By **Stefan Jonsson** and **Galyna Kutsovska**

Introduction.

Returning to the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014 ten years after

In hindsight, a revolution can be reconstructed as a chain of causes, albeit overdetermined by multiple contingencies. This is in stark contrast to the living present of revolution, which is usually characterized by hope, potential, and danger. At once fractured by political conflicts and unified by expanding social ties, a revolution interrupts historical continuity and sets itself apart as an important event. The task of explaining such an event after the fact is different from the task of understanding its unfolding in real time. In addition, both these tasks are different from interpreting the *meaning* of the event for those who were absorbed by the action - the subjects of the revolution, its winners and losers, and its victims.

The two peer-reviewed articles that follow return to the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014 ten years after.[1] They do so by analyzing artworks and cultural imaginaries created during the revolution and its aftermath. Why revisit Maidan now? For one thing, it tells us something about *the stakes* in the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Screenshot from Sergei Loznitsa's film *Maidan*, 2015.

PHOTO: ATOMS OCH & VOID

We suggest that the war can be seen as a struggle over the radical democratic aspirations that flourished in Kyiv's Square of Independence, Maidan Nezalezhnosti. It is these aspirations that we want to return to, and we do so by going to the only place where we can still explore them: the aesthetic artifacts and cultural creations in which the revolutionary event, as we argue, is preserved. This explains our approach through aesthetics and culture. As we seek to show in our articles, aesthetic

Roman Bonchuk, Iconostasis of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes.
Courtesy of the Museum of the Heavenly Hundred, Ivan-Frankivsk.

Living Memorial on the Alley.

PHOTO: GALYNA KUTSOVSKA

knowledge is truthful and relevant, perhaps more so than other forms of knowledge, in the rendering of the revolution's present moment, the meaning it held for its participants, the self-understanding of Ukrainian society, and its aspirations for the future.

The contributions that follow belong primarily to the transdisciplinary fields of political aesthetics, memory studies, cultural criticism and the history of consciousness, and they are perhaps affiliated with scholarship that adopts oral history and participatory ethnography, approaches that in themselves demand modes of aesthetic creativity and composition.[2]

THE FIRST ARTICLE by Stefan Jonsson discusses how aesthetic expressions help understand the *political emergence* of the Ukrainian protest movement and the intensification of *solidarity* that characterized it. Maidan's revolutionary art presented solidarity now as open and universal, now as a patriotic and self-sacrificing nationalism.

The second article by Galyna Kutsovska demonstrates how aesthetic figurations and cultural initiatives confirm or contest what seems to be the unavoidable result of successful revolutions such as the Maidan, namely its petrification into fixed symbols and ideological representations. As an "official" view of the

"THE ART OF MAIDAN RETAINS AN ENORMOUS RELEVANCE FOR WHAT IT TELLS US ABOUT DEMOCRATIC EMERGENCE."

revolution is canonized in collections and archives, or materialized in architectural blueprints for museum buildings, monuments, and memorials, will the radical experiences of popular power and self-organization vanish?

IN OUR ARTICLES we refer to the *Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014* as a general and noncommittal denomination, while we also use the revolution's historical names. The most common reference in late November and early December 2013 was *Euromaidan*. By mid-December and January 2014 this was replaced by *Maidan*. At the end of February, the revolution attained its heroic epithet, the *Revolution of Dignity*, today the official name in the Ukrainian context.[3]

Our articles also refer to established periodizations of the consecutive phases of the revolution.[4] From November 21–30, 2013, students and activists occupied the area of Maidan near the Monument of Independence. The second phase began with the brutal assault on the occupants by the security police on the evening of November 30, which was followed by popular outrage and an expansion of the protests across Ukraine and abroad against Viktor Yanukovych's pro-Russian government. The third phase began on January 16, 2014, with the so-called dictatorial laws, which declare the ongoing popular assemblies illegal. This phase is characterized by increasing vigilance on both parts and brutal suppression by the security police, leading to violent clashes and several deaths from January 21–22 onward. The fourth phase comprised a few days of culmination: February 18–20, "the Battle of Maidan," are days of lethal violence where snipers kill some eighty anti-government protesters.[5] This is followed by international condemnations and a partial breakdown of domestic political institutions, leading to Yanukovych's sudden escape from the country on February 22. The president's abandonment of his country effectively concludes the revolution in the strict sense. It also triggers a new chain of events and decisions, the most momentous being Russia's annexation of Crimea and orchestration of separatist militias in south-eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine's revolutionary art from the winter of 2013–2014 offer a living record

of the Ukrainian people in their effort to understand themselves, reinterpret their past and reimagine their future. Above all, the artworks ask: who are the Ukrainian people? As such, these works offer insight into the enigma of historical change and collective agency. As we argue, the art of Maidan encapsulates aesthetic knowledge of three phenomena: the political emergence of protest, the solidarity of revolt, and the collective memory of the revolution, what we also may think of as the preparation, production, and preservation of the revolution.

TEN YEARS AFTER, in the midst of an unjust and horrifying war with unpredictable outcomes, it is worth recalling what Ukrainians struggled for in 2013–2014 and how they used a range of artistic expressions to present their aspirations for the future and preserve the memory of their struggle.

In writing about the Maidan Revolution today, we are aware that we enter intellectual and academic terrain that since then has become torn and polarized, and we move under a horizon of searing uncertainty. While there is therefore no doubt that our efforts are as deeply embedded in history as is the revolutionary event that we investigate, it is just as true that the aesthetic productions at the heart of our attention are not fully reducible to historical time. They also register a dimension of interrupted temporality, collective solidarity, and human freedom. In the contemporary crisis, the art of Maidan retains an enormous relevance for what it tells us about democratic emergence, and hence also about the future of both Ukraine and Russia.

OUR ARTICLES build in part on field work conducted in Kyiv in June and July 2021, which involved visiting the Maidan Museum premises and meeting the director and staff of the Museum, as well as visiting the Maidan memory sites in Kyiv and meeting artists and scholars dealing with Maidan. The selection of artworks, material, and documentation chosen for interpretation is the result of long months of inventorying and sifting literature, artworks, music, films, and other aesthetic artifacts produced during the Ukrainian Revolution. We are tremendously grateful to numerous people who generously shared their experience and expertise: Ihor Poshyvailo, Ola Salo, Lesya Onyshko, and their colleagues at the Maidan Museum; Matvyi Vaisberg; Oleksei Beliushenko; Nataliia Moussienko; Volodymyr Tykhyi, Andrii Kotliar, Yuliia Hontaruk, Roman Liubyi, and Denys Vorontsov of the Babylon' 13 film community; and Anton Drobovych and Olena Snihyr of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. ❌

Stefan Jonsson is Professor in Ethnic Studies and Head of the Division of Migration, Ethnicity and Society (REMESO) at Linköping University, Sweden.

Galyna Kutsovska is a PhD student at the Department of History at Uppsala University.

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Figure 3. Matviy Vaisberg, *The Wall 28/01–08/03/2014*, no. 24. Courtesy of the artist.

WHAT ART KNOWS ABOUT DEMOCRACY

The aesthetics of the Revolution in Ukraine 2013–2014

by **Stefan Jonsson**

abstract

Based in part on interviews and fieldwork, this article analyzes how artworks produced during the Ukrainian Revolution (2013–2014) present the political emergence of the Ukrainian people as a collective fused by bonds of solidarity. At first characterized by a strong universal thrust, presenting a boundless democratic anticipation, this solidarity was subsequently contained by religious-political traditions and specific forms of self-sacrificing and masculinist nationalism, often projected as a revolutionary utopia in its own right, which has been operationalized in the defense against Russia's invasion. To substantiate the argument, the text analyzes numerous artworks from the Ukrainian Revolution. These interpretations demonstrate how aesthetic acts contribute to the production of bonds of solidarity that transcend existing modes of political and cultural representation of Ukraine.

KEYWORDS: Political aesthetics, art and revolution, crowds, Ukraine, social movements in art and culture

Professional artists, writers, filmmakers, and musicians, as well as unknown authors of slogans, oratory, visuals, memes, posters, songs, and performances, were intimately linked to the Maidan protests from the outset. "Revolution always gives impetus to the arts," states Andrey Kurkov in his chronicle of the uprising. Commenting on the so-called "Art Barbican", a spacious tent for cultural activities that was set up in Kyiv's Independence Square during the protests, Kurkov explains that it is "an active and fully integrated part of the Maidan" which yet "has a life of its own":

> There is a permanent exhibition of revolutionary painting there, generally anarchistic and politicized, evoking the poster art of the 1918 Civil War. There are also book launches, concerts by singer-songwriters, readings by poets and writers. Revolution always gives impetus to the arts. It was the same in 1917 and after the October

Revolution, and it is the same today. Handwritten or printed poems are stuck to fences and tents, in Russian and Ukrainian. Among the Euromaidan activists, there are writers, rock singers, even publishers. In between writing articles for websites and doing interviews, they help to build barricades.[1]

Fully integrated, yet with a life of its own: Kurkov's description of the artists' position in relation to a political movement that they both participate in and record, hints of an understanding of the epistemological privilege enjoyed by aesthetics in periods of revolutionary change. In his diaries Kurkov adopts the perspective of the participant observer. While participating, he commits to paper what he hears, sees, smells, and feels. He takes down notes which he then stores for subsequent revision and reuse. In doing so, and although the process entails a remodeling and reinterpretation of the uprising, he usually proceeds in a documentary mode and does not compromise the authority of the witness.

There are several examples of such a perspective from Maidan in 2013–2014. Natalya Vorozhbit, one of Ukraine's leading playwrights, went to Maidan with her colleagues with the conviction that they should participate, not just as citizens, but also as professional theater workers. Already in early December she realized that "something definitive, something historic" was in the making:

> So, we went to Maidan, where the protestors were camping out and we asked them to tell us about their experiences of the day-to-day and about key events that had taken place. We recorded all of the interviews on video or on Dictaphones. Then, in March, we started compiling the interviews. We transcribed and edited them to compose a script for the play. The basic idea was to try to capture the event, to capture the emotions.[2]

Vorozhbit emphasizes the authority that stems from the immediacy of the recorded statements. She and her colleagues caught history in the making: "What we collected were fresh and unaltered reactions."[3] The collection of interviews were converted into drama form: *Maidan: Voices from the Uprising*, a verbatim play based on witness stories, is a major artwork of the Maidan revolution.

FILMMAKER SERGEI LOZNITSA urged his cameraman and sound technician to join him in Maidan. From December 2013 to February 2014, they moved their equipment from place to place to record for hours on end the unfolding of the protest. The footage and sound recordings turned into a film that virtually situates the viewer inside the everyday activities of the revolutionary collective. Bluntly entitled *Maidan*, the film renders the protest movement in ethnographic detail while at the same time inserting it into a filmic drama which is primarily structured by its soundtrack. With neither voiceover nor interviews, the film challenges the viewer to attend only to the plural voice of the upris-

Figure 1. Sergei Loznitsa, *Maidan*, 2015. Screenshot. Courtesy ATOMS & VOID..

ing, or, better, to the uprising's choral voice: now megaphonic, now joyful, now militant, now melancholic, now solemn. This voice has a function in the film similar to that of a choir in classical drama. Loznitsa offers no commentary on the action other than that provided by the revolutionary collective itself: the film being edited as if the speeches and songs emerge directly from within the pictures (figure 1).

The film's visual dimension is also thoroughly collective. The viewer is slowly moved from one camera position to the other, observing the revolution like a sequence of history paintings in which the totality of the revolution and the insurrectionary masses traverse the cinematic frame. Loznitsa's *Maidan* has neither hero, nor protagonist, nor even any main plot. The narrative center being dispersed, we see bodies swarming or moving with determination across the screen yet never quite coming into focus or entering the foreground. A major preoccupation of Loznitsa is apparently what Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, in capturing another kind of social movement, forced migration, has called *Human Flow*: a decentered and anonymous collective whose bodies and faces exit and enter the field of vision according to a logic that the filmmaker neither directs nor fully controls. Loznitsa has expressed the awe he felt upon entering Maidan's radicalized crowds. Like a present-day ghost of Dziga Vertov's photographer in *Man with a Movie Camera* – a film also shot and produced in Kyiv – he seized the opportunity to witness the revolution in real time:

> I was also surprised that almost no other professional filmmaker except myself had filmed in the square. What a chance missed! *Maidan* has cost a bit more than 100 000 euro; if you wanted to reconstruct such events afterwards to make a feature film, you would have to spend dozens of millions: thousands of extras, explosions in the middle of a European capital, and so on. It would be expensive. Anthropologists and other researchers would also have found it insanely interesting to come to the square. I mean, when will you next get the opportunity to make a live observation of such a revolution?[4]

Figure 2. Matviy Vaisberg, *The Wall 28/01–08/03/2014*. Courtesy of the artist.

Visual artist Matviy Vaisberg also remained at Maidan for days and nights on end, capturing the drama with his camera. He posted the photos on Facebook as a running visual chronicle: shattering episodes of violence, shelling of teargas, exploding Molotov cocktails, rolling flames, undulating crowd waves of attack and retreat, and between the outbursts, long periods of waiting when people huddle together, stand watch, and try to anticipate everybody's next move. After the events on Hrushevsky Street in late January, he began to paint, at first for therapeutic reasons and then increasingly as possessed by affects elicited by the experience of the escalating violence. He reworked some of the camera snapshots, creating twenty-eight small-size oils, as many as he could fit on the wall of his studio. The resulting artwork, entitled *The Wall 28/01 – 08/03/2014*, is a somber panorama in front of which the viewer is stunned silent by Vaisberg's compression of the revolution into complex constellations of color, form, and light (figure 2).

At a distance, the 28 images appear like blurry snapshots pinned to the wall. Up close, they give off an abstract and non-figurative expression. Events, actions, and actors that were recognizable in the photographic image disappear into the materiality of the painting and find a hiding place somewhere in the sheets and spots of oil and pigment. A tiny, elongated spot of gold suggests a brass trumpet. A line scraped in a surface of black paint is what remains as an outline of a human crowd. Such are the sole remnants of the image's representational features, whereas most areas of the painting appear to depict social matter in various stages of congelation or liquefication, the fluid character of the surface offering an allegory of revolutionary transformation (figure 3).

THUS, WHILE VAISBERG'S aesthetic practice is a fully integrated part of Maidan and takes documentary photographs as a point of departure, it soon takes on a life of its own, sidelining the docu-mentary account so as to heighten the emotional charge and existential weight of the event. Everything that to the artist's mind is non-essential to the experience of the revolution is filtered out. What remains is the volatile and explosive nature of the antagonism between popular power and its militarized opponent.

In this way Vaisberg produced a visual and material equivalent to something transient and imaginary: the horizon of hopes, fears, ideals, and values that animated Maidan throughout these days and nights, the atmosphere that united people into a revolutionary collective, as it were. Having been an eyewitness to a radical historical opening – "something definitive, something historic" as Vorozhbit put it – Vaisberg visualized political emergence as such, the constituent power of the revolution, something which by nature is intermittent and resistant to aesthetic as well as political representation, but which is here peculiarly spatialized, visualized and crystallized in a montage of 28 pictures.

The quartet I have just mentioned – Kurkov, Vorozhbit, Loznitsa, Vaisberg – is but a small group in a larger crowd of artists, writers, and intellectuals who prepared and produced Maidan through aesthetic expressions. If revolutions always give impetus to the arts, as Kurkov asserted, the Maidan revolution is notable because of the high quality as well as the sheer quantity of the artistic expressions that fueled and responded to the protests. The square that hosted the political occupation also became an art factory.

The aesthetics and politics of democratic emergence

My general theoretical assumption in this article is that artistic representations – such as the works by Kurkov, Vorozhbit, Loznitsa, and Vaisberg – know something about crowds and democratic action that other forms of knowledge barely comprehend. This assumption makes sense only if we regard democracy not primarily as a mode of representation – for instance, liberal

parliamentarianism with a multiparty system and constitutional rights and freedoms – but as the ability of people to question each mode of representation. The assumption is inspired by political ontology rather than political science. While the latter is primarily concerned with politics as a system of representation, the former is concerned with how such systems are instituted, consolidated, transformed, and destroyed. "The political" here indicates the primal scene of society: how people join together by drawing a boundary with the rest of the world; how this community then draws a boundary across itself, so that one or a few (a king or a national assembly) are elevated to represent all; how these boundaries are constitutionally walled in and maintained by consensus or repression; and how they are periodically contested by social movements, demonstrations, and uprisings that do not recognize existing politics as representing their interests. Democracy, in this perspective, is the inherent potential of people to demolish existing political representations and create new ones, a process that repeatedly asserts itself in history and can be seen as a driving force of democracy.[5] With this perspective, we apprehend the close link of democracy to crowds and collective agency.

From this understanding of democracy follows a second theoretical assumption, which we may conceptualize as political emergence. Political emergence designates a process whereby a shared experience of objective constraint or oppression is dialectically transformed into practices of collective resistance. If we adopt an expression by Alain Badiou, this issue concerns "the rise of the inexistent," that is, the slow or sudden rise of new kinds of social and political agency that materialize in the breach of an existing order of representation.[6] Political emergence applies to popular forces that appear outside established political formations or are generated by contradictions and conflicts within these formations. If established channels of representation and communication cease to function, people scramble for new ways to assemble, protest, and resist, and new ways to narrate, enact and perform social transformation. Such movements may not be immediately recognizable as political entities. Often, they are ignored, demonized as "masses," or regarded as immature and disorderly by political institutions, journalism, and research. Notwithstanding such rejections, these movements remain political in that they create new ways of sharing, embodying, enacting, and imagining society. Although their demands may not be acknowledged by established political institutions, their political dimension resounds all the more strongly in the cultural and aesthetic dimension. In this context, put simply, the aesthetic gesture or aesthetic work becomes a prime instrument, both a mode of understanding for registering political emergence and a practice for its realization.[7] The brief examples above suggest that aesthetic figurations give access to deep dimensions of the Maidan uprising.

As I argue, these aesthetic presentations and performances offer unique ways of knowing the Ukrainian Revolution, the civil protests that forced it to happen, and the democratic aspirations of those who made it happen. To avoid misunderstanding, I should underline that I use aesthetics not in its conventional, watered-down sense, as referring to some exclusive quality of certain texts, images, or objects usually called high art, but rather in its rigorous epistemological meaning: as understanding acquired through sensory perception and imagination–in other words, how we make *sense* of the world, how the world is made intelligible or *sensible* through acts of hearing and seeing, as in fiction, poetry, visual arts, film, and theater, but also in masks, songs, slogans, and graffiti. Such presentations enable us to comprehend political emergence because they register sociopolitical transformation through voice, embodied experience, and subjective expression in ways comparable to the testimonial mode of the participant and the witness. Put differently, aesthetic works can absorb the phenomenological experience generated by participation in collective protest and revolt.

MY ANALYSIS IS NOT primarily concerned with what today is often discussed as art activism, that is, intentionally mobilizing artistic and cultural creativity and institutions as tools for social and cultural change. To be sure, Maidan contained many examples of art activism in this sense. However, I am interested in the other end of the process: how political emergence inevitably articulates itself aesthetically as it claims voice and presence in public space, and how the collective agency formed in this process presents itself through a variety of aesthetic modes and media, thereby enabling all who share this agency to understand the meaning of their actions. In other words, I am not primarily interested in art activism as a specific modality or genre by which artists and art institutions energize politics by injecting a dose of art into it, as it were, but more so in what I call the political aesthetics of democratic emergence, a broader category encompassing the ways in which political and aesthetic expression are at first indistinguishable and interchangeable as new collective actors and movements make their appearance in the public sphere. Aesthetics and politics, beauty and communal deliberation-action, are here two components or aspects of one and the same emergence of people rising toward freedom. Taken separately, the aesthetic aspect appears as the mode and medium through which the actors make sense of what they do and bring this into the realm of experience. As we shall see in the following section, this perspective has significant consequences for our interpretation of the Maidan uprising as an exercise in democracy.

Social and historical causes of the revolution

National politicians and their party symbols and flags were not welcome at Kyiv's Maidan.[8] On the evening of November 30, 2013, Andrey Kurkov noted in his diary that a record had been

> **"WITH THIS PERSPECTIVE, WE APPREHEND THE CLOSE LINK OF DEMOCRACY TO CROWDS AND COLLECTIVE AGENCY."**

set: "Yes, nine days of protest without the involvement of any party, even an opposition party: that's a new record."[9] A couple of days before, upon learning that students protesting in Lviv had chased members of the rightwing Svoboda party off the stage, Kurkov asked: "Why do politicians have such difficulty imagining that people can go out on their own and protest when something in the government gets them angry?"[10]

Polls made among the participants in the Maidan protests substantiate Kurkov's impression. Among people asked on December 7 by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, nine out of ten, or 91.2 percent, said they did not belong to any organization, while only 3.9 percent said they belonged to a political party.[11] The result was confirmed by another poll made by Olga Onuch and colleagues.[12] While commentators thus agree that party loyalty or ideological affiliation neither represents nor explains the Maidan events of 2013–2014, they ascribe greater explanatory weight to a generational collective.[13] Maidan is often described as being spearheaded by the "contemporaries of independence," the generation born after 1991 and the Soviet era. In January 2014, an overwhelming 73 precent of Ukrainians aged 16–29 supported association with the EU. It was their pro-European spirit that rose up in the first week. Inspired by occupations and uprisings elsewhere in the world, and with similar savvy in networking on digital platforms, cohorts of young pro-European activists set the tone for what was to follow.

However, the number of activists in the occupation was at first small. Those who stayed overnight were a few hundred at most. By the end of November, after a week of intensive protests that had failed to change the government's intention concerning the EU association, the occupants were set to pack up and disperse. Had it not been for a misguided intervention at this very moment by the infamous special police forces, Berkut, which on the night between November 30 and December 1 attacked the occupants and severely injured several of them, Ukrainian history, would have taken "a different turn," as political scientist Mychail Wynnyckyj puts it.[14]

WHEN THE ARMED units descended on the square – with the official pretext that the space had to be cleared for the erection of the *yolka*, the New Year Tree – they breached what Igor Lyubashenko calls "an unwritten rule of Ukrainian politics": that peaceful protests are not to be suppressed by force.[15] Outraged by the unprovoked brutality, many more now rose in protest in order "to protect the young," as the phrase went. As hundreds of thousands walked to the square the following day, the police forces, seeing themselves outnumbered, abandoned the site. Soon, new tents went up, as well as a big stage, while the metal framing of the *yolka* was repurposed into a symbol of protest. The adjacent Trade Unions' building and the building of the Kyiv City Administration were also occupied the same day.

The assault by the security forces on the young occupants thus catalyzed a process whereby the spontaneous protest

against the cancellation of the EU association fused with broader popular passions – of discouragement, dissatisfaction, betrayal, and frustrated ambition – concerning the situation in Ukraine.[16] According to Myroslav Shkandrij, on November 30 the Euromaidan was transformed into "a struggle conducted under the national flag, against tyranny."[17] Resulting from this was the political emergence of a new collective agency that stubbornly resisted the existing system of political representation and ultimately defeated it.

OVER SEVERAL MONTHS, from December 2013 to the spring of 2014, this emergent collective conjured up radical ideas of national and democratic rebirth.[18] The vast majority participated in the Maidan Revolution as citizens and did not see themselves as part of any official structure or organization. They showed up because of their loyalty to the collective event itself. While the uprising thus entertained porous boundaries to Ukrainian society at large, with people entering and exiting the occupation much at their own ease, the borders against the special police forces and government troops were attentively guarded. They were patrolled by spontaneously formed militias, organized into so-called *sotni*, or squads (more on this below). Borders were fortified by barricades built of metal sheets, furniture, boards, planks, sacks of sand, tires, rocks, construction material, urban debris, and blocks of snow and ice. Creations of collective effort and ingenuity, some barricades resembled artistic assemblages in their own right. Within the confines marked by these mounds, Maidan formed a large community and served as a basis for transformational social and national movements. In this sense, Maidan was a manifestation of popular power, or the democracy of the street.

> ## "MAIDAN WAS A MANIFESTATION OF POPULAR POWER, OR THE DEMOCRACY OF THE STREET."

Several historians, political scientists and sociologists have remarked as much. Olga Bertelsen in her introduction to a significant collection of articles asserts that "the Euromaidan" affirmed "the paramount role of human agency in history."[19] She goes on to describe the Revolution as "the beginning of a new history."[20] Stefan Auer speaks of the Maidan revolution as belonging to those events that "transform the people and their political culture."[21] Igor Torbakov explains: "the implications of the Euromaidan have been tremendously important: the world observed dramatic changes in Ukraine in 2013–2014 – the dismissal of the authoritarian political regime and the emergence of a new Ukrainian civic nation."[22] Ilya Gerasimov goes one step farther, asserting that Kyiv and Ukraine in 2014 displayed "the first postcolonial revolution." It deserves this designation, Gerasimov claims, because the revolution was "all about the people acquiring their own voice, and in the process of this self-assertive act they forge[d] a new Ukrainian nation as a community of negotiated solidary action by self-conscious individuals."[23]

While there may be no reason to doubt these assertions, it is interesting that the authors offer little in the way of substance and

explanation to back up such epochal claims. Between the brazen assertions (the rise of a new nation; the emergence of a collective subjectivity) and the empirical observations made to support them, there is a disconnect and lack of proportion. Few if any scholarly and intellectual accounts of the Maidan Revolution actually examine the emergence of the revolutionary movement. More modestly, they analyze the discourses, practices, and actions of Maidan in 2013–2014 as manifestations of the remote or recent past of Ukraine.[24] In this way, they infer the revolution from a set of representations of various facets of Ukraine's society, history, culture, and politics, which are then posited as so many causes contributing to the different phases and outcomes of the revolution. Because revolutions are by nature complex, compressed, and conflictual, such explanations *a posteriori* can always be further amended, nuanced, enriched, or questioned by any number of additional details and observations. The historical accounts thereby grow thicker, richer, and more reliable. Simultaneously, however, the historical accounts thereby analytically dismantle and retrospectively collapse the revolution into a myriad of social, political, individual, psychic, and ideological causes, among which we are at pains to make out the contours of that "emergent collective subjectivity," or "new nation," or "New Ukraine," which these very accounts were supposed to explain and define for us. Despite the seeming clarity introduced by such explanations, the revolutionary emergence of the collective agent will thus remain as obscure as before, or even more so.

AS A RESULT, the revolution appears as a black box, an enigmatic transformation or interruption beyond understanding. Even if we identify the contributing forces that came before and piece out the consequences that followed afterwards, the event itself still remains concealed and unknown. In this way, representational epistemology fails to account for what we for lack of better words may call the revolutionary character of the revolution: the *destruction* of existent systems of political and cultural representations, the *emergence* of collective political agency, and the *release* of democratic imagination. In a word, it fails to shed light on the *monstrous* nature of the transformative event.[25] An understanding of *these* processes necessitates an in-depth investigation of the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of the revolution. We need to open the box and discern the meaning of its content, which perhaps is the very meaning of democracy.

A multiform people

In the absence of representation by established political parties and organizations, people assembled for Maidan invented or discovered ways to present themselves in various repertoires of imagination. Political aspirations expressed themselves in aesthetic figuration and fantasy. Artistic expressions served as circuits of communication and signposts to the future, powering the protests, enabling its participants to present themselves as an emergent political force, thereby making manifest a *people* in the process of realizing themselves

as a subject of history. For these reasons, aesthetic expressions help understand what historical meaning the Maidan uprising held for those who were absorbed by and contributed to its formidable agency.

The witness accounts by Andrey Kurkov, Natalya Vorozhbit, Sergei Loznitsa, and Matvyi Vaisberg introduced above testify to the strong presence of an artistic spirit in the revolution that left an imprint on participants and onlookers from the first. Tamara Hundorova describes the Maidan as a cultural performance with at least four different themes or codes: Carnival, apocalypse, performance, and Cossack encampment. Quoting one of the protesters, she states that the Maidan was "a true art space," a "cornucopia of opportunities."[26] Nazar Kozak interestingly compares Maidan art to what Joseph Beuys once called a "social sculpture." Aesthetic expressivity here served as an invisible substance or energy that integrated and resurrected the people as a political agency and thereby blew new life into the social body.[27] Dmytro Shevchuk and Maksym Karpovets also emphasize the performative nature of Maidan, its unexpected release of "creativity and collective imagination" whereby it offered "an alternative version of social reality." That the demonstrators prevailed, they argue, is coupled to the fact that it "was an experience on the edge of human capabilities": "Maidan managed to 'blow up' politics, offering a unique experience of the extraordinary."[28]

As these writers also argue, the task of producing aesthetic presentations of the revolution that capture and preserve its explosive and experiential freshness, its horizontal and democratic multiplicity, its popular surplus and social multiformity, is different from the task of producing a political representation, sociological explanation, or historical interpretation of the event. In the latter case, we deal with the question of how to make an accurate representation of the revolution as an event in social and political history by identifying its underlying causes, central interests, and main agents. The question being asked is: what or whom does the revolutionary process represent? In the former case, we are dealing with the ways in which aesthetic expressions intervene into the revolution and capture and record the political emergence of the people as a collective agency, or even a new political sovereign, or agent of power. The question being asked here concerns art's contribution to the realization of democracy – to its preparation, production, and preservation: what or who present themselves in the emergence and unfolding of the revolutionary process?

WHEN SEARCHING FOR answers to such questions, we should note how Maidan artworks often perform an aesthetic balancing act. They present or even perform the sociopolitical force of the multiform people, while they also seek to represent the people in a compelling form. In the following two sections I analyze some iconic artifacts that illuminate how the revolutionary crowd oscillates between the multiform and the uniform.

> **"THE QUESTION BEING ASKED HERE CONCERNS ART'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE REALIZATION OF DEMOCRACY."**

Figure 4. Pavel Klubnikin and Strayk-Plakat, *R kraplya v okeani* (I'm a drop in the ocean). 2013.

From an ordinary drop to the universal ocean

A drop of water, a piano, and a New Year's spruce – the people behind the Maidan revolution operationalized ordinary things, repurposing them into political weapons. A whole gamut of revolutionary folk art saw the day during the three months of conflict as people painted, carved, crafted, chiseled, scribbled, sew, embroidered, and in other ways designed and decorated their political outfits and accessories. Though these decorated objects may seem crude from an artistic point of view, they demonstrate the sheer enthusiasm with which the nameless collective supported and produced the revolution. Several initiatives led to remarkable performance pieces, many of them produced by known individuals, and many other by ordinary, anonymous citizens.

Our first example is the drop (figure 4). This symbol was introduced via a poster designed by Pavel Klubnikin, one of eight graphic designers who on December 1, 2013, launched the Facebook group *Strayk Plakat* [Strike Poster], which published posters that could be downloaded and printed for use in the demonstrations.[29] Klubnikin's poster immediately became emblematic. In simple conceptualist or neo-functionalist style, its upper part shows a yellow drop against a blue background, and its lower part depicts a rippled yellow area symbolizing a water surface. The text in bold black is as simple: "I Am a Drop in the Ocean" (*Ia kraplia v okeani*).

If Klubnikin's poster was the first piece of political lore from Kyiv's Maidan to be sanctified as an expression of the sovereign people, this was for good reason. The poster's message is existential rather than political. It can be claimed by everybody and excludes no one. "A drop in the ocean" is a common expression in many languages. It typically serves as a synecdoche, a figure of the relation of part to whole, of individual to collective. Most often, the saying is used to express one's insignificance in rela-

tion to overwhelming social and political forces: "What does it matter what I do? I'm just a drop in the ocean" (*Ia tilky kraplia v okeani*). By omitting the "just" or "only" in the proverbial saying and by finding an iconography to match it, the designer struck a chord that transformed the message from a statement on the hopelessness and futility of all action into a piece of agitation: "I am a drop in the ocean. It matters what I do!" Or, as in a later version of the same poster: "I am a drop in the ocean that will change Ukraine."

A CLOSE READING of Klubnikin's poster shows that this rhetorical recoding mirrors the process of political emergence. As mentioned, the text and image interpellate the individual as a drop. The drop is apparently small and superfluous. However, the acts whereby many individuals simultaneously advertise to each other their insignificance as mere drops also entail recognition of their shared condition as drops. Between them, there is now equivalence. But the recognition of their equivalent condition is also a discovery that they together make up a new entity; as drops make up an ocean, individuals make up a collective. What the poster shows, then, are the ties between individuals that come into being when they understand that they share a common identity (all are drops). Insofar as they recognize this identity, they also recognize that they constitute a collectivity that previously did not exist. In one stroke, the poster thus makes visible the individual, "the drop," inasmuch as each embodies what everybody has in common with others, while it also makes visible the collective, "the ocean," as existing through the recognition by individuals of this same commonality.

Such is the process of political emergence that Jean-Paul Sartre once described as the transformation of *seriality* into a *fused* group.[30] The process presupposes what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe theorize as democratic equivalence: the recognition that people, as drops, or citizens, are equivalent in relation to power.[31] Gayatri Spivak designates this process as one of synecdochization: a person recognizes herself as being part of a whole, which enables her participation in a collective movement and offers her a share in the common.[32] This also explains how, in its historical present, the constellation of words, forms, and colors on Klubnikin's poster can be seen as a performance of democracy in the deep sense. Individuals discover and affirm their individual agency inasmuch as they become parts of the collective, and the collective discovers and affirms its collective agency inasmuch as it enables individuality.

IN THE AESTHETIC and rhetorical register, the poster establishes the concurrence of individuality and collectivity through three tropes. One is synecdoche, the relation of part to whole; drops are connected to one another by being placed in relation to the whole of which they are part. The second is metonym, close association, or nearness; the single drop is associated with larger bodies of water such as the ocean. The synecdochical and metonymical relation is then reinforced by the third trope, metaphor, as the meaning of the relation of drop and ocean is transferred to the relation of the individual to the social totality.

As a result, just as the drop *is* (a synecdochical and metonymical representation of) the ocean, so the individual *is* the political whole; every "I" is a representative of the collective and is responsible for its well-being.

To note, the poster does not *represent* this confluence of individuality and collectivity. The point is rather the following: in the unfolding of the uprising the poster rhetorically and aesthetically performs democratic equivalence and agency. The poster is in this sense what Horst Bredekamp calls an "image act" (*Bildakt*), wherein an image can be seen as a "speaking" subject.[33] In speaking and acting, the poster prepares and produces the revolution. The poster is therefore a historical index of the political rupture that it helped bring into being.

Interestingly, the drop soon started to live a life of its own in the culture of Ukraine's revolution, undergoing a series of visual transformations. In one version, the drop is imprisoned. In another, it bends the bars of a prison to escape. In yet another, it rises as David against Goliath (figure 5). The drop is frozen or freezing; it transforms itself into fire (or a Molotov cocktail) (figure 6); it infiltrates the stars of the EU flag; it drips as tears from a woman's cheeks. Thus, the drop generated its own sign language to address the various phases of the struggle. In mid-March 2014, finally, another version emerged, now with a yellow and blue drop against the colors of Russia's flag (figure 7). The artist who uploaded this image stated that he wanted to thank all the Russians who supported the revolution.

IN THE IMAGES of Strayk Plakat remain traces or impressions of a political act that redistributed political meaning and visibility–or sensibility, to use Jacques Rancière's term.[34] In the presence of the revolution, the drop posters made people see their impotence as individuals vis-à-vis the existing power structure, while also enabling them to see their potency as they joined in the creation of an oceanic force able to challenge that structure.

Collective emergence of this kind intensifies people's emotional investment in social interactions, and it thereby accounts for the common feeling of solidarity that characterizes such political events. Such an emergence also changes the constellation of political forces. If before there was an established regime governing a mass of atomized persons, as isolated as drops, now there is a tangible antagonism between the regime and an emergent, oceanic popular force. This process tends to dismantle hierarchies and erase social alienation, to the effect that people trust the collective, that is, they trust one another, as they make up a safe space and a source of meaning that emancipate people by realizing their individual agency.

A point can here be made of the fact that Klubnikin's poster did not state "We are drops in the ocean" but "*I am* a drop in the ocean." The revolution seems not to have stifled individual creativity but rather to have asserted it. Any contribution was of importance. Everyone was welcome – to cook, build barricades, donate money, or sing – and everyone fulfilled their self-imposed duties to represent and care for all others. This led to an outburst of both modest and extreme initiatives.

On December 5, 2013, for instance, Markyian Matsekh and

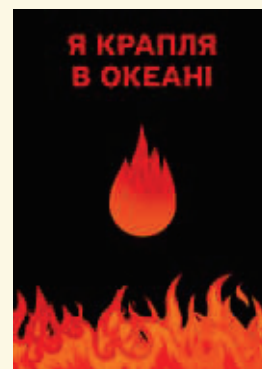Figure 5. Strayk-Plakat, The drop fights against the Goliath of the security forces. 2014.

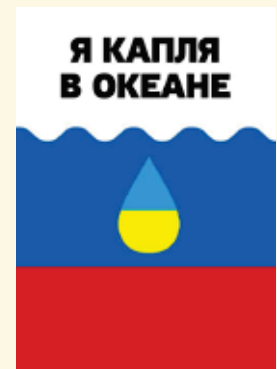Figure 6. Strayk-Plakat, The drop transforms itself into a Molotov cocktail. 2014.

Figure 7. Strayk-Plakat, The Ukrainian drop in a Russian ocean. March 15, 2014.

some of his friends painted their piano in the national colors of blue and yellow, hauled it to the square and placed it right in front of the riot police line. Matsekh then sat down on the stool and began playing Chopin's Waltz in C sharp minor until his fingers went numb in the cold. Photos of Matsekh playing Chopin's Waltz to the riot police immediately became iconic (figure 8). In interviews, the amateur pianist and IT worker from Lviv confessed that these performances had given a new meaning to his life. His intention was to show that, unlike the police and security forces, the Maidan occupants were peaceful. Even so, Matsekh's choice of Chopin spoke for itself. Chopin's music resonates with the sentiments of the composer and pianist whose native Poland was cut up between three European empires, and its main part dominated by Russian tsarism. The composer Robert Schumann described the music of his good friend Chopin as a force for national liberation, a "cannon buried in flowers," as he put it.[35] Incidentally, the Walz that Matsekh chose to perform was composed a year before the revolutions of 1848 that upset the political landscape of Europe, a historical event sometimes called *the spring of nations*.

MARKYIAN MATSEKH is an example of the ways in which Maidan's collective encouraged micro-heroism that asserted individual agency. At the other end of the spectrum, we detect equally inventive aesthetic practices without individual authorship. The foremost example of such anonymous or collective popular art is the *Yolka*, the great New Year's Tree that traditionally was erected on Kyiv's Maidan for the Christmas and New Year holidays. It was under the pretext of clearing ground for the scaffolding of the artificial tree that police assaulted the occupants on November 30. As the enormous crowd the next day chased the police off the site, the abandoned scaffolding was deployed for new purposes. The metal frame designed to be decked by plastic garlands, glitter, and electric lights turned out to be an ideal framework to which the revolution's symbols, messages, posters, flags, banners, paintings, and icons could be attached. Reportedly, the political decking of the *yolka* began as a young man climbed the structure to affix an EU flag at its top, after which others followed suit and tied their various banners and posters to the metal rods.

What the city authorities envisioned as an official symbol for the holiday season thus became an anti-monument, seized by the people from their government and now transformed into a symbol of their own plurality (figure 9). As the third main symbol of Maidan, alongside the drop and the piano, the tree was infinitely reproduced in photos, pictures, postcards, stickers, and kitchen magnets. Manuals on how to make miniature "Maidan yolkas" as Christmas gifts by using cardboard, wood, and paper circulated on the internet.

The *Yolka* was a bulletin board, scrapbook, and wardrobe, holder and hanger for the tags and colors of the protesting

people. As such, it was a piece of street art or accidental art. Intended as a giant crinoline that would serve as support for a fake tree, the scaffolding now displayed different tissues and materials, and it made the voice of the people *stand out*. What was hung on, strung to, and draped over the metal bars was a collective garment: "the tattered clothing of the people," to use Victor Hugo's words about similar phenomena in the June 1848 uprising in Paris.

Nationalism is certainly a reference in the three artworks of the revolution that I have discussed. But the patriotic allusion is faint and open to question. In Klubnikin's poster, the nation is present in the color scheme, as is also the case in Markyian Matsekh's piano performances. In Matsekh's performances, the nation is also alluded to by the political edge of Chopin's music, as it presumably asserts a Polish identity trampled by neighboring empires. In the case of the New Year's tree, the nation is present only in a vague folkloristic sense. When turned into an artwork, the *Yolka* becomes collective and indeterminable: a universal frame for whatever you attach to it.

The *Yolka* is a case of collective iconoclasm, a conquest from below of state-imposed traditions and celebrations. Smashing the symbolism of the state, the tree in this sense corresponds to the numerous assaults on public monuments and particularly those representing the Soviet heritage, such as the destruction of the Lenin statue in Kyiv on December 9, 2013. This demolition, and similar acts before and after, made clear that Lenin's figure was no longer acceptable as an embodiment of society.

> **"THE *YOLKA* IS A CASE OF COLLECTIVE ICONOCLASM, A CONQUEST FROM BELOW OF STATE-IMPOSED TRADITIONS AND CELEBRATIONS."**

This brings us to a new level of the argument. With all the representations of the current political order being symbolically destroyed and emptied of meaning, what could serve as a new image of the radicalized people? While the drop and the ocean certainly offered an idea of the social cohesion and civic loyalty that connected individuals to the protesting collective, they did not in themselves offer any representation of the people except in the form of an oceanic universality. As for the *Yolka*, its patchwork outfit was continuously restyled and restitched, and underneath the crinoline of steel there was just hollow space, waiting, as it were, for a political body to fill it.

THE SEARCH FOR a truthful representation of the Ukrainian people took on many forms. One of the major ones was established by Babylon'13, a film collective which early in the protests established itself as the "Voice of Maidan" and a "Cinema of a Civil Protest." The community of filmmakers was first called together by the documentarist Volodymyr Tykhyi, who understood that radical filmmakers owned the tools needed to provide Ukrainians and the entire world with a view of the revolution from the ground. With short films and chronicles uploaded to the group's YouTube channel only hours after shooting, Babylon'13 soon became a dissident alternative to official media,

Figure 8. Markyian Matsekh playing the blue-and-yellow piano on Maidan, February 2014.

Figure 9. The Yolka, the New Year's Tree on Maidan. Early February 2014.

Figure 10. Roti, "New Ukraine". Sculpture in rose marble placed on Maidan on January 7, 2014.

which was restrained by government control. Babylon'13 was an eminently collective undertaking to which any person with adequate cinematic skills and revolutionary sentiment could contribute. Rather than conveying a specific perspective or idea of the revolution, it encouraged rapid coverage mainly in documentary and journalistic form.[36] All of the films were published anonymously; the film collective itself took responsibility for what each of its individual film makers published. This collective organization, in addition to the documentary format, made it possible for Babylon'13 to preserve the multiform and multivocal nature of the Maidan revolution. As a running news reel of the revolution, presenting it from within several perspectives and facets at once, Babylon'13 adopted something of the decentered aesthetics of the *yolka*; a changing assemblage of statements, voices, and views formatted only by the constraints of their YouTube platform. It is likely that no other revolution or uprising in history can provide such a complete and diverse filmic record of its unfolding day by day, and from a perspective matching the perception of the revolutionaries themselves.

Allegories of the new Ukraine

The search for an embodiment and visual representation of the people was provisionally resolved by the street artist Roti, a Frenchman with close links to Kyiv's art community. On Janu-

ary 7, after two weeks of intensive stone-carving, he unveiled on Maidan nothing less than the *New Ukraine*, a two-meter-long horizontal sculpture in rose marble that represents a woman's body horizontally submerged in water with only her face, hands and feet sticking out and rippling the surface (figure 10).

THE AESTHETIC IMPACT of Roti's sculpture is due largely to the fact that it captures an undecidable instant of appearance. Judging from the sculptural expression only, it is impossible to tell whether the female body is floating, sinking, or rising. With context and title added, the symbolism is unequivocal. What we see is the new body of Ukraine, emerging from the depths of the waters and breaking the surface in the form of a beautiful woman. The sculpture prompts the viewer to undertake a veritable act of creation, to bring the submerged woman into being through a leap of political will, by *imagining* her slow rise from the depths of the water or the rock to full visibility and representation. Thus, the sculpture does not so much represent the New Ukraine as it exhorts the viewer to participate in its creation.

Roti's sculpture at once demonstrates and enacts political emergence. It demonstrates it, through its figuration in marble, and enacts it, through its performative mode of production and display. This dual quality, being simultaneously demonstrative and performative, accounts for the sculpture's considerable im-

Figure 11. Cover artwork for Tetiana Domashenko's poetry *Heavenly Hundred Maidan Warriors*. Published by The Spiritual Axis, Kyiv, 2014.

Figure 12. Roman Bonchuk, Iconostasis of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes. Courtesy of the Museum of the Heavenly Hundred, Ivan-Frankivsk.

pact on the Maidan occupants and the broad public, their almost instinctive recognition that the sculpture expressed who they were and the meaning of their action, an identity and meaning now codified and anchored in the here and now by being carved in stone and given a name, *New Ukraine*. No wonder this artwork, too, was soon canonized as an iconic expression of the revolution.

Roti's sculpture is thus another of Maidan's absorbing image acts. Yet, the semiotic status of this artwork, as a material sign of the revolution's very meaning, does not prevent us from recognizing its conventional character. Female allegories are commonplace in the history of nationalism and political revolutions. In one sense, Roti achieved just another version of the brand, and from a stylistic point of view a rather trivial one. His sculpture of the New Ukraine alludes to the Slavic myth of the feminine spirit *Berehynia*, a female keeper of the hearth and the homeland, of water sources and riverbanks, whose popularity surged in the late 1980s when writers and artists transformed her into an idea of authentic Ukrainian femininity and national culture. Since 1991, she has been reproduced in numerous statues, murals, and popular prints, most notoriously as the gilded sculpture atop the Monument of Independence in Kyiv's Maidan.[37] Apparently, Roti's *New Ukraine* could not express its newness except by reconnecting to the old.

On the one hand, the sculpture evokes the people as a non-representable mass, a rectangular rock of pure potentiality because it can assume many shapes and forms. On the other hand, it shows the people as united and sovereign, embodied by the female figure who is about to step into history. Attempts to describe revolutionary agency unavoidably vacillate between these two, as the politically activated people will strive for an articulation that, however, negates their collective movement by binding it to a particular representation or form.

Through its title, Roti's sculpture provides the revolution with a decidedly national character. The allusion to the mythic Berehynia turns it into a female incarnation of Ukrainian identity. As a result, the sculpture will unify the occupants and protesters only insofar as they identify themselves with Ukraine, thereby also separating themselves from any non-Ukrainian others, the most significant of which is of course Russia, which typically occupies the place of the rejected Other in Ukrainian culture and propaganda. With this closure of aesthetic signification, Maidan's universal Ocean is diminished to a Ukrainian Sea. The emotional register of nationalism, which has no firm hold on the drop, the piano, the *Yolka*, or Babylon'13's cinema of protest, appears in earnest in Roti's sculpture, devoted as it is to the imagined community of the nation.

Creating national martyrs

The first fatalities in the battles against riot police happened on Hrushevsky Street on 21 January. Many more followed, culminating a month later with the mass killings on the slopes along Institutskaya Street. It cannot be overlooked that the birth of the new Ukraine took place in a public space haunted by death. As the Revolution unfolded, the political emergence of the people was increasingly rendered through fiery nationalist iconography – patriotic and combative, grievous, and sacral. The poet Tetiana Domashenko codified this tendency. On February 21, 2014, the day of the public memorial service for the victims, she published a new poem, *Heavenly Hundred Maidan Warriors*, which sanctified the fallen ones, the "heavenly hundred" (in Ukrainian, *nebesna sotnia*).[38]

IN MANY REVOLUTIONS, aesthetic and cultural representations have been deflected in this manner. Revolutionary movements cultivate their legacies by honoring those who died for the cause. Yet, the Maidan Revolution is perhaps unique in the ways the cultural, aesthetic, and religious adulation of the dead heroes

has largely occluded the remembrance of Maidan as an experience of radical democracy.

Domashenko's poem sanctified the killed demonstrators as martyrs who had given their life and blood for the nation (figure 11). However, "heavenly hundred" is an insufficient translation of *nebesna sotnia*. It is worth dwelling on the connotations of this expression. A homonym with layered references, *sotnia* refers not just to the number 100. As mentioned above, it also designates a social, military, and administrative unit, somewhat like the Latin *centuria*, which refers to a military unit of roughly 100 men, as well as a voting unit in the assembly of the Roman Republic in antiquity and a land measurement unit. Although the etymology is tangled, it seems that the term for the cardinal number 100 at some point and in several languages–the old English *hundred* (a subdivision of a county), the German *Hundertschaft*, the Swedish *hundare*, the Ukrainian *sotnia*–extended its reference to also denote a geographical area or administrative unit consisting of 100 homesteads that could mobilize 100 men. In Ukrainian and Russian contexts, the word has been used as an organizational unit in military and civil administration, but it is also a way of naming any group involved in some kind of struggle or committed to a specific task. During Maidan in 2013–2014, demonstrators organized themselves in *sotni* tasked with self-defense and related logistics.[39]

THE GROUP OF KILLED activists mourned by the poem's "Ukrainian mother" is thus essentially a combat unit. A similar iconography – blending saintliness, martyrdom, military heroism, and Cossack allusions – characterizes several of the many paintings made in honor of Maidan's victims. Roman Bonchuk, a prominent visual artist, has devoted murals, an iconostasis, and an entire museum to the Heavenly Hundred heroes (figure 12). While Domashenko's eulogium is generally recognized for coining *nebesna sotnia*, or the "heavenly hundred," Bonchuk's paintings have been acknowledged for transforming the killed activists into Christian icons. Their respective artworks situate the dead in a religious-nationalist martyrology.[40]

Many Ukrainians have preferred to connect the revolution's tragic ending to a simple, heartbreaking folksong, *A Duck Floats on the Tisza* (*Plyve kacha po Tysyni*), which was performed during the Maidan memorial on February 21, 2014 and became an unofficial requiem for the victims. This old song of lamentation, first recorded in Lemkovina, Transcarpathia, in the 1940s, describes a mother duck bidding farewell to her offspring, who float down a dangerous river, never to be seen again and to be buried by "strangers" in a "foreign land." The lyrics about "Mother Duck" and her duckling are more modest than the zealotry of Domashenko's poem and Bonchuk's paintings. The standard reading of the folksong is that it is about a young soldier who goes off to war, leaving his mother in tears. But it is a song about *any* mother and *any* child: a recognition that departure and possible death are facts of life. Domashenko's allegory of

the Ukrainian mother speaks on behalf of Ukrainians, against enemies who kill her sons; "Mother Duck" speaks for everybody regardless of nationality.

This material thus presents us with two ideas of the Maidan Revolution that are at odds. In the perspective offered by the folksong "Plyve kacha," the revolution retains its universality even (or especially) in the face of disappearance and death. In the perspective offered by Domashenko's and Bonchuk's works, by contrast, the Maidan Revolution comes across as the realization of a heroic Ukrainian nationhood inscribed in Christian eschatology. This version of Maidan's legacy emphasizes its soldierly and self-sacrificial dimension, often rendered in idealized political iconography that ironically smacks of socialist realism. Meanwhile, it marginalizes most of the Maidan demonstrators, especially its female constituents who were advised to keep away from the barricades. In this register the Maidan Revolution is ultimately represented by the Heavenly Hundred, who through death dared complete a "pilgrimage from fear to dignity," and who voluntarily shed their "holy blood" to "sanctif[y] the freedom of Ukraine," according to Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.[41]

> ## "REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS CULTIVATE THEIR LEGACIES BY HONORING THOSE WHO DIED FOR THE CAUSE."

My point is that the aesthetic figure of the Heavenly Hundred helps us understand the process by which the nonviolent emergence of collective democracy during Maidan gradually gave way to a vigorous nationalist ideology, thus preparing itself for geopolitical conflict, Russian aggression, foreign occupation, and civil war. Put simply, the prevalent aesthetic figure of the Heavenly Hundred entailed what we may call an ideological containment, in which the democratic imagination that animated the Maidan Revolution was foreclosed or framed to fit a particular ideology.

THIS IS ONLY ONE SIDE of the process, however, for it must be recognized that the figure of the Heavenly Hundred is also a utopian figure that holds the promise of a community that offers the individual citizen a place within a larger whole. As Fredric Jameson once emphasized, no ideology can function unless it presents some utopian promise or reward to those who are interpellated by the ideology.[42] The popular embrace of the poetic figure of the Heavenly Hundred indicates that it resonates with people's experience. And although this experience goes far beyond the masculine and military ethos of the *sotnia*, it apparently still needs the mythic aura of fraternal solidarity and resistance to authority to make sense of itself. To cite one among thousands of similar statements, a female student said:

> There were people from all parts of Ukraine. The collaboration was fantastic. It didn't matter what language you spoke. People did not think about themselves but about the other. They were willing to sacrifice their lives, so strong was the sense of community.[43]

Testimony and artwork from Maidan express this sense of community sometimes as a mystical experience, a magnetic force-field, an all-encompassing devotion, or, in the words of Jurko Prochasko, an "enormous human solidarity."[44] As we revisit such testimonies and their multiform aesthetic articulations, we realize that the representation of the Heavenly Hundred as the epitome of the Ukrainian revolution is precisely an ideological figure that displaces the democratic universality of the revolution and highlights its nationalist elements, while at the same time embodying a revolutionary utopia of community and solidarity. As genuine as the Heavenly Hundred appears as an expression of the strength of the revolution, it is false as a description of its reality. We glimpse a more adequate description in a Facebook posting from late January 2014:

> **We have a Sambir sotnia, "Afghan" sotnia, "Vidsich" sotnia. There is a Gandhi's sotnia (followers of the father of non-violent resistance – Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi) that protects civilians. How can we explain that to you, our European friends, that we have a Gandhi's sotnia? That we have priests, ultras [soccer fans], students, Cossacks, Afghans, left-wing-radicals, poets, alpinists, Buddhists, Hutsuls, Crimean Tatars – and they are all together![45]**

Most of Maidan's *sotni* took part in the organized self-defense against the security forces, and some were responsible for cooking, emergency health care, fuel, supplies, and information. Artists and cultural workers also founded a *sotnia*, which organized art workshops and confronted the lines of riot police with poetry recitals. Other groups avoided or ignored the term, however. The graphic artists in *Strayk Plakat* did not identify as a *sotnia*. The members of the film community Babylon'13 considered the label irrelevant.[46]

IN LATE FEBRUARY there were 42 *sotni* on Kyiv's Independence Square.[47] Impressive as this is, it still means that most demonstrators were not members of any *sotnia* but contributed in countless other ways to the Revolution – another sign of its leaderless and multiform character. Meanwhile, it is telling that there had to be a Women's *sotnia*, for the simple reason that women were excluded from most other units of self-defense. A hand-written poster near the field-kitchen became infamous: "Women! If you see garbage – clean it up, the revolutionaries will be pleased." The *sotnia* is a mode of organization that tends toward a male homosocial and military ethos, in relation to which women are traditionally the keepers of the homeland, in accord with the gendered nationalism epitomized by the figure of Berehynia. The founders of the Olha Kobylianska Women's Sotnia saw

their initiative as a feminist critique of patriarchy, a counter-hegemonic intervention that promoted non-violent resistance and Ukraine's right to self-determination, while at the same time shunning nationalist symbolism.[48]

Again, this indicates how contrary notions of solidarity play against each other in the cultural imaginary of the revolution. Yet another understanding of solidarity is evoked in one of the films by Babylon'13, *The Citizen* (Hromadianyn). According to the members of the collective, it sums up the meaning of the Ukrainian revolution.[49] *The Citizen* consists of statements by activists (eight men and two women), each explaining why they joined the protests or, to be precise, "what they contribute to Maidan." A female IT worker explains: "I feel the reloading of human consciousness. I contribute to Maidan seven hours." A male entrepreneur asserts, "People have stopped looking for Messiah. We are ready to do everything ourselves," adding, "I contribute to Maidan all I have." Next, a builder, sculptor, retired soldier, agent of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, recreation therapist, designer, and filmmaker also state their reasons and display their contributions. One by one they lay down wooden signs on which they have written their professions and pledges, and at the end of the film the camera captures from above the mosaic of all the wooden signs that together form a map of Ukraine (figure 13). The seven-minute film closes with the summation, "Profession Citizen," and a quote from Dante: "The hottest fires in hell are reserved for those who remain neutral in times of moral crisis."

Notably, the plot of *The Citizen* has the same performative

"TESTIMONY AND ARTWORK FROM MAIDAN EXPRESS THIS SENSE OF COMMUNITY SOMETIMES AS A MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE, A MAGNETIC FORCEFIELD, AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING DEVOTION."

structure as Klubnikin's poster *I Am a Drop in the Ocean*. The aesthetic work represents what it performs, a pledge of allegiance to the collective. Individuals add themselves to the collective, identifying themselves as parts of a totality that they are in the process of reinventing by acting on it, and acting *in* it, together with others. Let us ask: Who or what is the beneficiary of their contributions? The people in the film give a straightforward answer: "Maidan."

What, then, is "Maidan"? In this context, it apparently signifies the emergence of the people as a democratic force outside existing systems of representation. Put differently, the term denominates a collective being and process that exist only so long as people give to it. It follows that Maidan was a being that was nothing more—and nothing less—than a collective of people unified by bonds of solidarity.

"PERHAPS THE ONLY tangible political idea that everyone involved in the Maidan had in common was the square itself," states Jessica Zychowicz in regard to Maidan's feminist movement.[50] She goes on to argue that the square emerged as a transparent space, or a negative space, which drew everyone into its center for what it might become. The square was a negative space of potentiality,

contesting the positive spaces of established power. "The square was sought, shared, and contested because of its polysemy. The defining measure of the moment was the square itself."[51]

This description contains an insight concerning the multiform collective of Maidan and how it became a magnet for political projects that otherwise shared little in terms of their respective political agendas. Yet, what the remark fails to observe is that "the square" is here a placeholder for democracy, not only in its fundamental sense, but also in literal terms: a place of assembly. Thus, what Zychowicz really refers to is perhaps not so much the square as a "political idea," but as a *practice* and *experience* of democracy expressed in numerous microhistories of solidarity. In retrospect, these histories are incompatible; in the moment of the uprising, they were not. What unites the micro-histories is a profound sense of indebtedness, which prompts an urge to give, contribute, and make sacrifices. Such sacrifices are the fuel of revolution, consolidating and accelerating the collective movement. A speaker in Vorozhbit's *Maidan Voices* explains:

> **There shouldn't have been anyone there, logically, but there were so many people there … These people were busier than ants in a nest. I saw a disabled man, shoveling snow from his wheelchair. With a spade. And I decided to take an active part, because I felt so very thankful. I wanted to say how thankful I felt towards all these people. First of all I carried water, then sacks of snow, and I saw this man, he was limping, and holding a stick in one hand and a 12-litre bottle of water in the other. Although I was carrying 10–20 litres of water, my arms were falling off by the end. And again I felt tears in my eyes. I realized I'd chosen my position. That's exactly it: I wanted to give thanks to these people.[52]**

The aesthetic expressions of the Revolution show how solidarity expands and contracts: on the one hand, a flurry of examples of Maidan's horizontal, leaderless, multiform, and spontaneous modes of articulation, its *heterarchic*–as opposed to hierarchic–pattern of action and expression;[53] on the other, and especially in the revolution's violent and tragic finale, a revival of historical heroes of Ukrainian culture and the Cossack myth, a recycling of martial imaginary in the form of homemade weaponry, combat gear, and militaristic emblems, and an iconography of nationalism and religion.

INTERPRETATIONS OF the Maidan revolution will therefore hinge on the question of the limits of solidarity. As Serhiy Kvit argues, no such limit existed at first. The revolution knew no boundaries: "The Euromaidan was ideologically friendly and open to everyone. There was no division based on language or ethnicity." Kvit even asserts that "[n]ot only were Russian-speaking Ukrainians welcome on the Maidan, but so were Russians and Russian flags."[54] Be this true or not for the first phases of the uprising, there then came a point where "the act of giving to Maidan" began to translate into an act of fundraising to support the armed *sotni* and other volunteers who in March transferred to Donbas

Figure 13. Babylon 13, *The Citizen*, 2014. Screenshot.

in order to fight the Russia-supported militias who had backed Yanukovych. In this process, Russian flags swiftly disappeared, as the "enormous human solidarity" which initially characterized Ukraine's democratic uprising transformed itself into that more ordinary yet enigmatic phenomenon which we call nationalism.

Concluding Remarks: **Solidarity between the Multiform and the Uniform**

According to political sociologist Robin Wagner-Pacifici, disruptive social events generate a continuous articulation of signifying practices through which the participants recognize the meaning of what they do together, and which gradually assume the form of a representation of the revolutionary event and process. The aesthetic works and testimonials that I have discussed in this article are cases or moments in such a cumulative process – which Wagner-Pacifici calls "political semiosis" – that infuse meaning into the collective experience, delineate the contours of the revolutionary community, testify to the revolution's significance for its participants, and contribute to its legacy. Cultural and aesthetic expressions that partake in this process of political semiosis enable those who participate to understand themselves as an emergent collective and sense the meaning of their actions. By giving form and meaning to what is multiform, such aesthetic acts also "organize" what appears to lack order, for instance, by privileging certain revolutionary agents and events over others.

If we briefly return to Sergei Loznitsa's film *Maidan*, we find a stunning illustration of such tensions between the multiform and egalitarian democratic praxis of the assembled people and what we perhaps too bluntly may call their ideological streamlining. The film is rhythmically sequenced – now displaying a profusion of everyday activities without central command and yet mysteriously coordinated, now conveying in powerful imagery how everybody is animated by a single collective will. As mentioned, the film's moments of unification have a particular acoustic quality as they are accompanied or even aroused by music, thus showing that aesthetic expressivity momentarily can turn many voices

into one, the multiform into the uniform. In this way, Loznitsa ultimately embeds all the sounds, noises, and explosions of the uprising into one song, the national anthem (see page 55).

Powerful aesthetic expressions are thus able to arrest the continuous process of political semiosis, capture the revolutionary event, and affix it to an image, story, ritual, or song. Such articulations inevitably inflect collective passions toward certain values and ideals. Arguably, this is what happened on Maidan beginning on February 21 as the myth and image of the Heavenly *sotnia* were put in place as an immovable figure and master narrative that re-oriented the Revolution toward past moments of nationalism, and which subsequently could be recoded for present purposes and help mobilize people in the revolution's violent and military aftermath. As Mychailo Wynnyckyj submits, "nationalist rhetoric and symbolism became the 'semiotic glue' for an *imagined community* formed and located in the *present* – not in the past."[55]

CAN WE CONCLUDE, then, that the Maidan revolutionaries eventually drew too much of their poetry from the past, to paraphrase Karl Marx? In the same text, Marx famously stated that people act and make history "under circumstances encountered, given and transmitted from their past."[56] Despite the cultural creativity, polyvocal aesthetics, universalist imagination, and democratic ingenuity by which the Ukrainian revolutionaries made themselves known in its present moment, and despite all the energy spent on creating something that did not exist before, they also conjured up, as Marx phrased it, "the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language".[57] Should we conclude, in other words, that the emergence of democracy in Maidan was overtaken by Cossack myths and national cults of male heroism and martyrdom? If so, how much of this is attributed to Russian aggression, and how much to a radical nationalism internal to Ukraine? Or will the future show that Maidan's return to traditions was preparatory, a run-up to the realization by Ukraine's people of more adequate models of democracy?

The answer will largely depend on the meaning Ukraine's historians and historical institutions ascribe to the Maidan Revolution in the long run. Ten years after the event, the choice between universalist and nationalist conceptions of solidarity remains a real one. Although the war today necessarily favors a narrow interpretation of war-time patriotism, future generations are likely to reopen the case and return to the Maidan that was: the political emergence of democracy and the struggle over its meaning. ❎

Stefan Jonsson is Professor in Ethnic Studies and Head of the Division of Migration, Ethnicity and Society (REMESO) at Linköping University, Sweden.

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MAIDAN, MEMORY, AND MUSEUM

Relations between aesthetics and revolution, 2014–2021

Figure 1. Independence Square or *Maidan Nezalezhnosti*.

by **Galyna Kutsovska**

abstract

This paper delves into the ways in which art and cultural expressions have helped to preserve the memory of the Ukrainian Revolution and how the Maidan Museum contributes to this effort. Specifically, the study explores the significance of the Maidan event in Ukraine's national memory culture and how it is being integrated into the country's historical narrative as part of the decommunization and decolonization processes. Additionally, the text examines how the politics of memory, as expressed through the museum's performances and aesthetics, can serve as a tool of collective and national resistance. Ultimately, the article argues that the Maidan event is not fixed but rather dynamic, and Maidan memory plays a critical role in Ukraine's ongoing transition away from a shared historical past with Russia.

KEY WORDS: Historical event, politics of memory, sites of memory, museums, Maidan.

Note: Images by the author, unless stated otherwise.

The memorialization of the Maidan Revolution and Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred has been uncertain, despite efforts from the public, activists, authorities, and the government. Although the Museum and Memorial complex remained unbuilt until the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, over eight years after the Maidan events, the memory of the Ukrainian Revolution has for the past decade been actively used to unite the nation against Russian aggression. As will be discussed in this article, the events of Maidan have been incorporated into the national resistance narrative, inspiring Ukrainians to strive for independence and freedom. Maidan has become a symbol of triumph and martyrdom for Ukrainians and the global community in the current context of the war. The Maidan Revolution case brings attention to the ongoing conflicts and tensions regarding memory culture in post-Soviet Ukraine, where actors reactivate collective memories. This shared understanding of the past is a living memory that evolves through art and commemorative activities.

It is important to note that the Maidan Revolution was immediately followed by the annexation of Crimea and the military

conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014, which fundamentally affected the framework of Maidan memory. As a result, there have been ongoing efforts to reassess historical myths, memories, and symbols to reject the Soviet symbolic heritage and shared past. These efforts led to the adoption of the Ukrainian memory laws or decommunization laws in 2015, which sparked international debates around controversial historical figures and national heroes from Ukraine's dark past. Memory laws are often effectively adopted in transitioning societies, as a tool to define what is an acceptable past as a foundation for a national identity.[1] The decommunization laws of 2015 in Ukraine played a critical role in shaping the country's politics of memory. This included renaming over 50,000 streets, squares, cities, and other places with national-socialistic names, marking the rejection of communist symbols and the dismantling of the former Soviet colonial system.

As pointed out by Tatiana Zhurzhenko, the Maidan Revolution, military conflict in Donbas, and Russian aggression led to the implementation of memory laws in Ukraine.[2] These laws were a long-awaited measure aimed at delegitimizing Soviet historical influence and promoting the European integration of Ukraine, using the argument of securitization and modernization. Furthermore, Georgiy Kasianov suggested that the annexation of Crimea and the war in the east increased anti-Russian military propaganda, drawing parallels between the historical fights for independence in 1918 and the current events in Ukraine.[3] Another turning point that disturbed the memorialization of the Maidan event was Russia's full-scale invasion and war of aggression against Ukraine in 2022.

THE PRIMARY FOCUS of this study is to explore how the Maidan Revolution is being commemorated through art and cultural representations. To do so, we must examine the correlation between aesthetics and revolution. This investigation takes place within the framework of the continuous memorialization and institutionalization of the Revolution's legacy. In this process, Maidan is perceived as a place of triumph and honor for the nation at the state level. Yet, it also symbolizes a place of vulnerability and sorrow for the families of the demonstrators and heroes killed during and after the Revolution. The question arises: How can we memorialize an event that brings both trauma to individuals and pride to the community? Moreover, how can art projects and aesthetic expressions contribute to this process and keep this memory alive?

Furthermore, part of the analysis discusses how museums and memorials become actors in the national-building process, more specifically, how museums and memorials not only serve as *passive* sites of memorialization, preservation, and representation of past events but also as *actors* in shaping a particular historical narrative in the present discourse, as a vital living source

of mobilization and resistance of the people. It moreover asks, what position does a museum take in the construction of national consciousness and ideology of a community in times when its integrity and independence are violated? Finally, the text reflects upon the future legacy of the Maidan event and memory.

This paper explores the politics of memory and memory culture surrounding Maidan in Ukraine, particularly after the Revolution from 2014 until 2021. The study draws upon empirical materials from various sources, including authorities, museum workers, intellectuals, artists, public actors, and victims' families. The material under analysis includes commemoration practices introduced by the Maidan Museum, Ukrainian authorities, and the public, in Kyiv, as well as objects that constitute part of the politics of memory, mainly exhibitions and memorial campaigns, architectural competitions, and literary, artistic, and cultural initiatives created during and after Maidan. The Maidan events sparked many spontaneous and collective remembrance activities, motivated by patriotic expressions, the demand for collective unity, and the need for mourning. This study will demonstrate memorial events with a close connection to the official state and public commemoration of the Revolution on the Maidan Square in Kyiv and those directly organized by the Maidan Museum.

The article starts with an overview of Maidan's politics of memory and memory culture over the past decade at both state and public levels. The content covers a political review of governmental activities, descriptions of art projects, commemoration campaigns, public initiatives, cultural and historical practices, and aesthetic expressions created by artists and the public. The first part of the text also briefly analyzes the memory site Maidan and its monumental objects. The paper's second section discusses the Maidan Museum's development process. It covers various steps, including efforts to establish a state institution dedicated to preserving memories of the Revolution, design projects of architectural competitions, and activities related to the historicization and museumification of Maidan.[4] The section also highlights the collection of art objects and historical recordings, exhibitions, cultural and historical activities, and commemorative practices.

> **"MAIDAN AS AN EVENT APPEARS IN A TRANSFORMATIVE MOMENT IN TIME FOR UKRAINE AND EUROPE, EMERGING FROM A DIFFICULT PAST AND UNCERTAIN FUTURE, REFLECTING THE EVENT'S IMPACT ON HISTORICAL PROGRESS."**

Theoretical reflections

This study is theoretically inspired by Robin Wagner-Pacifici's conceptual model, which aims to analyze the "complex lived experiences of events in the making."[5] Through examining several historical events, she explores how these events erupt and develop over time, space, and political authority.[6] Each event is shaped by certain forms, propositions, and agencies, and is built around interactions and transformations.[7] Wagner-Pacifici is in-

terested in identifying the underlying causes, significances, and outcomes of events, as well as what is at stake in their formation and flow.

Wagner-Pacifici argues that many studies in the field of collective memory suggest that once an event is memorialized, it is considered finished.[8] This means that forms of the event, such as memorials and museums, are not elements of the event itself. However, her conceptualization of the "ongoingness" of events or their "eventness" challenges this idea. Wagner-Pacifici explains that the field of memory studies sees the phenomenon of memory dealing with historical events from a distance.[9] Her criticism is directed towards the belief that memory only deals with what happens in the aftermath of a historical event, as she instead argues that memory including its aesthetic expressions or forms – museums, monuments, and memorials – are "congealed moments of the events." Using the 9/11 tragedy as an example, Wagner-Pacifici claims that the 9/11 Memorial and Museum constitute a form of the event since it cannot be considered finished. Thus, according to Wagner-Pacifici, memory is a fluid part of the event as it lives on in restless modes. Consequently, to analyze or "grasp" the event, we must understand their "restlessness" and "eventness."

IN HER BOOK, Wagner-Pacifici focuses on the evolution of events. This includes the grounds and backgrounds, a point of rupture, forms of the event, and finally its fixation in a particular time and space or struggle with achieving that. Accordingly, events emerge and take shape from the ground to a rupture eventually resulting in a figuration.[10] Wagner-Pacifici highlights the nature of the fluidity and uncertainty of the events, and how their flow is primarily influenced by cultural and political contexts and prerequisites in a specific society. So, what does a rupture mean in the Maidan event, and how does this rupture affect the memory of the Revolution? The Maidan Revolution was followed by the annexation of Crimea and the military conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014. We can observe that the Maidan event was "interrupted" by the Russian war that affected the development of Maidan memory over a decade. The war became a rupture in the Maidan event-in-the-making, a sudden and turning point in the historical event of the Revolution, which made it restless.

In the theoretical considerations, Wagner-Pacifici refers to the work of scholars Paul Ricoeur and William Sewell. Ricoeur asks how events affect the present, interrupt or end epochs, and alter the perceptions of the future.[11] The same questions are relevant for understanding the Maidan event in Kyiv, including how it erupted and developed, and what expectations it created. Maidan as an event appears in a transformative moment in time for Ukraine and Europe, emerging from a difficult past and uncertain future, reflecting the event's impact on historical progress. And as the Maidan event intersects with other historical

> **"EVENTS ARE PRESERVED IN OBJECTS ACROSS TIME AND SPACE SUCH AS MUSEUMS, MEMORIALS, COMMEMORATIONS, SPEECHES, AND MEMORIAL STONES."**

events within time and space, it remains potentially disruptive. Wagner-Pacifici draws on William Sewell's concept of "eventful temporality," which explains the interactions of events and historical "articulations."[12] The Maidan event goes beyond one time and space, and its temporality is extended and not yet defined, as will be shown in the present study.

According to Wagner-Pacifici's research, studies on collective memory have not given enough attention to the variety of memory forms and their relationship to content.[13] She stresses that the meaning of collective memory is formed through the interplay between the content of historical events and forms used to preserve and publicly represent them.[14] Thus, the aesthetic forms used to express memory are essential in molding the collective memory and its interpretation. This will be seen from the research on Maidan memory, which shows that memorials and museums, as aesthetic expressions, have a similar methodological impact on transforming memory.

IN ONE OF HER previous studies, Wagner-Pacifici analyzes the creation, design, and reception of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial.[15] The Memorial was built in 1982 to honor the soldiers who lost their lives in the Vietnam War. The process of building the Memorial posed methodological challenges for creating new commemorative forms that remember the past with uncertainty and ambivalence, leaving room for multiple interpretations. Sociologist Amy Sodaro notes that some historical events, such as the Holocaust and the Vietnam War, made it difficult to find cultural forms to remember and represent difficult pasts.[16] The Vietnam Memorial was seen as a transition in memory studies that emerged in connection to the politics of regret.[17] Four decades later, the memory, memorial, and museum of the Maidan event have the potential to draw a new methodological line in the field of collective memory. They could initiate modern discussions over which aesthetic forms of memory can reflect the meanings and significance of such a multifaceted event as the Maidan Revolution and which values it will promote.

In line with Wagner-Pacifici's analysis, we are interested in *where* the Maidan event starts and ends, *who* the participants involved in the event are, if we are *in* or *out* of this event, and *how*.[18] Wagner-Pacifici's research contributes to the scholarship on the historical past and theorization of events, their continuity, forms, and transformations. Events are preserved in objects across time and space such as museums, memorials, commemorations, speeches, and memorial stones. Wagner-Pacifici considers them as "congealed moments of the events" themselves.[19] The collective memory of the event is embodied in cultural forms that assign new meanings and significance to it.[20] The present study of Maidan memory delves into comprehending its forms and meanings, and Wagner-Pacifici's analytical model

explains certain aspects of this process while also raising new questions for future research.

Pierre Nora believes that memory is not just a mere representation of the past; it is a dynamic phenomenon that continues to evolve and can be distorted in the present.[21] The memory of Maidan is an example of how the past can be reinterpreted and reconfigured, affecting the historical consciousness and national identity of a community for the future. Historian Hayden White emphasizes that the historical past is a construction made by selecting a set of events from the human past that occurred at specific times and places and fitting them into diachronically organized accounts of a group's self-constitution over time.[22] Therefore, memorialization is not just about preserving and conserving the past but also recollecting it through interpretation and filtering. This involves reconstructing different versions of what happened in the past, with the resulting version being a compromise that incorporates a new interpretation of the event. Once institutions and historical accounts sanction this interpretation, it becomes the dominant one that overshadows other versions of the event. When this dominant interpretation is materialized in aesthetic forms of memory, such as museums, buildings, and monuments, the past may appear complete, and memorialization is considered finished.

THIS PAPER LOOKS at the theoretical aspects of memorial museums and their role in commemorating the past.[23] According to Amy Sodaro, memorial museums serve as a means of dealing with the past that memorials are unable to achieve.[24] In her book, Sodaro explains that while memorials offer spaces for remembrance and active sites for participatory memory, museums shape the history of past events by collecting artifacts and preserving narratives. They also serve as public spaces that can build national identities and foster a sense of belonging. Modern museums have evolved to become more "experiential" by providing visitors with education and immersive experiences. Sodaro notes that memorial museums built at the site of atrocities create a universal space with broader meanings through architectural and exhibition design. The Maidan Museum, which is still in the process of formation, will need to examine these theoretical aspects, particularly in terms of its approach, exhibitionary strategies, memorial techniques, and forms. In a broader context, the Maidan study aims to theoretically comprehend the responses of museums during times of conflict and war, emphasizing their role as national cultural institutions that preserve cultural heritage and create historical narratives.[25]

Finally, there is a significant amount of scholarly literature available on memory politics in Ukraine.[26] The main themes surrounding memory culture since the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014 include memories of the Holodomor (Famine 1932–1933),[27] historical representations of the military units Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA),[28] and decommunization laws.[29] The contemporary memory politics in Ukraine constitutes part of the nation-building process and is accompanied by the process of de-Sovietization,[30] where the Maidan memory symbolizes a tran-

sition from the Soviet legacy to a democratic Ukrainian future.

Recent discussions on postcolonial Ukrainian culture have contributed to a wider understanding of the experiences of Ukrainian people under Soviet totalitarian and Russian imperialistic regimes.[31] This perspective is based on the belief that Ukrainian culture was oppressed and considered inferior by the Russian superior culture. Therefore, the postcolonial transition of the Ukrainian culture involves rejecting or dissociating itself from the Russian imperial heritage and Soviet myths. This process is also seen as part of anticolonial nationalism, where memory politics reject connections with imperial culture and establish new heroes and historical narratives that may lead to distortions of past events.[32]

The debates on understanding Ukraine's colonial experiences and "who colonized whom" were problematized in scholarly circles.[33] Some scholars considered the nationalization of Ukrainian history and culture, achieved through de-Sovietization or decommunization policies, as equivalent to the process of decolonization.[34] Therefore, the recent tendency toward decolonization of memory and historical narratives is a significant development in Ukrainian memory culture, particularly in light of the present anti-colonial opposition to the Soviet past. Theoretical debates on decolonization concerning the rejection of the Soviet legacy offer a deeper insight into the current memory politics in Ukraine. These circumstances influence the creation and progress of the collective memory of Maidan. Maidan has gradually become intertwined with the decolonization narratives, and its assessment cannot be separated from it.

So, regarding Maidan, ten years after the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014: What exactly was it, and what significance does it hold for Ukraine and the rest of the world today?

Maidan: Forum for popular assembly

As a central square, "maidan" historically served as a platform for civil discourse and democratic participation, where citizens can express their views and discuss social issues. Maidan square in Kyiv has played a significant role in Ukrainian history as a major site of the collective voice, a public space for *viche* and popular assembly.[35] After the Revolution of Granite in 1990 and Ukraine's independence in 1991, Maidan in Kyiv was officially named Maidan of Independence, also known as Independence Square or Maidan Nezalezhnosti.[36] It became a national location for public performances, demonstrations, and civic unity, where people can express their citizenship rights openly and democratically.[37] The square has been a center of significant political and social changes and cultural transformations for Ukrainians, with "Going out to the Maidan" signifying an expression of one's will and patriotic position.[38]

During the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014, also known as Euromaidan, Revolution of Dignity, or Maidan, people all over Ukraine gathered at maidans in Kyiv and other cities to protest and show their civic unity. In the aftermath of the Revolution, maidans became memory sites to commemorate the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred and the Revolution itself, symbolizing patriotism, nationalism, sacrifice, and the continuous fight for

independence. The choice of Maidan as an official site of the memory of the Revolution is in turn a symbolic act of national significance, demonstrating the recognition of the importance of popular assembly and its powerful impact on Ukrainian history, memory, nationalism, and national identity. Therefore, understanding and analyzing the phenomenon of Maidan is crucial for comprehending the past and viewing the future. Its memory needs to be preserved and represented.

From Memory to Memorialization

After the Maidan Revolution, there was a shared desire among Ukrainians to commemorate it. This period, also known as the "Euromaidan euphoria," highlighted the need for an official politics of memory, or memory culture. The memorialization process brought together participants from various social groups and locations, including authorities and state agents, cultural and historical institutions, artists, protesters, and even family and friends of those who lost their lives. While all were eager to honor Maidan and its victims and heroes, the commemoration practices also created alliances and divisions among the participants. They faced challenges in establishing a memory site that could address collective and individual grief and trauma without diminishing the national significance and dignity of the event. The following section describes some of these memorialization activities to shed light on the politics of memory of the Maidan immediately after the Revolution at the state and public levels and the challenges surrounding them.

IN RESPONSE TO consistent requests from relatives, the president of Ukraine posthumously awarded the Hero of Ukraine title to the renowned protesters in November 2014.[39] This was followed by the decision of the President to designate February 20 as the Day of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes.[40] The decree also recognized the significance of an annual day of commemoration and associated activities supported by the government, such as holding memorial ceremonies, erecting monumental art and memorial signs and plaques throughout the city, renaming printing sites, and establishing a museum. In February 2021, Verkhovna Rada and the Prime Minister recognized Maidan as "one of the key elements of the Ukrainian state formation and an exponent of the national idea and freedom".[41]

Starting in 2014, memorial ceremonies were held in central locations and squares in Ukrainian cities to honor the Heroes of Heavenly Hundred. In Kyiv, major memorialization activities took place at the memory site, Independence Square (figure 1), Independence Monument (figure 2), and the Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes (figures 3 & 4), which are all located in the territory of the future National Memorial to the Heavenly Hundred Heroes. In March of the same year, a wooden memorial Cross

was installed in memory of the Heroes (figure 5). A wooden memorial Chapel, built by the revolutionary participants themselves at the end of the events, and an honorary Stele (figure 6) with portraits of the perished protesters also stand next to the Cross. The site serves as a reminder of the Ukrainian Revolution and the sacrifices made by these heroes who were transformed into martyrs for their people's freedom.[42] It also reminds people of the ongoing war in Ukraine and the continued effort to fight the common enemy. The Cross, Chapel, and Stele became one of the main symbolic *lieux de mémoire* in Ukraine, where annual ceremonies are held and attended by authorities and the public. During these ceremonies, people lay flowers and wreaths, light icon lamps, give commemorative speeches, and offer prayers to honor the Heroes of Heavenly Hundred and soldiers protecting Ukraine in the ongoing war against Russia.[43]

ON DECEMBER 1, 2020, a Bell of Dignity was placed next to the Stele (figure 7). The Bell features an inscription, "Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred!". This project was carried out at the President's order, with the joint efforts of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, the Maidan Museum, and the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States. The Bell was installed to honor the Heavenly Hundred Heroes and soldiers who have fought for the independence and freedom of Ukraine since 2014. The families of the fallen Maidan activists were the first to ring the Bell and pay tribute to their loved ones. Since then, the Bell has become an essential part of the commemorative elements of Maidan. On February 20, the Bell is usually heard 107 times. Furthermore, on the birthday of each Heavenly Hundred Hero, their portrait is displayed, and the Bell is rung as many times as their age. According to Ihor Poshyvailo, the director of the Maidan Museum, "The Bell of the Heavenly Hundred will reinforce our national unity and strength, demonstrating our readiness to continue the struggle for our freedom, dignity, and future. The Bell is a unique ceremonial and symbolic item that will allow visitors to this memorial space to honor the memory of the fallen not only by laying flowers and lighting candles but also by transmitting a powerful message to them through time and space." [44] This Bell signifies both commemoration and mourning, as well as a call to victory and celebration that unites people from the past and present against a common enemy, which is critical in the context of the ongoing war. At the opening ceremony, Nataliia Boikiv, head of the Kyiv public organization Family of Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred, stated, "Ukraine has shed enough tears, but it still needs to triumph."[45]

Remembering the events of Maidan has remained an essential aspect of state politics, even after the full-scale invasion in 2022.

> **"MAIDAN SQUARE IN KYIV HAS PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN UKRAINIAN HISTORY AS A MAJOR SITE OF THE COLLECTIVE VOICE, A PUBLIC SPACE FOR VICHE AND POPULAR ASSEMBLY."**

On the ninth anniversary of the Maidan Revolution and the Day of the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred on February 20, 2023, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy and First Lady Olena Zelenska paid tribute to the activists who lost their lives during the protests. They visited the Maidan site of memory, lit grave candles at the memorial Cross, and rang the Bell of Dignity.

State initiatives to honor the memory of Maidan were not limited to the capital. In multiple cities across Ukraine, municipalities and state agents have renamed various sites in tribute to Maidan, such as squares named after the Heroes. Between 2014 and 2016, official monuments were erected nationwide, with the tallest one, four meters high, constructed in Mykolaiv. In 2014 and 2015, the National Bank of Ukraine issued coins and memorial medals named after the Maidan Revolution and Heavenly Hundred. Additionally, a memorial complex was built in the town of Borshchiv, and the street on which it is located was named The Alley of the Heroes by the city council.

As social and cultural actors, state museums have also played a significant role in memorializing the event. For example, after the Revolution, museums such as the Ivan Honchar Museum, the National Centre of Folk Culture, the National Art Museum of Ukraine, and the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War in Kyiv created exhibitions dedicated to Maidan. In addition, the first Museums of the Heroes of Heavenly Hundred and the Revolution of Dignity and Freedom were established in Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil, respectively, in 2015 and 2016.

THE MEMORY OF Maidan has also gained recognition abroad through activities supported by Ukrainian diaspora members and local authorities. For example, the first monument to the Revolution was unveiled in Bloomingdale, US in 2015; a monument to the Heroes was also constructed in Braga (Portugal) in 2016; and 107 wooden memorial crosses depicting the Heroes were installed in Prague (Czech Republic).

Artists and intellectuals recognized the significance of the memory and adoption of the transformative event with thousands of books, poems, and songs glorifying the new era of cultural possibilities. Tetiana Domashenko wrote a religious poem called "Heavenly Hundred of Maidan Warriors" (*Nebesna Sotnia Voiniv Maidanu*) in honor of the fallen protesters, "who laid their soul and body for the Freedom." Her poem transformed the memory of the protesters and victims into the Heavenly Hundred Heroes and became integrated into the core of Maidan's memorialization. Other artists, such as Oksana Maksymyshyn-Korabel, wrote a poem, "Dear Mother, Don't Cry" (*Mamo, Ne Plach*), which later became a song by Tiana Roz. Artists expressed their solidarity and support through concerts all over the country, including the band *Tartak*'s song "Severe Winter" (*Liuta Zyma*), band BoomBox and Eurovision winner Jamala's "Storm" (*Zlyva*), Mad Heads' "Young Blood," and Yaroslav Zlonkevych and Iryna Chuiko's "Heroes Do Not Die!". In 2019, the Ukrainian band TNMK released "The History of Ukraine in 5 Minutes", a song that canonizes the main historical events of the independent Ukrainian state: Holodomor (Famine of 1932–1933), Maidan, the annexation of Crimea, and
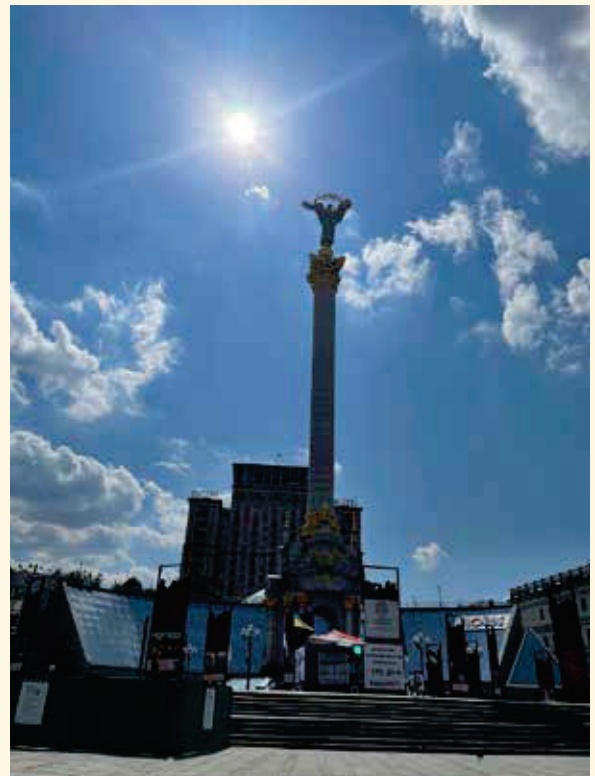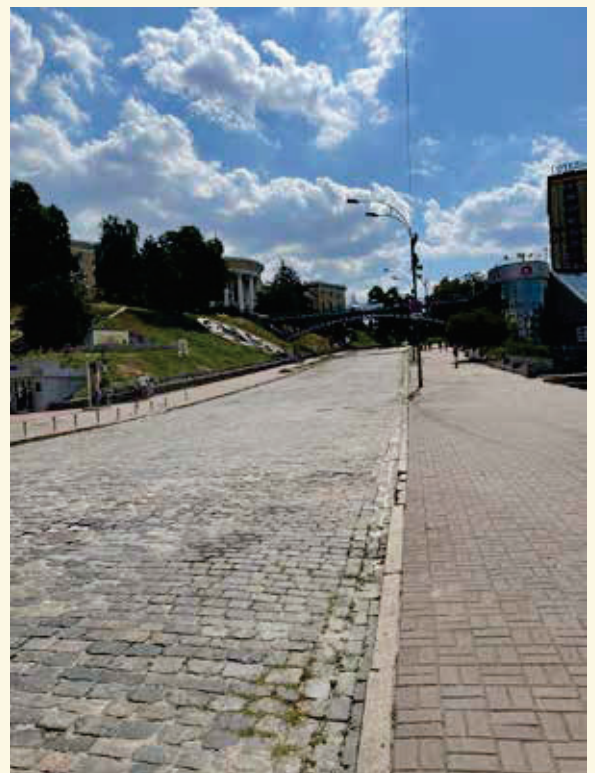

Figure 2. Independence Monument.

Figure 3. Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes.

Figure 4. Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes.

Figure 5. Memorial Cross in Memory of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes.

"ON THE BIRTHDAY OF EACH HEAVENLY HUNDRED HERO, THEIR PORTRAIT IS DISPLAYED, AND THE BELL IS RUNG AS MANY TIMES AS THEIR AGE."

military actions in Donbas. Multiple public exhibitions were opened, including the photo exhibition "Women of Maidan" by international photographers at Independence Square in 2014, and the "Maidan: Space of the Art" by the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture design students in Kyiv and Odesa in 2018.

In tandem with such institutional and artistic initiatives, the public has actively preserved and memorialized Maidan and its Heroes. After February 20, 2014, Instytutska Street in Kyiv became a gathering place for those who wanted to honor Maidan. The street later became the Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes, where people left flowers, candles, and photos of the victims to pay their respects to Maidan and its activists. Over the last decade, public memory has continued to evolve (as represented in figures 8, 9, and 10). Commemorative practices, including creating improvised memorials and plaques and displaying artifacts, have transformed the Alley into a living memorial site decorated with art objects. Friends, family members, and comrades of fallen soldiers come to the Alley to leave flowers, candles, pictures, poems, and other memory bearers. The Alley has been transformed into a site with therapeutic qualities where commemoration is converted to healing individual and collective grief and trauma. This illustrates that the Alley, as a living memorial, symbolizes the public commitment to remember and honor the fallen heroes of Maidan and other battles for Ukraine. It also shows that the memory of Maidan is still in the process of formation.

From Memorialization to the Museum and Memorial

In the previous section, I described the broad context of political, literary, artistic, and cultural initiatives that all sought to situate the Maidan Revolution in public memory. Let me now move on to what soon became the central state institution in efforts to commemorate the victory and victims of Maidan and script its place in official Ukrainian history.

In January 2016, the Ukrainian government initiated a new organization to create a centralized institution devoted to Maidan memory, which in April became a national institution.[46] The long name of the new institution reflects the many expectations placed on it: The National Memorial to the Heavenly Hundred Heroes and the Revolution of Dignity Museum. The short form is simply the Maidan Museum. It is a realization of an initiative that emerged during the Revolution.

Ihor Poshyvailo, the Director of the Maidan Museum, explained in an interview with *New Eastern Europe* on September

4, 2020, that the idea to form a museum was prompted by the "dictatorial laws" issued on January 16, 2014, which turned the peaceful protest into a violent revolution. Museum professionals started to record witness accounts and collect objects as the revolutionary process unfolded. In September 2014, the activist group behind the Maidan Museum merged its operations with the Freedom Museum (or Museum of Liberty) to form a joint initiative, the Maidan Museum/Freedom Museum.

THE MAIDAN MUSEUM consists of three components related to Maidan: a memorial dedicated to the victims, a museum, and an educational center called the Freedom House.[47] The narrative of the Museum will be the history of the struggle of the Ukrainians for human rights, statehood, dignity, and future, hence also the tripartite ambition. The memorial complex will represent a public space to honor and remember, and at the same time, it will serve as a platform for a dialogue to make memory vocal rather than silent. The next component is the museum, which will realize its commemorative and educational mission through relevant programs and permanent and temporary exhibitions. Finally, the last component, Freedom House, is planned to be a democratic forum of open discussions for rethinking history and memorial and post-traumatic activities. The targeted audiences consist of the young generation of Ukrainians, teachers, researchers, intellectuals, museum specialists, artists, writers, journalists, and mass media representatives, not to forget the demonstrators and their families, as well as soldiers fighting for Ukraine.

To avoid displaying the Maidan Revolution through a binary story about "winners and losers," the Museum intends to expose different dimensions and relations towards the event to make the solidarity that existed during the Maidan Revolution inspire both remembrance and future aspirations. Through Maidan stories, the institution also wants to represent previous civil protest movements in the nation's past, narrating the history of the Ukrainians toward their freedom and independence. According to Poshyvailo, "the Maidan Museum should narrate not only about the Revolution of Dignity, but about the phenomenon of freedom in general."[48] Therefore, the main narrative will continue toward the future rather than trying to consolidate a specific representation of the past. In this way, the Museum construes itself as an innovative platform with the mission to serve the public, not the authorities.[49]

AS CAN BE SEEN, the initial idea of documenting and representing the event was enriched by plans to establish a platform for knowledge sharing, inclusive dialogues, promotion of human rights and democracy, as well as the presentation of Ukrainian collective identity and comprehension of the history of the national fight for freedom. By establishing and presenting the memory of the different events that took place during Maidan, the Museum intends to create a space for representing historical struggles by Ukrainians for their freedoms, dignity, and national independence.

How is this agenda to be accomplished? As we have seen, the

Figure 6. Honorary Stele with portraits.

Figure 7. Bell of Dignity.

Figure 8. Public Living Memorial.

Figure 9. Public Living Memorial.

Figure 10. Public Living Memorial.

Maidan Museum intends to be an institution that simultaneously expresses the spirit of democracy in some universal and inclusive sense and the spirit of national Ukrainian resistance against a common enemy. But these aspirations are more complicated. How should it negotiate between the open and universal character of the Maidan Revolution and the urgent legacy of the Revolution according to which collective memory should be mobilized by the Ukrainian nation in its struggle against Russia? The Museum partly intends to resolve these dilemmas by foregrounding artworks and artistic practices. Art projects served as an aesthetic form of non-violent participation during the Maidan events. They represented cultural and national expressions of the resistance and its hopes for a community based on democratic values of solidarity. Art was central to the Maidan event and, consequently, will be central to the Museum. Art manifested the Revolution but also helped to create a community of protesters. The Museum will be a projective reality that bears a historical memory which potentially makes the memorialized objects alive. The Museum wants to use art objects and aesthetic expressions in permanent and temporary exhibitions. For instance, a central position in the Museum will be devoted to the *Yolka*, the famous New Year's tree, weighing 40 tons and measuring 30 meters, which became a symbol of Maidan. Demonstrators transformed the metal frames of the tree into a collective art object, incorporating paintings, slogans, banners, and other artworks created by the protesters. In the future Museum, this spontaneous popular art will illustrate public participation in the Revolution while simultaneously encapsulating and preserving the collective memory of the event.

IN THIS CONTEXT, the Museum has managed to gather an impressive archival collection: more than four thousand artifacts, including oral history (circa five hundred audio and video interviews); documentation; books; protestors' garments and weapons; shields; air guns; a crushed car of the so-called "automaidan"; belongings of perished protesters; barricades; posters; leaflets; flags; a topographical collection (made by the mapmaker Dmytro Vortman); songs; poems; fiction; ornamental and fine arts; the marble sculpture *New Ukraine* by French artist Roti; a collection of photographs and video recordings, including those by the documentary filmmakers' association Babylon'13; a series of picturesque canvases *Ukraine of Dream* and *Faith in the Future of Ukraine* (dimensions 200x1000) that were painted during the protests by people in Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk; three scarecrows symbolizing guardians of the Mykhalivskyi outpost of Maidan; a catapult; the famous piano of "Piano Extremist"; as well as numerous art works, including Ukrainian artist Oleksii Beliusenko's *Diary of an Extremist*. The Museum has also collected artifacts from other mass protests in Ukraine, such as the Orange Revolution and the Revolution on Granite. Following the annexation of Crimea and armed conflicts in eastern Ukraine, the Museum also collected artifacts related to these events. Among others, those include the personal belongings of the soldiers (clothes, shoes, diaries, military equipment) and art projects created in the war zone. The collections continuously expand and

extend. As of 2021, most of the Museum holdings were preserved in institutional storage and partner museums in Kyiv.

TO ACCOMPLISH its complicated balancing act – remaining truthful to the historical past of the Revolution and at the same time responding to the patriotic expectations of the present – the Maidan Museum also draws inspiration and methods from a group of well-known institutions that seek to combine historical commemoration, recognition of the victims, and visions for democratic future. As explained by Poshyvailo, one of them is the European Solidarity Center in Gdansk, Poland, representing the trade union-based civil rights movement *Solidarnost*. Another inspiration is the Warsaw Uprising Museum, which commemorates the Polish underground resistance in 1944 against Nazi occupation symbolizing Polish identity and fight for independence. Two institutions in the USA are also important: the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, distinguished by its use of modern technologies and the symbolism of its building, and the 9/11 Memorial, which memorizes traumatic dimensions of the recent past, referring to the memory challenges of the Maidan Museum.[50]

Moreover, in cooperation with international Western museum experts, such as colleagues from the Gdansk European Solidarity Centre, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC, the Maidan Memorial Complex in Kyiv intends to use the new methods of representing history and commemorating the event, as we shall see below. Some ideas are also motivated by well-known and successful projects memorializing historical events such as the Holocaust and World War II.

Ultimately, this will be a new museum adapted to the current needs of Ukrainian society, unlike its predecessors under the Soviet period, which were sites of authority and propaganda rather than mutuality.[51] While the Maidan Museum seeks to avoid such an authoritarian interpellation, it remains to be seen whether the new Memorial Complex will be able to represent different perspectives on the Revolution and other events in Ukrainian history and whether its narrative will be open and inclusive. At the intersection of conflicting legacies and contradictory expectations, the Museum is engaged in a struggle over the Soviet legacy while at the same time seeking to develop a democratic and inclusive collective memory in Ukrainian society. In this context, Maidan memory symbolizes the destruction of the country's totalitarian past. Yet, this past is still strongly present in Ukraine to the extent that it directly affects its future.

Logo as a vision of the Maidan Museum

The museum's logo (figure 15), created by the artist Mykola Honchar, embodies the central vision of the institution. It symbolizes Maidan as a site of political, social, and cultural transformations. The logo, hence, offers a concise summary of the official self-

> **"ART PROJECTS SERVED AS AN AESTHETIC FORM OF NON-VIOLENT PARTICIPATION DURING THE MAIDAN EVENTS."**

understanding and spirit of the Ukrainian Revolution, as perceived by those responsible for its preservation and legacy. Still, the logo not only manifests the meanings of the Maidan but also the complexities and conflicts inherent in its memorialization. Therefore, we can infer that the logo encapsulates the primary uncertainties surrounding the creation of the Maidan Museum and the establishment of its memory.[52]

The logo features a beautiful design of interlocking circles with a square in the center to represent the historic location, Maidan Square. Figuratively, the circle used in the logo holds symbolic and spiritual significance. It represents fate and the cyclical or revolutionary nature of history. Being a perfect sphere, it also symbolizes totality, infinity, and eternity. Unlike other shapes, circles have no angles, so they signify solidarity and safety that unite people. Furthermore, as a wheel, a circle is associated with the temporality of a life cycle, creating a structured space for society to evolve. It implies a sense of mystery, an idea of creation from nothing to everything, and mirrors the universe.[53] In architecture, symbols and images reflect people's cultural and spiritual needs and a circle symbolizes power.[54] Each circle is drawn around a fixed point, a sacred center that generates and organizes a community space. Independence Square or Maidan Nezalezhnosti serves as a center of historical revolutionary events essential in establishing Ukrainian independence. It is a temple or pantheon where civil society is formed, standing as a democratic laboratory of civic activism and collaboration between a museum and citizens.

INITIALLY, THE MUSEUM views five symbolic meanings behind the logo: the Independence Monument, a target, a drop in the ocean, a focal point or epicenter, and from sharp angles to mutual understanding.

First, the logo features Maidan Square with the Monument of Independence placed at its heart. The monument represents an empire, an old epoch of the independent but not genuinely free Ukraine. The five red circles surrounding a rectangle, the monument, symbolize the protesters who gathered around it to defend the values of independence, freedom, and democracy. We can observe that the rectangle disrupts the flow of the five circles, hindering the collective power of the revolutionary and democratic movements. Each circle closer to the rectangle adapts to it, acquiring slight angles on the sides, representing Ukraine's oppressive period when the state was adjusting to the Soviet regime. At this stage, the Monument of Independence needs to be retransformed, which is planned according to the architectural design described below. This decision will launch a new era of freedom for the Ukrainian nation, which no longer needs a monument that embodies the power and authority of the empire.

Second, as a spotter, the logo emphasizes that protesters became gun targets of the totalitarian regime, demonstrating the

courage and sacrifice they had to make to protect their independence and freedom. At the same time, it emphasizes that Maidan was an inclusive shooting gallery where everyone became a target, regardless of gender, age, class, language, religion, or nationality. The target in the logo reminds us of the threats to democracy that appeared during Maidan and other historical struggles and tells the stories of the victims who were defenseless and exposed in front of firearms, consciously sacrificed for national freedom.

Third, the logo depicts a famous image of the Revolution, a "drop in the ocean."[55] It is a reminder that a revolution consists of the power of individuals coming together to create a global impact. Each member of the community is a vital drop, contributing to the impetuous wave (circle) that moves the ocean toward the target. The slogan "I am a drop in the ocean" acquired a new powerful meaning during the Revolution motivating participants to not be intimidated by the state's authority, but to realize that every individual matter because it is about collective *us*. This drop is about micro heroism, which makes each individual a hero and a driving force in a revolution. Thus, the logo symbolizes the rebirth of Ukrainian identity and the strength of the Ukrainian people as a nation.

Finally, the logo indicates that a museum and memorial complex will be built at the core of Maidan Square to honor the Maidan Revolution. It will stand at the heart of the historical events, making it an epicenter of the transformation and revival of the Ukrainian society and state, where Maidan is historically a central point of change and renewal. As a symbol of political and social transformations, the Museum will attempt to come from the sharp angles of the square to a mutual understanding of the flowing circles. Decisions made by the people in the center, Maidan, are spread across the country via circles of the *viche* and popular assembly. According to Jason Frank, "Popular assemblies are privileged sites of democratic representation because they at once claim to represent the people while signaling the material plenitude beyond any representational claim... Assemblies manifest that which escapes representational capture; they rend a tear in the established representational space of appearance and draw their power from tarrying with the ineffability and resistant materiality of the popular will."[56]

Architectural competitions

As the previous sections showed, public discussions on memorializing Maidan began immediately after the Revolution. There was a collective demand to define a concept, idea, and vision behind the memorialization and to determine how to transform the city center's public space into a memory site.

In April 2014, the preparatory stage of the open competition *Terra Dignitas* [Territory of Dignity] for the best idea for the memorial site to the Heavenly Hundred Heroes was organized by the Kyiv state municipalities and the public.[57] Accordingly, the

Maidan Museum was supposed to become the place for the development of Ukrainian democracy and the shaping of the nation. The competition was seen as an example of the "spatial utopian model" of the new Ukrainian society.[58] The Jury, led by a Swiss architect, Carl Fingerhuth, consisted of multidisciplinary specialists from different countries. A total of 478 applications from 40 countries, and 149 projects from 13 countries, were submitted.

The contest comprised four nominations: the Public Space of Maidan and Kyiv's City Core, Memorialization of the Revolution of Dignity and Commemoration of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes, the International Cultural Center "Ukrainian House on the European Square," and The Multifunctional Museum Complex "Museum of Freedom/Museum of Maidan." Public voting was conducted from April to May 2015 and all projects were displayed on Maidan Square from May to June 2015. The International Jury announced the winning projects for each nomination on June 16.

LET ME LOOK more closely at some aesthetic forms and ideas mobilized in this contest to commemorate the Revolution. The first nomination called for proposals that reflected the values of the Revolution for public space in the center of Kyiv. The project should reflect the sense of brotherhood and unity that society requires regularly, particularly in crisis periods. At the same time, the project should avoid excessive ideas of museumification, complex traffic and transportation solutions, advertisements, and commercial buildings that currently litter the space. Ukrainian architect Nataliya Kondel-Perminova emphasized that the area's character was reorganized in 2001 following popular movements such as the Revolution of Granite and "Ukraine without Kuchma." [59] As a result of the government's attempts to diminish the collective power of the *viche* or popular assembly of the Maidan, the area was intentionally transformed according to a spatial logic of disintegration rather than unification. *The Terra Dignitas* project aimed to restore the site from a busy and tense city center into an inclusive human space with prominence given to a path of memory of the revolution that would honor its Heroes. The Jury appreciated spatial, inclusive, and European-oriented ideas that minimized traffic, movement, and noise, providing a sense of deep tranquility and access to memory spaces. The winner was a project by a Taiwanese group of architects with the slogan "*Sous les pavés, la forêt*" [under the pavement, the forest], referring to a famous tagline of the May 68 uprising in Paris. The project offered to remove the Monument of Independence as an imperial symbol incompatible with democratic space and, instead, to transform the Kyiv city center into a public park for mass gatherings and cultural events.

In the second nomination of the competition, devoted to commemorating the Revolution and its Heroes, many projects aimed to connect the sorrow of loss with the hope for a better future. The natural process of stratigraphy inspired the winning

> **"THE LOGO SYMBOLIZES THE REBIRTH OF UKRAINIAN IDENTITY AND THE STRENGTH OF THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE AS A NATION."**

Figure 11. The winning design of the Museum.

ILLUSTRATION: © KLEIHUES + KLEIHUES ARCHITEKTEN

Figure 12. Perspective view of the winning Museum

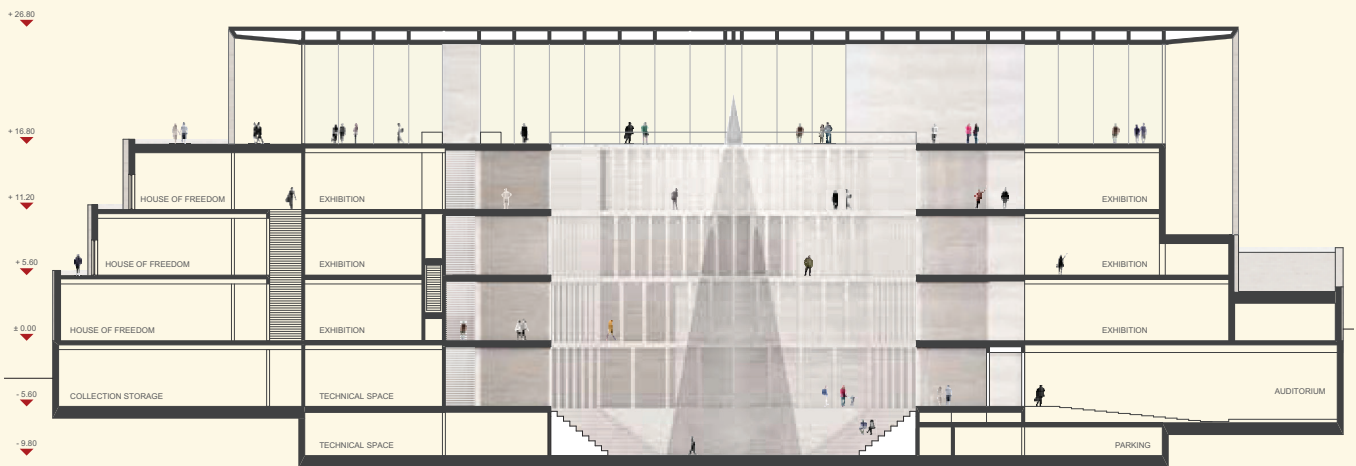ILLUSTRATION: © KLEIHUES + KLEIHUES ARCHITEKTEN

Figure 13. Plan of the winning Museum.

ILLUSTRATION: © KLEIHUES + KLEIHUES ARCHITEKTEN

Italian project. The architects associated collective memory with the natural life of a tree. The tree's heartwood tells its story, and as it grows, new rings are added to the trunk. Symbolically, these rings would spread across the site of memory and the city center, creating a path of memory that connects existing historical elements with the new values formed by recent collective memory. Instytutska Street would be transformed into a forest, each tree having its own identity and dignity, coming together to create a living memorial. This concept would require regular care from the community, helping future generations understand the past and the present. It would teach the public that history should not only be preserved but shaped for a better future. The memorial would not be associated with death, like a cemetery, or fear but viewed as a life and inspiration. Planting trees is a common commemoration practice that symbolizes a shift from victim to martyr. Sometimes, a separate tree is planted in memory of each victim, while in other cases, one tree embodies a group. In the case of the Maidan Memorial Complex, trees planted in the name of the Heroes symbolize a revival of those who died in re-

Figure 14. The winning design of the Memorial by MIstudio.

ILLUSTRATION: MISTUDIO

Figure 15. Logo of the Maidan Museum.

Figure 16. Site of the future Maidan Museum and Memorial Complex.

Figure 17. Information Panels on the Site of the future Museum and Memorial Complex.

sistance and struggle for the independence and freedom of their nation.

The third part of the competition focused on rethinking the Soviet legacy and replacing the former Lenin Museum. The winning Ukrainian project aimed to create a multipurpose space for social and cultural activities connecting Ukraine with Europe and an artistic hub that would showcase the values of European civilization. As for the fourth part, many proposals suggested that the future museum be located in the Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes. The Jury prioritized ideas that respected the existing urban environment and decided not to award first and second prizes for this nomination. Instead, the third prize was granted to two architectural groups, from Ireland and Russia.

ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS typically evaluate and determine the most suitable aesthetic expressions for representing an event. In this way, art and culture preserve the event of the revolution and canonize its memory. The *Terra Dignitas* competition aimed at searching for the main principles of memorialization and significant sites to locate the museum and memorial. It paved the way for an international architectural competition for the best project proposal regarding a memorial and museum, announced by the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine in October 2017.[60] The aim of this architectural competition was, in turn, to engage talented national and international architects to participate in developing the future memorial complex and choose the best project proposal. The competition was held in 2017–2018 and consisted of memorial and museum nominations. Both nominations were expected to be interactive and developed within an integrated project. The contest attracted 78 applications from 49 countries, 149 projects, 10,000 participants in a popular election, and winners from seven countries. The evaluation was done by an international jury of architects, writers, artists, historians, and museum specialists from five countries, the Minister of Culture of Ukraine, and the director of the Memorial Complex. The competition's democratic and inclusive nature was shown through various stages of discussions with the general audience and families of the Heroes. An exhibition in the House of Architects in Kyiv displayed all museum projects from both parts of the competition from July 13 to August 13, 2018. Eventually, President Petro Poroshenko presented the prizewinners with each nomination from the competition.

The Ukrainian-Dutch architectural bureau MIstudio based in Lviv won the Memorial nomination (figure 14). The project stood out for its focus on spatial and temporal unity and continuity, offering a space for contemplation and honoring. The area was divided into two zones: a transition part for memory and trauma and another part through the park that gave a feeling of relief, beauty, hope, and belief for a better future. The German architectural bureau Kleihues + Kleihues Gesellschaft von Architekten mbH won the Museum nomination (figure 11–13). This project transformed the museum into the Ukrainian Acropolis, from where one can observe the panorama of Maidan Nezalezhnost and Kyiv. This building will integrate well into the historical context of Maidan and create a center of freedom and dignity.

Making or unmaking the museum and memorial

The architectural competitions demonstrated the timeliness of the Maidan event in Europe and beyond. The contests resulted in project proposals for the Museum and Memorial Complex that will be located at the exact site where the Revolution occurred in Kyiv – the Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes.[61] This location holds great significance for the nation as a symbolic place of remembrance. A bridge will border the memorial space, outlining the complex and park areas, while a path will connect the museum and the memorial. Visitors will be guided along this path to see Maidan Square and the city before entering the building and ultimately proceeding to the memorial garden.

The central component of the Complex, connecting its various parts, will be a zigzag pathway that ascends from Institutskaya Street, leading from the Memorial to the Museum itself, and the Freedom House. This path symbolizes the struggles the Ukrainian people have faced in achieving their freedom and independence over numerous historical protests. The memorial place will thus be devoted to the Maidan event and ascribe a more comprehensive national symbolic meaning that refers to Ukrainian history. At the beginning of this path, a memorial stela in the shape of an arch will be erected, with stone slabs containing the names of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes. One hundred trees will be planted along the path, symbolizing the Heroes and embodying the choices made by the protesters as subjects and agents of the Revolution. The trees will also shape a memorial alley that ends in a wooden chapel, providing a space for silence. The path will culminate in the garden.

The museum building on a hill will symbolize the triumph of good forces over evil ones. The building's construction will feature sparse horizontal lines and open blocks of windows that allow natural daylight to illuminate the building. It will balance preservation and representation, resembling Greek and Roman Pantheons, which people once visited to celebrate the Gods and their dignity. The construction of the Maidan Museum will integrate into the surrounding urban context of the capital city center, similar to the Acropolis Museum in Athens. Therefore, the Museum will be a site where memory and history are spatialized,[62] highlighting modern tendencies in memory studies and museology.

The memorial complex's structure is planned according to three lines. The first line, Memorial to the Heroes – the territory of memory – contains the chapel, the square, the alley (a place of death but also a "river of memory"), the various monuments to the Heroes and participants of the revolution, an information and educational center, a memorial exposition, as well as office and administrative premises. The second line, the Maidan Muse-

um, is devised as a modern space with multimedia expositions, interactive experiences, and premises for research. This part of the complex will house a space for permanent and temporary exhibitions, archives, a scientific library, a children's museum, research and methodological centers, and administrative offices. The permanent exhibition will showcase objects from the museum collections telling the stories of the Ukrainian movements for independence and freedom in the 20th and 21st centuries, with a focus on the Maidan Revolution. It will also include histories of similar events worldwide using related artifacts. The exhibition will be structured thematically rather than chronologically. The third line is Freedom House – a cultural and educational center for generating and interacting new knowledge, having discussions, sharing opinions and activating initiatives and creativity. It will be a working and educational space for organizing workshops, research activities, meetings, and events.

> **"THIS PROJECT TRANSFORMED THE MUSEUM INTO THE UKRAINIAN ACROPOLIS, FROM WHERE ONE CAN OBSERVE THE PANORAMA OF MAIDAN NEZALEZHNOSTI AND KYIV."**

However, ten years after the Maidan Revolution, it is still uncertain what will become of the grand plan for the Memorial and Museum Complex. The Maidan Museum has been a state institution since 2016, but the physical facilities have yet to be built. Despite an approved design and allocated land on the site of the Revolution, as of 2021, construction has been delayed due to ongoing criminal investigations related to the shootings that killed many demonstrators. Additionally, there were conflicting opinions on how to remember the Revolution, with some families of the deceased Heroes opposing the construction of the Museum to preserve the site of the mass shootings.

FOLLOWING THE architectural competitions and the approval of a design, the Kyiv State Council decided in March 2018 to allocate territory for the construction of the complex on the site of the events, mainly on Maidan Square and the Alley.[63] However, the General Prosecutor issued letters during 2018–2019 postponing construction due to the ongoing investigations, which froze the development until the end of 2019.[64] As a result, the territory was seized and building works were not allowed. Additionally, some families of the Heroes and several Ukrainian architects wrote an open letter addressed to the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, the Institute of National Remembrance, and the Maidan Museum, opposing the realization of the project that would destroy the landscape of the places of mass shootings.[65] In other words, they do not want the memorial complex to be built on the site of killings. In February 2021, on the Day of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy assured that design and construction work on the Museum would begin that year.[66] The Verkhovna Rada and Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted a decree and the plan for a series of measures to commemorate the Revolution between 2021–2025, which included the actual construction and functioning of the Memorial

Figure 18. The Maidan Museum exhibition *Toward Freedom!* at the Infocenter demonstrating news and media extracts, megaphone, Ukrainian flag, and audio stories.

Figure 19. The Museum Infocenter.

Figure 20. Map of the Maidan square in the Museum Infocenter.

"TEN YEARS AFTER THE MAIDAN REVOLUTION, IT IS STILL UNCERTAIN WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GRAND PLAN FOR THE MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM COMPLEX."

and Museum.[67] However, construction had not begun before the full-scale invasion in February 2022, and will probably not begin until Russian aggression is over. As of summer 2021, the future site of the Museum on the Alley was surrounded by markers and supported by information panels in Ukrainian and English describing the Museum and Memorial Complex project (figures 16 and 17).[68]

Sociologist Elżbieta Olzacka emphasized that nowadays museums are laboratories of civic activism and community engagement, where exhibitions are decisive in constructing national community and identity.[69] The narrative of museum exhibitions shapes national bonds and unites a diverse and multicultural society of Ukraine that resists a common enemy.[70] Through exhibitions, a museum communicates with the audience and mediates the representation of the event and its memory. Without permanent facilities for its operations, the Maidan Museum has still been able to realize its aims through numerous exhibitions and activities in different locations, including the Ukrainian House and the Trade Unions Building (*Budynok Profspilok*) on Maidan Square in Kyiv.

THE INFORMATION and Exhibition Center of Maidan Museum (Infocenter) is located on the first two floors of the Trade Unions Building. The first floor presents a temporary exhibition, *Toward Freedom!* (*Nazustrich Svobodi*), that offers the history of the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014 chronologically. This installation includes news and media extracts that show the preconditions and political climate in 2010–2013 leading up to the Revolution. Images from the demonstrations, accompanied by explanatory texts in Ukrainian and English with chronicles of phases of the Revolution, illustrate the realities of Maidan. Artifacts like a megaphone and a Ukrainian flag, audio stories, and memories of Maidan participants are also displayed (figure 18). The second floor of the Infocenter offers a multifunctional space for museum-related activities, such as public presentations, conferences, and movies (figure 19). This space also features a stylized map of Maidan (figure 20) with key events of the Revolution and relevant information boards in Ukrainian and English connected to the map sites. The map describes what happened on a particular street or by a specific building during Maidan. It allows visitors to witness past events as if they were unfolding in the present and see how they are connected to the city's geography.

Another example of the Museum's activities is a temporary outdoor exhibition, *Century of Undefeated*, installed by the Memorial Complex at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti in 2021 (figure 21).

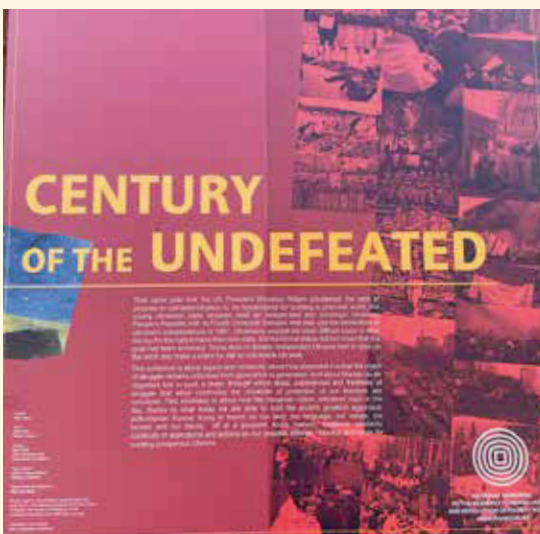Figure 21. Outdoor exhibition "Century of the Undefeated" at the Maidan.

Figure 22 (left). Outdoor exhibition "Century of the Undefeated".
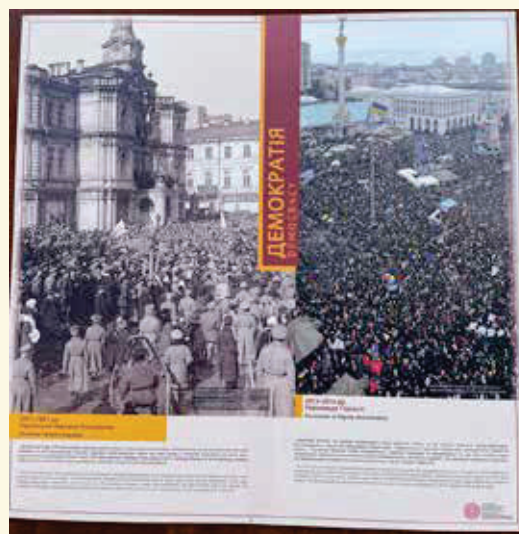
Figure 23 (right). The "Century of the Undefeated" exhibition board illustrates the importance of the *viche*, collective protests and demonstrations on maidans a century apart.

Figure 24. The "Century of the Undefeated" exhibition board displays the historical demolition of imperial symbols in 1917–1922 and 2013–2014, as part of the decolonization and decommunization processes.

Figure 25. The "Century of the Undefeated" exhibition board demonstrates how the slogan "Glory to Ukraine!" was used by the UPA in 1942–1956 and during the Euromaidan.

The exhibition features extensive information boards in Ukrainian and English. The English description of the exhibit highlights its purpose:

"This exhibition is about legacy and continuity. It is important that the chain of struggle remains unbroken from generation to generation. And about Maidan as an important link in such a chain, through which ideas, experiences, and traditions of struggle that allow continuing the chronicle of protection of our freedom are conveyed. This exhibition is about how the Ukrainian nation withstood back in the day, thanks to what today we are able to hold the world's greatest aggressor, authoritarian Russia, trying to trench on our land, our language, our values, our heroes, and our future, off at a gunpoint. About memory, traditions, solidarity, continuity of aspirations and actions as our greatest defense resource and token for building prosperous Ukraine." (Figure 22.)

The installation aims to showcase Ukrainian national groups that have historically fought against the imperial regimes of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union to gain independence and freedom for Ukraine. The examples include non-violent and violent resistance displayed by concentration camp inmates, Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) members, dissidents, and soldiers of the military *sotnias* of the Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen.[71] The exhibition also draws parallels between past events and contemporary ones from the Maidan chronicles or decommunization process. For instance, one board emphasizes the importance of *viche*, collective protests, and demonstrations in maidans occurring a century apart, as crucial steps in the journey towards democracy (figure 23). Another board demonstrates the demolition of imperial symbols and monuments during the Ukrainian People's Republic as part of the so-called *Leninopad* (figure 24). The exhibition also emphasizes the role of women as part of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen compared to the Maidan protests. Another board demonstrates how the slogan "Glory to Ukraine!", which was used by the UPA in 1942–1956, also found prominence during the Maidan event (figure 25). Still other boards showcase the importance of art, educational activities, and historical symbols, such as Shevchenko's, in the Ukrainian national resistance movements.

The exhibition highlights the importance of historical memory and events in shaping the memory of Maidan. By connecting the Revolution's memory to other historical movements and acts of collective resistance, its significance is amplified. However, it should be noted that some Ukrainian historical movements, symbols, and their glorification have a controversial legacy and have been subject to debate in national and international intellectual circles over the last decade.[72] Consequently, this historical heritage will be a matter of discussion of memory politics in Ukraine in the days to come.

AS WE HAVE SEEN, the Maidan Museum's focus goes beyond commemorating the Revolution by presenting tragic events that followed as integral to the narrative of historical Ukrainian national resistance for freedom and nationhood. The institution has organized exhibitions and public activities to honor Donbas War

soldiers as fighters for the country's independence. In light of the full-scale invasion in 2022, the Museum has been actively involved in commemoration and education devoted to Ukraine's ongoing resistance. Working closely with city and state municipalities, other museum institutions, human-rights centers, intellectuals, and activists, the Maidan Museum produces exhibitions, excursions, and publications, as well as organizes art events, public signings, and memorial ceremonies related to the ongoing war in Ukraine. The Museum also works to conserve culture and heritage under war circumstances and participated in the Heritage Emergency Response Initiative, collecting items from cathedrals and churches destroyed in previously occupied territories of Ukraine in 2022. As these activities demonstrate, the Maidan Museum is a vital agent in contexts that go beyond the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014, as it is deeply entangled and compelled to engage in controversies typical of the politics of memory.

Conclusion

This article presents an analysis of how a past event continues to evolve and transform in response to dynamic social, cultural, and political changes. The study concludes that the Maidan event remains ongoing and unsettled, and its memorialization does not signify its end but rather its continual reactivation. The memory of the event grows into something new. Theoretically, the study is built on Wagner-Pacifici's conceptual model, which prompts us to reflect on our position *inside* or *outside* the Maidan event and *who* and *what* is inside or outside it. By viewing the commemoration of the event from this lens, we are compelled to scrutinize where it begins and ends. Ultimately, the case study of the Maidan event demonstrates that its memory is dynamic and constitutes part of the historical event-in-the-making, reflecting the ongoing struggles of the Ukrainian people.

This study highlights the importance of examining how memories and narratives of past events are adapted to the contemporary needs of society. It emphasizes how certain actors use memories to either downplay or elevate them, how events can shape the course of history, and how events are altered to align with specific versions of historical accounts. The paper argues that political agents often use memories to shape a narrative that mobilizes a nation and influences its sense of nationalism and identity. Contested memories can guide political groups and actions and can be used for political purposes by state institutions. In this way, history and memory become exclusive, cropped, and polished to align with nationalistic visions. Since the Russian invasion in 2014, Maidan memory has been utilized to promote a national agenda and has become a component of the broader historical narrative of the collective struggle of Ukrainians in the Ukrainian state.

Tim Cole highlights that "constructing a memorial is a conscious act of choosing to remember certain people and events and by implication choosing not to remember others. And that conscious act is political, meaning that it is about power over memory, power over the past, and power over the present."[73] Memorialization is a complex process that involves reconstructing different versions of events, which ultimately results in a compromise. Once the official memory and narrative are established and the museum and memorial are built in stone and steel, the memorialization process may seem complete as it achieves a particular form of authorized representation. However, this representation will inevitably be challenged because every representation displays an event in a specific way, leaving out certain parts and elements. Some things are given more prominence, while others will be relegated to the margins, making the representation limited and incomplete.

This struggle of memories takes us back to the Revolution, which had many different elements and forms. Memorialization involves choosing certain forms and elements as more significant than others. The Revolution served as a platform for artworks, but memorialization reconstructs their meanings. Artworks, in turn, reflect independently on them, resulting in diverse and heterogeneous forms of memory and identity. The case of Maidan memorialization demonstrates that instead of preserving the distinct values of the Maidan event itself, artworks and elements of Revolution memory are put in the historical context of the past and contemporary national struggles of the country due to the ongoing Russian aggression.

MUSEUMS PLAY AN important role in the nation-building process by actively producing myths about heroism and martyrdom. Revolutions, wars, and collective struggles for nationhood have become essential elements in museum narratives.[74] In Ukraine, the Maidan has gradually become a significant part of the nation's historical narrative of resistance against Russian imperialism. What started as a student protest with democratic values in 2013 has evolved into a powerful symbol of resistance for Ukrainians and the world. Maidan serves as a living memorial, where officials, individuals, families of heroes, and victims of the Revolution and ongoing war come to pay their respects. It incorporates national, cultural, and historical symbols of collective resistance, reinvigorating other historical protests and oppositions of Ukrainian people that were previously suppressed and marginalized. The Maidan Museum is a temple to this historical and modern national resistance, but also a democratic laboratory of civic activism and dialogue.

Maidan memory was initially unpredictable, but eventually, it became a tale of heroism, marked by shifts in symbols and meanings. The narrative of Maidan is still ongoing and being officially established. Initially, the memory of the Revolution focused on the stories of the grieving families of those who perished. Later, it became a glorification of the events through political power, using the memory of Maidan as a governmental project. The

> **"THE MAIDAN MUSEUM IS A VITAL AGENT IN CONTEXTS THAT GO BEYOND THE UKRAINIAN REVOLUTION OF 2013–2014."**

Maidan event evolved from having no identity to embodying inclusive, universal, multilayered, and multivoiced values. It then continued to change as the memory of the Revolution became one of the elements in the creation of a new nationalism and the strengthening of Ukrainian identity.

In conclusion, this article suggests that the Maidan Museum and Memorial can serve as a significant cultural platform for both Ukraine and the world through three meanings: firstly, it showcases the struggle of Ukrainian democratic society for independence and freedom representing Ukrainian pride and dignity; secondly, it highlights the importance of memory and history for the present and future; and thirdly, it promotes the understanding of why protests, revolutions, popular assemblies, and *viche* are necessary and inevitable steps towards creating a democratic society.

The significance of Maidan is multifaceted, as it reflects both an event and a memory. Its meaning is influenced by historical understanding and the current political climate. The ongoing war in Ukraine, which began in 2014 and was followed by the Russian full-scale invasion in 2022, has consistently redefined the meaning of the Maidan event and memory, and this process will likely continue until the war concludes at last. Therefore, the ultimate narrative of the Maidan is yet to be seen. ⊠

Galyna Kutsovska is a PhD student at the Department of History at Uppsala University.

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32   Törnquist-Plewa & Yurchuk, "Memory Politics in Contemporary Ukraine," 701–702.

33   On the debate regarding colonial and postcolonial Ukraine, see, Timothy Snyder, "Integration and Disintegration: Europe, Ukraine and the World," *Slavic Review* vol. 74 no. 4 (2015): 692–707; Yaroslav Hrytsak, "The Postcolonial Is Not Enough," *Slavic Review* vol. 74 no. 4 (2015): 732–37; Roman Horbyk, "Ideologies of the Self: Constructing the Modern Ukrainian Subject in the Other's Modernity," *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* no. 3 (2016): 89–90.

34   On the matter of nationalization of Ukrainian history, see also Georgiy Kasianov, "'Nationalized History: Past Continuous, Present Perfect, Future...' in *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography*, ed. Georgiy Kasianov and Philipp Ther (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2009), 7–24; Kasianov, "The 'Nationalization' of History in Ukraine," in *The Convolutions of Historical Politics*, ed. Alexei Miller and Maria Lipman (Budapest, Hungary: CEU Press, 2012), 141–174; Törnquist-Plewa & Yurchuk, "Memory Politics in Contemporary Ukraine," 703–705.

35   *Viche* is historically a public meeting or popular assembly in the Kyivan Rus, where citizens expressed their democratic opinions to the authorities. On public space in post-socialist states and making Maidan a space for public protests and collective representation, read, Igor Tyshchenko, "A Return to Public Space," in *Urban Studies, Volume 3: Public Space and Its (Dis)contents*, ed. Svitlana Shlipchenko and Igor Tyshchenko (Kyiv: Vsesvit PH, 2017); on popular assemblies and revolutions as political aesthetics of democracy, see, Jason A. Frank, *The Democratic Sublime: On Aesthetics and Popular Assembly* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

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37   Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 129.

38   On the evolution of the Maidan meaning as a space, read, Roman Cybriwsky, "Kyiv's Maidan: from Duma Square to Sacred Space," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* vol. 55 no. 3 (2014): 270–285. On historical and architectural transformations of the Maidan square in Kyiv, see, Igor Tyshchenko and Svitlana Shlipchenko, "MAIDAN: From the 'Space of Protests' to 'Urban Commons'. Urban Eu/Utopia in the Making," in *Urban Studies, Volume 3: Public Space and Its (Dis)contents,* ed. Svitlana Shlipchenko and Igor Tyshchenko (Kyiv: Vsesvit PH, 2017); Nataliya Kondel-Perminova, "Maĭdan vid Chasu Zhovtnevoho Perevorotu do Revoliuciï Hidnosti," in *Khreshchatyk – Komunikator Mizh Chasamy* (Kyiv: Varto, 2021): 316–370.

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48   Anastasiia Levkova and Danylo Pavlov, "Ihor Poshyvailo: 'Nove dlia Ukrainy Yavyshche – Muzei, shcho Stavliat Skladni ta Nezruchni Pytannia'," *The Ukrainians*, March 16, 2021, accessed June 15, 2021, https://theukrainians.org/ihor-poshyvajlo/

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50   More about inspirations, read interview with the Museum director, "Ihor Poshyvailo: 'Nove dlia Ukrainy'"

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58   Tyshchenko & Shlipchenko, "MAIDAN: From the 'Space of Protests' to 'Urban Commons'".

59   Kondel-Perminova, "Mizhnarodnyi Konkurs Terra Dignitas," 147–148.

60   More about the international design competition, see the official website of the architectural contest, accessed March 30, 2021, http://www.competition-maidan-ukraine.org/projects_competition-maidan-ukraine_home_e.htm. Additionally, see, Kondel-Perminova, "Pereosmyslennia Khreshchatyka," 396–411.

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62   Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 25.

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64   "Henprokuratura Zaboronyla Budivnytstvo Muzeiu Revoliutsii Hidnosti na Vulytsi Instytutskii," *TCH*, July 18, 2018, accessed April 5, 2021, https://tsn.ua/ukrayina/genprokuratura-zaboronila-budivnictvo-muzeyu-revolyuciyi-gidnosti-na-vulici-institutskiy-1181553.html; "Shcho Vidbuvaietsia na Alei Heroiv Nebesnoi Sotni," May 12, 2019, accessed April 5, 2021, https://www.maidanmuseum.org/uk/node/751

65   "'Zupynit Znyshchennia Alei Heroiv Nebesnoi Sotni' – Zaiava Rodyn Zahyblykh Maidanivtsiv," *Radio Svoboda*, March 19, 2019, accessed April 2, 2021, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-memorial-nebesna-sotnia/29829850.html. For review of the official Museum's response to the Letter of the families, see, "Chomu Same Takyi Memorial Nebesnoi Sotni Postane u Kyievi? Vidpovid Muzeiu Maidanu na Vidkrytyi Lyst", March, 21, 2019, accessed April 2, 2021, https://www.maidanmuseum.org/uk/node/698

66   "Prezydent: U tsomu Rotsi Rozpochnutsia Roboty zi Stvorennia Muzeiu Revoliutsii Hidnosti," *President of Ukraine* official website, February 20, 2021, accessed May 20, 2021, https://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-u-comu-roci-rozpochnutsya-roboti-zi-stvorennya-muz-66657

67   Decree No. 112-p of February 17, 2021

68   Museum's summary of the construction background, challenges, and plans, see at the Museum's website, "Budivnytstvo Memorialu Heroiv Nebesnoi Sotni u 2018–2020 Rokakh," November 25, 2020, accessed March 20, 2021, https://www.maidanmuseum.org/uk/node/1236

69   Olzacka, "The Role of Museums," 1028–1029.

70   Olzacka, "The Role of Museums," 1035.

71   *Sotnia* from Ukrainian means one hundred, and historically refers to the Cossack and Ukrainian People's Army (UPA) military units. During the Maidan events, protesters divided themselves into self-defense units "*sotnias*" that after the Revolution became a collective name "Heavenly Hundred" (*Nebesna Sotnia*). Tetiana Domashenko's poem "Heavenly Hundred of Maidan Warriors" (*Nebesna Sotnia Voiniv Maidanu*) glorified the killed protestants as martyrs and eventually coined the term "Heavenly Hundred." See also, Nataliya Bezborodova, "Nebesna Sotnia, Formation of a New Narrative from Protest Lore to Institutionalized Commemorative Practice," *Ethnologies* vol. 40 no. 1 (2018): 101–138; Jonsson, "The Aesthetics of Protest on Kyiv's Maidan," 389–394; and Jonsson, "What Art Knows about Democracy." On religious meanings of the *sotnia* and Heavenly Hundreds, see Yekelchyk, "The Heavenly Hundred."

72   On the discussions regarding the controversial military groups OUN-UPA and debates surrounding the decommunization laws, read Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, and Marples, "Decommunization, Memory Laws, and 'builders of Ukraine in the 20th century'," *Acta Slavica Iaponica* no. 39 (2018): 1–22. Additionally, on the contentious issues of memory and difficulties of Ukraine in "confronting the past" or "coping with a difficult past," see, Yurchuk, "Reclaiming the Past," 107–137. Furthermore, on heroes of the nationalist movements and discussions about reconciliations, see Kasianov, *Memory Crash*, particularly, 249–263, 319–349. See also, Zhurzhenko, "Legislating Historical Memory," 114–115.

73   Tim Cole, "Turning the Places of Holocaust History into Places of Holocaust Memory: Holocaust Memorials in Budapest, Hungary, 1941–1995," in *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 273.

74   Olzacka, "The Role of Museums," 1039.