

Women in Arts

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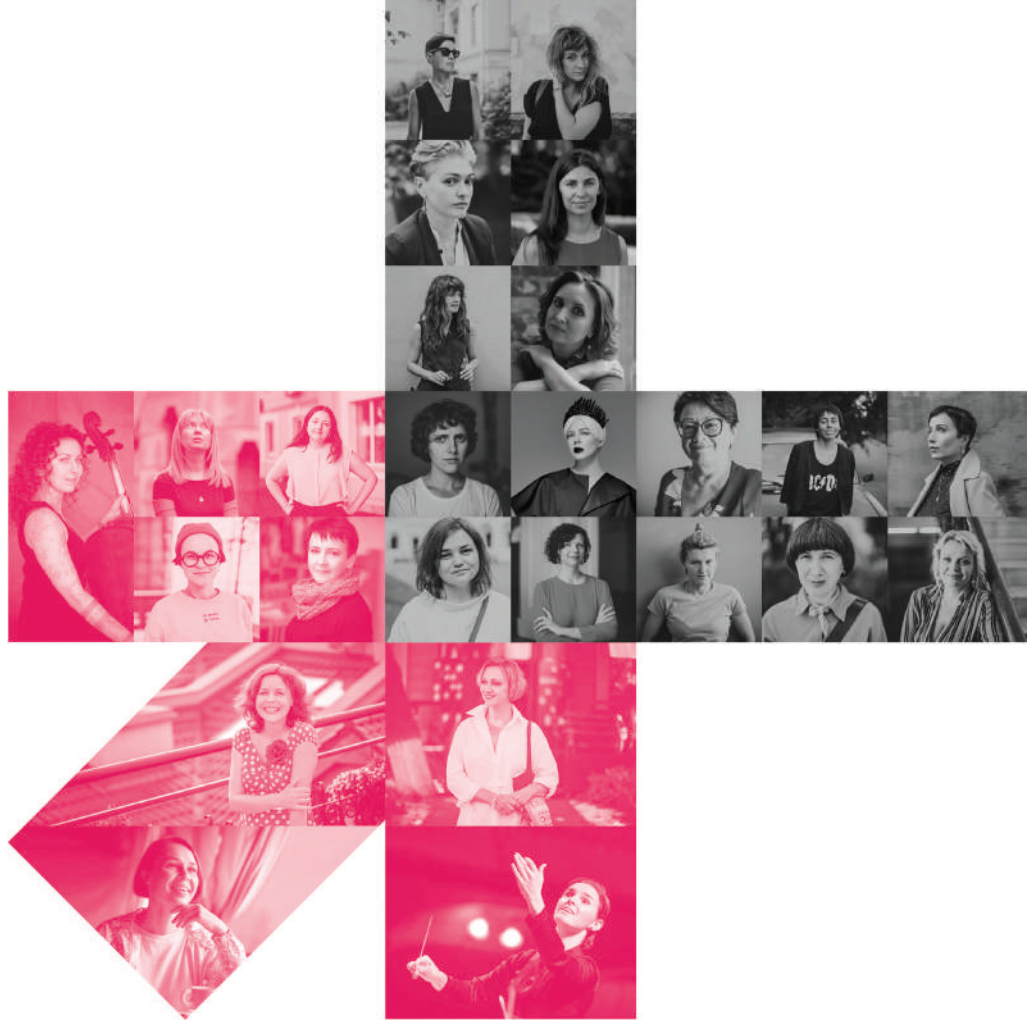
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The movement for equal rights of women and men has become a worldwide trend. The events of the recent years have proven that solidarity and equal rights are not an issue of a narrow circle of women, but a force that drives entire societies forward from the social and economic points of view. Today, the issue of non-discrimination has become urgent for business, politics, science and media. And culture is not an exception.

HeForShe, a solidarity movement for gender equality, promotes full realization of the potential of both men and women, girls and boys.

Women in Arts is an independent award established by UN Women in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Institute as part of the HeForShe Arts Week 2019. The goal of this award is to draw attention to the achievement of women who work in arts and to publicly thank them for their contribution to this industry.

In 2019, Women in Arts award was given in five nomination categories: Women in visual art, Women in music, Women in theater and film, Women in literature, Women in cultural management.

Independent experts identified 25 nominees in the areas corresponding to each of the categories and later determined the 5 award winners.

The Women in Arts 2019 statuette was created by the contemporary Ukrainian sculptor Maria Kulikovska in a form of interlaced women's hands. In the words of the artist, they symbolize support and protection, as well as women's work.

Together with the media resource "Povaha", 25 interviews and biographies of the nominees of the Women in Arts 2019 Award were produced as a publication. Among them are outstanding painters, sculptors, composers, performers, film directors, actresses, screenwriters, writers, poets, curators of cultural projects, and art managers.



Alevtina Kakhidze



Alevtina Kakhidze – artist, curator, performer, gardener, and teacher. Graduated from the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture and Jan van Eyck Academie majoring in Visual Arts. Winner of Malevich award for Ukrainian artists in 2008. Co-founder of a private residence for foreign artists in Muzychi village and an online resource on art, kram.in.ua.

In her work, she uses the combination of different types of art, video works and installations. Among her recent art projects is the book titled *Zhdanovka* that is a collection of personal memories, dialogues, newspaper articles, and texts from the Internet about her native town, Zhdanivka (currently in the non-government-controlled part of Donetsk oblast). Between 2014 and 2019, she was working on a project titled *Klubnika Andriyivna* that told the story of her mother's life in the non-government-controlled part of Donetsk oblast through texts and images. Our conversation with Alevtina Kakhidze is about tolerance and reproductive violence.

Ana More: Do you feel that the perception of sensitive issues is currently changing in a rather dynamic way here in Ukraine? That they did really start working on them more?

Alevtina Kakhidze: To answer this question, I would have to travel around all the towns and villages. In my environment, yes, I do feel there are changes. However, I can't speak about the broader scale, unfortunately.

A.M.: So, you are in the environment of artists. Does a woman artist have any limitations in today's Ukraine that a male artist doesn't? Or have these boundaries started to blur?

A.K.: They start to blur. But it was horrible for the previous generation. Fantastic female artists whom we know now were barely known then, and when they were, it was only alongside male artists. Female art theorists who are younger than me have now started to discover all that.

A.M.: What was it like with respect and tolerance at the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture when you studied there? Even now, it is hard to call it a place without stereotypes. At the time, did you feel that female artists were treated differently than male artists?

A.K.: Of course. Women don't always feel that something is wrong. Sometimes, this realization comes years later. I remember that everything at the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture 'felt wrong'. And only later I understood exactly what was wrong. For instance, all models in the Academy were positioned the way men would want to see them. And what's interesting, our teacher did this only to female models, and the way he positioned men was entirely different. It didn't occur to him at all that there may be different ways to see female models, this was the extent to which his own perception was dominating. I realized only after some time that all the drawings I had made looked as if they were made by a man, not a woman. I literally saw it, with time.

There was one episode that I remembered the most. At the time, there were talks that we would study for five and a half years, not six. I had already applied for a post-graduate program and I was waiting for my interview, and then our teacher came in and said: "No, it won't be five and a half, it will be six years." And most likely I had

a very surprised expression, maybe concerned even. And I remember it vividly how he asked me: "Are you pregnant or something?" So, in his opinion, I couldn't have had anything important except pregnancy going on. And of course, I didn't say anything then. I was an entirely different person back then. It was 2003.

A.M.: You did eventually go to the Netherlands to do your post-graduate studies. Then, in 2003, did you feel that you were treated differently there?

A.K.: Undoubtedly. Already then we studied such subjects as Gender Studies or Theory of Feminist Art. The interesting thing was that a lot of my work had already been intuitively made as if by a person who had already known about these things. I believe that internally we can feel violence, be sensitive to violence, feel when something is wrong. And it's okay if you can't describe it. Not everyone can describe it. And I think it is also important to understand that you are allowed to say that something is wrong, although you don't know exactly what it is. You can just describe your feelings.

A.M.: Speaking about the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture, you mentioned the "are you pregnant?" question. And one of your latest performances at the "A Space of One's Own" exhibition in Pinchuk Art Centre was about reproductive violence. In a six-minute video, you answer the question "do you have any children?" 44 times. This is the question that almost every woman has heard since she was 18. Why did you decide to take on the topic of motherhood and social pressure?

A.K.: Both female and male artists work with their own discomforts, their own issues. Sometimes, they themselves don't know what they eventually will come to. This work had fantastic feedback. Many people wrote me on all possible messengers. A shop assistant in Vsi Svoi shop recognized me. She told me that she even advised her parents to go and see the exhibition. At that moment, I felt that for many women this was a kind of support, as if I helped them feel what they had been feeling together with me. This support was also important for me. Because I felt rather confident and emancipated about the fact that I didn't choose the shots from the video where I was more beautiful when editing for the final version.

Anna Zvyagintseva

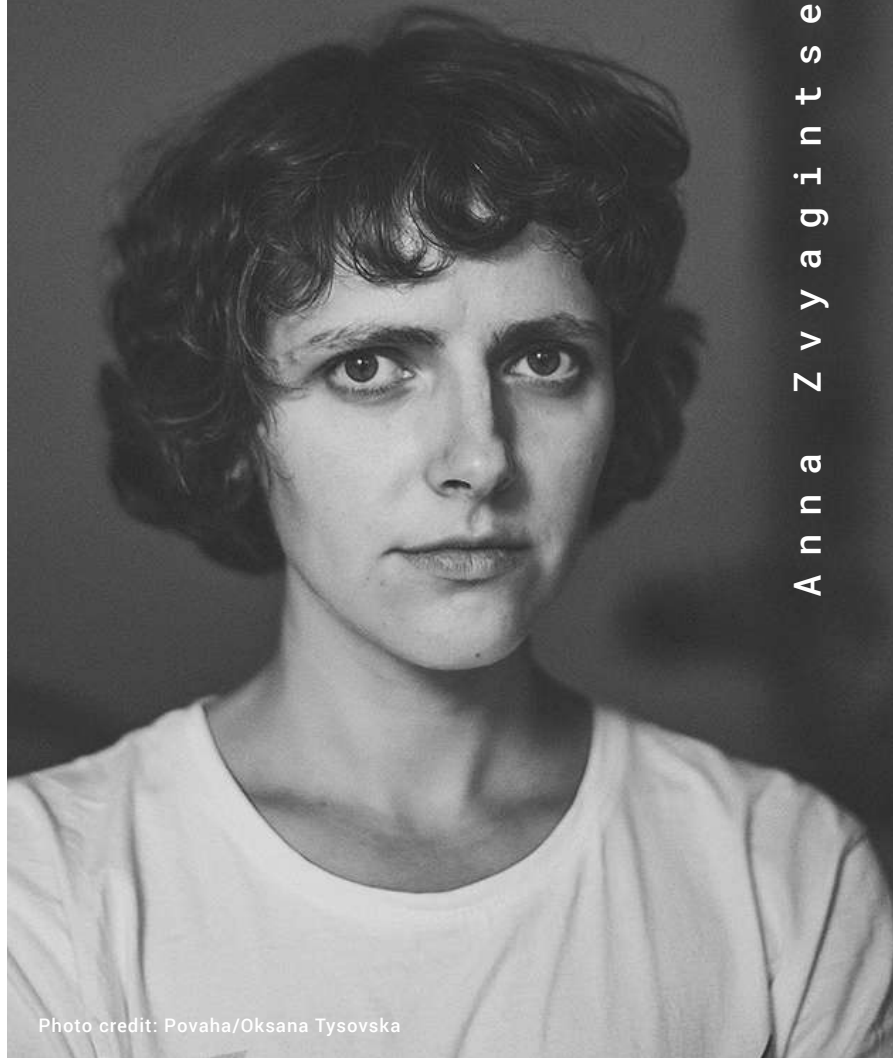


Photo credit: Povaha/Oksana Tysovska

A n n a Z v y a g i n t s e v a

Anna Zvyagintseva was born in 1986 in Dnipro, she lives and works in Kyiv. She studied at the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture. Has been the member of Khudrada ('Art Council') curator group since 2013. Finalist of Pinchuk Art Prize 2013, and the winner of the main prize five years later. Her work deals with life of a woman, the invisible labour, discrimination and other topics.

Anastasiya Horpynchenko: Tell us how did you come into art and how you realized that it was something that you will continue doing?

Anna Zvyagintseva: I have many artists in my family: my grandpa, my aunt, and my parents. Ever since I was a child, I was living inside art context, but I was

never particularly encouraged to do it professionally. I did have other career examples, as the other half of my family are doctors. In general, I have observed various experiences in my environment.

It was rather late that I decided to become an artist, maybe two or three years prior to entering the art

academy. I just felt that I was interested in it, because the world of art is about freedom. In addition, you don't have to go to the office, which at the time I associated with something constraining. I have a different opinion now, as no profession should limit a person in anything.

A.H.: Which art forms do you feel most connection with – installation, painting, or performance? Why?

A.Z.: Within one exhibition, my ideas may be represented in different form – starting from drawing and ending with a video installation. I am interested in practicing various forms in my work.

A.H.: Some people in art say something like “I am apolitical” or “art should remain art.” What are your thoughts on this? What topics do you choose to work on?

A.Z.: My art is political, because I bring to the public eye the things that I personally care about. I believe that these are the things that my viewer may also be interested in. I don't suggest that people just observe, I am trying to involve the viewer. It is the process of analysis, interpretations, critical thinking that is political for me, because something that is not permanent, that is not declarative can change the existing order of things.

A.H.: Have you felt any stereotypical attitude towards you while studying at the Academy because you were a woman?

A.Z.: Unfortunately, at the Academy it was at every step. For instance, when we were praised, the words they used emphasized that I was a girl. Most often, what all the girls heard was this: “Well, of course, you are a good student, it's all well, but you will graduate from the Academy, get married, and leave art. What's the point of teaching you here? No more than one or two of you will become artists anyway.”

Despite that, our teachers always cited Tetiana Yablonska as an example for us. She was and remains a remarkable figure in Soviet art. She was married several times and had children. However, despite all the changes in her personal life, she always kept working. Our teachers wanted to suggest that it was possible to become an artist, but only if you work extremely hard, and women need to work even harder than men.

A.H.: Is there any difference if we compare Ukrainian and foreign cultural space in this regard?

A.Z.: For instance, at the previous Venice Biennale curator chose to exhibit 50% of works by men and 50% of works by women. In the group exhibitions that I am a part of, men and women are also represented equally. Nowadays, everybody is trying to maintain the balance. The most important thing is to show the good work done by female artists, not to merely have the right statistics and show how feminist everybody here is.

A.H.: You were nominated for Women in Arts award. What is your attitude to such awards for women?

A.Z.: It is definitely positive, because this way female artists become better known to the general public. Women in Arts award is an opportunity to raise awareness and communicate.

However, it would have been good if there were also institutions that would give more opportunities to create and analyze work. We keep having more and more new contests – and it's fine, I've got nothing against it. However, at the same time, it would be good to have some more sustainable support. There are many artists, and that's why it would be nice to have more opportunities for everybody.

A.H.: Do you consider yourself a feminist? Can you pinpoint a moment when you realized that you are aligned with these values?

A.Z.: I have, of course, always called myself a feminist, because, like, how could I not have been one, as I support everything good and am against everything bad. However, I started actively practicing feminism in my everyday life when my daughter was born.

I stopped letting people treat me the way I don't like to be treated. I felt that I want to have the same opportunities to work as men do – both in terms of time and space. I know that there is inequality, but I behave as if I have all the equal rights. I stopped thinking as a victim, this freed me of guilt for I don't know what toward I don't know whom. This gave me strength to act.

Irma Vitovska



Photo credit: Povaha/Oksana Tysovska

Irma Vitovska is an actress, producer, and community activist. She has worked in the Molodyi theatre since 1998. Producer and lead actress in the charity project Oscar and the Pink Lady. Received a number of awards for appearing as Baba Prisyia in Stas Zhyrkov's play, Stalkers, and Volodymyr Tykhyi's film, The Gateway ('Brama').

With Irma Vitovska, we discuss the participation of women in politics, the importance of creating multimedia centers in small towns, domestic violence stemming from cultural crisis, and also why Netflix-grade series are not filmed in Ukraine yet.

Liza Kuzmenko: One of your latest Facebook posts received many likes. In it, you asked the readers whether you should become a politician, in particular, run in these parliamentary elections. Are you really going into politics?

Irma Vitovska: I can't say that it's a 'no' forever, but I can explain why I'm not going to do it now. I am sure I can work in cultural politics outside the Parliament, too – developing proposals and lobbying them together with the public.

Besides, currently I don't believe that any parliamentarian can be independent, because there is a corporate element in the parties. This is hard for me, because I have a very large amount of trust from the citizens, that's why for now I feel certain doubts [about starting a political career]. I need to get better prepared. There is

a need to fight for Ukrainian culture, but I am sure that this may be done also outside the Parliament.

For instance, I toured small towns with 'Brama' movie, and I saw that people were ready to watch such movies. They ask why movies like that don't get screened more often. It's like they say, do you think that we are stupid and won't understand them? The industry has gotten comfortable creating 'John Loves Mary' kind of product and distributing these simplistic messages across Ukraine. This makes our tastes, our humor more primitive. And humor is a sign of intellect. If you don't read anything, you degrade and become easily manipulated. And you start believing that some kind of a magician will come and change your life. We are ready to make Netflix-grade movies, but we continue to be trapped in the realm of poverty of taste and intellect.

L.K.: However, nowadays we feel the increase in, namely, the political participation of women, more and more political parties include women into their lists, for instance. Have you thought about that?

I.V.: I see myself more as a community activist, who can exert pressure on those in the Parliament. I have my own ideas, but I don't have ambitions. It is not important for me if certain ideas are labeled as namely my ideas, it would be much better if the politicians just did what the country needs instead.

For instance, I wish that there were platforms in Ukraine, let's call them multimedia centers, in small towns with a population of 20-30 thousand people that don't have anything like that now. In order to have that, the first thing that needs to be done is the audit of available space. Also, decentralization and transferring budget to local authorities is important. Local authorities should use this budget to renew these spaces, give them a different meaning. What's also important here is that these platforms should be comprehensive: there should be a stage, a movie theater, a library, and they need to be interactive. Currently, libraries are doing this, but they don't have a stage or a hall. We also don't have enough movie screenings, so I would also want us to have a state distribution network.

We need to be honest with the society. If the society wants a different Parliament, we need to create new rules of the game for it. If you put new faces in old conditions, they will discredit themselves or leave just the same.

L.K.: Do you feel that there is female solidarity in culture, in cinema? Do you notice it?

I.V.: Yes, I see it in the things that motivate and unite. Nowadays female artists are self-centered and ambitious. And it should be like this, we can't do without it. If you don't believe in yourself, you won't achieve much.

We have very few contemporary cultural managers. They should not be artists themselves, although, of course, artists can be great managers, too, but... An artist is an emotional and ambitious person, they may also be tempted to use the resource only for their own projects. An artist should play by the rules, and these rules need to be created.

Art shouldn't be subsidized, the state should do everything so that art can become self-sufficient. Art is a kind of entertainment, and our entertainment industry is at a very low level. If you travel around the struggling regions of Ukraine, you'll see that there is no content there at all, there is a huge cultural crisis there.

And because of this cultural crisis there is domestic violence, violence against women, violence against children. I am very grateful that I was invited to ride along with Polina police teams that are a part of the domestic violence response program. I was shocked at the amount of different forms of violence – not only physical, but also psychological – that women in Ukraine face.

Media also play a great role in this – TV channels did wrong by their audiences when they removed quality intellectual programs which developed tastes. Those were replaced with 'chewing gum' made of violence and crime stories.

L.K.: Media often describes you as this 'domestic goddess' kind of woman. What's your attitude to such an outdated stereotype?

I.V.: Those must be some conservative media. I generally don't get worked up much about that – even if they wrote that I was a 'vamp'. As long as they don't imply anything about my morals and didn't give me any names accordingly.

L.K.: Can you call yourself a feminist?

I.V.: In a way, yes. I generally have liberal thinking. I don't like it when a woman is judged by her gender when she produces some constructive ideas.

I also had something similar happen, a long time ago, before the Revolution of Dignity. I was lobbying a law on cinema, and someone told me then: "You are such a beautiful woman, we could maybe go out for some coffee, you would tell us about your roles."

And also when I was on "Lesya+Roma" series, men reacted very strongly to this Lesya character. I still get confessions that many were in love with her. So yes, at the time I got many night calls to join someone at the restaurant somewhere. I tried not to get too upset about it, so I would briefly reply: "Have a great time, good night."

Iryna Solovey



Photo credit: Povaha/Oksana Tysovska

Iryna Solovey is one of those who influenced the habits of modern Ukrainians. She taught many people the word 'crowdfunded' and made them used to providing individual donor support to charity. Garage Gang annual report says that crowdfunding ('Spilnokosht') on the Big Idea platform appeared in response to the need to support creative, media, and educational initiatives. The project is expanding further to fund innovation in IT, renewable energy, and responsible entrepreneurship. Spilnokosht today means 181 successful projects and 24,609 donors who invested over 12 mln hryvnia.

Iryna Slavinska: In your area of work are women's voices heard and are they heard well?

Iryna Solovey: I have a feeling in general that community work – which is the main area where we apply art and cultural strategies with the aim to form the potential of the community, to enable the community – is mainly a woman's work.

On the one hand, it is a lot of work, and our women are more used to having to work hard to have a result. We have been wondering for a long time, whether Spilnokosht was actually the tool for women, because women use this instrument more frequently. However, we have never really tried to make a deeper analysis to find out the reason for this. It is actually the first time

that I am saying this out loud. There is a lot of work, and women are ready to do it, but there may also be a reverse effect: because women are ready to do a lot of work, they are not looking for easier ways.

I.S.: At the same time, institutions are often headed by men. For instance, director of a museum may be male, but work related to managing separate projects is often performed by women who are his deputies, PR specialists, etc.

I.S.: I think that we need to work on people's confidence here. And not only with women or only with men. For instance, sometimes it is more difficult for a man to be subordinate to a woman, because traditionally he is more comfortable in the position of a boss, and in a

different situation he feels lack of confidence. Such men need to build confidence, which will help them work on different teams, including those with women leaders.

And, on the contrary, a woman may lack confidence and not work in leading positions for this reason. If a woman in a leading position cannot do something, she will not look for external reasons – such as difficult circumstances, indecent people, or flaws in institutional landscape.

Unfortunately, she will much rather think: “It is because there is something wrong about me.” She internalizes flaws that she also has to compensate with her own personal resources. And if she is unable to compensate, she worries that there is something wrong about her. And spends a rather long time paying this psychological tax after that later.

I.S.: Speaking about your professional development – at what point did you stop, if you have stopped, paying this psychological tax?

I.S.: I haven't. I think that somehow it might be for the better, because I can notice this in myself, I can name it, I can work with it. And if I can work with it, then I have the voice to speak about it, which in its turn brings about the acceptance that such things exist around us.

I see myself as a strong person, and other people also see me as a strong person. If a person is strong, it means that they are relatively okay. And now, in the moment of my weakness, I would also like to state that this is okay. I think more about it, I receive more direct questions about it, I can acknowledge it.

If you are a head of something or a cultural manager, often you have a possibility to enable a certain process, to produce it. This means, you need to assume a leadership position: go to someone who you don't know yet, meet them... If you are doing it in form of a work meeting, it goes more or less okay. However, if you do it informally somewhere in the coffee shop, you will soon face the fact that men think you are flirting with them. They think that you want something from them on a personal level. This also is part of our everyday life as women leaders. It takes time to identify this, though.

I.S.: How did you work up the nerve or allow yourself, if I may use this word, to become a leader, a businesswoman, an employer?

I.S.: Just like everybody else. Saviour complex, the wish to save everyone.

The practical process started when I told myself that it was time to try something. And in this case, it was Spilnokosht. There is another important factor: I am not ready to waste my life. If I invested into something, if I focused my days and years around this, invested something I value into this something that I love and understand, I am not ready to let it run into the ground.

You can't be responsible for your entire surroundings, but you can be responsible for your time, your energy, your attention, your imagination, and your relationships. If you are watching those things, everything else finds a place in a scheme of thinking and action, a certain pattern of your being able to deal with things.

I.S.: What is it like to be a woman in culture, in cultural management?

I.S.: It is any way you like it.

It is not getting stuck in your own narratives, because in the sphere of culture you promote new narratives. You always need to be a pirate, a hacker, a daredevil. You need to be a little countercultural, because you can imagine yourself outside the existing narrative, and show at least on your own example that a new narrative also has space to happen.

A woman's instrument in culture is the internal space. You need to always step outside of it. This work is very draining, because you need to be an intellectual and use intellectual instruments, but also remember constantly that intellect is a certain sum of ideas and concepts, and you can remain free only if you can step outside the boundaries of these concepts.

As a leader, you need to be ready to be critical about your own previous work. And this is how working in culture is different from a business idea, where you need to repeat something that works for as long as it works. And if you do this in culture, you will stall, limit the cultural process.

Today's culture is happening at the level of certain people. And if certain people are able to step outside themselves, outside their yesterday's beliefs, be the people of today – there will be progress of culture. And if not – there will be reverberation.

Iryna Tsilyk



Iryna Tsilyk is a director and a writer. Author of prose books *The Day after Yesterday* (2008), *Birthmarks* (2013), *Red Marks on Black* (2015); poetry books *Qi* (2007), *Depth of Field* (2016); and children's books *Such an Interesting Life* (2015) and *The City-tale of One's Friendship* (2016). Together with Artem Chekh, she co-authored an English-language handbook on Ukraine, *Awesome Ukraine*. Some of her work was translated into English, German, Polish, Lithuanian, and Czech languages.

She made short films *Blue Hour* (2008), *Commemoration* (2012), and *Home* (2016). She also worked on the *Invisible Battalion* project – a Ukrainian series of documentary short films about women in the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Currently, she is filming a documentary called *The Earth Is Blue Like an Orange* about a family that lives in the near-frontline town in Donetsk region. We talked to Iryna about women at war and combining art and motherhood.

Ana More: There is this possibly an incorrect idea in the Ukrainian society that women don't write about war, don't make movies about war. Where do you think this idea comes from?

Iryna Tsilyk: I think that the ideas that women can't create 'high shelf' literature, can't make great movies

have been around for a while. We do know, however, that women have successfully refuted these ideas.

I haven't very often come across the statement that women write little about war or don't film it enough. Moreover, I am surrounded with countless cool women who write and make films about it. I have been immersed

in this for the past five years myself. Everything that I am doing is somehow related to the theme of war: my poetry, my prose or my movies.

A.M.: A woman at war – what is she like? What does she face? What does she need to fight with?

I.T.: I have never experienced gender discrimination myself. But I see it around me. And when I met the women whom we documented in the Invisible Battalion I heard such vivid examples of sexism that I was shocked by them. It is seemingly not far from you, but you don't know enough about this until you start studying it.

Our subjects are women of different age and different professions, different social status. And nonetheless, every one of them was telling us about the same things. For instance, the story of Andriana Susak. She was a stormtrooper in the Aydar battalion. She fought the same as the guys, and she had earned enough respect from them. However, her official position in the army was 'seamstress.' So, de facto she was doing a complicated and dangerous job along her brothers in arms, but de jure she had nothing to prove it, no documents. And although every woman that appears in our documentary spoke about it differently, all of them said, in this way or the other, that they had to fight to have fair attitude to them – both from the state and from the people around them.

A.M.: The main protagonist of your film *The Earth Is Blue Like an Orange* is a 36-year-old single mother who raises four children in a town near the contact line. What challenges does she face?

I.T.: My protagonist, Anna, is a mother of four who has to deal with everything by herself. And it is impossible not to admire her. During the conflict, she learned to be even more self-sufficient. She had to deal with the things that seem unimaginable in the 21st century. For instance, where to find firewood in town where there is nothing left to burn, where to get the large bottles of water which are impossible to lift and which she and her sister had to roll under the shelling... And most importantly, where to find the strength not to be angry, to remain yourself, to raise kind and joyous children. Such 'little women' are, in fact, not little at all. You just need to look around, and you'll find women in your building who are worth telling the world about them.

A.M.: You are the mother to a 9-year-old son. Are you trying to raise him free of stereotypes?

I.T.: I can't say that my husband and I are too focused on this aspect. However, even now my son is a huge defier of stereotypes. I haven't even noticed how this happened, but he clearly is a person of a new generation. He is annoyed by stereotypes about girls and women. He almost always reacts to them.

A.M.: Speaking of stereotypes. There is an idea that artists have no time to raise children. And that women need to choose: to be a mom or to make art. How is it: being both an artist and a mom?

I.T.: To be honest, it is pretty hard to excel at everything that you do. And when you want to simultaneously be a mom, a film director who makes movies and a writer who travels around the world and gives public speeches, it is really hard to maintain balance everywhere and do everything right. If you don't have support from your family, I think it's a failed mission from the start, it is an impossible job. Very often women are expected "to raise children as if they do not work and to work as if they have no children." However, it has always been different for me. Since the first days that we had our son.

A.M.: You even word this as "we had our son." It's beautiful.

I.T.: Did I say that? But that was what happened! We did everything together from the first days. We lived in the village then, we ran away from Kyiv for several years, we had a period of searching. We just lived outside of the city and freelanced. And shared absolutely everything equally. In many families, the mom is still more responsible for raising a child, for their health and education. And the dad is always at work.

In our case, it wasn't like that at all. Mom and dad are equal. And recently I have been going on trips for work more often than my husband. One time, my son came up to me and said: "You know, in my class it's mostly dads who go somewhere, but for me it's my mom." So yes, if I didn't have the support of my husband, my grandma, my other relatives, I wouldn't have managed. There is no way for a mom to manage everything on her own.

Kateryna Kalytko



Kateryna Kalytko is a powerful female voice in contemporary Ukrainian literature. Kateryna writes both prose and poetry, and she also does translations. For her book called *The Land of the Lost*, Kateryna received BBC Book of the Year 2017 award. The same year, she also received Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski prize. Some of her work is translated into English, German, Polish, Armenian, Lithuanian, Slovenian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Italian, and Hebrew languages. Kateryna Kalytko is also an influential cultural manager as a part of the team that creates international literature festival Europe Island in Vinnytsia, which is an important event both locally and at the national level.

Iryna Slavinska: Are women's voices heard well enough in contemporary Ukrainian art?

Kateryna Kalytko: Personally for me, they are the loudest and the most convincing. Key problems and social phenomena in the moments of change have been best voiced and reflected in various kinds of art namely by women. However, there is often this moment when you reach a certain limit, and beyond this limit they tell you enough, that you have said too much, and important people will be making further statements without you.

We are still standing like that old lady from a famous photograph that was turned into a meme. Remember, she holds up a poster that says: "I can't believe I still have to protest this shit." We are used to these problems that should have been solved by now, that have already been solved in my mind, but they still persist.

I.S.: What was the reason that today women's voices are heard better than before?

K.K.: The passing of time has allowed women to express themselves more vividly. In the 1990s and early 2000s, we have often observed male infantilism. It was the time when women were taking responsibility for the entire family by themselves, they were concerned with survival, and men could relax and not expect professional competition. On the other hand, men have always gotten a head start, they automatically were perceived as top workers in any area, so they didn't have to strain themselves much. And on the third hand, they were also pounded by toxic masculinity, by a list of meaningless criteria about how to 'be a man.'

It's just that women have always had to plan to spend more resources, in order to jump over the 'glass fence.'

We are going to talk about 'glass ceiling' later, but there is also this point in the life of any woman when she approaches the invisible 'glass fence' at the level of, say, her knees. And it's not a lethal obstacle, but you suddenly stumble over the barrier that someone put out there, and sometimes it hurts. A woman needs to run an obstacle course and in the long run she can go further, once she trains her muscles. We can't allow ourselves to relax, or we will be eaten. So, as of now, we have trained our muscles a bit.

I also think that the past five years were very important. Part of a woman's consciousness works as a collective memory. There is the moment of accumulation of experience and transferring it further. A man, according to the archetypical division of roles, may not come back from the war... Although by now we definitely know that a woman may not come back from the war either – as a servicewoman, a volunteer, or a nurse. A warrior doesn't have to be male, and we have had enough evidence of that in our current situation.

I.S.: In conversations about women in poetry I used to hear ideas that a woman is in poetry not for long – only until she gets married. That getting settled in her personal life is a marker for finishing her poetic career. Have you encountered anything like this?

K.K.: I have of course heard people say these things. I started writing and publishing early: first there was regional press, then Smoloskyp and Hranoslov contests. And from the very beginning, I've had people tell me in a condescending and understanding way that I was a girl and the fact that I was writing was temporary. It was expected that I will fall in love, settle with a partner and stop writing, that all of this shall pass... or, on the contrary, that I am writing because I am in love and I am suffering, and soon it will be over.

I'm afraid, the belief that for women literature is just amusement will last for a long time. That only men can process serious landmark events, while women produce abstract lyrical work. I've had people try to convince me, in particular, that as a woman I should be writing about relationships, love, nature, flowers, and that poetry with socio-political context is harmful for women. This is discrimination. I think that some young writer who is starting her journey today is facing the same attitude right now. Maybe the wording changed and became more subtle, but she is definitely hearing these ideas.

I.S.: How does one deal with such inhumane conditions?

K.K.: You should ignore it, not pay attention to toxic manipulation, and continue to write.

Not everybody can feel the strength of their own statement from the very beginning. There is an important thin line between self-praise and the feeling of yourself, your boundaries, your shape in the world. You shouldn't be afraid to admit that you are able to produce a strong statement about something, if you feel that you can and you must voice things that nobody has voiced before you.

You need to move on and ignore the discrimination. It is hard, it can also be traumatic. Some people gaslight you, some belittle you, people can try to press on your most sensitive buttons, offend you. They may even say that you are worth nothing without male lobbying. The most important thing is to get through this and not lose your drive. If you can do this, then everything you've gone through was worth it.

I.S.: Do women in literature interact with each other in today's Ukraine? I am speaking of support, sisterhood, and cooperation.

K.K.: I think that we are having more and more of it. I have only recently started being really comfortable in the professional environment. Because my generation grew up, and we started cooperating in a productive way and moving in the same direction together. And at this point it became obvious that there are enough people who share my values and approaches and with whom we can move to the joint goal.

It was different when I worked with an older generation: I had a range of experiences from ideal sister-mother relations to blatant ignoring or openly displayed rejection. This resembled a situation of fighting for leadership in an animal pride, with various levels of drama: sometimes as if one animal is approaching the other, and the other hits them with a paw – this place is taken.

Now, I have an environment and a safe space where I can hide and share my experience with colleagues who are also there. It is easier and more comfortable for me. The network of sisterhood is growing, and it also includes mentor support, feeling of unity, and joint values.

Kseniya Hnylytska



Kseniya Hnylytska was born in 1984 in Kyiv. Graduated from the State Art Middle School and the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture. Creates paintings, drawings, art objects and videos. Co-founded the R.E.P. ('Revolutionary Experimental Space') and Khudrada ('Art Council') groups. Lives and works in Kyiv.

Anastasiya Horpynchenko: Did coming from an artistic family have rather a positive or a negative impact on your personal development?

Kseniya Hnylytska: Those were two different worlds – an insurmountable world of academic art in the art school and an elusive world of contemporary art. There was this kind of duality of these worlds. And later it all gradually came together, and it became clear that I won't be able to do anything except art.

A.H.: The fact that your father is a famous artist – did it put pressure on you, or did it help you?

K.H.: Of course, it helped, because at some point I saw the book called How to Teach Drawing and Painting in Middle Schools of the Soviet Union. That was how I realized that all those tasks: ravens on a cube, drawing in the zoo – that's what everybody does, and moreover, everybody does it in the same way. And it's great that I somehow preserved the feeling of individual approach, because sometimes you can dissolve in your profession, become a professional, but forget, why you need it all and what's the idea behind it.

A.H.: You are a member of R.E.P., which is called a socially active space. What topics do you currently care about the most?

K.H.: Global warming. An artist also has some leverage, that's why they need to speak about the important things that are becoming more and more visible. Besides, there are many compound topics, many local topics.

My latest project was about women – How I Want to Become a Geisha (Ed.: It is a series of portraits of women in traditional clothes – hijabs, sarees etc.). The project was based on me not knowing who I want to be. In Ukraine, we don't have any kind of traditional rules that govern your appearance, the length of your skirt and so on. On the one hand, it's good, and on the other, you need some kind of an internal understanding, awareness of yourself.

Finally, some things became more or less clear to me. I came to conclusion that whether you wear a seductive dress or shapeless dungarees is exclusively your right. And you don't need to hide your sexuality if you are a feminist.

A.H.: Do you consider yourself a feminist?

K.H.: Not quite, to be honest. Since I found out about HeForShe movement, I realized that there is an opportunity to be independent, and to remain a woman at the same time. It is worth remembering that all of us are a tribe where everybody helps one another. Statements such as “I am on my own” or “I can do it myself” are in a way only pride that hinders development.

A.H.: I once talked to an artist who recalled that during the time that she studied at the Academy, female students heard stereotypical phrases such as: “Why should we teach you, you’ll give birth anyway and give up on art.” Do you remember anything similar at the time that you were a student there?

K.H.: At night, you can meet many different people at Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the main square, and they can tell you some unbelievable stuff – it all depends on your perception. I, for one, have never heard anything like that when I was a student. Some people just said: “You’ll be like Yablonska, she abandoned her children and went to the workshop.” Which is also a kind of disapproval.

Something funny happened to me when I was a student. At the art school, I thought that there were only two possible ways: either to have a career, or to be a mother. So, in my questionnaire, you know, those notebooks with questions, I included the question: “What is more important for you – to create a genius work of art or to have a baby?” At that point I thought that those were two things impossible to combine. So, at that time, I was also a slave to stereotypes.

A.H.: What do you think now, when you both have a child and continue to paint?

K.H.: Undoubtedly, you need to work a lot and develop good habits. Your profession is like exercise equipment that you constantly need to train on, and not say: “Well, I’ll take a two-year break, and then I’ll have a fresh start...”. Because then you forget the habit of doing something.

In my experience, you need to constantly maintain your profession after you’ve had a baby. And then it will be fine. And then you won’t find yourself in 20 years telling your children: “I lost my figure and my health, and I didn’t build a career because I was raising you.”

You don’t have to narrow the scope of your freedom for someone, you need to remember to take care of yourself.

A.H.: You have a series of landscapes with fences – and if I am right, they symbolize class inequality, don’t they? Why did you choose this topic for yourself? Do you feel a similar inequality between men and women in Ukraine?

K.H.: There are certain stereotypes about men and women, and we need to fight against them every day. There are the typical “she doesn’t have enough sex – that’s why she is angry and screaming”, “she is just crazy”, “it’s all her fault”... If we take women politicians, everything that is said about them can be boiled down to a number of these stereotypes. There are things that repeat all the time, and that we need to constantly fight against.

A.H.: How about projects for women and about women? What is your attitude to those?

K.H.: Many of my male friends want to take part in female exhibitions. And they are very indignant that they can’t do that.

On the other hand, I understand that if we blur this principle then there will be no principle at all, and then everything can turn back towards men.

A.H.: If we compare the art space here in Ukraine and abroad, can you say that women’s voices are heard better somewhere?

K.H.: I think that there are many young female artists now whom nobody puts below or above young male artists. In the artist circle, we are lucky to avoid stereotypes.

However, there are statistics that galleries abroad are most willing to work with married men, less willing to work with unmarried women, and are the least eager to sign contracts with women who are not married, but are raising children.

A.H.: Have you encountered this?

K.H.: No, it is about how active and responsible you are. If they write you an email and you reply on time, nobody asks you if you have a family. This is more important for residency formats, where they are mostly willing to see young and free artists without partners, children, or pets.

Mariana Sadovska



Photo credit: The Ukrainians/Andriy Kuzminskiy

Mariana Sadovska is a famous singer and composer, as well as a folklorist and a vocal coach. She was born in Lviv where she later studied piano at the Ludkevych music college. She worked in Poland and the US where in 2002 she released her first album, *Songs I Learned in Ukraine*. In New York, she collaborated with Virlana Tkacz and her Yara Art Group, as well as with La MaMa theater. Lives in Cologne.

Olena Huseinova: Your father is a singer and a translator, and your mother is an artist. Could you say that art was in your life since early childhood? What is it like – to be born and grow up in such an atmosphere? Is it fun, is it traumatic?

Mariana Sadovska: After school, I would usually go to my mom, artist Kateryna Nemyria's workshop. This was in a way my 'afterschool class', so I grew up surrounded by sculptures, ceramics, sketches, coffee smell, conversations about the eternal and about politics, hard work, disappointments, creative ideas and search... At the time, my mom's workshop was a meeting place for Lviv artists, writers, and musicians.

My mom's sculptures inspired my songs for me at a certain point. From her I got this passion for work, and it is impossible for me not to create. And now, when I dive into my projects, when I leave my children behind for long months, I believe that this is just a new turn of the spiral.

Iryna Slavinska: Are awards such as Women in Art Award important? Does it make sense to separate women in a special category?

M.S.: I generally am not a fan of awards at all, because the decision to give an award is always very subjective, and it depends on the tastes of those who are making it.

In our days, such awards help draw attention to work that women are doing. However, I think that in the future we shouldn't divide artists into women and men. For instance, recently when selecting films for a documentary film festival in Leipzig the jury didn't have information on whether the film was created by a man or a woman. And it resulted in many more films made by female directors being chosen. It is the quality that's important, and not gender.

I.S.: Could you say that female voices are heard better now than they used to be in the past?

M.S.: I think so.

I.S.: Fortunately, the topic of fighting gender stereotypes is becoming more popular. Do you like it?

M.S.: I am hurt, surprised, and at times annoyed not by random people for whom it 'doesn't matter' and what they say, but by the statements and reactions of the thinking people, intellectuals, and other, so to say, opinion makers.

When in a private or work conversation such male artists say that for them, quality female literature does not exist, or when they emphasize the archaic image of a Woman-Mother as opposed to the "fancy gender talk"... it makes me very angry. For instance, I have just refused to work on a project of a play with a script that is full of such arrogant and derogatory views of one macho about a woman.

However, there are also good examples. For instance, when I was traveling around Ukraine, I visited Kryvorivnia, and I was very impressed how during the service Father Ivan Rybaruk used feminines when he addressed the congregation. Imagine, all of this happened in a church where, to my great surprise, there is a separate entrance and a special place in front which is allocated specifically for men. For me, this became an example of how outdated traditions meet the open contemporary and dynamic thought of Father Ivan.

I.S.: Are there gender stereotypes in music that you would like to fight?

M.S.: About two years ago I heard a story on TV that at the Metropolitan Opera they don't stage operas composed by women because they are afraid to have low sales. So, we need to fight until a claim like this becomes laughable.

A year ago, I was writing music for an experimental opera at the festival in Omaha, United States. The festival was directed and curated by a young director and composer from Los Angeles. And during every event he kept saying how lucky he was that his festival united so many interesting and successful women composers, directors, and musicians and that several pieces created by women were premiering at the same time.

I believe that one day, it will just be normal and not surprise anyone.

O.H.: Please say a couple of words about the start of your career – how did you start working in music, were there any obstacles or, on the contrary, advantages along the way?

M.S.: I am very grateful to my mom who kept saying how important it was not to be afraid to go against the stream, follow your calling and not fashion, not to adjust, but listen to your heart.

My mom also gave me freedom to make mistakes, to find my own way, didn't burden me with overprotection. My mom gave me an opportunity to become myself. It is especially now that I understand what her work meant for me, and how she celebrated women in an atypical and original way.

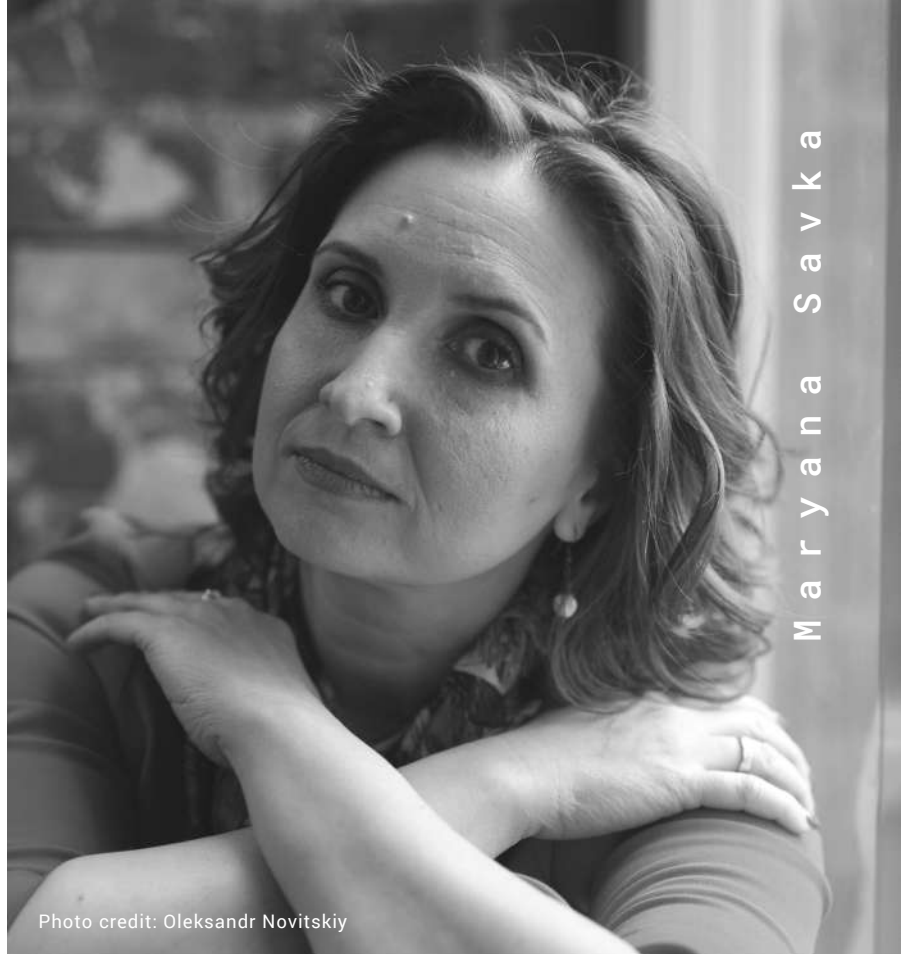
I.S.: Creative work and family – I remember, we once discussed how much it means when the entire family supports you, when there is mutual understanding and solidarity between partners, and cooperation, so that both of them would have time for their own creative work. What can you say about his now?

M.S.: This is the only possible way. My husband is the best feminist in the world.

In general, it is very difficult for women to receive scholarships or grants, because it is considered by default that a woman works alone... The institutions usually don't think that she might also have a husband and children, and that she can work, create, and travel together with them. For some reason, they don't take into account that a writer, a composer, or an artist can have a family, children, and a husband.

However, these things are changing. For instance, in Germany there are already government grants for cultural projects that allow to include the cost of nannies or other kind of babysitting into the budget.

Maryana Savka



Maryana Savka is an editor in chief and co-founder of Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva. She is also a poet who published 18 books. Since 2017, she is a UN Goodwill Ambassador in Ukraine, and since 2018 – a member of PEN Ukraine. She is the author of cultural and art projects 12 Incredible Women: On Values That Make a Person (2017) and This Is Lviv: A Collection of Urban Stories (2017).

Her work was published in several poetry anthologies, in particular, in the anthology of eleven female poets, Us and Her, as well as in the collection Girl Power: Little Stories of Big Deeds by Kateryna Babkina and Mark Livin about 50 extraordinary Ukrainian women and their strong spirit and belief in themselves.

Her poetic work was translated into Polish, English, Belarusian, Russian, and Lithuanian languages. We talked with Maryana Savka about awards for women and feminist men.

Ana More: Is there a need for separate awards for women such as Women in Arts Award?

Maryana Savka: Yes, I think that we need awards for women as another way to raise their self-esteem.

In my opinion, women suffer the most from being undervalued. We have inherited it from many previous generations. And it comes from the society in general, where women are undervalued not only by men, but by other women – at work and in families. Unfortunately, it

is still common that a mother-in-law, or even a mother of a young woman would put her interests much lower than the interests of the son or son-in-law. It is somehow common to think that a woman, not a married couple, is responsible for the family (and for saving it, in particular). Therefore, women often have to either obey and put up with minimizing their value (not to mention violence) or stand up for themselves.

At work, a woman often faces humiliating attitude towards herself as someone who creates more problems: she can become pregnant, not feel well because of her period, and God forbid she is going through perimenopause. And so, I'm thinking, in the Soviet time, women mostly retired at the age of 55, and perimenopause usually begins at about 50 and lasts for several years. So how does a woman feel when after such an incredible hormonal stress (and by the way, there is very little conversation about it) she also loses her job? Of course, it's only natural if she feels discarded. What's left for her? Taking care of her grandchildren. Many women in such situations had to overcome deep depression and broke psychologically. Now, pension age has been raised to 60. However, does the problem of women losing social significance still exist? Yes, of course it does.

However, the situation is changing. The opinion of influential people means a lot, as well as personal examples of women who found themselves and started developing, rebelled against ageism and proved that they were creative and effective.

A.M.: What is, in your opinion, the reason why we have more women in culture and art?

M.S.: It's that women are in general very creative. And also, often because you can be a creative unit independently of any organization. Let's take my industry as an example. Today, we have many incredibly strong female voices in prose and poetry. There are more women illustrators. And translators, too. Maybe it is also because women are more resilient, they burn out emotionally less often than men. Women are often marathon runners. And working on a book takes a lot of time and effort.

A.M.: Which manifestations of discrimination and sexism did you encounter?

M.S.: I personally don't have painful memories that are worth telling. Just some small things that must have happened to everybody. However, in conversations with employees of different embassies I realized that a woman can be any kind of attaché, but it is almost impossible for a woman to become an ambassador in Ukraine. However, it may be different in other countries. The situation is the same everywhere across all Ukrainian public institutions, in the ministries – there are many women in the secondary and tertiary roles, and critically few of them hold key positions. In business, the situation is healthier though. There are many businesswomen who create their own companies or have top positions.

A.M.: Are you a feminist?

M.S.: Yes, I am a feminist. I am a mother, a wife, a business owner, a writer, a composer and a performer, and I am a feminist. Because I think that a woman doesn't owe anything to anybody, and she has the full right to live and behave the way she pleases. She might want a big family or choose to live alone. She might find realization in her profession, or she might devote herself to kids or taking care of others. It is her choice and her right. Nobody can infringe on her body or her soul. And if I am coming back home after a day at work and I am tired, I can order a pizza with clear conscience instead of kneading dough. And I can go on a tour and leave our child with my husband. And paint watercolors in the evening instead of polishing silverware. I listen to myself, and I take responsibility for my life goals.

A.M.: Is there a feeling of sisterhood and support among women in literature?

M.S.: I am friends with many women in literature. I also publish them. I have a special status – I am a publisher for most of my female friends who are writers: I am just lucky that they are cool authors. So, there is this interaction.

And yes, we have very cool interactions on a private or more social levels. And what's important – I don't feel anything like jealousy. I am glad when my girls are good at something. And we create synergy together. It will be fair to mention that I have male friends, too. And probably all of them are feminists.

Marysia Nikitiuk



Marysia Nikitiuk

Photo credit: Povaha/Oksana Tysovska

Marysia Nikitiuk is a film director, screenwriter, and writer. In 2016, she received the Oles Ulianenko Literary Award for her collection of short stories *The Abyss*. She is the author of the prose book *Maybe Tomorrow* and the winner of the 10th ScripTeast Award for the screenplay *When the Trees Fall*.

Films based on screenplays by Marysia Nikitiuk have participated in international festivals in Locarno, Clermont-Ferrand, in Golden Apricot, Odesa IFF and others. She is a director and screenwriter of short films *Rabies*, *Mandragora*, *In the Trees*. Marysia Nikitiuk presented her first full feature film *When the Trees Fall* at the 2018 Berlinale. She is currently working on a full-length film *Seraphina*, scheduled to premiere in 2020. She is also working on musical film experiments. We talked to Marysia Nikitiuk about sexism in the world of cinema and how to break the stereotypes.

Ana More: To what extent financial discrimination takes place in the world of cinema?

Marysia Nikitiuk: It's not that noticeable in Ukraine. Everyone has a very hard time making money with art anyway. Both men and women earn peanuts, so this difference is not as vivid as abroad. Most often I come across male and female artists who are trying to experiment at their own expense or are constantly looking for funding.

A.M.: What biases can you still see in filmmaking?

M.N.: Oh, there is definitely a lot of bias against camerawomen. My sister studies as a camerawoman, and now I am also working with camerawoman Svitlana Aparina. From their experience, I know that it is very difficult for camerawomen to get a job. Many camerapersons work hard to climb the career ladder – they start as technicians, light technicians, etc. And this is all physical work. When I see strong guys carrying this heavy equipment, my heart is bleeding for my sister's future work. But the girls cope with it. It can be difficult for men, too. And I even understand their desire to offer help. Maybe, they don't show it, but this energy, the energy of empathy for a girl that carries all this heavy equipment is present at a film set. And I don't think it's always bad. The main thing is to feel comfortable at work.

From my experience and experience of my female friends, what we face more often is abuse, both physical and psychological violence at home. These things are much more relevant.

A.M.: Still, when choosing a cameraman or a camerawoman, you focus on his or her skills rather than on their ability to carry cameras weighing tens of kilograms, don't you?

M.N.: Me, yes. Recently, I had this situation: I was asked who was the cameraperson for the trailer of my own book *Maybe Tomorrow*. I said her name. And instead of asking why exactly her, they asked me why a woman. But yes, I choose a cameraperson based on the quality of the picture and personal communication.

A.M.: In your opinion, is there a gender imbalance among Ukrainian artists? For example, there are more men among directors because it is a male profession or something.

M.N.: In terms of quantity, it seems that currently in Ukraine there are more women in art. I ostensibly see two factors behind it. First, you can't make a lot of money in this industry. After all, our society still shares a stereotype that men are breadwinners, so they have to earn enough. Second, we have such an unhealthy climate that we want to run away from it. And the art enables you to go a bit beyond the economic, social, and political processes of survival. Art is a superstructure of the reality. You get experience, you internalize it, you modify it, you create your own world. Being involved in art, you have some space between yourself and life, you don't have to be 100% of your time in this world. You have a kind of distance between what is happening and yourself.

A.M.: In your most famous film *When the Trees Fall*, the protagonist is a rebel. In an interview you said that this film was about the fear of getting out of the system. What kind of a system is it for girls, young women and women in Ukraine?

M.N.: The system is changing rapidly now. But even 5-7 years ago, by large, it was a very patriarchal world. The system was about getting married at around 20, giving birth before you are 25, and after 30, you are already old. At the same time, you also feel the pressure because you still need to achieve something. What I feel now is that there is still a certain amount of stereotypes that bite you constantly. Like this old-school cliché "When are you going to have a baby?" At the same time, you feel like the world is open to you. That's how I had it. Nobody forbade me anything. If you want to write, then do. Well, only first get an education, then feel free to write. Nobody told me something was not for me. However, the people around were still living in the same patriarchal paradigm. No one seems to impose anything on you, but you feel like you are alone and go against everyone.

It's the same now – there are many open roads, but you're not encouraged to make certain choices. Ukraine lives in a certain time, follows certain rules. How can you live in your own space and play by your own rules? It is still about confrontation. You live as if in a fictional harmony somewhere in a residential area like Pozniaki. Basically, why not? The society is still quite conservative, it is not flexible enough, it is not intelligent enough. It is still difficult to talk, to have a dialogue with the society.

Natalia Zhyzhchenko



Natalia Zhyzhchenko is the leader of Ukrainian band ONUKA, author of songs, winner of Elle Style Awards 2015. In September last year, ONUKA presented a music video for their song Strum filmed in Pidhirtsi at the landfill. The goal of the music video was to attract attention to the problem of sorting and management of waste in Ukraine and in the world.

We talked to Natalia about the political emphasis of her work and the problem of objectivation in show business.

Kateryna Matsiupa: Today, you are the leader of a famous Ukrainian band. Please tell us when and how you got the idea to grow in this direction?

Natalia Zhyzhchenko: After the story of Tomato Jaws came to an end, ONUKA project came naturally. That's probably why it is still alive and growing.

I'll be honest, in the period between the two bands I did sometimes think that I won't ever be playing music again. This was a period of total frustration. However, there was Zhenia (Natalia's husband – Ed.) by my side, who believed in me and was constantly making me do something, involved me into the creative process that ended up becoming ONUKA.

K.M.: Have you ever in your career heard demands/ advice to go on stage in more revealing clothes that would show naked body or emphasize certain body parts?

N.Z.: I have never had to emphasize something in my appearance to promote music. In general, I would prefer to think that excessive sexuality and vulgarity in music are the thing of the past. Primarily, thanks to women themselves. They are changing attitudes towards themselves through their speeches on stage and statements in the media, and most importantly through their music. You'll ask, what are St.Vincent or Beyonce still doing on stage in revealing clothes? All of this is a protest that hardly has anything to do with objectivation. And the results of such fight for their rights are indeed inspiring.

When it comes to my costumes, all of them from the very beginning have been designed and created by Lesia Patoka – a talented costume designer and head of Patoka Studio. For me, self-expression through clothes is important both in everyday life and on stage. Of course, when I choose what to wear for my performances, my tastes shift – stage costumes are a hyperbole, although they still accurately reflect who I am.

K.M.: In your opinion, is the female image that currently dominates Ukrainian show business (a lot of naked body, frequent emphasis on appearance, body shape, stereotypically 'female' behavior) typical only for our country or is it a global trend?

N.Z.: Modern society is resisting sexual objectivation more and more, and I think that this is a healthy trend of our times. I hope that with time this trend reaches our country as well.

Female images of the previous decade are on the contrary excessively sexual, 'idealistic', and look similar to each other, and it can make girls feel inadequate, disrespect themselves and their bodies. And stereotypical 'female' behavior is, in fact, real misogyny that covers the entire society with a thin invisible toxic layer, although it is often disguised as being caring and protective.

K.M.: What is your attitude to feminism and do you consider yourself a feminist? What is feminism for you?

N.Z.: Feminism for me is primarily about equal rights, which leads to fighting sexism and other discriminating systems. All over the world, including Ukraine, people are still being oppressed based on their sexual preferences, skin color, and gender identity.

And although I can't consider myself a part of proactive feminist movement, I realize very well that often change in the society is achieved through radical measures.

K.M.: In your opinion, how do art and politics coexist? Should their paths cross or should they walk separately?

N.Z.: I will always think that there is no art without a powerful message. Music is a voice, so if an artist expresses themselves in their work on a deeper levels, it will automatically include their clear point of view, and in particular, their political point of view. It is impossible to close your eyes and not notice things around you, as they are happening to all of us.

I don't want to be everywhere or deliberately speculate on hot social topics. I think that when a person is spread out too thin they can't finish what they've started. However, I will never be silent about something that I care about. And if I have an opportunity to express this through music, I will use this opportunity.

Nina Harenetska



Nina Harenetska is a performer working in Dakh Daughters and DakhaBrakha projects. With their performances, the musicians have toured the most famous world festivals – Glastonbury, Sziget, Rudolstadt etc. – and other music events all over the world.

In DakhaBrakha, Nina is a vocalist, and she also plays a cello and a bass drum. Members of Dakh Daughters freak cabaret use different musical instruments (15 total): contrabasses, cellos, a piano, maracas, a guitar, a violin, drums, a xylophone, an accordion, a harmonica, and tambourines. Musicians are not tied to their instruments and can change roles easily.

We talked to Nina Harenetska about female bands and sisterhood in the world of theatre.

Ana More: Nina Harenetska, a woman – what is she like?

Nina Harenetska: Nina Harenetska is some kind of a complicated storage box with many different holes. It is hard for me to say what it is, but it is definitely some kind of a complicated mechanism.

A.M.: What is Nina Harenetska, an artist, like then?

N.H.: I have been in folklore since childhood, which means that I have been on stage and on tours since childhood. The first seeds were planted back in the day by our teachers, Oksana Milevska and Iryna Bankovska. I think that without being diligent, responsible, persevering, and punctual it is hard for an artist to keep up. Since the early years, we have been taught this by our teachers, and the drive and inspiration that had led me to what I am doing now.

A.M.: How did your creative path begin? What inspired you? What are you working on now?

N.H.: My creative path began from a live concert of a male choir where my elder brother performed – after that, I told my mom that I wanted to sing. The next day, my mom took me to the nearest cultural center. I was 8 at the time.

We are now working on a new album that we are planning to record in September in Brazil.

A.M.: As you approached adult life, what was the attitude to you as a young woman? What has changed now? Have you encountered any manifestations of sexism?

N.H.: I was lucky not to have anything like that happen personally to me. I grew up and formed as a person mostly surrounded by women. There were always more girls in folklore department, so even when there were boys, there were no problems, on the contrary, they were valued. We have never felt this attitude from boys towards us.

One time, I encountered sexism on a folklore expedition in western Ukraine. It was not projected on me, so I sort of observed it from aside, and some things seemed weird to me. For instance, our hostesses never sat at the same table with the guests, they constantly either

served guests or sat on the side, but not at the table. It is not something we do in my family, that's why I didn't know what to make of it. But I wasn't very comfortable with it.

A.M.: What is it important to say to modern young girls?

N.H.: Not to be afraid, not to be silent, but speak up if something bothers them. To do what they like, what inspires them. Not to restrict themselves with boundaries.

A.M.: Do we need awards for women such as Women in Arts Award, in your opinion?

N.H.: For as long as this question is being asked, such awards are important. Women can do everything and even more, they need to be encouraged, praised, and motivated to achieve things.

A.M.: Is there any sisterly support among women artists in Ukraine? How does it manifest inside the band?

N.H.: Of course. There have always been many girls in our theater. I can't imagine that there can be any way other than having friendly, warm, sister-like relationship. Support, help, and mutual respect are key to success of any band.

A.M.: When you travel, do you notice any difference in attitude to women in countries other than Ukraine? What is the difference?

N.H.: For instance, when we were riding public transport in Paris, I was shocked that nobody gives up their seats for elderly women. And even when I tried to do it, a woman stopped me with a gesture. It is not good manners, you sort of even offend her if you do it. I thought that it was rather unusual and odd and not typical for our culture.

Or in the US, it is rather common for stage technicians to be women. This job is physically very demanding. And you know, a girl wearing jeans ran up to us and grabbed our drum that weighs over 20 kg, and we didn't have time to blink before she put it on stage, because it's her job, and she loves it, and she doesn't care that it's hard.

Oksana Lyniv

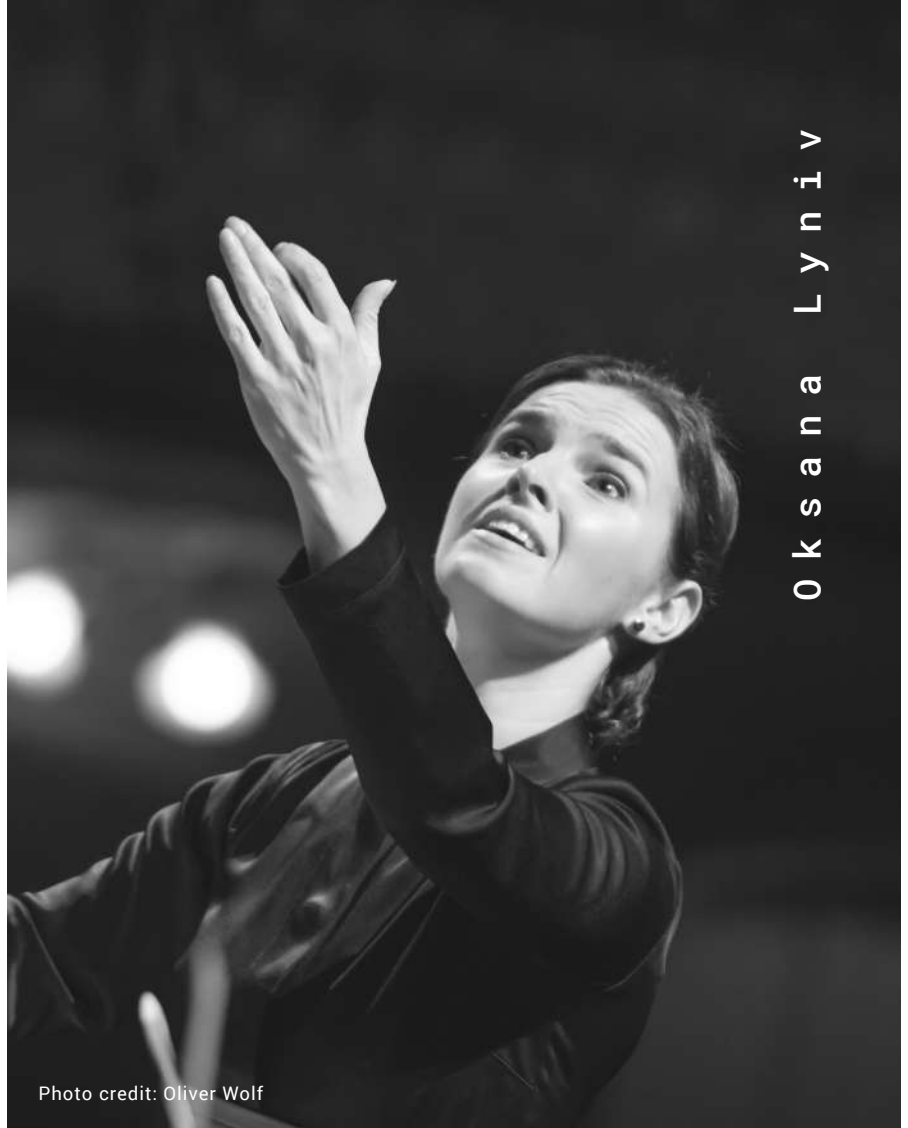


Photo credit: Oliver Wolf

Oksana Lyniv is one of the most famous conductors in the world, the founder and the art director of LvivMozArt festival, founder of the Youth Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, the Main Conductor of Graz Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra, ambassador and promoter of Ukrainian academic musical art.

We talked to her about the place of a woman in the conducting profession, the trends in classical music, and how young musicians should develop their careers.

Natalia Popudribko: You are the first woman who became a conductor of Graz Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra. Was it a special occasion for the team? Or is Austrian society ready for such appointments? And did the musicians need to adapt to it in any way?

Oksana Lyniv: I took part in the general competition. There were seven of us in the final round, and I was the only woman. Of course, for me it was a victory – I had the most points in general competition that was

followed by voting of the entire orchestra.. It was also a surprise and a certain challenge. Before that, I worked for 4 years as an assistant to general director of Bavarian State Opera. So, I needed to transfer from being an assistant to being the main conductor.

Did it take some getting used to for the orchestra? I'm sure it did, but not because I was a woman, but because I was a new person behind the conductor's stand. This means a different style, a different personality, a

different way of working, communicating, and making music. The previous main conductor had worked for 8 years. So, of course, he had very close contact with the entire group – he knew everybody by their names, this has already been a personal relationship in a way. And then suddenly there is me, a new person.

N.P.: In the recent years, there is a tendency towards more women conductors. In your opinion, is this a change in gender stereotypes, or is it the need for musical directors of a new kind?

O.L.: It's both. Gender stereotypes change as well. They say that a conductor's stand is the last male stronghold. I was shocked by the stories that I heard when I came to study to Germany. There were very few girls in our department. When I arrived, my professor told us that until as late as the 1980s there was a stereotype in Germany that a woman's role is limited to three things – Kinder, Küche, Kirche. Until the 1980s, there were almost no women in leading orchestras. I mean, we are saying that Europe is a progressive place, but it's not like that.

In recent years, there has been an enormous revolution. The fact that there are women now behind the conductor's stand is indeed a radical change of a gender stereotype. By the way, in 2016, the Ministry of Culture of Germany conducted a large study. They have been researching gender balance in all cultural spheres for a year, and the results were shocking. For instance, women who are doing the same job, may receive up to 25% less pay than men. And while mostly men are commissioned for feature films, women are hired to do short films or films in less prestigious categories. This was the same for publishing books or government orders for compositions.

The issue of introducing quotas and the need to have stricter control over allocation of funds was discussed at the state level. And now, we think that we live in the 21st century, but in fact we are not that far gone from the Middle Ages. There are only 3 women conductors in the entire Germany with over 100 orchestras.

N.P.: Are they prominent figures in the profession? What kind of orchestras do they conduct for?

O.L.: There are no women at all in top A class orchestras. There are three women in small German orchestras.

The same applies for allocation of professorship in conservatories and academies. There are only few women who conquer the world and make successful careers.

Accordingly, this changes the emphasis for the society. I've had many interviews with questions such as: "What do you think about a woman behind the conductor's stand?". There were even several scandals. For instance, the Main Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Vasyl Petrenko said in an interview that he doesn't accept women behind a conductor's stand, because they distract musicians from playing with their sexiness and attractiveness. Then, the Main Conductor of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra Mariss Jansons was careless enough to answer "Women on the podium are not my cup of tea" to a similar question. The press criticized them both profusely. Poor Jansons had to apologize, and the orchestra also issued a comment.

This year, Deutsche Zeitung compared the progressiveness of all orchestras by the number of female conductors that they invited. And wrote that Munich Philharmonic Orchestra had invited three, while Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra invited none, and no wonder, having such leadership in charge.

N.P.: Do you consider yourself a feminist?

O.L.: I don't even know. When I am not at work, I like being a regular woman, receive attention and be weak. I don't like being in control and give orders 24/7. I like strong men and communication with strong personalities. However, what I do in my career is a contribution to development of women's work.

N.P.: You were nominated for Women in Arts Award in 2019. Do you think that the industry needs separate awards for women?

O.L.: We do need such ratings. In general, in Ukraine we are a little bit behind in this regard. Last season, my name and my photograph were published on the cover pages of leading German newspapers Die Welt, Die Zeit, a professional edition for musicians Das Orchester, and in Ukraine the press is behind in this regard. In Ukraine, classical music is considered niche, and I think that the more people find out about successes of people in this area, the better.

Oksana Zabuzhko



Oksana Zabuzhko is a writer, poet and public intellectual who won the 2019 Shevchenko Award. Born in Lutsk, she lives and works in Kyiv. She made her poetry debut as a teenager in the 1970s, but the first poetry book was only published during the perestroika. She graduated from the Department of Philosophy and defended her PhD dissertation in Philosophy. In 1996, Oksana Zabuzhko's first novel, *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex*, was published, and in 2006 was named the most influential book in the 15 years of independent Ukraine. She is the author of more than 20 books of poetry, prose, philosophical essays, and articles. Her books have been translated into over 15 languages.

Olena Huseinova: Is your Shevchenko Award the first prize a woman received for philosophical essays? Does this mean that Ukrainian literary community has finally recognized a woman as an intellectual?

Oksana Zabuzhko: The Ukrainian tradition of recognizing women intellectuals is generally complicated. But that doesn't mean there weren't any. For example, Natalka Kobrynska. She is almost not published, not studied, but she is worth even being translated to foreign languages, since she is a very interesting thinker. And at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, she warned of the things that Julia Kristeva only wrote about in the 1970s. For

instance, that gender stereotypes are not localized. Natalia Kobrynska's texts should have been included into philosophy and gender studies courses. However, that never happened.

But when it comes to myself, I would say that in this sense I am not from the Ukrainian tradition. I came here from Virginia Woolf.

O.H.: When did you read Virginia Woolf?

O.Z.: When I was about 20. First, I read her essays, then the prose. And much later I read Hannah Arendt.

O.H.: Such books, were they available here at that time?

O.Z.: Yes, they were. They seemed innocent. There were specialized stores of foreign books, one of which was on then Chervonoarmiyska St. Such books cost tons of money – a book at the price of jeans. The selection was not that wide, but you still were able to find something for yourself. I received the full collection of Sylvia Plath's poetry from my first husband as a gift. We just came to that store and he bought me that book. It was a good Penguin edition, and I still have it at my home.

O.H.: Was there a circle where you could discuss Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath?

O.Z.: That circle was close to non-existent.

We knew it was risky. Everyone knew there was a snitch in every class at the University. Therefore, not all people who read Virginia Woolf knew each other.

It is happiness to see groups come together and give birth to certain ideas – it only became possible during the perestroika. And I can't help mentioning Solomiia Pavlychko in this regard. She was a kind of Socrates for us.

O.H.: You mentioned Solomiia Pavlychko, and it is an opportunity to talk about the solidarity of Ukrainian female writers.

O.Z.: Unlike men, it is difficult for groups of women to establish themselves as institutions. Many books have already been written about it. Thanks a million, to Western feminists and University departments who were considered freaks but who gave us all these lessons of creating institutions and solidarity.

And even now, these institutions are not built that easily. Solidarity is not that simple for us... That is something for what we had to descend into the dark, to grasp our way there. When you start writing, you understand that to try to live up to certain standards. At first, I understood it by myself, and then I read from Virginia Woolf's books that the rules and standards are male rather than universal. And you have to prune yourself to be recognized, not marginalized.

Now there are different feelings and ideas among Ukrainian writers. And it happened because our generation gained this consciousness, we better understood who we were. After all, we did achieve

something. And in this sense, Solomiia Pavlychko was our ideologist: she opened to the academic environment the methodology of feminist analysis that worked so well with classical Ukrainian literature and the way female authors were writing. But Solomiia did even more, because she was a life-long big sister. I had a very hard time overcoming losing her as a friend, it was a personal loss. I lost my conversation partner. Yurii Sheveliov called it a co-thinker. I lost my co-thinker.

O.H.: Thanks to Solomiia Pavlychko, it became respectable to present yourself as a feminist, didn't it?

O.Z.: Yes. She tried hard and crystallized a generation. The Ukrainian culture of silence has roots in our colonial history. To forgo discussions, to learn not to notice, to bypass... Solomiia was post-colonial. She taught the entire cultural circle the tradition of critical and polemical response.

O.H.: It is difficult for women in literature to build networks. And even to admit the influence that predecessors had on them. You consistently emphasize these influences. And make Lesya Ukrainka the central character in this sense.

O.Z.: We are lucky to have Lesya Ukrainka. When the *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex* was published in Sweden, I went there to present this book. And after all the festivities, I was drinking wine with my Swedish friend. She asked what I was working on and I said I was writing a book about Lesya Ukrainka. She said she didn't know anything about her, so I started telling. My friend doesn't know my language and culture, we both spoke a foreign language. And she finally says, "How lucky you are. She's a treasure." Indeed, we all are lucky to have Lesya Ukrainka. Not just a brilliant writer, a thinker, but also a role model.

O.H.: I would like to mention your poem *Mirrors*. Ms. Merzhynska. It is a kind of dystopia. And Lesya Ukrainka appears here in the context of everyday life.

O.Z.: This poem is not quite about Lesya Ukrainka. These are my settlements with life. That was the time when my first marriage was coming to an end, and I was thinking of whether to stay in the warm socially acceptable embrace of everyday life. But suddenly you have this feeling of emptiness, and you jump into uncertainty. And that was an attempt to decide for myself humbly comparing myself to Lesya Ukrainka.

Oleksandra Koval



Oleksandra Koval is a community activist and a member of PEN Ukraine. She was born in Lviv. She graduated from Lviv Institute of Forest Technology. Since 1995, she has been the founder and president of Lviv Publishers' Forum. In 2016, Oleksandra Koval received Vasyl Stus Award.

Since 2018, she has been the head of the Ukrainian Book Institute. Lives in Kyiv.

Yelyzaveta Kuzmenko: Do you consider yourself a feminist?

Oleksandra Koval: Of course. All normal people are feminists in our times. The only thing is that I've never had a problem with gender equality in my surroundings.

Y.K.: That being said, feminism is a proactive position, so how did it become active for you, if you were not impacted by inequality?

O.K.: Do you want to know why I hire girls rather than guys? If there are two good CVs of a young woman and a young man, I will hire a young woman to improve her confidence.

Y.K.: Your work with books started in the position of a deputy editor in Lviv-based Fenix publishing house. It was in the early 1990s. At the time, what was the attitude to women who were working in this sphere?

O.K.: It was a private publishing house that had only several employees, so there was no one else to work in this position.

Y.K.: How did you get to thinking that you need to step up and take responsibility? Did you just say "I'll do it"?

O.K.: Yes, my entire life, or at least since the Ukraine gained independence, I started to work in publishing, this was exactly what happened. I took initiative, nobody appointed me to these roles. I appointed myself.

Y.K.: And how did your 1990s Lviv community react to that?

O.K.: Well, nobody cared. I generally don't remember any limitations for women in Lviv community of that time, however they must have been there. I understand it now from the stories of my parents, my dad in particular. My dad has always told me: "Deputy department head is as far as you can go."

Y.K.: Why did he have so little faith in you?

O.K.: It wasn't because I was a girl. It was because my father was repressed. He knew that there was no bigger career out there for a child of repressed parents... Deputy department head – this was what I grew up with... This was my limit, my personal ceiling. It took me a lot of internal effort to see that I could do something more than be a deputy department head.

Our family wasn't particularly patriarchal, because since I was little my parents told me and my sister that I shouldn't entirely rely on help of a hypothetical husband. Instead, we have always heard that we needed to get a profession and be independent.

I studied at the Forest Technology Institute, in the Department of Mechanics, there were 5 girls and 95 boys there, and everybody paid so much attention to me. However, they all laughed at me too, because I never stood closer than five meters to any heavy machine.

Y.K.: How did you end up in publishing then?

OK: I haven't worked according to my major a day in my life. When I recall the Forest Technology Institute now, I realize that I learned a lot there. In particular, persistence. To learn something, to achieve something, you need to repeat the same action many times.

With publishing, however... I have just had a baby back then, and I needed to feed it. And then one of my friends turned up with an idea to publish Hrushevskiyi. We never did publish Hrushevskiyi, because it was rather difficult, but published several other books, and that was how it all started. I haven't left publishing after that. Even when I was already trying to raise money for the Publishers' Forum and someone told me: "Listen, you are a great organizer, but you are doing some silly things now. You better organize us a boxing match." That was a Kuchma-era public official in Lviv oblast council who said this to me in the late 1990s or early 2000s.

Y.K.: New spelling rules for Ukrainian have been officially adopted, and they include gender-specific feminitives. What is your attitude to the use of feminitives? Will this help women in literature and publishing to be more visible?

O.K.: I have a very positive attitude to any kind of changes in the language and spelling rules. Language is alive, it changes, and we can't now be using the vocabulary from the early or middle 20th century. It would have been kind of funny and retrogressive... Regarding feminitives, sometimes they amuse me, and sometimes they sound naturally...

Going back to the topic of gender equality, people are not entirely educated, and evidently they don't know what 'gender' means. I don't think that any adequate person can be against gender equality.

Olesya Ostrovska-Lyuta



Photo credit: Povaha/Oksana Tysovska

Olesya Ostrovska-Lyuta is the Executive Director of Mystetskyi Arsenal, art manager and curator. She was born in Lviv and graduated from the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Worked in the Renaissance Foundation, the Soros Centre for Contemporary Art, and other cultural institutions. In 2014, was the first deputy of Yevhen Nyshchuk, the Minister of Culture at the time. Since 2016, has been the head of the Mystetskyi Arsenal team.

Iryna Slavinska: How important are professional awards in the field, in particular those aimed exclusively at women?

Olesya Ostrovska-Lyuta: When it comes to professional awards, they definitely are important, because they

set some kind of a bar, some kind of a standard. They demonstrate what is good, what is acceptable, what people could look up to. It is important that such awards have enough weight, are accepted enough by the professional community – then they have value. Then they work as guidelines for the entire industry.

Should there be the ones only for women? I don't know. On the one hand, yes, because women require more visibility. On the other hand, when it comes to culture, this is already the industry that employs predominantly women. Many important figures in culture are women or groups of women. For instance, there are more women on Knyzhkovyi Arsenal ('Book Arsenal') team than men.

On the other hand, women's rights in popular discourse is something very new to Ukraine. I remember very well my first exhibition as a curator in 2003. This exhibition, *Tenderness*, was feminist and was dedicated to a woman's role. At the time when I had this exhibition, it was very exotic.

I.S.: I don't doubt that.

O.O.L.: When I compare my experience from 2019 and my experience from 2003, I see a considerable difference and a change in context. The societal discourse has changed, both what is said about women and what women say themselves, including the so-called successful women. But it is one thing what women from cultural and intellectual community say, and an entirely different thing what women from government, parliament, business or law background say.

There was a time when these voices were not even partially represented in a conversation about women's rights. The Women in Arts award also evidences that this discourse became much stronger. This is a positive sign.

I.S.: If we compare the situation in the early 2000s and now – what has changed, why did the discourse on women and women's rights change?

O.O.L.: It is a very boring answer, but I think that a great role here is played by the media and by female journalists. Once female journalists adopted the discourse of the intellectual academic community, became a part of this discourse and started talking to other women about being a woman in Ukrainian society, this discourse stopped being exotic and became normalized. It remained a thing for the 'enlightened', but now this was a much larger circle.

Gradually, women themselves stopped being ashamed of being feminists.

I.S.: In your personal biography, was there a moment of transition, transformation, when you stopped being ashamed of calling things by this word, 'feminism'?

O.O.L.: I don't recall such a moment, as I started studying humanities at Kyiv Mohyla Academy when I was just 16.

I.S.: No chance to avoid the conversation about gender and feminism.

O.O.L.: Yes, because you are already inside this discourse. When you read classic works by Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva and others during your first or second year at university, you behave differently. Besides, I started working at the Soros Centre for Contemporary Art almost immediately. This was work at the institution that was a part of a larger network. This was how I found myself in an international setting, where all these ideas worked in a different way. That's why I just started calling myself a feminist at some point.

Maybe, this is a characteristic of my career, that there were no sharp transitions. The same as I gradually realized that I was a feminist, I also gradually realized that I was a leader. When I worked in the CCA with Jerzy Onuch, I gradually became his deputy. And this already meant that I headed something. You gradually grow into this role, and it just becomes something normal and usual for you.

I.S.: Did you ever get a chance to think about what it means to be a leader, a woman who leads her own team? Instead of using gender-specific job titles, we could just speak about this through the metaphor of leadership, right? Have you ever given it a thought?

O.O.L.: For one, I think that a leader is a person who creates opportunities for others. The task of the leader is to create a situation where the others can grow. And let's be honest, this automatically also builds up the leader's position. When the team grows, everybody grows. On the other hand, this means to be an example – as much as you can, being a human. Roughly speaking, if you tell everybody to turn off the heaters because they will overload the electrical network, your office must also be cold. If you demand that everybody arrives by a certain time, you also must be there by that time. A leader sets a certain framework.

Ruslana Khazipova

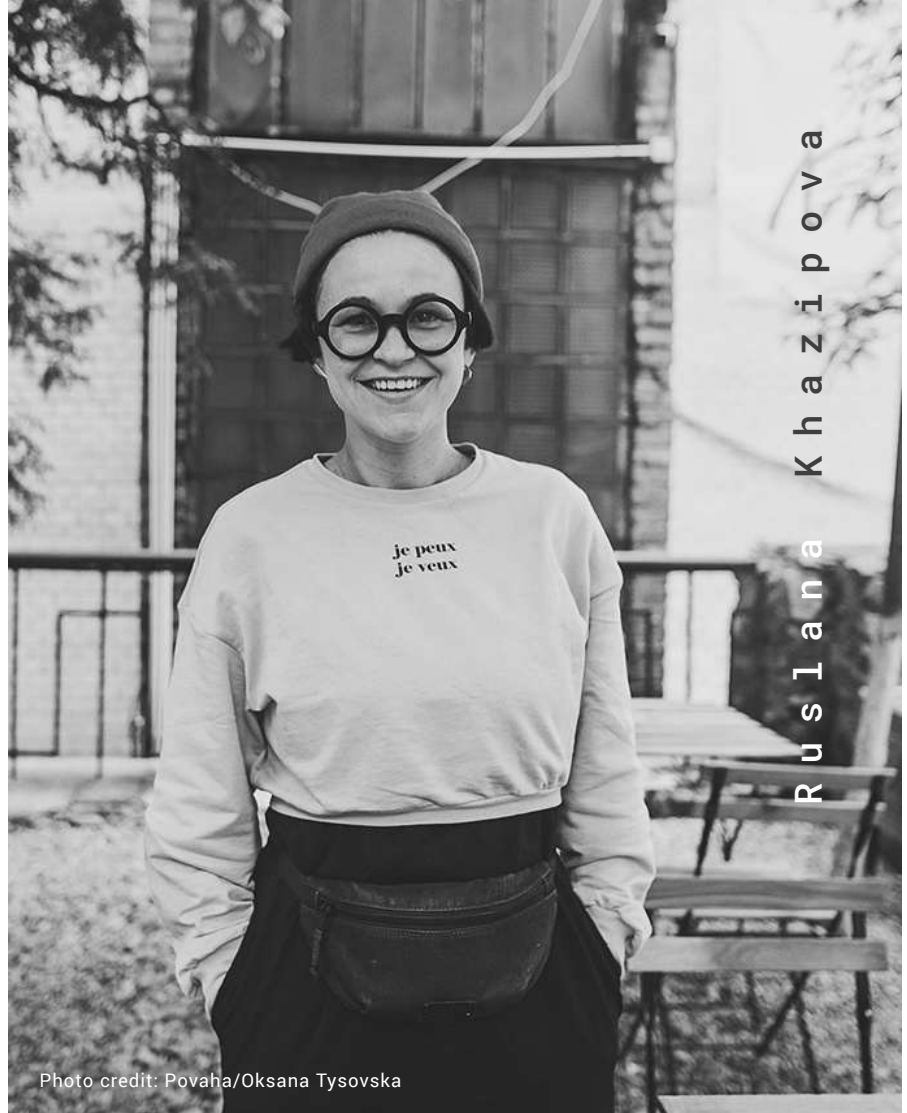


Photo credit: Povaha/Oksana Tysovska

Ruslana Khazipova is a member of Dakh Daughters band, as well as an actress at Vlad Troitskyi's Dakh theater. In 2018 in a screen version of Voroshylovgrad, a novel by Serhiy Zhadan, Ruslana Khazipova played one of the leading roles. In 2019, Dakh Daughters created a soundtrack and appeared in the movie Hutsulka Ksenia.

Iryna Slavinska: Are women in Ukrainian art visible?

Ruslana Khazipova: Of course, women are visible. I work in a group of six women myself. Although we mostly remain in our alternate space, alternate reality. There are strong female figures in Ukrainian art. Strength is not defined by sex, it is not governed by sex, only by a person. The ones who want to have it – do.

I.S.: You often attend public events together with your husband and son. Please tell us about your experience of motherhood, as a person who works in art.

R.K.: One thing that I realized from various websites about children is that only mention moms when they

write about parents: a baby has a mom, and mom's hands, mom's eyes, mom's voice. I also read that you should bathe a baby in the evening, because it is when dad comes back from work and can spend some time with them. And I understood that I don't live like this, and that our dad is as much of a mom for our son as I am. When I go on a tour, I can leave our son with him and not worry about them. And he is a mom just like me, he just doesn't have boobs.

I.S.: And yet, in the moment when the first dirty nappy happened, you had to make some kind of a deal about these things, didn't you?

R.K.: This is the whole point of a union between a man and a woman. That all these things are expressed in a harmonious way. Of course, there are agreements, there are systems and dogmas, but we try to live beyond it all.

Otherwise, it won't be fair. We present our viewers our pure art, we are saying that Ukrainians are free, that we can express ourselves during the war and are able to be competitive in the global market. If my life is not like that, who will believe me when I speak from stage?

Vlad Troitskyi has always told us that theater starts with you, from what and how you think, what you eat, who you talk to, and what you read. Theater is something that your own everyday life consists of.

I.S.: How can you structure this reality? It is not always perfect.

R.K.: We call it a macrocosm. And by 'we' I mean DAKH, Dakh family. All of us are small bubbles of Dakh family. We have a joint desire to create our macro and micro world.

In this chaos around us, you need to find your home, your calm and your inner peace. If you are not okay with yourself, you won't find your calm anywhere. People go abroad looking for a better fate, but they won't be able to find a better fate, because they can't agree with themselves.

I.S.: Please tell us a little bit more about how you started your career?

R.K.: Since I was a child, since I learned talking, saying my name, I was telling people that I am Ruslana Khazipova and I am a gypsy artist, that's it.

I.S.: Just like that?

R.K.: Just like that.

I.S.: Was there maybe an afterschool theater club?

R.K.: No, there were no clubs. I mean, there were plenty, and I didn't like any of that. For instance, I couldn't start dancing in a dance class before we had spent three months learning a movement. But it took me one and a half lessons to learn it. And zero career growth the entire remaining time.

That's why, I was an independent person, I was invited to host celebrations in cultural centers in Kryvyi Rih.

All people at the cultural center were my 800 people, they gave me strength and motivation. I love going up on stage and looking them into the eyes. I didn't study very well at school, but I was a leader, a school president, attended those leadership meetings. This status freed me from many tedious things.

And then, I entered the Theater, Cinema, and Television University... And it was the same as dancing lessons. And I was so disappointed, that they all were not real, that they didn't care about the audience. And then, Les Taniuk invited Vlad Troitskyi to teach at the university – and our lives changed.

I.S.: Did he have his own class?

R.K.: Yes, we were his class. And we had the worst grades in the history of university, because we occupied ourselves with art and not studies.

I.S.: What was it like for you to live in the environment that was often made of women? You have this song, Baby Babylon...

R.K.: That's why we keep saying that we don't have a gender issue, we have a human issue. It is an issue of human qualities, attention, love, very ordinary things that it is impossible to live without. We are oriented on a collective consciousness. It is a lot of work.

I.S.: Have you ever felt support from you female colleagues?

R.K.: Of course, and that's what I am talking about, because without it we wouldn't have been able to do anything. Zero collective consciousness if there isn't anything like this. Sisterhood or nothing.

I.S.: Does generation gap impact art and artistic life?

R.K.: I am always asked if an artist has anything to do with what is going on in the country. With the understanding that the artist may be politically involved. And I say that this is inseparable: the country is living through a revolutionary leap, and this is not being politically involved, but a tectonic change that happens in statehood, in national consciousness, it has nothing to do with politics, politics is only a part of this process. What inspires us to create, what inspires us to design this further, transform and then design again, and again transform, and again design.

Rymma Ziubina



Photo credit: Povaha/Oksana Tysovska

Rymma Ziubina is a Ukrainian actress and television presenter. She has played more than 50 roles in theater and 90 roles in films and television. The Nest of the Turtledove (2017), starring Ziubina, has received international recognition. Rymma Ziubina was recognized as the best actress in recent years in Shot in Ukraine rating in 2019. In addition to her professional career, the actress is an active citizen in her daily life.

We talked about politics in the arts, relationship with feminism and the role of men in women's emancipation.

Kateryna Matsiupa: In the world of art, you can hear from time to time that creative work should stay out of politics. What do you think?

Rymma Ziubina: I never shared this idea because I live a different life, I have been quite active since childhood.

When I was a pioneer, I was the chair of board of our squad and the head of pioneer city headquarters. I was always an activist. I was promised a great political future, I was persuaded by some teachers that I do not need to be an actor, it is worth enrolling in the Department of History at Zakarpattia University and

that the Komsomol City Committee is waiting for me there from my second year of studies. I have always been a fighter for justice, making good speeches – this is a public speaking skill, which is close to acting, and the Communist Party was looking for such people. It is great that everything fell apart just in time. My dream never changed since childhood – I wanted to become an actress.

K.M.: You are also a television presenter and repeatedly state that journalism is your lifelong dream. Would you like to say something about this dream?

R.Z.: This is not quite true. Before my exams to enter the theater university, I needed a medical clearance. I passed all the doctors, and in the ENT office I heard: “You have incomplete vocal fold closure, you don’t fit, you will never be an actress, I will not clear you.” In complete disbelief, I then started thinking what else I could devote myself to. Moreover, I also had a fear of the acting profession – that I would not manage, would not cope, would not enter the University, because I had no family members or acquaintances in this field, I was going there alone.

Journalism seemed similar to acting. I remember sobbing when I came home with the doctor’s conclusion. And my mom... Nobody ever forbade me to pursue anything, but this choice was very much not welcome. The acting profession implied having no family or children.

People in other professions tend to think that to get a role, you must take indecent steps to obtain it. And for sure, my parents were afraid that their daughter would get into some trouble, and they wished me a happy fate. But then, my mom supported me, she said, “Rymma, my darling, if you want to become an actress, you will definitely be an actress one day.”

K.M.: Do you consider yourself a feminist?

R.Z.: For sure, I stand for the equality of women and men in political, social, economic sectors. Feminism to me is not a question of who in the family does dishes and cooks meals. It is for instance about equal number of women and men in the Parliament. As for my own life, economic independence is a sign of my strength. Some people say, ‘Oh, I’m so tired of being strong’, and I’m actually not tired of being strong. Yes, I’m strong, and I like it. All my life I have been making my own living.

I have never taken any money from any man in any relationship. Therefore, as far as money is concerned, I am an absolute feminist. And concerning household chores, in my family, it is not a matter of gender, it is about mutual respect and care. In my family, the one who has free time and who has some energy cooks meals or does the cleaning. I can have some free time, a day off. But if I have been filming for 25 days with five hours of sleep, then nobody will demand that I do house chores, and for that I am very grateful to my husband and my son.

Being a strong woman does not mean that you have the right to walk over a man. It is almost not discussed, but there is a problem of domestic violence against men. Humiliation, transactional attitude, manipulation – I believe its unacceptable. A man is not a money-making machine. When I see emotional vampirism in relationships, then I’m not a feminist, I’m a human rights activist. I stand for justice.

K.M.: Can you recall some of your gender stereotypes that you eventually identified and overcame?

R.Z.: I do not understand when a man can’t cook, when he comes home and waits for two hours for his wife to come home from work and cook dinner. It is so weird to me. Life is changing us, our relationships, and changes things, my attitude towards cooking has changed. Yes, at the beginning I used to bake Napoleon cake for my husband. I had such moments in life. I have a son, and we do the cleaning of our apartment by ourselves, we don’t hire a cleaning lady. Because when Danyyil started to grow up, I thought that I didn’t want the stereotype in his head that house chores are woman’s work. A chain of thought – first I do it, then a cleaning lady, and then his wife will do it? My son knows how to cook and clean.

We have a tradition in our family to spend weekends or holidays together, the three of us. But my husband and I still find time to have time only for the two of us, because I think it is necessary to keep the family. But I do not often go to the parties with my husband, and I think it is fine, because my husband does not like parties, posing for pictures, red carpets – it annoys him. Why will I ever force him? To show that I have a husband? I do not consider it necessary to prove something to someone. I appreciate and respect my husband’s dislike for socializing and parties. This is what I have overcome in myself.

Sofia Dyak



Photo credit: Povaha/Oksana Tysovska

Sofia Dyak is the Head of the Center for Urban History of East Central Europe since 2010. She received a degree in history from Ivan Franko Lviv National University, MA in History from Central European University in Budapest, and a degree in Sociology from the Institute of Sociology and Philosophy of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. Her scientific interests include: post-war urban history, the practical aspects of heritage, and city branding in Eastern Europe.

We talk to Sofia Dyak about the place of women in history, the first female art curators in Lviv in the 19th century, exhibitions of the Center for Urban History, and why a certain sphere does not become weaker if women join it.

Yelyzaveta Kuzmenko: As a historian, you work a lot with archives. Even this conversation is happening in the Central State Archive of the Literature and Art Museum of Ukraine. What do the archives tell us about gender?

Sofia Dyak: Historical archives show us that there is more in them about men, because they were in power positions at the time. However, when we start digging, it leads us to managers, and who do you think worked on those projects?

When it comes to cultural products, there are, of course, authors and co-authors, but there is also this entire arena of collective work. I am a historian, so it is a question for me, whether we write the history of the great, or also the history of processes that may help us understand the processes that we are living today. In which case, society looks more horizontal, different from the picture where “there is a great man and nobody visible behind him.” However, it is not only about men, it is in general about the understanding of “what it takes to make things happen.”

Y.K.: On the website of the Center for Urban History, I saw information about an interesting project – an interactive map of Female Writers of the Interwar and Soviet Lviv. What is this project? How is it related to women in Ukrainian literature?

S.D.: Historians have this question “Where do we begin the story?”. And depending on where we begin it, the view on the entire story changes. This is the Jewish summer school project that we have had for 10 years already, and each year we have a new take on things. So, one year we approached it from the perspective of an art critic and poet Debora Vogel who was born and was killed in Lviv. She is an example of a minority point of view, which doesn’t mean it’s any less important, it’s just hidden.

And this anonymity may be the result of gender, poverty, physical ability, or sexual orientation. She had several of these factors at once, because she was a woman and a Jew at the same time. Her take is therefore very interesting. This is the perspective of an interwar Lviv. Debora Vogel supported cooperation among the Ukrainian, Jewish and Polish communities, and in that she was the matroness of art who promoted collaboration of artists of different nationalities.

Y.K.: Several years ago, there was a special exhibition at the Center for Urban History titled Home: A Century of Change that studied the history of housing throughout the 20th century, in particular, its cultural and social aspects, as well as political and ideological contexts. What does home tell us about gender?

S.D.: The exhibition is speaking about A Century of Change, as in these relative one hundred years more

people received a home. And this was an important change. Now, it is not obligatory for a woman to have a husband in order to have a home of her own. Before that, the most they could get was a part of a room that needed to be maintained, heated, laundry done. And all of it was a woman’s job.

In general, society should be fair. Not equal, because we have already tried that, but fair. And now when we have different improvements in our everyday life, we also see how it changes the role of men. New home appliances, new advertising to target women, which also attracted more men to do household chores.

Our home impacts us, and we impact it, because we create it together. But let’s remember how we see home... If it is tidy, then the mistress of the house is good, and if it’s not, the mistress is bad. It is always about the woman, nobody judges men like that. And if we reverse these phrases and make them about men, this will change the context a lot.

We also had an exhibition about sexuality, covering 19th and 20th century. It had a bed and playing cards, too. We focused not only on Halychyna, but also on the eastern part of Austro-Hungarian empire and Western part of the Russian Empire. One of the things that was happening at the time – trafficking women through port cities. From there, women were taken to New York and Latin America, for example, Buenos Aires, where there is even a cemetery of women who ended up there. The exhibition is also about the body and its codification. Yes, this is not your classical Ukrainian history, but at least we have an opportunity to talk about this now.

Y.K.: Does it mean that a certain sphere becomes weaker if more women join it? I mean, is it perceived as ‘easy’ or ‘weak’ if there are more women in it?

S.D.: On the one hand, this stereotype still persists. For instance, there are more men in politics and more women in culture. However, I think that the cultural sphere is very active today, and in a way it is even stronger than education and science. Culture is also more dynamic than humanities, and it is very sad, because to have good culture you need to have good research. In general, we have more women in culture, but this sphere is not weak, it is strong.

Sofia Andrukhovych



Sofia Andrukhovych was born in Ivano-Frankivsk and lives in Kyiv. Author of the prose books *Milena's Summer* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2002), *Old People* (Ivano-Frankivsk: Lileya-NV, 2003), *Their Men's Women* (Ivano-Frankivsk: Lileya-NB, 2005), *Salmon* (Kyiv: Nora-Druk, 2007), *Felix Austria* (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2014), and a children's book, *The Constellation of Chicken* (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2016).

She is currently working on a new novel. She also works as a translator, translating from English and Polish. She has already translated *European Woman* by Manuela Gretkowska (Nora-Druk, 2006), *Prince Caspian and The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by Clive Lewis (Prospekt, 2008), together with Viktor Morozov translated *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* by J.K. Rowling (A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha), and also translated *Never Let Me Go* by Nobel prize winner Kazuo Ishiguro (Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2016).

Sofia Andrukhovych has received Gaude Polonia scholarship twice. In 2014, she received Lviv Publishers' Forum special prize for her novel, *Felix Austria*. She also received BBC Book of the Year award for the same novel

the same year, and in 2015, this novel received an award from the Lesya and Petro Kovalevy Fund. Also in 2015, Sofia received Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski Literary Prize. *Felix Austria* was translated into German, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Croatian, and French languages.

In 2017, it was announced that Ukrainian company FILM.UA will make *Felix Austria* into a movie. The movie will be titled *Devoted*. It is directed by Khrystyna Syvolap, and is expected to premiere in 2020.

In 2017, *The Constellation of Chicken* by Sofia Andrukhovych and Maryana Prokhasko made the list of book recommendations for children's and teenage literature *White Ravens* 2017.

Tetiana Maliarchuk



Tetiana Maliarchuk was born in Ivano-Frankivsk, lived in Kyiv until 2011, and later moved to Vienna. Author of the books *Adolfo's Endspiel, or A Rose for Liza* (Ivano-Frankivsk: Lileya NV, 2004), *From Top to Bottom: A Book of Fears* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2006), *How I Became a Saint* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2006), *To Speak* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2007), *Zviroslov* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2009), *Biography of an Accidental Miracle* (Kharkiv: KSD, 2012), *Oblivion* (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2016), and *MOX NOX* (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2018). Winner of BBC Book of the Year 2016 for her novel *Oblivion*.

Books by Tetiana Maliarchuk have been translated into English, Belarusian, German, Polish, Romanian, Russian, and Czech languages. In 2013, Tetiana Maliarchuk won Józef Konrad Korzeniowski Award.

After moving to Austria, Maliarchuk has been writing in German. In 2018, she won the Ingeborg Bachmann Award for her German-language text, *Frogs in the Sea*. This was how the press service of the award commented on her winning piece: "The work is about the lack of interest of the young generation to their adult relatives and the problems of a socially unequal, detached from nature, and xenophobic society."

Tetiana Maliarchuk usually refuses to give interviews, speaking her mind mostly through written columns. In the summer of 2017, she took part in the Authors' Reading Month in Lviv, where she spoke about being a writer as a profession: "Why is poetry developed in Ukraine now (and we do have beautiful poetry)? Because

poetry is easier to write – not in terms of energy, but in terms of time. Because prose is daily work. Whether you are in the mood for it or not. The mood usually comes as you progress. I think that in Ukraine (in terms of making money) this is difficult. I am a happy person. I have always been lucky to have people who help me. I don't know if I have thanked the universe enough for what it gave me – the opportunity to write. And if I write well enough – I can't be a judge of that myself. But I have been lucky. I have my room, a table and a computer. And I can write for three-four hours a day."

During the same conversation, Tetiana Maliarchuk also spoke about the importance of the issue of human rights for her: "It seems that we need to start from stable things. And human rights are stable, no matter what is going on in the country. Unless there are (enemy's) tanks here, the only thing that I am ready to fight for are human rights."

Vlada Ralko



Vlada Ralko is an artist, a representative of the Kyiv school of art. In 2001, received the award at the Ukrainian painting triennial. Participant of Ukrainian and international exhibitions and biennials. Her work was exhibited in Kyiv, Berlin, Burgenland, Prague, and New York. Member of the Union of Artists of Ukraine since 1994. Co-authored the book *Reserve. From an Idea to a Project* together with Iryna Yuferova.

Most of Vlada Ralko's work is about the human body, about what happens with it and inside it, and about what may happen and what is invisible to a regular eye, what hides not only under clothes and skin, but also beneath regular viewpoints, stereotypes, and standards.

Ana More: Does the society have any requirements for artists? Such as to promote tolerance?

Vlada Ralko: In the work of an artist and in culture in general there is a certain irrational component that is not governed by ideology or market. However, since the Soviet times, the artistic language in the post-Soviet countries has a rather strange status because it is considered that it is needed for something or that it has to speak about something urgent. The artist has this obligation imposed on them, although in fact the obligation is their internal intention, natural will that is not governed from the outside. Totalitarian ideology has removed freedom and will from artistic circulation, and even still artists often care about external instructions or being useful. Demand for equality is one of the slogans of the French revolution, but the problem lies in literal interpretation of both generalized calls for action and works of art. Society often tries to involve art as therapy or as social practice. However, these awkward attempts undermine the understanding of art as a very separate experience and vision that is entirely different from everything else.

Art does not impact the level of tolerance, art itself is the basis and the prerequisite for tolerance to exist at all. All of my works without exception point to the area where a person can remember what else they have except instincts.

A.M.: Do you encounter any stereotypes against women?

V.R.: I used to be asked if I find it hard to live with a husband who is an artist and if he often limits my time in the workshop, because obviously I am a woman and have to do things about the house, not hang around in the workshop doing some strange things. It is always funny to me. I realized very early on that a woman, and any person in general, has to make choices since childhood.

I remember how in the Soviet Union they used to say: "all doors are open before the young people." And I remember that my parents used to tell me then – no, not all doors are open. You are seven now, and you won't be a rhythmic gymnast at this age, because it means vigorous training since the age of 5, and every hour, every day some doors close before you. You need to understand the passage of time, to understand how to use it, what to choose, what to say no to. And if you choose something – you are saying no to something

else. I have certain freedoms, I have certain limitations, but if I feel that someone wants to take away even a bit of my freedom, I will fight for it.

A.M.: What freedoms and limitations do you have as a woman? How do you fight back when some of the freedoms are taken away from you?

V.R.: I don't think that freedoms that are fundamental for all other members of humanity should be in some way different for me, since having certain sex cannot regulate this general law. I feel incredible indignation when women who are supposed to have equal rights and obligations as men in their activities are speculating on peculiarities of their nature and demand privileged attitude to them because of their physiological difference. This is the phenomenon of mixing traditional beliefs about gender roles and equality when a woman seemingly demands satisfaction for the entire history of discrimination against her sex, thus legitimizing again her different position that she has seemingly overcome. I deal with freedoms and obligations regarding women internally. It could be because my work as an artist limits socialization and in a way defines my social circle. To be honest, I have never considered my special position in my own work.

A.M.: What is feminism for you, and do you consider yourself a feminist? Why yes or why not?

V.R.: A woman should demand equality not only for women, but for all people whose rights are being violated because of a difference in their nature, because of things that they have no influence on. That's why, I have mixed feelings about feminism. I realize that in many aspects I benefit from the achievements of the feminist movement, and if not for those, my life would have gone differently. At the same time, it is also obvious to me that equality that feminists are advocating is a rather abstract construct that if implemented literally starts to take ugly forms. I have always instinctively avoided purely female groups namely because of some kind of paradoxical infringement of rights of a woman who is equal among equals.

A.M.: Being a woman for Vlada Ralko means...?

V.R.: Understanding a female perspective as a lens that sharpens my point of view, my thinking. Realizing how my female experience fits into the picture of the human world, influences it and is influenced by it.

Yulia Fediv



Yulia Fediv is a famous cultural manager. Her career is marked by systematic work in public institutions. For instance, for a long time Yulia Fediv headed the National Bureau of Creative Europe, an EU program in Ukraine.

And since 2018, she has started her job as the Executive Director of the newly created Ukrainian Cultural Foundation where her task was to develop competition procedures and transparent funding of cultural initiatives in Ukraine. This job was important as it offered, for the first time, a transparent mechanism for providing grants from the state budget to fund official and independent cultural projects.

Iryna Slavinska: Is cultural management in Ukraine a women's industry?

Yulia Fediv: To be honest, I don't think that it's a purely woman's job, but I presume that there is indeed a majority of women in this sector.

However, if you look at public sphere, it's often men there who are opinion leaders, and not women. For instance, I recently took part in the discussion about

cultural management, cultural diplomacy, expansion of culture, and except for me, there were only men in the panel. And it was noticeable that most of the questions were asked to the male part of the panel. I had some introductory words, and then I needed to ask them to give me the floor.

I.S.: Why does it often happen that women work in lower positions in cultural management? Why do they often remain deputies of their male directors?

Y.F.: The first reason is the salary. It is rather low in the culture industry, and at the same time there is a stereotype that a man should be earning more than a woman. Accordingly, women are ready to work as cultural managers, and men aren't. They would rather choose a different industry where they could earn more. The statistics for gender equality at the UCF is awful: out of 65 employees, only 4 are men.

Another reason is prestige. It is for some reason considered that it is less prestigious to work in cultural management than in project management. It's like, I better go work for a cool company that develops innovations or IT, sales, marketing.

Finally, it is somehow thought that all experts are men. The very word 'expertise' in any area is somehow associated with a man, not a woman. I could feel that when I worked in social cultural projects.

I.S.: How pervasive is everyday sexism in cultural management?

Y.F.: When there are men at the meeting, the questions are asked to them, and not to me as a representative of the UCF. Of course, age also matters here. Maybe, if I were a 45+ woman, not a 32-year-old, it would have been easier for people to perceive me as an executive director. However, I think that this will be changing. The age requirement has recently shifted considerably.

I.S.: Do you have any funny stories about it?

Y.F.: When I was a deputy of my previous director, who was not only a man, but also a German, I was responsible for fully managing one of the projects. One time, we came to a meeting with the Head of an Institute, a woman. During that meeting, I represented the project, and we started sharing the details of the presentation with the partners... Accordingly, we discussed that I will be presenting this project as the person who manages it. And then, the Head of the Institute said this remarkable thing to the director: "No, it's better if you present it, because you are a man. I think that the audience will hear you better than Yulia, because you are a man." I was 25 at the time, and everything on this project was my work, and my director didn't know anything about it. I wrote his speech myself, and after the presentation, I messaged him with prompts to help him answer the questions from the audience, because he knew little about the topic... It was the last drop for

me at the time. I wrote a resignation letter after that and left.

I.S.: Speaking of the experience of working with the EU and other international institutions, do they have better procedures and practices that allow for decreasing sexism in the workplace?

Y.F.: In international companies, there are often onboarding courses on various topics. They also have videos on gender equality, on minorities. However, I also often hear about Western Europeans or Northern Americans adopting 'Eastern European ways.' Sometimes, they adopt our practices of stereotyping and sexism. For instance, they start asking women questions at job interviews such as: "When do you plan to have children?" or "Are you married?"

I.S.: Is it easier to work with fellow women leaders?

Y.F.: In my experience, women share knowledge easier, are more open for contact and keep their cards open, and also there is very often solidarity in our job. As far as I have noticed, there is more solidarity between women than between a man and a woman in cultural management – this is what I see.

I.S.: How did you end up in this industry?

Y.F.: To be honest, I have always been rather multi-functional, one sector was not enough for me. I have always been searching, I knew I couldn't be a highly-specialized professional and choose only one direction. I have several university degrees – in international relations and law. Later, I received the third degree in Germany. This was how I combined international relations, international law, and political science.

In addition, I have never had just one job, I have always worked on two or three projects simultaneously, and when I felt that I was working only eight hours a day I started looking for an additional project. The turning point was when I moved from being a project coordinator to a higher managing position. This was at Creative Europe.

I.S.: What would you advise to other women who have courage to work in leadership positions?

Y.F.: To never think much about wanting to work in leadership positions. I mean, just do what you like, and sooner or later you will reach the required level.

Zhanna Kadyrova



Photo credit: Povaha/Oksana Tysovska

Zhanna Kadyrova is a Ukrainian artist and sculptor. She was born in 1981 in Brovary, Kyiv oblast. She now lives and works in Kyiv. Graduated from the Taras Shevchenko State Art Middle School, Sculpture Department. In 2012, received the Kazimir Malevich Award, in 2014 – the main prize of PinchukArtCentre, as well as Pulse Prize 2018 for the best individual contemporary art project at the Art Fair in Miami. Kadyrova's work was exhibited as a part of group exhibitions: twice at the Venice Biennale, as well as in Palais de Tokyo in Paris, among other important platforms.

We talked to Zhanna Kadyrova about feminism, perception of women in sculpture, reinterpreting Soviet art through the gender lens, and also about why Ukraine is not present on the world art map.

Yelyzaveta Kuzmenko: This year, you became the first Ukrainian artist whose work was exhibited in the main pavilions at the Venice Biennale. How did this happen, are there no other good artists in Ukraine?

Zhanna Kadyrova: This is an entirely different issue. Ukraine, in fact, is absent from the world map of contemporary art. I have been working with Galleria Continua in Italy, which has branches in France, China, and Cuba, for six years already, and this gallery sent my dossier to curator Ralph Rugoff. If I understand

correctly, he was just looking for good artists, and not for famous names.

Y.K.: If "Ukraine is absent on the world art map", why is this so? What are the reasons, in your opinion, that this is happening? Is it lack of funds?

Z.K.: Not only that. There is simply no strategy. I think that the Ministry of Culture should have had it. For instance, Ukraine is a country with the population of 40 million people, but we have no state contemporary art

museum. How can a country like this be present of the world art map? In Germany, there is such a museum in every town. These are all related processes.

If there is no infrastructure, there is no art. The state should be taking care of this, that's why it is good that now we have Ukrainian Cultural Foundation that started providing grants for cultural projects from the state budget. This has already impacted the situation, despite the fact that this is only the second year that UCF has been operating.

There is a new generation of collectors now, who do not simply buy themselves some art 'to hang above the sofa', but want something more experimental. However, the market in Ukraine is rather weak, so most artists have to look for extra jobs, and not fully devote themselves to their creative work. All of this makes the process slower.

Y.K.: In your creative work, you are exploring the theme of women. For instance, in your project on reinterpretation of Soviet monuments you depicted, among other things, a milkmaid with a halo. In your interview to Hromadske, you said that she looked like Mary Magdalene.

Z.K.: What's interesting is that Soviet art copied templates of sacral art, the compositions that are used in Soviet art are borrowed ones. That the difference is that in the Soviet version Lenin was depicted instead of Jesus.

I wanted to shift the attention from the political perception of these works to the fact that this is art, too. These are the works of art of very high quality. By adding a halo, I am showing that Soviet art actively destroyed religious art, and now it met the same fate. What I learn from this cycle is that historical monuments should be reinterpreted and not destroyed. I mean that there were many bad things about the Soviets, but there was also something else. For instance, during the Soviet times, women had access to education equally with men, had an opportunity to work, had more or less equal pay.

Y.K.: In your work, you use heavy materials, such as granite, and angle grinder. Have people been telling you that it is not 'a woman's work', that it is dangerous?

Z.K.: You know, I studied sculpture, although I didn't receive a university degree, I just attended a middle school specializing in art. It was considered absolutely

normal for us that there were fewer girls, because sculpture is still considered 'a man's work.'

Although I've been working with it since the second year of middle school, working with concrete for me is absolutely not a problem. If it is necessary, I simply involve some assistants. The largest team that I have worked with had 20 people. Of course, when I just started, I did everything by myself. I can work with any tools.

Y.K.: Why did you choose this major? Did you have thoughts to continue your studies at the Art Academy?

Z.K.: To be honest, it was only because there was less competition to enter. With the Art Academy – I tried to enter there several times, but I was not accepted. Even though I applied to the least popular major – Sculpture Restoration. You had to have connections to get there. If you come without 'somebody' asking for you to be accepted, you don't stand a chance. At the time, my father was already dead, and my mom worked in an entirely different sphere, so I didn't stand a chance. Now though, the Academy often presents me as their graduate. Once, we addressed it in a public statement to say that I had never studied there and had only visited their open lectures on art history a few times.

Y.K.: You worked with the theme of gender in your 2002 project Honor Board, where you posed as women and men from the Soviet times, the top workers whose portraits were displayed in the offices. Where did you get the idea?

Z.K.: This is one of my first projects. It is interesting that it was made for one of the festivals that took place near Moscow. It was exhibited in the old Soviet recreation facility. And the project was about labor and about these people. The irony was also that I created this board of honor by myself for myself. It was very natural for me at the time, I didn't even think about the gender component. Now, I am glad that this work may be interpreted in different ways, because it seems to give people room for their own interpretations.

Y.K.: Yes, because the work seems to be about the Soviet Union, but when you start looking at layers, it ends up being also about gender...

Z.K.: Yes, absolutely. In general, I am not ashamed of this work. A year ago, it was even exhibited at PinchukArt Centre again, and I also keep getting requests to provide it for this or that exhibition. Which means it is still relevant.

Viktoriya Poliova



Viktoriya Poliova is one of the most prominent Ukrainian composers from the generation of the 1960s, and one of the very few women in musical art who got recognized not only in their homeland, but also abroad. Like many of her colleagues of the same age, Poliova was looking for her unique voice and went from avantgarde and polystylism to briefness of 'sacral minimalism.' Today, her music is played on the world's most famous philharmonic stages, and her work is associated with the new Ukrainian spiritual music.

Rethinking canonical liturgical texts, providing them with new sound and a special author's vision, as well as finding lofty senses in the events of nature or life – these are the main topics that Viktoria explored in her creative work during the past decades. This work brought her prestigious Ukrainian and international awards: Taras Shevchenko National Award 2018 for the choral symphony Light Chants; Artemy Vedel Kyiv Award 2013 for the vocal cycle Ars Moriendi; 2008 award at the international contest Spherical Music (US) for the instrumental work Warm Wind; Borys Liatoshynskiy award 2005 from the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine for the cantata Simeon's Word; the first prize of the National Composer Contest Psalms of the Third Millenium 2001 for David's Psalm 50; and Levko Revutskiy Award 1995 for Missa-simphonia.

Viktoria Poliova's music language is characterized by brief use of texture that at the same times encompasses extreme ranges of dynamics and tempo, original tone colors, and broad genre palette. The works that unite

these extremes show the harmony of the world, the beauty of interaction of these two elements.

Poliova is one of the few Ukrainian artists who get invited to foreign festivals as a resident composer – an author who creates works specifically for the new concert season. For instance, in 2006, she collaborated with Menhir Music Festival Falera (Switzerland). In 2011, at the invitation of G.Kremer, became the resident composer of the 30th Lockenhaus Chamber Music Festival in Austria. In 2013, she was the resident composer at the Festival of Contemporary Music Darwin Vargas in Valparaíso, Chile.

Poliova's works are part of the repertoire of not only all national bands of Ukraine, but also well-known foreign orchestras and ensembles. For instance, her music is played by American ensemble Kronos Quarter, Baltic chamber orchestra Kremerata Baltica, Swiss band that specializes in performing the best pieces of contemporary academic music, Zurich Ensemble for New Music, and others.

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

HeForShe is a global solidarity movement for gender equality launched by UN Women which seeks to engage men and boys as agents of change. Since its launch in 2014, the movement was joined by state leaders, leading scientists, CEOs of global corporations, athletes, artists and public opinion leaders, all of whom share the values of gender equality.

The Ukrainian Institute is a state institution that represents Ukrainian culture and promotes a positive image of Ukraine internationally. Established in 2017 by the Government of Ukraine, the Institute is affiliated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Povaha is an awareness campaign against sexism in Ukrainian media and politics. The main goals for Povaha media resource are to raise public awareness of the benefits of gender equality, to challenge gender stereotypes, to combat sexism and to promote and advocate equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for men and women in all areas of the society.

HeForShe movement in Ukraine is supported by **Sweden**.

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U N W o m e n i n U k r a i n e

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