



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.

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-

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

Wagner-Pacifi 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-Pacifi 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-Pacifi claims that the 9/11 Memorial and Museum constitute a form of the event since it cannot be considered finished. Thus, according to Wagner-Pacifi, 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-Pacifi 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-Pacifi 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-Pacifi 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 within time and space, it remains potentially disruptive. Wagner-Pacifi 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-Pacifi’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-Pacifi 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

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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-Pacifi’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-Pacifi’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-Pacifi 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-Pacifi’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

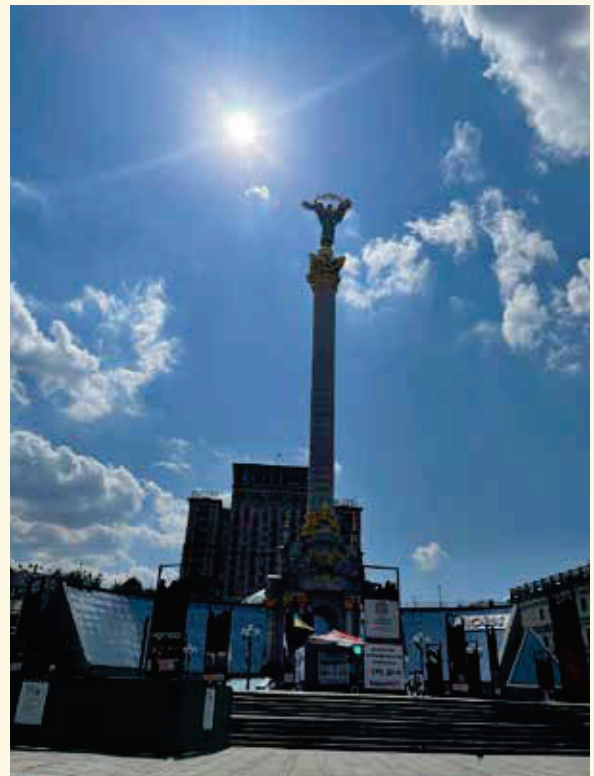


Figure 2. Independence Monument.

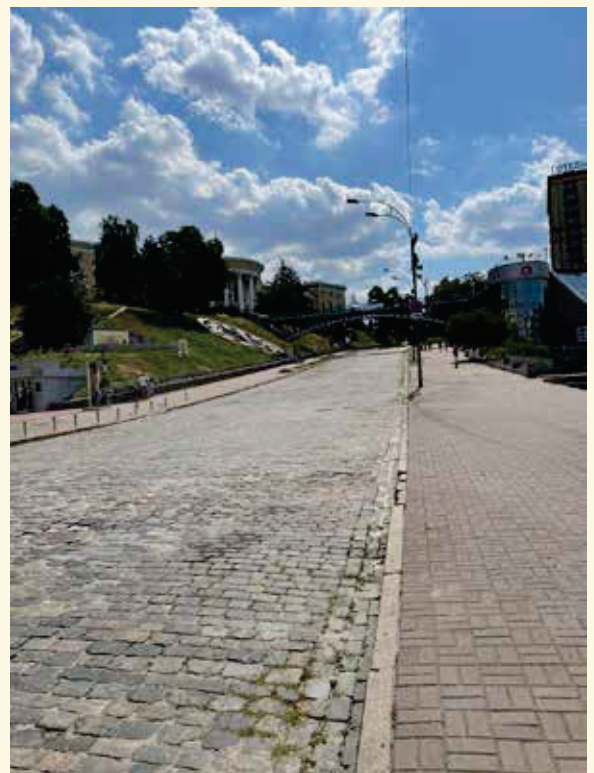


Figure 3. Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes.



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.

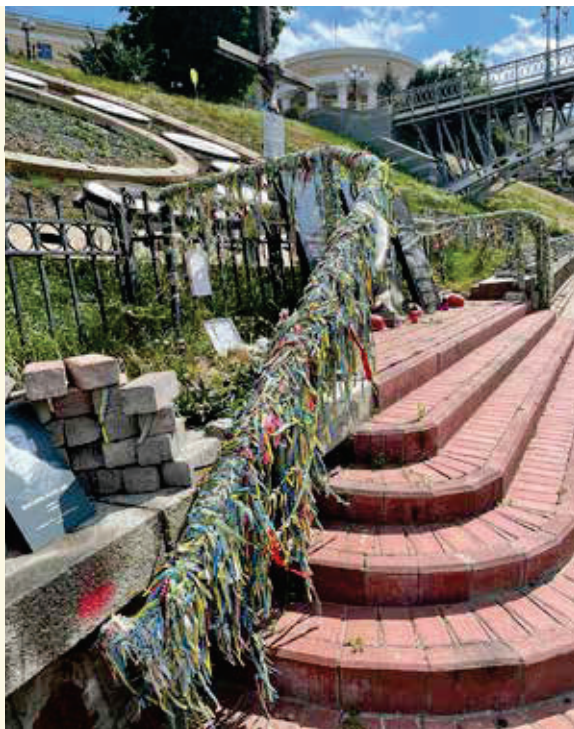


Figure 8. Public Living Memorial.



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; protesters' garments and weapons; shields; air guns; a crushed car of the so-called "auto-maidan"; 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 Mykhalivskiy 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-

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

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

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.

**“THE LOGO
SYMBOLIZES
THE REBIRTH
OF UKRAINIAN
IDENTITY AND THE
STRENGTH OF
THE UKRAINIAN
PEOPLE AS A
NATION.”**

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, com-

plex 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



Figure 11. The winning design of the Museum.

ILLUSTRATION: © KLEIHUES + KLEIHUES ARCHITEKTEN



Figure 12. Perspective view of the winning Museum

ILLUSTRATION: © KLEIHUES + KLEIHUES ARCHITEKTEN

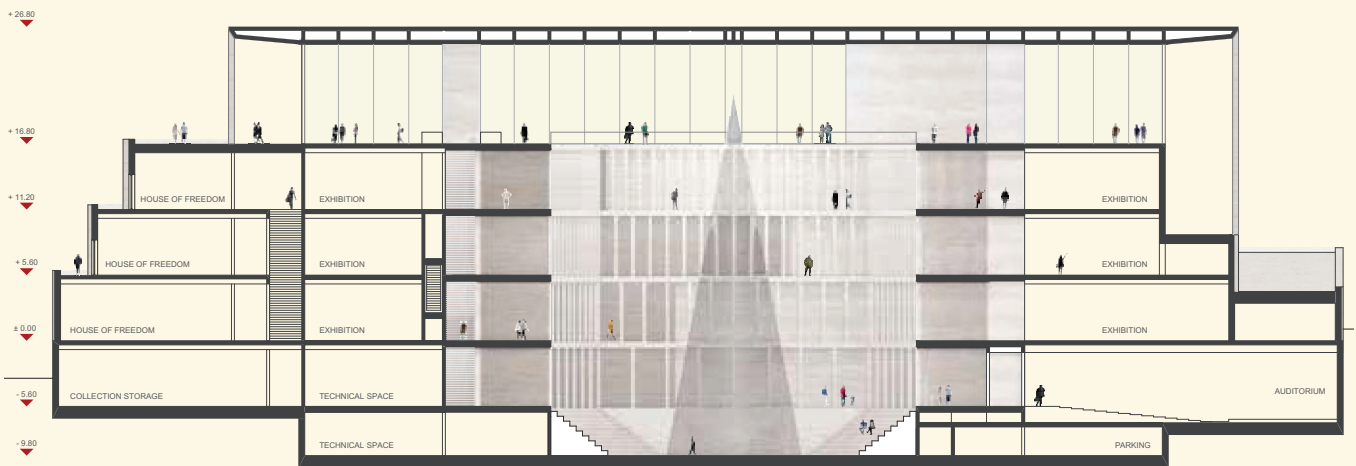


Figure 13. Plan of the winning Museum.

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. Instytutka 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 Mlstudio.

ILLUSTRATION: MISTUDIO



Figure 15. Logo of the Maidan Museum.

SOURCE: 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 Mlstudio 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 Institutska 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.

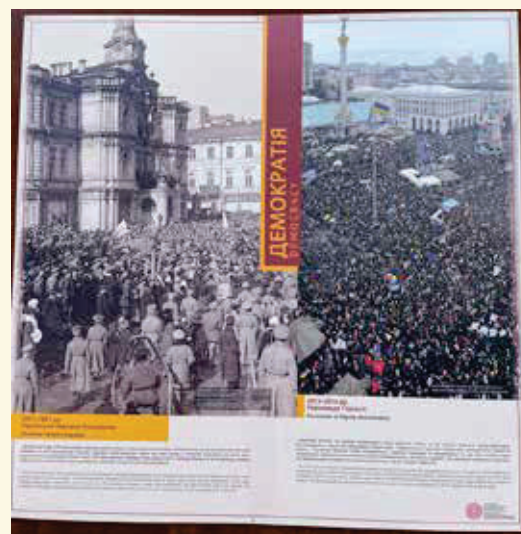
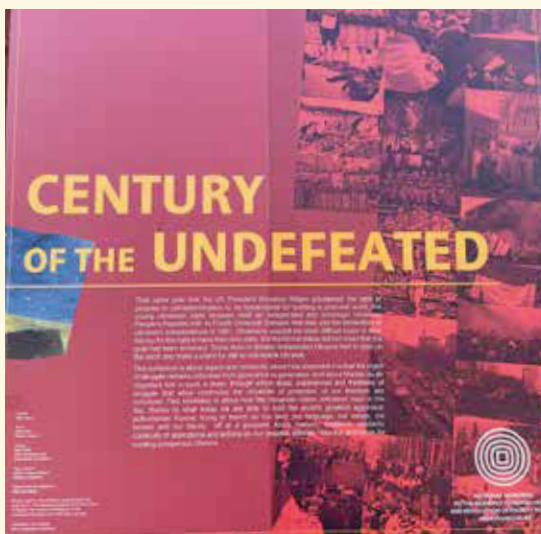


Figure 22 (left).
Outdoor exhibition
"Century of the Un-
defeated".

Figure 23 (right).
The "Century of the
Undefeated" exhibi-
tion board illustrates
the importance of
the *viche*, collective
protests and demon-
strations on maidans a
century apart.



Figure 24. The “Century of the Undeclared” 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 Undeclared” 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

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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. ✕

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