations associated with some of Molière’s plays, in particular with *Tartuffe* and *Don Juan*...

As for the performance itself, it takes place directly “on the heads”: two mannered gentlemen, between whom there is a lady in a magnificent dress, but at the same time balancing on a rope... And, finally, the sad and wise Jester, whose gaze – of the only one among the eight characters – is directed specifically at the viewer (a kind of memory of the paintings of another French *theatre-goer* – Antoine Watteau). The work has been nominated and awarded the third prize in the *Molière* category.

Andrii Levytskyi, admirer and connoisseur of the culture of the Land of the Rising Sun, notes about the second work for the 2022 project: “Ichiyō Higuchi is an outstanding woman, a Japanese writer of the Meiji era, who has studied classical poetry, lived in Tokyo, is the authoress of wonderful stories and novels about life of ordinary people of Japan, lived

only 24 years and died of tuberculosis. My work is called *Ichiyō Higuchi's Stream*, with female portraits of Kakemono-style dedications. It is a scroll that hangs vertically. The image of a young woman, a geisha with a beautiful laconic hairstyle and many various flowers and hairpins is in the foreground of the work. Together, these flowers and pins seem to carry the flow over the waves of life. And there is a beauty that does not feel mutual love. It is difficult to walk the path of poverty and destitution for the sake of love”⁷. However, not only precious artistic scrolls, but also a much more democratic art – woodblock printing of the Edo period, in particular the works of Kitagawa Utamaro, become the source of inspiration for the artist. And yet, the meaningful and emotional center of the work is formed with a real photo of Ichiyō Higuchi, a serious, modestly dressed girl who looks more like a Yaroshenko Student than a Lady Chrysanthemum by Loti. The six-time repetition of her image is used to create another additional allusion – with the art of Andy Warhol... Or maybe it is just a reminder that the writer died early is one of those depicted on modern Japanese banknotes...

The work dedicated to Novalis has a long and complex title: *Ask Baron: Is Religion the Opium of the Peoples* and is built again on allusions and associations, moreover quite unexpected. After all, if the rose, half-hidden by luxurious curtains and illuminated by golden light, is a memory of the Blue Flower, the most capacious, significant and at the same time mysterious symbol of the unfinished (we have only its first part – *Expectation*) “artistic novel” *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, then the text highlighted in red is not just the most popular, but also a well-known expression of the legendary romantic (although, in the transcription of another, somewhat later, German thinker). Andrii Levytskyi himself remarks about his work: “The image of Novalis has become a model of a philosopher-poet for many romantics, and for me, as an artist, it is associated with: a bookshelf; with my graphic work in the intaglio technique, a flower in large inflorescences – Novalis rose; with stamp and

famous Novalis quote; baron Georg Friedrich Philipp Freiherr von Hardenberg is the author of the comparison of religion with opium, which has become widely known thanks to Karl Marx's phrase “Religion is opium for the people”⁸. The work has been nominated and awarded the fifth prize in the *Novalis* category.

AIDA has chosen Willa Sibert Cather (1873–1947), Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) and Wisława Szymborska (1923–2012) in 2023.

Andrii Levytskyi has dedicated one work to each of the three persons whose anniversaries are celebrated. In contrast to the bright compositions of the previous year, these are now classic intaglios in a restrained grey-blue or grey-brown spectrum, with gold and red colour accents.

The title of the work *At Five O'clock in the Afternoon* is referred to Lorca's famous poetic work *Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías* (full quotation is “Everything else was death, only death at five o'clock in the afternoon”⁹). Intaglio also contains quite frank author's quotations from the graphic tondo of 2021, commented by Andrii Levytskyi himself as follows: “*Toros Bravos* is a favorite theme of *Tauromaquia*, a fight with the Bull, where the victory, of course, belongs to the Bull!”¹⁰. But in the new work, the actual bullfight is something of the past, a memory, perhaps a delusion (Lorca's hero died, let's remind you, not on the arena, but of a wound, after two days in the hospital). That is why the dynamism of the composition is changed to stiffness, and the bulls approaching the torero are perceived as components of a difficult, hopeless nightmare. The gold and purple accents traditional for Andrii Levytskyi look like sun reflections and drops of blood, but the overall tone of the intaglio is nevertheless grey-brown, lifeless: the color of gradually dying flesh...

Wisława Szymborska, the Nobel Prize laureate (1996), is the authoress of numerous collections, but Andrii Levytskyi has chosen a small poem *Cat in an Empty Apartment* from the entire universe of her poetry. The work is tender and penetrating: “Die – you can't do that to a cat.

<...> Someone was always, always here, / then suddenly disappeared / and stubbornly stays disappeared. <...> What remains to be done. / Just sleep and wait. / Just wait till he turns up, / Just let him show his face. / Will he ever get a lesson / on what not to do to a cat. / Sidle toward him / as if unwilling / and ever so slow / on visibly offended paws, / and no leaps or squeals at least to start..."¹¹. As for the intaglio of the Kyivan graphic artist, the point of view gives it additional delicacy, so to speak: after all, we see what is happening not through the eyes of a cat or someone who visits and feeds it, "according to the plot", not even with our own, "reader-spectator", eyes. The cat – already "from the other side of reality" – is seen by its dead owner, who seems to be no less surprised than his lonely pet, because the artist enhances the tragedy of the situation by adding the silhouette of a revolver and red "drops of blood" ...

The gloominess of the two intaglios of 2023 is somewhat softened by the third one – *Dream. My Ántonia*. Willa Cather's final novel in the *Prairies Trilogy* (*Oh, Pioneers!* (1913), *Song of the Lark* (1915), *My Ántonia* (1918)) is not translated into Ukrainian. According to Wikipedia information, "the novel is about an orphaned boy from Virginia named Jim Byrden and Ántonia Shimerda, the daughter of Czech immigrants. Both of them have become

pioneers (first settlers. – O. L.) at the late 19th century and settled in the state of Nebraska. The first year of life in a completely new place leaves strong impressions on children, which they will remember for the rest of their lives". Andrii Levytskyi (not without a touch of irony, it seems) associates the events of the novel with those popular in the 18th century idylls against the background of nature, in particular with François Boucher's famous picture *The Interrupted Sleep* (1750), which, by the way, is kept in New York's Metropolitan Museum. The work was nominated and awarded the third prize in the *Willa Cather* category.

It should be noted that "Homage à trois" has already announced the names of the persons whose anniversaries are celebrated in 2024: Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) and Joan Salvat-Papasseit (1894–1924).

Conclusions. Andrii Levytskyi has offered distinctive and expressive works in various genres and graphic techniques for the "Homage à trois" project (Barcelona, Spain) during 2021–2023. He was nominated and awarded three times in various categories. Taking part in the international artistic projects, and even more so winning in them, Ukrainian artists contribute actively to the creation of a positive image of the state.

Notes

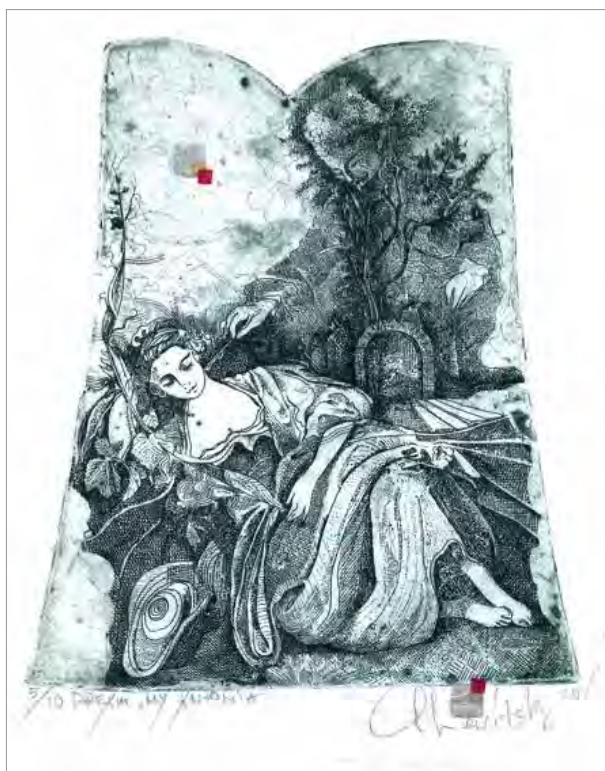
¹ The artist was born in Kyiv in 1961. In 1992 he has graduated from the Ukrainian Academy of Arts (now it is the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture). M. Derehus, M. Kompanets, A. Chebykin, H. Yakutovych have been his teachers. A. Levytskyi is a participant of All-Ukrainian and foreign art exhibitions since 1987. The personal exhibitions have been carried out in Munich, Germany (1992, 1996), Tokyo, Japan (1995–1996), Kyiv (2002, 2005–2006, 2008–2009, 2011–2012). Individual works are preserved in the museums of Ukraine, Poland, Italy and Turkey. He is the member of the National Union of the Artists of Ukraine (1992). The graphic artist is a laureate of O. Danchenko Artistic Prize of Kyiv Organization of NUAU (2007), winner of a number of international awards for the best works in the field of graphics.

² Citation according to the website of the Duana de les Arts International Association (AIDA) [online]. Available from: <https://duanadelesarts.cat/> [in English].

³ *ibid.*

⁴ For example, the artist's series *Tree of Life* (1992), *Crimea. Trees* (2004), *Enchanted Garden* (2013–2015), sheets *Love Comes in The Town* (2002), *Talking to Myself*, *Letters* (both – 2004), *Pine Spirit*, *Dreamscape* (both – 2005), *Geografica Nova* (2007), *Railroad*, *AVIA* (both – 2009), *My Island* (2020–2011), *My Threes* (2014), *Oliva* (2015), *Beetle Tree. Garden* (2019), finally, simply *Tree* (2013) can be mentioned. See also the authoress's published work [15].

⁵ Andrii Levytskyi himself explains and comments on his choice as follows: "The genius of Jean La Fontaine (1621–1695) for me consists of the relevance of his works even today in the conditions of the two-year "covid-19" lockdown.



Dream. My Ántonia (Willa Cather), 2023, intaglio



Cat in an Empty Apartment
(Wisława Szymborska),
2023, intaglio



Poem about a Henna Tree
(Jean Lafontaine), 2021, intaglio



At Five O'clock in the Afternoon (Federico García Lorca),
2023, intaglio



Molière's Mask, 2022,
computer design, digital printing

Ichiyō Higuchi's Stream, 2022,
computer design, digital printing



Ask Baron: Is Religion the Opium of the
Peoples? (Novalis), 2022,
computer design, digital printing

The *Poem about the Henna Tree* has been published by a famous French fables writer in the late 17th century. The poem is dedicated to this amazing plant (Quinquina Tree). He has written in it that it is as if the sun-faced Phoebus himself (Apollo, the god of light; hence his nickname Phoebus – “radiant”, “shining”) sends people a cure for the deadly swamp fever, brought on by the insidious Pandora (“gifted with everything” – the first woman).⁶

⁶ The third person whose anniversary is celebrated in 2021 chosen by AIDA is Patricia Highsmith (1921–1995), American writer, authoress of psychological detective stories, including a series of novels about the criminal Tomas Ripley.

⁷ Commentary by A. Levytskyi; Meiji (“Enlightened rule”) is the motto of the reign of Emperor Mutsuhito; according to European periodization, the Meiji era covers the period from October 23, 1868 to July 30, 1912. This is the time of the end of Japan’s self-isolation and its gradual transformation into a modern industrial national state. Meiji was preceded by the Edo period (1603–1868).

⁸ Commentary by A. Levytskyi.

⁹ Federico García Lorca. *Selected Poems*. Translated from Spanish by Hryhorii LATNYK. Lviv: Kalvariia, 2008, pp. 160 [in Ukrainian].

¹⁰ Commentary by A. Levytskyi; from the private correspondence with the authoress of the article.

11 SZYMBORSKA, Wisława. Cat in an Empty Apartment. Translated by Nataliia SYDIACHENKO. *Step-Sisters Magazine*, 2023, no. 44 [online]. Available from: <https://posestry.eu/zhurnal/no-44/statya/kit-u-porozhnyi-kvartiri> [in Ukrainian].

It is not about a tom-cat in the original text, but about a cat Myzia, whose owner was the poet and writer Kornel Filipowicz (1913–1990).

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