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NEW IMPULSES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVE PROFESSIONS IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

The article examines the main factors influencing the professional activity of artists as the driving forces of career development in the crisis period of 202–2021. For the purpose of analysis, they were divided into constant and variable factors, taking into account the specifics of creative professions. The emergence of variables is due to the disruption of the sustainable impact of external conditions, and their unique nature was formed as a result of restrictions on social activity caused by the pandemic. The study is based on the International Library of Artists' Stories database, which describes the experience of working during the lockdown in different countries and local contexts.

The influence of such factors as "Forced productivity", "Increased/Suppressed Freedom", "The magic kick", "Time", "Society vs Solitude", "Congratulations! Your application was successful", took place regardless of the type of professional creative activity and the country of residence of the participants, economic, cultural, social and other conditions. As a unique phenomenon, they have become an active driving force for the development of a strong and stable intercultural environment, helping to overcome uncertainty in the new post-pandemic world.

The constant and variable factors that influence the creative professional activity of artists in this period help to understand the stages that artists go through on the way to developing their professional activity in society, but at a much faster pace. The growth of online activities has become a catalyst for positive change, which in turn has helped to bring personal and collective creative development to a new level. By replacing the lack of personal communication, virtual tools have encouraged artists to learn and acquire new skills necessary for the modern competitiveness of creative professions. The development of the international art community in this challenging period is stimulated by the emergence of new conditions for communication and remote collaboration, which also opens a window of opportunity for artists.

The results of the study show that 2020–2021, as a period of constant leaving the comfort zone, turned out to be a time of unexpected experience, which generally had a positive impetus for the development and self-realization of representatives of a wide range of creative professions.

Key words: art, creative, artist, profession, library, pandemic, virtual.

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НОВІ ІМПУЛЬСИ ДЛЯ РОЗВИТКУ ТВОРЧИХ ПРОФЕСІЙ У ПОСТПАНДЕМІЧНОМУ СВІТІ

У статті розглянуто основні чинники, що впливають на професійну діяльність митців, як рушійних сил становлення кар'єри, у кризовий період 2020–2021 рр. Для аналізу чинники були розділені на постійні та змінні з урахуванням особливостей творчих професій. Виникнення змінних чинників зумовлено порушенням стійкого впливу зовнішніх умов, а їх унікальний характер сформувався внаслідок обмежень соціальної активності, викликаних пандемією. Основою дослідження є база даних міжнародної бібліотеки історій про досвід роботи митців під час локдауну з різних країн і локальних контекстів.

Вплив змінних чинників, таких як «Вимушена продуктивність», «Посилення та пригнічення свободи», «Магічний поштовх», «Час», «Соціальність vs самотність», "Congratulations! Your application was successful", відбувся не залежно від виду професійної творчої діяльності та країни проживання учасників, економічних, культурних, соціальних та інших умов. Маючи характеристики унікального явища, вони стали активною рушійною силою для розвитку міцного та стабільного міжкультурного середовища, допомагаючи подолати невизначеність у новому постпандемічному світі.

Постійні та змінні фактори впливу на творчу професійну діяльність митців у цей період допомагають зрозуміти етапи, які проходять художники на шляху до становлення своєї професійної діяльності в суспільстві, але значно швидшими темпами. Прискорений розвиток онлайн-діяльності став каталізатором позитивних змін, які, в свою чергу, допомогли вивести особистий та колективний творчий розвиток на якісно новий рівень. Заповнюючи брак живого спілкування, віртуальні інструменти спонукали митців до навчання та набуття нових навичок, необхідних для сучасної конкурентоспроможності творчих професій. Розвиток міжнародної мистецької спільноти в цей складний період стимулюється появою нових умов для комунікації та дистанційної співпраці, що також відкриває вікно можливостей для художників.

Результати дослідження свідчать, що 2020–2021 рр., як період постійного виходу за межі зони комфорту, виявився часом несподіваного досвіду, який загалом мав позитивний поштовх для розвитку та самореалізації представників широкого кола творчих професій.

Ключові слова: мистецтво, творча діяльність, митець, професія, бібліотека, пандемія, віртуальний.

Problem statement. The creative industry has been severely affected by the pandemic, and artists have been the least protected in the 2020–2021 crisis (UNESCO, 2020). CISAC President Björn Ulvaeus adds that this industry “will be the last to return to health” (CISAC, 2020: 2). However, despite numerous studies, the issue of insufficient data still remains an obstacle to the formation of a joined impact model. In his report on the impact of COVID–19 on cultural relations at the international online conference “The New Normal of Cultural Relations”, Professor Pierangelo Isernia of the University of Siena stressed that “the overall picture is not complete, and there are gaps in the available survey data and impact reports” (Isernia, 2021). In his study, the researcher does not ignore Ukraine, paying considerable attention to the importance of state support for the vulnerable creative sector, whose complete uncertainty needs to be overcome. “These are entire areas of the economy that are currently on the brink of survival. They also pay taxes and give people jobs, so they need no less support than traditional businesses”, says Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (Isernia, Lamonica, 2021: 34–35). Therefore, there was a need to create a database of information materials based on the international experience of direct participants in the cultural sphere.

Speaking about the new reality for cultural institutions in the post-pandemic world, Aleksandra Janus notes that “we need to go where our audience already is” (Janus, 2021). However, the next and perhaps most important step will be to create places that will serve to strengthen the immunity of the creative industry. Places that will primarily strengthen the ability of artists themselves, as the basic unit of the creative sphere, to counteract the negative consequences of the pandemic. In 2020, the Ukrainian art research platform MOKONSHU initiated the creation of a library of stories and voices of artists from different countries and local contexts. The research was conducted as part of the

international art project #365daysafter¹, which brings together Ukraine, Croatia, Portugal and China in a joint study of art from the 2020–2021 pandemic with the participation of more than 200 artists born and/or living in one of these countries. An important part of the art project was the stories of each participant’s experience of creative activity during the pandemic, describing, characterising and documenting this period so that we could break down the walls of social isolation built by the pandemic.



II. 1. “Library of Artists’ Stories” virtual location

“Culture feeds our souls every day”, says Angelique Kidjo, who calls on European leaders to raise awareness of the arts as a key element in overcoming the crisis. She emphasizes that neglecting the need to protect the cultural sphere will have serious consequences for society (Ernst & Young, 2021: 31). It was online that began to listen to the needs of the

¹ #365daysafter consists of two parts: life during the COVID–19 pandemic and a look to the future. With this project the organizers sought to explore the local context of four countries, combine experience and create a database of information materials that will serve as motivation and guide for young artists in overcoming the crisis caused by the pandemic and combating its consequences.

² The #365daysafter art project was created by the art organization “MOKONSHU” in collaboration with its partners: the creative agency “KAMSOMOL”, the “Garaža KAMBA” gallery (Zagreb, Croatia), the international artists residency “DE LICEIRAS 18” (Porto, Portugal) and the independent Institute of Contemporary Arts “Snarte Space” (Nanchang, China).

audience, satisfying the most important of them – socialisation. “Library of artist stories” is not only a virtual location for obtaining valuable information for your professional and creative development, but also a platform for like-minded people, a place where everyone become a part of important changes in society (MOKONSHU, 2021). The virtual library, open to the public, contains stories of the experience of artists from Europe to Asia with a set of effective tools for overcoming fear and uncertainty in the new post-pandemic world and continuing to create at the same time (“Artists’ Stories” – mokonshu.art)².

Research analysis. According to surveys, the cultural and creative sectors have suffered even more than others. The data shows the following: Rebuilding Europe: the cultural and creative economy before and after the COVID-19 crisis (2021); Culture Action Europe and Dâmaso (2021); Ernst & Young (2021); CISAC Global Collections Report 2020; Panteia (2020); UNESCO (2020); Eurostat, Culture statistics – cultural employment (2020), and more. Factors of influence on professional growth as driving forces of career formation (economic, social, psychological, biological, personal etc.), are generally identified by scientists, in particular V. Berg, A. Derkach, E. Fromm, D. Goleman, S. Grabovska, V. Lozovetska, A. Marushkevych, V. Radkevych, J. Rotter, N. Volianiuk, and others. Taking into account the specifics of artistic professions, careers of artists and their labor market, in particular N. Alper, S. Aleksieieva, C. Ekinsmyth, M. Kamprath, P-M. Menger, V. Radkevych, J. Storey, A. Wittel, and others.

Research aim – identify the constant and variable factors influencing the creative activity of artists during the pandemic, considering them as new impulses towards the development of creative professions in the post-pandemic world.

Display of the main material. Creative work and the artists’ labor market has a number of specifics that distinguish it from other areas, features such as “intermittency, heterogeneity and instability” (Culture Action Europe & Dâmaso, 2021: 7). To assess the impact on the artistic sphere and the creative activity of artists in 2020–2021, it is worth highlighting the main ones, dividing them into constant and variable.

The factors of constant influence include those that are common to most professions under the stable influence of external forces. Variables specific to individual professions, in particular creative ones, are those that arise as a result of a disruption in the stable influence of external factors, in our case, their uniqueness was caused by the pandemic.

Constant factors:

- Psychological
- Social
- Economic
- Financial
- Personal growth

Psychological. Satisfaction from the reward, stable emotional state, calmness, confidence, and resistance to obstacles

The psychological factor is at the heart of professional development. Therefore, it is worth paying special attention to examples of minimising the negative impact on the psychological state.

A set of elements of the psychological factor responsible for the emotional state is formed on the basis of stability. In the case of professional activity in creative fields, this means sufficiently stable working conditions that have remained during the pandemic and lockdowns, such as studio space with free access to it, the tools and materials necessary for work, orders/sales, etc. During the pandemic, artists whose work schedules remained almost unchanged and those who continued to work on projects they had already started became more stable (Dmytro Kupriyan, Valery Leshchynsky, Brian Ten (China), Branko Gulin (Croatia))³.

It is worth noting that the stability of working conditions does not guarantee that creative activity belongs to the category of full-time employment. Rather, it is self-employment, with a constant change between part-time work and combined jobs, a type of employment described as “atypical work” or “non-standard work”, while research shows that cultural workers have a higher level of education than workers in other sectors (Eurofound, 2018). This situation is quite common among artists, but the unique experience of overcoming the restrictions of the pandemic has helped to consolidate the creative profession in the category of full-time work.

Resistance to the negative influence of the psychological factor was demonstrated by artists who can be classified as “minimal risk” and “positive thinking”. In contrast to the “minimal risk” group, which is characterised by a shift to short and quick projects, simpler techniques, cheaper materials and smaller works (Viacheslav Rogin, Vladimir Tomić (Croatia), Anna Zaporozhets), the group “positive thinking” refers to the challenge, the stage of overcoming obstacles, which is associated with testing strength and finding opportunities. Since the pandemic period was a challenge in itself, effective

² The article presents photographs from the exhibition of the international art project “#365daysafter”, material taken from the website mokonshu.art.

³ Hereinafter, the names of those for whom the above-mentioned factors of influence were most typical are given.

ways to minimise the impact of the factors should be sought in the stories of artists who have already found a way to overcome difficulties and their experience during 2020–2021:

– Place. Those who were forced to leave their rented studio but continued to work at home. In order not to be influenced by the negative, they worked in a bright palette (Valentyna Spanchak).

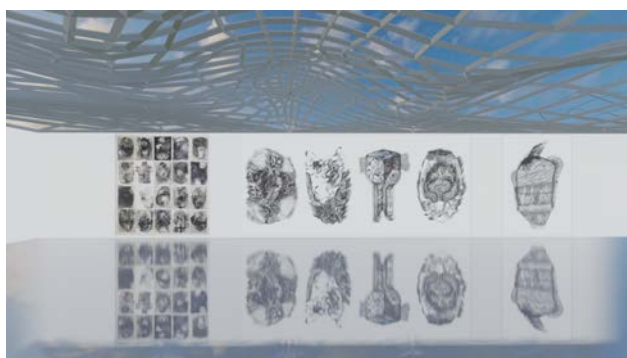
– Materials. The lack of usual materials that forced to experiment with unusual ones, such as packaging cardboard, paper, styrofoam, etc. This experience influenced the permanent job of the artists. For example, Andrija Večenaj improved as a lecturer and was encouraged to use alternative teaching methods at the university, which proved to be more motivating for students.

– Media. The forced change of techniques and media has become more successful for creative development (Ivana Bajcer, Laura Sajko).

Social factor of influence. Education, family and support

The social factor is associated with risks in the process of professional growth. Eliminating these risks requires planning, setting short- and long-term goals, as well as “foresee” abilities.

The social factor of influence is also related to psychological and emotional stability. The way challenges and obstacles are perceived affects the outcome of decisions, namely the ease and/or complexity of their solution. Challenges related to the social factor were fully experienced by women artists who were pregnant during this period and gave birth to a child, thus gaining the ability to become stronger and more resilient to future obstacles.



II. 2. Ivana Bajcer “Suspension”. Exhibition of the art project #365daysafter

Their “mega-skill” is not only the ability to adapt to new conditions, but also to use difficulties as a way to develop:

– “Here is a child, here is a workshop, here I am a cook, and here I have parties. And it’s all in an apartment of 40 square meters”, – Inna Kharchuk⁴.

– “I was making ceramics within my body limitations while pregnancy, within time limitations with a small child on hands and now continue within pandemic”, – Daria Davydova.

In the context of the social factor, it is also worth considering the experience of Nadya Mitskevitch, an artist who works with the topic of domestic violence, which has become more relevant than ever during the pandemic. Communicating with people from different countries through the Zoom platform, she created a series of works dedicated to this topic. In the work “Call for Help”, which is part of the series, Nadya visualized a cry for help in the form of a composition reminiscent of a video chat, as a symbol of communication in our time⁵.

Economic. The level of development of the country. State support

According to surveys, the creative sector in Central and Eastern Europe has been particularly affected, with negative consequences for artists (Culture Action Europe & Dâmaso, 2021: 10). With the onset of the pandemic, consumer habits have significantly shifted towards essential goods. It is worth noting that the need for luxury goods, which is exactly what art is for the Ukrainian audience, was far from being in the first place before the pandemic. But despite its insignificance for the audience, art still found its mass consumer. This happened primarily in new online markets created on the basis of groups in popular social networks.

The degree of influence of the economic factor depends on the knowledge of the existing labour market and its opportunities, the ability to assess one’s own skills and compatibility with the new conditions for personal development. Those who have the necessary skills, or who learned quickly, were able to reduce the negative impact of the factor.

Financial. From the availability and search for resources needed to implement a project/work/series to receiving remuneration

The essence of work is measured by financial stability and depends on working conditions. As we have already seen in the example of artists from Croatia, the lack of usual materials can be replaced by those that are available. However, unlike Andrija Večenaj, Ivana Bajcer, and Laura Sajko, for Dmitro

⁴ The depiction and visualization of the artists’ experiences were included in the “Library of Artists’ Stories”, the full text of which can be found on the website mokonshu.art.

⁵ Link to the virtual gallery of the international art project #365daysafter – <https://mokonshu.art/gallery365daysafter/>

Krishovsky, the need for such a replacement was forced, which is not so much due to the availability of materials as to their cost. “The pandemic has limited our possibilities”, notes Dmitro, and that is why he consciously decided to work only with the materials he could find for free, which eventually resulted in a unique series of works.

The factor of financial stability was significantly shaken during the pandemic crisis, and works of art, like luxury goods, were far beyond the consumer needs of most buyers. For artists, this situation manifested itself in the fear of not having a stable income, which, in turn, prevented them from perceiving art as their main activity. “Compared with the wider labour market, artists and cultural workers are more often self-employed than other workers are” (Panteia, 2020: 18). Even under normal circumstances, the risks of not receiving regular financial rewards have turned creativity into a hobby, and during the pandemic, it is even more so. As a result, many artists are starting to look for work outside the CCIs (Ernst & Young, 2021: 21; IDEA Consult et al., 2021: 38).

One-third of workers are freelancers, and despite the flexibility this status provides, it also interferes with the financial stability and social security enjoyed by full-time employees (Ernst & Young, 2021: 21). However, it was during this period that we had the opportunity to observe the opposite situation, when, after losing a permanent job, creative work took its place (Natalya Ovsienko, Natasha Brichuk, Anna Pichuhina, etc.).

Many artists, including those from other countries, are concerned about finding ways to monetize their work. “For many artists in Europe, the only thing that keeps us afloat is our authors’ societies”, said Angélique Kidjo (Ernst & Young, 2021: 31). For example, Harmke Datema-Chang, an artist from the Netherlands with Chinese roots, sees the most positive result in an international association of artists who help each other, work on joint projects, create online auctions, etc. In her opinion, this format will help overcome the difficulties of the pandemic.

The personal growth factor. Motivation, self-affirmation, realization

The stage of productive work becomes an example of overcoming the obstacles of social activity restrictions related to the use of this factor’s capabilities: interest and desire to work; use of abilities, demonstration of new skills and professional achievements; desire to prove oneself through participation in exhibitions, residencies/festivals/projects; active attitude to opportunities; assessment of achievements; readiness for change, and much more. According to our observations, this is most

relevant to the use of online tools for promotion/sales, training, participation in exhibitions, etc.

The personal growth factor has become a key element in the development and acquisition of new digital skills for artists such as Pavlo Baltaziuk, who discovered digital skills and gained new knowledge as an architect of virtual worlds, Veronika Cherednychenko, who works with digital sculpture, Gaia Radić in 3D modeling, Khrystyna Khmil, who also develops VR technologies in her new series, Zhanna Podobed and her digital collage, and Fu Qiang, who works with 3D sculpture.

The variable factors that influence the creative professional activity of artists are derived from the constant ones, primarily from the factor of personal growth. Their emergence is caused by crisis phenomena, and their uniqueness lies in the specifics of creative activity. The variable factors that we will consider below also belong to the motivational ones (A. Maslow, T. Mitchell, V. Vroom, N. Volianiuk, L. Yershova, and others).

Each of these factors, having the characteristics of a unique phenomenon, regardless of the context, becomes an active factor in the development of a strong and stable intercultural environment:

- Forced productivity
- Increased/Suppressed Freedom
- The magic kick
- Congratulations! Your application was successful
- Time
- Society vs Solitude

Forced productivity

Among the factors, are those that require special attention, due to the complexity of their impact on artistic activity. The main one is “forced productivity”, – a factor that directly depends on the financial stability of the subject. Despite the impetus for active creative work during this period, the impact of the same factor can be both positive (Nuno Fareleira) and negative (Vedran Šilipetar).

In this context, it is worth talking about freedom, which is the basis of creative work, the balance of which was disturbed by the limitation of social activity. “It is very tough time for artists. I had so much time to work on my art. However, I was more productive than ever, but I’d rather be less productive and feel free to travel and work as we all used to”, – Vedran Šilipetar.

Despite the restriction, for the artist Ena Bajuk, also from Croatia, the suppression of freedom has become a positive factor, as the confined space of self-isolation, on the contrary, has encouraged creativity. “During the year of the pandemic, I created more



**Il. 3. Lucija Krizman “Things the mirror shows, things the mirror doesn’t...”, 2021.
Exhibition of the project #365daysafter**



Il. 4. From left to right: Maria López and Josephine Gerhardt “Telefone Estragado”; Helena Valsecchi “Synecdoche”

than before. The enclosed space during the lockdown provided me with a familiar and safe shelter, but gradually the white walls of the apartment evoked artistic reflection”, – Ena Bajuk.

Increased/Suppressed Freedom

Many artists mentioned that their daily rhythm of life is similar to being in isolation, but as Martinho Dias, an artist living in Portugal, points out, there is a very big difference between these concepts: – “In fact, I have always been in lockdown at studio, but <...> being in lockdown by your own will is not the same as being in lockdown by obligation” (MOKONSHU, 2021).

Artists who worked on joint projects during this period while living in different countries deserve special attention. Their experience serves as an example of how limiting freedom becomes a factor in gaining even greater freedom. In order to understand how to reduce the negative impact of external factors, it is important to look at the experience of artists in this period. It is worth mentioning the recently formed group of Maria López (Portugal) and Josephine Gerhardt (Germany), who worked on the same project while living in different countries. The artists used the issues of distance, communication and time during the pandemic as an advantage.

The Telefone Estragado project is an example of when going online becomes a forced action, but more effective. In the absence of the opportunity to present the project together, due to travel restrictions, the artists have an urgent solution – a joint Instagram page, that allowed them to significantly expand the audience (Telefone Estragado, 2021).

Thus, we can see that the effect of constraints can become a factor of development. Like Maria López and Josephine Gerhardt, Francisca Patrocínio and Leonor Talefe (both from Portugal) also worked online on joint projects while in different cities, one of

which was “Uma cadeira dá para duas pessoas”⁶. An interesting solution for working together at a distance was a closed Instagram account, which they used as an archive and a space for ideas. “Virtually connected. United by thoughts”, the authors of the project note. The artists themselves call this format a “deposit”, a means of accumulating ideas and references.

Another example of using the suppression of freedom as an advantage is the story of Ivana Filip, who benefited from the reduction in social activity in a research project she had started before the pandemic. Ivana was studying local urban cats in Croatia, and the reduced number of people on the streets made it much easier to work on her art project.

The magic kick

A situational factor of influence, the degree of which is determined by “chance”. It becomes magical not because it has any supernatural properties, but because of its appearance. Usually, it is the expectation of a chance that allegedly forces one to act in a certain way and not otherwise, and to make decisions that a person is not able to make on their own.

In the context of the pandemic, the impact factor of “The magic kick” was most valuable as a push. It provided an opportunity to receive a “reward” and, by encouraging you to move towards your goal, helped you find a path, unlock your potential and eventually find the purpose of life. This “non-linear path” requires time, which is very often not externally funded, highlighting the growing need for “information, financial support and continuous training”, which has become particularly acute during COVID-19 (Culture Action Europe & Dâmaso, 2021: 24–25). A striking example of the magic kick is the story of Zorana Unković, an artist from Croatia. Before the pandemic, she was in constant depression, living in fear, and it was the difficulties of this period

⁶ Trans. from Portuguese: “The chair is suitable for two”.

that became the necessary impetus to change, to feel the desire to create and take control of her life. “Pandemic <...> was the greatest gift life has given me. I finally reached the bottom and started climbing up”, says Zorana Unković.

To start with, it can be small steps, such as using digital tools for promotion/sales, online training, participation in exhibitions, etc., which will eventually take the form of an effective incentive for the next step in your career (Uliana Shchabel, Anna Bitaieva, Anna Kozyreva, Anna Leticia Barreto (Portugal), Yana Hudzan, Oksana Chepelyk, Galina Bayda, Illia Nesterov, Anna Mironova, Astian Rey):

- time and conditions for research, as well as opportunities for media change (Elya Element, China);
- new digital professions, such as virtual reality architect (Pavlo Baltaziuk);
- natural materials leading to new media (photographer Sofii Korotkevych, who found herself in a land art);
- a new audience in the digital sphere, such as Lidia Matviienko, who voiced an audiobook for the first time in her life.

The catalyst for the next stage of creativity was a magical impulse that led to a reassessment of values (Oleksandr Stamer, Julia Lazumirska, Dmytro Tarasenko, Olga Polianska, Letricija Linardić (Croatia), Mariko Gelman, Xingrong Qiao (China), Viktoriia Cherniakhivska, Nazar Kulchytsky, Igor Melnyk), finding out one’s strengths and weaknesses (Anastasiia Pavlova, Terra Neidorf, Natasha Brichuk, Petra Pavetić Kranjčec (Croatia)), and understanding that creativity is the way to success (Ievgen Artamonov, Alexander Halishchuk, Vitaliy Matukhno, Mariia Drozdova).

Congratulations! Your application was successful

A factor that serves as a supportive incentive and confirmation from society, which, while focusing on art professionals, does not exclude the general audience. The pandemic has helped many to find this confirmation – from increased productivity in a well-known style or media (Harmke Datema-Chang, Anna Pichuhina, Viktoria Adkozalova, Bohdan Sokur, Oleksandra Sukhetska, Tania Belashchuk, and others) to a new one (Lidia Matviienko, Dmytro Danylov, Sofii Korotkevych, Anna Bitaieva, Elya Element, Letricija Linardić, and others).

For most of them, forced virtual activity and the transition to digital became exactly what they were looking for in art, and led to the opportunity to visit an art residency, participate in an exhibition and receive a monetary reward. As a logical consequence, creative activity began to be perceived as a full-

time job. Therefore, confirmation of recognition is a key factor that serves as a test, primarily for oneself, that distinguishes a full-time artist from a part-time temporary worker. Therefore, it should not be forgotten that “self-employment and atypical working patterns” are commonplace for artists and professionals in the field of culture and creativity (Panteia, 2020: 18) and include “on-call, short-term or fixed term contracts, project or task- based work, agency work (increasingly through digital platforms), false selfemployment, etc” (Eurofound, 2018).

The periods of elation and depression in the process of changing permanent job to creative work are associated with constant emotional trials, the sources of which lie in the public opinion about the “artist” as a falsely self-employed person. Creative activity is impossible without the factor of “freedom”, but being free in an essentially unfree society is a rare opportunity, and getting closer to it requires a lot of work on oneself.

Time

The time factor is closely related to the desire to work as a full-time artist. Basically, more time for art was available to those who:

- had economic stability due to their main professional activity;
- lost their permanent jobs and devoted all their time to art.

The second option has a significant negative aspect – artists quickly began to feel economic instability, which, in turn, either forced them to give up art and look for work outside the CCIs or prompted them to look for ways to monetize their work.

“Many artists and cultural professionals therefore have a secondary job in either an arts or non-arts related fields, either motivated by (artistic) interest, or by (financial) necessity” (Eurostat, 2023). “One of the biggest challenges for such artists is to ensure that there is enough time to devote to their art or creative endeavours” (Panteia, 2020: 7). The assessment of the “time” factor cannot be complete without taking into account those for whom art has become the main paid activity after the pandemic. That is why the experience of transitioning from a profitable field to unstable creative work deserves additional attention. These are the people who demonstrate how to make a choice between stability and life’s work. These are Elzara Avramenko, who was very successful in the jewellery business, or Irina Vigovskaya, who worked in restoration all her life.

The existence of such a form of employment as “artist” in a society focused on the need for formal employment is assessed as unemployment. Uncertainty is part of the artist’s life choice, and most

young artists under the age of 30 remain unemployed, forcing them to accept “unstable contracts and unpaid salaries” to stay in the labor market (Panteia, 2020: 11–12, 29). The biggest fear when choosing the profession of “artist” is to remain deliberately unemployed, in fear of being condemned by society, deviating from the standards and norms of acceptable behavior. Being an artist in most cases is partially or completely related to the lack of stable financial remuneration. This is its main risk and the main attraction of the profession of “independent artist”, which requires full disclosure of one’s own potential. The contradiction between freedom and society, the need for approval and acceptance, and at the same time the need for free existence, shapes the choice.

Society vs Solitude

“<...> Man dreads loneliness. And of all loneliness, moral loneliness the most feared” (Honoré de Balzac “Lost Illusions”). According to P. Holbach, a person’s dependence on a society dominated by norms, rules, and laws cannot make him or her completely free, although freedom is a primary right. The paradox is that a person can realize his or her freedom only in a society that restricts this freedom. “Man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains” (J.-J. Rousseau, 1968: 49).

The creative process requires solitude, but a work of art requires social engagement. During the pandemic, we have vivid examples of the impact of this factor on the creative process. Just think of Anna Ogulewicz, an artist from Poland living in Portugal, who turned the “loneliness” factor into an advantage by spending four months in isolation at the edge of the forest working on her own art project, documenting the experience. Personal growth is also associated with the process of adapting to new conditions, as a result of which the artist begins to use disadvantages as advantages.

Video documentation has become one of the most important types of artistic practices, which has gained additional popularity during the restrictions on social activity. Joining the team during the second lockdown, Iryna Vorona, Pavlo Baltaziuk and Mattia Bonafini worked on the multilingual video “Virtual Borders of Social Isolation”, a video documentation of virtual experiences and observations in text, audio and video formats. The artists created a powerful voice of collective expression by transferring physical experience into the virtual dimension (Pavlo Baltaziuk, 2021). They observed that communicating with people during the pandemic was similar to physical discomfort and compared this feeling to walking on a sharp stone. This exploration formed the basis of their artistic research and allows us to better understand how self-isolation has affected individual and social relationships during Covid.



Il. 5. “Virtual borders of social isolation” by Iryna Vorona (visual art), Pavlo Baltaziuk (media art), Mattia Bonafini (sound art). Presentation at the international artist residency, initiated by Carbon (Ukraine) and InterAKT Initiative e.V. (Germany)

Freedom is a natural human condition, but absolute freedom is impossible. We find an interesting observation from the philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, who, in the context of the impossibility of absolute freedom, wrote about communication as a resource, an element of necessity for everyone. A resource that underlies the formation of personality, because in communication we receive confirmation or refutation of our thoughts. Constantly appealing to the needs of live communication, society was forced to dive deeper into virtual communication. During the pandemic, gadgets filled the gap of live communication, “<...> and the computer became my new resource”, stated Fu Qian (China). As a tool that opens up opportunities for the development of new skills, the computer is becoming a factor in influencing the boundaries of loneliness and sociality in the context of communication in 2020–2021.

Conclusion. The years 2020–2021, as a period of constant transcendence of the comfort zone, turned out to be a period of unexpected experience that had a positive impact on the creative development of the individual, forming an extensive system of searching for ways of self-realization.

The uniqueness of this phenomenon lies in the fact that, despite the negative context, the pandemic accelerated the transition to online, reducing it to three months instead of five years, according to research conducted by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020). This became a catalyst for positive changes, which, in turn, contributed to the elevation of personal and collective creative development to a qualitatively new level. The creative development of the international art community in this difficult period is stimulated by the emergence of new opportunities for communication and remote collaborations. As Valentino Zvonarek from Croatia notes, “<...> it is all about Art”.

Based on the analysis, it can be argued that in 2020–2021, the nature of the influence of factors

on professional activity was shaped by a common variable – “pandemic restrictions”, regardless of the type of activity and country of residence of the participants, economic, cultural, social and other conditions. Constant and variable factors of influence on the creative professional activity of artists in 2020–2021 help to understand the stages that artists go through on the way to establishing their

professional activity in society, but at a much faster pace. A significant number of project participants noted that it was the pandemic, social isolation, forced productivity, and increased/suppressed freedom that helped them develop professionally. Most of them felt grateful for this period, because it helped everyone find the answer to the question: whether they were a real or fake “artist”.

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