

**FORMATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS:  
CREATIVE APPROACHES TO ECO POSTER**

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**Abstract.** Our studies of the environmental protection and rational use of resources will greatly facilitate the eco culture development of society, especially the younger generation. The art imagery, colouristics, nonstandard interpretation, emotion, humour, and satire are needed in modern eco posters, and so it becomes more important to use in the advertising appeal as a visual-verbal model such creative technologies as metaphor, metonymy, allegory, associations, as well as hyperbole. Comparing the reflection of eco problems and their understanding by society, we can mention that the level of eco culture in Europe is much higher. This is usually thanks to the daily nurturing of the society in this direction with the help of outdoor, television, web advertisements, supporting various eco-initiatives by the Governments and private funds, and discipline of all population concerning waste utilization. The visual means and main stages of the historical development of eco posters in the context of culture are analyzed. Authors are considering the imagery and stylistics of the eco poster as public advertising. These materials are part of the course of academic lectures “Design of Advertising”, which can be used not only for designers but also ecologists, advertisers, culturologists, sociologists and philosophers.

**Keywords:** eco poster, public advertising, eco culture, visual communications, media design.

## **1. Introduction**

Posters have always played a key role in the life of our societies. They are the most noticeable form of communication in urban settings, wielding great influence on the interpretation and perception of a place by passers-by (Rebelo et al., 2019). The poster is identifying the specific importance of

cleanliness for urban life, participation of the general population in conscious consumption, the collaborative discussion between designers and other sectors—business, academia, and the youth. It is the most visible and relevant form of visual communication which has a significant impact on the audience. But mass environmental propaganda relies on completely exhausted visual stereotypes of the globe, green leaf, hands, flames, which have become part of the popular discourse. The concept of trans-disciplinarity acts as cooperation that opens up innovative perspectives, questions or solutions, and transcends the gap between artistic disciplines. This raises the question of how creative practices can collaborate with other fields to offer new solutions and new formats in media design.

Changing our consumption and production patterns is an environmental and social priority. Designers have a responsibility to develop new products and new services that use sustainable materials. Through recycling and refurbishing, designers have a role to play at every step of the economy. In the modern conditions of excessive anthropogenic influence on the environment, the task of forming efficient programs of natural resources management and nature protection activities seems to be of current concern. It is impossible to fulfil these tasks without shifting moral accents, directives, social priorities and simultaneously adopting new cultural practices to the benefit of the harmonious development of people and perception of Nature as the highest

value. Global environmental problems touch every inhabitant of the planet; some care less about them, some more, but pollution of the environment overcomes borders easily. The recycling of wastes from modern production and discarded things is hard to be assessed with precision and it remains a subject of research by many entities. Presently we observe an insufficient quantity of ecological social calls in the media space. Outdoor advertisements and isolated articles on news portals are most frequent. This especially regards the media in Ukraine. A critical analysis of the aesthetical levels of advertising appeals reveals the usage of outdated approaches such as visual clichés, Soviet-style visual elements, and the absence of original ideas. So, the objective of this article is to study and compare visual aspects of European and Ukrainian eco advertisements.

## 2. Theoretical part

Eco posters are a public affair. They are in visual info space and influence us with their inevitable messages. This relationship is the focus of the article. To achieve this aim, system-structural, socio-cultural, axiological, and comparative methods were used. The method of theoretical generalization made it possible to summarize the research and determine further areas of our work.

Analysis of the latest research and publications uncovers an acute shortage of publications of both scientific, popular science and educational sort concerning the interdependence of the society and nature, targeted at a wide circle of the population, especially children and the youth. In fact, there are no theoretical works in the field, for instance, the variety of topics of the Conference on Public Advertising in Ukraine omitted considering ecological posters. Advertising specialists highlight this too: the interdisciplinary approach to the development of namely ecological advertising finds only a minor reflection in the Ukrainian academics' works. Comparing the state of reflection of environmental problems and their understanding by society, we can say that the level of eco culture in Europe is much higher. Of course, this is due to daily education in this area through print and outdoor advertising, television, web advertising, support of various environmental initiatives by the government and private foundations, the discipline of the whole population on waste disposal (Pryshchenko, 2017).

The development of technological progress affects the birth of completely new forms of poster,

which are not limited to one paper medium. The value of a social poster is in its content aspect, conceptual solution, well-chosen palette, composition. The language of graphic design changes along with the situation in society. It becomes extremely figurative, exaggerated, metaphorical, and symbolism takes the place of verbatim. The main task of the poster design focused on nature conservation is to contribute to the formation of ecological culture, starting with motivation for self-preservation and preservation of the environment, where the knowledge and skills of both each person individually and entire human communities are essential. The poster is an iconic carrier of information, simple and understandable, which does not require intellectual efforts from the viewers and educates them both morally and aesthetically, influences a person's emotions, and attitude to the environment (Vasilenko et al., 2015).

The contradiction between convenience, usability and problems of processing versatile material stimulates invention of technologies of production of novel and safe materials and their follow-up recycling. American designer and advertising specialist Victor Papanek criticised the excessive manufacturing of commodities and their planned obsolescence, linking the environmental awareness to the engineering process and propagating creative solutions, taking into account ecology problems (Papanek, 2004). Studying ecological advertising, we note that now the key task is reforming mass production with reducing to a minimum the detrimental consequences for the environment while preserving the consumer comfort and the image of industrial brands. This was called ecological modernisation and now it is at its height.

Social responsibility nowadays means consuming as few natural resources as possible and producing as low amount of waste as possible. Ads are most authoritative among the foreign studies of the ecology problems and popularisation of their solutions. In addition to publications and conferences, these entities actively organize eco seminars, displays, fairs of eco products and eco-design, and spread environment-related information through mass media. Organic materials, organic components, organic products; nature colour schemes in the interior, clothes, advertisements; eco-tourism; energy efficiency; and the formation of a new lifestyle in the urban medium have gained popularity recently. Modern designers are looking for harmonious aspects of their works in the very components of nature harmony, such as structures, shapes, materials, colours, patterns. and figures. They have proclaimed a new motto "Ahead to

Nature!” (not backwards), which means a responsible attitude to nature, fruitful usage of its laws in the designing activities (Nature Graphics, 2014). The aesthetic potential of the natural harmony is to facilitate the shaping of creative thinking, as well as perfect the body-space medium. Nature offers art experts an inexhaustible treasury of inspiration, but we study nature for the sake of understanding our place in it too.

Eco-design is a branch of contemporary engineering, the dominating factors in which are demands of environment protection, saving natural resources, waste-free production technologies, organisation of sustainable consumption processes, and prohibition of genetically modified products. The “green design” includes the entire life cycle of the commercial product: extraction of raw materials, environmental consequences of their processing, the amount of spent energy, and recycling efficiency. Eco parks are emerging, the output of eco food and eco cosmetics is growing. For example, in October 2015, Leipzig (Germany) hosted a design exhibition under the slogan “Eco-design for social changes” where most of the displayed items were aimed at a pivotal change of the modern society’s lifestyle (Designers’ Open, 2015).

### **2.1. Visual analysis of eco-posters design**

Ecology problems found their reflection in the ecological poster, which can be considered as a variety of social advertising. Global Earth Day is celebrated on April 22, the day of environmental protection and saving natural resources. Every spring many countries conduct all sorts of contests: contests of eco-posters or drawings, exhibitions, and green Olympiads.

Examining the visual methods and specificity of the poster in the context of social advertising, let us indicate that a poster is a widespread kind of graphic art, whose artistic features are determined by the agitation function. People must perceive the sense of information in motion, and this determines the visual form of the poster—size, laconism of the image, the limpidity of the idea with or without the concise text, easy-to-read fonts, and bright colours. The most widespread advertising (commercial) poster often uses photographs, character elements and association-emotional methods of influence on potential buyers. The social poster belongs to non-commercial mass media. The skill to see and depict the idea in the poster, the poster-wise mode of thought, anxiety, and fervency in the aspiration to capture the viewer’s attention is the

designer’s main characteristic. The poster artist must put the idea through the filter of internal analysis of self and the corresponding topic in order to get the image across to a certain audience in a simple and expressive form.

The history of ecological public advertising started back in 1906 when the American Civic Association organized a campaign to protect Niagara Falls from the damage done to it by energy companies. New styles in art (constructivism, futurism, cubism, symbolism) stimulated further evolution of the poster, whose objectives were outlined by the French artist Cassandre (Adolphe Jean-Marie Mouron), who said that the aim of pictorial art lies in itself; and the poster is a means of communication between the merchant and the consumer; it is nothing less than the telegraph. The poster conveys information in a clear and expressive form (Pryshchenko, 2018).

After World War II, the meaning of the poster lessened for a certain period. It gave way to the radio, photography, and mass media. Lithography became uneconomic and, therefore, was replaced with offset printing and silk-screen printing, which though cannot reproduce the variety of shades and textures. In the 1960s, Swiss graphic designer and typographer Wolfgang Weingart used a transition from a set of metal letters to photographic typesetting for developing a new technique of image creation which allowed devising new sophisticated textures, figures and images that resembled collage. All tumultuous events of the past century sharpened the need for the poster as an effective and quite cheap means of influence on society. In Western Europe, the establishment and development of the poster were predetermined by Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, and Poland.

In the 1970s–80s, anti-war, ecological, and cultural-entertaining genres of the poster were developing in the Soviet Union and particularly in Ukraine. This was prompted by certain events: the possibility and free flow of information from international poster reviews and presentation of their creative works by domestic artists alongside the works by world-famous masters, as well as the capability of the art educational institutions to teach students properly. Contests and exhibitions conducted by the Artists’ Union played one of the main parts in the rise of the poster and publishing houses in Kyiv, L’viv and Kharkiv. The socio-economic crisis in Ukraine in the late XX century suspended poster art. The cultural-entertaining (theatre, circus) genres suffered firstly; on the other hand, the commercial poster gained momentum – unfortunately its aesthetic value was not

high enough. In Ukraine, poster exhibitions are held regularly – topical, regional, personal – but access to them is very limited and receives almost no coverage by the modern media. The urban medium lacks ecological social advertisements but the outdoor media (billboards, city lights, advertisements on transport and in the underground) appear to be the most efficient today. Specific visual methods of the poster – flat image, generally comprehensible symbols, eye-catching juxtaposition of colours, scales, points of views, degrees of conventionality, satiric characters, etc. The poster artist's creative method is largely specified by the level of aesthetic development of the target public. So, elevation of the viewer's general culture will inevitably lead to a change in the appearance of the poster, made at a high artistic level; it can become an important factor of the positive aesthetic effect. For a hundred years “green advertisements” have been raising environment-conscious people, becoming brighter and more expressive.

In September 2013, Lviv was hosting the eco poster exhibition entitled “Nothing Decided” by Klaus Staeck, who was the President of the Berlin Academy of Arts for a long time. For over 40 years his works have impressed by their relevance and laconism of reflection of the environmental problems in the society. Staeck's posters combine art, ecology and political call that instigate people to changes. He created over 300 narrative posters most of which are devoted to environmental protection. Long before the Green Party was created, Staeck had turned attention to the problems related to climate change, air pollution, growing amount of garbage, nuclear waste, and pollution of the World Ocean. These satirical works without slogans impel apprehension and critical analysis of the current ecological situation: dangers of anthropogenic climate change and environmental destruction. Their power comes from the way Staeck places familiar images and texts in new contexts with wicked irony.

The World Wildlife Fund (Switzerland), long ago made a claim about itself as a customer of quality, explicit and sometimes cruel ecological social advertisements. The main areas in which the WWF works, are climate change, protection of forests, freshwater bodies, seas and oceans, conservation of flora and fauna, minimising the usage of toxic substances, and restoring the environment. Wild animals at the present-day consumer market are perceived only as a raw material for tailoring clothes, footwear, and accessories, so in this case they “carry”

S and XL marks in the poster. Such visualisation ordinarily arrests viewers' attention much quicker and sticks to their memory better than the standard depiction of fur overcoats. In general, it is worth noticing the high creative level of this organisation's posters, whose motto is “Nature Needs Advertising”

Imagery is also necessary for the advertising natural heritage. For example, mountains are present in tourist posters of the twentieth century in many countries and regions: Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy, France, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, India, the USA, the Crimea, the Carpathians, the Caucasus, the Urals, the Tibet, providing geopolitical landmarks that address issues of historical, cultural, and national identity. Mountains are the subject of philosophical reflection and ecological meditation, a means of spiritual healing, scientific experiments, medical therapy, and recreation, as well as a source of artistic innovation. Mountains are not only objects of reflection in art and media; they can also be perceived as sociocultural hyper-projects, influencing what we think about our existence, the planet and society. In the posters, mountains appear as romantic “deserts”, national parks, sports grounds, recreational resources and more. Visual means of advertising graphics vary from stylization of natural forms to emphasized geometry. Colouristics in the posters can be versatile – from rich colours to a limited range of colours or almost monochrome solution.

The intertwining of many cultural events, the transformation of values, mentality, worldview led to the transformation of the means of artistic expression, led to a significant number of stylistic searches in advertising. The main contradiction of culture today is between multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and globalization, which are opposed by deglobalization and the focus of modern advertising on regional consumers. Particularly interesting and promising in the context of intercultural interaction is the tourist poster with a modern emphasis on ecotourism. We emphasize that, compared to verbal language, visual elements are perceived faster, easier; they are more accurate and understandable to people of different countries. Therefore, the travel poster must meet the important principle of semantic integrity, consisting of physical, psychological, symbolic, and strong internal connections, respectively, colour elements (illustrations, slogans, brand constants of travel agencies) interact closely and determine the advertising effect. Among the significant shortcomings of modern tourist advertising are the predominance of primitiveness, the

actual lack of national image, the dominance of kitsch, eclecticism, which are becoming culturally dominant. And although the main purpose of advertising is to attract the attention of potential consumers, to create a positive image of the city, region, country, Ukrainian examples mostly have a low aesthetic level.

Eco poster is also important in the city's visual info space. INUAS network universities at Vienna, Munich and Zurich have a great topic “Urban Transformations: Resources and Public Spaces” and provide a platform for current issues and perspectives for the development of cities and regions. The questions related to the ecological, political, planning, social and technological challenges and opportunities in public spaces addressing for young people (INUAS, 2019).

The experience of the developed German-speaking countries – Germany, Austria, and Switzerland – in solving environmental problems and the development of eco culture is very interesting and useful for Ukraine. In Germany, posters play a noticeable role in international design processes thanks to campaigns, poster contests and exhibitions. The poster exhibitions are held regularly – thematic, regional, and personal, but access to them is limited and not very actively represented in today's media. For the time being, the main meeting point of the poster with its viewer is advertisements in the urban space. But it is impossible to see these posters in the streets of Ukrainian cities. Below are students' proposals for placing author's eco posters in Munich, Zurich, and Kyiv (Fig. 1).



a)



b)



c)



d)

**Fig. 1.** Students' proposals for placing eco posters in urban space, 2021: a – Oleksandra Savanchuk. Kyiv; b – Zhanna Fedosova. Kyiv; c – Anna Zeruk. Zurich; d – Katerina Garashchuk. Munich Airport.

Curator – Prof. Svitlana Pryshchenko

### 3. Results and Discussion

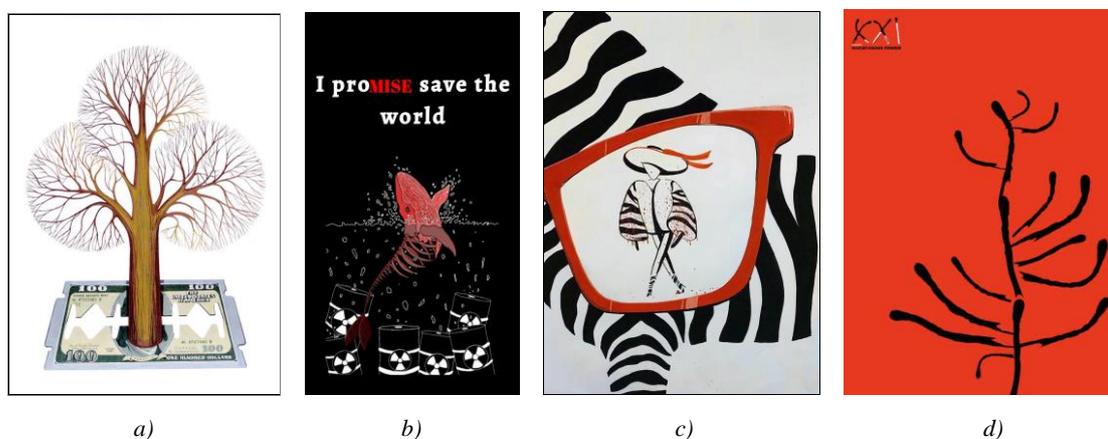
The activation of attention on contemporary environmental issues and reasonable use of resources will contribute significantly to the development of eco culture of the Society, especially the younger

generation. The information in the poster should be perceived by man in motion, and it will determine the visual form of a poster – image size, conciseness, clarity of ideas, legible font, bright colours. Foreign experts Peter Anker (Anker, 2010), David Dabner, Sandra Stewart & Eric Zempol (2015), Steven Heller

(2000), Elizabeth Resnick (2003), Liudmila Tarabashkina (2015) also pay attention to this issue. Poster thinking is the excitement and ardor in an effort to bring the idea to people. The poster artists must filter the ideas and related means through themselves, must conduct the internal analysis to convey the image to the viewer simply and clearly. In the present days, the poster has the dynamic development as a graphic art and as a commercial applied industry.

The modern public advertising poster requires interesting imagery, offbeat, humour, satire, so the usage of creative technologies in creating the advertising message as a visual-verbal model – metaphor, metonymy, allegory, association, or hyperbole is progressively gaining relevance. Slogans considerably amplify the emotional constituent, though any information is shifting towards visuality in the 1<sup>st</sup> decade of the XXI century. Among the widespread stylistic trends, we can accentuate minimalism, constructivism, and post-modernism (eclecticism – combining various visual means on the collage principle: graphic art, photography, using pieces of art). In the recent years, advertising communications have been rapidly turning into digital.

Websites and banners propagated on the Internet are not only commercially but also socially focused. Thus, the relevance of the current environmental problems gave rise to organizing the international project “ECO-culture” in Germany for holding a contest of environmental drawings for children and the youth in the framework of the Munich – Kyiv partnership (September – December 2015; the concept and presiding over by Prof. Svitlana Pryshchenko). The aim of the project was the development of eco thinking, eco education and long-term collaboration of the civic communities of Germany and Ukraine, popularisation of eco trends, forming a new lifestyle with the means of poster art, and promoting the concept of clean cities. Comparing the state of reflection of environmental problems and their understanding by the society, we can mention that the level of eco culture in Germany is much higher; this is usually thanks to the daily nurturing of the society in this direction with the help of printed and outdoor advertisements, television, internet advertisements, supporting various eco initiatives by the government and private funds, and discipline of all population concerning waste utilisation.



**Fig. 2.** Eco posters of Ukrainian students, 2021:

- a – Volodymyr Pidluzhnyi. National Forestry University of Ukraine, Lviv;
- b – Alona Gerasymchuk. State University of Infrastructure and Technologies, Kyiv;
- c – Sofia Bozhko. Lutsk National Technical University;
- d – Karina Samarska. Ukrainian Academy of Printing, Lviv.

Photo from the eco poster competition webpage <https://www.facebook.com/ECO-culture-club-109900551139700>

In February 2021 we took part in Winter International Carpathian School where we presented our Project and invited students to participate in the Eco Poster Competition. The main idea of our proposed International Eco Poster Competition “ECO-Culture” based on the State University of Infrastructure and Technologies (SUIT) is an interdisciplinary dialogue on the role of education, art

and design and the responsibility of each of us in systemic change in environmental protection. Relevant topics for the development of eco posters are the conflict of civilization and nature, human problems in urban space, garbage recycling, plastic control, clean city, healthy lifestyle, climate change, animal protection, disturbed lands and territories, man-made impact, water and air pollution. Many young people

and children from all over Ukraine responded to the offer to take part in the competition, which confirmed the urgency of the initiative. The page of the international competition on the social network “Facebook” will become permanent and in the future will be gradually filled with creative discoveries of students and pupils of different countries (ECO-culture club, 2021). The emblem developed by it associatively combines 4 natural elements in the corresponding colours: air in blue, fire – in yellow, water – in blue, earth – in green. Graphic elements create a dynamic movement and symbolize life on the planet. This emblem was adopted and approved by the higher management of SUIT, thus becoming a visual identifier of the International Eco Poster Competition for the coming years. According to results, more than 800 people took part in the first virtual stage of the competition. These were students of higher educational institutions, professional art colleges, lyceums, gymnasiums, art schools and eco clubs from Ukraine. The best works will be presented at the exhibition in Dnipro in April 2022. As the further development of our Project, in Spring 2022 we plan to hold the second stage of the International Eco Poster Competition among students from Poland, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Croatia, Montenegro, Greece, Czech Republic, Azerbaijan, Armenia and others.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the conducted analysis of picturesque and stylistic trends of the development of eco posters, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of the sociocultural approach to the visualization of the socially significant ideas and respective advertising complement. For greater effect of the ecological social advertising, it is necessary to introduce slogans to posters, searching and heightening the emotional-aesthetic component. With further financial backing, we have proposed the International Student Project aimed at designing and using eco posters in the urban and virtual media. Consolidation of efforts of specialists in the modern media space in the direction of intensifying attention and settlement of the environmental problems by every person will considerably help the eco culture to evolve, especially in the young generation. International sociocultural designing in this direction is quite interesting and promising, the focus of which will be an in-depth study of environmental issues and their visual manifestations in modern European media space, holding mobile eco posters exhibitions in Ukraine and abroad.

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