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Artistic Practices as a Mode of Self-Expression: Tradition, Innovation and Personalisation under Globalisation

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Abstract Contemporary artists work within conditions in which the international circulation of images, visual languages, and artistic concepts both expands the field of creative references and complicates the search for a distinct artistic voice. This paper presents an analysis of how young Ukrainian artists negotiate these complications by working with national tradition, digital technologies, and individual experience in their art under conditions of globalisation. The empirical sample comprised 30 art students from three higher education institutions in Ukraine. Data were gathered using an original questionnaire, the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ), and a modified version of the Self-Expression and Emotion Regulation in Art Therapy Scale (SERATS). Two-thirds of the respondents (66.7%) reported that they include elements of national tradition in their work. Most of them do so as a creative stimulus (80%) and for cultural anchoring (66.7%). In digital practice, graphic editing software ($M = 4.23/5$) and social media platforms ($M = 4.03$) were the most commonly used tools. AI-based tools, video production, and 3D modelling were used far less commonly. Stronger involvement in the international art world was associated with higher identity-related tension ($r = 0.45; p < 0.05$). Among the multicultural characteristics, cultural empathy scored the highest ($M = 34.2/40$), followed by openness ($M = 33.1$). These traits were also associated with creative engagement: openness was related to innovation ($r = 0.58; p < 0.01$), while empathy was related to emotional depth in the process of creating work ($r = 0.52; p < 0.01$). According to the respondents, artistic practice is not only a form of professional production but also a means of emotional processing and self-understanding. These results could be beneficial for art curricula seeking to harmonise national cultural heritage with global requirements in the sphere of artistic communication.

Index Terms project culture, spatial environment, documenta, biennale, art exhibitions, contemporary art, interpretation, style, creativity, graphic design, art projects, paper engineering

I. Introduction

The very conditions for making art changed radically after the 1990s. Cultural exchange increased, visual references proliferated, and geographical distance no longer limited access to styles, techniques, or audiences [1], [2]. These changes opened up new possibilities for creativity and posed a question that has not disappeared: when everything is available and everything circulates, how does an artist's work acquire its specificity? Previous research has tended to examine the different aspects of this question separately rather than considering them together. Scholars working in cultural heritage have examined how traditions are conserved or lost, whereas those working in digital art have examined how technology changes creative practice [3], [4]. Very little attention has been directed toward how individual artists negotiate these same dimensions—tradition, technology, and personal history—as they come together within a single practice. This negotiation is what the current study aims to bring into focus. We seek to un-

derstand how young Ukrainian artists apply national cultural codes, digital tools, and lived experience in creating work that remains consistent with contemporary creative conversations while, at the same time, remaining distinctly their own.

II. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, an in-depth review and synthesis of the scholarly literature were conducted to provide the theoretical framework for the study. Self-expression, artistic practice, tradition, innovation, and cultural identity were defined through related discussions in other scholarly works rather than as isolated definitions. The second, empirical stage of the research involved 30 students from three higher education institutions specialising in the arts in Ukraine: 15 students from Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts, 9 students from Lviv National Academy of Arts, and 6 students from Kyiv State Institute of Decorative and Applied Arts and Design, named after Mykhailo Boichuk.

The student participants were between 19 and 23 years of age, with a mean age of 20.7 years. There were 18 female and 12 male participants. All participants were either in the third to fifth years of bachelor's study or in the first to second years of master's study. This stage of education was selected deliberately because students at this level generally possess basic professional skills while their artistic identities are still developing. They therefore constitute an appropriate group for considering how identity development may be affected by external cultural and global pressures.

Data were collected using three research tools. The first was a 14-item questionnaire developed by the researcher, titled *A Young Artist in a Globalised World*. It solicited information on the respondents' attitudes toward national tradition, their use of digital technologies, their experiences of cultural hybridity, and their perceived tension between personal authenticity and global artistic tendencies. Closed Likert-scale questions were used together with open-ended items to collect both frequency-based data and short reflective comments. The second tool was the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire short form (MPQ-SF40), developed by Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee [5]. It measures five dimensions of multicultural personality: cultural empathy, open-mindedness, emotional stability, social initiative, and flexibility [5].

The third instrument was an adapted version of the Self-Expression and Emotion Regulation in Art Therapy Scale (SERATS), as proposed by Haeyen *et al.* [6], [7]. In its original form, it covers emotional contact and awareness, emotional expression, emotional regulation and release, as well as insight and self-development. For the current study, two additional dimensions were added: tradition and cultural identity, and innovation and global influences. The final adapted version contained 14 items measured on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was administered anonymously through Google Forms in February 2026. Completion time was approximately 25–30 minutes for each participant.

Quantitative responses were processed in Microsoft Excel. The reliability of the adapted SERATS was checked by calculating Cronbach's alpha. Answers to the open-ended questions were examined using content analysis, with semantic grouping around the themes of identity, tradition, and globalisation. Relationships between variables were tested using Spearman's rank correlation in SPSS 26.0. The research instruments are provided in Appendix A.

III. Literature Review

Said's critique of Orientalism [8] created a framework that continues to be relevant: the depiction of the cultural "Other" in Western discourse can be understood as an artificial construct that serves particular purposes rather than as a neutral representation, thereby distorting what it claims to represent. When artists from non-Western traditions enter global circuits, however, they enter a space in which their cultural codes may be interpreted within that same distorting landscape [9]–[11]. Orujov [12] illustrates the contemporary dimensions of this issue by mapping the interaction of technological, cultural,

and ecological factors in twenty-first-century globalisation. Maguire and Holt [13] reject an exclusively reflective account of art's social function; they suggest that artistic practice can bring about social change rather than merely reflecting social reality. Kaur and Dave-Mukherji [14] outline changes in aesthetic value within a global economy, with a focus on processes of cultural borrowing and hybridisation rather than homogenisation. He [15] investigates artists in different cultural contexts who use visual arts as a way to initiate conversation without obliterating their cultural specificity.

Wang *et al.* [16] investigate what happens to authenticity when cultural modes converge—that is, when an artist uses more than one tradition at the same time. Milak and Tankosić [17] take a more specialised approach by exploring social-media-related identity negotiation among Balkan and South Korean artists. Kuo and Sprečić [18] examine migrants working across visual, textual, and sonic registers to articulate displacement. Waldron [19] studies arts students connected with London, Mumbai, and Shanghai and illustrates how the pedagogical environment shapes the form of creative subjectivity that becomes possible. Rupī Kaur's decision to write in lowercase is also noteworthy here: it is not merely a stylistic exercise but an assertion of identity—the typography of a Punjabi Sikh woman who refuses to conform to a conventional literary vocabulary [20].

In the area of modernity and tradition in practice, Da Silva [21] invokes *NEVE INSULAR* to suggest that tradition is not a repository of stable forms but material with which artists are continually and actively engaged in the practice of reconstitution. Dyachenko [22] follows the global context in which traditional craft becomes conceptualised as a site through which historical memory is expressed rather than simply as a form belonging to the past. Zhang [23] demonstrates that the centuries-long tradition of ink painting does not prevent innovation; instead, it supplies the symbolic language through which innovation can become visible. The 2025 exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum [24] featuring the Thai artist Jakkai Siributr made the same point: textile techniques, refined from generation to generation, now spoke directly to notions of displacement, grief, and collective loss. Malezhyk [25] also addresses Ukrainian material and traces the influence of global trends on Ukrainian art while considering what remains local in character and specific to the Ukrainian artist. Radomska *et al.* [26] examine a patriotic postage stamp as a platform through which national symbols can enter global visual circulation.

Vasylijeva *et al.* [27] view institutional logos and emblems as carriers of cultural values that continue to circulate across multiple settings. Regarding artificial intelligence in creative work, Marella, Erukude, and Veluru [28] argue that AI can add to creativity rather than replace it—that is, it can function as a tool rather than a substitute. Li and Vasilyevna [29] demonstrate that reflective practice in arts education can catalyse artistic development: the capacity to conduct self-appraisal and account for one's cultural position can be a precondition for the development of artistic skills rather

than an optional addition. The literature on preserving digital heritage is extensive [30]–[37]. Dimoulas [30] investigates big-data approaches; Fanini *et al.* [31] explore Web3D and WebXR applications; Giannini and Bowen [32] note the rapid transition of the museum sector toward the digital landscape during the COVID-19 pandemic; Parker and Saker [33] and Shehade and Stylianou-Lambert [34] focus on virtual reality from user and specialist perspectives; Parrinello and Dell’Amico [35] document accessibility practices; Meier *et al.* [36] analyse users’ experiences of virtual tours; and Swain *et al.* [37] explore how digital tools transmit cultural meaning into new contexts. The Mousse Magazine archive [38], as well as the works of the Chinese artist Xu Bing [39], provide both theoretical and grounded references for locating contemporary artistic practice within the broader context.

IV. Results

The socio-demographic characteristics of the sample included age, gender, higher education institution, specialisation, and year of study. Participants ranged from 19 to 23 years of age ($M = 20.9$), with 20-year-old participants forming the largest age group at 30%. Women constituted 63.3% of the sample, which is consistent with the gender distribution in Ukrainian higher education in the arts. In terms of institutional affiliation, 50% were from the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts, 30% were from the Lviv National Academy of Arts, and 20% were from the Boichuk Institute. Graphic design (26.7%), painting (23.3%), and decorative and applied arts (23.3%) were the most common specialisations; sculpture and new media each accounted for 13.3%. The majority (73.4%) of participants were in years 3–4 of bachelor’s study. Two-thirds (66.7%) of the respondents reported using national tradition in their creative output. Among these respondents, 80% cited inspiration and 66.7% cited cultural self-location as their primary motivators, while 16.7% attributed their use of tradition to fashion. In the practice of using digital tools, graphic editors ($M = 4.23/5$) and social media ($M = 4.03$) were the most common. AI image tools ($M = 2.77$), video editing ($M = 2.70$), and 3D modelling ($M = 2.20$) were significantly less common—a pattern that probably reflects where the learning curve is steepest rather than a deliberate or moral avoidance of these technologies. Global trends influence the work of 66.7% of respondents, 56.7% identify with the global art community, and 60% report a moderate influence from other cultures. Internal tension between authenticity and global pressure characterises 46.7% of respondents, while 13.3% deliberately keep global trends out of their practice.

The open-ended answers illustrate how participants conceptualise cultural identity. The most frequently mentioned framework was a connection to roots and heritage (12 references), including meanings such as “uniqueness,” “Ukrainianness,” or “responsibility to one’s ancestors.” Eight participants defined identity as a compromise between tradition and contemporary work. Six called themselves “citizens of the world,” while four framed themselves as identity navigators dealing with information overload. Attitudes toward globalisation var-

ied widely. For 10 participants, it was largely a question of access—to audiences, exhibitions, and exchange; for 8, it was a source of ambivalence, involving both opportunity and the danger of cultural levelling; for 7, it was considered a force that erodes individual distinctiveness; and for 5, it was a challenge to be navigated through conscious positioning.

Reverse-scored items in the MPQ-SF40 were recoded using the formula ($6 - \text{obtained score}$) prior to analysis. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for MPQ-SF40 scales ($n = 30$)

Scale	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Cultural Empathy (CE)	24	40	34.2	4.8
Social Initiative (SI)	18	40	30.5	5.6
Openness to Experience (OP)	22	40	33.1	5.1
Emotional Stability (ES)	16	40	28.4	6.2
Flexibility (FX)	14	40	26.7	7.3

Note: maximum possible total score per scale is 40.

Cultural empathy emerged as the highest-scoring dimension ($M = 34.2$), reflecting the capacity to understand the feelings and perspectives of people from other cultures. Openness ranked second ($M = 33.1$), reflecting an absence of prejudice and a readiness for intercultural exchange. Social initiative was at a moderate level ($M = 30.5$). Emotional stability ($M = 28.4$) and flexibility ($M = 26.7$) were the lowest-scoring dimensions across the sample. The distribution of respondents across low, medium, and high MPQ scale levels is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by MPQ Scale Levels ($n = 30$, %)

Scale	Low (≤ 24)	Medium (25–32)	High (≥ 33)
Cultural Empathy (CE)	6.7	30.0	63.3
Social Initiative (SI)	20.0	43.3	36.7
Openness to Experience (OP)	10.0	33.3	56.7
Emotional Stability (ES)	30.0	46.7	23.3
Flexibility (FX)	36.7	40.0	23.3

The results indicated high levels of cultural empathy in 63.3% of the students, representing the largest single group across all five scales, which is consistent with the regular engagement of arts students with culturally diverse material. More than half of the participants, 56.7%, fell within the high range for openness. Social initiative was most commonly at the medium level, at 43.3%. This pattern was followed by emotional stability and flexibility, which emerged as the weakest profiles: 30% and 36.7% of the students, respectively, fell within the low range, while only 23.3% reached the high threshold on either scale. Self-expression traits were measured using the modified SERATS; the descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3.

Emotional contact and awareness obtained a score of 8.7 out of 10 (87% of the possible maximum), which was the highest score in SERATS. This was followed by regulation and release (8.4) and emotional expression (8.3). Insight and self-development scored 12.8 out of 15 (85%), representing the strongest result for a three-item scale and making it clear that participants use their creative work to explore and recon-

sider their personal lives rather than simply to communicate them to others. Tradition and cultural identity (8.1/10, 81%) and innovation and global influences (11.9/15, 79%) were also close in relative terms and both scored highly. This small lead for the tradition scale corresponds with the trend in the MPQ data: when identity is in question, established cultural references appear to carry more weight than new ones. The strongest relationship between an MPQ dimension and a SERATS scale was between openness and innovation and global influences ($r = 0.58; p < 0.01$); this indicates that artists who were more open to cultural difference also accepted new technologies more readily.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for SERATS scales – adapted version (n = 30)

Scale	Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD	% of max
Emotional Contact and Awareness	1, 3	6	10	8.7	1.2	87%
Emotional Expression and Representation	2, 4	6	10	8.3	1.3	83%
Regulation and Release	5, 6	6	10	8.4	1.2	84%
Insight and Self-Development	7, 8, 9	9	15	12.8	1.8	85%
Tradition and Cultural Identity	10, 12	6	10	8.1	1.4	81%
Innovation and Global Influences	11, 13, 14	9	15	11.9	1.9	79%

Note: maximum for two-item scales is 10; for three-item scales is 15.

Cultural empathy was significantly related to all six SERATS scales, with its relationships with emotional contact and innovation showing the highest correlations ($r = 0.52, p < 0.01$ and $r = 0.51, p < 0.01$, respectively). This pattern suggests a common basis between one’s ability to comprehend others and one’s ability to develop understanding through creative effort. Flexibility was significantly associated only with the innovation scale ($r = 0.46; p < 0.01$): participants who found it easier to adapt to new technical forms also employed technology more consistently as applications changed across contexts. Openness exhibited the strongest association with AI tool use ($r = 0.53; p < 0.01$) and the impact of global trends ($r = 0.55; p < 0.01$). Cultural empathy was correlated with engagement with national tradition ($r = 0.38; p < 0.05$), indicating that participants who understand others tend to engage more deeply with their own heritage, as well as with the use of social media ($r = 0.44; p < 0.05$) and AI ($r = 0.41; p < 0.05$). Social initiative correlated most closely with activity on social media ($r = 0.52; p < 0.01$), which is consistent with the communicative function that these platforms serve. Flexibility was positively correlated with AI use ($r = 0.49; p < 0.01$) and global trends ($r = 0.42; p < 0.05$), and negatively, although not statistically significantly, with internal conflict ($r = -0.33$): participants exhibiting greater flexibility were less likely to report tension between authenticity and external pressure.

Correlation analysis between the SERATS indicators and questionnaire results revealed several statistically significant relationships. The tradition dimension was associated with the extent to which participants used national tradition ($r = 0.62; p < 0.01$) and with the degree to which they experienced conflict within their own cultural lives ($r = 0.44; p < 0.05$); participants who placed greater weight on tradition also reported greater tension with the global influences they encountered. The innovation scale was associated with en-

gagement with global trends ($r = 0.61; p < 0.01$), AI use ($r = 0.57; p < 0.01$), and a sense of belonging to the global art community ($r = 0.53; p < 0.01$). Emotional expression was correlated with social media use ($r = 0.42, p < 0.05$), which helps explain why digital platforms serve as spaces in which emotional content is made public. The regulation scale was associated with internal conflict ($r = 0.39; p < 0.05$), showing that participants who use creative work as a tool for controlling their emotional states also tend to experience tension between their culture-based identity and the identity pressures associated with the demands of international participation.

V. Discussion

In these artists’ practices, national tradition serves as raw material rather than as a model to be replicated. Two-thirds intentionally draw on it; among those participants, four out of five cite inspiration rather than preservation as their primary motivation. The open-ended data support this interpretation: for most participants, identity is derived from roots (12 mentions) or from a combination of heritage and contemporary work (8 mentions). Dyachenko [22] applies the same orientation in a different context, in which traditional craft becomes a conceptual medium rather than a museum artefact. A similar conclusion from Portuguese design practice was reported by Da Silva [21]. The seven respondents who associated tradition with the “trend for ethnicity” add a further complication: Said [8] identified precisely this risk—that cultural particularity can become a currency in global markets when detached from its historical significance. Participants appear to recognise this danger even while engaging with the trend. The divide between basic digital tools and advanced tools is real and probably temporary. Graphic editors and social media are embedded in daily practice; AI, video, and 3D modelling are not yet embedded to the same extent. The gap is probably related to the investment involved: graphic editors lower the technological barrier, whereas AI image tools and 3D software require more time to learn and use effectively. Longitudinal research will determine whether adoption increases as students progress into professional practice.

The relationship between global belonging and internal conflict ($r = 0.45$) diverges from a simple narrative of cosmopolitan openness. Greater inclusion in the global art world does not simplify questions of identity—it sharpens them. This pattern should not be interpreted as pathological or illogical: the more an artist participates in global networks, the more frequently the question of uniqueness may arise. Wang *et al.* [16], [40] frame this dynamic as cultural hybridity—an ongoing negotiation between cultures that is never fully settled. Some of the low scores on emotional stability and flexibility also deserve careful interpretation. For a young artist working amid the pressures of war, economic uncertainty, and rapid cultural change, emotional sensitivity may function as a professional resource and part of an emotional edge. It directs attention toward one’s own experience and can provide additional depth to the resulting work. The cost remains tangible—

greater susceptibility to stress and difficulty adapting when conditions change—but low scores should not be interpreted purely as evidence of deficit.

The slight movement in SERATS scores toward the tradition scale (81%) over innovation (79%) is consistent with the broader pattern in the data; when there are relatively few anchors, cultural roots can provide a degree of structure. The negative relationship between the use of tradition and the use of innovation ($r = -0.42$) shows that these dimensions are not always easy to combine, although the correlation does not imply complete exclusion. Nevertheless, some participants do both, and their practices are consistent with what Wang et al. [16] refer to as cultural hybridity. The negative correlation between flexibility and internal conflict ($r = -0.33$) therefore suggests that participants who adapt relatively more smoothly are less likely to experience global/local tension as a rupture.

VI. Conclusions

The evidence does not support the idea that globalisation simply wipes away the essence of artistic identity. Instead, globalisation appears to do something more specific: it subjects identity to continuous interrogation. Young artists who are more integrated into global art networks feel greater pressure to define what is distinctively theirs, rather than less pressure. This sample approaches national tradition as a resource rather than as a constraint. Artists use it selectively, reinterpret it, and treat it as a source of authenticity rather than as a collection of forms to be replicated. At the same time, some participants recognised the market logic that can convert cultural particularity into a decorative surface. That awareness represents a form of critical engagement with globalisation. Creative practice also has psychological roles here that extend beyond professional output. Emotional regulation, introspection, and identity work are all mediated by the act of making art—the SERATS evidence supports this interpretation across multiple scales. The tension between local heritage and global influence is evident throughout the results, but it does not prevent creative work. In many respects, that tension contributes to making such creative work possible.

Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed equally to this paper and read and approved the final version.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Data Availability

This study analysed publicly available peer-reviewed publications retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ERIC, and Google Scholar. No original datasets were generated. The analysed materials are available through the respective databases and publishers.

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