

Abstract of Michał Szymko's doctoral dissertation entitled *Contemporary Lemko Art: Identity, Memory, and Aesthetics*

Contemporary Lemko art constitutes a significant subject of research into cultural processes in which tradition undergoes dynamic transformations under the influence of globalization and modernization. This study examines how these processes have not led to the disappearance of Lemko culture but, on the contrary, have become a catalyst for its creative reinterpretation. This art functions as a space for dialogue between historical heritage and contemporary challenges, enabling both the preservation of traditional values and their adaptation into new forms of artistic expression.

One of the key issues addressed in this study is the relationship between cultural memory and modern artistic trends. Previous research on Lemko culture has primarily focused on church iconography and sacred architecture, while contemporary individual artistic creation remains an almost entirely unexplored area. There is a lack of systematic studies on this phenomenon in the existing literature, and its significance for the identity and cultural heritage of the Lemko community has not yet been subjected to in-depth analysis. This study fills this research gap by undertaking the first comprehensive examination of contemporary Lemko art and defining its role in the processes of constructing and redefining Lemko identity.

The analysis demonstrates that contemporary art plays a crucial role in the Lemko community not only as a medium of artistic expression but also as a tool for reflecting on collective memory and a mechanism for shaping identity within changing socio-political conditions. In this sense, contemporary artistic creation constitutes a key element in the construction of cultural narratives and a strategy for negotiating one's subjectivity within a broader social discourse.

This study aligns with the field of research on the art of ethnic and national minorities, presenting contemporary Lemko art as a phenomenon situated at the intersection of tradition and modernity. The interdisciplinary approach adopted in this study contributes to a broader understanding of how art can function as a space for preserving, reinterpreting, and creatively developing cultural heritage in the context of dynamic civilizational transformations.

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