



Art

**AS A TOOL
OF PEACEBUILDING**



Art can become a successful tool not only for reflection, but also for a certain relaying, resonating of the gained experience. Can it work as a means of conveying a message of very many people, turning into a kind of expression relay? We know from experience and believe that it is so. After all, having people who act as a kind of bridges, curator-oriented thinking finds concise expressions for quite complex topics.

Since 2017, my colleagues and I have been organizing a long and complex dialogue process between residents of government-controlled and non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine. For some of them, these were the first meetings and departures since the beginning of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. During a meeting,

a participant from Luhansk passionately talked about an artist who continued to create art, despite the conditions in which he found himself. This is a rather unusual case for modern art, when an exhibition was built around one work of a classical carver. And not just an exhibition, but a whole space of complex and deep dialogues that took place on its basis in different regions of Ukraine.

The exhibition itself, despite the desire to demonstrate the artist's skill, is a direct result of quite complex and emotionally difficult meetings. Meetings of people who, due to various circumstances and events, found themselves physically on different sides of the contact line in eastern Ukraine. The experience of these people. their vision, assessment of the situation and psychological state are formed by direct or indirect involvement in the war. During the meetings, these people tried to explain to each other





(and quite often only to themselves) what was happening to them, to us, to the reality we all got into. Where am I on this timeline of events, where would I like to be? Is there a common space or is it polarized?

These were difficult conversations where interacting with another person became a personal challenge and required a great personal effort. Especially under conflict conditions, when it seems that the other side is simply unable to comprehend our feelings and thoughts. Instead of understanding, we lock ourselves in isolation the nature of which becomes difficult to determine at a certain stage of the war — is it a product of circumstances or a voluntary choice? We are in the capsules of our environment, experience, culture, form or style of life. It is more comfortable, more pleasant and safer that way. Tension, conflict, war only





strengthen our internal encapsulation, narrowing the circle of personal responsibility and inclusiveness to a radius of a few meters around ourselves and our loved ones.

The participants of the dialogues tried to expand their own visions, supplement them with the visions of others, objectify their capsules, understand their content and limits, see a similar Intersection with another person — one of the results of the interaction that led to the discovery of the Luhansk carver Viacheslav Kozak's work and this exhibition. Having studied and reproduced the wooden decorations of French galleons before the war, the master immersed himself in traditional Ukrainian wooden icons with the beginning of the conflict. This is the story of a person who, despite real physical limitations and blocks, continues to connect our isolated and polarized capsules

The concept of the exhibition was built just around the ardent desire and activity of one person, the developed field of thoughts and insights, thanks to one artifact, and it is expressed with a rather simple and concise statement — “Aren’t we living in a capsule? Does our reality really deserve a pedestal, or on the contrary, to be cut to size by the hand of a master?”

As a result of the displays, the experience of a small group of people was scaled up and disseminated, involving others, if not in working out answers, then at least in searching for questions, and now not only within the framework of the exhibition, but also thanks to the comic book, which continued the idea of capsules. Only now, it was done not through the message of the master, but through the real stories of the dialogue participants, thereby demonstrating another art form of such activity that

