



ПЛАТФОРМА 3 ГРАФІЧНИЙ ДИЗАЙН: СУЧАСНІ ТРЕНДИ

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COMIC STRIPS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA – FROM TRADITION TO MODERN DESIGN TRENDS

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The study focused on identifying, systematizing, inventorying, analyzing, and preserving cultural memory through comic strips from the Republic of Moldova created between 1945 and 2025. The analysis allowed for the identification of multiple comics developed in the country, thus highlighting, by format, journalistic comics, graphic novels, and digital comics; by content: social, historical-documentary, action/adventure, educational, fantasy; by style: realistic, caricature, franco-belgian, minimalist; by narrative structure: linear sequential, fragmentary sequential, without text, hybrid; by function: educational, historical-documentary, demystifying, political, experimental. Extensive analysis clearly shows that comics have found their way into the visual art of many artists in the Republic of Moldova. The specificity of comics in the Republic of Moldova has been shaped by a distinct trajectory, marked by a preliminary stage, between 1945 and 1959, defined by the emergence of early artistic explorations, a prolific stage in the 1960s and 1970s (watercolor, ink), followed by a period of diminished interest in the 1980s–1990s and, starting in the 2000s (digital techniques), a stage of revitalization of comics, evolving from a propaganda-educational function to a modern instrument of artistic and civic expression. This study was conducted within the framework of the research and innovation project 25.80012.0807.53SE – Valorization and Safeguarding of Comics from the Republic of Moldova (1945–2025) as an Integral Part of the National Cultural Heritage.

Key words: comics, visual narrative, traditional techniques, digital art, artists.

INTRODUCTION

The scientific approach focused on analyzing the evolution and manifestation of comic strips within the graphic arts in the Republic of Moldova, a field that has historically received less attention compared to book graphics, easel graphics, etc. Extensive analysis clearly shows that comics found their way into the visual art of many artists in the Republic of Moldova, featuring prominently in periodicals such as *NOI*, *Tânărul leninist*, *Alunelul*, *Steluța*, *Scânteia leninistă*,



Chipăruș, Cactus, Constelația Post-Scriptum, a-Mic and Florile dalbe. This facilitated their evolution, their recognition as a genre of sequential arts, and, last but not least, their loyalty among readers of all ages in relation to the publications in which they were reproduced.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The specificity of comics in the Republic of Moldova has been shaped by a distinct trajectory, marked by a preliminary stage, 1945-1959, defined by the emergence of early artistic explorations, a prolific stage in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by a period of diminished interest in the 1980s and 1990s, and beginning in the 2000s – a stage of significant revitalization of comics, both in terms of production and interest from the general public.

A visual and technical examination of the comic strips revealed that in the 1950s and 1960s, the images were mostly arranged vertically without being framed in boxes, and the characters in the images were not accompanied by words in their narrative act – the text being in the form of verses as a legend. During this period, the individuality of comic strip creation was highlighted in the artistic achievements of graphic artist Alexei Grabco in the *Trică and Ciupică* series, which were published in the pages of the magazine *Scânteia leninistă*.

It has been clarified that the period between 1960 and 1970 was marked by the use of traditional graphic techniques (watercolor, ink, colored pencils, or graphite pencils) and constant publication in children's magazines such as *Scânteia leninistă, Steluța*, and others. It was also noted and highlighted that these comics were designed as visual tools to promote socio-cultural functions such as information, education, and entertainment through humor. Humor, it was found that during this period, was skillfully used as a major component in guiding children's perception of the surrounding world, human feelings, and activities: work, sports, learning, animal care, helping loved ones, etc. The works of artists Alexei Grabco and Iacov Averbuh were identified and analyzed in this way.

The period between the early 1970s and the late 1980s was also analyzed, which allowed for the observation of the increasingly rare appearance of comic strips, and their appearance in the pages of the satirical and humorous magazine *Chipăruș* and *Steluța* attests to the continued development of comics with the same structural principles by graphic artist Alexei Grabco, with minor interventions regarding the topics addressed (aimed at elucidating everyday practices designed to develop a spirit of autonomy and ingenuity in children), less diverse and vibrant stylistics (in a decorative manner) and coloristics, with the role of small accents.

Extensive documentary analysis of comic book publishing revealed that, in the early 1990s, these types of images appeared frequently in the children's magazine *Alunelul* and the newspaper *Florile dalbe*. A systematic investigation of this publication revealed the presence of a section dedicated to comics, suggestively titled "Comics," with the aim of highlighting images as a distinct art form, emphasizing their expressive specificity for readers. A detailed examination of the issues of *Alunelul* magazine led to the identification of comic strips signed by Valeriu Curtu, N. Tighineanu, Aurel Guțu, Anatolii Smâșleaeu, Valeriu Ionițoi, Ana Evtușenco, E. Maidenbergh, Natalia Bahcevan, N. Tighineanu, Boris Svinorez,



Vasile Diviza, Radu Diordiev, Iulian Melnic, and others. Analysis of these artists' comics shows that they used a wide variety of image arrangements, forms, and representations of events and objects from multiple reference points and perspectives in their creative process. Thus, the images in the "Comics" section are characterized by frames/boxes arranged in a single horizontal or vertical register, or two to four parallel horizontal or vertical registers. The frames are either homogeneous or non-homogeneous, alternating in size and shape: square, rectangular—vertical or horizontal; open or closed (delimited by outlines); polychrome, polychromy integrated with monochrome; static or dynamic, emotional visual narrative; realistic or fantastic. The aesthetic rhythm provided by the compositional structure of the comic strips correlates with the rhythm of the actions that form the subject of the visual narrative. The graphic artists used panoramic, ensemble, medium, and close-up shots that emphasize interactivity, attractiveness, and the alternation between the dynamic and static aspects of the narrative. Some comics are represented only by images, with the emphasis on characters operating with chromatic contrasts, while others abound in bubbles with irregular contours, with texts reproduced in typographic fonts dominating the images.

It is noteworthy that in the work of artists who are new to the field of comics – Cristiana Grati, Octavian Curoșu, Alex Buretz, Călin and Valentin Enachi, Inna Sacali – who emerged after the 2000s, there is an increasingly pronounced emphasis on the role of civic education, the demystification of socio-political and cultural information, and the sharing of personal experiences with the general public [1]. These artists use historical-documentary, action/adventure, and fantasy comics as a visual medium for developing critical thinking and strengthening the ability to discern information – essential skills in a contemporary society marked by the proliferation of fake news. There is a noticeable revitalization of comics in the Republic of Moldova, both in terms of subject matter (with themes such as ecology, family and social well-being, current local and international political dynamics, and historical aspects) and in terms of style, which is closer to franco-belgian and polish comics, as well as the functions and techniques involved in their creation. Young artists use specialized software (Clip Studio Paint, Adobe Photoshop, Procreate, Krita) and modern equipment (graphic tablets, styluses, interactive devices) that integrate all stages of the production process into a unified environment, offering extensive editing, correction, storage, and publishing capabilities [2]. So, the digital environment allows for the simulation of traditional textures, the use of 3D models, the creation of complex visual effects, and the adaptation of works for multi-platform distribution – from print to webtoons and interactive formats – which allows visual artists to be relevant in contemporary comic book exhibitions held nationally and internationally (Comic Book Competition in Brașov, Romania; COMICS magazine, Romania; Comic Book Festival in Sibiu, Romania).

In the context of contemporary trends in graphic design, artist Octavian Curoșu frequently draws on the narrative language of comic strips, focusing on the creation of graphic novels as a complex form of visual and editorial expression, examples being the works *Din subteran la suprafață* (From Underground to the Surface), *Căluțul cocoșat* (The Hunchbacked Horse), etc. At the same time, comics



are emerging as a modern and innovative teaching tool [3, 4], highlighting their role in cultural development and in modernizing the teaching and learning of literature and general cultural information (examples include *Mil Comics #3 – The story of an online scam, Ariciul Arci*).

CONCLUSIONS

The evolution of comics in the Republic of Moldova shows a complex trajectory, marked by a gradual transition from a simple propaganda and educational tool to a true modern means of artistic and civic expression. The stages of development reveal a clear transition from the first narrative explorations based on traditional techniques to a profound revitalization beginning in the 2000s, stimulated by the digital environment. This contemporary renaissance is distinguished by significant typological and stylistic diversification, with new generations of artists using graphic novels and webtoon formats to promote critical thinking and socio-political demystification. The implementation of digital tools has facilitated multi-platform distribution, ensuring the presence and competitiveness of Moldovan artists at international exhibitions and festivals. Local comics transcend their initial condition, consolidating their status today as a viable visual heritage and innovative teaching tool, capable of preserving and reflecting the dynamics of society's cultural memory.

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