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## The Epitome of the Russian National Idea: Comparative Reconstruction in Sculpture and Narrative

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### Abstract

The formulation of the national idea for such a multinational country as Russia is a big issue. Its solution is not monopolized by the ideological institutions; art and popular mentality also contributes to the working out of the meaning for the unifying national idea. The author reconstructs those dominant meanings of the national idea (in art and popular consciousness) by the means of visual and textual analysis. The visual object for this reconstruction was realized by the sculpture that embodied the national idea of Russia at the International Art exhibition. The corpus of texts for the Russian contest that reflected the people's ideas about the national idea was used in narrative analysis.

### Keywords

Transmedial Storytelling, Visual and Textual Analysis, National Idea, Art

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### Acknowledgements

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## **The Epitome of the Russian National Idea: Comparative Reconstruction in Sculpture and Narrative**

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*The formulation of the national idea for such a multinational country as Russia is a big issue<sup>1</sup>. Its solution is not monopolized by the ideological institutions; art and popular mentality also contributes to the working out of the meaning for the unifying national idea. The author reconstructs those dominant meanings of the national idea (in art and popular consciousness) by the means of visual and textual analysis. The visual object for this reconstruction was realized by the sculpture that embodied the national idea of Russia at the International Art exhibition. The corpus of texts for the Russian contest that reflected the people's ideas about the national idea was used in narrative analysis. Keywords: Transmedial Storytelling, Visual and Textual Analysis, National Idea, Art*

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The research aims at an analytical reconstruction of a complex composite object—the artistic embodiment of the national idea in the form of a sculpture, presented at the international exhibition (Venice biennial<sup>2</sup>) and of a collection of narratives about the same national idea that are generated in the context of an online contest of ideas. The dual optics of visual and textual analysis, combined methodologically with the principles of descriptiveness and structuration, is set upon the tradition of qualitative analysis, referring to Glazer, Straus and Corbin. This goal has been achieved via the theoretical resources of the trans-medial storytelling, since the public presentation of the above-mentioned sculpture so-obligingly entitled (the National Idea of Russia) is a symbolic message, an invitation to a public discussion on what can unite the nation.

Thus, the object of analysis is endowed with a unique quality to present the views consolidated on the media platforms of the Internet, and embodied by the means of art. This facet of the ordinary perceptions of the national idea fundamentally differs from the regular opinion polls, although it carries an imprint of ideological influences.

In this article, we analyze the art experience directly connected with one of the most ambiguous social subjects, the national idea. Art object creation for the Venetian biennial was combined with use of virtual outsourcing for the organization of the contest of verbalized art concepts of the national idea. Speaking in Habermas language, the narrative genre grants access to an inner world of the story-teller as a symbolically prestructured object (Habermas 1984, p.108), as “the story is connected with existing cultural and historical structure, and the local repertoire of narrative forms of the story-teller intertwines with the wider cultural set of the discursive orders” (Brockmeier & Harre, 2000, p. 31). Storytelling, coming to the open space of virtual media platforms, can get additional options in public conversation about national Imaginary. Therefore, we estimate the social potential of the art object and reflect on the ways of the narrative report of national idea and the contours of collective identity of the Russians found in a transmedial way.

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<sup>1</sup> The research was supported by RSF (project No. 14-28-00217).

<sup>2</sup> Venice Biennale - one of the most notorious forums of world art, an international art exhibition, held every two years with the participation of an international jury.

### **The Social Effect of Storytelling**

The narrative analysis offered further in the article, as well as the art object as the *crème de la crème* of the outsourcing efforts recruited in virtual space, became for us a reason for the thought which is going beyond the competitive frame “The national idea of Russia.” The stories get a special sense in the long term of public discussion, not as a stadium of experts but as a sort of the deliberative democracy (Polletta & Lee, 2006) involving opinions, ideas, narratives, and images of so-called simple social groups. Among the theorists of the deliberative democracy, whose efforts were directed toward the justification of the possibility of public discussion about vital social problems (Barber, 1988; Dryzek, 2000; Fishkin, 1991; Habermas, 1992/1996), the common position about the prospects of public discussion giving chances of unforeseen compromises and expansion to a set of legitimate opinions is extended. In any case, the understanding of a wider range of existing opinions promotes decisions which were earlier impossible for the participants of the discussion (Shapiro, 2002). This line of reasoning is picked up by a number of authors in the discourse of deliberative democracy which integrates public discussion into the administrative, electoral and legislative processes (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004, p. 3). Even at equal consultative access participants of public discussion possess the social capital not commensurately and, as a result, the prospect of an articulation of the position or experience is enhanced. In other words, not all are owners of an exclusive discourse in the public space. One of the rhetorical decisions for the legalization of various discourses in public discussion is personal storytelling (Mansbridge, 1999; Young, 2000). Its social attractiveness lies in the equalization of everybody, telling stories on behalf of them (Sanders, 1997; Young, 2000).

### **Contents of a Storytelling**

A story is defined as information about sequence of events in the order in which these events occurred (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Linde, 1993). Unlike causal relationships in ordinary conversation, storytelling produces the reasons at least in four ways: (1) stories unite the description, an explanation and an assessment; (2) they are separated from an external discourse; (3) they are allegorical; and (4) they have an iterative character in the sense that they generate counter stories in the course of communication.

To understand a story, it is necessary to understand its moral consequences (Bruner, 1991; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Linde, 1993; Ochs & Capps, 2002). It doesn't mean that morality will be formulated without fail by the author of the story. Rather, values will be built into the plot from which they should be taken. Starting in general, stories order events, and subordinate peripheral plots. The main plot connects the story structure, using the ordinary sense shared by the majority, but just the recounting of personal experience gets special significance against the background of similar stories (Bruner, 1991). The open character of a plot is basic. This experience is pledge of the fact that people can transfer prospects new to a dominating discourse in a form of the general subject lines and in that form of narration which causes sympathy in listeners. The audience perceives the arguments by assessing the claims of the author: his justificatory principles and proofs. On the other hand, the understanding of a story is formed on balance between the described events, the internal emotional state of the hero who endures these events, and that whole in which the history develops (Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Bruner, 1991).

Storytelling in this context is actually a way to receive the help of other people in the formulation of social norms, in search of the justification of these opinions and the definition of possible available options. People listen to personal stories because they believe that those stories translate the meaningful human experience, but if all stories have morals, it is seldom

shown unambiguously. It is rather, that listeners recognize that they should interpret a story to take its value (Bruner, 1991), and this is valid; the sense of the story can be not obvious even for the storyteller. All discursive forms demand interpretation, but listeners expect good plots which will give scope for interpretation, rather than to produce good reasons or dense descriptions.

But why do narratives attract people? This fundamental question is set also in reflections on “tellability”—the features of a story making considerable, surprising or in any way worthy. Here it is possible to find an analogy with Bart’s *punctum* as the circumstance justifying the attention of the photographer. The speech, thus, violates the expected succession of events which turns a simple incident into an event. The term “tellability” was coined by William Labov (1972) for the description of narrative interest. Later Pratt (1977) created an index of a tellability, indicating to what degree the elements of a story were unusual, broke expectations, or hides. Ryan finds this interest generally in textual elements, such as subjects and plots: “The Tellability is a quality which makes story standing the story in essence, irrespective of its textualization” (Ryan, 2005, p. 589). On the contrary, Sternberg emphasizes that the universals of an entertaining narration (uncertainty, intrigue, aspiration to surprise) are based on text processing by the reader (Sternberg, 2003). Herman (2002) offers a compromise position: narrative interest can be metaphorically described as a cultural negotiation between the reader and the story text. Herman defines narration from a variety of scripts and the deviation sum between narratives and expectations of the reader/listener. Thus, the process of a cultural negotiation contains the interaction of the story text with the experience and cultural rootedness of the reader. Respectively, narrative interest results from the continuous mutual adaptation or negotiations between these two domains. Various factors can become conditions of this adaptation. Authors include in them intensive circulation of cultural materials (Greenblatt, 1995) and the existence of interpretive communities (Fish, 1980); however, with the specification that there are no preset communities, they arise as a result of the interpretation of leading meanings and the need for their constant redefinition/reinforcement. If there are general bases for narrative interest, they are created and built in the course of cultural negotiations.

### **Transmedial Storytelling**

It would be logical to assume that the circulation of the socially important cultural meanings requires a variety of formats for their implementation. The story of a national hero who sacrificed his life for the sake of his comrades can be described as a saga, sung as a song, or portrayed as comics for the younger generation. In this regard, we attract one more narratological innovation—a transmedial storytelling which also has become a subject of conceptual concern already quoted by Ryan. She addresses the relationship between the narratological concept of a transfictionality and a fashionable trend in modern culture using transmedial storytelling (Ryan, 2013). The concept of transmedial storytelling was introduced by Jenkins (2006), describing the creation of the world of stories (storyworld) on the basis of different platforms of mass media:

In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best—so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play. Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained enough to enable autonomous consumption. That is, you don’t need to have seen the film to enjoy the game and vice-versa. (Jenkins, 2003, p. 3)

The transmedial storytelling is thought by the authors in two contrasting forms. The first option is similar to the “snowball” effect: a certain story enjoys such wide popularity or becomes so culturally significant that it spontaneously generates various sequels, remakes, and transmedial adaptations. In this case there is a primary text which functions as the general reference for all other texts. The other form is presented as a system in which a certain plot was conceived from the very beginning as a project which develops on the basis of various media platforms. The concept of the storyworld takes a central place in transmedial storytelling and somehow unites various texts of this system. The opportunity to create a world or, more precisely, the ability to inspire an idea of the world, is the main condition for the text which will be considered as a storytelling. The storyworld assumes space, but the story represents a sequence of events which develop in time. Therefore, the world of stories is a dynamic model of situations development. Ryan (2005) draws an analogy to the concept of chronotope by Bakhtin (1975), who combined this inseparability of space and time in a narration. But she develops the static and dynamic components of the world of stories—as that precedes the story and develops it in more detail.

According to Ryan, the static component includes: (1) an inventory of the objects occupying the storyworld, and its main characters, (2) local folklore, (3) geospace characteristics, (4) the set of natural laws, and (5) the set of social rules and values. The dynamic component includes (6) the physical events making changes to an essence of things and (7) the psychological events generating values of physical events (i.e., motivations and emotional reactions of agents) and influencing the relations between characters, and also changes in a social order.

The storyworld develops the three relations with their accompanying texts. The text can be a projection of the determined world; then it is the only exclusive access to this world. But even if users-audience-listeners will construct the same sequence of events, they will make various interpretations of these events. The second option: one text is a set of the worlds. This ratio appears when the text is so uncertain that each user creates their own version of the world. The third option: one world is a set of texts. This ratio is typical for the oral culture which repeats and remakes the same story. As such theorists of transmedial storytelling represent this phenomenon as a reflection of one world in many texts. Here Ryan introduces one more term—the transfictionality (Ryan, 2008; Saint-Gelais, 2005) for the migration of fictional subjects in various texts, but these texts can belong to the same media platform. According to Doležel, to whom Ryan refers, the fictional world of literary discourse can be connected with another three types of relations: enlargement (expansion), modification, and movement. This storyworld can expand into (or even to win) another, modify its structure, and inventing the story (Doležel, 1999, p. 207). The replacement of movement keeps the main story about the protoworld but places it in another time or spatial context.

What is required for a narration to reflect common threads and not just the character of the hero? This conditional world has to possess invariant lines to be recognized as a general reference system in different media platforms of storytelling. The wide network of symbols related to national stories, gender, and family is an especially favorable condition for the central system of a narration. But to support a large story as a system, the fictional world also has to show a lot of variety—the smallest details have to be thought over by its founders. As Jenkins notes, the transmedial world of stories has to be encyclopedically capacious (Jenkins, 2006, p. 116).

Summing up a transmedial storytelling will form the basis of the forthcoming analysis. We look at narrativized art concepts as a de facto byproduct of creation of visual art object. Moreover, it is possible to consider a set of images and narratives initiated by a competition as a storyworld, or a world which one idea cannot win by vote but is important to the co-presence of their final set. It is possible to look at this world of stories as a cultural negotiation promoting

the generation of narrative interest and tellability by means of which the important idea can be sounded.

### Search of National Idea by Means of Art

The reason for writing this article came from an uncommon event in the world of domestic art, and the presentation of the sculpture «Russia. Try to kill!» of Denis Saunin and George Mamin (CF Art Group) at the 2013 Venetian Biennial. The artists use the power of collective reason—virtual outsourcing—and organized an All-Russian competition with the subject “National Idea of Russia.” The artists crowd sourced 458 ideas from the internet held from December 1, 2012 to March 1, 2013. A work of modern art was created on the basis of the won concept (a picture, installation, a sculpture, architectural group, performance), and the winner of competition was rewarded with a prize and co-authorship. Under the competition terms, any Russian of any profession could take part in it, having description of a visual image of the national idea of Russia. The selection was organized in two streams: for all participants and for the experts. The winner of the competition was determined by the organizing committee in the accord with the results of the participants of the art community voting and on the basis of the expert opinion. The Grand Prix went to Vitaly Saburov for the concept “Russia—the Tilting-Doll country.” Such is the background of the competition having a direct bearing on social research of national consciousness.

How was the main objective of the contest formulated? What frames did authors use to imagine the main national idea?

“The national idea is not reflective of the current situation and not a detection of national or historical features. It is a thought which gives us power to improve life. The understanding of a national idea is at the heart humanistic belief about the supreme value of EACH AND EVERY person, which can improve a lot of things in our country. Especially, if it became close to all citizens . . . we have become the sacrifice of concrete human destinies for the sake of the general wellbeing that we do not understand [sic]—our main mistake and the reason for the majority of problems is covered here. If we put first not the interests of the state, but the infinite importance of each concrete person, many problems will be solved by themselves and society will recover. The new uniting idea is necessary for Russia, but it cannot be collected from past remains, nor imposed from the outside—the idea must be created by the themselves Russians...”<sup>3</sup>

We have at the beginning a humanistic message “the thought giving force for the improvement of life,” and “belief in the value of each individual person.” In other words, such valuable people have to live better. Each Russian has to live better. So why does it not occur? The visual answer to this question is the dynamic sculpture “Russia. Try to kill!” of D. Saunin and G. Mamin also is represented (please, see fig.1). What does it represent and what does it contain?

From the standpoint of visual sociology, an analysis of the image consists of three phases: a description of visible data, its division into structural elements and their relationships, and search for the value of the interrelation of the text and the image in a certain social historical context. There are also three phases of interpretation which correspond to this partitioning of the analysis: (1) a description and verbal paraphrase of the text and graphic messages, (2) an exact reconstruction and analysis of the values of the symbolical meaning of the text and graphic materials, and (3) a socio-cultural interpretation (Meshcherkina-Rozhdestvenskaya, 2007, p. 29).

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<sup>3</sup> The website of art concepts contest. <http://contractconcepts.rf/>





Figure 1. The dynamic sculpture “Russia. Try to kill!” with authors D. Saunin and G. Mamin<sup>4</sup>.

The sculpture, weighing a half-ton and 5 meters high, has a one-and-a-half-meter bright red sphere on the bottom, a trimmed log with a gold two-headed eagle is on the top. It is a dynamic self-righting sculpture, which resists any attempt to knock it over. The slogan is: “Russia – try to kill!”<sup>5</sup> in English a defensive version: “Russia—never overturn.”



Figure 2. Russian Tilting Doll<sup>6</sup>.



Figure 3. The sovereign orb<sup>7</sup>.



Figure 4. A spherical pyx<sup>8</sup>.

In addition to the known tilting doll (please, see fig.2) combining a rattle and a stabilizer, another reference is seen in the sculpture, provoked by a two-headed eagle. This evokes symbols of statehood and the spiritual power—both the sovereign orb (fig.3), the most ancient attribute of the Supreme power, and a spherical pyx (fig.4).

“Here is the pyx, like a golden sun,  
For a splendid moment hanging in the air;  
Now only the Greek tongue should resound,  
Holding the whole world in its hands like an apple.  
The exultant zenith of the service has come round,  
Light under the dome inside the circular temple in July,

<sup>4</sup> The photo from page [https://rus.rus4all.ru/city\\_msk/20130320/723948928.html](https://rus.rus4all.ru/city_msk/20130320/723948928.html)

<sup>5</sup> In Russian – “Poprobuy zavali.”

<sup>6</sup> <https://ru.russianarts.online/29928-nevalyashka/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://w.histrf.ru/articles/article/show/dierzhava\\_ot\\_dr\\_rus\\_drzha\\_vlast](https://w.histrf.ru/articles/article/show/dierzhava_ot_dr_rus_drzha_vlast)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.wikiwand.com/ru/%D0%94%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B0>



So that with nothing held back we sigh, beyond time,  
 For that green pasture where time stands still.  
 And the Eucharist hovers like an eternal midday –  
 All partake, play and sing;  
 Under the eyes of everyone the holy vessel pours  
 With inexhaustible rejoicing. . . ”—from the poem Osip Mandelshtam (Mandelshtam, 1991).

The sphere and the eagle are connected by a roughly processed wooden column which allows an independent symbolical value. If it were a separate figure, for example, as an image of a World Tree, a sign of the sky and earth connection. In the sculpture it plays an intermediary role tending the gaze upwards to the supreme value or an award. In ordinary consciousness it will cause associations with the comic entertainment for Pancake week<sup>9</sup> entertaining of people competing to climb a column. This connotation is supported also by the slogan, an aggressively defiant challenge. By combining the visual and textual material, the sculpture stimulates a simple specific communication: do not get acquainted, do not get accustomed and learn, but do try to overturn the sculpture, and not simply a bear, but a giant five meters tall. Instead of the head, the giant has an unambiguous state symbol that depersonalizes it but generates the subjectivity of the Leviathan. Sometimes size is important. If the figure were human size or less, it would cause laughter and the attempt to overturn it becomes the interaction of equals. After all, the game destroys pathos. In this case, the size is rhymed with the value of the attracted symbols of the power.

A sculpture, in principle, is subject to possible conceptualization thanks to three measurements of cultural objectivization: (1) the plan of the author of the image, (2) the visual and communicative resources which are represented, and (3) the correlation to cultural view (Meshcherkina-Rozhdestvenskaya, 2007, p. 30).

For the first point, we found semantic frames limited social imagination of participants in the background of the contest. The value of the individual person disappeared, having given way to the total presence of the dominating and aggressive state. The appeal to the best life is replaced with an offer to test your strength. The second measurement of objectification partly investigated in the dense description of the sculpture, turns not so much onto a choice of symbols, as a scale of the rejected versions with which we will get acquainted below. Nevertheless, we would offer here not the obvious sense of the children's toy to be kicked, but keeping, on the contrary, the interference of the meanings proceeding from the sovereign orb and pyx as symbols of the absolute power on the earth and above. The construction of the state is unsteady but takes hold, aggressively provokes but demands respect. The third measurement appealing to the recognizability and national context, in our case, surprisingly coincides with the trend in modern art, formulated by Groys: “If you ask any expert in media how to create a media figure, any American expert will tell, “You must be controversial.” The modern icon is a conflict or collision” (Groys, 2004). In this sense “Try to kill!” illustrates clearly Groys's idea of conflict in art, but it creates its own media biography. It would seem it fits ideally into the expectations of the Western art space. But there is one essential distinction. Describing current trends in this sphere, Umlauf writes about art “renationalization” which stimulates artists of different nationalities to refer to an all-European background, despite the symbolic of the local variety of art expressional and language resources (Umlauf, 2013, S. 26). Here, seemingly, we have the reversed situation: resources of art representation belong to the language of the globalized art, but the ideological background is deeply embedded.

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<sup>9</sup> Pancake week is an Eastern Slavic traditional holiday (analogous to the Carnival), celebrated during the week before the Great Lent, retaining in its ritual a number of elements of Slavic mythology. The holiday marks the edge between winter and spring.

The embeddedness of the main idea is, the result of the outsourcing of ideas to the contest for art concepts and a final co-authorship. According to Groys, “we live in ideal system in which the artist isn’t the main producer of the visual. This is new situation, the loss of the monopoly for esthetic representation of policy for the artist” (Groys, 2004). These circumstances urge us to pay special attention to the competition of art concepts; its contents are not limited to this sculpture. If we consider that social thought unsuccessfully tries to formulate the national idea of Russia in the last 15-20 years, this outsourcing initiative provides rich material for the analysis and the reflection about an image of the national idea formulated “from below,” not by an expert community; it is the sort of common knowledge about national collective identity and its figurative embodiment, as well as the narrative description.

### Left Behind the Sculpture: Textual Analysis of Art Ideas

As it was mentioned above, the visual image of the exhibited sculpture “Russia - try to swamp!” was based on the popular imaginations of the national idea presented for the competition of art concepts. This part of the article will address these narratives, which were formulated by the contest participants. subject of the textual analysis became 458 art ideas which participated in the competition and showed a range of substantial references significant for the common understanding of the national idea in Russia. The author undertook stages of substantial coding of art ideas in the qualitative tradition of the grounded theory to summarize the thick description of various thematic fields. The intermediate procedure of coding always bears on itself a subjectivity shade control over which is possible in the course of the reception of return offered by Strauss to a crude data and checking of code’s validity (Strauss & Corbin, 2001). For example, in the group of codes under the name living symbols (N= 33), most (N=25) were animals and birds. Other codes of this group were connected with images of trees, and the decision to unite this natural cluster under the name “living symbols” as the theme of nature overshadows the specifics of the animal symbolism. The cluster of liberal values, according to submissions of the author, included equality, democratic freedoms, economic development, human rights, etc. As a result, the first the major components of national idea are:

Prevalence Rating in the Data	Components of National Idea	Number of References in the Data
1.	national symbols	79
2.	family and children	48
3.	Christian symbols	34
4.	living images	33
5.	anthropocentric images	32
6.	morals	18
7.	humanitarian values	16
8.	liberal values (2.4% of total number of ideas)	11
9.	ecological values	10
10.	idea of revival	9
11.	patriotism	5

Table 1.

The next stage of the textual analysis focused on the selected art concepts which are a genre of narrative unfolding a certain action with the heroes and the morale, a storytelling or narrative

description of art object (N=130). The existence of action to change or a plan to change became the selection criterion in this cluster (N=35). Our narrative interest was focused on the characteristics of verbs and subjects and the circumstances of change.

In this methodical way, the 35 main narrative constructions were analyzed, and they keep at this stage author's style and word usage. Perhaps this phase of the analysis gives the densest idea of the contents and a form of a narrative kernel or leading styles of storytelling:

Meaningful constructs of sentences, focused on verb structures (in bold - dynamic characteristics of the event structure)
1. He worked all night long, <b>spreading drawing</b> from stones on the hill directly opposite to windows of the beloved.
2. Open valves in the padded military ship not to be given and die, <b>having kept</b> the honor and the glory.
3. The person <b>cutting himself</b> from the rock with a hammer.
4. The person <b>digs</b> into a big heap of rubbish in which he finds books, newspapers, TVs, disks etc. He examines each very carefully and <b>throws out</b> an to a big mountain of lies, or keeps it.
5. Russia as a tree <b>blossoming</b> periodically, considering the climate.
6. The policemen <b>pushing</b> people into the ark with rubber bludgeons.
7. The ballerina <b>begins</b> to dance. The Government and us... if we begin to spin, we <b>will work</b> , all problems will fly away.
8. The rusty person <b>tries to get out</b> of a big cage, holding in the hand the released bird.
9. The police officer, the deputy, the businessman, the worker and the doctor <b>lift</b> the young girl from her knees.
10. Figures of a man and a woman <b>breaking</b> off fetters.
11. Three horses, troika, <b>rushes</b> forward.
12. The woman <b>changes—breaks</b> a sword over her knee and descends it, <b>dumps</b> her clothes, lets her hair down, <b>removes</b> a spiteful mask and <b>appears</b> in the form of a beautiful girl.
13. The Phoenix <b>rises</b> from the ashes.
14. The Worker and the Women-farmer stand on stools on the right and left of the Statue of Liberty and <b>try to strangle</b> it.
15. A troika <b>tries to hold up</b> a pipeline segment.
16. The statue “Motherland” <b>banishes</b> the “Statue of Liberty” from Russia.
17. Instead of the mausoleum is a chasm. The people pass by and <b>throw</b> flags into it.
18. A majestic rock shines under the sun. The people come by in boats from suffering a disaster in a raging sea of burning ships and <b>find</b> rescue. They <b>moor and rise</b> upward, to the top. Depardieu is first in a train of these people.
19. The sower <b>gets</b> Cyrillic letters from a bast basket and carelessly throws them into the earth. Fresh shoats <b>grow</b> from the earth - the word “Love” written in different languages.
20. The woods <b>heal</b> wounds and terrible illnesses, free the inhabitants. These woods are also Russia, unique in the world going forward the

special way whose purpose is unknown to anybody except the inhabitants of the woods. But they are silent.
21. A soccer ball weaved from highways and, like a roll, <b>untangles</b> , tracing the highway.
22. A hero, sitting on a huge serpent, <b>sticks</b> with both hands a broad sword into it.
23. A spinning top, slows, <b>starts spin</b> ridiculously and <b>falls</b> .
24. Three men (the first—in a shirt, the second—in a suit, the third—in sportswear) <b>help to raise a</b> woman symbolizing the Motherland.
25. Figures of a man and a women <b>breaking</b> off fetters.
26. The country, as a tilting doll <b>rises</b> again.
27. The child <b>ringing</b> a veche <sup>10</sup> Bell.
28. The simple frivolous girl <b>tears around</b> because she is very passionate, break in thinks much.
29. People in a glass jar <b>trying to get out</b> to the surface, few people have made it.
30. A boy, ten years old shouts. He left crowd, looks at enemies and is afraid, cries, but <b>stands sure</b> .
31. The side which has won game (an angel or the devil) <b>turns</b> a sign post.
32. The painted robot-nested doll-tumbler toy with a crown as a pregnant woman <b>does a Cesarean section an herself</b> .
33. A half bent figure of a corrupt official, with rolls of money sticking out of his pockets, <b>receives a blow</b> on the back from a running football player.
34. A person in a business suit <b>runs from a cage</b> on a green meadow and, having stretched hands towards to a wind, happily laughs.
35. Behind and in front men in white shirts with ties and in jackets <b>try to push</b> a tractor.

Table 2.

Now we can present the very narrative core criteria as a set of the sense-bearing nouns located in descending order: change/transformation, release, physical effort, glorious and inglorious death, hope, search, crops, and appeal/enthusiasm. The skeleton narrative core, having lost the context of the developed action, shows the scale of the efforts mobilized for the great purpose, but speaks little about the maintenance of the purpose. However, the purpose doesn't remain hidden. And here two halves of the "apple" meet each other—a part of the ideological and figurative art ideas and a smaller part of the narratives analyzed above. It makes sense to pay attention to the first five of the most widespread symbols, which cumulate in a traditional and archaic complex—state symbols, family and children, Christian symbols, living images, and anthropocentric images. These symbols nourish the national storyworld in the sense of M. L. Rayan, mentioned above. Thus, it is better for Russians to live in the shadow of the state and Christianity and a pagan heritage, with family and children.

On the basis of reflection about storytelling and its transmedial innovations, our objects of the analysis seem built in a wider cultural frame characterizing the developed design of the sculpture on various media platforms. A result of the competition became not a unique idea selected by vote and expert opinion, but a whole universe of ideas and stories which possess not a smaller heuristic value as a whole. This world of stories is subject to consolidation and

<sup>10</sup> Veche - general meeting.

translation into the visual language of sculpture, performance, and the virtual document, becoming some kind of emblem for the national idea. But this world of stories in the programmatic expansion opens a subterranean national Imaginary and feeds the legitimate image which is the subject for an embodiment and a presentation both in a local context and beyond its limits. As a whole, the transmediality, a basic openness to the transformation of narratives and images of art ideas into the language set, seems to be a quality of storytelling—the formulation of valuable conflict or change by social agents.

### Discussion

This article was set up to analyze the contours of the national idea of Russia involving the resources of the trans-medial storytelling. The sculpture embodying the national idea could be analyzed hermetically, but to portray the cultural negotiations on what could unite modern Russian society, it was important to address the context of the origin of this sculptural image and to dwell into the reservoir of potential meanings shared by the “Russia’s National Idea” contest participants.

It is high time for assuming that the state ideological discourse prevailed by the conservative, paternalistic values is also interpreted and supported “from the grass-roots,” from the ordinary consciousness of the citizens themselves. Drawing on the idea of A. Giddens of the “double hermeneutics” (Giddens, 1987, pp. 20-21), one can say that not only the ideological institutions of the state are responsible for the production of the national idea, but such a production is also structured by the re-interpreting activity of ordinary citizens who are also responsible for the conservative discourse, for the aggressiveness of the national idea, and for the paternalistic expectations.

As a whole, we found that the sculpture reflects an important condition in modern media presentation—an idea of conflict, a space of the ideological collision. The virtual outsourcing used for the organizing of the competition as media technology allowed the creators to be guided by the contours of the uniting national idea found in such an artistically-narrative way: on the transmedial platforms of the sculptural image and narratives of everyday consciousness. But the national unifying idea declared by the creators of sculpture and competition as “a thought which gives us strength for life improvement,” was visually aggressive, and substantially traditional, if not archaic. It is high time for the suggestion that the state ideological discourse prevailed by the conservative values is accepted from below, from the side of ordinary consciousness.

The lesson of this research in relation to our subject—the phenomenon of the Russian national idea—is that the empirical national specifics we found push toward a strong national identity. The evidence of this follows from the results of the textual analysis of proposed (in competition) art conceptions, with a vanishingly small share of liberal values and a dominating state-traditional complex. The collective identities in the strong sense develop through an ideological-political conflict; it is a result of extensive public, deliberative discussion concerning valuable questions of the society. In this regard, the use of any media platform for the narrativization of the questions exciting the citizens, instead of only social agents, is an essential element in the progress towards constructing a collective identity and public reflection about a unifying national idea.

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