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POTTERY OF THE UKRAINIANS IN THE LATE 20TH AND EARLY 21ST CENTURIES: THE PRESERVATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE TRADITION

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Rezumat

Vasele din ceramică ale ucrainenilor la sfârșitul secolului XX și începutul secolului XXI: conservarea și transformarea tradiției

Producția de ceramică are o tradiție bogată, care a trecut prin multe etape de dezvoltare. Tradiția și-a păstrat arhetipurile-cheie asociate cu metodele tehnologice dezvoltate de multe generații de meșteri, cu cea mai reușită arhitectonică a formelor, cu diversitatea funcțională a produselor, cu gama de motive ornamentale. În același timp, tradiția rămâne un câmp larg pentru inovare. Articolul este dedicat studiului și analizei etapei moderne (sfârșitul secolului XX – începutul secolului XXI) a tradiției artistice etnice a olăritului ucrainenilor. Relevanța temei este condiționată de necesitatea analizei critice a proceselor de transformare. Noutatea științifică a lucrării constă în considerarea etapei moderne a tradiției ca o perioadă de soluții creative propuse de meșterii profesioniști. Sunt luate în considerare inovațiile în domeniul tehnologiei, arhitecturii și ornamentației lutului. Numele meșterilor moderni din cele trei centre exemplare ale tradiției sunt introduse în domeniul științific; sunt ilustrate cele mai bune exemple de creație modernă. Articolul utilizează metodologia cercetării de teren, precum și metode de analiză critică și previziuni științifice.

Cuvinte-cheie: tradiție, inovație, ceramică populară, vase ceramice.

Резюме

Гончарная посуда украинцев конца XX – начала XXI веков: сохранение и трансформация традиции

Изготовление гончарной посуды имеет богатую традицию, которая прошла много этапов своего развития. Традиция сохранила свои ключевые архетипы, связанные с наработанными многими поколениями мастеров технологическими приёмами, наиболее удачной архитектурной формой, функциональным многообразием изделий, ассортиментом орнаментальных мотивов. В то же время традиция остаётся широким полем для новаций. Статья посвящена изучению и анализу современного этапа (конец XX – начало XXI вв.) этнической художественной традиции гончарной посуды украинцев. Актуальность темы обусловлена необходимостью критического анализа трансформационных процессов. Научную новизну работы составил взгляд на современный этап традиции как период креативных решений, предложенных профессиональными мастерами. Рассматриваются

новации в технологии, архитектонике и орнаментике глиняной посуды. В научный оборот введены имена современных мастеров трёх показательных очагов традиции; иллюстрируются лучшие образцы современного творчества. В статье использована методика полевых исследований, а также методы критического анализа и научного прогнозирования.

Ключевые слова: традиция, новация, народная керамика, гончарная посуда.

Summary

Pottery of the Ukrainians in the late 20th and early 21st Centuries: the Preservation and Transformation of the Tradition

The production of pottery has a rich tradition that has passed through many stages of its development. The tradition has preserved its key archetypes associated with the technological techniques developed by many generations of masters, the most successful architectonics of shapes, functional diversity of products, the range of ornamental motifs. At the same time, tradition remains a wide field for innovation. The article is devoted to the study and analysis of the modern stage (the end of the 20th – beginning of the 21st centuries) of ethnic artistic tradition of pottery of the Ukrainians. Relevance of the topic is conditioned by the necessity of the critical analysis of transformation processes. The scientific novelty of the work consists in the view of the modern stage of tradition as a period of creative solutions proposed by professional masters. The innovations in technology, architectonics and ornamentation of earthenware are considered. The names of modern masters of the three exemplary centers of tradition are introduced into the scientific field; the best examples of modern creativity are illustrated. The article uses field research methodology as well as methods of critical analysis and scientific forecasting.

Key words: tradition, innovation, folk ceramics, pottery.

Ukrainian artistic ceramics is a complex and multifaceted cultural phenomenon, which is closely related to historical contexts, social and political processes in particular. In the year of 1991 with the declaration of Ukraine's statehood the interest in national culture increased in its relevance. Gaining independence by Ukraine aroused interest in folk art, especially to those its types which have a deep tradition.

Ukrainian art of ceramics belongs exactly to such types. The archetypes of a continuous tradition are its basis. Especially this concerns clay vessels – a functional kind of ceramic products which has the most profound connections with the past. The ancient samples of pottery have been massively preserved among archaeological artifacts. The shapes and decor of earthenware contain coded information about our ancestors' view of the world, their understanding of the main laws of the universe and being. The utensil conveyed a spiritualised image of the world and was a human personification. This may be indicated by the anthropocentric names of the elements of the earthenware: "tulovo" (torso), "plichka" (shoulders), "shyika" (neck), "ruchky" (arms), "vushka" (ears), etc. (Романець 1996: 20).

The tradition of production of earthenware in Ukraine has been researched by many scholars, the most informative of the published works belong to Yevheniia Spaska (Спаська 1995), Mariia Friede (Фріде 1928), Liliia Shulhina (Шульгіна 1929), Tetiana Romanets (Романець 1996), Kateryna Mateiko (Матейко 1959) and others. The local tradition of folk ceramics of the settlement of Opishnia (Poltava Raion, Poltava Oblast) was researched in a dissertation by Olena Klymenko (Клименко 1995). However, the pottery of the late 20th and early 21st centuries has not been a subject of a separate study yet.

The proposed article is an attempt of a scientific reconstruction of Ukrainian artistic tradition of pottery of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The scientific novelty of the article consists in the analysis of the transformational processes and highlighting the innovative tendencies in the progress of the Ukrainian tradition of pottery, the identification of factors, favorable to creativity, representation and introduction into the scientific circulation of the new names and artistic works of modern potters. In the process of research the authors used the field research methods as well as the methods of critical analysis and scientific forecasting.

The antiquity of the tradition of earthenware in Ukraine is evidenced (apart from the archaeological and literary sources) by the richness of shapes and variety of ornamentation, as well as the developed terminology, represented by a large list of professional names. Each name does not simply indicate the functional purpose of the ware, but also outlines its shape.

Polyfunctionality was a characteristic of a significant part of the pottery. The ware often had a utilitarian, ceremonial and decorative role. Every family had earthenware, first of all, as a utilitarian item: dishes were cooked in it and eaten from it, products saved and transported inside, etc. The level of the

people's household culture to a certain extent may be determined by a typological diversity of pottery products.

The decorative function of ceramics is confirmed by the practices of using earthenware as home decoration: usually in Ukrainian houses in a prominent place there was a carved "mysnyk", "sudnyk" or a shelf with painted ceramic ware (bowls, jars, etc.). The displayed dishes, together with woven and embroidered products, gave the house a special colouring, solemnity and festivity; they were the owners' point of pride. In fact, earthenware was sort of a symbol of a family's welfare, its talisman and a source of spiritual harmony. Above all, this concerns painted ceramics, since unglazed terracotta products as well as the smoked ones were less decorative and were utilized mainly for everyday use. By using pottery ware everyday while eating, the Ukrainians were receiving aesthetic pleasure from its decorative shapes and ornamentation, in which folk ideas of beauty were embodied. Therefore, earthenware played an extremely important role not only in the household, but as well in a spiritual and artistic culture of the people.

In general, archaic forms of Ukrainian pottery date back to the Neolithic era (Матейко 1959: 6), since when all the prototypes of modern vessels had been already laid. In spite of continued interethnic influence, the tradition of Ukrainian pottery did not lose its authentic nature. The shapes of ceramic products preserved the characteristic peculiarities and underwent only insignificant changes. After all, pottery is a very conservative art (Романець 1996: 46).

The stable stylistic features had already been received at the most ancient times by a bowl and a pot, the production and usage of which are strongly connected to the ancient Slavic tradition. At the same time, "dzban" (jug) and "banka" (carafe) demonstrate affinity with ancient pottery (they are subconsciously compared with ancient Greek amphorae). Mykola Biliashivskiy rightly noted that "starting from the pagan, mainly princely, times, we have almost all the prototypes of modern ware, not only concerning the shape, but as well the ornament" (Біляшівський 1913: 72-78).

From this statement in no case shall be concluded that folk ware is primitive and backward in its shapes. Vice versa, the relative stability and succession of the traditional foundations of Ukrainian pottery shows that the constructions and proportions of products were so perfectly adapted to utilitarian needs and requirements that there was no sense in changing them. We became so accustomed to the comfortable shapes that in a certain way they model our idea about the "ideal" beauty.

The long-lasting tradition of pottery has accumulated a great heritage of knowledge and skills, presented in the creativity of local centres. The products of various regions and pottery centres of Ukraine stand out by distinctive features, which can be seen in the dominance of certain constructive shapes, topographical schemes and the repertoire of decorative motifs.

Nevertheless, if in the 20th century in Ukraine the traditions of creating the earthenware were preserved in numerous centres, at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries their number significantly decreased. According to the observations of Oles Poshvyailo, at the beginning of 20th century there were over 700 functioning centres, but at the beginning of the 21st century not more than 50 centres were preserved (Пошивайло 2004: 8). The number of potters decreased as well – usually one or two masters work, continuing the tradition of their ancestors. For instance, in the village of Havarechchyna (Lviv Oblast) at the beginning of the 20th century there were 90 potters in 90 yards, whilst in 1984 there were only 3 kilns and 3 masters left for the entire village, and now only 3 potters work: Hennadii Bakusevych, Bohdan Bakusevych and Volodymyr Harbuzynskyi (Мотиль 2011: 46).

The reduction in number of centres and masters of pottery during the end of 20th – the beginning of 21st centuries is observed everywhere in Ukraine and concerns both masters of self-activity and the extensive system of artistic crafts, the fall of which was acknowledged by the participants of the First National Exhibition-Competition of Artistic Ceramics “Керамік у Опішному” (2009) (Перша 2010: 10). Among the existing only twenty years ago pottery enterprises, specialised in the production of utensils, about ten left, the biggest of which is the Factory of Maiolica in Vasytkiv.

Hence, the modern processes within the tradition of pottery in Ukraine are related not to the revival of mass production of earthenware, but with the development of individual practices, creation of small private workshops. There is a widespread opinion that only the creativity of potters, who work independently, not in the system of folk production, preserves the living traditions of folk art, and the manual nature of work allows the craftsman to improvise and create his own style.

It is important to note that the Ukrainian folk ceramics, despite all the negative processes, continues to preserve the deep tradition and represents an authentic paradigm. Especially it concerns the production of vessels and is manifested in the application of traditional materials and technological

processes, separate kinds of assortment of products, construction of shapes and decoration techniques.

In the opinion of an art critic Olena Klymenko, nowadays three options for the tradition's development in the centres of Ukrainian pottery exist: 1) the tradition evolves in a natural way, organically being supplemented by innovations; 2) the tradition is actively filled with innovations, which change it substantially, but do not destroy; 3) the tradition ceases to exist (mainly due to the cessation of artistic practices in the centres) (<https://um.etnolog.org.ua/zmist/2011/4.pdf>).

It is worth adding that the activity of artistic practices is a peculiar phenomenon of time. Its emergence is provided by favourable factors, among which the following are standing out: high level of passionarity of the ethnos; active position of the bearers of ethnic artistic tradition; the presence of creative masters; the demand for artistic works (Федорчук 2019: 14). It is important that all ethnic artistic traditions, particularly the tradition of pottery, are based on the traditions of local centres. It is natural that modern actualization of the ethnic artistic traditions is mainly observed in an “old” rather than a “new” place and is primarily related to the revival, and not the birth of the centres of folk art (Федорчук 2021: 97).

In the 1990s pottery centre in the village of Oleshnia (Ripky Raion, Chernihiv Oblast), known since the 19th century, was remaining a successful example of permanent development of the local tradition. Pottery there had the characteristics of an industry (a lot of people engaged, significance in the center's economy, commodity character of production) (Мірошніченко 2005: 177-178). On the initiative of ceramic artist Hryhorii Denysenko the technological base was created and the assortment of products (up to 20 samples) was developed for the evolution of the pottery industry in the village of Oleshnia. However, at the beginning of the 2000s the production of ceramics was privatized and soon deliberately destroyed (Денисенко 2005: 27). In 2007 we recorded the activity of only one hereditary potter, Ivan Bibik (born in 1925), who was teaching the production of smoked ware to a young married couple from Chernihiv. The master could boast of a fairly big variety of products. Nevertheless, his smoked jugs were in little demand, mainly as souvenirs.

Not that long ago the production of pottery ware in the city of Sloviansk (Donetsk Oblast) had been falling under the characteristics of an industry. However, in 2015, after the start of the military operations in the East of Ukraine, the production of pottery ware in the city of Sloviansk fell into decay. Moreover, in

2022 the procurement of clay, which was purchased by the potters from all over Ukraine, also stopped.

The analysis of the modern stage of the tradition of Ukrainian folk ceramics leads to a conclusion that its progress is successful in those centres which are open to innovations. The town of Kosiv (Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast) and the settlement of Opishnia (Poltava Oblast), which were reformed into the centres of folk culture and tourism, are now considered to be the successful centres of the tradition of pottery. The development of local traditions there is facilitated by innovations. The majority of craftsmen experiments boldly, relying on the principles of traditional creativity. It is a question of active interaction between folk art and the professional one. Each artist understands and implements it in his own manner.

Unfortunately, sometimes ceramists with professional education in art, working in the centres of folk ceramics, stylize their works as if they were the traditional ones, but they do not get along with the tradition (<https://um.etnolog.org.ua/zmist/2011/4.pdf>). Among the ceramics of Kosiv a high percentage of products is related to the local tradition quite indirectly, at the level of superficial assimilation of shapes and decoration motifs. There are widely spread vessels ("dzbanok", "kolach", "hornia"), separate constructive parts of which are "artificially" connected with each other. In one work there might coexist elements of different styles, the decoration motifs (the majority of which is traditional for local ceramics) that are too big in size and not related to the shape. There are products, the surface of which is overloaded with an excessive number of patterns, placed densely and chaotically, so that it prevents a holistic perception.

The artistic practices of the majority of graduates of Kosiv Institute of Applied and Decorative Arts are considered to be the progressive ones. They thoughtfully imitate the pottery of Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttia, creating original jugs, plates, carafes, carefully experimenting with shapes and decoration (Мотиль 2019: 463-468). The graduates of Kosiv Institute try their hand in numerous creative currents and directions, among which the two dominant ones may be singled out. The first of them is the study of the traditions of ancient pottery centres and bringing them back to life at the level of modern artistic reinterpretation. The second one is the application of real shapes (plants, animals, humans, natural phenomena) and their decorative plastic interpretation in clay. The most traditional elements of folk art (when a master adheres to a tradition, and innovative pursuits do not contravene with the peculiarities of a local school) are characteristic of the vessels of

Valentyna Dzhuraniuk, Oksana Kabyn, Oleksandr Verbivskiy, Vasyl Hrynivskiy, Serhii Tsvilyk, Oleksandra Kushnir, Vitalii Kushnir, the Trots family (who, apart from the painted ware, make terracotta and smoked products as well as small decorative plastics). At the same time the spouses Liudmyla and Oleksandr Yakybchuk create exquisite relief plant and ornithomorphic images on the entire surface of their works.

A rather complex process of interaction of traditional and innovative principles of creativity takes place at the beginning of the 21st century in the settlement of Opishnia – the centre, which throughout the whole 20th century was undergoing many innovations that were changing and continue to change the artistic peculiarities of local ceramics (Клименко 1995: 3-5). Nowadays the masters of older generation (Vasyl Omelianenko, Hanna Didenko) work in the centre, which represent the "classic" tradition of Opishnia, enriched with innovations. Young craftsmen are also engaged in pottery, some of them abide by the ancient principles of shaping and decoration: Yurko Poshyvailo, Valentyna Lobichenko. The others try to develop the tradition of Opishnia on the basis of their own comprehension of it: Olena Morokhovets, Oleksandr Shkurpela, Oksana Shkurpela, Yevheniia Panasiuk, Mykola Varvynskiy, Nina Dubynka, Liubov Hromova, Dmytro Hromovyi. Sadly, the appeal to the traditional shapes and ornamental motifs by some masters turns into the "under the old days" stylization without the internal feeling of the tradition, which is characteristic for the masters of the older generation. At first sight both the shape and the decoration of the ware are almost identical to the old samples, but there is a lack of that deep foundation which has been preserved by the folk masters at the subconscious level, passed on from father to son and has been the essence of the tradition of Opishnia.

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries there was a unique example of the transformation of an earlier existing centre of glazed pottery into the centre of smoked ceramics. This is about former Sokal Raion (Lviv Oblast), where pottery was well-developed before, in particular, in the creative work of the renowned master of painted ceramics (carved images and painting with coloured glazes) Vasyl Shostopalets (Івашків 2007). In 1991 a group of talented youth from the town of Chervonohrad created the "Chorna Keramika" ("Black Ceramics") society. Serhii Havalko, Valentyn Drobakha, Valerii Synylo, Valerii Ivanov and Viktor Rudenko became the pioneers. The young enthusiasts travelled to a famous in Lviv Oblast centre of pottery – the village of Havare-

chchyna (Zolochiv Raion) – with the hope of mastering the pottery skills. The master Marian Bakusevych even came to Chervonohrad and helped to construct a pottery kiln. However, the young craftsmen did not succeed immediately – the products, made according to the “recipes” of the potters of Havarechchyna, came out with stains and cracks. The mastery was acquired only with one’s own experience. Many could not stand the difficulties and challenges, so they quit this painstaking activity. Viktor Rudenko, Yevhen Ly-siuk, Volodymyr Kurylo, Oleksandr Makrenko, Ivan Bratko, Volodymyr Dovhan, Serhii Ivashkiv as well as the spouses Lidiia Ulianytska, Andrii Ulianytskyi, Oksana Martynovych and Dmytro Kahaniuk were among those who did not get discouraged, did not give up, but continued to work diligently. As of today there are eight kilns in Chervonograd and Sosnivka, where pottery is fired. The masters from former Sokal Raion do not consider themselves to be the direct successors of the tradition of Havarechchyna, they perfectly mastered the technology of producing smoked ceramics, but each one of them creates their own individual style in pottery, uses the new decoration elements, untypical for the traditional pottery ware, etc. (МОТИЛЬ 2019: 67).

Thus, during the 1990s–2020s the tradition of Ukrainian pottery experiences an active interaction of the traditional and the innovative. The effects of such factors as globalization and unification of world cultures as well as the economic crisis are very strong. Globalization and unification lead to the blurring of the ethnic peculiarities of modern creativity in pottery. Due to the economic crisis the consumer circle of folk ceramics narrows. In order to reduce the cost of their products, the masters produce the reduced copies of folk utensils, which may serve only as souvenirs.

It is crucial to support the centres of folk pottery that have not been lost yet and to preserve their authentic nature. A scientific research and popularization of the creative work of leading modern masters plays an important role in this matter. Numerous pottery events (symposia, festivals, pottery plein airs, masterclasses in museums, exhibitions, scientific and practical conferences, etc.) also facilitate the revival of the art of folk ceramics. In the 21st century the festivals and symposia of pottery have become a rather widespread phenomenon of an all-Ukrainian scale: the All-Ukrainian Pottery Symposium in the village of Bubnivka, Haisyn Raion, Vinnytsia Oblast (1995–1998), the Ceramics Symposium in Sloviansk, Donetsk Oblast (2001), the All-Ukrainian Youth Symposium on Pottery Art “Chyhyryn”, Cherkasy Oblast (2003–2013), the National Pottery Symposium in the

settlement of Opishnia, Poltava Oblast (2000–2001, 2009–2019), the festival “Maliovaniy Dzbanyk” in the town of Kosiv, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast (2014–2020), the Festival of Potters “These are not Saints who make the pots” in the city of Ternopil (2018–2021) and others.

The festivals of pottery in Ukraine as a phenomenon of artistic culture contain a wide range of tasks. The aim of holding such events is to discover and demonstrate the creative potential and achievements of Ukrainian artistic ceramics, to involve heirs of pottery families and new masters in the work, to communicate and exchange experience, to develop and continue local traditions of folk pottery, to popularize the art of ceramics, to form the aesthetic tastes of consumers, to return national ceramic products into the wide usage. The festivals and symposia of pottery, which take place simultaneously with the exhibitions of folk art, are the measures of artistic and aesthetic education of the population that contribute to the formation of national identity.

The Conclusions. The tradition of Ukrainian folk pottery, which has deep connections with the past, nowadays continues to develop in the centres that have a lasting local tradition and are open to the innovations. The town of Kosiv (Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast) and the settlement of Opishnia (Poltava Oblast) belong to the most successful. The critical analysis of the processes in these centres indicates that individual creativity has the greatest prospects. It is important for a master to be an expert in pottery and at the same time a sales manager of his products. Orientation to the needs and artistic tastes of a modern consumer is a key to the successful artistic practices. As the innovations, the professional masters propose new solutions concerning the construction of shapes and decoration. However, too bold interpretations as well as blind copying of ancient artifacts are not interesting to many consumers. The works of the masters, who are able to reinterpret the traditional heritage with respect and creativity at the same time, are the most advanced and demanded.

Nevertheless, alongside of progressive changes, negative processes happen within the tradition of Ukrainian pottery. They are manifested in the cessation of functioning of many centres of pottery and disappearance of certain types of vessels from the assortment of some centres. A too radical dialogue between the traditional and the innovative often leads to the emergence of unsuccessful works with deteriorated technological and artistic characteristics, when the potsherd becomes thicker, the shapes become simplified, the assortment of ornamental motifs becomes impoverished, the colouring becomes unsuccessful.

The ceramic symposia, festivals, pottery plein airs, masterclasses, exhibitions, scientific and practical conferences, etc., which became popular at the beginning of 2000s, facilitate the successful progress of the tradition of Ukrainian pottery and the avoidance of undesired processes within this tradition. The mentioned events, in addition to the modeling of the modern stage of the tradition of Ukrainian pottery, contribute to the education of the national consciousness of the Ukrainians as an important component of modern state-building processes.

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Annex



Fig. 1. Kosiv ceramics. Clay, potter's wheel, modeling, engraving, underglaze painting. Kosiv, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, 2008. Fig. 1-8 are by the authors.



Fig. 2. Oleksandra Kushnir, Vitaliy Kushnir. Candlestick. Clay, potter's wheel, engraving, angob, glaze, underglaze painting. Kosiv, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, 2022



Fig. 3. Pottery kiln after firing in Chervonohrad, Lviv Oblast, 2023

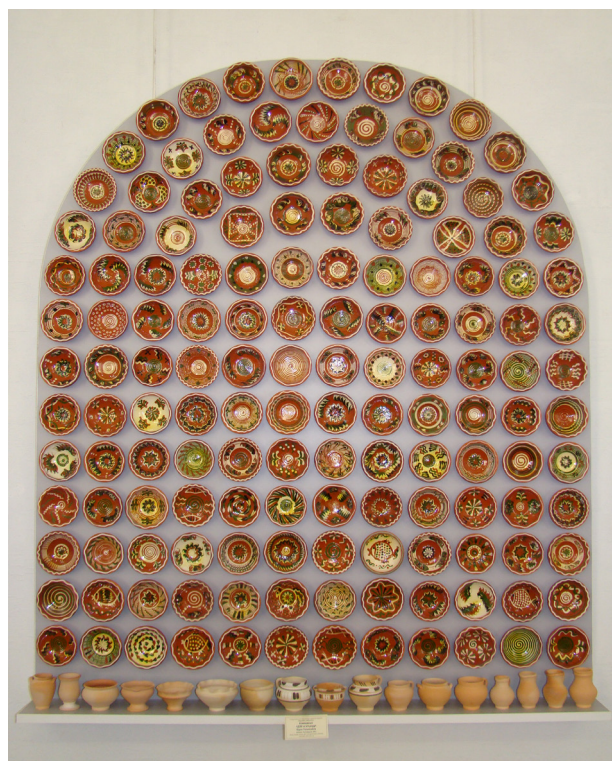


Fig. 4. Yurii Poshyvailo. «DNA of My Family». Clay, potter's wheel, glaze, underpainting. Opishnia, Poltava Olast, 2008



Fig. 5. Serhii Ivashkiv with a traditional Sokal jug of the 19th century. Clay, potter's wheel, modeling, engraving, glazing. Chervonohrad, Lviv Oblast, 2022



Fig. 6. Oksana Martynovych. Smoked ware. Clay, potter's wheel, modeling, ritualising, polishing, smoking. Chervonohrad, Lviv Oblast, 2019



Fig. 7. Andrii Ulianytskyi and Lidiia Ulianytska. Figural dish «Lamb». Clay, potter's wheel, modeling, polishing, smoking. Chervonohrad Lviv Oblast, 2021



Fig. 8. Potter Ivan Bibik, born in 1925. Oleshnia village, Chernihiv Oblast. 2007