

# Коммуникативный вектор публичного искусства: глобальный масштаб в региональном локусе

## Communication Vector of Public Art. Global Scale in Regional Locus

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### Аннотация

В данной статье рассматривается динамика публичного искусства в России, исследуются специфические особенности этого явления, отличающие его от других новых форм и жанров искусства. В поле внимания авторов исторические и культурные аспекты взаимодействия российских художников с городским пространством, их плодотворные коммуникативные стратегии и успешные проекты сервисной, арт, пиар-коммуникаций, отражающих коммуникативное поведение художника-зрителя-власти в современной информационно насыщенной городской среде России, новые повороты инструментального развития территорий, концептуальные сдвиги публичного искусства, обусловленные в том числе влиянием цифровых трансформаций на культуру города. В работе отражены социально-политические, художественно-эстетические, арт-активизма и другие проблемы, связанные с культурой соучастия, participatory, диалогичности, самоидентификации локации. В общих чертах прослежена эволюция публичного искусства в России и его нынешний масштаб, который был усилен резким увеличением кураторских проектов, связанных с публичным искусством. С одной стороны, спрос на публичное искусство в России, который усугубляется растущим числом кураторских проектов, направленных на работу с пространством и окружающей средой в контексте фестивального, биеннале движений и арт-резиденций, а с другой стороны, возросшим интересом муниципальных и правительственных служб к публичному искусству как движущей силе территориального и городского развития.

Обзор различных зарубежных и отечественных исследований дает ретроспективный взгляд на трактовки публичного искусства как творческий процесс, систему коммуникативного взаимодействия и изменения городского пространства, а, вместе с тем, гармонизации среды и человека, творческого осмысления сопричастности личности к месту своего обитания с его культурными кодами и смыслами. В статье осуществлен сравнительный анализ успешно реализованных проектов в различных регионах России, которые дали новый импульс для развития публичного искусства, приблизив пространство к населению, расширив коммуникативные возможности умного города и его креативного жителя.

**Ключевые слова:** городской арт- и лингвистический ландшафт, креативные индустрии города, коммуникативное взаимодействие в городском пространстве, региональный российский публичный арт.

### Introduction

In terms of its linguistic origin, the Russian term «публичное искусство» derives from the English word “public-art” and a traditional definition would be limited to the basic,

### Abstract

This paper examines the dynamics of public art in Russia, explores specific features of the phenomenon that distinguish it from other new art forms and genres. The authors focus on the historical and cultural aspects of the interaction between Russian artists and urban space, their fruitful communication strategies and successful projects of service, art, PR communications reflecting the communicative behaviour of the artist-viewer-power in the modern information-saturated urban environment of Russia, new turns of instrumental development of territories, conceptual shifts of public art caused by including the impact of digital transformations on the culture of the city.

A review of various foreign and domestic studies provides a retrospective look at the interpretation of public art as a creative process, a system of communicative interaction and changes in urban space, and, at the same time, the harmonization of the environment and the person, creative understanding of the involvement of the individual to his place of residence with its cultural codes and meanings.

This paper will broadly trace the evolution of public art in Russia and its current scope that was enhanced by the sharp increase of the curatorial projects that deal with public art.

On the one hand, the demand for public art in Russia is exacerbated by the growing number of curatorial projects aimed at working with space and environment in the context of the festival and biennial movement and art residencies, and on the other hand, the increased interest of the municipal and government officials in public art as a driving force for territory and urban development.

The article provides a comparative analysis of successfully implemented projects in various regions of Russia, which gave a new impetus to the development of public art, bringing the space closer to the population, expanding the communicative capabilities of a smart city and its creative resident.

**Keywords:** urban art and linguistic landscape, creative industries of the city, communicative interaction in urban space, regional Russian public art.

yet incomplete characteristics most often mentioned in the dictionaries and encyclopaedia. It is defined as art placed in public places, such as streets, city squares, parks or inside public buildings be it hospitals, libraries or else.

The main criteria is physical accessibility of art objects displayed out of the special exhibition venues and open to everyone.

Interdisciplinary approach to the meaning of “public-art” allows to emphasize that this kind of art has left traditional institutions and turned towards the audiences. Concurrently, it becomes part of a “smart city” that engages residents in cultural communications through modern means and interactive technologies. This process changes people and their attitudes to the place where they live. Due to the creative involvement of the city residents, public spaces become socially meaningful, rich and memorable.

The authors who claimed that one of the main advantages of public art is its status as an accessible, «tactile» [14, p. 13] cultural phenomenon, which has the properties of social therapy [1], increasing the cultural need to «expand» the potential of creative space, in fact, sound quite convincing.

It comes as no surprise that the tone of current research on public art is amplified by the urban and social context. It is important to figure out how to deal with this phenomenon: «...What kind of challenge does the modern city pose to art? What does it want to get from art? What opportunities does it offer for contemporary artists? What artistic forms and strategies can social fabric of the modern city generate? Can art find itself in the creation of the public sphere by artistic means reproducing creative and cultural assets? Does the city become a «canvas» for the artist or a narrative space in the context of the development of public art? [20].

Public art today is particularly relevant to territories which possess a rich cultural and creative heritage, but go through some depopulation. They are particularly in need of ‘bringing out of oblivion’ their resources and finding organic interactions between artistic practices and social activity that generate new images of the urban environment. This process not only reinforces the sense of place by creating the image and branding the particular site or location but also, and above all, the idea and the artistic and aesthetic characteristics of Space and Time.

Nowadays, post-industrial areas as well as residential districts, territories of the former industrial enterprises/art-clusters that have emerged on the sites of the “secret” (classified) production facilities are widely used for public art. In terms of its functions, public art is taking on greater roles in public life and becoming one of the main driving forces behind urban recovery, social and cultural transformations in aesthetics of the post-industrial and residential spaces.

The term “public art” originated from the American government programmes aimed at public art development, such as “Art in Public Places” or “Art in Architecture”,

initiated in the 1960s, although there were earlier analogues in the US that can be considered an alternative to the pervasive concept of decorative and monumental art that dominated in the Soviet Union.

In the Soviet times art critics and art historians reflected both on the ideological and creative approach and on the problems of art history and space publishing the results of their studies in the specialized journals, such as “Soviet Monumental Art”, “Art” (Iskusstvo), “Soviet Screen” (Sovetsky Ekran), “Theatre Life” to name a few. These publications provide insight into the historical and cultural preconditions, aesthetic concepts and cultural codes of art in the urban environment of this country.

For a long time, primarily monumental art exemplified “the alliance of art and the city”: they were perceived as “the meeting point of urban space and socially consolidating ideas” [20]. In the USSR mosaics, decorative panels, murals, sgraffito, and other kinds of monumental art were widely used in public space. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the Soviet concept of monumental art gradually lost its popularity and significance. It occurred not only because the fallen political regime forfeited its ideological values but because this time marked the development of the postmodern cultural paradigm. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the long-awaited emergence of artistic movements that had previously been categorized as underground, informal, non-conformist or avant-garde. The openness of artistic quests, the desire to integrate into the global artistic process lead to the emergence of a new generation of contemporary Russian artists working in a postmodernist manner [10].

Postmodern aesthetics includes such important stylistic traits as open-mind concept, randomness, overcoming eliteness and previously closed nature of art practices. However, it is important to emphasize that the ideas to proliferate art into urban space closer to the viewer, to lift the barriers between art and life were inherent for the Russian Avant-garde artists. Thereafter, for Russian culture re-emergence of these trends and experiences is not something borrowed solely from the outside. The pure idealistic modernist space is radically displaced by the physicality of the real and ordinary place of everyday life. Nowadays, we see that urban space is being used by contemporary artists, curators and art institutions in a much broader sense. «A traditional exhibition with its conflicts and enjoyment connected with the placement of art objects gives way to a journey. Just as a map replaces the picture, the city comes to where the museum used to be » [2, p. 289].

The most acute and radical cultural discourse dealing with the ideas of space fuses the latest “on art, architecture and urban design on the one hand with theories of the city and public space on the other» [17, p. 6]. We clearly see that the process of art creation as well as its

perception becomes more and more here and now and with the direct involvement of the viewer. At the forefront of contemporary art practice are experiments in social partisanship, interaction and dialogue between different groups of people.

In the 1990s the visual environment of Russian cities was characterised by a number of destructive tendencies; most of them can be labelled as 'de-culturalization' in public spaces. The cities were filled with faceless residential and office complexes, aggressive outdoor advertising.

Concurrently, the 1990s were marked with the rise of radical actionism, experiments in performance and unsanctioned, often conflicting forms of public interactions. This was largely due to the institutional underdevelopment of the art market, a period of transition in the political and social spheres. At the same time in the 1990s, the so-called 'street wave', a subculture of graffiti and street art, poster communications, emerged, characterised by its spontaneous, illegal and therefore fleeting nature [11; 17].

The economic stability of the 2000s brought the new tendencies: artists saw more and more commissions to erect art objects that were approved by the authorities: parks, streets and even pavements of Russian cities became the field of experiments not only in marginal practices but also as an art space that was sanctioned at different levels — by the authorities, business actors and art institutions. It did not take too long to reveal the contradictions between contemporary art practices and the attempts of various administrative bodies to decorate the urban environment [5; 7; 8; 12].

### **Review of Studies on the History of Public Art in the US**

The history of public art in the USA is long and deeply rooted in the state's commitment to public art. A number of non-profits, associations and funds, such as Americans for the Arts, Chicago Public Art Group among them, provide a multifaceted support for public art development. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) publishes a special newsletter. The history, aims and means of public art in the USA have been researched by authors such as Suzanne Lacy [13], Miwon Kwon [12], Cher Kraus Knight [3], Tom Finkelppearl [5], etc. All of them trace the evolutions of public art from the memorial to American presidents on Mount Rushmore to such projects as "Quilt" initiated by AIDS activist Cleve Jones in 1987. The project is dedicated to people whose lives were lost to AIDS: each piece of the quilt commemorates a person. As of today, the project continues in many countries including Russia.

In Russia, public art, despite its growing scope of recognition by the art community, is still at the stage of justifying the need for a coherent theory of its own, from

a scientific point of view. Nailya Allahverdieva, one of the first practitioners and later researchers of public art in Russia, refers to the phenomenon as an "institutional alternative" [1]. In 2015 V-A-C, established in 2009 by Leonid Mikhelson and Teresa Iarocci Mavica as a non-commercial contemporary art foundation, launched a long-term programme in Moscow aimed at finding the relationship and cross-cutting issues bringing together art and the city. The programme spanning from 2015 to 2016, is published in two volumes [4]. The street art theoreticians suggest that sanctioned public art is the main criteria for marking the border line between public and street art [23]. The article by E. Kartseva and M. Zvyagintseva provides an in-depth view and detailed terminology for criteria applied to public art. In conclusion, the authors write that «the art in public space can take various forms. It's an umbrella term that is much broader and encompasses various strategies» [10, p. 70].

As for other important parameters defining public art, the researchers highlight them as follows: site-specificity, the presence of an unprepared viewer, participatory nature of public art, community involvement/social engagement; processuality; change of a place's initial function [9].

Pavel Shugurov's Ph.D. thesis (he stood for his degree at the Far East Federal University FEFU) explores the developments of public art the Far East, pointing out that even the most seemingly authoritarian examples of art in public space always have room for adaptations and interpretations. He clearly questions the distinction between monumental art, public art and street art [21, p. 24]. The article by Sidelnikova and Beregova on the study of sculpture, contemporary sculpture and art objects in the city of Yekaterinburg is devoted to the modern trends of the Urals public art [19].

Speaking about the Russian cultural landscape, it is crucially important to take into account the local mentality and geographical context of these regions. Two other researchers, Zamyatin D. and Romanova E [6, p. 6–12], point out at the depressiveness of Northern cities as a result of the climate and anthropology of the Cold.

In June 2021 the State Institute for Art Studies, the leading Russian centre of comprehensive research in the field of arts, held the first ever all-Russia federal scientific conference called "Public-Art VS City: Dialogue or Confrontation"<sup>1</sup>.

The speakers included the managers of central and regional cultural institutions, scholars, representatives of adjacent fields of humanitarian knowledge, who discussed the need to form a coherent theory of public art. According to the participants, such a theory should reflect the essence of the phenomenon, its properties, criteria, aspects

<sup>1</sup> Public-Art VS City: Dialogue or Confrontation Announce of State Institute for Art Studies 22.06.-23.06.2021. [http://sias.ru/upload/iblock/e39/ED\\_Public\\_art\\_anons\\_konferentsii\\_2021.pdf](http://sias.ru/upload/iblock/e39/ED_Public_art_anons_konferentsii_2021.pdf) [data of the application: 1.07.2021].

of ethical, political legitimisation of public art, copyright of public art artists, preservation and restoration of public art objects.

### Public Art in Russian Capital

Moscow's contemporary visual environment can even seem over-saturated, filled with legitimised decorative and lighting solutions, sculptures, graffiti funded from the city budget. Municipal officials appropriate graffiti and other art objects imitating «street art» and «public art» as a form of trendy urban development. In 2018, shortly before FIFA World Cup, Moscow's experience was expanded to the Russian regions as part of a programme to improve public spaces in 40 Russian cities with 42 billion roubles allocated from the federal budget [18].

In the struggle for urban space between residents, utility companies and the art community the issues of public art legality are key: sanctioned objects stay on, yet they are often criticized, and unsanctioned ones are demolished. However, it is almost impossible for public art to avoid not always evident but always necessary approvals of the city officials, private clients and institutions.

Nowadays, most commonly the public art projects in Russia can be carried out under certain conditions or by interaction with various key players:

- in agreement with the building owner;
- as part of gentrification of factories, operating or abandoned;
- during the biennale of contemporary art, as a means of exploring the territory;
- within the framework of festivals;
- as a resource for the development of the territory, initiated by city officials.

In Moscow, public art projects are often commissioned by parks under the jurisdiction of the local district administrations. Street installations and art objects can be seen in the central parks such as the Gorky Park (Central Park of Culture and Leisure), Zaryadye, Aptekarsky Ogorod, and in the parks of the residential areas (the so-called sleeping districts) such as Kuzminki, Otradnoye, Tsaritsyno. The mechanisms for promoting contemporary art into the public environment are being developed by art clusters. Residential complexes, shopping centers, office buildings also demonstrate a growing interest in public art. Skolkovo innovation center implements its own public art program. Some of the museums, such as the State Tretyakov Gallery, the Museum of Moscow and the Garage Museum follow the concept of an «open museum»: they use their facades and courtyards to install outdoor exhibitions and objects. The growing popularity of public art in modern Russia is clearly demonstrated by the exhibition of public art on Red Square in the summer of 2021, as part of the Gum Red-Line festival.

It is hard to underestimate the role of professional associations such as “Artmosphere”, founded by Sabina Chagina and Yulia Vasilenko, in the establishment of public art in Moscow and Russia. One of the association's first public art programs in 2015 was held in cooperation with VDNKh (Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy). A temporary exhibition showcasing installations, sculptures, wall paintings and works on the asphalt by Russian and foreign artists appeared in the park. Later on, “Artmosfera” supervised the public art projects in Samara, Tula, Vyksa, Murmansk region, and Yakutsk.

Meanwhile, the projects of some public artists may also have non-institutional motivation. In these cases, the artists independently initiate and go through a series of complex agreements. Marina Zvyagintseva is considered one of the pioneers of Moscow public art. Since 2007, she has been the ideologist and curator of the Moscow public art program «Spal'nyy rayon» (Sleeping District), which aims to bring cultural events to districts far from the center, fill them with cultural meanings, and make them a center of attraction for ultra-local tourism. Her large-scale site-specific installations were also installed in Zaryadye Park, Tsaritsyno, the courtyards of the Higher School of Economics, the center of creative industries “Fabrika”, the Morozov Children's Hospital, the Polytechnic Museum, the ARTPLAY Design Center, and the Skolkovo IC. For some of the abovementioned projects, she became a nominee for the VII All-Russian competition in the field of contemporary visual art «INNOVATION» (2012), the «ARCHIWOOD» Prize (2012), the Kandinsky Prize (2008 and 2009) and the Kuryokhin Prize (2011 and 2018).

Nikolai Polissky, another prominent figure of Russian public art, launched a community land-art project in the village of Nikolo-Lenivets in the Kaluga Region in the early 2000s. It later evolved into a major festival, the “Archstoyanie”, one of the most remarkable events in Russia and important institution in the field of Russian public art.

In St. Petersburg situation with street art is aggravated by the highly protected status of the city center. Despite the “Honest Graffiti” competition, the winners of which compete for the title “Whose nine-story building is brighter” or the “100 addresses” program with the “Wall of Free Creativity” project established by the authorities, St. Petersburg's street artists are in constant conflict with the authorities. Nevertheless, legal works of public art are located on the territory of public spaces such as «Little Holland», «SevkabelPort» or the Street Art Museum located at the territory of the existing Laminated Plastics Plant. The city also hosts “Art-Prospect” public art festival, in which more than 250 artists from 20 countries have taken part since 2012. The festival was held in the Central, Petrogradsky, Vyborgsky, Admiralteisky and

Kirovsky districts of St. Petersburg. In 2013, the Pulkovo airport in St. Petersburg launched a program to attract contemporary art objects to the airport — the sculptures and paintings by contemporaries, moreover, most of them were created by the city dwellers.

### Regional Public Art

The map of Russian public art is perplexed by the fact that in each of the regions the situation with public art is individual, largely depending on the city or region with its cultural, historical, and even climatic prerequisites. In some regions, public art is the only opportunity for contemporary art to be present. Others were pioneers of public art, whose experience was later adopted by conventional «centres». The intensity and variety of public art in Russian regions is also confirmed by the active spread of biennial movement, where preference is given to large-scale installations, including those scattered around the city in the most unexpected places [9].

The cultural experiment in Perm appeared to become one of the first and most ambitious examples of cooperation between urban managers and contemporary art. The project was initiated by the political strategist and gallery owner from Moscow Marat Gelman under the patronage of the Governor of the Perm Territory Oleg Chirkunov in the second half of the 2000s. Subsequently, the head of the Moscow Department of Culture, director of Gorky Park Sergei Kapkov transferred the experience of Perm to Moscow.

The program for introducing Perm to contemporary art included not only the opening of a museum, restoration of the theatre, but also an extensive public art program that significantly changed the cultural landscape of the city. The main goal of the experiment was to rebrand the city as the «cultural capital of Europe», reduce the outflow of residents from the region and attract tourists. Famous artists were involved in the creation of public art projects, including Nikolai Polissky and Andrei Lyublinsky. Lyublinsky's «Red Men» have become the subject of numerous public discussions. The only object that the inhabitants of Perm really fell in love with was the work of Boris Matrosov «Schast'ye ne za gorami» («Happiness is not far off»), installed on the Kama river embankment. The example of Perm clearly demonstrated that public art should not only invade the territory of city residents, but fill the urban vacuum where society needs it the most. Public art is not just a kind of cultural policy, but also constant work with the social body.

The experience of Nizhny Novgorod became exemplary in this regard, where grass-roots initiatives of local artists were able to draw the attention of officials to the potential of public art in solving social problems. The urban situation associated with the abundance of dilapidated wooden architecture and the historical heritage of

Nizhny Novgorod, as one of the centres of arts and crafts, determined its unique «Nizhny Novgorod style». Since public art, as a practice of contemporary art, is very dependent on the environment that inspires it, the local street art communities have applied advanced art practices to working with traditional materials such as painting, carving, lighting wood. Unlike Perm, the residents of Nizhny Novgorod, for the most part, were very loyal to contemporary art. The artists not only received permission for their graffiti from the residents of the houses, but also sought to draw the attention of the city administration to the need for their restoration. The indigenous inhabitants of the centre, who live in wooden houses, are interested in preserving their city and believe that the art on the walls of their houses will help preserve their houses. Houses often reach such a state that they are resettled and burned to be demolished later, although people could still live there. Artists, for example, the «Toy» team, depict on the walls of houses their inhabitants and the professions they are engaged in. The example of Nizhny Novgorod states that successful public art is about building horizontal ties, and initiatives coming from the society itself, rather than authoritarian decisions of city managers. Now, in order to rethink the urban environment the Street Art Festival «Mesto» («Place») is being held.

In Yekaterinburg public art is a major factor that drives the transformation of the industrial landscape and reboots its alienation from a man. The artists Tatyana Badanina and Vladimir Nasedkin have implemented this idea into a site-specific object «Red Line», recreating the history of the Ural metallurgy by means of the video-art installations in the interior of an abandoned factory. In 2001, within the framework of the Symposium «Ecology of Art in the Post-Industrial Landscape», the artist Sergei Bryukhanov held an action «Teaching the Ural Love» on the streets in Nizhny Tagil, which later on was documented in an analytical television film about social disunity. In 2020, a local development company «Atomstroykomleks» launched a large festival project «CHO» dedicated to urban sculpture. Access to the urban space is also realized within the framework of the Ural Industrial Biennale of Contemporary Art, for example, the installation by Timofey Radya «Who are we, where are we from, where are we going?» installed on the building of the instrument-making plant in 2017, as a special project of the 5th Biennale.

In the north of the country, the demand for public art is dictated by the harsh climatic conditions, where public art acquires particular importance during the winter season. A number of initiatives have been implemented in Norilsk and Yakutsk in recent years [6].

Marina Zvyagintseva's project with the symbolic name «Eternal Warmth» in 2016 in Norilsk placed the heating systems on the facade of the city library, only instead of

batteries there are bookshelves connected to «pipes» where «flows» lines by Famous Russian poets.

In the regions it is especially important to take into account the ethnocultural characteristics of public art. For example, at the Yakutsk Biennale of Contemporary Art 2018 artists Sardaana Ivanova, Nikolai Chochasov and Danil Chuchaytsev, with the participation of a team of students from the Arctic State Institute of Culture and Arts, created a public art object in the form of snow goggles «The Arctic Cosmogony». Referring to the traditions and customs of the peoples of the North, the project touched on the central idea of the northern peoples — the mythical and poetic vision of the world. In his land-art installation “The Sacred Herd of Mythical Horses”, Nikolay Polissky also addresses the world of images and ideas close to the culture and traditions of the local population. The artist identifies the herd of horses with a mythical beginning, his «horses» have two heads: one feeds on grass, absorbing earthly forces, the other looks at the sacred sky, passing the energy of the Sun through itself. Meanwhile, the art object “Primeval Mirage” by the Spanish artist Okuda, although inspired by Yakut mythology, was accused of colonizing the local cultural context and dismantled after complaints received by the city administration. The experience of the Yakutsk Biennale speaks of the importance of including local cultural codes in producing public art.

Since the 2010s, the number of regional festivals involving public art has been steadily increasing, which is explained by the interest in urban landscaping and the development of a territory brand on the part of city managers. Thus, since 2010, the small town of Vyksa is hosting the Art-Ovrag street culture festival on the initiative of the city-forming enterprise United Metallurgical Company. An interesting solution to involve an unprepared viewer was the raft competition, in which ordinary townspeople took part along with the artists. After the festival, the winners’ rafts «Luna» (The Moon) by the famous Moscow artist Leonid Tishkov and the raft «Prishshepka» (The Clothespin) by local resident Ekaterina Kuleva were leased to small businesses, creating new opportunities for communications.

Since 2016, in Samara, with the support of the regional government, the Interregional Festival of VolgaFest embankments has been held. Its goal is the re-interpretation of the Volga River, making it a centre of social and creative interaction. The winning projects are installed on the city embankment. In 2021 the festival went far beyond Samara, to Tolyatti, Syzran, Oktyabrsk, Volga region, Zhigulevsk. Other large cities on the Volga were also invited to participate: Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, Ulyanovsk, Saratov.

In 2018, at the initiative of Krasnodar’s Mayor Evgeny Pervyshov, it was decided to turn the city streets into an

open-air contemporary art exhibition. The Krasnodar Center for Contemporary Art «Typography» was invited to curate an open contest for the city improvement. The construction «Pillars» by local artist Viktor Linsky won the competition: it consisted of 21 metal pillars about 4 meters high, stylized as birch trees with images of balalaikas, nesting dolls, bottles, rockets and airplanes.

Public art project by the Krasnodar-based Recycle art group was installed in the Galitsky Park. «Geolocation» is an art-object from stainless steel, 5 meters high, 4 meters wide; «Artificial Environment» is a multi-figured bas-relief made of plastic mesh appeared in the park while it was closed for quarantine due to the pandemic. Recycle Group, whose central theme is exploration of the digital culture and Virtual Reality were chosen to represent Russia at the Venice Biennale in 2017. Currently, they are at the height of their prolific art career and popularity implementing projects and art collaborations across the globe.

Nevertheless, art objects located in public spaces regularly become the subject of hot dispute and discussion. Thus, the sculptures of Valery Kazas from the Papier-mâché series installed on the Kuban embankment didn’t gain understanding from the locals and were removed.

The popularity of public art projects is also being actualized by the restrictions caused by the covid-19 pandemic. Unlike digital projects that the viewer watches from device screens, works in an urban environment are not devoid of an aura and retain the ability to humanize the communication environment, relieve inner tension, and improve individual and collective well-being. Public art has turned out to be an important compensatory tool for human communication. At the same time, new media, possessing the qualities of interactivity, a special interface, organization of databases, spatial navigation, as well as new paradigms of their creation, introduce colour, composition, rhythm and other components into the logic of public art. The implementation of the Smart City concept in the regions gives examples of how public art can be developed taking into account the light, sound, and colour palette of an art object, reaching the “ideal of visual semiotics” [15].

Digital culture is guiding curators and artists on the path to reimagining traditional public art as a purely offline model. From July 2 to August 1, 2021, with the support of Rosbank, a digital public art festival «Future of Cities» (ROSBANK Future Cities) was held. Several major public art regions — Yekaterinburg, Krasnodar, Krasnoyarsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Moscow and St. Petersburg — took part in the Festival, that was aimed at studying the digital infrastructure of modern Russian megalopolises. Citizens were invited to take a fresh look at the familiar urban spaces through VR, as one of the layers in a multi-level system of input and output, control and dissemination of data in the cityscape at different scales. According to the Russian scientists, the further develop-

ment of electronic culture will make it possible to realize the idea of preserving socio-cultural experience in electronic form [8; 16; 22].

### Conclusions

Public art in Russia is dynamic and ever-shifting. It is expanding, conquering new territories, penetrating the urban environment, migrating from the central areas to residential districts, from reality to virtual dimensions. Russian public art also evolves as a space of intercultural dialogue between different social groups. Through festivals and competitions public art engages the creative potential of city dwellers, inviting them to cooperate or even co-produce when not only the author's ideas are taken into account, but also the opinion of local residents, as customers or even co-creators of the artwork. the art objects.

The projects are curated by institutions respected in the expert community, such as *Typographia* or *Atmosphere*. The dialogue between the authorities, the art community and the artists becomes more productive.

However, according to Susan Lacy's terminology, most often these practices still refer to a paternalistic format of communication rather than a «new genre» of public art, which could include happenings and collective art actions. Theatrical marches mocking at the traditional May Day demonstration (annually held in Russia on May, 1) became the most appealing art practice. The action called "Stebius Loop" was held in Novosibirsk on 20 November, 1995. Novosibirsk art activists marched along the streets of the Siberian capital holding the absurdist banners. On 1 April 1997, Barnaul hosted the April Fool's Day demonstration, organised by students from the Sociology Department of the Altai State University. On 1 May 2000, the Creative Association «Svoi2000» held its own theatrical procession in Moscow.

The abovementioned projects inspired the artist Artyom Loskutov and other young Novosibirsk activists and artists to organize 'Monstration' rally in 2004. The first performance march gathered only 80 participants, but later on the project gained such popularity that it expanded across Russia and near abroad. In some years the number of «monstrators» joining the rally with conceptual and absurdist slogans and banners amounted to 5,000 people.

In 2010, the Novosibirsk-born performance artist won an «Innovation» state award for contemporary art. According to Sergei Samoilenko, a coordinator of the Siberian Center for Contemporary art, 'Monstration' as a form of public art is somewhere in between art practice, social activism and political gesture. By questioning and mocking at serious' political demonstrations, 'Monstration' clearly protests against the absence of public politics in the country. It does not simply mark the borders of civil rights, but pushes them far beyond the limits, becoming a school of solidarity, creative activity and civil freedom.

In 2019 the Young Guard of Russia, one of the pro-Kremlin youth movements, organized rallies that imitated 'Monstration'. In his interview for Novaya Gazeta, Artyom Loskutov explained the difference between the original and mocked 'monstration': "People come to a real 'monstration' with their own gibberish slogans on placards. At a faked rally they give them banners. A real «monstration» does not require participants to agree on attendance and the content of the slogans. A real one is not in support of the authorities. There is no advertising during a real «monstration» rally. The real one takes place on 1 May".

The review of Russian public art clearly shows that the current scope and functions of public art are expanding. There is an interest in it from the authorities: public art, as a genre of contemporary art, is proving to be a more effective technology for building a territorial brand than traditional sculptures. In addition, the materials used for public art objects are often cheaper than traditional bronze or mosaic. It is also an opportunity for artists to implement large-scale projects in the urban environment and gain wider recognition going beyond a narrow community. However, the number of artists who are able to implement public art project is still quite limited: Dmitry Aske, Andrei Lublinsky, Marina Zvyagintseva, Nickolay Polissky, Andrey Bartenyev, Sasha Frolova, Leonid Tishkov, Recycle Art Group, MishMash art duo, Sergei Katran and Dmitry Kawarga among them. Public art activity demands the number of specific crafts and competences which fine artists do not get or train during the formal art education in Russia.

First of all, public artists most often deal with the open space, taking art out to the streets. Secondly, the individual style which is easy to recognize is crucially important. It also becomes more important to operate with ultramodern innovative materials such as plastic, latex, 3-D printer or else. No less vital are well-trained or innate communication skills such as the ability to coordinate the process with the local people, long commission process and /or coordination with the authorities. Nevertheless, the spectrum of public art forms, methods and agendas has proliferated immensely in recent decades and the number of artists involved will continue to increase.

The change of space both for art and the artist in the process of public art creation is key to bringing in nuances and new cultural and historical contexts.

Public art is always 'site-specific', made in conjunction with the social context: in a certain way it argues, inter-acts, has a dialogue with the place. It also inevitably begins to question the existence of art and the audience that encounters it, provoking social communication that reflects the needs of the times.

It is evident that in the near future contemporary art will continue its trajectory towards flourishing of the socially engaged art practices. As of today, such themes

as inclusion, social and political issues, post-colonial discourse are in the focus of attention of the art community. Art as the form of collective expression and the product of collective activity can respond to and incorporate the environment. It replaces the individual logics making more appearances in people's daily lives and taking on greater roles.

This type of cultural paradigm changes both the production and perception of art alike, with the possibility of artist and viewer interchanging their roles. In public art of the future an artist will take on the function of a cultural worker whose function is not just decoration and recreation, but a kind of immersive practice that involves residents and passers-by into the act of creation as such. Social transformations launched in such a way can bring a greater impact.

Studying public art through local cultural codes and practices seem to become one of the perspective trends. As it turns out, "live culture"/intangible heritage that is

traditionally associated with the local dwellers is often under a threat to be lost. Collaboration with artists can launch a mechanism for identifying, positioning and promoting the unique cultural features of Russian cities, towns and villages, shaping the identity of the territory through practices of not only material but also intangible culture.

Folk art as the collective anonymous production of cultural values is a puzzling category that is of scholarly interest for researchers. In this sense, if we define public art as art produced by community, we can talk about the emergence of a kind of social mechanism and aesthetics of its relationships, through visual art, dance, poetry, music, and the circulation of creative and innovative ideas.

Public art has the potential to demonstrate the aesthetics of relationships in the city or in the urban neighbourhood, to manifest its creative and civil freedom, to provide a valuable insight into its innovative ideas and social connections.

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