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KODOWANIE I ROZKODOWANIE

INSPIRACJE UKRAIŃSKIMI MOTYWAMI LUDOWYMI

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INTRODUCTION

The title of the doctoral thesis and its subject *“Coding and decoding – inspired by Ukrainian folk motives”* constitutes a summary of my earlier artistic and scientific activities in two areas: folk motives and women’s cancer.

I referred my current artistic activities to regional traditions in 2015 for the first time. It was started by a painting cycle and then a photographic one inspired by a folk motive of *pasiak świętokrzyski* (vertical pattern stripes usually appearing in red and black colors).

During that time my most important individual exhibitions were presented by me in Historic-Archeological Museum in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski (*“Pasiak nie tylko świętokrzyski”*) and in Museum of Kielce Countryside in Tokarnia (*“Świętokrzyskie przenikania”*).

Afterwards I expanded my area of interests with Ukrainian folk motives being a subject of this thesis. During the 3 years of doctoral studies I took part in a 1-month project *“Touring school of Polish language”* organized by Stowarzyszenie Integracja Europa-Wschód. It was then when I had a first contact with a live folk culture in Ukraine (oblasts Żytomierz, Vinnytsia, Khmelnytskyi). It was the beginning of my artistic research in particular. It was a time spent on looking for opportunity for a scientific research journey to Ukraine. During the internship in General Consulate of Republic of Poland in Lviv. Its result were two individual exhibitions: *“Diffusions II”* in the Gallery Własna Strzecha in Lviv and *“Vinnytsia Inspirations”* in the Gallery Artszyk in Vinnytsia.

The appearance of women subject in my creation was a totally different story. A groundbreaking and one of the most important projects for me was a sculpture cycle dedicated to women suffering from cancer. It presents naked prints of women’s breasts after

mastectomy of women posing as Amazon of Świętokrzyskie. The summary of this project were exhibitions *“Love life”* in the Gallery Okrągłak in Provincial Office in Kielce, *“Strong Women”* in Gallery XS in the Institute of Fine Arts of Jan Kochanowski in Kielce and *“Amazon Procession”* in the Gallery XXI in Warsaw.

This form of doctoral thesis, both theoretical and practical is an attempt to create my own language to describe subjects related to women. With the use of painting I combined Ukrainian folk motive embroidery with the subject of women's cancer. The tool that I used to encode women's cancer diseases is an authorial alphabet (in Polish language) created based on the alphabet included in geometrical symbols of Ukrainian embroidery (in Ukrainian language, Cyrillic). Ornament which became an inspiration of the ultimate artistic form is on „Рушник'у”(in Poland also known as a ritual or embroidered towel – embroidered or weaved material used for religious rituals, mainly Orthodox).

System of encoding and encoding information in my doctoral thesis may not be so modern because to read an information we do not need a phone as it is for reading QR codes. Just a key including geometrical alphabet is enough. On the other hand this method is more demanding as we need to decode letter by letter ourselves creating word(s), sentences. Using a language of geometry in my thesis I treat it as a handy tool set to create compositions characterized emotionally.

This doctoral thesis comprises of two parts: the artistic and the theoretical one. The cycle of twelve pictures with an encoded subject of women's cancer has been realized in technique of acryl on canvass (10 paintings of dimensions 100 cm x 100 cm, 2 paintings of dimensions 90 cm x 110 cm). Each of them refers to one of three problems: cancer, a disease that can cause cancer or the effects of cancer. The second one was divided into two chapters. First chapter explains the subject of the thesis, its genesis and motivation. The second chapter concerns the colors of images whose prototype can be found in Ukrainian folk motifs. The third chapter refers to realization of paintings, dimensions, technique, amount of works, the course of the creative process itself. Here I explain the way of coding, I attach the authorial alphabet used to decoding pictures. In the fourth chapter, I point to practices and theories that are a reference area for my own deliberations and actions. In this part I recall the work of artists dealing with the problems of cancer of women and Ukrainian artists inspired by embroidery.

CHAPTER I

ELABORATION ON THE SUBJECT OF THESIS

The subject of my doctoral thesis *“Coding and decoding – inspired by Ukrainian folk motives”* is dual. One of the parts of the thesis refers directly to embroidered folk motives and the encoded content refers to the cancer. They are linked with a womanly space.

The thread of a cancer showed up in my production in the previously mentioned sculpture project. It was created as a part of the campaign against breast cancer and cervix. It was organized by the voivode of Świętokrzyski Bożentyna Pałka-Koruba. This cycle presents naked impressions of busts of the Świętokrzyskie Amazons - women after mastectomy.

Nudity, thinking is changing in order to achieve well-being. Fourteen plaster casts of torsos showed traces of depletion and emptiness behind fourteen women and fourteen life stories. Despite disorder in the symmetry of their bodies Amazons are certificate of a won fight against the disease which requires finding strength and self confidence at the time when the body changes drastically – when it stops to be beautiful in a classic way. By losing a breast the woman gains a chance to retrieve her life in which she can discover herself once again, accept and enjoy. It can be difficult to do, to be able to please at any price - to be attractive, slim, athletic and eternally young.

In my doctoral thesis I will use two words of “ancer”. According to the Encyclopedia PWN the medical definition of a word “cancer” is *“malignant tumor originating in epithelium, i.e. epithelioma, of a clinical treatment, level of malignity, negotiation and reaction to treatment¹”*.

The next definition of a cancer can be found in the *„Dictionary of symbols”* by Władysław Kopaliński *„Cancer (in Polish language meaning also a crawfish) in folklore related to the Moon grows and retreats with its phases. Miserable as it walks backwards; thus the disease was supposed to be called cancer; Karkinos (in Greek) cancer/crayfish – meaning both an animal and a disease.²”* This term symbolizes aggressiveness, rebirth, resurrection, retreat, willingness to get back to original condition.

In Poland women suffering from cancer, as the only ones in the world adopted the name of Amazons³ derived from Greek mythology. This was the name given to women who had one of their breasts cut off for the purpose of better manipulation of a bow. Their features were heroism, independence, strength, courage

¹ Rafał Łąkowski, *Universal Encyclopedia PWN*, Warsaw 1982, p. 649

² Władysław Kopaliński, *Dictionary of symbols*, Warsaw 1990, p. 350

³ Władysław Kopaliński, *Dictionary of myths and cultural traditions*, Warsaw 1987, p. 35

and the fact of being a compact, homogenous group. Above words refer to the group of associated women suffering from a breast cancer (the list is available on the Internet website of "Amazons" Federation of Associations)⁴.

Among many cancer diseases I chose the ones that in my opinion are the most interesting for the relationship with the physicality of a woman: breast cancer, breast cancer, vaginal cancer, uterine cancer, cervical cancer, ovarian cancer, endometrial cancer. Each cancer name is a title of doctoral thesis picture. I have complemented the whole with two works referring to two selected diseases leading to cancer: cysts and endometriosis. It is implicated by the fact that cancer may be a result of the complications of other disease. One picture symbolizes infertility as a result of tumor. Two pictures refer to the ultimate results of cancer: mastectomy – cutting off a breast – and hysterectomy – cutting out a uterus.

A towel strictly related to an orthodox religion and its geometric ornament motives can be found among other nations as well: Eastern Poland (towel), Ukraine (Рушник), Belarus (Ручник) or Russia (полотенце). It is usually seen in churches hung over the picture. It is an information carrier.

It is also worth mentioning that the informational embroidery appearing on folk clothes has different forms depending on the region of Ukraine (geometric motives, floral, zoomorphic). It also has different colors and a weaving style. An important role is played by a proper choice and use of ethnographic elements such as material, its size, embroidery technique. It is beyond doubt that the composition elements of a towel – sign and symbol – are main semantic information carriers. They contain mathematic and logical rules.

With the use of geometric figures built from squares embroidered cross-like or weaved on a white material there is content written in. They usually concern a person to whom the towel belonged.

„Each towel almost has its own "personality" – in other words a history identical to the fate its owner.”⁵

This history is nothing other than a kind of chronicles in which between one and another end of the material there is one man's way of life written. Due to the letters embroidered on it, the words in a square form, geometric composition or symbols there is a recording of the most important events of a given man created. At the baptism there is a first and a last name of a child coded, its birth date. With time there is a name of a spouse

⁴ www website of „Amazons" Federation of Associations <http://www.amazonkifederacja.pl>

⁵ Alina Dębowska, Jerzy Sołub, Katarzyna Sołub, *Folk towel from the areas of Bielsk Podlaski. Embroidery and a lace*, Białystok 2014, p. 4

added, children, place of residence. This peculiar chronicle accompanies orthodox Ukrainians during the death.⁶

An example of a ritual towel donated at baptism is clearly regulated the principle of placing the ornament. Subsequently, the following were encoded: first and last name of the child, its origin (creation of the lineage of the family), date and place of birth, prayer for a newborn child and the name of the author of the embroidery. Additionally a towel was decorated with flower motives (a flower is assigned to a birth year, e.g. 1987 - sunflower). Other example are also wedding towels made by young girls before they got married. All the preparation process took a year from crops and processing of linen till weaving. It was a kind of dowry. It was women in particular who propagated the towel's pattern and colors by taking it with them to their husbands' homes.

Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat in her book *"History of costume"* draws an attention to a symbolism of weaving – interleaving of a woof and canvass is an allegory of a human life. A canvass is a time passing. It represents a course of a human life, i.e. a woof. A weaving dualism of a thread and canvass constituting a material appears in day and night, yin and yang, in man and woman who give birth to new generations⁷. This weaving dichotomy appears also in my doctoral thesis combining difficult subject of women's cancer with activities associated with women – embroidery and weaving. I used a code to describe cancer and related diseases. With a painted embroidery I describe what affects a women indirectly (disease of mother, friend, mother in law) or directly (their own disease).

Each string of a canvass and woof is a new story – new picture. Twelve paintings in my doctoral thesis are history carriers of women encrypted with the use of embroidery, history of the women affected by tumors, myoma, endometriosis, infertility, women suffering from breast cancer, cervix cancer, post mastectomy and hysterectomy.

⁶ *"The towels themselves at that time constituted an important attribute of wedding or funeral ceremonies. They could be encountered at the roadside and cemetery crosses."*, Alina Dębowska, Katarzyna Sołub, Jerzy Sołub, *Catalog of folk towels in the commune of Bielsk Podlaski*, Białystok 2014, p. 4

⁷ Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat, *History of costume*, Warsaw 2011, p. 287

ROZDZIAŁ II

KOLORYSTYKA

Haft na krańcach białego prostokątnego materiału – ręcznika – najczęściej ogranicza się do bieli, następnie bieli i czerwieni, po czasie ustępując miejsca dwóm kolorom nici – czerwieni i czerni. Były to barwy wykorzystywane w procesie haftowania od samego początku. Kolory użyte w „ręczniku” miały charakter ochronny przed urokami. Kolor biały (materiał) symbolizował wieczność, bezgraniczność, smutek, bezruch, czerwony znaczył kolor wschodzącego słońca, życia, ognia. I tak to w jednym ręczniku splata się ze sobą radość i smutek, życie i śmierć. Dopiero w XIX wieku zaczęto wprowadzać inne kolory: niebieski i róż, które pełniły funkcję tylko dekoracyjną⁸. Nie miały żadnych znaczeń. Inne źródła, takie jak „*Ręcznik ludowy z okolic Bielska Podlaskiego. Haft i koronka*” oraz „*Katalog ręczników z Gminy Bielsk Podlaski*” wymieniając kolorystykę wątków ręcznika, które były przede wszystkim w barwie czerwonej i czarnej potwierdzają chronologię barwną. Następnie rozbudowano kolorystykę wątków o kolor niebieski i różowy. Barwy ręcznika miały charakter symboliczny⁹. Wzory na „ręczniku” tworzą poprzeczne pasy złożone z motywów geometrycznych. Ornament wpisany jest w czworokąt, gdzie słowa zamykają się w rombie, kwadracie lub w linii prostej¹⁰.

⁸ Strona www: <https://etnoxata.com.ua/statti/vishivanki-istorija-i-suchasnist/tsveta-narodnoj-vyshivki-i-ih-znachenie> 07.02.2018, <http://eco.iarc.fr/EUCAN/Country.aspx?ISOCountryCd=804>, 07.02.2018 r.

⁹ Alina Dębowska, Jerzy Sołub, Katarzyna Sołub, *Ręcznik ludowy z okolic Bielska Podlaskiego. Haft i koronka*. wyd. Muzeum Podlaskie w Białymstoku, Białystok 2014, str. 7

¹⁰ Jw. str. 7; Lidia Orel, *Ukraińskie ręczniki. Badania historyczne i kulturowe* (Лідія Орел, Українські рушники. Історико-культурологічне дослідження), wyd. Кальварія, Lwów 2003; Lyubov Mikhailovna Butkevich, Maria Chumarna, *Haft losu. Symbole i techniki szycia* (Марія Чумарна, Вишивання долі. Символіка і техніки шитва), Апріорі 2009, str. -88; Svetlana Kitov, *Zwykła kronika Ukrainy: semantyka ornamentu ukraińskiego ręcznika* (Світлана Китова, Полотняний літопис України. Семантика орнаменту українського рушника), БРАМА, wyd. Вовчок О.Ю. 2003. str. 224

Wyjaśnienie koloru znajdziemy również w „*Słowniku mitów i tradycji kultury*” Władysława Kopalińskiego. Autor przywołuje znaczenia powyższych kolorów. Kolor biały symbolizuje czystość, prostotę, uczciwość, niewinność, prawdę. Na wschodzie kolor biały jest symbolem starszeństwa, wyższości. Ubrani na biało są kapłani, magowie, druidzi. W obrzędach pogrzebowych symbolizuje nadzieję¹¹. Czerwony kolor jest kolorem krwi, miłości, rewolucji, walki, męczeństwa, miłosierdzia, natomiast w folklorze – magii. Jego pierwotne znaczenie odnosi się do zabarwienia owada (czerwca polskiego – *Porphyrophora polonica*), którego samice dostarczały barwnika¹². Czarny kolor według tradycji wschodniej uważany jest za symbol niższości, niewoli, niskiego urodzenia. Ubrania w tym kolorze nosi się w trakcie żałoby po zmarłym. Natomiast barwa czarna w heraldyce oznacza rozagę, mądrość i stałość. Władysław Kopaliński określa melancholię jako „czarną chorobę”¹³. Kolor niebieski to kolor pogodnego nieba. Symbolizuje on rozagę, wierność, tęsknotę, nieskończoność, nadzieję, kontemplację, pobożność, szczerość. W sztuce w przedstawieniach Madonny ubranej w niebieską szatę – symbolizuje skromność, pokorę, pokutę oraz Anioła – wierność, wiarę¹⁴

Stanisław Popek w książce „*Barwy i psychika*” wskazuje na treści duchowe kolorów pojawiających się w filozofii chrześcijańskiej średniowiecza. Ponadto były one wynikiem osobistych odczuć emocjonalnych artysty, uwarunkowanych wrażliwością i kontekstem kulturowym. Od tego momentu „stają się symboliczno-duchowym przekazem wartości”¹⁵. Biel kojarzona była z czystością, niewinnością, odnową ducha, a także apostołami, aniołami, elementem szat Chrystusa i Matki Boskiej, Starcami Apokalipsy i nowo ochrzczoneymi. Czerwień była kolorem mocy, władzy, najwyższego kapłaństwa, wyrazem sił życiowych, ognia, krwi, namiętności, płodności, symbolem grzechu zmysłowego oraz uświęcenia przez miłość do Chrystusa. Błękit miał znaczenia tylko dodatnie. Kojarzony z niebem, skupieniem, melancholią, spokojem, kontemplacją. Czerń to przeciwieństwo światła,

¹¹ Władysław Kopaliński, *Słownik mitów i tradycji kultury*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1987, str. 80 i 95

¹² Władysław Kopaliński, *Słownik mitów i tradycji kultury*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1987, str. 81 i 182

¹³ Władysław Kopaliński, *Słownik mitów i tradycji kultury*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1987, str. 81 i 176

¹⁴ Jw. str. 80 i 747

¹⁵ Stanisław Popek, *Barwy i psychika*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 1999, str. 56

symbol niewiary i grzechu, pokory, wyrzeczenia, obumarcia dla świata i ciała (stąd czerń sutanny), żałoby i smutku. Stanisław Popek zwraca uwagę, że przypisane barwom znaczenia są umowne, mogą mieć powszechny lub indywidualny charakter w określonym kręgu. Podążając tropem badacza, barwa staje się jedną z form symbolicznej informacji.

Rozpoznawalnym na całym świecie symbolem kampanii przeciwko nowotworom piersi kobiet jest różowa wstążka spopularyzowana w 1991 roku. Od momentu pierwszej kampanii, której dochód został przeznaczony na walkę z rakiem piersi, kolor różowy jest „kolorem raka piersi”. Stanisław Popek w książce *„Barwy i Psychika”* wyjaśnia pojęcie koloru różowego, który „w malarstwie jest mieszaniem bieli z czerwienią, brązem i oranżem. W paletce zalecanej do malarstwa olejnego znajduje się wśród pigmentów czerwieni: czerwieni kadmowej, jasnej czerwieni, różu perskiego (ugieru czerwonego), szkarłatu weneckiego, czerwieni naftowej, czerwieni trwałej, czerwieni i alizaryny¹⁶.” Autor zwraca uwagę również na fakt, iż barwom przypisywane są symboliczne wartości. Określają one również status społeczny, mają pewnego rodzaju charakter informacji językowej, a także są nośnikami treści kulturowych. Kolor różowy określa empatię, przyjaźń, wrażliwość.

Cykl dwunastu obrazów namalowany jest w kolorystyce ręcznika obrzędowego (haftowanego). Spośród wielu pokrywających się znaczeń wybrałam po jednym do każdego koloru z intencją odniesienia do choroby nowotworowej kobiet. Wykorzystane przeze mnie kolory symbolizują na moich obrazach:

- czerwony: walkę z chorobą,
- czarny: mądrość, którą zdobywa się na drodze do zdrowia,
- biały: nadzieję na uleczenie i całkowite wyleczenie,
- róż: brak – wybrakowanie, defekt fizyczny, niedostatek emocjonalny,
- niebieski: pokorę – świadomość własnego życia wobec choroby.

¹⁶ Stanisław Popek, *Barwy i psychika*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 1999, str. 56

CHAPTER II

COLOURING

Embroidery on the edges of a rectangular shaped material is limited to two color thread – red and a black one. These were the colors used in the process of embroidery from the very beginning. Colors used on the “towel” had a character protecting from spells. The primary colors were: red – color of the rising sun, life, fire; white – white material symbolized eternity, infinity, misery, motionlessness. In the early days it was the white color that was a color of mourning. And this is how on one towel a joy entangles with sadness, life with death. Not until XIX century one started applying different colors: black and blue which played a decoration role only.¹⁷ They had no meaning. In different sources (“*Folk towel from the areas of Bielsk Podlaski. Embroidery and a lace*” and “*Catalog of folk towels in the commune of Bielsk Podlaski*”) the color of threads on the towel was mostly kept in red, black and blue, thereafter extended with a pink color. The color of the half was symbolic character¹⁸. The pattern is created by transversal stripes including geometric motives. An ornament is inscribed into a tetragon¹⁹.

Władysław Kopaliński in “*Dictionary of myths and cultural traditions*” recalls the meanings of above mentioned colors. White color symbolizes purity, simplicity, honesty, innocence, truth. In the East white color symbolizes seniority, superiority. Dressed in white are the priests, maguses, druids. Regarding funeral ceremony it symbolizes hope.²⁰ Red is a color of blood, love, revolution, fight, martyrdom, mercy. On the other hand in folklore it is a color of magic. Its primal meaning refers to a colored insect – Polish cochineal (*Porphyrophora polonica*) – whose females provided a dye²¹. Black color according to a eastern tradition is considered a symbol of inferiority, slavery, low social status. Clothes in this color are also worn during the mourning the dead. In heraldry

¹⁷ Internet website: <https://etnoxata.com.ua/statti/vishivanki-istorija-i-suchasnist/tsveta-narodnoj-vyshivki-i-ih-znachenie> 07.02.2018, <http://eco.iarc.fr/EUCAN/Country.aspx?ISOCountryCd=804> 07.02.2018 r.

¹⁸ Alina Dębowska, Jerzy Sołub, Katarzyna Sołub, *Folk towel from the areas of Bielsk Podlaski. Embroidery and a lace*, Białystok 2014, p. 7

¹⁹ Alina Dębowska, Jerzy Sołub, Katarzyna Sołub, *Folk towel from the areas of Bielsk Podlaski. Embroidery and a lace*, Białystok 2014, p. 7; Lidia Orel, *Ukrainian towels. Historical and cultural research* (Лідія Орел, Українські рушники. Історико-культурологічне дослідження), Lviv 2003; Lyubov Mikhailovna Butkevich, Maria Chumarна, *Embroidery of fate. Sewing symbols and techniques* (Марія Чумарна, Вишивання долі. Символіка і техніки шитва), Апріорі 2009, p. -88; Svetlana Kitov, *An ordinary chronicle of Ukraine: the semantics of the Ukrainian towel ornament* (Світлана Китова, Полотняний літопис України. Семантика орнаменту українського рушника), БРАМА 2003, p. 224

²⁰ Władysław Kopaliński, *Dictionary of myths and cultural traditions*, Warsaw 1987, p. 80 and 95

²¹ Ibid. p. 81 and 182

it means prudence, wisdom and constancy. The author refers melancholy as "black disease"²². Blue is a color of a serene sky. It symbolizes prudence, faithfulness, longing, infinity, hope, contemplation, devotion, honesty. In art on the pictures of Madonna dressed in a blue robe it symbolizes humbleness, humility and an angel, faithfulness, belief.²³

Stanisław Popek in his book *"Colors and psyche"* points at spiritual content of colors appearing in Middle Age Christian philosophy. It was also a result of the personal emotional feelings of the artist, caused by sensitivity and cultural context. Since that moment they "become symbolic-spiritual value message"²⁴. White is associated with innocence, spirit renewal and also with apostle angels, element of Christ robe and Mother of God, elders of Apocalypse and newly baptized. Red was color of power, highest priesthood, expression of life force of fire, blood, passion, fertility, symbol of sensual sin and consecration by Christ's love. Blue had only positive meanings. Associated with focus, melancholy, tranquility, contemplation. Black is the opposite of light, a symbol of infidelity, negation, decay for world and the body (hence a soutane is black), grief and sadness.

Besides the author draws an attention to the fact that the meanings assigned to each color are contractual, they can be common or have individual character in a given ring. Following up on this line a color becomes one of the forms of symbolic information.

A symbol of the campaign against breast cancer recognizable all over the world is the pink ribbon promoted in 1991. Since the first campaign, of which the income was committed for a fight against a breast cancer, the pink color is recognized as a color of a breast cancer. Stanisław Popek in his book *"Colors and mind"* describes the pink color as the one *"which in art of painting is a mixture of white and red, brown and orange."* *In a palette recommended for oil paintings there are pigments of red: cadmic red, light red, Persian red (red ocher), Venetian scarlet, oil red, permanent red and alizarin.*²⁵ The author also draws an attention to the fact that the colors have their symbolic values assigned. They also characterize the social status, they have some kind of language information, but they are also a carrier of cultural contents. Pink color refers to: empathy, friendship, sensitiveness.

The cycle of twelve pictures is painted in colors of the ritual towel (embroidered one). From many covering meanings I picked one for each color with an intention of referring it to women's disease. Colors used by me in my pictures symbolize:

red – a fight with a disease,

black – wisdom gained during a recovery,

²² Ibid. p. 81 and 174

²³ Ibid. p. 80 and 747

²⁴ Stanisław Popek, *Colors and psyche*, Lublin 1999, p. 56

²⁵ Ibid. p. 56

white – hope of total recovery,
pink – physical defect, emotional deficiency,
blue – humility, awareness of one's own life when confronted with a disease.

CHAPTER III

WAY OF REALIZATION

My doctoral thesis is comprised of twelve paintings in acrylic technique on a canvas (ten paintings with dimensions of 100 cm x 100 cm, two paintings with dimensions 90 cm x 110 cm). The compositions diverge in four directions with the central activity marked.

My work on the cycle of pictures took place in several phases. First one was the research consisting in decoding an alphabet included in the geometric symbols of Ukrainian embroidery. The second phase was creating an authorial alphabet used further for coding. The third phase was finding an information on the most common types of women's tumors and giving those pictures titles. The fourth phase was composing and recording the names using the alphabet and selection of colors. The fifth phase was creating the paintings.

The look of „Рушник’а” from which I drew an inspiration:



On each one of „Рушник’u” there is an information recorded with the use of Ukrainian alphabet in the form of geometric characters²⁶:

АЛФАВИТ

■ вертикально-горизонтальное написание ■ диагональное написание

А	Б	В	Г	Ґ
Д	Е	Є	Ж	З
И	І	Ї	Й	К
Л	М	Н	О	П
Р	С	Т	У	Ф
Х	Ц	Ч	Ш	Щ
Ю	Я	Ь	Ъ	Связка

²⁶ Vladimir Pidgimyak, *Embroidered text*, Kiev 2008, p. 5

Examples of information saved on „Рушник’у” / towel²⁷:

ЦИФРИ

Рис.2

Одиниці	Символ	Вигук
1 (один)		
2 (два)		
3 (три)		
4 (чотири)		
5 (п'ять)		
6 (шість)		
7 (сім)		
8 (вісім)		
9 (дев'ять)		
0 (нуль)		
Десятки		
Сотні		
Тисячі		

6

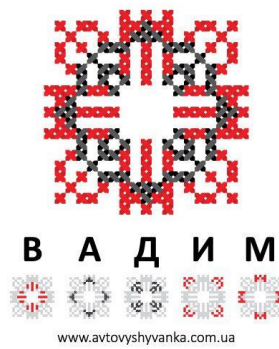
ПРИКЛАДИ НАПИСАННЯ СЛІВ

Приватного змісту

Рис.6

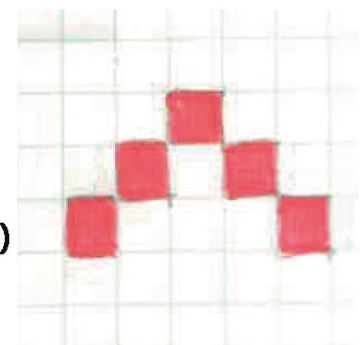
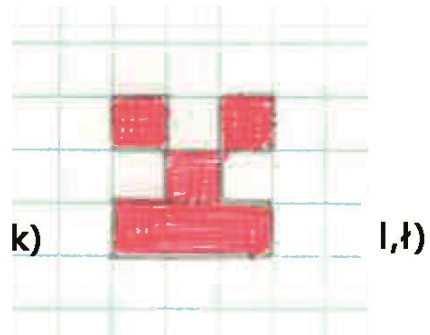
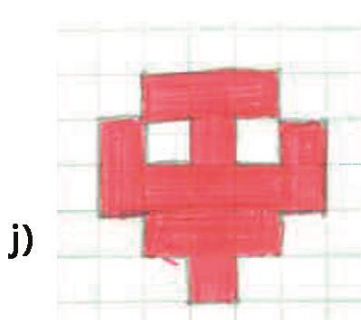
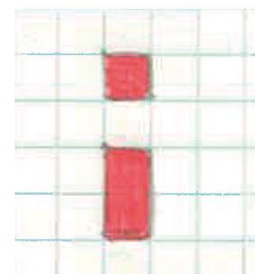
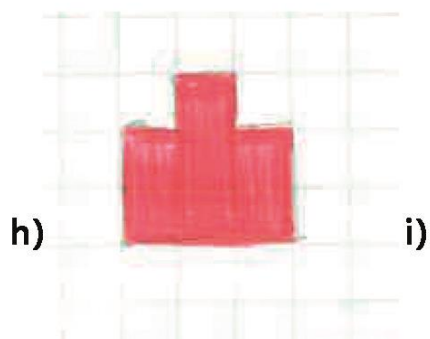
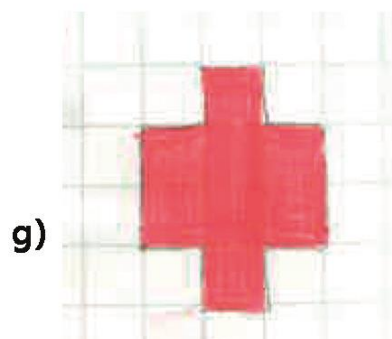
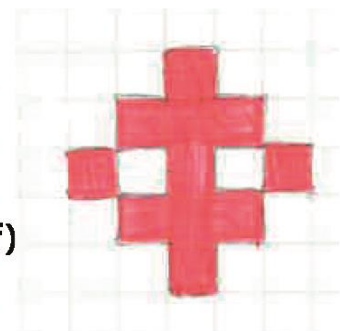
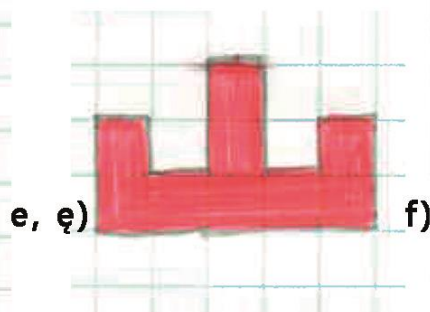
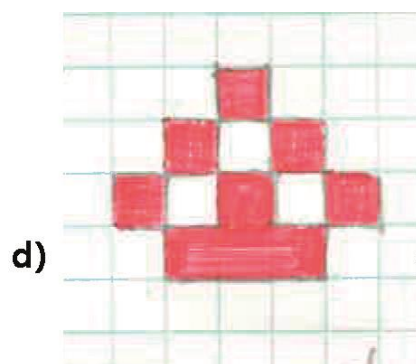
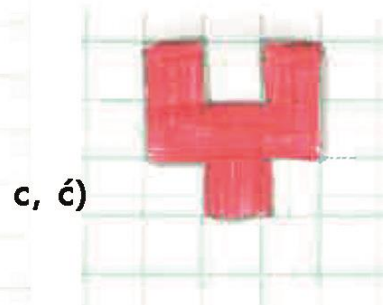
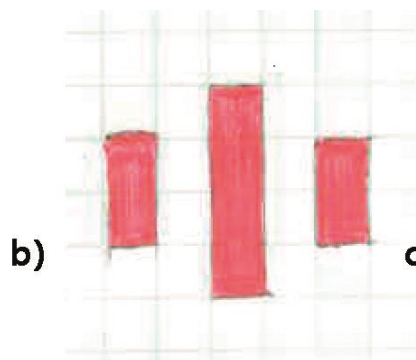
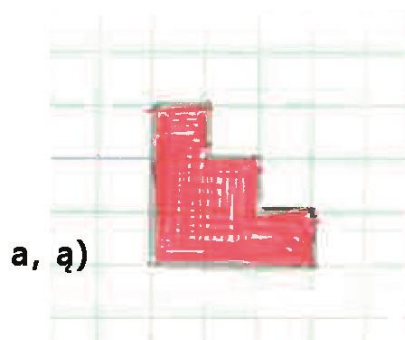
Записано	Колодуємо	Угальничемо
МАМА		
ТАТО		
МАРІЯ		
ВОЛОДИМИР		

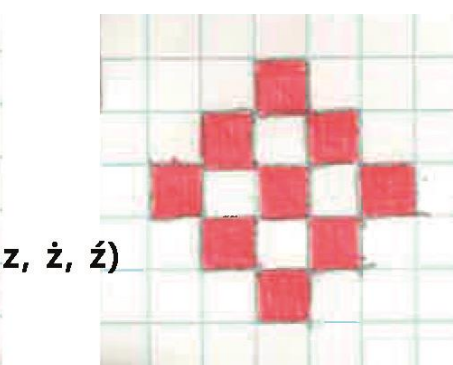
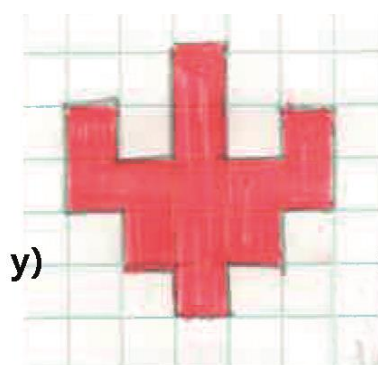
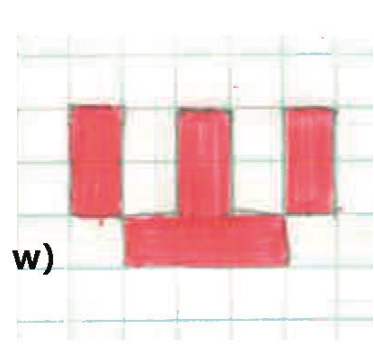
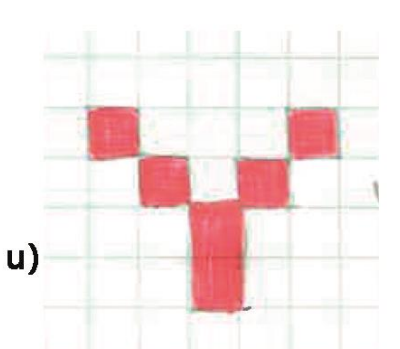
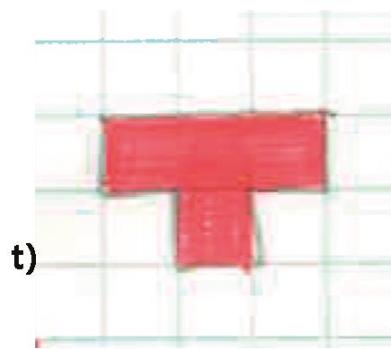
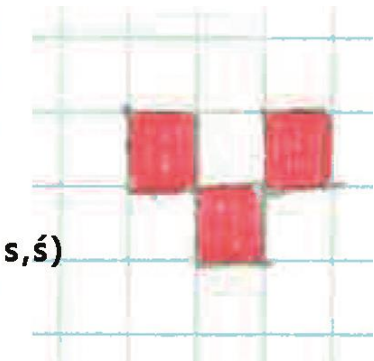
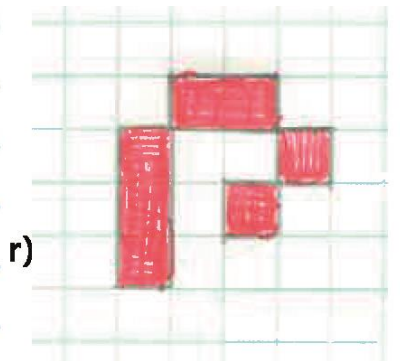
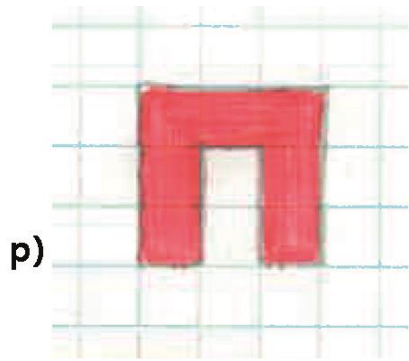
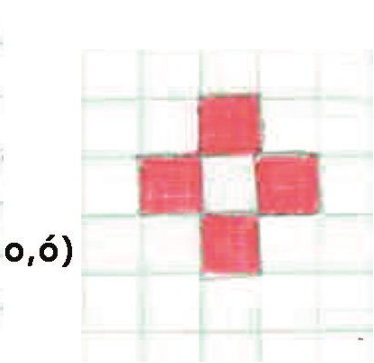
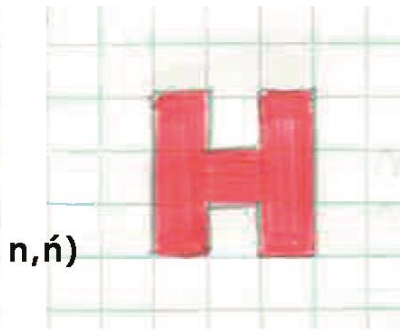
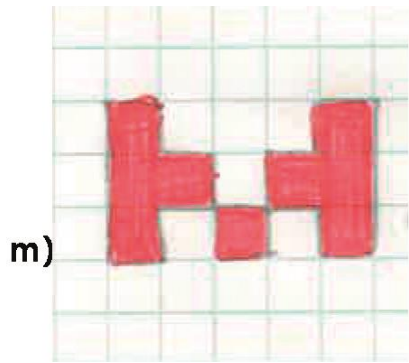
10



²⁷ Vladimir Pidgimyak, *Embroidered text*, Kiev 2008, p. 6 and 10

My alphabet:



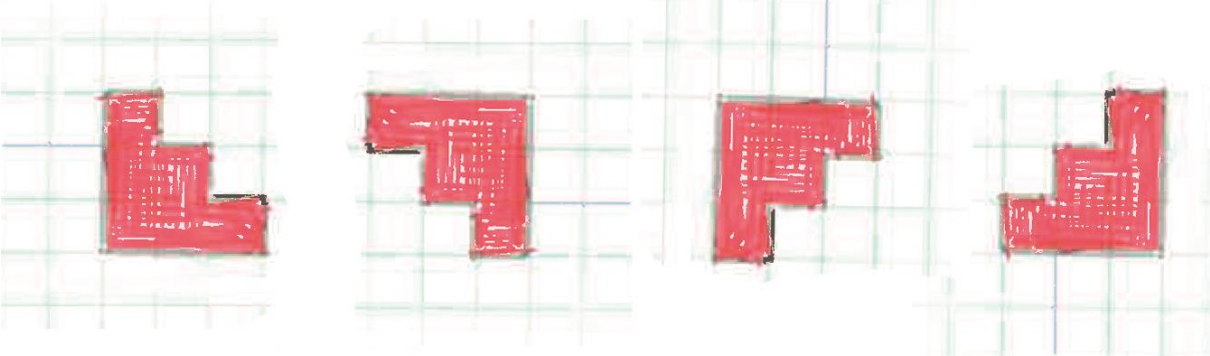


Using the authorial alphabet I recorded the types of tumor from which women suffer.²⁸ The type of disease is a title of the picture. I divided the cycle into twos. Starting from pictures with the white background and geometric composition in red and black: diseases leading to cancer (cysts and endometriosis). It was them that started the cycle due to their form remotely like Рушник'а in color (white, red and black) and the enlarged format. Two pictures with the pink background (vagina cancer and uterus cancer), two pictures with the blue background and geometric figures in pink and black (nipple cancer and endometrial cancer); two pictures with the white background and geometric figures in pink and blue (cervical cancer, breast cancer, vulva cancer, ovary cancer); two pictures with the black background and geometric figures in pink and blue related to the ultimate effects of cancer (mastectomy – cutting off breast – and hysterectomy – cutting out uterus) and one picture painted in pink (infertility as a result of tumor diseases).

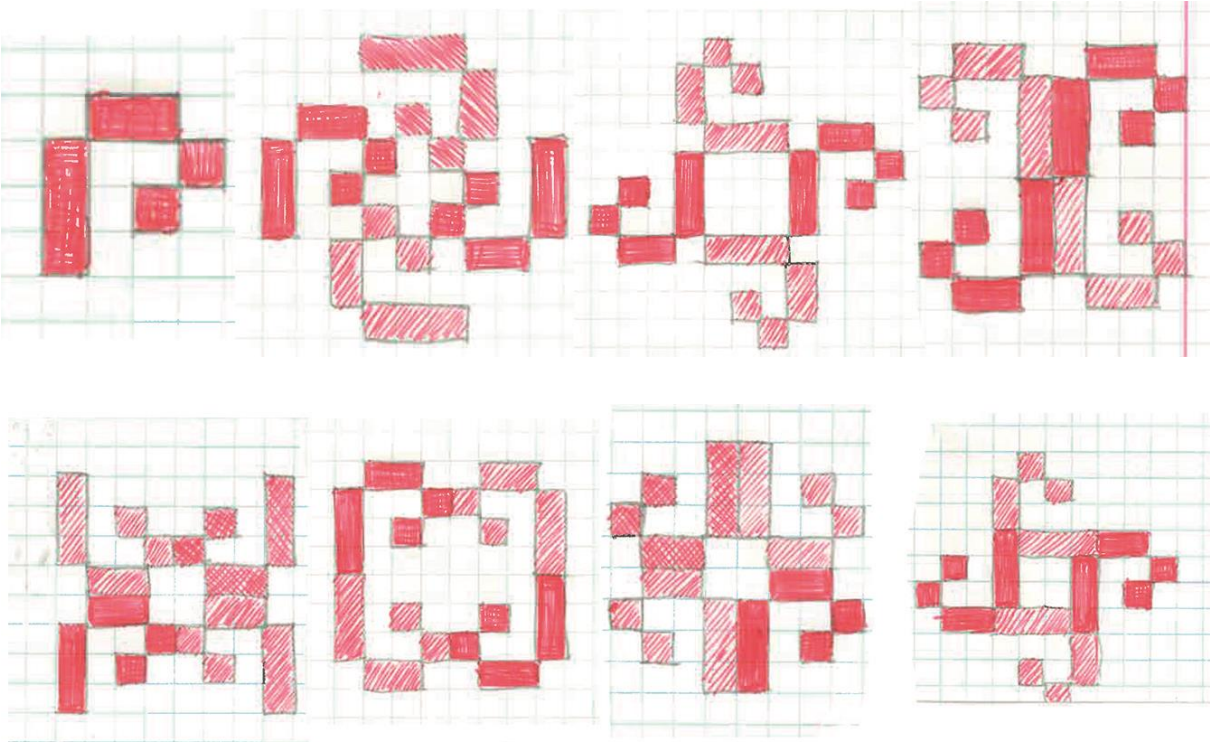
In the next, fourth stage, I sketched a checkered pencil in a sketchbook and geometric compositions and red and black ballpoint pen. The pencil allowed for quick, sketchy designs and freedom to make changes. In checkered, I „typed in” the patterns that I colored with a red and black pen - the colors of the embroidery Ukrainian. Then I combined the letters into fours. This division is connected with the four sides of the world.

²⁸ Joanna Didkowska, Urszula Wojciechowska, Paweł Olasek, *Malignant tumors in Poland in 2015*, Warsaw 2017

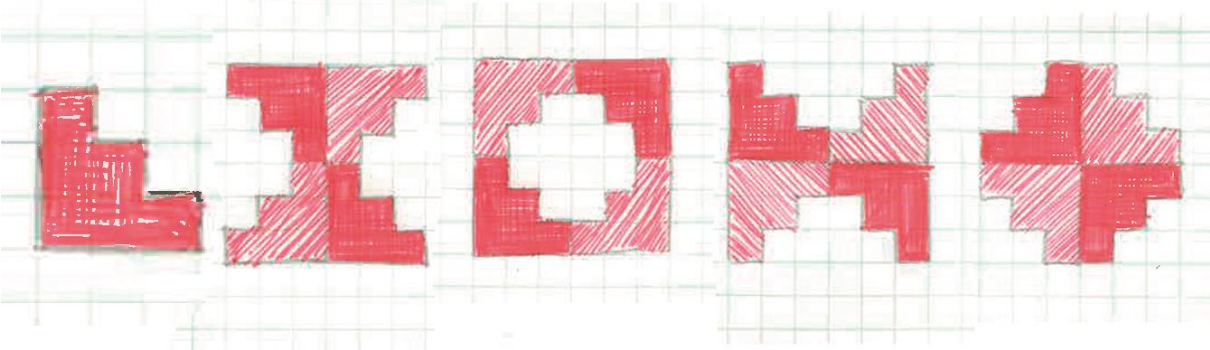
Rotation of the letter "a" (vertically, horizontally, mirror image):



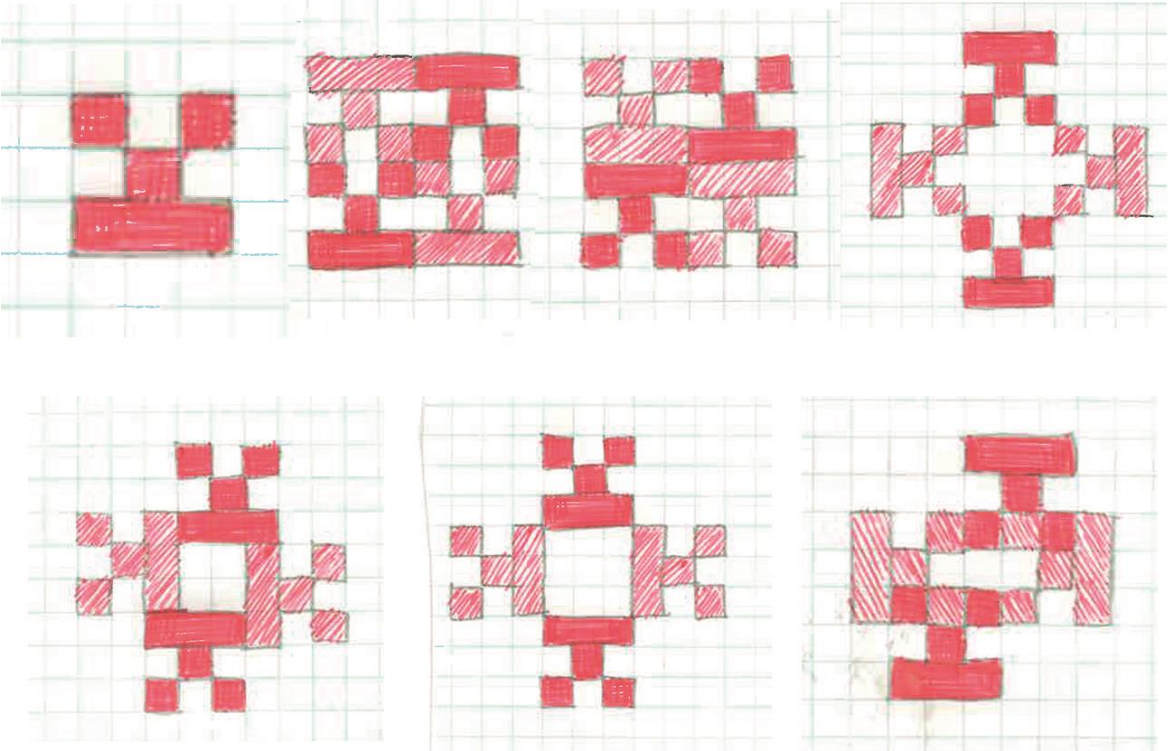
Way of joining letters "r" in fours (each letter repeated four times and rotated):



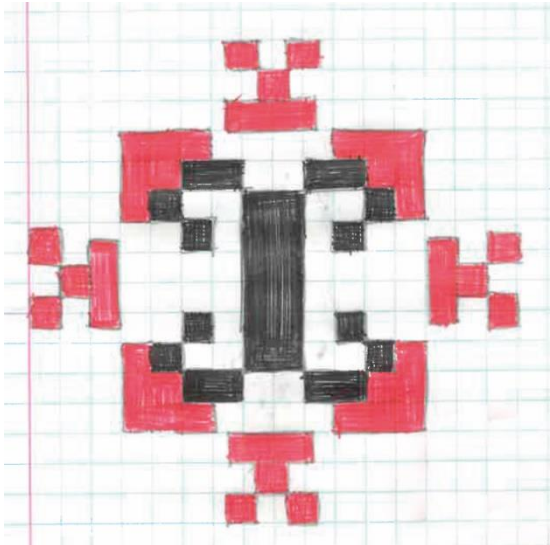
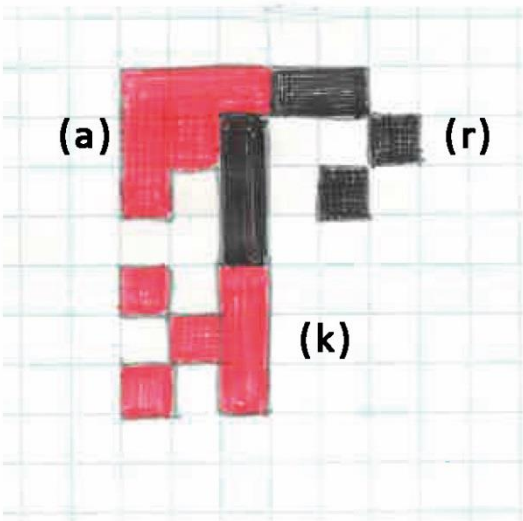
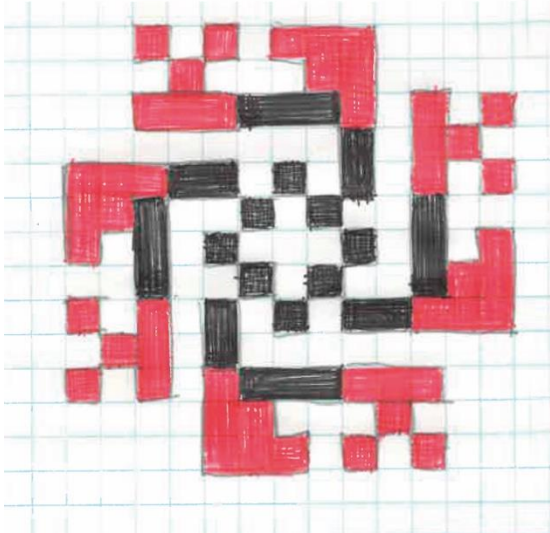
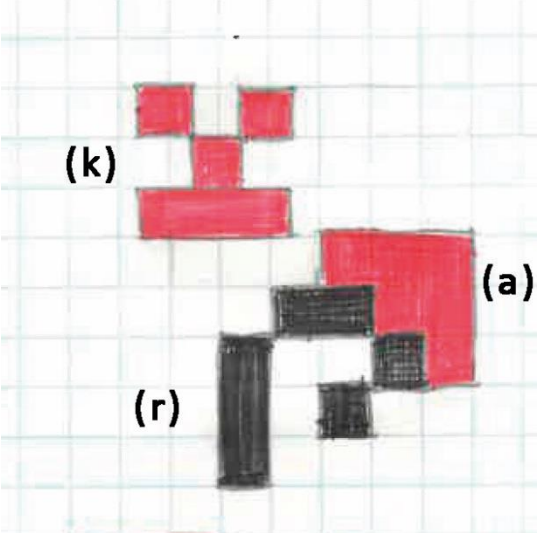
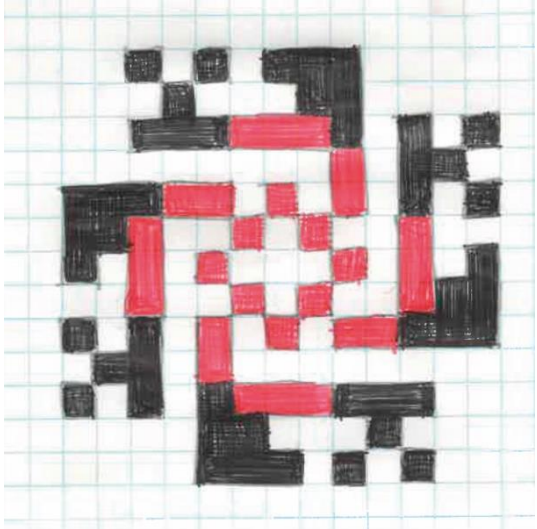
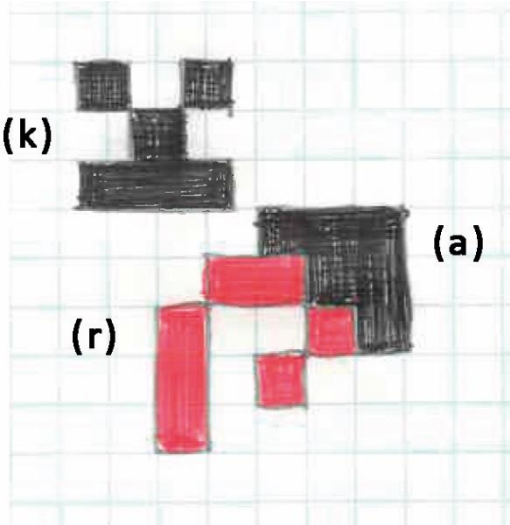
Way of joining letters "a" in fours (each letter repeated four times and rotated):

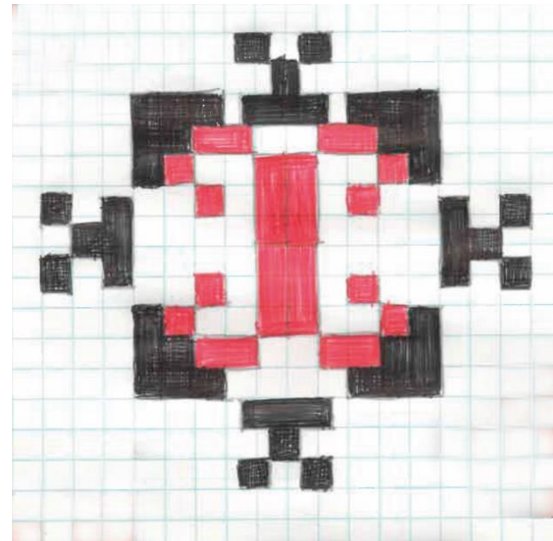
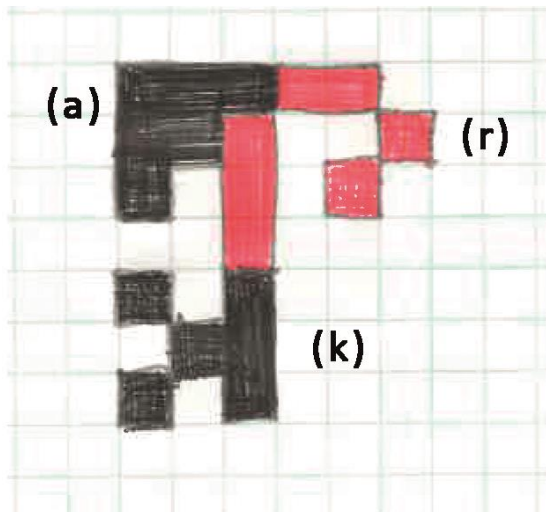


Way of joining letters "k" in fours (each letter repeated four times and rotated):



Four examples of composing the word "cancer" (each letter repeated four times and rotated):





Thereafter I moved the project to Adobe Photoshop which allowed me to check different color versions and different variants of elements comprising the picture. Due to that I could complete the composition analysis fast. Geometric symbols were placed in accordance with the letters in a word. The ultimate shape depended on the size of the letters in a given word and on their placement with the rhythm – letters are rotated. Background color and two other colors were used to paint the symbols. At that stage the process of giving the ornament shape ended.

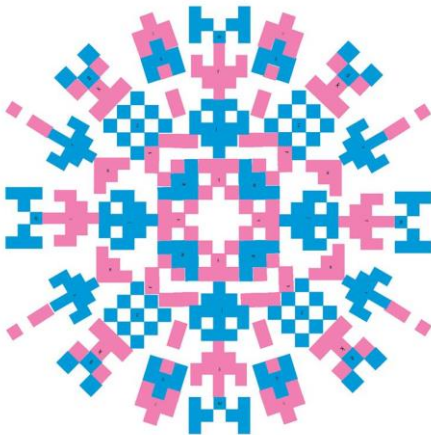
The process of deciphering encoded words in paintings using the attached authorial geometric alphabet is comparable to reading a map. Having a legend (alphabet) the recipient is able to read a code. We start reading from the centre to the edge. One letter is repeated four times, similarly as every word. The whole is closed in a square (e. g. nipple cancer), rhombus (e. g. endometriosis), or circle (e. g. cervical cancer).

An arrangement of images consisting of geometric shapes (alphabet) I composed manually by means of sheet of paper and pens, then, through Adobe Photoshop program. I could accelerate this process using a program called Ornament Name (website: ornament.name/creator#), which is used to record information through geometric alphabet in Ukrainian language. Information on how to use this program is on You Tube website (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhVXxwNiSGo>). The same coding scheme is in the book entitled *"Tekst haftowany"* written by Władimir Pidgirnyak (Володимир Підгірняк, Текстова вишивка).

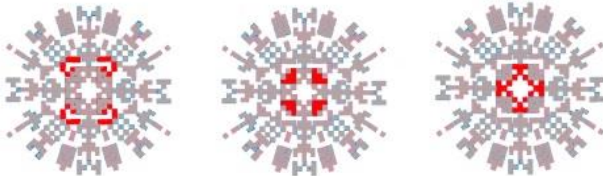
I started making of the pictures by applying the base onto a canvas with the use of classic spackle and a spackle with cloves. Applying it horizontally and vertically led to creating a check. When it dried up I painted a thin color base with an acrylic paint using a flat brush. After that, using the color corresponding with a given picture, I applied it on the previous layer trying not to totally overwrite it. I created three pictures with a pink background, two with a black background, two with blue one, four with a white one. Those colors were brought down to a color chart chosen by me: white, red, blue, black. All the colors come from the embroidery „Рушник’у” except for the pink one symbolizing the “pink ribbon”.

During the next phase using a drawer and crayons I drew a check with dimensions of 2,5 cm x 2,5 cm. I started applying a color on it creating an letter ornament. At that step I could manipulate the thickness of the applied paint, its quality and saturation. The way of treating the painterly matter joining the base with acrylic paint and with a pencil gave an effect of embroidery on a fabric showing the letters.

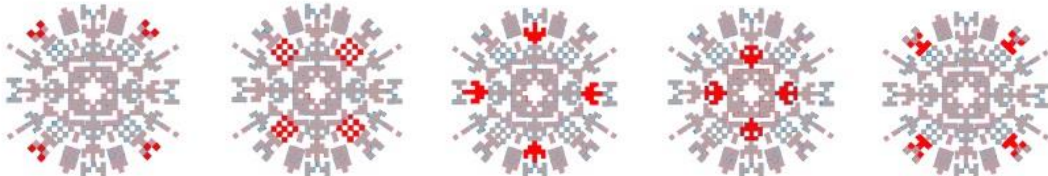
cervix cancer



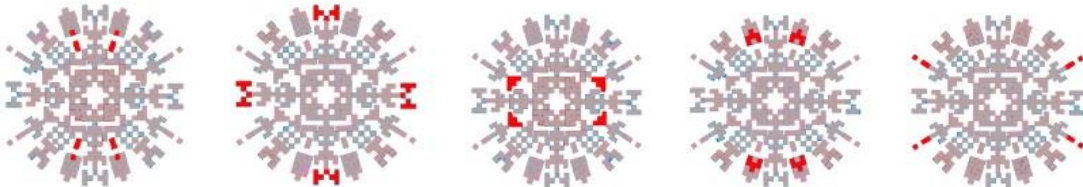
R A K



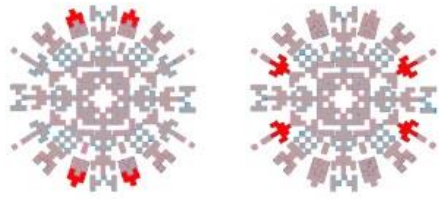
S Z Y J K



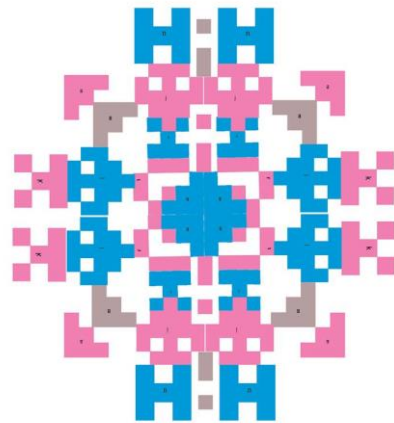
I M A C I



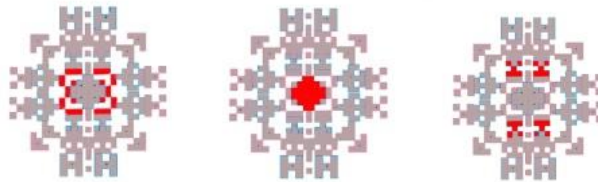
C Y



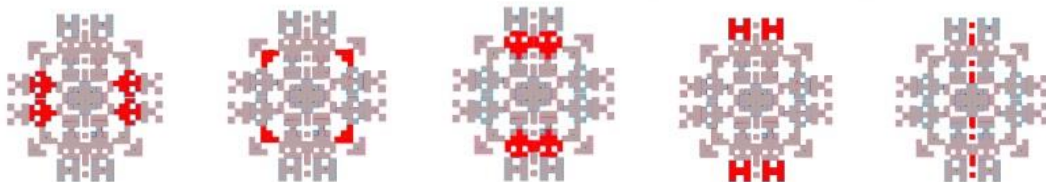
ovary cancer



R A K

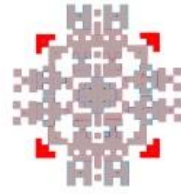
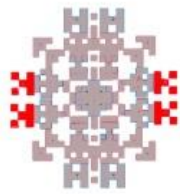


J A J N I

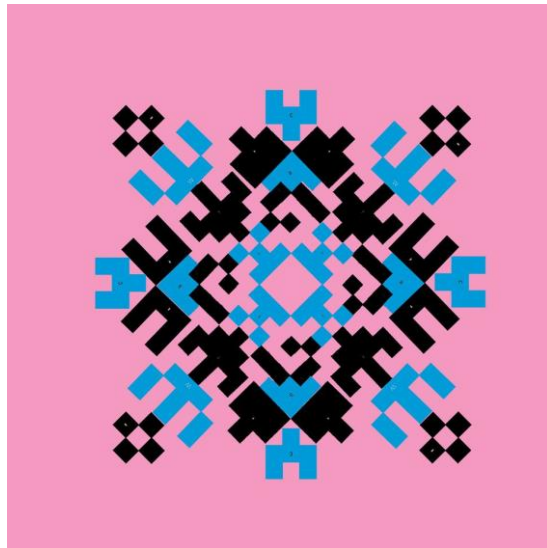


K

A



vagina cancer



R

A

K



P

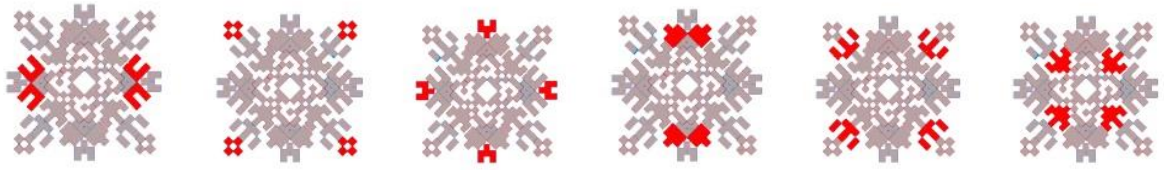
O

C

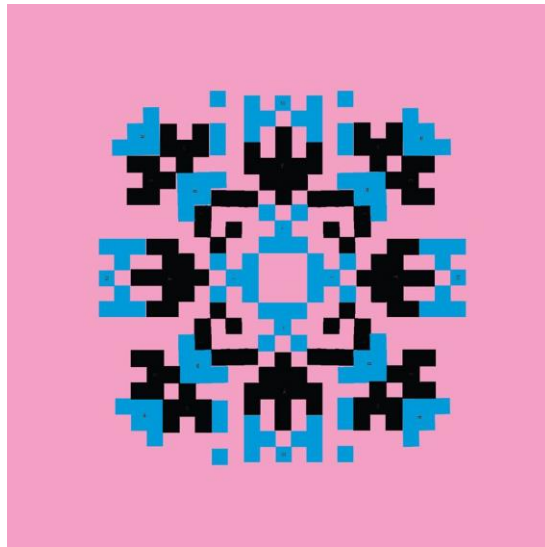
H

W

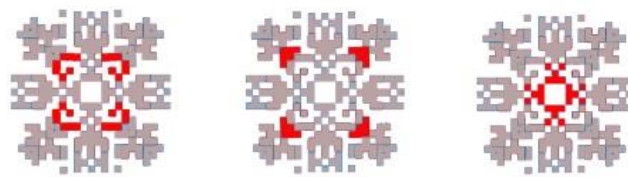
Y



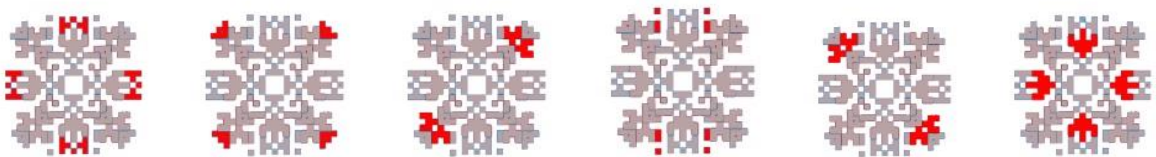
breast cancer



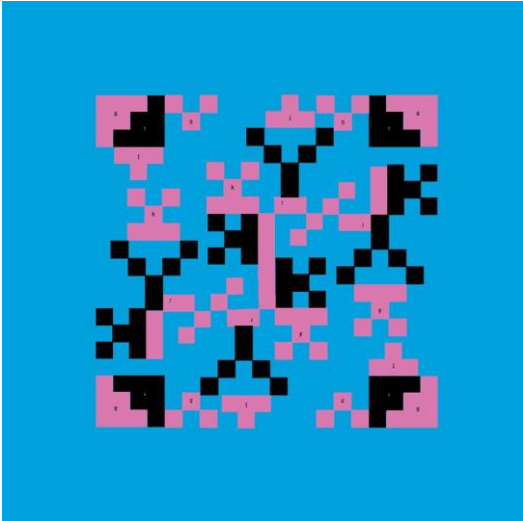
R A K



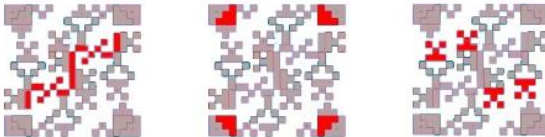
M A C I C Y



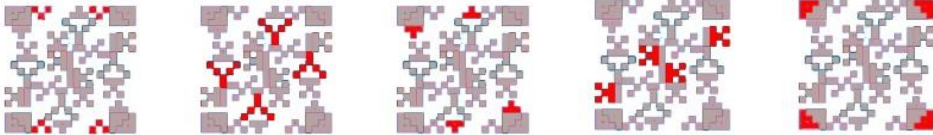
nipple cancer



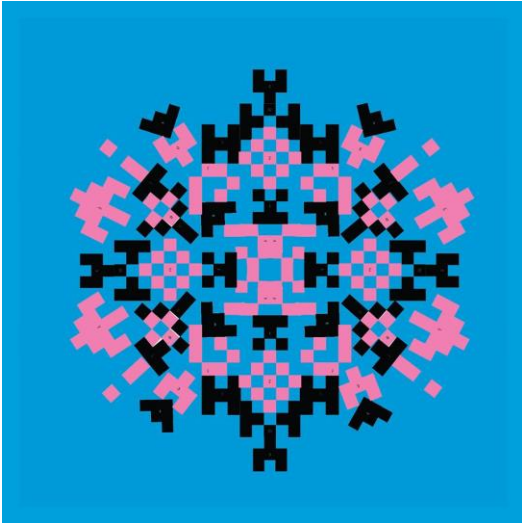
R A K



S U T K A



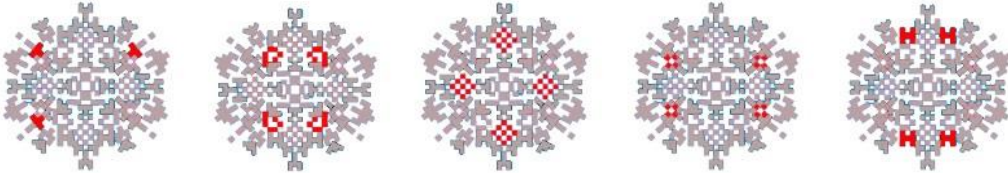
endometrial cancer



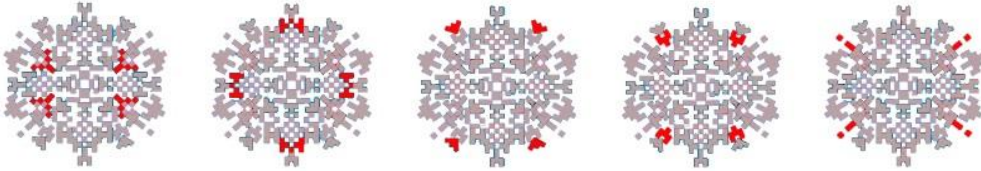
R A K



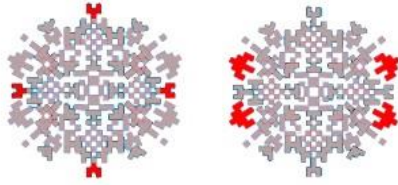
T R Z O N



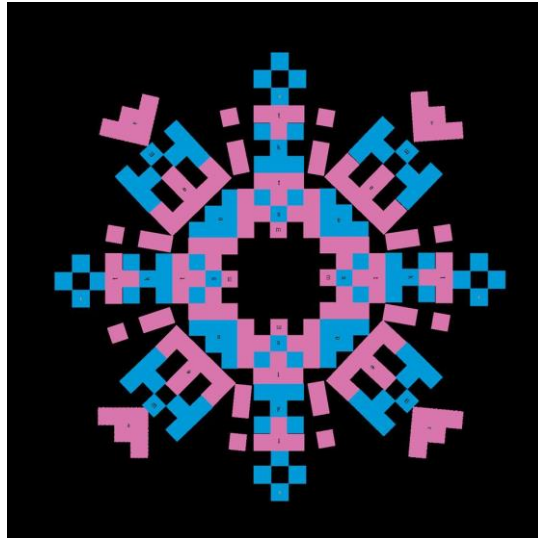
U M A C I



C Y



mastectomy



M

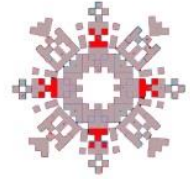
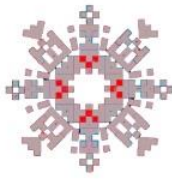
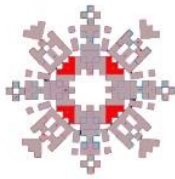
A

S

T

E

K



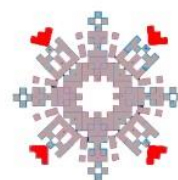
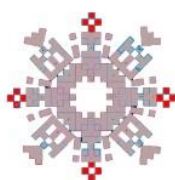
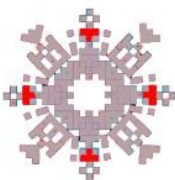
T

O

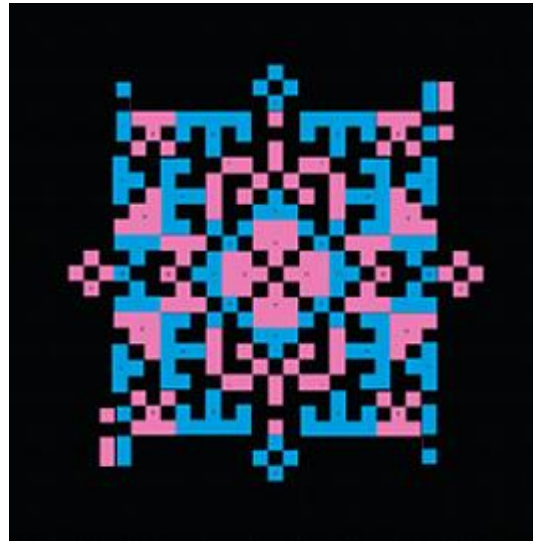
M

I

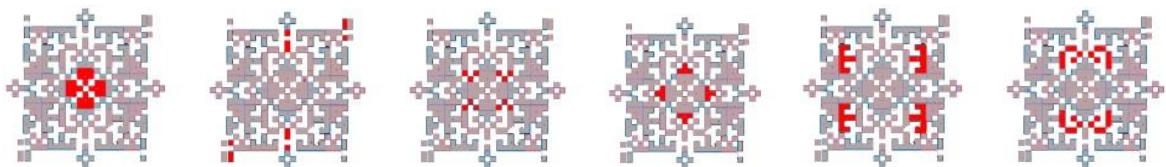
A



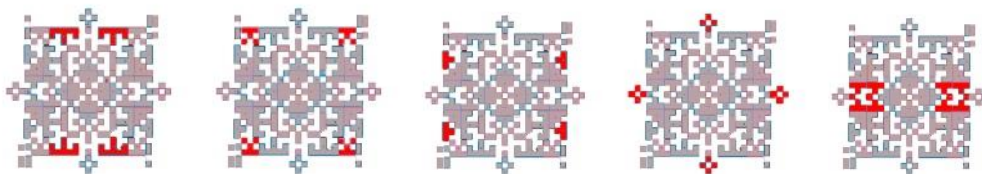
hysterectomy



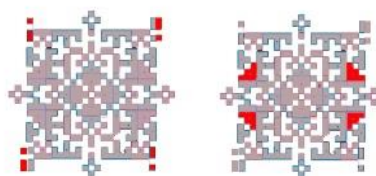
H I S T E R



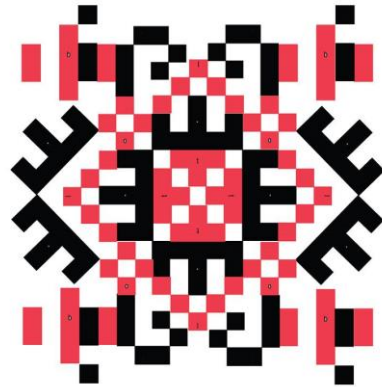
E K T O M



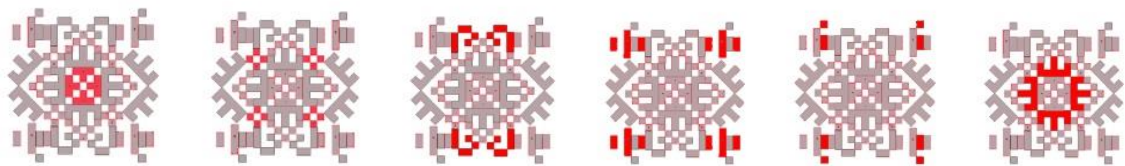
I A



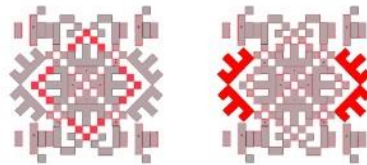
cysts



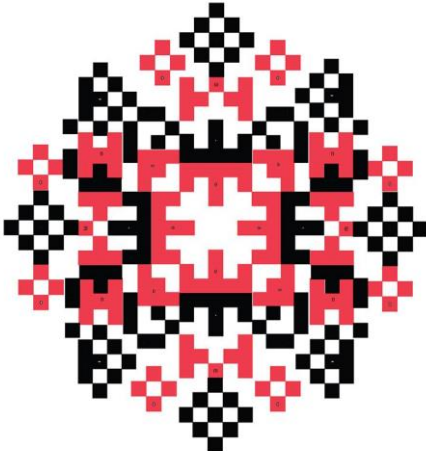
T O R B I E



L E



endometriosis



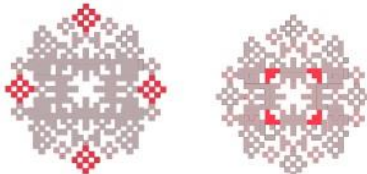
E N D O M



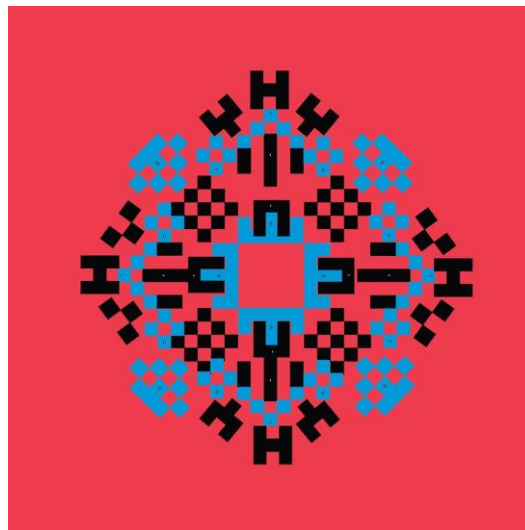
E T R I O



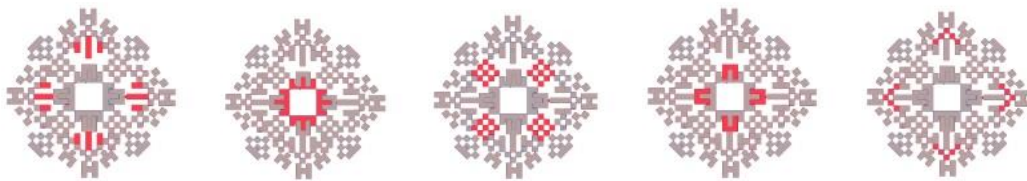
Z A



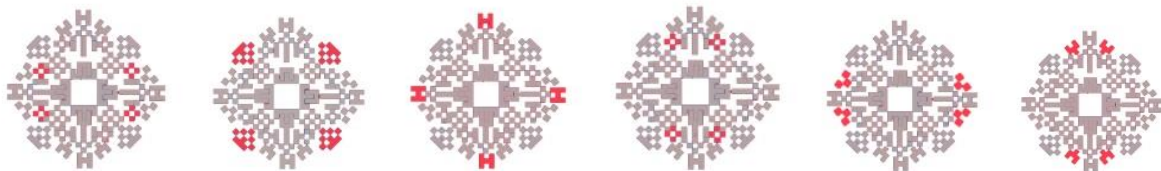
Infertility



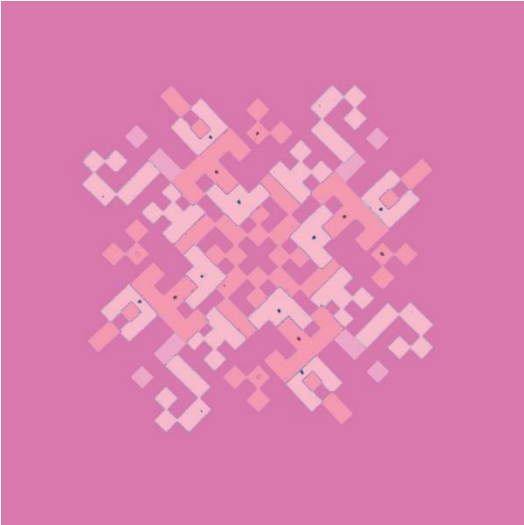
B E Z P Ł



O D N O Ś Ć



breast cancer



R A K



P I E R S I



CHAPTER IV

ARTISTIC PRACTICES AND THEORIES AS A REFERENCE AREA

Females' cancer as a subject of major interest in my dissertation refers to the artistic practices of *Alina Szapocznikow*, *Katarzyna Kozyra* and *Iza Moczarna-Pasiek*. In their works they undertake problematic aspects of cancer. The aforementioned issue of cancer in art is present both among sick female artists and those who are healthy.

A direct reference to cancer can be seen in *Alina Szapocznikow* sculptural works. In 1968 the Polish artist was diagnosed as having a breast cancer²⁹. Starting from that moment her works in a sense are documentation of a progressive disease. Manifestation of her own experiences appears in series of works such as "*Pamiętki*" (pictures of the loved ones sunk in lumps of resin), "*Nowotwory uosobione*", "*Wielki nowotwór*", "*Małe nowotwory*", "*Nowotwory nawarstwione*", "*Kruźlowa*" or "*Pogrzeb Aliny*" (along with the casts of heads, faces, immersed pictures and bandages in resin). It seems that Alina Szapocznikow uses pink colour in her works referring to parts of the body such as lips or nipples³⁰. Alina Szapocznikow's works are filled with experiences enclosed in a frozen sculpture. Emotions related to the cancer disease of women close to me have been closed in my paintings.

References to the topic of my doctoral thesis concerning cancer among women I also find in artistic creation of *Katarzyna Kozyra*, who has been affected by cancer (Hodgkin's lymphoma)³¹. In the work entitled "*Olimpia*" (1996) the artist refers to Edouard Manet's image from 1863 which is of the same title. In the form of a triptych "*Olimpia*" was presented for the first time at the Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle. In the middle of the first photograph lies a naked artist with a "shaven" head reflecting her illness, with a flower of orchid behind the ear, black ribbon on the neck, bracelet on hand and red shoes. A bed is covered with a blue bedding, beside the bed stands a housemaid with a stuffed cat lying in her legs. In the second photograph the artist is naked, lying on the bed in a hospital, with a connected drip and the elbows slightly bent to support herself. Next to her is a nurse. The body is without hair on. There is also a video enclosed to this picture, which shows Katarzyna Kozyra taking liquids through a drip – the last chemotherapy. In the third photograph there is a figure of a naked old lady in a flat, sitting on a bed and holding a bandage. The protagonist of the last part of a triptych is not

²⁹ Edyta Zierkiewicz, Alina Łysak, *Woman and (b) cancer. Images of breast cancer in culture*, Warsaw 2017

³⁰ Agata Jakubowska, *Multiple portrait of Alina Szapocznikow*, Poznań 2007

³¹ Izabela Kowalczyk, *Body and power - Polish critical art for 90.years*, Warsaw 2002

accompanied by the housemaid or nurse, she is alone. She is sitting in a way which implies an expectation for someone or something. The black untied ribbon on the neck indicates that Olimpia is the title character. Katarzyna Kozyra arranges her work "*Olimpia*"³² in a series of three photographs. My doctoral dissertation is divided into three cycles: diseases that cause cancer, cancer and their consequences. The artist described her work with the name Olimpia. For each of the dissertation images I could match the name of a woman marked by a disease.

Izabela Moczarna-Pasiek is also an artist whose work enters into my core area of interest. She invites to cooperation all women who were affected by mastectomy. The results of her activities can be seen in several series of photographs, for example "*Kalendarz amazonek*" (2005). The project was developed in collaboration with the Femina-Fenix Amazons Association in Wrocław. The artist wanted to show publicly the portraits of women and emphasize their femininity diverging from the image created by media. Amazons were shown with flowers, hats, corals, vegetables, or sculptures. Chests of the photographed women are partially or completely obscured. "*Cięcie*" (2009) was established in cooperation with Warsaw-based Psycho-Oncology Association - "*Garden of Hope*". This time these are women who are after chemotherapy which caused a total hair loss. In this case, a bald head may be associated with the negative feelings, such as shame, humiliation, or any sort of defect. Women conceal their problems by wearing wigs, kerchiefs, hats, or caps. It is much easier to cover, camouflage the fact of breast removal by wearing a brassiere, rather than cover a bald head.

My doctoral thesis undertakes the issue of cancer in a new way – through the use of encryption. Encoding disease by alphabet is a kind of camouflage, as well as disease "camouflages" its symptoms. Only a detailed analysis can give a complete diagnosis. The high number of cancer cases should make us accustom to the problem of this disease. With early diagnosis a full recovery is possible.

„Ręcznik” is a good starting point for a wider discussion not only in my thesis. Nowadays there are many Ukrainian artists that recognize the potential of folk motives, for example in artistic creation of *Ivan Semesyuk* (Іван Семесюк)³³. In his works I observe a direct analogy to undertaken artistic problems of my thesis. His ways to use motifs of embroideries in painting and his support for placing social issues in his creativity, similarly, as I intend to do it as well, and my inspiration comes from these social commitments. A towel became a pretext to illustrate all what surrounds us. It is worth to mention even the

³² Karol Sienkiewicz, *They will dance to you, what they trebled. Polish critical art*, Warsaw 2002

³³ Interview, Maria Osika and Ivan'em Semesyuk'iem (Іван Семесюк), <http://tema.in.ua/article/7984.html>

series of works from a project called *„Funky Textile“*, as for example hand embroidered *„Ukraińskie marzenia“* – a few cushions filled with applications, embroideries, embroidered texts, introducing symbols simple for reading, such as an emblem or a flag of Ukraine, swastika on a red background, a skull with the inscription: life or dead, radioactivity sign. These elements, painted by means of white, red or black paint, are repeated on a square piece of canvas. In its middle part there is mounted a cushion and a towel is hung over the entirety.

In another set of works the artist applies red embroidery to the cushions, keeping composition of the towel (alignment, central system, mirror image). In the middle he decorates with names and logos of well-known brands, e.g. Chanel, Lexus, Louis Vuitton, BMW. Further, the same motifs are repeated in a smaller scale and complemented, e.g. a bird's wing with a symbol of Lexus. A set of white T-shirts decorated with red embroidery is also inspired by the towel. On the top of each T-shirt there is an inscription *„Рушник“* arranged with a brand name, e.g. Nike, Reebok, D&G. The Kiev artist remains faithful to the folk motifs in his painting cycles, e.g. *„Antybohaterowie“*. The canvases show the series of portraits of people, often politicians, with embroideries painted in red and placed over their heads. I think that Ivan Semesyuk in his works wants to break with the meanings assigned to the ritual towel such as their spirituality or holiness. In a well-thought-out way he uses Ukrainian archetypes, taking them to a new level.

In my dissertation I refer to a game strategy³⁴ (I chose it as my creative strategy), which requires a joint interaction between the work and the recipient. The most important is to allocate a task that must be accomplished in its logical centre and which in this case is based on a decryption of anagram. The viewer receives at his/her disposal the rules and tools of “game” – a card with letters and a defined space – a particular painting. A geometric figure is assigned to each letter. Being faced with a legend we are able to decode the title of the painting. It is clear that a difficulty level is important, dependent on the number of letters in word/words.

In turn, the inspiration for a system strategy are mathematical and modular systems with defined rules and information. The example of realization this type of strategy are geometrical works of *Jerzy Grochocki*, Polish artist who uses his own code relating to surface and colour: black, white, gold and silver. Colour is assigned to each letter of the alphabet. I am inspired by the artist because of his way in planning the space of a painting, reduction of colour, geometric form.

³⁴ Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, *Interactive art*, Warsaw 2010

In this context, it is worth to recall a semiological method which answers the question about the way of creating meanings by images. Through the distribution of painting image into parts – we divide the ornament into smaller geometrical shapes and bring relations down to a broader system of meanings.

In my work as a painter I strive to show the symbolism of the colour of geometric shapes, reinforced with background. In this area, the research carried out by Stanisław Popek serve as the theoretical reference. He deals with the theory of colour perception and the effects of colours on the psyche. More information on the issue is included in Chapter II – Colouring.

SUMMARY

The title of the doctoral thesis and its subject *“Coding and decoding – inspired by Ukrainian folk motives”* constitutes a summary of my earlier artistic and scientific activities in two areas: folk motives and women’s cancer. This form of doctoral thesis, both theoretical and practical is an attempt to create my own language to describe subjects related to women. With the use of painting I combined Ukrainian folk motive embroidery with the subject of women’s cancer. The tool that I used to encode women’s cancer diseases

is an authorial alphabet (in Polish language) created based on the alphabet included in geometrical symbols of Ukrainian embroidery (in Ukrainian language, Cyrillic).

Using aforementioned alphabet I encoded in pictures: reasons for cervical cancer (cysts, myomas and endometriosis), types of cancer (breast cancer, nipple cancer, endometrial cancer, cervical cancer, ovarian cancer), consequences of tumor diseases (mastectomy - cutting off breast; hysterectomy - cutting out uterus, infertility). Colors used by me in my pictures symbolize: red – a fight with a disease, black – wisdom gained during a recovery, white – hope of total recovery, pink – physical defect, emotional deficiency, blue – humility, awareness of one’s own life when confronted with a disease.

The following dissertation is a summary of Ukrainian folk motives. Despite common access to knowledge on women is still a taboo topic. The process of encoding and decoding of content that would trigger viewer’s emotions. When this happens the form of creating my own painter.

„A disease is a night hemisphere of our lives, our more oppressive citizenship. Since the day we were born each one of us has two passports – belonging both to the world of the healthy and to the world of the diseased. And even though we all prefer to admit only to the better

*one of these two worlds, sooner or later, at least for a moment, we have to acknowledge our relationship with the other one.*³⁵

The above quoted fragment starting the book *“Disease as a metaphor – AIDS and its metaphors”* by Susan Sontag who suffers from cancer, says about our adherence to two worlds: the world of the healthy and the world of the diseased. Explaining this thought we can state as follows: belonging to the first one we are aware that we will be bound with the other one in a directly – the disease will affect us – or indirectly – affecting our dear ones.

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³⁵ Susan Sontag, *Disease as a metaphor. AIDS and its metaphors*, trans. Jarosław Anders, Warsaw, 1999, p. 7

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