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The cultural and artistic environment of Transcarpathia in the interwar period and its influence on E. Konratovych

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Abstract. The research relevance is determined by the need to determine the impact of the complex socio-economic circumstances of the interwar period and the cultural revival of Transcarpathia on the formation of Ernest Konratovych's creative outlook. The study aimed to analyse the formation and rise of the cultural and artistic centre in Transcarpathia and to characterise its influence on E. Konratovych. The methodology involved the use of historical, biographical, analytical, and several art historical methods, which were used to comprehensively characterise the historical context and development of the cultural sphere in Transcarpathia during the specified chronological period. These methods were also used to analyse the artistic environment of E. Konratovych and demonstrate its impact on the selection of themes and motifs in the early stages of creative career. The article examined the development of the cultural environment in Transcarpathia during the interwar period, which influenced the formation of Konratovych's artistic style and the selection of subjects and themes in the early phases. A significant amount of factual material was gathered concerning the artistic and cultural life of Subcarpathian Rus in the 1920s and 1930s. The influence of the environment on Konratovych's thematic choices and the development of the plots was substantiated. The conclusions drawn from the research contribute to determination of the development of cultural and artistic processes in Transcarpathia in the 20th century. A substantial portion of the historiographical and factual material is valuable for scientific research, museum work, and the creation of textbooks, curricula, and lecture courses

Keywords: Subcarpathian Ruthenia; school of painting; society of contributors to the fine arts in Subcarpathian Ruthenia; interwar period; regional identity

INTRODUCTION

The events of the interwar period in the territory of Transcarpathia (1919-1938) were reflected in detail in the works of Ernest Konratovych (1912-2009), who began artistic career during this time. Author's world-view, shaped by the complex socio-economic conditions of the era, was embodied in several original artworks. The population of Transcarpathia was experiencing the consequences of the global economic crisis, which brought mass unemployment, emigration, famine, and

widespread social suffering. These observations were captured in early works – genre compositions depicting the destitute, beggars, and vagabonds who crowded the roads, church porches, and streets of the region. At the same time, despite the tragic realities, the 1920s-1930s marked a period of favorable conditions for the development of Transcarpathia's cultural and artistic environment. This era was characterised by a cultural revival and the renewal of national traditions. Therefore, it

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is necessary to explore the processes of formation and development of this cultural milieu to identify the key events and factors that influenced the artistic evolution of Ernest Kontratovych.

The cultural and artistic environment of 1930s Transcarpathia was examined by O. Rebryk & A. Rebryk (2024). The study demonstrated how the political and social transformations of the period influenced the formation of the local intelligentsia and shaped its engagement with the literary sphere. The artistic legacy of E. Kontratovych was analysed in the publications of A. Cheipesh (2020; 2023). The study conducted a thorough and comprehensive examination of a substantial body of the artist's oeuvre, with an emphasis on the influence of external sociocultural factors on the selection of themes and subjects in the paintings. M. Syrokhman (2020) conducted an in-depth study of the lives and creative paths of ten prominent artists of the Transcarpathian School of Painting, who successfully integrated leading European artistic trends with the painting traditions of the Carpathian region. Art historian O. Havrosh (2022) conducted research on the history, formation, and various aspects of the development of the Transcarpathian School of Painting, as well as on the individual contributions of its representatives. The studies also explored the interactions among local cultural and artistic figures, including I. Chendey, A. Erdeli, and V. Mykyta.

Art historian V. Manailo-Prykhodko (2024) consistently explored the work of Fedir Manailo, one of the leading figures of the Transcarpathian school of painting. Comprehensive studies by Manailo-Prykhodko revealed essential aspects of the artist's creative legacy and life. The interest in the art of Transcarpathian artists remains relevant. Contemporary scholars explore various aspects of the region's visual arts, particularly sacred painting. H. Sklyarenko (2021) investigated the role of the Transcarpathian School of Painting in the revival of modernist tendencies in Ukrainian art during the post-Stalinist era. T. Ivanytska (2022; 2023) examined the development of the portrait genre in Transcarpathia, focusing on the works of A. Erdeli and Y. Bokshai, with emphasis on the influence of the natural environment and European artistic education. Additionally, author explored the portrait painting of the second half of the 20th century through the works of artists such as A. Kotska, V. Mykyta, I. Ilko, and F. Seman, interpreting their artistic output as a means of personal self-identification.

The study aimed to analyse the development of the cultural and artistic centre in Transcarpathia in the interwar period and to characterise its influence on the formation and evolution of Ernest Kontratovych's creative personality.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

One of the main sources used in the study is materials from the book M. Vegesh & Ch. Fedinets (2010). The

study highlighted the path of development of various social and cultural spheres of life of the population of Transcarpathia in the specified period. The book contains significant factual material presented in an unbiased light. The archival materials were used to recreate a complete picture of the development of Transcarpathia's culture and the local art school. Information in the monographs of the founders of the Transcarpathian school of painting and active figures of culture such as V. Martynenko (1973) and I. Nebesnyk (2007) expanded knowledge about the conducting of important cultural events, in particular, the holding of exhibitions and plein airs, the organisation of the educational process in Uzhhorod and the founding of artistic associations and unions. This was also described by A. Erdeli (2012), F. Erfan (2016). These events were also covered in the press at that time. Art historians and critics conducted a professional review of cultural and artistic events in magazine and newspaper articles.

An analytical method was used to determine the topic's state of development; bibliographical, archival, and factual material was analysed using a systematisation method. The historical method was used to analyse the historical situation and cultural and artistic environment in which the artist's creative personality was formed. The biographical method was used in the reconstruction of the main life events of the artist. To analyse the creative work of E. Kontratovych, a range of art historical methods was used, such as iconographic, artistic and stylistic, and comparative methods. The generalisation method was used to form conclusions for the conducted research. The aforementioned research methods were used to comprehensively characterise the historical context, and the development of the cultural sphere in the territories of Transcarpathia in the specified chronological period; to analyse the artistic environment of E. Kontratovych and prove the influence on the choice of themes and plots in the works of the early period of creativity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education, art, and nation-building in interwar Transcarpathia

The first mention about Transcarpathia (until 1919, the modern territory was called Hungarian Ruthenia) in the chronological framework of modern history is associated with the Habsburg Empire, which in the early XX century was on the verge of collapse. The destruction of the vast political system called Austria-Hungary, and its multinational population led to the outbreak of World War I, which brought several new states to the world stage, including the Czechoslovak Republic. Transcarpathia became part of it, which influenced the political system of the region, its economy and culture. The government of Czechoslovakia attempted to bring Subcarpathian Ruthenia the European features (Subcarpathian Ruthenia is the name of the modern

territory of Transcarpathia during 1920-1938). The reforms conducted by the President of Czechoslovakia, T. Masaryk, contributed to the development of cities, the construction of roads, the improvement of living standards and cultural prosperity. The reforms also created a fertile ground for the development of regional art, which had a direct impact on the works of emerging artists, including E. Konratovych. The 1920s and 1930s were recognised as a time of emergence of the artistic achievements of the region. The literature of Transcarpathia experienced a significant rise. The Society "Prosvita" contributed to the development of theatrical art. The beginning of the formation of the Transcarpathian painting tradition also occurred at this time. A. Erdeli and Y. Bokshay developed the concept of art education of the region and taught young generation of talented artists. This environment, with strong cultural foundations, significantly influenced the young artists of the time, such as Konratovych, shaping approaches to art and thematic choices.

In 1919, under the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, the territory of Transcarpathia called Subcarpathian Ruthenia became part of Czechoslovakia. The President T. Masaryk sought to give the new part of the republic the European features, hence several reforms, in particular, in the administrative, financial, tourism sectors in the 1920s-1930s, were conducted (Vegesh & Fedinets, 2010). The joining Czechoslovakia created new conditions for the development of the cultural environment of the region. These reforms laid the groundwork for a cultural awakening, which also influenced the intellectual and artistic development. Despite the economic stagnation, even within Czechoslovakia, these years were a "Transcarpathian cultural revival" due to changes in education, the development of national literature, the establishment of a permanent theater and the formation of the Transcarpathian school of painting. The educational reform of the 1920-1930s contributed to the opening of new schools (from 475 primary schools, 321 were with the Ruthenian language of teaching), and the introduction of new subjects and books (Vegesh & Fedinets, 2010). The opening of new schools and the improvement of educational standards provided better access to artistic education and new artistic concepts for the young generation.

The issue of higher education was problematic, as it was received in Prague, Bratislava, Munich, and Budapest. Doctors, scientists, high school teachers graduated from local educational institutions. However, this was not enough, and therefore the progressive public of the region raised the question of opening local higher educational institution – the University of Subcarpathian Ruthenia. However, the government of Czechoslovakia argued that Subcarpathian Ruthenia has no conditions for the development of higher education (Vegesh & Fedinets, 2010). The Uzhhorod singing and teachers' seminary, headed by A. Voloshyn was the exception. The

institution annually graduated 40-50 priests, who also taught and actively participated in cultural life. In particular, among the seminarians were the students of the Public School of Drawing – A. Kotska, E. Konratovych, A. Boretskyi and Z. Sholtes (the only minister of a religious cult and an artist at the same time). In general, the reform of education in Transcarpathia contributed to a quantitative growth of the intelligentsia, which affected the overall increase in the cultural level of the region. The formation of professional theater is associated with the activities of amateur theater groups. The groups in Beregovo and Uzhgorod particularly stood out among them. In 1920, with the assistance of the Society "Prosvita", the "Ruthenian theater" was opened in Uzhgorod. The next theater was headed by a prominent Ukrainian theatrical figure M. Sadovskyi, who helped the theater to become professional.

Cultural and artistic events of Subcarpathian Rus in the 1920s

The organisation of the local art center was associated with several problems: the lack of vocational art education institutions and the required number of teachers. O. Izvorin (1942) characterised Transcarpathia prior to its incorporation into the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic as a region where Verkhovyna functioned not solely as an artistic movement but as a holistic cultural phenomenon rooted in a way of life centred on artistic practice. The area attracted artists, motivated by the status of a locus of creative inspiration. Nevertheless, despite its cultural significance, visits by artists were relatively sporadic, and many of those who did come were primarily driven by the necessity to earn a livelihood, frequently through the production of religious iconography.

Regarding the sacred art of Transcarpathia, Professor M. Pryymych (2017) emphasised that the tradition of church painting was at the origins of the visual tradition of the local school. The study proved that the preserved monuments of fine art provide substantial evidence that highly skilled and professionally trained painters were active in the region over an extended period. Therefore, the absence of any movement in the field of art is noteworthy. At this time, artists who lived in Transcarpathia – S. Beregi, D. Virag, K. Izai, in 1917, organised "Club of Artists" (another name "Mukachevo Club of Artists"), which included S. Beregi, Y. Bokshay, D. Virag, E. Grabovskyi, A. Erdeli, D. Iyas, K. Izai. Due to their fundamentally conflicting views on the purpose of fine arts, the group managed to hold just three exhibitions before dissolving – in Mukachevo, Beregovo, and Kosice (Vegesh & Fedinets, 2010).

The next step in uniting the creative forces was the exhibition initiated by A. Erdeli and Y. Bokshay. On January 1-9, 1921, the works of Transcarpathian and Kosice artists were presented in Mukachevo, and later in Beregovo, Kosice, and Uzhgorod. The works of the above-mentioned artists who revived the "Club of Artists of Subcarpathian Ruthenia" were exhibited.

This group organised one exhibition in 1922, but could not provide a significant impetus for further intensive development (Gapak, 1975). G. Ostrovsky (1974) explained the reason for the unsuccessful attempt as follows: the concept of national art was not universally accepted among Transcarpathian artists, as individual ambitions and limited professional interests often prevailed over broader ideological or cultural imperatives. During the 1920s Transcarpathia, its unusual ethnic group and folklore were “discovered”. With the assistance of the Czechoslovak government, several exhibitions were held, demonstrating the items of folk art and life of the Ruthenians. The most famous was “Art and Life of Subcarpathian Ruthenia” (1924), organised by critic S. Makovskyi in Prague. The great success of the event, the positive reviews of critics, the album, publishing in three languages was the evidence of interest in the presented exhibition (Ostrovskyi, 1974).

The large numbers of Ukrainians living in Prague and Bratislava expanded and strengthened the cultural and artistic ties (Boiarchuk, 1993). Education and, in addition to secondary schools, were emphasised, as in Prague, at that time, there was a single Ukrainian art higher educational institution – the Ukrainian Studio of Plastic Arts (USPM), which was known in Prague and abroad for its regular exhibitions. The professional education provided by the Ukrainian Studio of Plastic Arts in Prague was central in fostering the national self-awareness and ethnic identity of its youth (Dzhus, 2015). In the 1920s and 1930s, obtaining a professional art education was a significant problem in Transcarpathia. The absence of an art institution prompted the founders of the Transcarpathian school of painting A. Erdeli and Y. Bokshay to discuss its creation. They were inspired by the ideas of the Barbizon painters, their entry into the plein air, S. Hollosy and K. Ferenczy. After graduating from the Hungarian Royal Art Institute in Budapest, A. Erdeli and Y. Bokshay returned to Uzhgorod and both began to teach. A. Erdeli became a teacher of drawing at the Mukachevo Teachers’ Seminary (1916), later at the Mukachevo Real Gymnasium, and Y. Bokshay taught geometry at the Uzhgorod Gymnasium (1918). Researcher of art education in Transcarpathia I. Nebesnyk (2000) considered that the early stages of the establishment of art education in Transcarpathia were directed toward meeting the cultural and educational needs of the region’s Ukrainian population.

In the 1920s-1930s, Erdeli sought self-fulfillment more as an artist than as a teacher. From 1922 to 1931, the artist traveled to Europe (Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and France). For four years, A. Erdeli lived and worked in the workshops of Munich, presenting in 1923 works in the most prestigious exhibition hall – “Glaspalats” (“Glass Palace”). The result of A. Erdeli’s creative work during the stay in the above-mentioned cities was numerous paintings that were later presented at exhibitions in Prague (1927), Brussels (1929), Paris (1930),

Bratislava (1936), and Uzhhorod (1930s). In the 1920s, Y. Bokshay exhibited personal works at the exhibitions in Czechoslovak cities – Prague, Brno, and Bratislava. The first personal exhibition of the artist took place in Prague in 1926. And during 1930-1931 the author visited Italy, France, Yugoslavia, Switzerland and Germany, studying the works of old masters, whom he always set as an example to follow (Ostrovskyi, 1974; Erfan, 2016).

On the initiative of A. Erdeli and Y. Bokshay, in 1927 the Public School of Drawing began to function in the classes of the Uzhgorod Teachers’ Seminary on weekends. Talented seminarians were invited to study at the school. Students listened the lectures on the history of art, attended creative disciplines: drawing, painting, plastic anatomy, basics of perspective, worked with naked nature and plaster. Open-air classes were a compulsory element of this school. It is possible that on the classes, one of the students, E. Konratovych, invented a method of creating a landscape, which was unchanged throughout the creative path. As the state of nature changed, the artist tried to quickly “catch” the main part of the painting, and the sky and the foreground were completed in the studio. After three years of study, the school released the first cohort of professionally trained artists – A. Kotska, E. Konratovych, A. Boretskyi and Z. Sholtes, who confidently continued the picturesque traditions of mentors.

Activities of Subcarpathian artists in the 1930s

There were more and more followers of the idea of creating the “Subcarpathian Barbizon”, so in 1931 the “Society of Contributors to the Fine Arts in Subcarpathian Ruthenia” was founded – an organisation that involved artists, including students of “Public School” in artistic life. As of 1932, the organisation had thirty-eight members. A. Erdeli was elected as the chairman, D. Endredi as the deputy, L. Kaigl as the secretary, A. Dobosh as the cashier, F. Manailo as the curator (Havrosh, 2017). The society brought together the artists of different nationalities. O. Izvorin (1942) emphasised that the main one was the “Ruthenian core”: Y. Bokshay, I. Dvan-Sharpotoki, A. Erdeli, I. Erdeli. A. Boretskyi, A. Dobosh, A. Kotska, E. Konratovych, and Z. Sholtes joined the Society in different years. Their formation was grounded not in national, specifically Ruthenian principles, but rather in artistic and ideological convictions; they wholeheartedly embraced the idea of discovering the soul and stylistic essence of their people and native land. The first exhibition of works by members of the organisation took place in 1931 at the Uzhhorod Jubilee Czech Folk School named after T.G. Masaryk. In 1936, with the support of “Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Ruthenia”, an exhibition of works by artists of the Society was held in Bratislava, presenting 95 works by nineteen artists. In 1937, the exhibition “Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia – people and the land in fine arts” took place in Prague. The local Subcarpathian school was represented by Y. Bokshay, V. Dvan-Sharpotoki, A. Erdeli, I. Erdeli,

A. Kotska, Z. Sholtes (Nebesnyk, 2007). Possibly, E. Konratovych also participated in the exhibition activities of the Society. After joining the Society of Contributors to the Fine Arts, Konratovych participated in art exhibitions from the late 1930s to the early 1940s with works of pronounced social critique, earning recognition as one of the most incisive voices expressing rebellious sentiment among Transcarpathian artists (Myshanych, 2010). Early works of E. Konratovych reveal the acute social problems in the life of the Transcarpathian people of the 1930s. They are devoted to the themes of begging and disability ("Grandfather – Cripple", 1937; "Beggars", 1930s), poverty ("Hunger", 1937), unemployment ("Unemployed Tramp", 1938), death (The Funeral of the Poor, 1939; "Ruined House", 1938). The image "Grandfather – Cripple" depicted an old man with twisted legs standing at the edge of a village (Fig. 1). Next to the old man is a hollow willow tree, within which the silhouette of a crucifix is present. The colour scheme is based on the contrast between warm-toned shades in the sky and cool greens of varying brightness and saturation. The overall palette is muted and subdued, and, combined with the distinct brushstrokes, provides the impression of a graphic work.

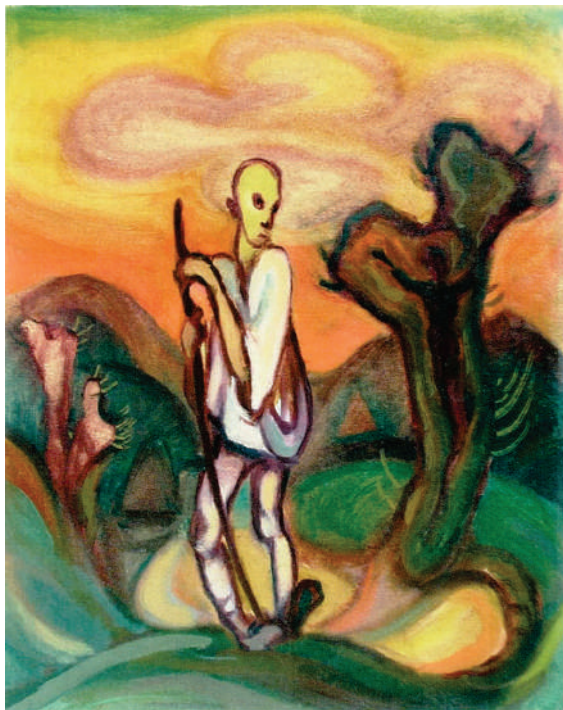


Figure 1. Grandfather – Cripple. 1937.
Cardboard, oil. 65x45

Source: Private collection

The unnatural pose of the old man, dressed in white and leaning on a long staff, stands out against the background landscape. The figure, along with the depiction of the sun veiled by a strange cloud, reappears in a later work "Beggars" (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Beggars. 1930s. Cardboard, tempera. 70x49
Source: Private collection Umansky family collection (n.d.)

In the artist's most renowned work, "The Funeral of a Poor Man" (1939) (Fig. 3), a multilayered composition was employed to unfold the painting's narrative – a funeral scene taking place in the courtyard of a Hutsul village home. The asymmetry created by shifting the group of peasants holding church banners to the left adds a sense of movement, further emphasised by the figure of a woman walking across the yard. At the center stands a traditional Hutsul house, while the mountainous landscape in the distant background serves as a static backdrop for the slow, deliberate motion of the funeral procession. This contrast between movement and stillness underscores the indifference of the natural world to human sorrow. The colour palette is restrained and closely toned, with no vivid highlights. The peasant group and the woman are subtly distinguished by a muted light-brown hue. The subdued lighting and somber tones reinforce the ordinariness and quiet sorrow of the depicted event.

The works feature a marked sense of suffering and alienation from the world, because despite the reforms, the Czechoslovak government failed to solve the problems reflected in the above paintings (Cheipesh, 2020). It is necessary to consider the political and economic conditions of bourgeois Czechoslovakia, which had a direct influence on E. Konratovych. Alongside the global economic crisis that affected Czechoslovakia, this period was also characterised by the intensification of the revolutionary movement among workers and peasants. Living and working as a teacher in a rural environment,

Konratovych was closely acquainted with the hardships faced by the peasantry. These widespread social disturbances, often culminating in tragic outcomes, significantly influenced the ideological and creative divisions within the artistic intelligentsia (Gapak, 1983).



Figure 3. The Funeral of a Poor Man. 1940s.

Oil on canvas. 72×67

Source: Transcarpathian Regional Art Museum named after Y. Bokshai

It is worth noting the educational work of individual members of the Society. Z. Sholtes, who was a minister of religious cult in Uzhok village (1933-1937) significantly contributed to the involvement of rural youth in cultural life. The author established a creative workshop in this location, which became a centre for local engagement. Peasants, along with young boys to whom the author taught ornamentation techniques, were common attendees. While the girls produced traditional red embroidery based on author's designs, the boys practiced wood carving. On Sundays, the author delivered lectures on folk art, fostering a deeper appreciation of cultural heritage among the community (Autobiography of Z. Sholtes, n.d.).

In the 1930s, the graduates of "Public School of Drawing" began their exhibition activities. In 1931, A. Kotska began teaching career at a public school in the village of Verkhovyna. During this period, Kotska created a series of genre scenes and landscapes reflecting local life, some of which were later exhibited in Uzhhorod in 1933 and 1935 (Autobiography of A. Kotska, n.d.). A. Boretskyi exhibited personal works at the exhibition in 1933 together with the works of A. Kotska. Z. Sholtes organised the first personal exhibitions in 1932 and 1933 in Uzhgorod. Later, E. Konratovych began an exhibition career. In 1935, Konratovych was admitted as

a full member of the Union of Artists of Transcarpathia, actively participating in all exhibitions organised under its auspices (Personal sheet on personnel accounting of Konratovych Ernest, n.d.).

In the late 1930s, the political situation in Europe began to worsen. Aggression in Germany's actions grew; On March 15, 1939, the Hungarian troops occupied Subcarpathian Rus (Erdeli, 2012). On May 20, 1939, the first meeting of the "Society of Contributors to the Fine Arts" was held, it was reorganised into the Union of Subcarpathian Artists (Nebesnyk, 2007). From July to August this year, members of the Union together with representatives of the Art Institute in Budapest organised a plein air painting in the villages of Velykyi Bereznyi district – Volosyanka and Uzhok.

After summing up the results of the plein air painting, the artists of the Union participated in the 5th All-Hungarian Exhibition in Kosice. The local press regarded the event as positive, noting the work of the young A. Kotska (Erfan & Miasishcheva, 2011). The artist was soon invited to study at the Roman Academy of Fine Arts. In 1940, an exhibition of works by Transcarpathian artists was opened in the Uzhgorod coffee house. Hungarian critic E. Kallai (1940) identified common and distinctive features of Subcarpathian and Hungarian painting, as well as noted the movement of Subcarpathian artists to individualisation. During the occupation, the Hungarian authorities understood the need to find common ground with the intelligentsia. To this end, Hungarian authorities began to organise artistic events of artistic direction. "Art Weeks" were the most famous, the events of which were described in detail by A. Erdeli (1941). For four weeks, cultural and artistic events of various directions were held in Uzhgorod, which were designed to show "modern Hungarian values". An exhibition of contemporary Hungarian painting, graphics and sculpture was demonstrated as part of the event. The artist also presented a review of Subcarpathian artists who took part in the weeks.

The events of the war were reflected by E. Konratovych in 1939-1944. Albums with sketches were filled with images of crosses ("Tombstone with red birds", 1943), uprooted trees resembling the ruins of cities ("Old tree with a bunker", 1943); "Bunkers", 1942-1944). "Evacuation in Verkhovyna" (1944) (Fig. 4) is notable for the colour palette, built on the contrast between shades of red and green. The dense arrangement of women in the foreground, positioned close to the edge of the canvas, evokes a sense of silent despair and fear of an uncertain future (Cheipesh, 2023). Specific for that time gloomy, dark blue-violet colors, contrasting with bright red-yellow ones intensify the feeling of anxiety and restlessness (Martynenko, 1973). During the occupation of Subcarpathian Ruthenia by Hungarian troops, the authorities tried to support the development of art, while other industries were falling into decay, including the economy and industry. Such a

policy led to future significant problems in the lives of Verkhovyna peasants and was reflected in the work of Transcarpathian artists.



Figure 4. Evacuation in Verkhovyna. 1944.
Cardboard, oil. 50×70

Source: Zaporizhia Regional Art Museum

The cultural and artistic environment of Uzhhorod in the 1920s-1930s significantly affected the formation of Ernest Kontaratovych's artistic identity. During this period, the city experienced a true cultural renaissance, driven by the incorporation of Subcarpathian Rus into Czechoslovakia, which initiated modernisation processes in education, infrastructure, and culture. Thanks to the Czechoslovak government's policies, Uzhhorod saw the emergence of new educational institutions, cultural organisations, and an active intellectual community that fostered the development of artistic life. One of the key events of the time was the founding of the Public Drawing School in 1927 by A. Erdeli and Y. Bokshai. In this institution the young E. Kontaratovych received foundational artistic education, laying the groundwork for future creative development. Kontaratovych's interaction with leading artists of the time, particularly A. Erdeli and Y. Bokshai, inspired a deep interest in European art movements while nurturing a strong appreciation for local artistic traditions. Uzhhorod of the 1920s-1930s served as a cultural bridge between East and West, and this synthesis was reflected in its art scene. The combination of modernist influences with folk aesthetics became a defining feature of Kontaratovych's artistic style, which later manifested in landscapes and genre works. Thus, the vibrant cultural life of interwar Uzhhorod, the availability of formal art education, and contact with talented contemporaries played a decisive role in shaping E. Kontaratovych as an artist.

CONCLUSIONS

The cultural and artistic developments that occurred in Subcarpathian Rus during the 1920s-1930s provided a significant impetus for the further evolution of the

Transcarpathian school of visual arts. The Czechoslovak government was central in this process, as broad reforms in major sectors contributed to the revival of the cultural heritage of the local population. A systematic and detailed examination of the socio-cultural life of Transcarpathia in the interwar period was conducted; the role of individual artists (A. Erdeli, Y. Bokshai, E. Kontaratovych, Z. Sholtes, etc.) and organisations (Mukachevo Art Club, the Society of Fine Arts of Subcarpathian Rus) in the formation of professional art education and traditions of fine arts were clarified. This identified the key factors that contributed to the formation of the regional art school and the development of the original artistic environment of Transcarpathia.

The study determined that the key factors influencing the development of Kontratovych's work were, in particular, T. Masaryk's reforms that contributed to the development of infrastructure and support for education and culture. In addition, the foundation of the Public Drawing School in Uzhhorod in 1927 was an important stage in the formation of a professional artistic environment that influenced the work of Transcarpathian artists, and participation in exhibitions abroad and the creation of the Society of Fine Arts of Subcarpathian Rus provided Kontratovych with international recognition. The study determined that the cultural and artistic environment of Uzhhorod in the 1920s and 1930s had a significant impact on the formation of Ernest Kontratovych's artistic identity. Thanks to educational institutions, cultural organisations, and interaction with leading artists of the time, in particular A. Erdeli and Y. Bokshai, the artist managed to combine European modernist influences with local artistic traditions, which determined the style of the author. Social themes were vividly expressed in the works of E. Kontaratovych, which reflect compassion for human suffering and social injustice. The artist's works revealed that paintings depicted the harsh realities of peasant life – poverty, disability, and unemployment. The influence of the global economic crisis, as portrayed in paintings, demonstrated that despite the overall cultural revival, the Czechoslovak government failed to address key problems that perpetuated economic backwardness and led to tragic consequences for the region's population.

Further research on the artistic life of Transcarpathia during the interwar period may follow a variety of directions, including an in-depth analysis of the creative output of individual regional artists, especially lesser-known figures, with an emphasis on visual language, stylistic characteristics, and the socio-political context of their work. Expanding the source base through archival materials, private collections, and oral testimonies remains highly relevant, as it can help better reconstruct the cultural landscape of the era. Promising avenues include the study of the system of art education, institutional support for artists, connections with

educational centers of interwar Czechoslovakia, and comparative analysis of Transcarpathian art within the broader European artistic context. Modern technologies open new possibilities for the digitisation and popularisation of the region's artistic heritage, and when combined with interdisciplinary approaches – historical, sociological, psychological, and postcolonial – they will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of art in the cultural landscape of Transcarpathia in the first half of the 20th century.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Культурно-мистецьке середовище Закарпаття в міжвоєнний період та його вплив на Е. Контратовича

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Анотація. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена необхідністю осмислення впливу складних соціально-економічних обставин міжвоєнного періоду та культурного відродження Закарпаття на формування творчого світогляду Ернеста Контратовича. Метою статті було проаналізувати формування та розвиток культурно-мистецького центру в Закарпатті та охарактеризувати його вплив на Е. Контратовича. Методологія включала використання історичного, біографічного, аналітичного та ряду мистецтвознавчих методів, які допомогли всебічно охарактеризувати історичний контекст і розвиток культурної сфери на території Закарпаття в зазначений хронологічний період. Ці методи також використовувались для аналізу мистецького середовища Е. Контратовича та доведення його впливу на вибір тем і сюжетів на ранньому етапі творчості. У статті розглянуто розвиток культурного середовища в Закарпатті в міжвоєнний період, що безсумнівно вплинуло на формування художнього стилю Контратовича та вибір сюжетів і тем на ранньому етапі його творчості. Зібрано значну кількість фактичного матеріалу про художнє та культурне життя Підкарпатської Русі в 1920-1930-х роках. Доведено вплив середовища на формування вибору тем і сюжетів для творів Е. Контратовича. Висновки, зроблені в ході дослідження, сприяють доповненню цілісної картини розвитку культурно-мистецьких процесів в Закарпатті в ХХ столітті. Значна частина історіографічного та фактичного матеріалу може бути корисною для наукових досліджень, музейної роботи, написання підручників, програм та лекційних курсів

Ключові слова: Підкарпатська Русь, школа живопису; Товариство діячів образотворчого мистецтва на Підкарпатській Русі; міжвоєнний період; регіональна ідентичність