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SPACE OF TRANSFORMATION:  
CONTEMPORARY ART CENTRES IN KYIV.  
THE CASE OF PINCHUK ART CENTRE AND  
MYSTETSKYI ARSENAL

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## *Summary*

### *(Space of Transformation: Contemporary Art Centres in Kyiv. The Case of PinchukArtCentre and Mystetskyi Arsenal)*

The doctoral dissertation examines the processes of transformation of cultural space in Kyiv. Two art institutions founded in independent Ukraine and located in Kyiv, which represent two different institutional models (private and public), have been chosen for the research project: PinchukArtCentre and Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Museum Complex. The cultural institutions and their architecture are studied as spaces of postcolonial and post-Soviet transformation. The Author looks at how the processes of decolonization are manifested in the cultural and narrative politics of the two chosen contemporary art institutions in Kyiv, and whether efforts are made to deal with the legacy of the colonial (Soviet) past. Of particular interest are the processes of contextualizing and exposition of artworks, study of the curatorial and institutional narratives, and study of the art spaces as the centres of meaning, to conceptualize each *space* as a *place*. The Author explores the art centres as symbolic spaces that construct, but also mirror, beliefs and values. The overriding goal of the project is to understand the processes related to decolonization which took place in Ukraine after 2014, and which can be named the *postcolonial turn*.

## *Streszczenie*

### *(Przestrzeń transformacji: Centra sztuki współczesnej w Kijowie. Przypadek PinchukArtCentre i kompleksu Mystetskyi Arsenal)*

Niniejsza rozprawa doktorska bada procesy transformacji przestrzeni kulturowej w Kijowie. Do projektu badawczego wybrano dwie instytucje artystyczne założone w niepodległej Ukrainie i zlokalizowane w Kijowie, które reprezentują dwa różne modele instytucjonalne (prywatny i publiczny): PinchukArtCentre i Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Museum Complex. Instytucje kultury i ich architektura są badane jako przestrzenie postkolonialnej i postsowieckiej transformacji. Autorka przygląda się temu, jak procesy dekolonizacji przejawiają się w polityce kulturowej i narracyjnej dwóch wybranych instytucji sztuki współczesnej w Kijowie, oraz czy podejmowane są wysiłki, by uporać się ze spuścizną kolonialnej (sowieckiej) przeszłości. W szczególności badane są procesy kontekstualizacji i ekspozycji dzieł sztuki, narracje kuratorskie i instytucjonalne, oraz przestrzenie sztuki jako centra znaczeń (*przestrzeń* zostaje skonceptualizowana jako *miejsce*). Autorka bada centra sztuki jako przestrzenie symboliczne, które konstruują, ale także odzwierciedlają, przekonania i wartości. Nadrzędnym celem projektu jest zrozumienie procesów związanych z dekolonizacją, które miały miejsce w Ukrainie po 2014 roku, a które można nazwać *zwrotem postkolonialnym*.

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## I. Introduction

I am writing these words when the Russian Federation has just invaded Ukraine. The Ukrainian cities are shell bombed, and Ukrainians, including my friends and colleagues, live underground in the bomb shelters. For a long time, I have been looking for a time frame for this dissertation. I knew, where to begin, but I did not know, where to end. The reality brought the ending to me; however, it was the reality that none of us expected. The reality, where an independent state is viciously attacked by its neighbouring country, the base for the attack being the unfulfilled dreams about power and authority, stemming from the mythical conception of the empire. The issues I am addressing here have just turned out to be tragically relevant and timely. The desires of Kremlin to rule Ukraine seem to stem from its imperial aspirations – the aspirations of the former colonial power.

The whole history of colonialism, which is very familiar to us from both European and American cases, involves denying that another people is real. It involves denying that another state is real. And that is of course the premise of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Mr Putin has made it very clear, for the past ten years or so, that he doesn't believe that Ukrainians are a people, and that he doesn't believe that Ukrainian state is a real state. Those are the classic arguments that Europeans made for 500 years when they colonised other peoples (Democracy Now!, "Historian Timothy Snyder").

This denial has been influencing Ukrainian history and culture for centuries, but once revealed, can become a powerful tool of subversion. In the last 30 years, Ukraine acquired state independence, confronted the phenomenon of oligarchic capitalism, and went through three waves of mass protests, two revolutions, a war in the country's east, the annexation of Crimea, a neurotic and belated de-communicization. Today it's facing a full-scale military invasion and the biggest humanitarian crisis in Europe since the World War II. Ukrainian cities are destroyed, civilians are executed, and Ukrainian women and children are raped by the Russian soldiers. Already 13 million Ukrainians fled their homes – half of them being internally displaced, others finding refuge in neighbouring countries, including my home country Poland, that has already taken 3.5 million refugees. But apart from the physical aspect of war, there is a symbolic one. "Conflict in Ukraine has something to do with the memory, or myth, or memorialisation, or the selective way the

governments and leaders choose to talk about the past and choose to instruct their people to think about the past” (URIHU, “Petryshyn Lecture”). One of the issues I am addressing in this dissertation is how the past is being referred to in Ukrainian visual arts, and what is the meaning of that reference, a question especially important now, when Ukrainian scholars, artists, and intellectuals are asking questions about decolonisation of their country. In March 2022 I attended a seminar at the Harvard University,<sup>1</sup> during which Oleh Kotsyuba from Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute talked about the necessity to reconsider the Russian Studies as well:

The next thing I think that is really important is the issue of decolonizing Slavic Studies, because they are Slavic just in name. The absolute majority of Slavic Studies in the Anglophone world, but also elsewhere, is Russian studies. And so just as German Studies, and I speak as someone whose first degree was in German Studies, German Studies was not the same after World War II as it was before. Russian Studies and Slavic Studies cannot exclude chauvinistic and imperialist motives and sides of Russian culture. We cannot teach Pushkin without teaching things about him that are not so nice. We cannot teach Bulgakov without teaching his whole Ukrainian phobia, and so on. So, we need to re-examine what we are doing, and how we’re teaching these things (Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, “War in Ukraine”).

I would add the impossibility to teach about Fyodor Dostoevsky without mentioning his pro-tsarist and pro-imperial views. Vladimir Putin adores Dostoevsky, who saw Russia as a Slavic civilisation force (The Economic Times 2014, Brinkhof 2022). Dostoevsky in his letters “daydreamed of a war between Europe and Russia and felt certain that Russia would win” (Brinkhof 2022).

The full-scale Russian invasion has changed the way the Ukraine’s post-coloniality has been perceived. In this thesis, initiated already in 2018, I study two art institutions founded in independent Ukraine and located in Kyiv, which represent two different institutional models – PinchukArtCentre and Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Museum Complex. I look at the cultural institutions and their architecture as spaces of postcolonial and post-Soviet transformation, trying to understand how, and if, the processes of decolonization are manifested in the cultural and narrative politics of chosen contemporary art institutions, and whether efforts are made to deal with the legacy of the colonial (Soviet) past. I am particularly interested in the study of the curatorial and

institutional narratives, and the art spaces as the centres of meaning, to conceptualize each space as a place, therefore, I also resort to methodologies derived from humanistic geography, such as topophilia, and concepts of “place and space”. I explore the art centres as symbolic spaces that construct, but also mirror, beliefs and values. The overriding goal of the project is to understand the processes related to decolonization which took place in Ukraine already after 2014. My research is based on the methodology derived from the postcolonial studies, primarily the thoughts of Homi Bhabha and Leela Gandhi, and their concepts of the therapeutic processes of postcolonial transformation. I propose that what happens in the visual arts after 2014 can be named a *postcolonial turn* – a phenomenon based on healing and acceptance of history, and of the past in its hybrid form, without imposition of the imperial or national pattern. In my opinion these are the first signs of transition to post-coloniality (instead of neo-coloniality).

### **I.1. The Question of Orientalisation**

While working on this thesis I was accused a couple of times that the postcolonial perspective, that I propose here, applied by a Polish scholar on Ukrainian topic might end up in orientalisation. I would like to briefly reply to these accusations. The category of “orientalism” was instituted by Edward Said in 1978. According to Said, orientalism is “a set of discursive practices through which the West structured the imagined East politically, socially, military, ideologically, scientifically and artistically” (Buchowski 2006: 463). Furthermore, Orientalism is as well “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident’” (Said 1994: 2). First, although Poland geographically lays West of Ukraine, it is not a Western Country. Today Poland is customarily counted among the Central or East-Central European countries, however for decades it belonged to the semantic sphere of Eastern Europe, as it was the satellite country of the Soviet Union until 1989. I grew up in a Soviet satellite country, not a Central European country, and not a Western country. I cannot orientalise Ukraine, because for me this is not an “Orient”. The space of “orientalisation” was my daily life in the 80s and 90s. Poland was orientalised by the West as much as Ukraine – “(...) whatever they did, they still were Polish plumbers, Romanian strawberry pickers, Ukrainian prostitutes in the eyes of the others” (Botanova 2022).

At the same time, I admit, that Polish people have not always been the best neighbours for Ukrainians, who were often working here for the lowest wages, taking the poorly paid and physically demanding jobs. I am writing these words in May 2022, when

Poland has taken in 3.5 million Ukrainian refugees, when Polish people are opening their homes for the Ukrainians, taking them (and their pets) from the borders, fundraising, buying medicines, food, clothes, military equipment, opening schools, kindergartens, and helpdesks, organizing language courses, legal and medical services. We mourn and cry with our neighbours, so I do hope that this is the beginning of a long-lasting friendship on equal terms between my two beloved countries.

I do not see myself as an outsider also. Since 2014 I was travelling to Ukraine two, sometimes three times, each year, and I have spent weeks and months living in Kyiv, L'viv, Kharkiv, and Donbas. Ukraine has become my second home, a place where I lived, worked, and spent time with friends. Ukraine, I got to know is not imagined. I did not seat in my scholar's office thousands of kilometres away. I was in Donbas in November 2021, less than three months before the outburst of a horrendous war on the 24th of February 2022. During my last travel, I went to Ukraine by car, cause the spectre of war was already in the air, I did not want to risk my solo journey to Soledar in Eastern Ukraine, in Donbas, without my own means of transport. Everything seemed so safe back then, even if the frontline of the war that started in 2014 and continued, was just 30 kilometres away. I could see the damages, the wounds of the conflict were still visible – depleted forests, signs warning of a mined area. Now Donbas is under attack again and, along with the whole country, fights for the right to be recognised as an independent subject.

## **I.2. The Criteria of Choice**

For my place of research, I have chosen Kyiv, the capital, and the biggest city in Ukraine. Although some actions are being taken to change it, Ukrainian contemporary art environment remains strongly centralised, meaning that the most visible art centres remain in the capital.

The first criterion is the importance of the art centre in both Ukraine and abroad. The selected institutions are the two most famous and with the biggest media coverage, attracting the unprecedented public attention since the day of their emergence. Only institutions that focus on contemporary art in both their exhibition and research programmes are considered. Institutions that express no critical approach towards contemporary art were not taken under consideration. The last criterion is that only non-commercial institutions were selected. I was also interested in the question of the public-versus-private, and I try to see how those factors influence the overall work of each art centre.



The research was conducted in the two above-mentioned institutions, in the form of the library research, spatial research (visiting the premises of the institutions) and meetings and interviews with curators and other employees of the institutions, as well as with artists participating in exhibitions. Most of the information and materials are available only in the art institutions, their archives and exhibition catalogues. The detailed time frame is opened with the founding of the Mystetskyi Arsenal in 2005 and closed in the Winter of 2022 and the Russian invasion on Ukraine.<sup>4</sup>

## **II. Methodological Considerations**

“Postcolonial studies are themselves a form of decolonisation” (Domańska 2008: 160).

### **II.1. Postcolonialism and the Decolonial Option**

I believe that the postcolonial theory can help to understand the processes taking place in Ukrainian cultural space after Euromaidan. Although the concept is still widely connected to the overseas Western empires and the so called Third World countries,<sup>5</sup> there are numerous attempts to apply a postcolonial perspective to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, especially the former Soviet bloc. The Soviet Union was considered the world’s last remaining empire, until it was disintegrated in 1991, which led to numerous decolonising processes (Kuzio 2002: 241).

“Just a few decades ago, the idea that Ukraine or even Central Asia were colonies of the Soviet Empire evoked furious resistance on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In the 1990’s, postcolonial experts still debated the reasons for not applying their concepts to the emerging countries of the post-Soviet space” (Etkind 2011: 249).

There were several reasons for this kind of approach, and therefore it is important to see why the postcolonial methodology can be imposed on the studies of the post-Soviet countries and societies. The first reason for doubt is that the countries of the former Soviet Union are not colonies as understood in their “classical” or “initial” definition.<sup>6</sup> First of all, the widely used and understood concept of colonialism is connected to the colonisation of non-European lands, the overseas territories. In case of the former Soviet Union there is no oversea factor, as well as no race factor, which was especially important in developing several postcolonial thoughts, such as the concept of the “Other” or the “Subaltern”. What is a classical colony is still being discussed, however some common traits are easy to be numbered, and apart from the above mentioned, there are many that were present in the

relations between the countries of the former Soviet Union, and its centre – Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Russian SFSR or RSFSR). Therefore, the post-Soviet states need to remove the same sort of inherited colonial legacies as postcolonial states in Africa or Asia (Kuzio 2002: 241). There is the appropriation of land<sup>7</sup> and economy (imperial control of the trade), the exploitation of labour, the cultural interference (language of the coloniser serves as the dominant one, the culture of the colonised is suppressed and seen as minor, cultural stagnation, the history is being rewritten from the imperial point of view, forced integration and assimilation as the “little brothers”, or the “little Russians”), legal and political structures as puppet government or the central control (Shkandrij 2011: 283). There are also important contrasts present in the colonial relations – centre versus margin (or periphery), mainstream and peripheral, and dominant and minor.<sup>8</sup> All these elements are present in the relations between Moscow and other republics. The only one that does not fit the pattern, or rather, is not as obvious, is the appropriation or takeover of land. However, since the Ukrainian land was considered a “breadbasket” for the rest of the Soviet Union, as well as for foreign countries via trade, the land appropriation still can be considered a valid description.

Even wider scope of interference can be described with the term imperialism. And in a case of Russian-Ukrainian relations, both are legit. As summarized by Shkandrij:

The pattern of Ukraine’s domination by Russia included both an imperial context (the gradual abrogation of the country’s autonomous rights, legal system, and institutions) and a colonial context (the settlement of the country, exploitation of its land and labour).<sup>9</sup> In cultural sphere, the well-documented suppression of its language, literature, and the manipulation of its historical memory were clearly systematic... (Shkandrij 2011: 283).

What’s more, the story of Russian imperialism goes back much further than the Soviet Union. George Grabowicz describes the Russian-Ukrainian relations within the Russian Empire:

(...) the Russian Empire – and its policy between approximately 1847 and 1905, but specifically between 1863 (and then 1876 and 1905), of declaring the Ukrainian language officially nonexistent and subversive as such, and repeatedly banning and curtailing Ukrainian activities, the use of Ukrainian in public discourse, in public theater, indeed prohibiting the public use of the word

“Ukraine”, the publishing or importing of Ukrainian books, and so on (Grabowicz 2019: 247).

Also, what is very important, postcolonialism is not a fixed scientific theory, rather a set of ideas that can be applied as methodologies. As summarized by Janusz Korek:

(...) The attention of postcolonial studies can then be concentrated on the mechanisms of imperialism per se, the various kinds of hegemony and the methods used for attaining domination, on colonial discourses, in strategies of subordination, on the mechanisms needed for the emergence of individual, group and national identities and their mutual relations, on the culture, language and literature of the coloniser and the colonised... on everything, quite simply, that is the essence of the relationship between empire: and the conquered, between the centre: and the provinces, and in that which evokes and strengthens the political and cultural situations of hegemony and serfdom, domination and subordination (Korek 2007).

Ewa Domańska suggest that the postcolonial perspective can be useful when there are relationships of domination and power that are imposed by the imperial structures (Domańska 2008: 158). Additionally, postcolonial method is research of the emancipatory discourse understood as a manifestation of one’s own subjectivity, which was neglected by the imperial discourse (Kołodziejczyk 2010: 24). These are the relations that were dominant between the Russian and Ukrainian cultures, which serve for my justification of using some of the postcolonial methodologies.

Another concept, that of *coloniality*, as an idea that differs from *colonialism*, is that proposed by Anibal Quijano (Quijano 2000), and developed by Walter Mignolo and other authors (Mognolo and Escobar 2009):

Coloniality is the indispensable underside of modernity, a racial, economic, social, existential, gender and epistemic bondage created around the 16th century, firmly linking imperialism and capitalism, and maintained (though reconfigured) since then within the modern/colonial world. Both postcolonial and postcommunist discourses are products of modernity/coloniality, emphasizing different elements, yet having a common source (for example, class and race, ideology, and religion, and so on) and a shared birthmark in the rhetoric of modernity (the mission of progress, development, civilization, and so on) acting

as a tool to justify the continuing colonization of time and space, of lives and futures (Tlostanova 2012: 132).

While colonialism is a specific historical condition, coloniality is another term, which emerged at the same time (around 1500), and includes both – imperialism, and capitalism. So, colonisation is a state not as much connected to the prevailing overseas concept of colony, but to other factors stemming from the modernity rhetoric, including not only race, but also progress or development. In that sense, the continuous narrative of Ukrainians as *little* Russians – *little* meaning under-developed – finds its place within this discourse as well. Furthermore, colonisation is not only about the territory, culture, or economics. There is a colonisation of minds, what Tlostanova simply names *brainwashing* and *zombification*, which also stems from the modern “civilising mission”, and it includes communism (Tlostanova 2012: 132). Tlostanova proposes that this specific type of colonisation (mind-colonisation) should be studied from the decolonial, rather than post-colonial angle. But since Ukraine has both been colonised and mind colonised, I believe that both approaches are valid.

## II.2. Literature

There has been a long-term dispute whether Ukraine has been a colony or not. The history of the dispute is brought in detail by Stephen Velychenko<sup>10</sup> (Velychenko 2002). Edward Said, one of the founders of the post-colonial theory, suggests the possibility of the imposition of the post-colonial theory on the study of post-Soviet countries in his famous work *Culture and Imperialism* (Said 1994). Since then, several texts which applied the postcolonial perspective to post-communist experiences emerged (Pavlyshyn 1992, Thompson 2000, Shkandrij 2001, Moore 2001,<sup>11</sup> Velychenko 2002, Kuzio 2002, Chernetsky 2003, 2006, 2007, Carey and Raciborski 2004, Spivak et al. 2006, Chari and Verdery 2009, Rice 2009, Tlostanova 2012, Fiut 2014, Riabchuk 2015a, 2015b). Timothy Snyder, who already after 2014 recognised Russian aggression in Ukraine as a post-colonial syndrome of the former empire, supported post-colonialism as a method of the research on the countries of the former Soviet Union (Snyder 2015, Democracy Now! 2022). He claims that already the approach of Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia in the 1930s can be understood in terms of colonialism,<sup>12</sup> or, as he calls it, *recolonisation*, which he understands as the German and Russian thought that much of Europe can be treated as a colony (Snyder

2015: 697). It is a colony, however, that must be re-conceptualised, and is different from the maritime empires' colonialism of the past.

“The move here is not to apply postcolonial theory to Eastern Europe but rather to insert Eastern Europe into the history of colonialism, which would then require a rethinking of the postcolonial canon” (Snyder 2015: 696).

And although the Bolshevik revolution was anti-imperial, so also anticolonial in its ideological core, Bolshevik and Soviet Russia created an empire, which aimed at colonization of a different sort – the internal one. For both – Germans and Russians – Ukraine was to be a breadbasket (Snyder 2015: 697-698). Snyder calls the Nazi and Soviet systems neo-colonial: “During the years 1933–45, Ukraine was the most dangerous place in the world, precisely because it lay at the centre of interest of both neo-colonial projects” (Snyder 2015: 699).

The author sees *a safe landing from colonization* in the creation of the European Union (Snyder 2015: 700). This could explain, why the pro-European Maidan revolution of 2013-2014, was in core anti-colonial<sup>13</sup> – because support for the European Union, not Russia, is a support for an organization that, according to Snyder, has become the guarantor of anti-colonialism. After the full-scale Russian invasion Snyder adds: “Stalin was quite clear, that he would treat the territory of the Soviet Union, in particular its periphery, as a kind of colonial territory to be exploited. And Ukraine, with its black earth was the central of exploitation” (Democracy Now! 2022).

Taras Kuzio sees the Soviet Empire as a colonial empire with defined central area of Moscow and the Russian SFSR (Kuzio 2002: 242). He also proposes that the former USSR is more like the Ottoman empire, than the Western world colonies, as the core was connected to the peripheries by land, and no independent states were created before the emergence of the Soviet Union (Kuzio 2002: 242). The centre controlled the peripheries, constructed of the 14 non-Russian republics, including Ukrainian SSR. The leading nation, the *elder brothers*, felt like home within the whole Soviet Union. Kuzio claims, that this was a deliberate policy, to confuse the Russian and Soviet identity (Kuzio 2002: 242). Therefore, even today, “Soviet accomplishments are seen as *Russian* only – after 1991, Russia became the heiress of the most important physical or symbolic Soviet heritage” (Badiou 2022). But in general, the distinction between the centre and the other states was blurred under the same notion of the Soviet citizen. This made the process of cutting off from the union so complicated in 1991.<sup>14</sup> Kuzio also underlines, that Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova were to be fully assimilated, and so the three republics were not treated as foreign,

but Russian.<sup>15</sup> In case of Ukraine and Belarus the idea of assimilation was based on the supposed similarity to Russians, the elder brothers, the idea that they are the regional Russians, and not independent peoples. And so, the Russian control over Ukraine (and Belarus) was understood as the recovery of the natural order, and not annexation (Kuzio 2002: 246).<sup>16</sup> Moldova was to be the area for creation of the new Russian nation (Kuzio 2002: 245). As Kuzio states in 2002, the Soviet legacy is still deeply rooted, and thus difficult to be entirely removed. He underlines the importance of Soviet historiography, rooted in the imperial character of the Tsars Russia (Kuzio 2002: 245). It was based on the idea of the *free-will unions* between the centre and other Soviet states, which are unable to create an independent state on their own and need the *beneficial mission of civilising* (Kuzio 2002: 246). These deep connections indicate the colonial character of Russian-Ukrainian relations.<sup>17</sup>

The Russian scholar, Andreas Kappeler, on the other hand, described the phenomenon of internal colonisation, that is, one which lacks the element of racial and legal discrimination as well as geographical distance (Kappeler 2001). According to the researcher, the Ukrainians (due to the history of Russian suppression and influence) gradually became the regional variety of the Russians (Pasko and Korzhov 2020: 29). He also claims that many years after regaining independence in 1991, the process of national self-recognition did not take place, so the broadly understood Russian culture was still a model to follow (Kappeler 2001, Pasko and Korzhov 2020: 29). Kappeler further proposes that colonialism can be considered within the frame of economic exploitation of natural resources in Ukraine. Carey and Raciborski:

On the European side of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was undoubtedly one of the most exploited republics. The notion of Ukraine as an “inner colony” has been in circulation since the 1920s. However, its relation to Russia was not strictly “colonial” because the level of socioeconomic development in Ukraine (at least at the beginning of the twentieth century) was higher than that of Russia (Carey and Raciborski 2004: 223).

Additionally, as Hrytsak argues:

Kyiv and central Ukraine were seen as the core of “Russian lands”, in opposition not so much to growing Ukrainian nationalism but to local Polish elites who saw these regions as part of “historical Poland”. Another interesting factor, is that the

core of the Soviet Union ruling elites in the last decade of its existence consisted of ethnic Ukrainians, including Leonid Brezhnev (Hrytsak 2015: 732).

Therefore, Hrytsak claims, “Ukraine was more core than colony” (Hrytsak 2015: 733), as it did not meet the requirements of the “classical colony” definition. However, already in 2001, Moore proposes to discard the term of “classical colony” itself, as it suggests that only the Western experience of the colony is valid, while the Russo-Soviet understood as a deviation (Moore 2001: 123). I support this idea, as in this thesis I try to give to Ukraine the centre of meaning, make it a subject, and not an object, and not to impose the norms imposed by the Western point of view, that tends to “Other” the East: “Even decades after the Cold War officially ended, ‘the East’ remains the Other. Yet, the Othering of ‘the East’, a key ideological instrument of Cold Warfare, has not simply been extended” (Borisionok and Sosnovskaya 2021).

Instead, as Aleksei Borisionok and Olia Sosnovskaya claim, it got a new coat of paint and a new thrust, epitomized by the term “New East”, that performs a similar function. The area of a former Socialist world remains thus underconceptualized, secondary, and precarious in both Western and ex-Socialist worlds (Tlostanova 2017: 3).

What Hrytsak further underlines, is the variety of Ukrainian colonial experience – being the core of the Russian and Soviet projects, as well as the core of anti-imperial and ant-Soviet ones in the territories of Western Ukraine, in Galicia under both Habsburg and Soviet rule (Hrytsak 2015: 733-734). He further proposes to think of Ukraine not as much as of a colony, but of *contested borderlands* (Hrytsak 2015: 734). And although he agrees on the importance of the postcolonial paradigm, he does not see it as the most efficient one that could “help bring the Ukrainian past and present into the global context” (Hrytsak 2015: 737).

Another important voice is that of Mykola Riabchuk, the author of the book *Ukraine. Postcolonial Syndrome* (Riabchuk 2015a). He proposes that the phenomenon of “Ukrainianisation”, present after regaining independence, should be understood primarily as westernisation on the one hand, and decolonisation on the other (Pasko and Korzhov 2020: 29). Riabchuk sees Ukraine as a country which experienced three types of colonization. The Western part of the country, with highly developed national identity, did not submerge to the occupiers’ culture and did not have the feeling of the inferiority of their own. The great empty lands of the South-East Ukraine experienced the settler’s colonization, while the central part – a peculiar *dynastic type of colonization* that is heading

back to the 18th century (Riabchuk 2015a: 337). In 2021 Riabchuk published an important article “Біла шкіра, чорна мова” (“White Skin, Black Language”), in which he summarizes his tests of applicability of Franz Fanon’s psychoanalytic method to study Ukrainian colonial experience (Riabchuk 2021). He analyses, to what extent the Ukrainian situation in general can be considered colonial, as well as how the Ukrainian language can serve as an analogue to Fanon’s “black skin”, which serve as a tool of “Othering”. Here he mentions that the colonisation of Ukraine was on the one hand “dynastic” (by the Russification of local elites and their gradual co-optation), and “settler” – through the resettlement of ethnic Russians into Ukrainian lands (Riabchuk 2021).

As a result, a typically colonial situation emerged in Ukraine, in which the natives took on the role of culturally humiliated and economically marginalized inhabitants of the rural “third world”, while the Russians (and later the urbanized Russified part of the natives) played the role of “higher” civilization, more cultural, wealthier, more developed “first world”. (...)Ukrainianness has become a stigma – a sign of backwardness, inferiority, and the absence of any prospects in the modern world (Riabchuk 2021).

He further analyses, what was already mentioned by Carey, Raciborski and Hrytsak, that the Russian and Soviet elites did not discriminate Ukrainians, who became part of the “imperial project” (Riabchuk 2021). The price for that was however high – the renunciation of one’s own culture, tradition, and history: “Ukrainians were not really subjected to colonial oppression and discrimination – but only to the extent that they ceased to be Ukrainians in any significant sense. No one colonized them, because there was no such need: they themselves were already on the side of the colonizers, in the role of their zealous helpers and executors” (Riabchuk 2021).

In the research on the latest events in the history of Ukraine, the postcolonial theory was applied by Barbara Törnquist-Plewa and Yulia Yurchuk in a discussion on the politics of memory in contemporary Ukraine (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019). In turn, the concept of Maidan as a postcolonial revolution was discussed by Ilya Gerasimov, who considered postcolonial thinking as the only possible understanding of the events of the Revolution of Dignity: “The Ukrainian revolution is a postcolonial revolution because it is all about the people acquiring their own voice, and in the process of this self-assertive act they forge a new Ukrainian nation as a community of negotiated solidary action by self-conscious individuals” (Gerasimov 2014: 22-23).



Finally, Anna Engelhardt discusses the possibilities and pitfalls in the aim to apply both – postcolonial and decolonial approach – in her 2020 article. She notices the urge of decolonization without understanding the nuances of colonisation itself. She also analyses the case of the annexation of Crimea and building the Crimean bridge (Engelhardt 2020).

There are, however, also the opponents of the idea of colonisation within the Soviet Union. Already mentioned postcolonial Russian scholar Alexander Etkind underlines the distinction between the European empires and the Russian empire, due to the economic and political benefits delivered by the former to their colonies (Etkind 2011). Etkind considers the colonization of Ukraine as “non-classical”, because of the incorporation of the “ethnically homogeneous population” into the empire and by “forming the cultural and political differences of the other as their own” (Pasko and Korzhov 2020: 29). Etkind’s approach was criticized by Vitaly Chernetsky:

A critical tone barely registers in Etkind’s analysis of this model. (...) In other words, once a non-contiguous colony is appended to the Russian empire, the imperative is to naturalize it by conquering the territory in between and restoring contiguity. In effect, Etkind perpetuates aspects of Russian colonialist ideology, providing evidence of how far Russian culture still is from “find[ing] a positive, enlightened solution” to the enduring legacy of colonization, a solution Etkind calls for at the end of his essay (Chernetsky 2006: 835).

Anna Engelhardt also sees Etkind’s approach as an evident example that the “post-colonial turn in Russia itself hasn’t happened yet, no matter how many exhibitions, public talks, and seminars were held” (Engelhardt 2020).

Chernetsky noticed also:

Why is it that when representatives of academic communities studying non-Russian cultures in the region asserted the need to look at the ex-Soviet world through a postcolonial lens as early as 1992 (one of the earliest such attempts was made by the Ukrainian Australian scholar Marko Pavlyshyn), they were ignored or ridiculed by the overwhelming majority of Russian intellectuals and Western-trained specialists on Russian culture? Why, a dozen years later, did many of the same intellectuals and specialists, in Russia and the West, suddenly have a change of heart? (Chernetsky 2006: 834)

However, I was being ridiculed by a number of Ukrainian scholars (while the Western scholars indeed had “a change of heart” and fully supported the postcolonial approach I propose here) while doing my research in Ukraine fifteen years later - a stance that has instantly changed after the Russian invasion on Ukraine on the 24 February 2022, an invasion that clearly has colonial roots.<sup>18</sup> As noticed by Shkandrij in his article summarizing the colonial, anti-colonial and post-colonial approaches in Ukrainian literature after 1991, some writers and critics saw the term connected with the idea of colony as demeaning, contextually connected with oppression, subjection and even slavery, and did not want to consider Ukraine within this frame, deeming it to be humiliating<sup>19</sup> (Shkandrij 2009). The so called “Third World” associations (such as backwardness and lack of autonomy) were also an issue, as well as the notion of national humiliation<sup>20</sup> (Shkandrij 2009, Domańska 2008: 162). As the most significant influence the author lists the peculiarities of the “our-versus-their nationalism” paradigm, as he names it. The postcolonial approach calls for dealing with both, colonial and anti-colonial (national) myths, and the rejection of both narratives. It calls for acceptance – but not confirmation. But also, not denial. Postcolonial approach allows hybridity and marginality, which damages the idea of the “core tradition” and national values and identity, as understood by the anti-colonial approach (Shkandrij 2009). In 2009, Shkandrij says, the postcolonial moment, at least in literature, “has arrived for some, (and) is being violently resisted by others” (Shkandrij 2009). Moore in his 2001 essay explains the reluctance to look at the countries of the former Soviet Union and its satellites from the postcolonial perspective. He claims that it stems from the post-coloniality itself – the unwillingness to accept, that the country and its culture was colonised (Moore 2001: 118). Moreover, it leads to further colonisation that takes form of the *Westernness* (Moore 2001: 118). While working on this thesis, I have also encountered some reluctance towards this methodology while conducting interviews with cultural workers in Ukraine - in my case, this stemmed mainly from the opinion expressed by Anthony King, that “all post-colonial discourse then must, ipso facto, be colonial in that it responds to the imperialism of the dominant centre” (King 1992: 340). Additionally, considering that Poland used to be the colonial power as well in the history of Ukraine, the “discourse on colonialism may be seen as colonial because, like much of ‘scientific knowledge’ itself, it stems predominantly from the colonizing or post-imperial countries themselves” (King 1992: 341).

Janusz Korek names yet different reasons for the lack of trust into the postcolonial approach towards Central and Eastern Europe among several scholars. Since the

postcolonial studies emerged at the time of the Cold War, as well as mainly in the Marxist cycles, the Soviet Union's policy towards the member states was not seen yet as an ideological, cultural, or economic oppression – especially in comparison with the Western empires towards their colonies<sup>21</sup> (Korek 2007: 4, after Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 3). Above all, not only the element of racial discrimination was missing,<sup>22</sup> but also the ideological oppression itself at that time was not yet properly identified, an argument mentioned also by Moore (Moore 2001: 117). Korek also recalls that the lack of race discrimination was pointed out by some scholars as an argument against the accurateness of the postcolonial theory for Ukrainian studies. The racial chauvinism, however, can be compared to the national one, and even the widely recognized concept of the Ukrainians as the Little Russians is diminutive to those subjected. It demonstrates one of the main premises of colonisation, namely, that the imperial culture (including language) and ideology (and worldview) is the superior one, as well as understood as universal. It manifested itself in a fact that Ukrainian elites adopted Russian language and looked for education and careers in the imperial centres of Moscow and St. Petersburg (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 4, Riabchuk 2021). Russian remains the language vastly spoken in Ukraine, especially in Eastern and Southern regions, but also in central Ukraine.

The postcolonial theory was, however, successfully applied in the field of literary studies, and some other fields of Ukrainian culture (after Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 3; Grabowicz, 1995, 2019; Pavlyshyn, 1992; Chernetsky, 2003; Riabchuk, 2010; Shkandrij, 2001, 2009, 2015).<sup>23</sup> It was proved, that not only the experiences of Ukrainian people in the Russian and Soviet empires are similar to those of the subaltern in the Western colonies, but also that many patterns and syndromes of the postcolonial countries are present in Ukraine.

Among Polish scholars the adaptation of the postcolonial theory on the area of Central and Eastern Europe was analysed by Dorota Kołodziejczyk (Kołodziejczyk 2010). She offers to think of postcolonialism in this area as of the *studia postzależnościowe (postdependent studies)*<sup>24</sup> to understand the specific condition of the region<sup>25</sup> (Kołodziejczyk 2010: 23). Kołodziejczyk claims, that the postcolonial condition in Central-Eastern Europe is a legitimate research topic that could and should add up the current postcolonial discourse, that is still mainly focused on the Western-European perspective, while the other perspective could form an interesting case for comparative studies. (Kołodziejczyk 2010: 30) This is a paradox, as postcolonialism in theory was about to overthrow eurocentrism and Eurocentric perspective. Kołodziejczyk:

Postcolonial studies in their golden decade were so preoccupied with narcissistic culturalism that a phenomenon of a broader geopolitical significance, such as the Soviet Union's involvement in post-World War II anti-colonial movements, had no place at all in postcolonial approaches to anti-colonial processes. Except for Edward Said's call in "Culture and Imperialism" to include the bloc of post-socialist states in the area of postcolonial studies, there are no clear traces of postcolonialism seeing the anti-imperial implications of the velvet (mostly) revolution in Eastern Europe. Said's voice was, however, the voice of a comparator representing a broader humanist perspective, and by no means a postcolonial critique<sup>26</sup> (Kołodziejczyk 2010: 31-32).

She even calls the postcolonial studies provincial in their failure to notice the anti-imperial movements in Central-Eastern Europe. So even if the region is not post-colonial per se (from a historical or geographical perspective it is not an ex-colony), it is a subject of postcolonial studies understood as a critical thinking (Kołodziejczyk 2010: 32). Furthermore, the postcolonial theory pays particular attention to:

(...) the colonial aftermath, to the persistence of the colonial system and the stigma of the colonial past, which resonates in the contemporary culture of independent states and poses a serious problem for their identity, and to the manifestations of new, neo-colonial forms of subjugation brought about by the expansion of capitalism and the processes of globalization. (Domańska 2008: 162)

As these approaches prove, Ukrainian case can be considered within the context of postcolonial studies. However, what should be done is not the application of a paradigm without consideration of the specificity of the region. The critical postcolonial transfer is needed, based on the specific ideas formed by the postcolonial scholars, but with the consideration of the local context. The dependencies that formed the region should be specifically named and addressed. The cautiousness is needed in applying the postcolonial method as one formed in the Western intellectual circles, and so prone to being the norm that can take possession of another territory without needed critical approach. (Kołodziejczyk 2010: 34, Saifullayeu 2020: 245-246, 249) Postcolonialism then, can on the one hand be understood as a geohistorical phenomenon or historical condition, on the other – as a theory offering the tools.

### **II.3. The Thoughts of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Leela Gandhi**

I am basing my research on the concepts coined by the postcolonial scholars Homi Bhabha, Leela Gandhi and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, researchers who proposed foundations for the contemporary post-colonial studies. The important methodological constructs will be those of *postcolonial turn* (or *postcolonial moment*), *hybridity*, *anticolonial nationalism*, and, most importantly, *re-membering* and *postcolonial healing*.

#### **a. Anticolonial Nationalism**

According to Frantz Fanon, anticolonial nationalism should be understood as a *therapeutic necessity* and as a *process of reterritorialization and repossession*, which replaces the “two-fold citizenship” of colonial culture with a radically unified counter-culture” (Gandhi 1998: 112). As was noticed by several scholars (Cohn, 1983; Gandhi, 1998: 118), and summarized by Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 4), anticolonial nationalism can challenge the imperial thought. At the same time, however, it often becomes what it wanted to subvert, and this mimetic character is what was especially underlined. As Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk recall, it manifests in the rejection of everything connected with the imperial culture in the narratives considering the past, which ends up in the inversion of the colonial discourse and, in fact, its repetition, when the anticolonial discourse takes over the same one-sidedness as the colonial one. (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 4) The need to erase the colonial past is congruous to the colonial concept of erasing the individual national past of the colonized nation – it introduces the similar kind of a *self-willed amnesia*. (Gandhi 1998: 7) Congenial mechanisms are present in the need for self-invention and self-assertion. (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 4) While the empire imposes the patterns and standards of the colonizer’s worldview, the anticolonial nationalism invents their own, similarly, not to be rejected.<sup>27</sup> A good example in the case of Ukraine is the imposition of the Western-Ukrainian narrative of the national heroes from OUN or UPA<sup>28</sup> – the narratives with which the Eastern part of the country do not necessarily identify.

The anticolonial nationalism is often seen as a stage of transition leading to the decolonizing processes (e.g., Fanon, 1990; Lloyd, 1995; Parry, 1994. After Törnquist-Plewa, Yurchuk 2019: 4). The following step should be that of the nativity of the true new social consciousness, void of the identities and worldviews imposed by the nationalist anticolonialism. This moment, according to Homi Babha, constructs a *place of hybridity*,

where a new identity is born. (Bhabha 1994a: 25) Hybridity allows the birth of an autonomous construct which might manifest in the fields of culture, politics, and language.

### **b. Hybridity**

As noted by Leela Gandhi, the discourse of hybridity emerged on the foundations of Frantz Fanon's thought about the mutations which the foreign domination undoubtedly evokes in the consciousness of the colonised – the new subject appears from the two conflicting systems of beliefs, one that cannot stay pure and untouched<sup>29</sup>. (Gandhi 1998:130, Hall 1990) Homi Bhabha in his classic book *Location of Culture* describes the hybrid moment, that is when the elements are transformed or rearticulated, so that they are “neither the One, nor the Other, but something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both” (Bhabha 1994a: 41). What is hybridity itself, according to Bhabha? He sees it as an important operation of the “strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal” (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority), and also: “Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects” (Bhabha 1994a: 160-161). This repetition leads to healing, as “it displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination” (Bhabha 1994a: 160-161). In other words, the recognition, instead of oblivion and denial, is a necessary step towards the autonomy. In a hybrid moment the authority of the colonial power is no longer accepted, but it is present and exists ambivalently in the same place with what is represented by the national or local, which is no longer repressed. Hybridity suggests the mutuality between the coloniser and the colonised, which makes the colonial relations so ambiguous. As soon as the colonised begins to replay the colonisers culture, language, etc., the hybridity is born, because it does not belong to the coloniser anymore. And thus, the colonised becomes the subject, and not an object of colonisation. Hybridity is not about merging two different cultures. It is rather about the entering into the dominant discourse to undermine its rules. Bhabha sees the cultural differentiation (i.e., Russian, and Ukrainian in the case here) as a sign of authority (Bhabha 1994a: 163). Hybridity destructs this kind of thinking and allows to open for the future instead of being stuck in the predetermined identities. Therefore, it becomes extremely important for the postcolonial countries to rewrite the past in a new manner, bereft of the colonial narrative, but also of the nationalist one, which, as opposed to the colonial, becomes entangled in colonial narrative again. The solution is hybridity, which can express identities and narratives most accurate for the actual society, which

emerged during the colonial period, instead of imposing the fixed ones. For example, in case of Ukraine, both Greco-catholic and catholic identity is present, both European and Eurasian world, as well as both – Ukrainian and Russian (Riabchuk 2015b: 8). It applies to the works of art as well, or in general to the objects of culture – if a hybrid work of art recalls the past, it is not due to the continuity, aesthetic reason, or social cause, but for the past to be renewed and refigured, to create the *in-between space* that changes the way the present is perceived and performed (Bhabha 1994a: 10, 25). According to Gerasimov, and I agree,<sup>30</sup> hybridity exposed by Ukrainians during the Maidan revolution is a sign of the *postcolonial emancipation* (Gerasimov 2014: 36).

### c. Re-membering and Therapeutic Healing

“Trauma, whether collective or individual, can only be dealt with through a process of re-telling” (Paoli 2015: 174).

After gaining the independence the country enters the post-colonial stage, when all the remnants of the colonial rule are to be reworked in the main fields of economy, politics and, as importantly, culture. However, as noticed by George Grabowicz, “the colonial paradigm is much more pertinent than has generally been assumed” (Grabowicz 1995: 677-78). The very name *postcolonialism* can give an impression, that this is the stage where all the strings attaching the today with the colonial past should be broken, and the new world should emerge. That the *historical amnesia* might be the best choice to detach from the traumatic past. But it is not, because “this rupture is in fact a way of forgetting or repressing the past, that is to say, repeating it and not surpassing it” (Lyotard 1992: 90, after Gandhi 1998: 7). The unresolved past, along with the refusal to “remember and recognise its continuity with the pernicious malaise of colonisation” (Gandhi 1998: 7) is causing a prolonged stage of postcolonial convalescence. What Gandhi proposes, is that to face the postcolonial historical amnesia, postcolonialism might offer a *therapeutic theory*, which would help to cope with the forgotten memories of the colonial condition and with the recalling the colonial past (Gandhi 1998: 7-8). The first step is to remember and acknowledge the past events.

The concept of *re-membering* is connected to and stays in opposition to the common phenomena present on the newly independent national states that is the desire to forget the colonial past – something what Gandhi names a *will-to-forget* and a *postcolonial amnesia* (Gandhi 1998: 4). The primary need after the end of the colonial era is that of self-invention and the new beginning, that go hand in hand with the need to erase the burden of the

colonial past. But while the painful memories can somehow be repressed, the reality does not lose the burden of the colonial encounter so fast. What Leela Gandhi proposes is to see the postcolonial method as one, that can revisit, re-member and question the colonial past (Gandhi 1998: 5). She proposes to return and go back to have a closer look at this difficult relationship between the colonised and the coloniser, instead of erasing everything that wears its traces.” And it is in the unfolding of this troubled and troubling relationship that we might start to discern the ambivalent prehistory of the postcolonial condition” (Gandhi 1998: 5). The history produced under colonial pressure is not always giving the true picture. Therefore, it is important to go back to the past in order to not only better understand it while having in hand the postcolonial knowledge and method, but, most importantly, to heal – something that Gandhi names the *therapeutic retrieval of the colonial past* is the key concept to this thesis. I am looking at the contemporary art institutions to see, if the above-mentioned retrieval, a step towards the full decolonisation, is taking place, when and what form it takes.

In the method of *anamnesis*<sup>31</sup> in psychoanalysis, the patient associates seemingly not connected events from the past to their present problems, uncovering the new meanings that lead to self-understanding. Similarly, the postcolonial theory may commit itself to the processes of recovery, retrieval and re-membering, which help to live with everything imposed by the colonial condition, as well as to better understand it (Lyotard 1992: 93, Gandhi 1998: 8). Homi Bhabha also understands the therapeutic nature of memory. As he puts it: “Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful *re-membering*, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (Bhabha 1994a: 90).

Bhabha seems to support the psychoanalytic methods and sees the memory as a lake of consciousness – where some memories are easily accessible, while others are submerged and grounded deep under the water. Those blocked and banned, inaccessible to our consciousness, can have a tremendous impact on everyday life. But if they stay hidden, they cannot be cured (Bhabha 1987: 123). To release them and heal, Leela Gandhi recommends the *procedure of analysis-theory*, based on both, the psychoanalysis, and Bhabha’s theory. She is bringing up the Lacan’s reversal of the Cartesian *cogito*, where “I think therefore, I am, is replaced by I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think” (Gandhi 1998: 9, Lacan 1977: 166). The *theoretical re-membering* of the colonial condition has two functions to correspond: on the basic level it aims at uncovering the barbarism of colonisation; on the other, leads to familiarisation and availability. The goal of that second



function is the retrieve of the images, that have been expelled by the colonial violence, so that they can be owned again (Gandhi 1998: 10). There is more to it than just reclamation. The retrieved content may reveal the relationship between the coloniser and colonised, that is both, ambivalent and symbiotic and much more complicated than the oppressor-oppressed or invader-victim dyad (Gandhi 1998: 11). Only by acknowledging that in a colonial condition there are two partners and that behaviours are reciprocal, the residue of colonisation can be decomposed. The mutual desires are not always easy to accept – there is, on the one hand, desire of the empire to take over the colony, but on the other hand – there is both, hatred, and awe, on the side of the colonised (Gandhi 1998: 11).

Postcolonial theory pays particular attention to the *colonial aftermath*, to the persistence of the colonial system and the stigma of the colonial past, which resonates in the contemporary culture of independent states and poses a serious problem for their identity, and to the manifestations of new, neo-colonial forms of subjugation brought about by the expansion of capitalism and the processes of globalization. A tension thus exists between those who see postcolonialism as a geohistorical phenomenon and those who see it as a theory offering ideologically laden research directives stemming primarily from various forms of Marxism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction. Leela Gandhi points out that it is one thing to understand postcoloniality as a historical condition and another to understand it as a therapeutic theory that heals the wounds of the past (Domańska 2008: 162).

#### II.4. Topophilia and Experience According to Yi-Fu Tuan

The term “topophilia” was coined out of the Greek *topos*, meaning place or location, and *philia* – love. For the need of this thesis, I will be using the concepts coined by Yi-Fu Tuan in his *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (Tuan 1974), who was the first to establish topophilia as a separate branch of scholarship. Although some of his ideas were later criticized (Lofland 1975, Patricios 1979, Robinson 1990), the key concepts still operate in numerous scientific disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, or geography. I am going to imply them to the art historian’s research on art spaces as specific and multi-layered places and spaces of meaning. I find it important, to conceptualize the chosen art spaces as places, as they are formed from both, the mental or conceptual construct, as expressed in the exhibition topics, educational program, and language, but also the physical or tangible one - as each art space is a physical place, that also influence the way the viewer perceives the presented objects.

Topophilia is “an affective bond between people and place or setting” (Fleming 1975: 315). It is, literally, a love of place. It is about the meaning of things, and the experience of things, and is used broadly to “include all the human being's affective ties with the material environment” (Tuan 1974: 93). Experience seems to be one of the key concepts to understand Tuans idea. A person is getting to know the world through experience, and the modes used to gain experience include the senses of sight, taste, smell, touch, and hearing. Some of the senses are paths to rationalizing the experience – especially sight, which provokes thoughts, that are shaped by person’s knowledge and recognizable patterns of reality (Tuan 1975: 152). In other words, culture is a factor, which influences man's perceptions of his environment, which can be, however, approached both, through the senses, and mind, and can be on the one hand – a construct of thought, and the senses on the other (Fleming 1975: 315). Both are outcomes of different kinds of experience.

Tuan recognizes two mental constructs – of place and space, where place is “a centre of meaning constructed by experience” (Tuan 1975: 152), while space remains more abstract and less concrete: “Space is abstract. It lacks content; it is broad, open, and empty, inviting the imagination to fill it with substance and illusion; it is possibility and beckoning future. Place, by contrast, is the past and the present, stability, and achievement” (Tuan 1975: 164-165).

In architecture it is a free and physically empty form created and shaped by the materiality of the physical elements that surround it. Space is one of the fundamental elements in architecture, it constitutes the core relationship between the material and ephemeral, between the physical and non-physical. It also creates relationship between humans and objects. Space can only be considered in relation to something, and itself it creates relations between visual elements. Space can enhance objects, objects can enhance space, and the relation can also be balancing or equilibrate. Place is recognised and defined by individual experience; therefore, it cannot be objectified. In this thesis I will understand each art institution as *place*, with constructs of meaning on different levels, while the spacial conditions (such as exhibition space), will be referred to as *space*.

The way the building is constructed and how it is used, for what purposes, is also significant in the way it is understood. From the moment we approach it, through the full experience of passing through its corridors and rooms, affects the way we will understand it – not the building itself, but more likely the institution that is placed in it. Both institutions chosen for this research, is not placed within a new built headquarter – they took over a pre-existing space and adapted them to their needs. The choice of each place is worth

special attention. The surface appeal of the building has the power to create impressions and connotations, therefore the choice made by the authorities or founders of each institution should have been deliberate.

Another important factor mentioned by Tuan is name – to give a name to a place, is to give it a meaning and a recognition. Names contain all kinds of information, which might create a feeling of place, before even approaching it. Therefore, they are powerful. The name of an institution already informs us about its core idea, its essence.

Tuan devotes attention to regions, cities, and neighbourhoods as places of meaning, and as specific mental and emotional constructs. Therefore, it is important to see where and when each institution was founded, and what were the geographical circumstances – it makes a great difference, whether a place is set in the centre of the capital city, like PinchukArtCentre, or historic area of the Pechersk district, like Arsenal.

I am adapting some of Tuan's thoughts to the study of art institutions – I am, however, not making the full use of the topophilia, as that would require application of sociological or anthropological knowledge and methods, and I want to focus here on the subjects specific to my discipline – history of art. Therefore, I will not research on the viewers experience, as this would be an entirely different, although fascinating, topic. I will, however, use some methods and ways of thinking introduced by Tuan to understand better the meaning of each institution in the environmental, cultural, and historical context. I will try to understand its mental construct, because, as Tuan puts it, “architecture creates place materially as well as in the imagination” (Tuan 1975: 161). Finally, to “know a place is also to know the past” (Tuan 1975: 164) – therefore, I am examining the history of each building and conditions in which it was erased, and in which it was inhabited by each institution.

## **II.5. The Importance of Architecture**

The art centre is not only a place where the objects are kept, it not only is a material structure. It is a “space of encounter” (Boast, 2011: 56), a space that adds meaning to the objects and creates interactions (Jones and MacLeod 2016: 207). The objects will feel differently depending on the architecture. It is known that visitors experience the museum space as much and intense as the objects themselves, and that space significantly affects the way the whole museum experience is perceived. Not only the physical objects are considered, but the overall emotions and imaginary experiences that one encounters (Gaynor 2003). As was noticed by several scholars, architecture can play an important part

in experiencing some discourses – add authority, believability, and persuasiveness (Gieryn 2002: 6). The mission of the art centre, the way it works in various ways and contexts, is expressed in the language of its architecture, that also reflects major political, economic, and cultural shifts (Jones and MacLeod 2016: 208-209). Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of the art centre as such, I look at each of the chosen institutions also from the perspective of its architecture. Jones and MacLeod focus their interest in the socially located understanding of the museum architecture and its environment. I, on the other hand, try to understand the reception versus the intention. Each art space is settled within the specific environment, in a particular building. The choice is being made consciously, as the surroundings, exteriors, and interiors, express the values of the institution or build the desired image. For example, the National Museum would normally be placed in an old, historical building, and not, let's say, in the post-industrial site. The decision makers would want the audience to clearly understand, what they are going to find inside, what they can expect. However, the reception does not always follow the intention. Therefore, I examine the art institutions sites to see what was wanted, and what was achieved, and how the physical side corresponds to the conceptual. First step is to recognize that each building forms a part of the environment – country, city, city district etc., and is influenced by cultural, sociological, economic, and political currents and powers (Jones and MacLeod 2016: 208). Buildings – their sites, surroundings, internal spaces, and external facades, have qualities that need to be recognised (Jones and MacLeod 2016: 214). Therefore, I see architecture and space as an inseparable part of art institution practice, mission, and daily functioning, and not merely a static outcome of architect's work.

Museums and art galleries are normally designed with a specific goal and are constructed around a set of attributes. However, while an art institution is placed in already existing building, it must interact with what is given. Spatial organization is one of the main concerns for an institution, for which one of the main goals is to exhibit objects. It not only has to provide space for exhibits, it has to, or at least it should, reflect the concept of the institution itself, and sometimes the mission and its reception do not go hand in hand (MacLeod 2013).

### **III. From Soviet to National**

Ukraine gained independence after the collapse of the USSR and the signing of the so-called Białowieża Treaty on December 8, 1991. However, the country remained dilatory in

the processes of transformation, with the unstable legislative system, tardy restructuring, and multiple residues of the Soviet era (Łabowicz-Dymanus 2016: 118). The contemporary art environment was much poorer than in many other post-Soviet republics or satellites countries like Poland or Czechoslovakia. It was caused by the emigration of several Ukrainian artists to Russia or to the Western Europe, due to the strict regime against the so-called nonconformist art (Łabowicz-Dymanus 2016: 118). It was only in the mid-1980s, that the movements and demonstrations criticizing the authorities, proclaiming the abolition of censorship and the postulates of democracy and Ukraine's independence appeared, which was provoked by perestroika and shock after the Chernobyl disaster. After 1991 the newly emerged countries were supposed to cut themselves off from the socialist heritage and culture, as well as from Russian imperialism. The resolution of the Soviet Union was equal to the victory of the West in the cold war, and so the countries of the “former East” were expected to follow the Western paradigm, meaning to move from the colonial state to the state of auto-colonization. All under the flag of modernisation and independence.

As was said before, in the field of culture the first steps towards liberalisation occurred already in the end of the 1980s. Researchers started to dig into the issues from the past, and the questions about what has really happened, and why, started to be present. The greater number of historians appeared in the Western Ukraine, which was always more nationally conscious part of the country – this will later lead into the imposition of the Western Ukrainian historiography and the “cult” of persons such as Stepan Bandera, Roman Schukhevych, and the organisations such as the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). The blind spots of the past started being investigated and researched, and the banned subjects and figures begun to come back to the light. A few Ukrainian intellectuals was rehabilitated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, the Soviet historiography, where Ukraine was treated as the “little brother” of the great Russian nation, was still doing well. The Memorial Society established in Ukraine in March 1989 worked on the Ukrainian history blind spots and on establishing national historiography. The topic of Kyivian Rus, previously mainly researched by the Russian historians, now began to get interest in Ukrainian scholarship. It was claimed that the country has a 1000-years tradition and that the Kyivian Rus is the first state to be considered proto-Ukrainian.(Kuzio 2002: 252). This was obviously problematic for the Russian historiography, but also for the Western one, that has so far connected Kyivian Rus with Russia, and not Ukraine. According to the new historiography Ukraine was to be older

nation than Russia, the “elder brother”. One of the rehabilitated historians was Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi, who was so far considered to be a “German agent” and “bourgeois nationalist” (Kuzio 2002: 252). His book, the 11-volume *History of Ukraine-Rus* have now become the official line of the historiography of new Ukraine. It was mainly because his line of historical thought led directly to the 1000 years of history of one nation, with roots in Kyivian Rus. The newly introduced state symbol – *tryzub*, as well as the currency – *hryvna* (UAH), were first used in the Kyivian Rus.

The post-Soviet Ukraine was highly diversified population. In his 2015 book *Ukraina. Syndrom postkolonialny (Ukraine. The Postcolonial Syndrome)* Mykola Riabchuk describes that around 2000s the so called pro-Western electorate, liberal-democratic, was present on all the area of historical First Polish Republic (Western and Central Ukraine), as well as the historical Cossack Hetmanate of the 17th and 18th century (Riabchuk 2015a: 10). However, there remained nine districts in the South and in the East, where the pro-Soviet, anti-Western and authoritarian moods prevailed (Riabchuk 2015a: 10). These were the lands of the so-called Wild Fields, where the industrialization went hand in hand with russification in the 19th century, and with sovietisation in a later period. Therefore, the only known historical tradition of these lands is sovietness (Riabchuk 2015a: 10). It was thus so important to find a common root for the whole country, such as the Kyivian Rus. The new historiography underlined, that the tragedies such as the artificial famine of 1932-1933, or the Chernobyl explosion of 1986, were only possible because at that time Ukraine was not an independent country and was under the foreign imperial protectorate, that led to the tragedies. It was also conceived, that Ukraine is more European than Eastern country, with a long tradition of democratic institutions, which differentiate the state from Russia (Kuzio 2002: 252). The teaching of the new national history became very important for the state (Petherbridge-Hernandez and Raby 1993). The same phenomenon will reappear after 2014 and the beginning of the Donbas war, when one of the four so called Decommunization Bills of 2015 will be devoted to education and new programming in schools. Other core ideas of the new historiography in the early 1990s included the redefinition of the 1654 treaty of Pereyaslav, that were no longer depicted as a reunion of two brother nations (Ukrainians and Russians), but rather as an event forced due to the Poland’s unwillingness to accept Ruthenia as a partner in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. The foreign rules were being reinterpreted – seeing the imperial tsarists and Stalinist rule as unambiguously negative, while the Austrian rule as more favourable. The Holodomor was officially declared an ethnocide, and the Ukrainian’s People’s

Republic (UNR), Directory and Hetmanate of 1917-1921 were depicted as a legitimate attempts of state building. UPA and other nationalists' partisans of the World War II were to be understood as the organisations that fought against both Soviets and the Nazis (Kuazio 2002: 152-253). Reclaiming state and nationhood was based on anti-Soviet and anti-imperial notions, instead of accepting the hybridity that emerged after years of imperial power.

### **III.1. Decolonisation of Ukraine after 1991**

To understand the environment which surrounded the emergence of the two contemporary art centres that are the subject of this thesis, it is important to see the political and cultural situation in Ukraine after 1991 from the perspective of the postcolonial studies.

Only a reduced version of decolonization was introduced in Ukraine after 1991, and until the Orange Revolution in 2004 there was no state program of de-Sovietisation and decommunization. What was lacking after 1991 was a critical reflection on the past, which is necessary to create healthy and self-conscious society and the national community.<sup>32</sup> The narrative was torn apart between anticolonial nationalists and those who wanted to keep the post-imperial heritage alive. Initiated during the Leonid Kravchuk's presidency (1991-1994) and continued during Leonid Kuchma's (1994-2004), there were, however, elements of nationalisation, mainly present in education.<sup>33</sup> The Orange Revolution, even if ultimately did not fulfill the hopes for political and economic change in the country, was the first true anticolonial protest. The following rule of Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010) did acquire some anti-Soviet, which in Ukrainian case means anticolonial, features (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 6). The new version of history was now focused on the underground nationalist movement of the OUN and UPA,<sup>34</sup> the Holodomor and the fight for independence. An important venture of Yushchenko, aimed at institutionalization of the new historical narratives, was the opening of the The Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (Ukrainian: Український Інститут Національної Пам'яті, UINM), also translated as the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, in 2006.

The sudden turn in the memory politics took place in 2010 when the presidential election was won by the pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich. Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk call it the "re-orientation from anticolonial politics of memory to 'restorational' memory politics characterised by the return to Soviet symbols, such as the use of the term 'Great Patriotic War'" (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 6). The new president appointed

Valeriy Soldatenko a new head of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, a historian with a clearly pro-Russian view on the history (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 6).

Yanukovych's rule was abruptly finished in February 2014, when in the climax of the Maidan revolution he was forced to flee to Russia.<sup>35</sup> Earlier, in November 2013, he denied signing the association agreement with the European Union, what in turn led to the outburst of the Euromaidan. The society saw Yanukovych's Party of Regions as a regime that tries to "defend the legacy of Soviet imperialism, and throw Ukraine into the arms of Russia", as the EU agreement were to be replaced by the Eurasian Custom Union offered by Russia (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 6).

The Euromaidan, called the first postcolonial revolution (Gerasimov 2014), changed the narratives imposed by Yanukovych's government and implemented those of the anticolonial nationalism. "Kyiv was drowning in yellow and blue"<sup>36</sup> (Sulek 2018a: 95) – the national symbols were present on the streets of the city, its walls, and windows. They related to the national colours of Ukraine, the *tryzub* – the coat of arms, as well as with the OUN and UPA.<sup>37</sup> The Cossack heritage was also present, represented by the formation of *sotni* in Maidan, the self-organised units, which the UPA also used in their structures. Some men decided to cut their hair in a Cossack style – head shaved bald with a thick lock of hair falling from the top of the head onto the forehead (the so called *oseledets*). The demonstration of national symbols was juxtaposed with the destruction of the Soviet ones. On the 8th of December the monument of Lenin in Kyiv was toppled down, an event that started a series of demolitions of the Soviet monuments in Ukraine. These bottom-up actions might be understood as a social demand for decommunization and de-Sovietization, which found its legal form in the 2015 de-communization laws, that were largely the doing of the director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, Volodymyr Viatrovykh,<sup>38</sup> appointed in 2014:

His actions were the driving force behind the so-called decommunization laws, which aim to regulate how to speak about the past. Viatrovykh was also involved in constructing a positive image of national heroes and nationalist organisations from the Second World War era such as Stepan Bandera, the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, and UPA Ukrainian Insurgent Army, ignoring their collaboration with the Nazi authorities, ethnic purges of the Polish population in Volhynia and the local nature of these organisations, which operated only in Western Ukraine (Sulek 2020b).



What I am describing here is an imposition of a narrative, that is marginal and characteristic of only a small part of the country. Decommunization, a process of erasure from public spaces the physical remnants of the old system, regulated by the 2015 laws, became one of the most visible consequences of Maidan. The so-called decommunization laws were passed by the Supreme Court of Ukraine on the 9th of April 2015, and they all concern the politics of national memory and shaping the new historical policy free from Soviet rhetoric. The first law regulates the access to archives,<sup>39</sup> the second concerns the narratives of fighting against the Nazi regime during the Second World War,<sup>40</sup> the third, initiated personally by Viatrovykh together with Yurii Shukhevych,<sup>41</sup> aims to regulate the discussions around veterans of the struggle for Ukraine's independence, and even foresees penalties for denying its legality and legitimacy.<sup>42</sup> The final law concerns decommunization of public space, and its implementation entailed change of institution and street names, even cities,<sup>43</sup> which commemorated communism, as well as removal of monuments and memorial plaques, an action required within the six months from the implementation of the law. The result – the removal of almost 2000 monuments (a phenomenon that soon will be named *Leninopad*), and the change for around 50,000 towns, streets, and square names – caused a lot of controversies. There is also a question of why this had only happened now? Other post-Soviet republic, and the so-called Soviet satellite states like Poland, removed the remnants of the system much earlier. It seems that it was Maidan that unleashed emotions that had been suppressed for years. Sułek: “Demolition of monuments is nothing new. In Moscow, after the October Revolution, the statue of Tsar Alexander III was toppled, the head cut off and the body dismembered. The mass demolition of monuments in Ukraine and the attendant emotions are therefore connected to a much deeper theme – reconciliation with the past to be able to look into the future” (Sułek 2020b).

The decommunization laws have been widely criticised by the authorities, scholars, and journalists, both, in Ukraine and abroad. The concern was brought up, that they might limit the freedom of speech, as well as objective scientific research<sup>44</sup> – even if the Ukrainian archives were now to be opened. Even the Venice Commission expressed their concern about its restrictions against “the freedom of expression and association” (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 11). However, as noticed by Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk:

All these disputes demonstrated not only the lack of professionalism of the people who crafted the laws and the lack of strategic thinking on the part of those who adopted such laws but also the rigid limits of interpretation within the scholarly

community that applied universalist theoretical frameworks, ignoring the Ukrainian historical context, including the condition of postcoloniality (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 11).

This condition is pointed out by the authors twice more. They comment on the fact, that the law on the *fighters for liberation* describes them as those, who *regained* independence, what would suggest that Ukraine was independent before the 20th century. The authors see it as an example of *self-invention*, which is typical for the postcolonial condition, as well as for the anticolonial historical discourse. The historical monopolization of narratives, the one and only right and legit way to interpret history, as well as a top-down permission to punish those who present other perspectives, is characteristic of the imperial and colonial powers. By introducing the decommunization laws, Ukraine is emulating the colonial discourse, which is also characteristic of the postcolonial condition (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 11). The authors, however, also point to some elements of hybridity visible in the 2015 laws:

The “hybridal” elements of these laws can be noticed in their references to three distinct traditions and practices: first, they refer to international norms such as UN declarations and EU legislation; second, the need for these “decommunization” laws is explained by the local context as “securing the country’s sovereignty”, reinstating historical justice for crimes like Holodomor; third, these laws operate within the “Soviet” framework of history writing, where there is a strong belief in the existence of only one “correct” interpretation of history, and that the state can punish the deviation from this interpretation. In such a way, they combine modern Western liberal tradition with the Soviet legacy and the national interests (understood exclusively in anticolonial defensive terms). In our view, they contain elements of Ukrainian postcolonial hybridity in the sphere of memory politics. However, in the “Laws on Decommunization”, this “hybridity” is reduced or “tamed” since they express the state authorities’ belief in some given essentialized qualities of “correct” history (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 12).

Even after Maidan no real decolonisation took place, and on the governmental level the only big step taken was the set of the four laws, which turned out to be controversial and chaotic. They were triggered by the Maidan revolution and the subsequent political events: “The symbol of value-based delegitimization of Soviet colonialism in Ukraine was

the Maidan, which without relying on the principles of traditional identity united various network communities in Ukraine” (Pasko 2020: 35-36).

According to some scholars, the society, however, have not used chances for a social change, which emerged after Maidan (Pasko 2020). But some markers of decolonial process became visible, and I do not mean the abrupt and sudden removal of the Soviet monuments and street names. This symbolic and chaotic violence proved the lack of a coherent strategy of decolonization of the country. As underlined by Pasko, this aggression faced onto the *other*, diverts attention from what is important – the internal change (Pasko 2020: 37). The change that should come out from understanding and healing, as well as from appreciation of history and culture, in contrast to the inferiority and peripheral complex stemming from the idea of more prestigious Russian culture and language. What was needed was the rethinking of the past in terms of the imperial culture and heritage, and elaboration of a “third space for negotiations” (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019: 15), which would be situated between the Soviet and new historical narratives, and which would be the source of new meanings.

### **III.2. Contemporary Art Spaces in Soviet Kyiv**

The situation of contemporary art in Ukraine has changed dramatically within the last thirty years, but even more drastically within the last decade. After gaining the independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the art institutions were “inherited” from the old system, and the expected adjustments to the new circumstances were not coming (Bluszcz 2013). Both, the number of artists, and the public for contemporary art, were low. The biggest art organization remained the National Union of Artists of Ukraine (Ukrainian: Національна Спілка Художників України), very conservative structure established in 1938 as a Union of Soviet Artists of Ukraine, the only art organisation officially permitted in the Soviet times. The Union run its art space in Soviet times, which also operates today. Artists collaborated with the “so-called Multi-Unit Enterprise (Ukrainian: художній комбінат), the guarantor of survival for every Soviet artist” (Akinsha 2018: 29). The commissions were distributed by the Enterprise, bought *en masse*, and often kept in the storage, although some of them embellished walls of state’s enterprises (Akinsha 2018: 29).

The roots of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine head back to 1917, when the Ukrainian Academy of Arts was formed in Kyiv on the 5th of December (in 1924-1930 under the name Kyiv Art Institute). It was the time of ferment, when the Bolshevik Russia fought against the formation of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, so the foundation of the

Academy had a symbolic meaning (Fedoruk 2019: 11). Several prominent Ukrainian artists were connected to the Academy, including its founding-professors Heorhii Narbut, Oleksandr Murashko, Vasyl Krychevskyi, Fedor Krychevskyi, Mykhailo Boychuk, Mykola Burachek, Mykhailo Zhuk, Abram Manevych. The Ukrainian Academy of Arts was an important part of the newly founded Ukrainian People's Republic cultural policy – Ukrainian art, culture and tradition ought to be supported as part of the official state's policy (Lozhkina 2020: 55). Lozhkina:

Up until the institution's reorganization by the Bolsheviks in 1922, it was de facto led by the nationally oriented monumentalist Mykhailo Boichuk. Boichuk's classes during those hungry war years gave life to a whole host of young artists: Vasyl Sedliar, Oksana Pavlenko, Onufrii Biziukov, Antonina Ivanova, and Ivan Padalka. These artists would lend significant weight to the Ukrainian art scene in the 1920s and early 1930s and would come to be known as Boichukists (Lozhkina 2020: 56).

In the Soviet times any research of the history of the Academy was considered bourgeois and nationalist, and thus forbidden (Fedoruk 2019: 12). Interestingly, today the art education in Ukraine is considered inadequate and backward, unsuited to the contemporary needs, and both, the Ukrainian Academy of Arts, and the Union of Artists – as conservative and suspended in the past. Art techniques such as performance, installation or video art are marginalised, and the teaching programmes are circled around the traditional painting techniques (Myched 2013). The curator Alisa Lozhkina summarised the Ukrainian art at the turn of the centuries in the following words:

The remnants of the old Soviet art system were slowly and reluctantly making way for a new aesthetic paradigm, but there has been no ultimate break in favour of contemporary art. The government has largely been neglecting modern art practices. Until recently, Ukraine's ministry of culture was known for its rigid conservatism and is still dominated by obsolete bureaucratic norms and priorities. The realist art created by members of the anachronistic Union of Artists has gradually degenerated into salon art; although it is no longer connected with the global art process, it remains the basic aesthetic system taught at the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture and other state-funded art schools. No alternative art schools have emerged since the country gained independence. Artists

learn about contemporary art from friends, internet, short-term courses, or – as of more recent times – abroad (Lozhkina 2018: 38-39).

The first independent art space, Soviart, was opened in Kyiv in 1987 and run by Sergei Sviatchenko and Viktor Khamatov (Łabowicz-Dymanus 2016: 118, Lozhkina 2020: 307). It was both – the art gallery and a platform for artists and curators, who tried to form an independent art environment. Apart from that, artists formed squats that served as working and exhibition spaces, such as *Parcommune* in Kyiv, placed around Mykhailivska Street, former Paris Commune Street, between 1989 and 1994.

### **III.3. Kyiv Contemporary Art Spaces in Independent Ukraine**

Galyna Sklyarenko in the 2016 catalogue of Ukrainian art published on the 25th anniversary of the Ukrainian independence wrote:

The need for a museum (or museums even) of contemporary Ukrainian art was first voiced during Perestroika. Even in Kyiv, one has no opportunity to see contemporary art unless there is a big show at the Art Arsenal or at the PinchukArtCentre. At present, our country has no collection that would offer a comprehensive overview of national art from latter half of the 20th century to the present ( Abramovich 2017, vol. 1: 11).

The problem she addresses here, the nearly total absence of contemporary art centres, accompanied by the undeveloped market and no stable governmental support in the first years of Ukrainian independence marked the emergence of PinchukArtCentre and Arsenal. Similarly, curator and the director of the Soros Centre for Contemporary Art in Kyiv, Jerzy Onuch, recalls: “When I lived in Ukraine, and I lived there for 13 years, no new cultural institutions were built. No new concert halls, galleries, museums etc. were built. While stadiums were built in connection with Euro 2012, nothing has changed in terms of cultural infrastructure in 20 years of independence” (Laufer 2013).

The contemporary art institutions in Kyiv could, and still can, be divided in two main groups – state, and private. The main representant of the first one, next to the Arsenal which is the topic of this thesis, remains the National Art Museum of Ukraine (NAMU), the first museum that was freely open to the public. It was founded at the end of the 19th century thanks to the initiative of Ukrainian intellectuals and nationalized in 1919. Although the focus of the institution is not based on contemporary art, after 1991 NAMU

had hosted several important exhibitions dedicated to the art of the last fifty years, such as the *New Wave* in 2009, curated by Oksana Barshynova, or *Myth. Ukrainian Baroque* in 2012, curated by Barshynova and Galyna Sklyarenko. It was a meaningful event, as, on the one hand, it presented the phenomenon of the Ukrainian baroque and its presence in the national consciousness. On the other hand, the curators broke with the conventional museum narratives, of exhibiting art works in a chronological way. They combined the objects from different eras, bringing out a wide network of associations and allusions between works that were separated by centuries (Myched 2013). In 2010 Olesia Ostrovska-Lyuta curated the *Great Surprise* in NAMU – an art intervention by the artists of the R.E.P. group that pointed to the issues of hidden narratives of past and present. Furthermore, the state-run New Art Gallery exhibition hall of the Union of Artists of Ukraine continued to host art shows, and in the 90s the House of Artist in Kyiv was established. In 2001 The Modern Art Research Institute was founded in Kyiv, a state-run institution with the exhibition space focused on contemporary Ukrainian art.

In the other pole, the art environment of Kyiv was further mostly influenced by the private Soros Centres for Contemporary Art (SCCA<sup>45</sup>), established in 1994, with its gallery opened in 1995 at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy, which was the only place at that time that exhibited renown international artists:

Kuzma<sup>46</sup> was probably also aware that not only was contemporary art almost non-existent in Ukraine, but so was its audience. Thus, a gallery that regularly organized exhibitions not only of Ukrainian artists, but also of international stars, had any chance of gaining the public's permanent interest. Presenting the work of foreign artists also helped to create a context for local art and to educate the public. (...) The SCCA had a tremendous impact on shaping the Ukrainian art scene, as well as the international careers of the artists who exhibited there (Łabowicz-Dymanus 2016: 120, 122).

The regular organization of exhibitions by recognized foreign artists, an initiative of Marta Kuzma, continued by Jerzy Onuch, was an extremely important factor. Thanks to this, the Ukrainian audience had an opportunity to see excellent works of art (Łabowicz-Dymanus lists Bruce Nauman, Bill Viola, David Cerny, Annika von Hausswolff, Jannis Kounellis, Joseph Beuys, Joseph Kosuth, Andy Warhol, Alighiero Boetti, Paolo Canavari, Diamante Faraldo, Ste-Fano Arienti, Sam Taylor-Wood, Yves Klein, Douglas Gordon, Martin Creed, Damien Hirst, Marc Quinn, and Steve McQueen), and get acquainted with

the international context (Łabowicz-Dymanus 2016: 124) – an idea, that will be continued by the PinchukArtCentre. It was also the SCCA that shaped the audience for contemporary art in Kyiv and made it fashionable. Furthermore, it invested in alternative art projects and practices, and offered funds to the artists to experiment and work. When in 1999 Soros decided to withhold funding of the centre, the SCCA changed into a foundation under the name CCA at NaUKMA, and later (2008) CSM/Foundation Centre for Contemporary Art.

Some private art galleries emerged at the beginning of the 90s in Kyiv – Irena Gallery and YKV Gallery of Contemporary Art in 1991, the Alipii Gallery at the Ukrainian House in 1992, Blank Art Gallery in 1993, Ra and Atelier Karas in 1995 (Kochubinska 2019b: 177-181, Lozhkina 2020: 391). At the beginning of the 21st century an important private gallery was led by Marat Gelman. Opened in 2002 it was an important place that, according to Lozhkina, “stood out for its radical and bohemian approach” (Lozhkina 2020: 393). Numerous art centres and galleries were opened in the capital in the second half of the decade – Pavlo Gudimov’s Ya Gallery Art Center (2007), Anatoliy Dymchuk’s Dymchuk Gallery (2008), state-run M17 Contemporary Art Center (2010), Shcherbenko Art Centre founded by Maryna Shcherbenko (2012). Still, in the late-2000 still, the only institutions with the high-profile and international projects, the places that attracted unprecedented public attention were Mystetskyi Arsenal and PinchukArtCentre, that are the topic of this thesis.

#### **IV. A Private Centre for Contemporary Art - PinchukArtCentre**

Sociologist Harald Wydra in his 2007 book *Communism and the Emergence of Democracy* notices that the post-Soviet countries share the desire to “overcome the backward condition of one’s country or the oppression of communist rule by reaching the shores of Western civilisation” (Wydra 2007: 240). One of the perspectives that I propose here is to look at the PinchukArtCentre as an independent Ukraine’s dream about creating a *Western Museum*. Remaining, at the same time, in the hands of an oligarch, position that emerged in the post-Soviet Ukraine and other states after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, that has been widely criticised mainly by the pro-western circles, the PAC forms an interesting hybrid of new-Western and post-Soviet, while the oligarchic system is often seen as the source of the lack of political reforms, of corruption and the unbreakable bonds with Russia.

Using the methodology described before, I am having a closer look at the PinchukArtCentre in Kyiv, opened in 2006 by Ukrainian oligarch Victor Pinchuk. I am analysing its stated aim, its location, architecture and exhibition space, and program, with a special focus on the new narratives, that, in my opinion, emerged around 2013 due to the political changes in the country.

The PAC has been founded and financed by the Victor Pinchuk Foundation<sup>47</sup> based in Kyiv, which also owns several works by Ukrainian and international artists.<sup>48</sup> The PAC was officially opened in September 2006, after only a couple of months of preparations. The admission is free of charge, and the PAC claims to have over 3 million visitors as of today.<sup>49</sup> The centre holds the biannual global prize for artists under the age of 35 – Future Generation Art Prize, and the biannual PinchukArtPrize for young Ukrainian artists, and was responsible for the Ukrainian National Pavilions in 2007, 2009, and 2015. An important initiative that emerged in 2015 is the Research Platform. Currently the team of the PAC consists of twenty-seven members<sup>50</sup>, the artistic director of the centre is Björn Geldhof, who took the position in September 2015, after six years of working at the PAC as an Artistic Manager and Curator (November 2009–October 2012), and as a Deputy Artistic Director (October 2012–August 2015).<sup>51</sup> He comes from Belgium, was educated as an art historian, and previously worked in Antwerp, Gent and Leuven.

According to Alisa Lozhkina, curator who worked in the Marat Gelman Gallery and Mystetskyi Arsenal, the story of the PAC started already in 2002 with the figure of Russian political consultant, collector, and gallerist Marat Gelman<sup>52</sup>, who collaborated with Pinchuk and other oligarchs in Kyiv. Earlier, in Moscow, Gelman started careers of the whole generation of Ukrainian painters in the early 90s, his gallery having the exhibitions of such figures as Alexander Roitburd and Oleksandr Hnylytsky. “He has this history of supporting Ukrainian art” (Lozhkina 2022). In 2001 he started working as a political consultant in Kyiv, and in 2003 opened the Marat Gelman Gallery (closed in 2004), that became the first “administrator” for Pinchuk’s projects in contemporary art (Lozhkina 2022). Its first project was a 2003 conference that discussed the idea of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Ukraine:

It’s focus supposed to be the Ukrainian collection, and we’ve [Alisa Lozhkina and Oleksandr Soloviov] started the huge research project that aimed to prepare the list of the art works that could be acquired for the collection. I went to collect the money in trash bags from the Pinchuk’s office. The exhibition entitled “The First



Collection”, curated by Sacha Soloviov was soon opened, and the gallery [Gelman] was the managing partner. It was in the exhibition hall of the Artist’s House [Ukrainian: Центральний будинок художника] at L’vivs’ka Square. So, it was the first artistic project made by Pinchuk (Lozhkina 2022).

According to Lozhkina, they all later quarrelled due to some political reasons in the eve of the Orange Revolution, and the cooperation between Gelman and Pinchuk was broken (Lozhkina 2022). Pinchuk started collaboration with Nicolas Bourriaud and other international advisors, who, according to Lozhkina, “started brainwashing him, that Ukrainian art is just garbage” (Lozhkina 2022). Pinchuk lost interest in Ukrainian art and switched to international art market, slowly heading towards what became for many years the PAC’s trademark – the most recognizable names of artists such as Damien Hirst, Haruki Murakami, or Antony Gormley.

#### **IV.1. Victor Pinchuk**

We will remain suspicious still for a long time about the big money of those who organised financial pyramids in the early 1990s, speculated on compensation certificates in the mid-1990s, [took advantage of] an unprecedented wave of shadow privatisations at the beginning of the 2000s. But when with their money, these people help children’s lives, everything else becomes of secondary importance (After: Puglisi 2008: 70).<sup>53</sup>

Who is Victor Pinchuk? An oligarch who owns steel company, four television channels and a tabloid newspaper. On the PAC website he calls himself a businessman and a philanthropist and gives some details of his biography. According to the New Statesman, being a Jew, Pinchuk was denied to study in Kyiv in the 1960s, so he moved to Dniepropetrovsk to gain a degree (1983) in metallurgy at the Metallurgical Institute and “designed a pipe that became the source of his fortune” (Conrad 2006: 43). He also earned a PhD in 1987, founded Interpipe Company and, later, EastOne Ltd., Eastlabs, and built a metallurgical plant – the Interpipe Steel Mill – in Dnepropetrovsk, where Olafur Eliasson placed his five permanent installations.<sup>54</sup> His second wife being the daughter of the former Ukrainian president, Leonid Kuchma, Pinchuk quickly made it to the top. Kuchma ran the Soviet’s Union largest missile factory, where Pinchuk served as an MP for eight years. (Conrad 2006: 43) He was an elected Member of the Ukrainian Parliament two times between 1998 and 2006. After the Orange Revolution, during which he supported Viktor

Yanukovych, not only he lost the previously won opportunity to open an art centre in the Arsenal in Kyiv, more importantly, from the financial point of view, his latest acquisition of the steel company Kryvorizhstal was also declared illegal, just like the Arsenal contest (Conrad 2006: 43). According to artnews.com overview:

Victor Pinchuk is a Ukrainian industrialist who made his money with steel. He mostly collects contemporary art, and has a garden in Kiev full of sculptures, including pieces by Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons. In 2006 his foundation opened the PinchukArtCentre in that city as a venue for showcasing the work of both Ukrainian and international contemporary artists – “a temporary studio, a research and production laboratory for projects still to be developed – projects which uncompromising artistic extreme and intensity give validity to the works,” as the space puts it on its website. In April 2018, it was revealed that special counsel Robert S. Mueller III was investigating a \$150,000 payment Pinchuk gave Donald Trump for an appearance via video conference in Kyiv<sup>55</sup> (ARTnews 2015).

ARTnews is “the oldest and most widely circulated art magazine in the world” (ARTnews, n.d.). It seems justified to say, that pointing by the magazine to the investigation run in Pinchuk’s case underline the awareness of the art world of the oligarch’s “problematic” business-political background. Alisa Lozhkina: “He was not a nice guy, and he is not a nice guy, Ewa. (...) He is a cancer of Ukrainian society” (Lozhkina 2022). It was mentioned to me in private conversations multiple times, among others during the discussion about the Ukrainian National Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2015. Some artists and visitors found it disturbing to see the pavilion, which exhibition discusses the dramatic war situation in the country, in front of the millionaires’ yachts in Venice. “Probably Pinchuk’s yacht was also berthed there” – commented one of the artists. The Art Newspaper cites the anonymous source, that claimed, that Pinchuk’s interest in art was suggested by the French PR agency that he hired after the bad press that the whole family received after the 2000 murder of the Ukrainian journalist Georgiy Gongadze<sup>56</sup> (Ruiz 2011). After the murder Pinchuk’s spending in philanthropy and his search for “Western friends” visibly swelled.<sup>57</sup> The same ARTnews acknowledges Pinchuk’s important role in the art world and lists him among top 200 world art collectors in 2009, 2010 and 2020 (ARTnews 2009, 2010). Geldhof, an artistic director of PAC, believes in Pinchuk’s true love for art:

He's passionate about art, he loves it deeply, he brings it everywhere, throughout all projects, he is incredibly engaged. He believes that art changes the world. He believes that art changes thinking. And that's why he started the art centre. He didn't start it cause "I am a collector and I love art." He didn't start it like "I am collector and I need to build the collection." That was not the point. It was like "I wanna bring something to the country that changes the way people think. And there's two things that do it – science and art." He chose to invest in art. Because he believes that confronting big public with contemporary art changes how they look at life. And that's our mission today (Geldhof 2021).

"An oligarch is not simply a rich man. An oligarch craves power" (Kowal 2013: 79). The "position" of an oligarch comes from the final phase of *perestroika* and the 1990's, when the state property went into the private pockets of those who were well-placed already within the communist system (Kowal 2013: 79) – just like Victor Pinchuk. So, oligarchy, as much as it is an "invention" of the last decade of the 20th century, is deeply rooted in the Soviet times. Due to the USSR economical politics various branches of industry were divided between the republics. Therefore, today's oligarchies operate sectors – in Ukraine it is steelworks and transport of energy from Russia, joined by the transfer of goods and raw materials to the West (Kowal 2013: 80). Art collecting, next to the other symbols of luxurious life, became a hobby for the oligarchs, who, it seems, connect it to other activities leading to the improvement of their image. Museums, art, and culture in general is thus an area of oligarchs' interest. Ihor Kolomoyskyi and Gennady Timchenko have established the "Jewish Memory and Holocaust in Ukraine" Museum in Dnipro. Vadim Rabinovich sponsored the rebuilding of the Lazarus Brodsky Synagogue and the gilding of the domes of the St. Volodymyr's Cathedral in Kyiv. Rinat Akhmetov, who is a Muslim of a Tatar origin, made the construction of the Donetsk-based Ahat Jami Mosque possible, while Dmytro Firtash supports the rebuilding of Orthodox churches and monasteries. Henadiy Boholyubov supports the Jewish communities in Ukraine and abroad (Kowal 2013: 82). And there is Victor Pinchuk with his PinchukArtCentre and plans for building the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center in Kyiv.<sup>58</sup> With all his other endeavours, such as the Yalta European Strategy Forum, set up in 2004, which is an international conference that hosts the most important American and European politicians, Pinchuk is seen as a politician himself, as his impact on the Ukrainian economy, culture and politics is truly tangible. "In Eastern Europe, oligarchs are mostly a Ukrainian speciality" (Kowal 2013: 84). This is due

to the former president Leonid Kuchma's policy of concentrating the capital and power into hands of a small group of people, whose impact has not minimalised since. In Russia Vladimir Putin has put to an end oligarchic tendency by getting rid of people whose ambitions he found too dangerous for his own goals. Therefore, the Ukrainian oligarchs will not be willing to support the Russian influence in their country, even if, as in Pinchuk's case, the correct relations have to be kept due to the trade with Russia<sup>59</sup>. As summarized by Rosaria Puglisi:

(...) as close as they were and attracted as they might have felt towards Russian business, they were particularly wary of the risks that a closer interaction with Moscow might involve. If in the years following the end of the Soviet Union the Ukrainian economic elite might have perceived itself as naturally inclined towards Russia, in 2007 Ukrainian oligarchs' absolute priority was to preserve their independence while, at the same time, enhancing their business profits (Puglisi 2008: 79).

Although it seems unobvious from the Western point of view, some analysts claim, that the oligarchs are guarantors of the non-totalitarian system (Puglisi 2008: 69) and some, more cautiously, that at least some of them try to operate within the internationally accepted business practices (Puglisi 2008: 82). In general, though, the oligarchic system is widely criticised, and named among the main reasons for the lack of positive changes in Ukrainian state after 1991. Taking that into consideration, the fact is also that Pinchuk's engagement in the charity of all kinds cannot be underestimated, as well as his support for culture and the Ukrainian state in general. Pinchuk hosts an annual gathering on philanthropy during the World Economic Forum in Davos and was the first Eastern European to take the Giving Pledge in 2013, a promise to give away at list half his wealth for good purposes. While studying at the University of Cambridge I personally met two Ukrainians in their postgraduate programmes, who managed to be there thanks to Pinchuk's support.<sup>60</sup> The Victor Pinchuk Foundation organised also several valuable cultural projects, such as the 'Independence Concert' by Paul McCartney in Kyiv, which was free to attend, or the production of a film *Spell Your Name* on the Holocaust in Ukraine with Steven Spielberg. Among multiple activities, the PAC website also lists the Foundation's support for the Clinton Global Initiative, Tony Blair's Faith Foundation, Peres Center for Peace, the Anti-AIDS Foundation of Elena Pinchuk. As of 2019 the Foundation has invested over 125 million dollars into their work in Ukraine (PinchukArtCentre 2019c: 30).

## IV.2. The Good Citizen

The PAC is run by the Victor Pinchuk Foundation, which was established in 2006 and is the biggest private philanthropic foundation in Ukraine. According to the PAC's 2012 report: "The Foundation invested in three main directions: a) in people, to boost human capital; b) in society, to promote social responsibility; c) in the world, to foster a more integrated world" (Schneider and Geldhof 2012: 28). Its mission is: "Empowering future generations to become the change makers of tomorrow" (PinchukArtCentre, n.d.a). It is also dedicated to fostering artistic education, providing a sustainable contribution to the cultural participation and emancipation of Ukrainian art and society, and giving a significant contribution to the cultural dialogue between East and West as well as between national identity and international challenges (Schneider and Geldhof 2012: 28).

Next to the improvements in the education and healthcare, the mission is to provide access to the "inspiration of contemporary art," and to "foster international integration" (PinchukArtCentre, n.d.a). Those objectives are met by the creation of the art centre, that aimed at being the hub for contemporary art, that would develop the Ukrainian art scene, while also creating the platform for the critical social discourse. "We wanted to build civil society and to promote critical thinking" (Geldhof 2021). The exhibition program aims at investigating "national identity in the context of international challenges" (PinchukArtCentre, n.d.a). In this short sentence the core idea is revealed – the intention to be part of the international contemporary art scene, supporting the local one, and developing the critical approach. In the first years the mission of the centre was, however, somehow different and is to be found in the catalogue of the exhibition of the PAC's collection which was opened in 2007, the first year<sup>61</sup> of centre's existence. In the Reflection<sup>61</sup> catalogue we read the introduction by Peter Doroshenko, the first president of PAC:

The PinchukArtCentre is committed to presenting exhibitions of national and international importance that relates to current artistic activity. The PinchukArtCentre Collection is a new and leading collection of contemporary art, featuring its consistent commitment to collect and exhibit the finest art available. The art centre began collecting art only four years ago and only opened in its present facility one year ago, but since that time it has assembled a core of Ukrainian and international art that is becoming a role model for other global institutions to emulate.

This exhibition, “Reflection”, includes numerous recent acquisitions that are representative of the collection's breadth and depth. Works by artists such as Serhiy Bratkov, Peter Doig, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Christian Marclay, Takashi Murakami, Gabriel Orozco, Arsen Savadov, Sam Taylor-Wood, Oleg Tistol, Vasyl Tsagolov and Piotr Uklanski fill the various floors.

Thus, the PinchukArtCentre is a special place dedicated to the preservation and contemplation of contemporary work of art (Doroshenko and Staebler 2007).

It is clear, that the initial idea around the PAC was simply to “give” to the people some “good art” for free.

Further we read: “These art works have new history here in Kyiv; they are now part of the centre and will be exhibited at various times in the future. The collection of art works in the PinchukArtCentre will offer a retreat from ourselves and from the competitive demands of the workday and the world around us. In a certain sense, as a church or temple, the centre is a new sanctuary” (Doroshenko and Staebler 2007).

There are two important notions in those parts of the introductory text. Firstly, the art works by international artists are now part of Ukrainian art space, implicitly, making this space an equal part or partner for international art market. Secondly, at this time (2007) the role of art is seen as a pleasurable way to enjoy free time and admire the mastery of the finest artists of the 21st century. The figure of the museum as a sacral space is also introduced – it is a space when a spectator is left with awe against what is seen. It's not about participation, critical commentary, or reflection. It is rather about a pleasurable experience and a god-artist versus faithful-viewer relation.

Pinchuk is said to be the admirer of George Soros, whose multiple projects in the Eastern Europe, including the Soros Art Centres, were to stimulate the development of the so-called “Western civic values” (Somers Cocks 2006, Łabowicz-Dymanus 2016). This idea dates to the 19th century and is an important factor in the processes of Ukrainian decolonization and de-Sovietization. Riabchuk describes it as a humanistic tradition, inherited after the First Polish Republic of discerning oneself from Russia by symbolically belonging to the West (Europe), and not the Russian (Asian) empire (Riabchuk 2015b: 11). Already in the 19th century Ukrainian intelligentsia would glorify the Ukrainian “Europeanness” as opposed to the Russian “Asiaticism”. The model of an art institution ran by a private donor might bring associations with those of the Soros Centres for Contemporary Art (SCCA), a net of institutions initiated by George Soros in several

countries of Central and Eastern Europe existing in the 1990's. However, the model itself was not pioneered by Soros, but by American Ford Foundation founded in Detroit in 1936 by Edsel and Henry Ford. Followed by Salomon Guggenheim, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney or the Rockefellers, the model assumed the patronage that not only reflects donor's private taste, but also an investment, as well as a gift for society (Łabowicz-Dymanus 142). This "gift" is one as much for the society as for the donor himself. As mentioned by Alisa Lozhkina: "He [Gelman] was a very controversial and ambiguous guy, but he managed to convince Pinchuk that contemporary art was his ticket to eternity. And also, a way to white washing his money" (Lozhkina 2022). Providing the cultural goods is a great mean of improving the public image of the donor, what in case of Victor Pinchuk, the oligarch, might have been one of the factors upon the decision about establishing the art centre. As Carol Duncan notices, in the ultimate public reception, the donors are usually mostly associated with their kind gift for the humanity (the art centre, the museum, the art collection, all kinds of charities the donor is involved in), rather than with their businesses (Duncan 1995: 82-83). The "donor memorials", as Duncan calls the art centres and museums funded by a private donor, are often placed in former royal or aristocratic residences or in buildings that might recall one (Duncan 1995: 72), which is the case of the PAC as well – located in the central area of the city, in the tenement house. In addition, it is open to the public for free, offering the educational program focused on both international and Ukrainian art – a strategy that Duncan calls the "Good Citizen"<sup>62</sup> (Duncan 1995: 82-83).

"Following the Orange Revolution, Victor Pinchuk appeared as indisputably the most active (and successful) among former oligarchs in trying to recreate an image for himself as a philanthropist, a 'patriot' (as he put it) and as a man passionately concerned with Ukraine's development and integration into the international community" (Puglisi 2008: 67).

That went hand in hand with the political situation in the country. After the 2004 revolution and the end of Leonid Kuchma's presidency, the oligarchs faced the potential loss of their influence and income (Puglisi 2008: 80). However, with the presidential election of Victor Yushchenko in 2005, it did not happen, and due to the increasing opportunities of Ukraine's presence on the international markets, the oligarchs understood, that their interests align with the country's interests. And so, they, or at least some of them, including Victor Pinchuk, were to play a major role in pushing the integration of Ukraine within the international community (Puglisi 2008: 80).

Another factor mentioned by Duncan is the donors' pursuit of keeping their collections separate from other institutions and assigning them directly to the person of the donor. She sees it as a strive for their surrogate selves, that will remain intact also when they are gone (Duncan 1995: 83). These symbolic extensions of life are probably more common among the donors who decide to exhibit their collections in a form that was given to it by them during their lives – in the USA places like J.Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, Frick Collection in New York, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, CA, or Dulwich Picture Gallery and The Wallace Collection in London. Also, the PAC was initially built around the Pinchuk's collection, which was multiple times exhibited along with the thematic expositions on the other floors. It is also interesting, that Victor Pinchuk, unlike other oligarchs of the former USSR, has decided to use his name for the art centre, which seems to resemble more the Western model. A few rich businessmen in the USA and in the Western Europe over the centuries used their names for art foundations, but, more importantly, the art collections and art institutions (Getty, Guggenheim, Frick, Whitney, Huntingdon, Dulwich, Fitzwilliam to name some). I have not found any other example of family name related art institution in the former USSR, other than the PinchukArtCenter.<sup>63</sup> To give a name to something means to give it a meaning and to fit into a certain narration – the naming is a symbolic process of power. This model gives importance to the family identity and signalizes, that the institution represents the family for generations, and not only during the lifetime of the founder: “Young artists and entrepreneurs undertake start-ups, while other organisations provide a contemporary Ukrainian version of nineteenth-century America. Like our own robber barons – Frick, Rockefeller, and Carnegie – Ukraine's oligarchs are building art collections, collecting historical artefacts, and establishing museums (Norris 2010: 10).

### **IV.3. Location: The Heart of the Modern City**

When I look at the map of Kyiv, I can see a city located along the Dnipro River. Originally it was situated at the Western bank, and only in the 20th century it expanded to the Eastern (the so-called left bank). The PinchukArtCentre is in the Shevchenkivskyi District, a historically significant area, which includes the Old Kyiv, the site that was the capital of the Kyivian Rus (Cybriwsky 2016: 153). The location is connected to the reigns of Volodymyr the Great (first fortifications) and his son Yaroslav the Wise, who has enlarged the city, built the Saint Sophia Cathedral complex, and the Golden Gate, the main entrance to the 11th century capitol of the Kyivian Rus, which residues are still present in the area.



The Old Kyiv was destroyed by the Mongol invasion in 1240, which became the end of the power of Rus. The first parliament of Ukraine has declared its independence in 1917 also in this part of the city. It is a district of opera house and universities (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv National Economic University, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine). The Orange Revolution of 2004-2005, as well as Maidan in 2013-2014, also took place in this area. The government district is situated here, with the building of the president's office at Bankova street, and the Verkhovna Rada – the Ukrainian parliament. The tsarist officials were based here, the Soviet Ukraine had its government centre, as well as the short-lived Ukrainian National Republic of 1917-1921 (Cybriwsky 2016: 155).

Maydan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square), the main central point of the area, and, I dare to say, of the whole city, is adjacent to the Khreshchatyk street, which has its beginning on the European Square, and its end on the Bessarabska Square (il. 1). Khreschatyk, the 1,2 kilometres long main street of the city, before the middle of the 19th century used to be “little more than undeveloped stream bed in a ravine between the southern slope of the old urban core and the slope of Klov Hill (...)” (Cybriwsky 2016: 154). Today it is an elegant avenue, abundant in cafes, restaurants, and expensive designer's boutiques, resembling those of many prominent European cities. The area became prosperous in the late 19th century, due to the industrialisation and the sugar production<sup>64</sup>. Soon Khreschatyk became home to luxurious apartments and hotels, banks, trading companies, stock exchange, the main post office, and the Duma – the City Hall.<sup>65</sup> Extensively destroyed during the World War II, the street was rebuilt in the common effort of the citizens and the professionals – architects and the city planners. “This task had enormous symbolic value and was a boost for morale” (Cybriwsky 2016: 158). The street was rebuilt in a socialist realism and Stalinist style by the Soviet architect Anatoly Volodymyrovych Dobrovolsky, who became the director of architecture for Kyiv in 1950. The newly built Maidan Nezalezhnosti, back then the Kalinin Square, the Khreschatyk Metro Station and Hotel Ukraina, previously Hotel Moskva, marked the main points of the street and mixed with the reminiscent pre-war architecture. Today, the extreme wideness of the street makes it a nice promenade during the weekends, when it is closed for vehicles. During the week, on the other hand, it remains busy and heavily trafficked.

Khreschatyk reaches the Bessarabian Market, which was founded out of money left by Lazar Brodsky, the Sugar King,<sup>66</sup> the industrialist and the philanthropist, after his death in 1904. Brodsky's charity was mainly directed towards the Jewish community of Kyiv,

including the construction of the Choral Synagogue, trade school for Jewish boys, and modernisation and expansion of the Jewish Hospital built by his father, Israel. He has also supported the need of the whole population of Kyiv – building a tuberculosis sanatorium, the Kyiv Red Cross, founding the Kyiv Polytechnic and the literary society, and was engaged in the city's gasworks (Cybriwsky 2016: 156). This figure rises in my head immediate associations with the founder of the PinchukArtCentre, which faced the Bessarabian market exactly 100 years later thanks to the efforts of Victor Pinchuk.

PinchukArtCentre is in the commercial complex of buildings situated within the historical Bessarabsky Kvartal (II. 2). Victor Pinchuk initially wanted to open his art centre in the Arsenal. The Orange Revolution, however, changed his plans, as he was “ostracized by the new government” (Dmitrenko 2007 A10: 30). His foundation won the competition for the reconstruction of the Arsenal, but the contest was cancelled, and Pinchuk found a new location for his art centre.

In 1892-1901 the complex of tenement houses at the Bessarabsky Kvartal was constructed, which included expensive apartments, first-class hotels “Orion” and “Berlin”, and numerous shops. It was the area of the luxury buildings constructed in the Art Nouveau style. After the 1917 revolution the quarter began to gradually change its character. The luxury facilities were replaced by the communal services, medical institutions, student dormitories, workers' apartments, small shops, and canteens (Ibud.ua 2012). The old houses began to be resettled in 1986, the action that arouse the question about the future of the quarter – should everything be brought down to construct the new complex, or should at least some parts of the historical buildings be saved? The initial project involved the construction of the three high-rise buildings at each corner of the quarter. The customer was the Austrian company Makulan, and the constructor Yanush Vigh's workshop (Ibud.ua 2012). However, Makulan went bankrupt, and the area remain empty, which led to the process of gradual destruction. One hundred years after its construction the damages of the load-bearing walls ranged from 41 – to 95%. One of the walls facing the courtyard fell, and others were in terrible conditions, with cracks reaching the width of 4 cm, and wet foundations (Ibud.ua 2012). In 1997 two companies took interest in the area – the Korean Daewoo and the Israeli Zeevi Group both planned to erect a multi-storey skyscraper. Luckily for the historical area, it never happened. The final construction somehow combines the historical character of the quarter with commercial aspirations, although, without any doubts, leaves area for a strong critique. In 2000 the city authorities along with the private investors got involved. In result the original facades of the main buildings of the

complex (those facing Bessarabian market and the Velyka Vasylykivska Street) were restored and the 1930s superstructures were dismantled. It is not clear which parts were destroyed and built anew, and which are partially reconstructed or restored. According to Roman Adrian Cybriwsky the whole quarter was destroyed, and all the buildings constructed anew in a historicizing manner (Cybriwsky 2016: 194). The author claims that it was Victor Pinchuk who took up the entire block of the historical space of Kyiv, which in the past formed the part of the Jewish Kyiv called the Bessarabsky Kvartal, including the place where the famous writer Sholom Aleichem<sup>67</sup> used to live (Cybriwsky 2016: 194). He further notices, that the facade of the complex seems historic (as seen from the Bessarabska Square), however it was built completely anew, without any (or rather little) respect to the original specificity of this place, which was razed to the ground in 2001 to the outrage of the international Jewish community. Victor Pinchuk, says Cybriwsky, who is also of Jewish parents, did not take into consideration the Jewish heritage while destroying the original Aleichem's house. What he did, was founding the Sholom Aleichem Museum which is in the direct spot where the writer used to work. Smaller than originally promised, it is a house to the remnants of the famous author's work and life and the Jewish Kyiv. Cybriwsky claims that the size of the museum was dictated by the commercial needs of the neighbouring strip club that needed more space (Cybriwsky 2016: 194). Cybriwsky, however, seems to be confusing some facts. Sholom Aleichem's house in Kyiv, where he lived and wrote stories of Tevye the Dairyman, was placed at the 35 Velyka Vasylykivska street, which is way further than the Arena City, and was destroyed in 2009, four years after the opening of the complex. It was taken down due to the plans of building a hotel for the Euro 2012 (Matveyev 2009). The Sholom Aleichem Museum opened only in 2009 in the Arena City as a branch of the Kyiv History Museum. Also, it is not certain, whether it was Victor Pinchuk who stood behind this operation. In 2019 the whole complex was sold to the new owner, and the seller was Dmytro Firtash, and not Victor Pinchuk<sup>68</sup> (Unian.info 2019). The 2007 article published by the magazine MIMOA mentions that Pinchuk bought "six floors in a recently restored group of eclectic buildings near the old marketplace in the centre of Kiev and turned it into a contemporary art centre" (Dmitrenko 2007: 5). So, it is also doubtful whether the whole historical complex was destroyed as Cybriwsky claims.<sup>69</sup> In the 2010 article in the German magazine *TEC21* it is mentioned that the centre is placed within the original 1905 structure (Büren 2010: 16). According to the information on the PAC website, the centre is located within the "architectural complex in the Besarabka area,

which underwent a major renovation in the beginning of the 21st century” (PinchukArtCentre, n.d.a ).

In one of the chapters of his book *Kyiv, Ukraine: The City of Domes and Demons from the Collapse of Socialism to the Mass Uprising of 2013-2014* with a meaningful title “A Geography of Privilege and Pretension”, Cybriwsky points out to the prevailing presence of strip and night clubs in the whole complex of the Arena City (il. 3), as well as the “face control” factor:

Solid Gold is one of three so-called gentlemen’s clubs in Arena City. The others are Zolotoy Nosorog (in Russian; the words mean Golden Rhinoceros) and the Arena Stars Cabaret. (...) They are impossible to miss with their huge neon signs and suggestive advertising, and they take up much of the commercial space that comprises the complex. (...) The nightclubs of Arena City are also about sex. The tourist books all say that, and so do websites that advise sex-minded tourists to Kyiv. The largest club has the big “Face Control” warning posted on its door (Cybriwsky 2016: 195).

Apart from the gentlemen’s clubs, there is also a Sky Bar on the seventh floor of the complex, where one can enjoy the view of Kyiv, get a drink and party.

One marker of the Arena City space, which for me was the most striking one, is a vast, empty, and not well cared for commercial space, which, in addition, creates a curious maze around the art centre. The Pinchuk’s complex of buildings is located on an “island” surrounded by four extremely busy and trafficked streets: Bessarabian Square in the North, Pavla Skoropads’koho Street in the South, Basseina Street in the East, and Velyka Vasylkivska Street in the West. To reach the “island”, one must choose one of the underpasses. While stepping underground, we are immediately entering the maze of commercial space of the Arena City (when stepping in from the North or West), or Mandarin Plaza (from East or South). Both belong to the Pinchuk’s company, Mandarin Plaza, with its architecture inspired by the Ukrainian Art Nouveau, being the exclusive shopping centre for the wealthy:

It is Mandarin Plaza because it invites the new class of aristocrats with its high prices and put-on airs of exclusivity. In the old Chinese Empire, the nine classes of Mandarins were distinguished by buttons worn on their caps. Now, “New Russian” mandarins are known by their fashion: Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Armani...

all the usual pricy brands that serve to separate the conspicuous consumers of the new social order from the faceless masses (Cybriwsky 2016: 195-196).

Stepping in from the East, one will also pass the Le Silpo supermarket – the only place (apart from the PinchukArtCentre) in the whole complex that remains busy. The six levels of the Mandarin Plaza, and three of the Arena City, remain devoided of customers and, largely, of shops as well. As observed by Cybriwsky: “There is an almost comical Potemkin Village aspect to the scene in that sometimes goods from one store are displayed in the windows of a neighbouring empty store to make the mall look more filled” (Cybriwsky 2016: 196).

The author also underlines the striking number of security guards, which outnumbered that of customers, as well as the video surveillance, which allows the guards to track and watch every single person who enters the complex (Cybriwsky 2016: 196). The tense atmosphere is raised even further by the ever-present dirt and filth, and lack of any clear directions and instructions how to get around. I have been to the PAC at least one hundred times, haven't met a single customer of the shopping mall, and never managed to reach my goal without wondering through the maze for over a dozen of minutes. After some time, I started implementing the Kyivians' strategy to cross the streets at whichever point possible, risking my health and life due to the local traffic.

The whole quarter was ‘reconstructed’<sup>70</sup> by the A.V. Koval bureau from Kyiv. The construction began in 2001 and was finished in 2005, the A.V. Koval bureau was responsible for the design, with V. Zhezherin as a main architect, accompanied by architect M. Makarevich and constructor A. Ostapchuk (Skyscraper Source Media 2022b). The Mandarin Plaza was built in 2003, Arena City was finished in 2005. The site also mentions that Arena City contains the building of 1898 by the architect A.K. Kraus. The address of the complex covers 2, 4, 6 Basseina Street and 1-3, 5 Velyka Vasylkivska Street. The floor area is 35,000 m<sup>2</sup>, and the highest part counts 18 floors (tower of approx. 16 m). It is described as the mixed-use destination, including office, retail and museum, with its architectural style being called postmodern. On the website of the Koval's bureau, some additional information is given - the general contractor was Kievreconstruction, the chief architect of the project – Alexander Koval, the lead architect – Igor Ryabokon, and the designer – Alexander Yusupov. The construction dates – 2003-2005. No further information about the concept or construction is available, as well as no photographic documentation.

The A. Koval Architectural Bureau was founded and is run by Alexander Vladimirovich Koval since 1999:

The workshop has many years of experience in the construction industry, performs a full range of architectural and construction design from projects of individual residential buildings to significant urban development complexes and multifunctional objects, has many years of experience in projects for the reconstruction of existing buildings, giving a modern function both to the interior space of these buildings and to the external appearance in accordance with new trends and modern building materials and technologies<sup>71</sup> (Akoval.com.ua, n.d.).

The bureau was responsible for several constructions and reconstructions in Kyiv and other cities in Ukraine, including the reconstruction of the Bessarabian quarter with the office centre “Dominant”.

#### **IV.4. Postmodernist Architecture of the Post-Socialist City**

But can Kyiv boast of modern buildings that would attract tourists in the same way that the National Museum of Art of the XXI Century (Maxxi) in Rome, built by the architect Zaha Hadid, does? Hardly. The list of new constructions causing public protest is long, while there is a scarcity of new structures of which Kyiv can be proud. It is common knowledge that the architecture of a city is one of the main sources of impressions for the tourists who visit it. It is in search of such impressions that people travel all over the world, including to Kyiv. This is why it would be great for the city to have new architectural forms distinguished by their artistry and expressive value; buildings that would not overshadow older traditional construction but become an organic component of the artistic space of the city (Moussienko 2013: 2).

Arena City is an example of a postmodernist architecture of the post-socialist city, the city in transformation. In postmodernist architecture the historic elements merge with the contemporary forms. Robert Venturi, who is widely taken as a father of postmodernism, although he himself many times underlined that he is not a postmodernist (Bernstein 2018), in his “Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture” first published in 1966 (Venturi 1979), expresses interest not in “the plasticity of volumes, but the urban facades of Italy, with their endless adjustments to the counter-requirements of inside and outside and their

inflection with all the business of everyday life” (Stierli 2016). As Stierli notices, Venturi, whose thought has inspired dozens of postmodernist architects, looked for an inspiration in the urban settings. This approach explains the bizarre appearance of the whole Arena City complex – contemporary realisation within the historical area, connecting the modern commercial space with the historicizing architecture in one vast hybrid block (il. 4). The outer facades seem to be inspired by the original architecture of the complex and by the forms of the classical language of architecture. Venturi also argued that there is a place for ornament and historical allusions in modern architecture, however, he used history as a reference, but never as a direct inspiration (Bernstein 2018). Venturi complained that his ideas were often *misapplied or exaggerated* by his followers (Bernstein 2018).

In the Arena City complex the inside does not correspond to the outside, which would be another trait beloved by the postmodernists, that might have been taken from Venturi’s awe towards mannerism. His notion of the *difficult whole*, in Arena’s case turned out to be too difficult. Constructed from several complex plans and spaces, the quarter constructs an island which is difficult to reach, messy to move around it, impossible to take in in one gaze, and, simply, aesthetically controversial. It is a truly weird addition to the historic neighbourhood. The Arena City complex recalls the Polish most famous postmodern building – the shopping mall Solpol. It was built in 1992-1993 in Wrocław by the Polish architect Wojciech Jarzabek and his studio, and was commissioned by Zygmunt Solorz-Żak, one of the richest man in Poland. The building was erected at the very beginning of the transformation period after 1989. The postmodernist style which was chosen for this project could interestingly correspond to the neighbouring gothic and baroque buildings in the centre of Wrocław. Just like Arena, Solpol’s meaning, and popularity gradually started to decline, leaving it almost empty these days.<sup>72</sup> The scale of the construction is much different – the Polish realisation consisting of Solpol and Solpol II is much smaller. Another difference is that Jarzabek’s design, in my opinion, although controversial, is much more successful than the one of the Kyiv architects.

The PinchukArtCentre is located within the Northern facade of the Arena City, directly above a Bentley showroom and a branch of Villeroy & Boch. It is situated in the middle, along the Bessarabian Square, facing directly the Besarabsky Market, the architectural highlight of the area, constructed in 1910-1912 by a Polish architect Henryk Julian Gay in the Art Nouveau style. It is worth mentioning, that today’s Bessarabka is partially covered with advertising posters and companies’ logos, just like the Arena City. The PAC is unobtrusive – the whole facade constitutes one surface and is often half covered

with the advertising posters of the commercial companies, which reside or sell within the complex. The PAC poster advertising the current exhibition stays among them, being visible only from the other side of the street. I am not saying, however, that the PAC is difficult to find – the queue of visitors usually guides the way. The centre is also one of the main attractions of the city, listed among places such as Maidan Nezalezhnosti, St Sophia Cathedral or Pecherska Lavra, so tourists are eager to find it and direct their steps towards it consciously rather than by accident. It is, on the one hand, weird place for an art centre, on the other hand, however, seems quite right. Roman Adrian Cybriwsky's opinion on this place is very rough:

The PinchukArtCentre is wonderful. Its exhibits showcase some of the most commercially successful artists in the world and they are free. The place is a maze of rooms and surprises behind closed doors, and the guards allow visitors to enjoy the art. It is a must-see for visitors to Kyiv. But it is in Arena City and has sex spots and sex tourists as neighbours, dark corridors with urine and drunks, and a shopping area where bored security guards and bored store clerks try to not look too bored because they too are on camera. But it does make sense to have such a fine place in such a poor complex. The oligarch-benefactor grants us encounters with a world of creativity beyond our reach to remind us that he sits at the top as the ultimate arbiter of high taste and sophistication, and that we are his subjects. Moreover, we should not criticize him, because he has a foundation that supports fine causes, and because his generosity grants us good art to enjoy for free (Cybriwsky 2016: 197).

However, one can clearly understand, why this spot was chosen. Instead of building a costly new building for the art centre, Pinchuk has decided to use what has already been in spot.<sup>73</sup> Despite of the commercial and entertainment connotations of the Arena City, it is clear, that the location is very central, situated in the very heart (or rather one of the three hearts)<sup>74</sup> of Kyiv. The one which is most crowded and most popular among the first-time-to-Kyiv tourists. The choice of the site with the historical facade, facing the city centre, also appears significant. What is interesting, is that it seems that the choice of this location was at least partially accidental. Philippe Chiambaretta mentions that the Victor Pinchuk Foundation considered two other places for the art centre. The final decision was based only on the immediate availability of the space in the Arena City (Chiambaretta 2020). The PCA Stream had less than a year to prepare the space for the grand opening. Also, in the



2011 interview for the Art Newspaper Pinchuk mentions about his plans to build a proper place for the contemporary art centre, which, according to the Western standards, would be a “purpose-built gallery” site designed by the internationally renowned architectural bureau. It was supposed to be ready in around five years (Ruiz 2011). Pinchuk: “It has to be an important building for our country, for our city. It has to be a destination for sightseeing tours in Kiev. I hope the image of this art centre will be on the most popular postcards... it has to be” (Ruiz 2011).

Probably he would look for an iconic Bilbao effect, but, as for today, it never happened. Probably he replaced this idea with the project of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, which is under construction, and was about to open in 2023 in Kyiv<sup>75</sup> (Babyn Yar, n.d.).

#### **IV.5. The Interior Space – a Sensory Journey**

The interior space of the museum was designed by the French company PCA Stream based in Paris, led by an architect Philippe Chiambaretta. Nicolas Bourriaud, the artistic adviser of the Pinchuk’s foundation, was the one who pointed on Paris-based PCA Stream to prepare the space for the art centre. He is said to also have a say in a designing process, being in dialogue with Chiambaretta in the process of looking for a proper form for the collection in the space, which had some serious constraints and was more suitable for an office space than for an art centre. The team that worked on the project for Kyiv included Steven Ware, Alexandre De Mercey, Adrien Raoul, Melanie Catel, Eric Perraudin and Alexandre Gilot; the statistics were made by Chiambaretta, HKL planning by Flack & Kurtz (Paris), and the lightning design by Speeg & Michel (Paris). The project period lasted from 2005 until 2006, and the designed exhibition area covered 2,600 m<sup>2</sup>. Four types of Ukrainian granite were used as a finishing material. Ceilings were made of suspended membranes (Barrisol), light was designed by the Modular Lightning System, and ventilation is perforated sheet steel (Büren 2010: 17). The PAC extends over three full floors (administration and exhibition rooms) and the extended top floor, in around a quarter of the area of the Arena City. The first two floors and the neighbouring buildings have also been renovated and are used for other commercial purposes, so currently the centre occupies six floors, including four floors with exhibition spaces of more than 3,000 m<sup>2</sup>, library, bookstore, education room, video-lounge, and café.

The first thought upon the entrance, is that it is surprisingly small, which explains the regular queues in front of the PAC. One must go through the security, climb some stairs,

or take an elevator, before reaching the exposition spaces on the third, fourth and fifth floors. The exhibition rooms are surprisingly huge in comparison to the street entrance. They also do not correspond with the outside architecture of the building – neither in style, nor in construction, including adding one more floor in the inside of the building, behind the historical facade. As Chiambaretta explained: “The rebuilt staircase leading to the Foundation space allows us to understand this intervention - the staircase landings do not match the windows - so that the old facade looks like a film set, detached from the floors themselves” (Dmitrenko 2007 A10: 30).

The main exhibition area placed on the two lower levels also needed some extra space, so the architects have decided to double the heights for the accommodation of monumental artworks. The existing route between floors was also changed. Instead of three stairs and two elevators, PCA Stream team introduced two new interior stairs, to make the people circulation more fluid. There are, however, some areas which point to the outside walls – the alcoves correspond to the original floors of the building, covered by the wallpaper designed by Paris-based Taiwanese artist Michael Lin. The contrast between the richly decorated, eclectic facade, and the minimal and almost sterile interior, is very strong, it is almost like entering a different reality. This maximum dissociation from the buildings outside appearance was deliberate – Chiambaretta was not interested in the building’s facades, only in creating the possibly most attractive and useful space to experience contemporary art. There is no experience of architecture itself, rather the feeling of the interior design and space, which was constructed to help the viewer explore and view the works of art. Until we reach the top floor with the café and video room, we are completely cut off from the outer world. There are no windows in the exhibition halls or bathrooms, just few on the staircase.

They [the halls] make it impossible to look into the outside world at all, completely lock out everyday life outside and are structured in a clear, but not schematically boring, sequence. The white walls, the ambience illuminated with artificial light and the floor, which is reminiscent of a Japanese rock garden with its striped structure, create an almost monastic atmosphere. (Büren 2010: 16)

The toilets also provoke the experience of space – with the colorful installation by Daniel Buren placed in each of them, we lose the track of space – it is almost impossible to judge the real size of each bathroom due to a play of colour and light.

Chiambaretta did not want to create a neutral background for the art, although the first impression is that of the *white cube*. The PAC interior space is not, however, a sterile white cube, although it might seem like it for a very short moment. The architect and his team designed the space so that the viewer can be guided through it by a discreet set of indicators, and move along the space to enjoy contemporary art. We are guided by space from the very moment of entering the building: “The journey begins at the very entrance, where the existing balustrades of the main stairs were replaced with a matrix of metal tubes, an intriguing installation rising through the entire height of the building, beyond the visitor's gaze, thus drawing them deeper into the museum” (Dmitrenko 2007: 5).

The concept envisaged the phenomenological approach, which includes stimulating several senses. Not only we are supposed to see the works of art. We are supposed to experience our visit on multiple levels, including the feeling of movement, and being *sucked into* the building and what it has to offer. A linear route takes us from one floor to the next. The prolonged shapes of exhibition rooms which were designed to “emphasize the channelling of circulation” (Dmitrenko 2007 A10: 30) guide us through space, as well as the light and dark narrow granite strips, five to thirty centimetres wide, arranged in a strict geometric pattern along the granite floor, creating a kind of a path for the viewers (il. 5). The necessary technical installations for air conditioning, lighting control, supply, and exhaust air, etcetera, are built into a massive, one-meter-thick technical wall that also divides the sequence of rooms and creates the path for the visitors. The one-meter-thick wall divides the two exhibition floors into two equally large areas. The rooms are ventilated via perforated metal sheets in the wall and an adjoining, suspended ceiling section: “The ventilation grilles are disguised as perforated metal panels displaying abstract graphics specially designed to avoid distracting viewers from the exhibition” (Dmitrenko 2007 A10: 30). The same graphic design repeats in the staircase, however here, even if larger in scale, it does not disturb from experiencing the artworks. The artificial light is built into walls and ceilings throughout, so that no optically disruptive installations affect the works of art (Büren 2010: 17). The works of art are illuminated by linearly arranged rectangular light fields in the ceiling, which is covered with a tightly stretched white Barrisol membrane (Gillier 2007: 3). The lighting placed along the ceilings also marks the exhibition route and echoes the pattern on the floor.

On the top sixth floor the Sky Art Café is placed (il. 6). It seems that it was designed as a counterpoint to the rhythmic structure of the exhibition tour (Gillier 2007: 3). It is designed mostly in white by the brothers Fernando and Hymberto Campana from Brasil,

and Konstantin Grcic from Germany “(...) in a video lounge on the roof, you can loll on rubberised white sofas as if floating on a cloud above the golden domes of the ancient city (Conrad 2006: 43). The outstanding panoramic view of the city is a huge asset of this space which also neighbours with the room destined for the video presentations. As put by the architects themselves: “(...) a video-lounge and a panoramic bar embody a confrontation of temporalities: they overlook the historic city while offering a futuristic atmosphere by means of a geometric treatment of immaculate whiteness (PCA-Stream, n.d.).

Chiambaretta deliberately designed the architecture of this exhibition space as a kind of contemplative interior view and only allowed the visual reference to the city on the top floor. The sole places where the outside corresponds with the inside are the café on the top floor and the staircase, where the stairs with granite steps follow the former building design, the railings are newly made of stove-enamel and glass. Modernity is the key word for describing this space, which interior recalls the computer modelling.

The very emergence of the Arena City and the whole quarter marks one of the problematic aspects of transition from Soviet socialism to capitalism. The Soviet inequalities were replaced by the capitalist ones - in Ukrainian landscape, however, those capitalists emerge directly from Soviet, like Victor Pinchuk's, the oligarch, case clearly presents. “A new class of “millionaires against the people” has taken the country and its capital, and lives as it wants at the cost of the masses” (Cybriwsky 2016: 325). Cybriwsky sadly concludes, that “the capital city of Ukraine is nothing more than a commodity for the new, post-socialist class of oligarch-capitalists” (Cybriwsky 2016: 326). In the case of the Arena City, the authentic urban texture of a historic value was lost to the new capitalist, and essentially, post-Soviet, power. Gentrification and land development for profit became evident in the Ukrainian post-socialist society with its oligarchs such as Dmytro Fitrash (first owner of the Arena City), Victor Pinchuk and Sergey Tigipko (owner from 2019).

#### **IV.6. The Grand Opening**

The PAC was opened on the 16th of September 2006 with the exhibition of the selected works from the permanent collection. It was entitled the “New Space”, a name which indicated not only the new institution on the cultural map of Kyiv, but also, very literally, referred to the newly designed space of the Arena City (il. 7). Pinchuk wanted the big names to participate at the opening – the famous German performance duo Eva and Adele cruised among guests repeating their slogan: “Wherever we are is museum”, as if the art centre needed recognition, that it really is what it claims to be. Participants recall Pinchuk's

surprise, that he promised for the opening party, which was the courtyard filled with the dancers in cages and a concert by a rock band. At the end some fireworks put on fire the plastic wall, which was previously symbolically tugged down. The reports from the participants of the event do not leave doubt about its character – it was oligarchic<sup>76</sup>, as much as the opening of Olafur Eliasson’s installations at the site of Pinchuk’s Interpipe Steel Mill in 2012, as described by one of the journalists:

After dusk, the remaining guests returned to the pavilion for a viewing of Dnepropetrovsk sunrise, the artificial sun. We were treated to drinks and a thematic playlist: “Tequila Sunrise” by the Eagles, “Here Comes the Sun” by the Beatles, “In the Summertime” by Mungo Jerry. “What would people think? Do we belong to a cult? We’re meeting at 7 PM to see a sunrise,” Pinchuk said. “It’s only possible with contemporary art and great artists like Olafur Eliasson.” A choir of boys and girls, dressed in approximations of Soviet school uniforms, appeared on stage to sing “May There Always Be Sunshine,” a popular children’s song from the 1960s. As they finished, the curtains on the pavilion’s east wall parted to reveal the sun (Droitcour 2012).

It feels as the author almost has it at the tip of his tongue to call the whole thing just *Soviet*, while mentioning a weird cocktail of emotions and attitudes that accompanied the opening. It is the same kind of intangible feeling of contemporary Western and Soviet which is present at the PAC. Up until today, all openings are by invitation only, what creates the exclusive VIP aura around these events.

#### **IV.7. The Collection and the First Exhibitions**

Pinchuk started his collection in 1993, taking the advice from Marat Gelman and later Nicolas Bourriaud, and, even before the 2006 opening, he presented some works at the Venice Biennale in 2005,<sup>77</sup> which was a signal to the world, that he enters the international art scene. (Somers Cocks 2006) He later said, that the 2005 experience was the inspiration to buy the space for the PAC, which he wanted to open as soon as possible (Ruiz 2011). The PAC was created around Pinchuk’s private collection,<sup>78</sup> which not necessarily means around his private taste,<sup>79</sup> and includes a number of artists represented mainly by Larry Gagosian (such as Damien Hirst and Takashi Murakami) and Jay Joplin<sup>80</sup> and the London-based White Cube Gallery.<sup>81</sup> Alisa Lozhkina says, that at that time the Western galleries discovered, that they can sell to the new oligarchs whatever they want:

They suddenly understood that art was a big scam for this new money from all the shady areas, like Saudi Arabia, or Russia and the Post-Soviet countries – that you can just sell them anything. And what was sold, was not the artwork. It was the ticket to decent society. You're buying this Damian Hirst and suddenly you get invited to places. And Pinchuk was very interested in entering those places (Lozhkina 2022).

Only later he started buying directly from artists, instead of the art dealers. The Art Newspaper mentions that his early collection was bought fast in a moment when the prices of many of his artists peaked (Ruiz 2011). Pinchuk wanted to create a serious collection of art of the 21st century and was ready to spend a lot of his funds on artists that he liked. Indeed, he does have one of the world's biggest collections of the works by Damien Hirst. He underlined, that in this part of the world he is one of the few to have an interest of this kind, and that also his institution is unique for the same reason (Ruiz 2011). Unfortunately, little did he know about art while he was starting his collection, what can be clearly seen in some cycles that were exhibited in PAC, such as Hirst's blue paintings presented in the centre in 2009 (Ruiz 2011).

The 2006 opening exhibition the *New Space*<sup>82</sup>, was a preview of what the PAC will offer in the upcoming years. Art historian Olexandr Soloviov was chosen to make a pick of ten artists for the next to Nicolas Bourriaud, former curator of the Palais de Tokyo,<sup>83</sup> who was responsible for international part of the exhibition. Bourriaud was to be the person, who persuaded Pinchuk on the idea of mixing Ukrainian art with international artists (Chiambaretta 2020). Bourriaud, being the artistic adviser of the Pinchuk's foundation, was also the one who pointed on Paris-based PCA Stream to prepare the space for the art centre. He is said to also have a say in a designing process, being in dialogue with Chiambaretta in the quest for looking of a proper form for the collection in the available space. The selection of works at the *New Space* aimed at presenting the best of both – Ukrainian and foreign art, to place the PAC, from the very beginning, in the international art circuit, at the same time underlining, that this is Ukraine, and Ukrainian art will also be of interest here. During the opening show guests could see the works of Olafur Eliasson, Sara Morris, Philippe Parreno, Thomas Ruff, or Carsten Höller, next to Ukrainians, Serhii Bratkov, Oleksandr Hnylytsky, Oleh Kulik, Boris Mykhailov, Arsen Savadov, Oleg Tistol, Vasyi Tsagolov. The choice seems to be a bit eclectic, and *the best of* theme floating in the air.

Similar aura accompanies the 2007 *Generations.U.S.A.*, an exhibition bringing together young American and Ukrainian artists<sup>84</sup>, which “main goal is to provide a general review of contemporary art in both countries, while focusing on the new and most interesting phenomena” (PinchukArtCentre 2007). The general review included twelve Ukrainian artists and eight from the US, all of them representing different media. In the exhibition catalogue the then President and Artistic Director of the PAC Peter Doroshenko states, that emerging Ukrainian and American art “must be presented for serious consideration in a large institutional exhibition” (PinchukArtCentre 2007). Oleksandr Soloviov, on the other hand, expressed the need for young artists to compare their work with those of their foreign colleagues (PinchukArtCentre 2007). It is an important point, as was later underlined multiple times by several curators and other employees of the PAC (Interview with Malykh and Pogrebnyak by author in person 2021). At that time there was still not a lot of access to the international art in Ukraine, so as much as this idea might sound cheap, it was a very prominent part of PAC’s mission in the first years, to simply present what is going on in the West. Still, the core idea of the exhibition seems to be simply the presentation of *interesting*<sup>85</sup> works of a new generation which entered the art market in the 2000’s, and the creation of the common and equal space for Ukrainian and American artists. Next in 2007 there was a Vik Muniz solo exhibition<sup>86</sup> followed by *An Instinctive Eye: A Selection of Contemporary Photographs from the Sir Elton John Collection*<sup>87</sup>, and *Reflection* – the latest acquisitions from PAC’s collection.<sup>88</sup> The majority of works presented were those of Damien Hirst.

Already in the first operational year the centre took their chance to organize Ukrainian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, which in my opinion, was supposed to mark its presence within the international art environment. The exhibition placed in the Palazzo Papadopoli and entitled *A Poem about an Inland Sea*,<sup>89</sup> curated by Doroshenko, was opened during the 52nd biennale on the 10th of June 2007, and remained available for the public until the 21st November.<sup>90</sup> Interestingly, the project was chosen without official open competition, although the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine announced in 2005, that the national exhibitions for the Venice biennale will be chosen as a result of a contest (Turchak 2018: 295). Eight international artists were invited to prepare projects about Ukraine. As described by the curator:

The exhibition, entitled *A Poem about an Inland Sea*, features artists from Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States who demonstrate a

cohesive vision and commitment to exploring new and active roles for artists in society. They have all produced work that specifically aims to raise the questions – what is it to be Ukrainian? Who are the Ukrainian people? Where are the Ukrainian people? (UnDo 2007).

Doroshenko decided to include recognizable foreign artists (Juergen Teller, Marc Titchner, Sam Taylor-Wood, Dzine) along the Ukrainians (Serhiy Bratkov, Alexander Hnylytsky, Lesia Zaiats, Boris Mikhailov) who would express their opinion on the above-mentioned questions. I see two sides to it. Firstly, the PAC wanted to mark the presence at such an important art event straight away. Secondly, Ukraine, that participated in the biennale since 2001, still needed international recognition when it comes to contemporary art. Inviting foreign artists, who already have their say at the world arena of art, was a way to mark the pavilions presence at the map of the biennale and boost interest. Invitations for foreign artists meant they were to investigate into the Ukrainian topic which constitutes yet another way of participating in the international art circle. In the exhibition catalogue Pinchuk described the decision:

These two vectors of cultural exchange – *Ukraine-Global and Global-Ukraine* – travel in tandem with one another, rather than colliding like two planets. Therefore, there is no controversy whatsoever in the fact that so many people from other countries have expressed their desire to participate in the Ukrainian project. When someone comes to us to get their impressions, inspiration, and ideas, we welcome such “intrusions” into our spaces. We are ready to “adopt” such “invaders” and are glad to accommodate them in the Ukrainian pavilion because for us, there is no such notion as Ukrainians or foreigners when it comes down to creative work. There are only brothers and sisters who share our thoughts and feelings and have the same vision, mindset and genetic code of perception and self-expression as we do. There are brace and creative people on this planet. In this case, Earth is not so much an astronomical object as it is a global cultural context into which Ukraine is incorporated (UnDo 2007: 4).

The above-mentioned exhibitions are all characterized by terms such as “the best of, review/selection of works, best / most interesting artists, first time” (in Ukraine), and a general lack of a problematic or critical approach which would be based on a need to dive deep into a particular problem or question. It seems like in the early years the PAC simply



wanted to show the *big names* to become a part of the international art space. The exhibitions' description limits itself to the list of famous names, who were brought for the first time into this part of the world. The ideas behind the art shows are more widely presented in the catalogues, but still do not present a critical approach, just an informative description.

In 2008 the centre presented seven exhibitions, including solo and group shows by Ukrainian and foreign artists and one *big name* show. The *French Connection* observed from the beginning is still present – the first 2008 show was of a Ukrainian-born, Paris-based Kristina Solomoukha. The *Pastime Paradise* was her first exhibition in Ukraine and was inspired by her memories of the homeland. Next was the *East Art Map*, a project by IRWIN, the art collective from Slovenia, devoted, as clearly stated in the title, to the art of the area of Eastern (as well as South-Eastern and Central) Europe. The project was carried out between 1999 and 2005 by IRWIN with collaboration of international art critics and curators and gained international interest, including an extensive book covering the project published in 2006. (Irwin 2006) As we read in the description of the publication, the project is “a reconstruction of the missing history of contemporary art, art networks, and art conditions in Eastern Europe from the East European perspective” (Irwin 2006). On the PAC's website the show is described as “a guidebook through the contemporary art of Eastern Europe and its relations with Western arts, social and political history” (PinchukArtCentre 2008b). Japanese artist Mariko Mori solo exhibition followed, which was the first presentation of her works in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>91</sup> 2008's *big name* show in the PAC was the presentation of paintings by Sir Paul McCartney.<sup>92</sup> An important exhibition in terms of balancing the Western with the Ukrainian, was ‘Patriotism. Art as present’,<sup>93</sup> a project by the R.E.P. (il. 8). Group. R.E.P.<sup>94</sup> was founded in 2004 by Nikita Kadan, Zhanna Kadyrova, Volodymyr Kuznetsov, Ksenia Hnylytska, Lada Nakonechna and Lesia Khomenko. The group won the competition for the project of the Ukrainian Pavilion at the 51st Venice Biennale of 2005, but the outcome of the competition was ignored by the authorities who chose the more traditional and conservative project of Mykola Babak *Your Children Ukraine*, curated by Oleksiy Tytarenko (Brożyński 2012). R.E.P. show at the PAC was presented in the Project Room, small space situated on the 4th floor, and consisted of three components – the visual display, a free newspaper, and several accompanying events. All these elements together combined into a performance platform uniting artists, experts, activists, curators, and visitors. The project itself was running since 2006 and has been presented before in multiple countries including Poland, Russia,

England, Sweden, Estonia, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, Italy, and the Netherlands. At its core lays a need of creating a universal language by inventing a logotype alphabet, based on a play with a collective memory, and inspired by some techniques used by the Soviet propaganda and political communication. The project also aimed at taking a stance on one's own national identity.

“Patriotism” has become the hallmark of the group. It is based on a pictographic code, whose individual symbols graphically represent concepts important from the point of view of Ukrainian society (Zambrzycka 2016: 230).<sup>95</sup>

The pictograms were created to simplify the communication between Ukraine and the rest of the world, and to broaden the discussion by introducing the local problems into the universal context (Zambrzycka 2016: 230). A special glossary was published with the explanation of the meaning of the pictographs, in which, for example, a candy symbolised bribery, a cherry – unity, sperm – competition. Ukraine was placed to symbolize the Other, which is very meaningful in the context of this thesis, as the Other is one of the main concepts of the postcolonial studies. The Other, as put simply by Jean-François Staszak in the *International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography*, is a “member of a dominated out-group, whose identity is considered lacking and who may be subject to discrimination by the in-group” (Staszak 2008). Interestingly though, in case of “Patriotism”, this *otherness* should be considered contemporarily, as it is Europe here that is a dominating group, and not Russia, as could be thought when considering Ukraine in the postcolonial terms. In this sense, the project discusses the relations between Ukraine and the West – the main topic of interest, at least in theory, for the PinchukArtCentre at that time. Each version of “Patriotism” was slightly different depending on circumstances. The one presented at the PAC focused on the issue of art institutions. In their text in the exhibition newspaper the R.E.P. group touches upon the question of the non-existent art market in Ukraine, as well as public versus private art institutions, each of them having separate questions when it comes to artistic freedom (PinchukArtCentre 2008c: 5).

Our mural deals with art-as-private-property, art as a product on the market, art depending on the national cultural policy, as well as art as an integral part of the social sphere. It also covers the issue of autonomous space and its relationship with different areas of the art infrastructure. (...) “Patriotism. Art as a Present” deals with the different forms of the functioning of art inside and outside the

culture industry. In this way we show that the situation of art as a present is not without alternatives (PinchukArtCentre 2008c: 5).

It was probably the first exhibition at the PAC which heavily commented on the political and social situation, the first one with the critical approach towards the chosen topic instead of being simply the presentation of art objects. Additionally, it truly represented the desire of the PAC to offer the gallery space to young Ukrainian artists. The exhibition that followed, was also of prominent Ukrainian art group – SOSka.<sup>96</sup> Created in 2005 by Mykola Ridnyi, Hanna Kriventsova and Serhiy Popov of the artistic milieu of Kharkiv, as opposed to R.E.P. which was gathered around the Kyiv based Soros Center for Contemporary Art under the direction of Jerzy Onuch. SOSka presented the project entitled “Dreamers”, which was: “(...) a metaphoric reflection of the today’s society existence. A state of insecurity and fragility defines the post-Soviet reality in the new millennium, reality that has replaced the solid pessimism of the previous decade (PinchukArtCentre 2008a).

As described by the members of the group, Kriventsova and Ridnyi in the exhibition catalogue: “The artists’ provocative acts constituted the diagnostics process allowing to see the landmark changes in the society (Kriventsova and Ridnyi 2008: 8).

Both groups, R.E.P. and SOSka, were created within the social and political atmosphere of the Orange Revolution of 2004,<sup>97</sup> which indicates how important are the revolutionary events such as the 2004 revolution and, a decade later, Maidan, for the artistic life in Ukraine. SOSka group consciously referred to the legacy of the Kharkiv school of social photography, that originated in the late 60s. The closing event for the 2008 was a group exhibition *Rhine on the Dnipro: Julia Stoschek Collection/Andreas Gursky*.<sup>98</sup> Located on the three floors, the exhibition gathered works by Andreas Gursky and artists from Julia Stoschek collection such as Bruce Nauman, Christian Jankowski, and Robert Boyd. Gursky is one of the artists whose works Pinchuk collects, including his “99 Cent II Diptychon” bought in 2007 for USD 3.3 million, making it the most expensive photograph in the world (Mead 2009).

The 2009, fourth year of the functioning of the PAC, seems to be the moment when the centre’s program stabilizes to fully complete its mission. The number of exhibitions hits seven again. The blockbusters shows accompany the displays of Ukrainian art, as well as contemporary art group shows. It is also another year when the PAC is responsible for the Ukrainian Pavilion in Venice, and the initiating year for the biannual PinchukArtCentre prize for Ukrainian artists, being awarded until today, and acknowledged as one of the most

important art prizes in Ukraine. The year was initiated by the solo exhibition of Japanese photographer Keita Sugiura,<sup>99</sup> today world-famous, among others because of his cooperation with Pharrell Williams, back then young artist, who won the bronze award at the “GEISAI#11”, the annual Tokyo art-fair led by Takashi Murakami - one of the Pinchuk’s favourite artists, whose works he collects. Pinchuk was one of the jurors at the GEISAI, and the solo show at the PAC was the award for the young artist. The show was presented in the project room. The big solo shows of 2009 included Sam Taylor-Wood’s<sup>100</sup> and Damien Hirst’s, both connected to the Young British Artists, and both collected by Pinchuk. Hirst’s show ‘Requiem’ with more than one hundred works was on view for five months.<sup>101</sup> In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Pinchuk wrote: “This exhibition is of great significance but what is most important for me is that the opportunity to see Hirst’s new body of work occurs first in Kyiv. Damien’s exhibition in Kyiv symbolises the reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship between contemporary Ukrainian culture and that of the rest of the world. They share a common ground” (PinchukArtCenter 2009: 3).

Clearly, what was important for Pinchuk was both – the possibility to show in Ukraine the works (including the new works, that were not exhibited before) of one of the most famous contemporary artists, and through this – to incorporate the PAC into the international art scene. In the catalogue we will find a short interview with the artist conducted by the renowned art critic and art historian Eckhard Schneider. The conversation is surprisingly not insightful and full of generalities, of how Damien Hirst is happy to exhibit at the PAC. The part of the text that is more detailed is his description of the relationship (friendship) with Victor and Elena Pinchuk (PinchukArtCenter 2009: 5). The book also contains the conversation of Hirst with Takashi Murakami, and an essay by a British writer Michael Bracewell. Interestingly, on the quest to find some reviews of the exhibition in the international media, I’ve just found, just like in the case of the PAC’s opening exhibition, opinions on the opening ceremony itself, and not the exhibition itself. Similarly, as in a case of the 2006 event, the descriptions of Western journalists revolve around two watchwords – *oligarchic* and *bizarre*. Kate Sutton described in Artforum the party in the SkyArtCafe, and the opening dinner in the Kyiv Puppet Theatre, attended by some prominent guests – international curators, artists, and art dealers, alongside stars of Ukrainian artistic scene. Similar report was given by Laura K. Jones in Artnet. Both seem amazed by the oddity that accompanied the opening – from the choice of the Puppet theatre

as a place for the official program, to the performance of a seven-year-old girl in a pink dress, and a National Choir (Sutton 2009, Jones 2009).

The four group shows in 2009 included the “21 RUSSIA”, a presentation of the contemporary Russian artists,<sup>102</sup> as well as the *Red Forest*, a group show of the Ukrainian artists of the 90s, with Sergey Bratkov, Oleksandr Hnylytsky, Oleksandr Roitburd, Arsen Savadov, Georgy Senchenko, Vasyl Tsagolov, Ilia Chichkan.<sup>103</sup> The show refers to the trees in the Chernobyl nuclear station zone, which received the biggest release of the radioactive dust after the 1986 explosion. The core of the exhibition was formed by the works selected from the Pinchuk’s collection. It was the year when once again the PAC was responsible for the Ukrainian Pavilion in Venice. Ukrainian artist Illya Chichkan presented his works alongside Japanese Mihara Yasuhiro. The exhibition *Steppes of Dreamers* was curated by Wladimir Klitschko, and the commissioner was Petro Doroshenko.<sup>104</sup> The Ukrainian Pavilion was a joint initiative by the PAC and the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine. Again, the exhibition was opened at Palazzo Papadopuli, just like the PAC’s exhibition in 2005, and the national pavilion in 2007. Participating artists were Illya Chichkan and Japanese Mihara Yasuhiro, who in their Venice project “examine the past, present and future of the Eurasian landscape through various cinema metaphors – inspired by the great Ukrainian film director, Kira Muratova” (Schneider 2009: 9).

The last 2009 group show was an exhibition of the shortlisted PinchukArtCentre Prize nominees. Twenty Ukrainian artists up to 35 years presented their works from 31<sup>st</sup> October to 20<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>105</sup> The PAC Prize is the biannual prize for young Ukrainian artists before the age of 35. The nominees receive funding to produce artworks for the final exhibition, which is prepared under the supervision of the PAC curators and director, currently Björn Geldhof. The 2009 was the first edition of the prize, which is being awarded since then. It was the first private art prize in Ukraine, that aimed at supporting the young generation of Ukrainian artists by institutional and financial support. The project also aimed at raising interest in contemporary art from Ukraine by exhibiting young artists in an institution that strives to position itself as one of the world’s leading cultural hubs. The artists are selected by the Selection Committee, and the Main Prize, two Special Prizes and Public Choice Prizes, determined by the audience’s votes, are granted. The Main Prize of UAH 250,000<sup>106</sup> includes some support as well for production or residence, as well as secures the winner’s place among the nominees for the Future Generation Art Prize – another award established by the PAC in 2009, with the first exhibition in 2010, aimed at young international artists, up to the age of 35. Two PAC Special Prizes of UAH 60,000

each also offer production and residency support. The Public Choice Prize is of UAH 25,000. In 2009 the winner was Artem Volokitin, while Masha Shubina and Oleksii Salmanov were awarded the two Special Prizes. The jury members were Jessica Morgan, Boris Mikhailov, Udo Kittelman and Sergey Bratkov.

In 2010 the centre's program seem to stabilise into what it would represent in the following years, until the political torment of 2013-2014. Since 2008 until 2015 the general director of the PAC is Eckhard Schneider, the former director of the Kunsthaus Bregenz, who is believed to be responsible for the "chip blue" profile of the art centre. Björn Geldhof is the artistic manager, Oleksandr Soloviov remains the curator. Three blockbuster shows, one solo show by Ukrainian artist, and award-connected group show create a program frame that would characterize the PAC's image of a place focused on presenting international art, especially the co called Blue-Chip Art, with an accent of the Ukrainian *big names*. Blue-Chip artists, those who rule the art market, have found a permanent place within the walls of the centre. Ksenia Malykh, responsible for the PAC's Research Platform, a long-term employee, sees it as the only possible way back then to familiarize Ukrainian public with contemporary international art (Malykh 2021). Similar opinion is shared by Oleksandra Pogrebnyak, the assistant curator (Pogrebnyak 2021). Ukraine has been deprived of the access to international art for decades, including the one following the Ukrainian independence. Therefore, as Malykh says, it is not fully justified to see the PAC's program back then as merely an effort to easily, with the use of the *big names*, enter the international art environment. Ukrainian audience had no knowledge of contemporary art worldwide, so the best encounter to start with would be with the famous artists, whose names might have been somehow known. The idea was to attract the public to the centre, and slowly educate about contemporary art, taking the examples from abroad, where the art market and environment were clearly much better developed in every possible aspect.

The first solo exhibition of 2010 was Sergey Bratkov's *Ukraine* (il. 9).<sup>107</sup> The photographer who emerged from the environment of the famous Kharkiv school of photography presented here the critical reflection of a country in transition. At the same time the solo exhibition by Indian Subodh Gupta *Faith Matters* was presented on the 2nd and 3rd floor. It was the first major solo show in Eastern Europe of this top-selling artist. The theme of the newly prepared sculptures and paintings was focused on the changes and shifts in national identity and culture. The group blockbuster art show *Sexuality and Transcendence* included works by the renown artists such as Jeff Koons (il. 10), Anish Kapoor, Takashi Murakami (il. 10), Maurizio Catellan, Cindy Sherman, Louise Bourgeois,

and Jenny Holzer<sup>108</sup>, alongside Ukrainian big stars Boris Mikhailov and Illya Chichkan. This introduction and juxtaposition of Ukrainian artists with international stars is invariably and consistently implemented. The 2010 was closed with the solo show of Takashi Murakami,<sup>109</sup> one of Victor Pinchuk's favourite artists, whose works form a big part of his private collection. Relationship with Murakami lasts until today, including artist's work presented during the 15th Yalta European Strategy forum in 2018, dedicated to Ukraine ("Ukraine: The War and Peace").<sup>110</sup> In the following year Murakami was one of the mentors in the program of the Future Generation Art Prize for young artists,<sup>111</sup> and according to the prize's concept, his solo show was accompanied by the exhibition of the nominees for the FGAP.<sup>112</sup> Eckhard Schneider, the author of the concept of the prize:

Inspired by Takashi Murakami's Geisai prize, the Future Generation Art Prize expresses the vision of Victor Pinchuk, its founder, to create a global art prize for a future generation of artists. For this reason, Takashi was invited to be the first Patron artist to present his works in a solo exhibition along with works of the young artists shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize 2010, award and competition established one year later. This first global private art prize is a bi-yearly venture set up as a consistent support for developing an art scene (Gratza 2016).

Any artist under the age of 35 can apply till the mid-year, and the winner is announced in December. The prize covers the costs of production of the new work, and provides the international exposure for the 20 nominees, who take part in the final exhibition. The winner receives USD 100,000, split in USD 60,000 cash prize, and USD 40,000 investment in their practice, and is automatically shortlisted for the upcoming edition of the contest. The board of the prize is formed out of the top figures of the international art world such as the directors of the Centre Pompidou, MoMA, the Guggenheim, and Tate. Damien Hirst is also a board member, as well as a mentor for the winning artists, alongside Jeff Koons, Andreas Gursky, and Takashi Murakami. The Mentor Artists have committed to a long-term participation in the prize. Among the finalists there is always Ukrainian, as the recipient of the PinchukArtCenter Prize automatically enters the final. During the conference launching the second edition of the FGAP, Pinchuk mentioned, that the considerable amount of money, that the winner receives, should be thought of as an investment, that the business investor would put into start-up (Stoilas 2012). Considering the composition of the board of the prize, even the non-winning

appearance can give an artist a significant and real push of his career – not to mention the financial possibilities that the win itself gives. The nominees' exhibition is presented at the PAC and attended by the “Ukrainian high-society and members of the local art scene” (Unwin 2019). The exhibitions take a significant amount of space – each artist having at their disposal an area comparable to a small gallery. The works are newly produced, thanks to the budget assured by the PAC, and the exhibition is later moved to Venice and presented during the Venice Biennale. The goal of the FGP is also deeply connected with the overall mission of the PAC. As Geldhof stated in 2019:

The effect of exhibiting work by finalists of each edition of the prize in Kiev has been transformative for contemporary art in Ukraine. It has, he says, had “a very deep impact on how Ukrainian artists have positioned themselves. It has allowed them to emancipate themselves and it has also supported them into a global discussion, giving them trust that what they're doing is somehow closely connected to what other artists are doing around the world” (Unwin 2019).

In 2009 Pinchuk travelled to New York to personally announce the establishment of his art prize (Mead 2009). In 2010 the jurors were: Daniel Birnbaum (Sweden) – Director of the Städelschule Art Academy, Frankfurt am Main; Director of the Venice Biennale 2009, Okwui Enwezor (Nigeria) – Director of Documenta XI; Former Dean of Academic Affairs and Senior Vice President at San Francisco Art Institute, Yuko Hasegawa (Japan) – Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (MOT); Former Chief Curator of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Ivo Mesquita (Brazil) – Chief Curator at the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo; Curator of the 2008 São Paulo Biennial, Eckhard Schneider (Germany) – General Director of the PinchukArtCentre; Robert Storr (USA) – Dean of the Yale University School of Art; Director of the Venice Biennale 2007, and Ai Weiwei (China) – Artist (Schneider and Geldhof 2010: 26).

In 2011 the PAC-UA project was inaugurated, as well as the Collection Platform. Both projects included several exhibitions, which, together with other shows, increased the number of expositions in 2011 to as many as twelve. The PAC-UA project was to put an accent on Ukrainian artists connected to the Collection Platform.<sup>113</sup> The 5th floor of the centre became a space of presentation of works that were created in a collaboration between the PAC and Ukrainian artists. The first show was Vasyl Tsagolov's *Fear Has Many Eyes* painterly series.<sup>114</sup> Another PAC-UA shows in 2011 were Arsen Savadov's *Blow-Up*<sup>115</sup>, Oleksandr Roytburg's *If There is No Water Running from Your Tap*<sup>116</sup>, and Illya Chikan's



*Backside Entrance at the Museum*<sup>117</sup> in collaboration with the street artist Psyfox. The shows were presented within the Collection Platform, an exhibition of works from the collection of the PAC, and both were exhibited in a separate viewing room to let the visitors discover Ukrainian artists within the international scope of the collection. The whole project was thought to be educational, and its main goal was to get Ukrainians acquainted with contemporary art, including that from the West. And so, during the first exhibition entitled *Collection Platform 1: Circulation*<sup>118</sup> presented works included those by Ukrainians Sergey Bratkov, Illya Chichkan, Oleksandr Hnylytsky, Oleg Kulik, Boris Mikhailov, Oleksandr Roitburd, and Arsen Savadov (il. 11), as well as *Westernes* Cecily Brown, Gregory Crewdson, Peter Doig, Tracey Emin, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Gary Hume, Jeff Koons, Richard Prince, Thomas Ruff, Robert Therrien, Sam Taylor Wood, and Jeff Wall. Ethiopian Julie Mehretu and Japanese Takashi Murakami, both world-renowned, were also part of the collection. Most of the works were presented during the previous shows in the PAC, however some were exposed for the first time. The second edition, *Collection Platform 2: Circulation*<sup>119</sup> included Banksy, Maurizio Cattelan, Chuck Close, Olafur Eliasson, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Oleg Kulik, Liza Lou, Boris Mikhailov, Takashi Murakami, Richard Phillips, Marc Quinn, Thomas Ruff, Sam Taylor-Wood, Oleg Tistol, Fred Tomaselli, and Vasilii Tsagolov. As underlined multiple times, the project aimed to offer the audience “a deeper understanding of artists and their works. The idea is to slow down the speed of viewing and by giving more information allowing the audience to acquiring more knowledge, competence, and experience as integral part of the new education offensive” (PinchukArtCentre 2011a). The educational program has been, and still is, an extremely important part of the PAC’s activities and mission, which corresponds to what Pinchuk and the centre’s curators often repeat. Several activities like guided tours, public talks, family events or literature nights was introduced early on and is still present today. In 2011, apart from the new project, the centre continued with the blockbuster shows (Damian Ortega,<sup>120</sup> Candice Breitz,<sup>121</sup> Olafur Eliasson),<sup>122</sup> and its core projects of the PAC Prize<sup>123</sup> and the Future Generation Prize,<sup>124</sup> for the first time in Venice, exhibited at the time of the Venice Biennale.

In the same year the PAC launched the Curatorial Platform, a two-year full-time program for young professionals under 30, who wish to “develop their competence on a high international professional level to become an expert in the curatorial work, exhibition, communication, publication, education, technique in the context of contemporary art museum” (PinchukArtCentre 2011b).

In 2012 a new program was introduced. “The exhibitions became very politically driven I think from 2012”<sup>125</sup> – says Geldhof (Geldhof 2021). *Transfer* was an exchange program between the PAC and the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle (CSW) in my home city of Warsaw, Poland. As an outcome, the five one-week long exhibitions of Polish artists were carried out in Kyiv (Monika Zawadzki, Agnieszka Polska, Konrad Smoleński, Nicolas Groszpiere, Michał Budny), while Ukrainian artists’ shows (Mykola Ridnyi, Zhanna Kadyrova, Lada Nakonechna, Nikita Kadan, Volodymyr Kuznetsov) were presented in Poland<sup>126</sup> in the Bank Pekao Project Room at the CSW. Due to this project of mutual exchange, as well as the continuation of the PAC-UA and Collection Platform from the previous year, the PAC presented fifteen art shows in 2012. It included blockbuster solo shows by foreign artists Gary Hume,<sup>127</sup> Jeff Wall,<sup>128</sup> Anish Kapoor,<sup>129</sup> and Damien Hirst,<sup>130</sup> solo shows by Ukrainian artists in the context of PAC-UA project (Mykola Matsenko,<sup>131</sup> Pavlo Makov,<sup>132</sup> Zhanna Kadyrova)<sup>133</sup>, and the series of exhibitions *Collection Platform*, where the works of the world-renowned artists are presented alongside the projects of the winners of the both PAC art prizes (*Collection Platform 3: Forever Now*,<sup>134</sup> *Collection Platform 4: Emotion and Technology*).<sup>135</sup>

In the following year only one PAC-UA exhibition was carried out, a show by Serhiy Bratkov.<sup>136</sup> Three solo exhibitions took place, two by internationally renowned artists Tony Oursler<sup>137</sup> and Jake & Dinos Chapmans,<sup>138</sup> and the winner of the Main Prize of the Future Generation Art Prize 2012 – Lynette Yiadom-Boakye.<sup>139</sup> The group shows included *China China*,<sup>140</sup> a group show of Chinese artists, the Future Generation Art Prize in Venice,<sup>141</sup> the exhibition of artists shortlisted for the PinchukArtCentre Prize,<sup>142</sup> and the project by Elena Pinchuk’s AntiAIDS Foundation<sup>143</sup>, marking the 10th anniversary of the initiative. The show included works by the blockbuster artists devoted to the topic of HIV/AIDS in contemporary art and aimed at raising the awareness of the problem in Ukraine, which is a country with one of the biggest numbers of HIV infected in Europe, with the tendency constantly raising (Bielsat.eu 2018). The 2013 programme also included a solo show of Daria Bezakostna, a 17-year-old artist with cerebral palsy.<sup>144</sup>

In 2013 Eckhardt Schneider is still the general manager, while Geldhof is a curator. This team has been working together since 2009, when Geldhof joined the PAC team, primary as the artistic manager and curator (until 2012), later as the deputy artistic director (2012-2015), and finally as the artistic director of the centre (since September 2015). He has also been the artistic and strategic director from 2015 till 2018. Before coming to Kyiv, he worked as a curator at the Angelos Jan Fabre in Antwerp area in Belgium. Eckhardt

Schneider has been the general director of the PAC since October 2008. Previously he was the head of the Nordhorn Municipal Gallery (1976-1989), business manager and artistic director of the Kunstverein Hannover (1990-2000), and director of Kunsthaus Bregenz (2000-2008) in Germany.

#### **IV.8. Victor Pinchuk and Euromaidan**

Euromaidan is probably the most important event in the contemporary history of Ukraine. In 2013 a wave of civil unrest and demonstrations began. They were initiated on the night of the 21st of November with the public protests in Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kyiv. The reason for protests was the governmental decision to suspend the signing of an association agreement with the European Union. In the wider perspective it meant that Ukraine would close its ties with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union. The protests soon attracted the vast numbers of people who began to form the official programme, including the calls for the resignation of President Victor Yanukovich and his government, and for the introduction of the anti-corruption programme. The situation escalated after the night of the 30th of November, when the protesters were violently dispersed by the Ukrainian riot police – Berkut, leading to the outburst of the Ukrainian revolution, also called the Revolution of Dignity, in February 2014. A series of violent events involved protesters, riot police and unknown shooters, caused death of approximately one hundred people, who later will be known as the Heavenly Hundred (Nebesna sotnya). As an outcome of the revolution the Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich fled the country, and his government was overthrown. Soon the new government led by Arseniy Yatseniuk was formed, and the presidential elections were won by Petro Poroshenko. It is important to note, that not all the country supported the revolution. The opposition, which was first formed in Kyiv as an Antimaidan gathering, was mainly present in some eastern and southern regions, where the future of the country was seen as Russian-oriented. The opposition movement escalated into the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, the military intervention in this area and the subsequent war in Donbas.

The PAC, being located at Kreschatyk, the main street leading to Maidan, has found itself in the heart of the protests, although the protesters' "city" has never reached PAC, and its barricades were located one block away, at the crossroads of Kreschatyk and Khmelnytskoho Street (Taylor 2014). Katya Soldak describes Pinchuk's attitude at that time:

He wasn't just a passive spectator. “We were on the phone constantly – with businessmen, with politicians, with our Western and Eastern friends, discussing what all of us could do.” His team ferried medical supplies to the wounded in the Maidan, as the central square is known. “My thoughts were with them all the time,” he now says. But he wasn't there with them in body. Not quite. In fairness, many of his fellow Ukrainian tycoons fled the country entirely, sitting out the revolution in places like London. But at least one, the chocolate-mogul-turned-politician, Petro Poroshenko, threw his full support behind the protesters at a time when that looked like risky folly. Pinchuk stayed somewhere in the middle. “The goal of a businessman is to do everything to avoid bloodshed and to bring about peace and compromise,” he told me during one of our conversations as the deadly three-month thriller in the square played out. That thinking reflects a view he has held for some time: “It's not necessary to be a member of the European Union,” he told me a year ago. “But European values”--meaning civil society, the rule of law, human rights, freedom of speech, will solve a great number of Ukraine's problems.” Yet he added: “Ukraine cannot be successful without Russia.” (...) “Ukraine is Ukraine in its current borders, and we must not give up any part of it” (Soldak 2014).

Still, until July 2013, 38 percent of Pinchuk's main export, steel pipes, was addressed to Russia (Hewitt 2014). The export that in 2014 was gone. It seemed clear, that the PAC soon will be making some cuts, such as the less frequent exhibitions of a longer duration (Hewitt 2014).

#### **IV.9. PinchukArtCentre after Euromaidan**

Asked about the changes at the PAC after the 2013-2014, Björn Geldhof, said that he doesn't think there were any. I cannot agree with this statement. I understand, that from the insider's perspective, it did not look like a conscious decision, as he could not name the moment when the board would say: OK, we had Maidan, annexation of Crimea, the war in Donbas, now we will work in a completely different manner because of these events. He underlines that the changes came gradually and were an outcome of the natural processes of the development of an art institution (Geldhof 2021). From the outsider's perspective, the list of changes is long, and they are for better. What is important, is that in 2014 the art centre took a clear side when it comes to Russian – Ukrainian conflict. The 2014 opening

of the exhibition of the Future Generation Art Prize was downscaled, but Pinchuk underlined that the quality of the PAC's events will stay the same (Hewitt 2014). At the same time, the question about the necessity of such events at difficult times emerged. The FGAP exhibition might seem unnecessarily luxurious and unfitted to the country's political, social, and cultural aura at the time. It is when Victor Pinchuk declared: "I'm a strong believer in contemporary art as one of the most revolutionary forms in the world. Artists are our allies in creating an extra-territorial value of freedom" (Hewitt 2014)'

This attitude is confirmed by PAC's artistic director, Björn Geldhof. In an interview he said that "Victor really believes in the power of art" (Geldhof 2021).

In 2014 the PAC continues the program but includes some new elements. So next to the earlier planned exhibitions of Jan Fabre,<sup>145</sup> the patrons of the FGAP (Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Andreas Gursky and Takashi Murakami), the 21 Artists Shortlisted for the FGAP 2014,<sup>146</sup> a joined exhibition of video works by Pierre Huyghe, Christian Marclay, and Diana Thater,<sup>147</sup> and the *Collection Platform 4: Emotion and Technology*<sup>148</sup>, there are new projects that mark some institutional and narrative changes.

The PAC's yearly programme announced in the form of a catalogue-newspaper names the 2014 as the *year of renewal*. (PinchukArtCentre 2014) Not only a new programme was introduced, but also a new floor structure, giving more flexibility to the way the projects are presented. A new programme line included the Architectural Platform, which in its first year included projects by Olafur Eliasson, Ai Weiwei and Mario Merz. The Deputy Artistic Director and the chief curator of the PAC is now Björn Geldhof. Schneider remains the General Director.

In February 2014, when the streets of Kyiv will soon become a place of the bloodiest days of the Maidan revolution, the PAC presents an exhibition dedicated to the Panton Chair<sup>149</sup>, which from the current perspective seems a bit unlucky. However, from the institutional point of view, the PAC was just following the earlier plans. No one predicted that the protests would take such a violent turn. This project was one of many with the sole participation of Ukrainian artists, followed by Alevtina Kakhidze's *TV Studios/Rooms Without Doors*<sup>150</sup> and Open Group's *Biography*<sup>151</sup> (il. 12) – both within the PAC-UA Re-Consideration programme, a new endeavour aiming at the research of the relations between contemporary Ukrainian art and the past practices and discovering "the continuity of tradition on the context of interrupted development of Ukrainian art history" (PinchukArtCentre 2014a). The exhibited artworks by young artists were to be somehow influenced by their Ukrainian predecessors, so that the continuity within the Ukrainian art

history could be traced. This is the first signal of upcoming narrative changes in PAC. Although Ukrainian artists were present in the programme from the very beginning of the PAC's existence, from now on the way Ukrainian art will be presented and exhibited changes. What is signalled here will be developed within the Research Platform, that will emerge a year later – the consistent dive into the Ukrainian art history, at that time still institutionally non-existent. The Ukrainian art and artists will be presented not in relation to the Western art and history, but in relation to themselves – this turn from the outside to the inside will manifest in multiple narratives, the greatest one of them all being the Ukraine as the centre of meaning, and not solely a comparative. What has changed in comparison with the earlier PAC-UA platform, is that the history and multinarrative enter the stage. PAC-UA was rooted in the present, while PAC-UA Re-Consideration reaches towards the past. Open Group's *Biography* emerged as a collaborative project between the members of the group (Yuriy Biley, Anton Varga, Pavlo Kovach, Yevgen Samborsky, Stanislav Turina) and Yuriy Sokolov, artist of an older generation based in Lviv. The project took form of a performative action with the active participation of the audience. Like Kakhidze, who reached towards the project executed in the 90s in order to create one that is based in the present time, the artists thought of the ambivalence between the present and past – an element essential to the process of biography writing. Another project within the PAC-UA Re-Consideration programme was the Kharkiv-based artist Ivan Svitlychnyi's *Subimage*<sup>152</sup>, within which he reconsiders his own artistic practice. Svitlychnyi dives deep into his past, analysing such factors of influence as his family, teachers, and environment that surrounded and still surrounds him (PinchukArtCentre 2014c).

An exhibition, that in my opinion marks the greatest shift in the institutional programming, was *Fear and Hope*<sup>153</sup> (il. 13, 14, 15). Three Ukrainian artists, all the winners of the PinchukArtCentre Main Prize within the last years, created the first show at the PAC that directly commented the current political situation in the country.<sup>154</sup> The Maidan protests started in November 2013 and turned into the lethal revolution with around one hundred deaths. The subsequent annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the beginning of war in Donbas were the biggest tragedies in the history of independent Ukraine. Nikita Kadan, Zhanna Kadyrova and Artem Volokitin renounce hastily works commenting on political events on an ongoing basis.<sup>155</sup> For the first time since November 2013 they are trying to look at Maidan from a distance. The curator of the exhibition, Björn Geldhof, justified the implementation of the exhibition with the desire to create a platform for thoughts and discussions about the future of Ukraine, considering, first, what happened

within the last few months. He also emphasized that in the space of the art centre, artists may assume a non-participatory attitude, as opposed to the moments when they themselves participated in protests (PinchukArtCentre 2014b). This allows to introduce the critical attitude. The common theme of the presented works is the past and the present of Ukraine, and the exploration of topics such as conflict, memory, and loss. Three works by Zhanna Kadyrova were opening the exhibition. The series *Athletes* (2003), referring to the problem of violence, bodily injuries, and protest, was made by the artist during her stay in Crimea. At the exhibition, the photographs are juxtaposed with the work *Untitled* (2014) – a sculpture in the form of a map of Ukraine with a broken and missing lower part – Crimea. This three-dimensional map was made from a fragment of burnt, damaged wall that Kadyrova found in a former Soviet factory during her stay in Sharhorod. Its front is made of burnt bricks; its back is covered with an old Soviet wallpaper. *Untitled* is a picture of a country in disintegration – it refers both to the loss of Crimea to Russia and the collapse of the Soviet Union and its failed system. The Soviet wallpaper also symbolizes the civil side of all conflicts, that always have an impact not only on history and politics, but above all on everyday life. Kadyrova says that today she would probably not choose to produce this work, or maybe she would have done it differently. She considers it too emotional, maybe even too simple to convey. “But at a given time and place, it had a meaning, a role to play. At that moment, that's what I felt” – she adds (Kadyrova 2017). The juxtaposition of these two works builds a coherent history of Crimea as a place marked by violence.

In his installation Nikita Kadan deals with the issue of the responsibility of the museums for the historical narratives. When it comes to *musealising* or *institutionalizing* an event, a museum has a huge responsibility for how (and if) future generations will remember it. The way of presenting the past, history, or memories (memory) can easily be violated – for example, to ideological conflicts, because of which a given history (persons, events) may be forgotten and the historical narrative may be partially or completely changed. Kadan presented five showcases creating his own vision of the narration of the historical museum. Two projects (*Yesterday, Today, Today*, 2012-2014 and *Working Materials. Blame of Images*, 2014) comment on the relationship between the society and ideology. The first one refers to the appearance of the Soviet metro in Kyiv, which was decorated to become, on the one hand, a place of aesthetic pleasure according to the model adopted at that time, and, on the other – a symbol of equality and a *palace of the working class*. Decorative elements and expensive materials emphasize the greatness of the Soviet ideology. Today, subway stations have been redecorated in a way that corresponds to

neoliberal and capitalist ideas – for example by placing numerous advertisements. However, symbols of the old times and their ideology are still visible in 2014.<sup>156</sup> The spirit of the Soviet past, continuously present in the everyday reality, is a guide to understanding the causes of today's conflicts.

*City Hall. Model* (2014) and the *Museum of Revolution. Blame of Display* (2014) refer directly to the events of the preceding months (the Maidan revolution, the war in Donbas, the annexation of Crimea). The *City Hall. Model* is a small copy of the town hall in Odessa, in which representatives of the city authorities barricaded themselves in 2014 for the fear of the crowd. It is a symbol of a lack of understanding and a lack of dialogue between the authorities and the citizens. The *Museum of Revolution* refers to the Ukrainian House in Kiev. The former Lenin Museum has become one of the main areas of protests during the Euromaidan. Kadan constructs a para-museum display case whose parts resemble the fragments of a building destroyed during the revolution and then repaired with plywood. The display case itself becomes the object of a historical narrative. Kadan sees no need to display anything inside. It is an important and up-to-date comment on not only the course of the revolution itself, but above all a broader understanding of what history, historical narrative and memory are. The last of the showcases is called *Exhibit. Inseparable* (2014). The enormous structure was filled with ash and Kadan consciously refers to this simple symbolism – “For you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). The artist is talking here about the end, but also the beginning – a new historical narrative.

Geldhof juxtaposes the showcases with the 2009-2010 series *Procedure Room*. On a set of eight plates Kadan applied pictures referring to the aesthetics of the Soviet illustrated Medical Encyclopaedia. He shows characters that undergo various, often complicated, and painful treatments, which they endure with a happy smile on their faces. This is a catalogue of “treatments” used by the Ukrainian police, present long before the revolution. It was due to Maidan that those “treatments” became visible to the world, that they ceased to be transparent.

The third artist present at the *Fear and Hope* exhibition was Artem Volokitin. As in the case of Kadan and Kadyrova, the exhibition of his works uses a juxtaposition of the newest objects from 2014 (i.e., from the period after the experiences of the revolution, war, and annexation of Crimea) with the previous ones. Volokitin's large-format paintings speak of war in a very direct and emotional way – they are based on the images of explosions and visualize violence, loss, and emptiness. The paintings are adjacent to a video work from



2006 (with inserted new elements in 2014) entitled *Sisters*. In the film we observe four women, the title sisters, lamenting the loss of their mother. Volokitin speaks here about death, loss, but also about the life cycle – the sisters will take their mother's place, being mothers for the next generations. Death and loss are signalled through work that is completely unrelated to the current events in Ukraine. What connects them is a universality of the topic and the ability of the viewer to connect these works. In the context of the entire exhibition, personal death and loss become a universal experience.

I have devoted a lot of attention to this exhibition because of the ground-breaking meaning of the show for the curatorial narratives at PAC. Not only a current topic is addressed in a major exhibition, but it is also addressed critically. The participating artists are only Ukrainian, and the motifs present in *Fear and Hope*, such as an importance of history and its impact on the present, will be addressed multiple times in the forthcoming exhibitions, including *Hope!* in Ukrainian Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennial<sup>157</sup> (il. 16, 17, 18, 19).

From the very beginning the PAC wanted to mark its presence on the international scene by its participation in the Venice Biennial. In 2007 it presented a group exhibition *A Poem About an Inland Sea* and in 2009 *Steppes of Dreamers* by Illya Chichkan (Ukraine) and Mihara Yasuhiro (Japan). In 2015 the centre with the support of the Victor Pinchuk Foundation participated in the biennale for the third time with the group show *Hope!* curated by Björn Geldhof. The project was, again, chosen without an official competition, and in an atmosphere of an internal confrontation. However, as described in detail by artists Nikita Kadan and Mykola Rydnyi in an interview for Art Guide East (Lendeczki 2015), the cooperation with the private sector at that time was the only way. Kadan circumscribes the cultural state institutions as *disfunctional*, while Rydnyi emphasises the lack of interest of state in culture due to the ongoing war.

It was the first time that PAC's curator did not invite international artists to participate in the project – however the curator being Belgian himself, although he says that he considers himself Ukrainian (Geldhof 2021). The visual artists chosen for the exhibition were young, although all of them already recognisable, and with considerable successes in their home country. Most of them started their artistic and political activity within the Orange Revolution of 2004. Serhiy Zhadan, a famous Ukrainian writer, was also part of this project. Located in a glass construction on one of the main routes in Venice – Riva dei Sette Martiri – the pavilion aimed at symbolizing the new, transparent Ukraine.<sup>158</sup> Similarly to *Fear and Hope* the prevailing themes in Venice were those of the war in

Donbas as well as recent Ukraine's history. Another common point was the participation of Kadan, Kadyrova and Volokitin in both exhibitions, accompanied in Venice by Yevgenia Belorusets, Mykola Ridnyi in a joint project with Serkiy Zhadan, Anna Zvyagintseva, and Open Group.

In Venice Open Group and Yevgenia Belorusets commented on the personal engagement in the armed conflict and present contrasting attitudes of individuals – those who refuse to take an active part in war (the miners observed by Belorusets), versus young men in the Ukrainian army. The miners of Donbas portrayed by Belorusets (*Please don't take my picture! Or they'll shoot me tomorrow*) do not belong to any side of the conflict, while they don't associate themselves with neither – the separatists nor the Ukrainian government. They exist in the conflict zone due to the geographical circumstances. Their fight is the one for survival. Open Group presented the live-stream multi-channel video of front doors at homes of the families waiting for their loved ones to return from the war zone, while the artists themselves would watch it in the pavilion every day (*Synonyme for "Wait"*). The members of the group (Yuriy Biley, Anton Varga, Pavlo Kovach, Stanislav Turina) declined to eat during the whole period of this project.<sup>159</sup> Kadyrova's *Crowd. Day* refers to the unlawful referendum of the 16th of March 2014, when Crimea seceded from Ukraine to join Russia. In the anniversary of this tragic event the artist collected the newspapers from around the world to create a 6 m long collage – the portrait of a crowd. She also comments on the essence of mass media, its differences, and similarities within the globe, as well as traces international attention given to Ukraine on the 16th of March 2015. Zvyagintseva's *The Cage* of 2010 was made to critique Ukrainian jurisdiction system. The form of her work is a reminiscent of court cages where the defendant seats during the trial. Her cage, however, is knitted, which means fragile and unstable – just like the juridical system in Ukraine. It is also fragile like hopes and beliefs that after Maidan the long-needed changes would appear.

Volokitin presents again one of his large-scale paintings (*Spectacle-1*) devoted to the violence of war and the idea of war as a spectacle. With the use of the mass media the war has entered the living rooms and became just another image. Violence is also a main theme of the joint work by Rydnyi and Kadan (*Blind Spot*), where the fragmented image of war that we watch through the peep hole is juxtaposed with poems that present the personal experience of fictional and real characters that lived through the war in Eastern Ukraine.

And finally, there is Kadan's sculpture outside the pavilion – *Difficulties of Profanation*, which combines both – the current and the past. Placed in a showcase reminiscent of those from Soviet times it contains materials collected by Kadan in Eastern Ukraine during the war – concrete chunks from the bombed apartment block and teacups melted into the shelf made of glass (Nayeri 2015). Kadan refers here to his earlier works that also treated about the institutionalisation of history – by placing chosen elements in the museum or in the showcase (Kadan: “I try to tell the experience of Maidan and of the war through the medium of historical museum”, Lendeczki 2015). They are all carriers of the present history, however trapped in a Soviet showcase they also work as reminders of the unwanted past that was gradually erased in Ukraine. A bean plant that grows inside will cover the remnants, destroyed artefacts, symbolising hope for the better new future. This way Kadan's object combines the past, present and future and introduces a narrative of the forgotten and erased Soviet past that will be present in multiple exhibitions at PAC.

Geldhof expressed the necessity of the pavilion to not avoid commenting the military situation in Ukraine: “I think it would be a form of escapism,” he said (Nayeri 2015). Pinchuk, on the other hand, added that it would not be possible to stay silent about the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, however warned the artistic team of not doing anything anti-Russian. “A spokesman for Mr. Pinchuk later said that while Mr. Pinchuk had condemned the annexation of Crimea and the fighting in eastern Ukraine, he was not otherwise critical of Russia” (Nayeri 2015).

*Hope!* was an important show due several factors. It was the first appearance of Ukraine in Venice after the beginning of the war in 2014, so the exhibition had to be carefully narrated to present the difficult topic to the international audience. I am not surprised that Pinchuk Foundation decided to finance the pavilion in 2015 (while they did not in 2011 and 2013). It seemed like an important statement at that time, when the world was still deeply interested in the war in Donbas (an interest that faded away later, only to be back in 2021 and 2022 with the new threat of a Russian invasion, and a full-scale invasion in February). The exhibition presented critical approach, as opposed to the hastily made artistic commentaries that emerged during and soon after Maidan and the annexation of Crimea, which allowed to outline the deeper problems that haunt Ukrainian society, like untrustworthy jurisdiction or the Soviet past that was erased and not re-considered. Geldhof underlined multiple times the *non-partisan* formula of this project (ArtReview 2015, Artsy 2015). It was also another PAC's show at Venice which marked the constant present of the centre at the biennial – apart from the 2007 and 2009 pavilions, the PAC's Future

Generation Art Prize exhibitions were held in Venice in 2011 and 2013, and in 2005 – an exhibition in Palazzo Papadopoli as a collateral event.<sup>160</sup>

Björn Geldhof in an interview claimed that the programme did not change after the events of 2013-2014 (Geldhof 2021). I dare to disagree. In 2015 all but one art show executed at the PAC were clustered around Ukrainian issues. This is a big change in comparison to the preceding years – although it is not true, as some artists claimed, that the PAC was not interested at all in Ukrainian artists, but only in the chip blue artists exhibitions.<sup>161</sup> The *Mute* project by Zinaida Lihacheva was presented in a frame of the PAC-UA project<sup>162</sup> – a series of video-portraits of female volunteers and participants of the Maidan protests. Not only Lihacheva gives testimony of the ground-breaking events, but also introduces a feminist approach – a novelty that raised after the revolution and war and has not been researched yet.<sup>163</sup> While *Mute* was presented on the 4th floor of the centre, its main space was occupied by *Borderline. Ukrainian Art 1985-2004*, a group exhibition that included works by Sergey Bratkov, Oksana Chepelyk, Illya Chichkan, Oleg Golosiy, Yuri Leiderman, Pavlo Makov, Masoch Fund, Boris Mikhailov, Natsprom, Vlada Ralko, Alexander Roitburd, Jury Rupin, Andrii Sahaidakovsky, Arsen Savadov, Georgiy Senchenko, Oleg Tistol, Vasiliy Tsagolov, and Leonid Voitsekhov.<sup>164</sup> Apart from the small PAC-UA projects of 2014, it is the first exhibition at the PAC that refers to the Ukrainian art history. It also reflects on the role of art in a post-Soviet society and the role of artists in regaining their own artistic freedom and voice. It touches topics such as instability, social changes, and ideological shifts of the transformation period (PinchukArtCentre 2015a). In Geldhof's own words: "The exhibition is a stand against formal appreciations but instead tries to offer a view that allows to see unifying driving forces within Ukrainian art" (PinchukArtCentre 2015a).

The clearly underlined statement on discourse and not formal appreciations is crucial here and marks one of the biggest changes in the exhibitions' narratives at the PAC. It will be applied not only to the Ukrainian art exhibitions, but to all the programs. The *best of* and *review of works by* motto is no longer applicable, as well as the *first show of X in Eastern Europe*. This is a massive change not only in terms of the themes, but in the whole approach to thinking about exhibitions.

The annual PinchukArtCentre Prize exhibition<sup>165</sup> was also different, as the great number of works by the nominated artists were commenting on the current situation in the country. Darya Koltsova's, *Archive of the Contingent Listener* (2015) deals with the trauma of war. Roman Mikhailov's *Radif. The Last Child* (2015) tells the story of the 1944

massacre of the Crimean Tatars, creating a parallel between the violence of the 2014 annexation of the Crimea. Mykola Ridnyi's *Regular Places* (2014-2015) shows the atrocities between the citizens of Kharkiv during the conflict and asks if regular places can be bearers of memory. *Let's Put Lenin's Head Back Together!*<sup>166</sup> (2015) by Yevgeniya Belorusetz deals with the problem of decommunisation. Even the video installation by Nikolay Karabinovich *Songs of the South Slavs* (2015), although pertains to the Yugoslavian war, could be accurately applied to the war in Ukraine. Interestingly though, none of the awarded projects were politically engaged, as if after the one year of war there was an urge to return to normality. The winning project, Open Group's *Exclusively for Internal Use* (2015), explores the coexistence of random people who are forced to interact in a common space, such as in a train or a tram. The self-participatory character of this project (artists travelled from Lviv to Kyiv) was documented on the video, photography and in a book, all of which became part of the final installation. The special prizes went to Alina Kleitman (*Super A: Shave Your Heart*, 2014-2015, a series of videos dealing with femininity and the way it is approached, perceived, and objectified), and Anna Zvyagintseva, who also received the audience award (*The Way It Is*, 2015).

Carlos Motta's, who shared the 2014 Future Generation Art Prize with Nástio Mosquito, solo show *Patriots, Citizens, Lovers...*<sup>167</sup> was devoted to the Ukrainian LGBTQ activists, which makes the whole 2015 at the PAC devoted to the Ukrainian issues, a phenomenon that will continue in the following year. Geldhof: "We were no longer interested in mega blockbusters, but much more driven by political views. When I made an exhibition with Carlos Motta, that was like a manifest exhibition at the moment when Yanukovych tried to almost make the LGBTQ community illegal. That was absolutely a very strong statement about that" (Geldhof 2021).

The most important event of 2016 was the introduction of the Research Platform into the exhibition space of the PAC. The Platform was officially launched in 2016, however, as Geldhof underlines, the idea for this project emerged even before the Maidan, so much earlier (Geldhof 2021). It is possible though, that war was an impulse to speed up the emergence of the platform.<sup>168</sup> Geldhof:

The idea to create the Research Platform was something that we've discussed as early as 2012-2013. The fact that the Platform materialised soon after is irrelevant. Nothing is coincidental. Maidan is not coincidental. The need to look at one's own art history in an academic way is not coincidental. It was missing in Ukraine and

needed to happen. But you don't make that overnight, you develop strategy for that. So, it was not that: oh, it happened, we should do this. It was already in our thoughts; it was already on paper. But whatever happened at Maidan just reconfirmed the urgency to engage in such a discussion. And the entire decommunization movement reaffirmed the need to be able to look at that away from the politicised view, with a more academic distanced approach. (...) What was lacking was the big narrative, the one we started to build with the Research Platform. But before one can start to build such a platform, you have to understand the problem, what can you contribute as a private institution. And of course, developing that takes a bit of time. And perhaps the critique is right that it took too much time. But ok, nobody else was doing it (Geldhof 2021).

The platform is a space of research and discourse that aims at generating the *living archive of Ukrainian Art* from the early 80s till present (PinchukArtCentre, n.d.b). The effects of Platform's work are presented through exhibitions, discussions, publications, and educational events. It is completely focused on rediscovering and rethinking Ukrainian art and art history through archiving and reinterpreting the body of works by Ukrainian artists. It might be difficult to believe, but in 2016 it was the only project of this kind in the country, as Ukrainian art and art history remained wholesomely under-researched. Kateryna Iakovlenko, curator and researcher: "There are almost no books on Ukrainian history of art. We worked with private archives of Natalya Filonenko and Oleksandr Soloviov and scanned all the available materials. We created the database of Ukrainian art – profiles of artists and they work, as well as publications" (Iakovlenko 2021).

The open archive of Ukrainian artists, their works, publications, and interviews, is available online in Ukrainian and allows researchers to gain otherwise unobtainable information – gathered from artists and collectors. (Doslidnyts'ka platforma) The first exhibition executed in the cooperation with the Platform was Lada Nakonechna's *Exhibition* in the context of the PAC-UA Re-Consideration.<sup>169</sup> Interestingly, it covers the topic that I am trying to follow here – the methods and mechanisms of visual representation within the frames of institutional narratives. (PinchukArtCentre 2016c) Nakonechna traces how histories are constructed, how the contexts are built, what is chosen, and what remains omitted. She comments on the role of the art agents – curators and art institutions, that frame artistic production – unless it is directed towards the social sphere without the formal mediation. This conceptual project opens the activity of the Research Platform in an almost

symbolic way, as the Platform itself is an outcome of institutional changes. The chip blue art is gone. The more critical and problematic approach towards both Ukrainian and international art is introduced.

The second show of the Research Platform was called *Transformation*<sup>170</sup> and its focus were transitional processes in Ukrainian painting (1980s-early 2000s) – it was the first exhibition at the PAC that touched this important topic (il. 20). The show included the photographs, collages, and drawings from both the late Soviet era and the first decade of the Ukrainian independence. The curator tried to trace “the renovation of artistic language, which is associated with the transformation of the system of thinking and reflect the transition from one cultural phenomenon to another” (PinchukArtCentre 2016e). At the same time another Platform’s show was opened (il. 21). *Guilt*<sup>171</sup> was referring to Karl Jaspers’ concept of the overcoming totalitarian past through the consciousness of guilt – an idea coined in a reference to post-war Germany (PinchukArtCentre 2016d). This consciousness, which does not cover only politics, but most of all individual morale, is essential for the creation of the new reality and a spiritual revival. It alludes to the complicated history of Ukraine – both the transitional years of the 90’s, full of uncertainty and fear, and the ongoing war in Donbas – in terms of necessity to acclaim one’s own responsibility. The lack of scrutiny and the tendency to blame the external circumstances is seen as the main factors of the memory policy in Ukraine. The project was also devoted to the experience of violence, or rather violence’s that can take multiple forms. The themes of World War II coincided with the images of the war in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. *Guilt* is a major show that asks how to interact with the past – a question that was never asked in the walls of PAC<sup>172</sup> before Maidan and war.

The third show opened on the same day also dealt with the past and trauma. *Loss. In memory of Babi Yar*,<sup>173</sup> with works by Christian Boltanski, Berlinde de Bruyckere and Jenny Holzer, might seem for a very short moment as a come back to the blockbusters policy, but it is not (il. 22). The show deals with one of the biggest tragedies of Holocaust which was the killing of nearly 34,000 Jews in a ravine of Babi Yar in Kyiv on September 29-30 1941.<sup>174</sup> The exhibition covers the themes of loss, collective memory, violence, and death in a commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragedy. In the introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition Victor Pinchuk says: “After the Ukrainian’s clear choice for European values, it becomes even more imperative to commemorate our country’s role in this tragedy. (...) With ‘Loss’ we contribute to a moment of remembering” (Geldhof, Pinchuk and Schlögel 2016: 5).

Pinchuk connects the practices of commemoration and memory to the Ukraine's participation in the history of Europe. Not only he marks the Ukraine's choice of Europe (instead of Russia), but this choice relates to the processes of re-membering and gaining back the country's past. It might at first seem surprising, that in the visual arts in Ukraine the thread has only recently become visible, as the Jewish community in Ukraine remains one of the largest in the world. Babi Yar was a Jewish gravesite never acknowledged by the Soviet regime, the extermination of Jews becoming a non-subject in the Soviet history. All the loss among Jews went under the category of the *Soviet citizens*. The decision about the erasure of the Jewish history from the Soviet narrative was supported by a few factors. The major one, however, included antisemitism as an official policy of the state. During the times of the Cold War everything Western was suspicious, and Jews, with their associations with the international community of their natives, were seen as being unpatriotic cosmopolitans (Dawidowicz 1981). Also in the supposedly united Soviet society there was no need of singling out the suffering of the Jewish people. Only a small memorial to the suffering of the Soviet citizens was erected at the place of the tragedy after the war (Geldhof, Pinchuk and Schlögel 2016: 11). Babi Yar might be thought of as a symbol of the Soviet Union's efforts to physically erase memory – bringing back Babi Yar into the realms of memory is a gesture of protest against the “Soviet Eraser” which aimed at removing undesirable elements from history.<sup>175</sup> It is an anticolonial gesture, as it opposes the history written by the coloniser, as well as a healing gesture – in its acknowledgement of not the best version of Ukrainian history itself, recognizing the Ukrainian collaborators, who supported the Nazi invaders in the process of this ethnic cleansing.

*Parcommune. Place Community. Phenomenon*<sup>176</sup> is the third show prepared by the Research Platform in 2016 (il. 23), which proves the importance of the project to the PAC's managers. Curators of the show, Tatiana Kochubinska and Ksenia Malykh, explored the practices of the artists related to the Kyiv's *Parcommune* squat, where the artists' studios were situated in 1989-1994 (PinchukArtCentre 2016b). With an extended public program, the exhibition not only brought attention to the Ukrainian art of the early 90's, but to the problems such as community, artistic groups, and mutual influences – a phenomena still present in Ukrainian art due to the long-lasting lack of institutional support.<sup>177</sup>

The final exhibition of the 2016 was *The Marble Angles With Bows Were Shaking in Shadows Their Small Penises, Bending Their Bows and Carelessly Laughed at Death*<sup>178</sup> by Sasha Kurmaz within the PAC-UA and the Research Platform (again). The show reflected



on the freedom of creation within the institutional and social restrictions (PinchukArtCentre 2016a).

The following year the only events that were not connected to the activity of the Research Platform were the annual exhibitions of the Future Generation Art Prize<sup>179</sup>, and an international exhibition *Fragile State*. The Platform presented five exhibitions in 2017: *Versus*<sup>180</sup> (PAC-UA Re-Consideration), an outcome of a cooperation of young Ukrainian artists with the invited curator and artist Sergey Bratkov, *Motherland on Fire*,<sup>181</sup> which dealt with the transformation period of the 90s, its insecurities, instability, bad working conditions, and economic crisis (PinchukArtCentre 2017c), Anna Zvyagintseva's solo show *Misplaced Touches*<sup>182</sup> (PAC-UA), *Fedyr Tetyanych. Canon Friputia*,<sup>183</sup> with the focus on works of Tetyanych, whose artistic practice remained alternative to the Soviet culture of the time, and *Anonymous Society*,<sup>184</sup> which focus was again the transitional period after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The exhibition's focus was the period of anomie, a conception coined by Émile Durkheim, the moment of transition in a society which is cutting off from the old values but has not defined the new ones yet (PinchukArtCentre 2017b).

The "big show" of 2017 was *Fragile State*<sup>185</sup> with works of the renown international artists such as Marina Abramovic, Damien Hirst, and Ai Weiwei. Carlos Motta, who won 2014 Future Generation Art Prize, was also invited to participate, which shows PAC's good practices to engage young successful artists to collaborate with the world-famous stars (il. 24). The topic of the exhibition, although did not refer to Ukraine in any direct way, touched several issues that constituted the contemporary discourse in the country. The fragility that the title mentions refers to the friability of the world order as well as the vulnerabilities in culture, ideology, society, and even body (PinchukArtCentre 2017a). It is difficult not to think about the fragility of the borders between Russia and Ukraine, and instability of the political systems that allowed the foreign invasion in the 21st century European country – an unprecedented event in Europe that remained in peace since the end of the World War II. The fragility of a country at war is another construct that comes to mind, just like the one of the human bodies, that can be so easily deceased during the conflict. Santiago Sierra's *Veterans of War* facing the gallery corner, a continuation of his series commenced in 2011, was one of the strongest works at the exhibition. In the performance the veteran of war simply stayed in the corner of the exhibition room with his back to the viewer. This act confronted with the awareness of the ongoing military conflict in Donbas leaves a striking impression. The works of Motta (*Colonial Forts #10*, 2013) and Douglas Gordon (*The End of Civilisation*, 2012) that comment on the terrors of colonialism with its ability to destroy

the whole cultures and civilisations, can also be easily connected to the rising awareness of Ukrainian postcolonial condition in relation to Russia.

In 2018 the Research Platform prepared three exhibitions: Lesia Khomenko's *Perspektyvna*<sup>186</sup> (PAC-UA) and two group shows – *Red Book: Soviet Art in Lviv in 80s-90s*<sup>187</sup> and *A Space of One's Own*.<sup>188</sup> *Red Book* marks an important ideological twist (il. 25). As mentioned before, the official memory policy of the country was based rather on erasure than re-interpretation of the Soviet heritage. This anticolonial nationalism is a natural stage in the decolonising processes. In case of Ukraine, however, the colonisation within the Soviet Union took a different shape than in the case of the so-called Western colonies. Some scholars claim that the countries of the former Soviet Union were not colonised at all or that rather the concept of internal colonisation applies here. However, the Soviet heritage also formed the heritage of Ukraine and shaped what the country is today – therefore, it cannot be cut out, but rather accepted and critically re-approached, as Homi Bhabha proposes in his concept of hybridity. The Soviet heritage accepted by the Ukrainians, does not belong to the coloniser anymore, but also to colonised, which makes their relation even. *Red Book's* focus being the Soviet art of the 1980s Lviv as well as certain visual practices of the 1990s that has been academically and institutionally neglected is not only rediscovering the Ukrainian art history, but also reinterpreting its heritage, by pointing to the practices that have been for numerous reasons neglected. In the years of transformation many artists faced chaos and new market economy, which often resulted in immigration or oblivion (PinchukArtCentre 2018a).

*A Space of One's Own* was yet another approach to the forgotten elements of the Ukrainian art history – the female artists (il. 26). The show focuses on the practices from early 1980s till present trying to find a new perspective for the research of works of female artists within the specific socio-political context. The curators also underlined an interesting duality of being rooted in the Soviet experience while seeking to inscribe oneself into the prevalent West European narratives (PinchukArtCentre 2018a). As I noticed before, the recent years brought attention of Ukrainian artists, art historians and researchers to the issues of female artists – including the publication by the PAC's Research Platform *Why There Are Great Women Artists in Ukrainian Art*<sup>189</sup> (Iakovlenko 2019) accompanying the exhibition.

Apart from the Platform's projects, the PAC hosted the solo show of the winner of the Future Generation Art Prize 2017 – Dineo Seshee Bopape<sup>190</sup> and the biannual exhibition of the shortlisted artists for the PinchukArtCentre Prize 2018<sup>191</sup>. The Main Prize winner

was Anna Zvyagintseva, the Special Prize was awarded to Mykola Karabinovych and the artistic duo Yarema Malashchuk and Roman Himey, Public Choice Prize went to Alina Kleitman. Within the nominated projects only one directly addressed the ongoing conflict in Donbas – Sasha Kurmaz’s *The Chronicle of Current Events*.

The annual international group exhibition was *Democracy anew?*<sup>192</sup> (il. 27). Similarly to the last year’s major show *Fragile State* it touched on politically engaged topics that related both to the situation in the country and a more global problem of the elections and how they shifted the balances of power (PinchukArtCentre 2018b). The presidential elections in Ukraine were announced to take place on the 31st of March 2019, while the Parliamentary on the 27th of October the same year. The controversial, at that time, choice of Volodymyr Zelensky, a comedian and a TV celebrity, for the 6th president of independent Ukraine gained international interest. The show aimed at asking questions about the threats to democracy as well as ways in which it can be rethought, redefined, and adjusted to the current needs – an accurate topic in a country that still struggles with corruption and ambiguities in the processes of democratic elections.<sup>193</sup>

The last show of 2018 was a group exhibition prepared by the Curatorial Platform, a training program for young curators launched in 2011 at the PAC. *How to Be Cool*<sup>194</sup> that focused simply on the newest phenomena of the Ukrainian contemporary art, was the first show curated by a group of young art professionals who have undergone a three-month training. The Curatorial Platform emerged as a program of educating future art-specialist. The participants could not only work with the PAC’s team, but they also received remuneration. Four out of five curators continued working at the PAC – Oleksandra Pogrebnyak, Alexandra Tryanova, Valeria Schiller, and Daria Shevtsova. Pogrebnyak: “It was a very important experience for me, I didn’t have any curatorial education before. We still feel lack of people and are always hunting for art professionals. This program is also about the community building – so even if someone will not stay at the PAC, they still might get engaged in some projects (Pogrebnyak 2021).

2019 marked a big change in programming. Despite the presence of new curators at the PAC, the centre decided to visibly decrease number of exhibitions. The Future Generation Art Prize took place first in Kyiv<sup>195</sup> and later in Venice<sup>196</sup>. Next to the PAC’s biannual project only two more exhibitions were executed and none of them included world-famous international artists. *Ain’t Nobody’s Business*<sup>197</sup> was prepared by the two of the graduates of the Curatorial Platform – Alexandra Tryanova and Valeria Schiller, and presented works of artists from Ukraine, Lithuania, Russia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, and Belarus.

“Such an international composition of the project participants aims to stimulate the further development of dialogue and cooperation between Ukrainian and foreign artists, which is an integral part of the rapid development of the cultural landscape of the country” – was stated at the exhibition’s website (PinchukArtCentre 2019a). The topic remained political, just like in the exhibitions of the previous years – the artists commenting on the relationship between the government and the individual.

The final show of 2019 was the Research Platform’s two-chapter project – dedicated to the life-long oeuvre of Ukrainian photographer Boris Mikhailov (*The Forbidden Image*<sup>198</sup>, il. 28), and a phenomenon of the Kharkiv School of Photography (*Crossing Lines*)<sup>199</sup>, and its tradition reminiscent in a practice of the younger generation of Ukrainian photographers. This juxtaposition stays in line with the founding program of the Research Platform – to trace continuity in artistic practice, and by doing so, to build Ukrainian art history. Both exhibitions are closely connected and based on the three main threads: “(...) an image that lies beyond the boundaries (The nude, The performative), a “life-drunk” image of society (New humanism), and an intimate image that “flutters at night” (Personal romantics). (PinchukArtCentre 2019b).

The narration of Mikhailov’s exhibition is built around the title *Forbidden Images*, that refer mainly to the earlier years of his work as a photographer, his life as an artist in the Soviet country, and the related prohibitions, orders, and repercussions (Sulek 2019: 35). Mikhailov’s work is closely embedded in the social and political context of the time, as the artist himself tells in the two premiere films presented at the exhibition. Mikhailov was one of the first to focus his work on the naked body and explored this theme in many ways. After losing his job in the factory in the 1960s, he focused entirely on unofficial or private photography, far from the officially functioning canons. Using the achievements of amateur photography, private archives, and the tradition of the Soviet coloured photography, he showed bodies – often far from ideal. Bodies while resting, at home, on the street – he portrayed the everyday life of the inhabitants of Eastern Ukraine, entangled in the official propaganda discourse of those times. In this way, public and private met in his works, creating a unique intimate diary, being at the same time an important testimony of his times (Sulek 2019: 37).

*Crossing lines*, an exhibition accompanying, or rather complementing, the *Forbidden Images*, is devoted to the Kharkiv school of photography, an artistic phenomenon that emerged in the former capital of the Ukrainian Soviet People’s Republic in the 1960s, closely related to the work of Mikhailov. The combination of documentary

photography with artistic creation or stylization has become a characteristic of this milieu. The narrative of the exhibition focuses on the first and second generation of Kharkiv photographers and the group Vremia (Time), founded by Mikhailov, Yevhen Pavlov, Oleh Malevany, Oleksandr Suprun, Yuri Rupin. The curators successfully showed the continuity in thinking and artistic practice derived from the Kharkiv school of photography, which is also present in the works of artists of the younger generation, such as Mykola Rydnyi or Sergey Melnichenko (Sułek 2019: 36).

In 2020 the centre opened, again, only three exhibitions, one of them being the biannual PinchukArtCentre Prize show.<sup>200</sup> The Main Prize winners', Yarema Malashchuk and Roman Himey, video *Live Stream*<sup>201</sup> and presents men dressed in military uniforms resembling those of the Red Army, who perform a dance after a long preparation (Yarema&Himey 2020). The video resembles the documentary footage and questions the way reality is constructed, and the way images are produced in contemporary visual culture.

Lithuanian artist Emilija Škarnulytė, who won 2019's Future Generation Art Prize had her solo exhibition.<sup>202</sup> The last presentation of the year was *Dot, Line, Possibilities*,<sup>203</sup> a group show of Ukrainian artists with special developmental needs, an outcome of a four-year programme dedicated to empowering minorities, curated by Olha Shyshlova, head of the Educational Department of the PinchukArtCentre, and Katya Buchatska, artist. None of the three 2020 exhibitions included world-renown international artists, and two of them were entirely focused on Ukrainian art.

In 2021, apart from the Future Generation Art Prize,<sup>204</sup> all exhibitions were only of Ukrainian artists. All the three of them opened on the same day, February 27<sup>th</sup>, and remained accessible for viewers until the 15<sup>th</sup> of August. Young artists Daniil Revkovskiy and Andriy Rachinskiy presented *Tailings Dam*<sup>205</sup> in the frame of the PAC UA programme. The new work commissioned by the PAC: "(...) takes shape of a Museum of Human Civilisation which is established in the future after humans go extinct. (...) The work touches upon the issue of man's responsibility for natural resources and chimeric forms that the imprint of human activity on Earth may acquire" (PinchukArtCentre 2021a).

This deeply accurate topic touches on the issues of Anthropocene and the destruction of our planet and human civilisation.

The group exhibition *Remember Yesterday*<sup>206</sup> opened a new initiative – shows that draw from the PAC's collection of Ukrainian art as well as new productions or loans – similarly to a series that was focused on its international collection before<sup>207</sup> – the *Collection Platform* (2011-2014). Two things are worth noticing here – the shift in focus

from international to local, and the topic of the first show of the new series. Its focus is turned into the past and attempts to understand it. *Remember Yesterday* talks about the events that have impacted the development of Ukraine's history and its society: from the Holodomor, through Perestroika, the 1990s, the Orange Revolution, the Revolution of Dignity, up until now (PinchukArtCentre 2021c). It touches upon all the important issues, starting from the complicated and often unwanted Ukrainian history, hopes for the future as much as fears of the future, corruption, external threats of the last years. It corresponds to both elements that I have described in the initial part of this thesis that I find crucial while considering the postcolonial perspective to research the Ukrainian art shows narratives after Maidan – past and memory, both words creating the title of the exhibition.

The Research Platform carried out a solo show of Nikita Kadan, an artist whose career has been gradually developing in the frame of the PAC – from a small exhibition of the R.E.P. group in 2008, through participation in group shows including the Ukrainian Pavillion at the Venice Biennale in 2015, winning the PinchukArtCentre Main Prize in 2011 and Special Prize of the Future Generation Art Prize in 2014. The solo show at PAC, the only one of the Ukrainian artists apart from Sergey Bratkov and Boris Mikhailov, marks his position as one of the most important contemporary artists in Ukraine.<sup>208</sup> *Stone Hits Stone*,<sup>209</sup> (il. 29, 30) curated by Björn Geldhof and Kateryna Iakovlenko (assistant curator), reflected on: “Ukrainian history, political violence, national historical heritage, avant-garde, and Soviet utopia. This exhibition deals with present day challenges in its inextricable connection with the past, using history to enlighten the present and imagine the future (Blacker 2021).

All these themes, constantly present in Kadan's practice of the last decade, became a consistent narrative of his retrospective at the PAC including both older (dating back to 2014) and newly produced works. The exhibition also contains the collection of works by avant-garde artists: Marc Chagall, David Hofstein, Vasyl Yermilov, Ivan Padalka, Manuel Shekhtman, Viktor Palmov, and Sofia Nalepinska-Boychuk, that were collected and arranged by Kadan. He also added his work alongside – *Tiger's Leap* (2018) – an act which seems to be the key to the understanding of the whole exhibition. It is a reconstruction of the self-made weapons used during the 1905 failed armed uprising of the metal factory workers in Horlivka (Gorlovka), that was part of the revolution and a turning point of the Donbas workers' movement. Although the revolt failed and the resistance was tamed, it led the way to the numerous acts that laid the groundwork for the 1917 October Revolution –

the starting point of the Soviet state – a state and its utopia that were initially cherished by the avant-garde artists (Geldhof 2018). Sułek:

Nikita Kadan's spires are beautifully crafted pieces of art and could be approached as only (or as much as) beautiful objects. But it is not the case. As suggested by the very title *Tiger's Leap*, taken from Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1969), the approach is not about a neutral archiving or historicising by replicating the weapons used in the 1905 failed workers' uprising in Horlivka, Donetsk region. Benjamin's tiger's leap into the past provokes critical approach to history and its aspects, that were invisible or not recognised back then, but might be seen now (Sułek 2021a).

The title is a hint for Interpretation – Kadan's contemporary spires are placed next to the artworks from the period of the events, artworks that comment on revolution and pogroms. And according to Benjamin's theory, those events from the past can be re-interpreted today thanks to the knowledge and perspective that was acquired. It is a leap into the present, that helps to take the past out from the time continuum and transform, to not only serve the past, but also the present and even the future – as two major ideologies that Kadan comments on, Nazism and Communism, still haunt the contemporary world. Kadan juxtaposes the images taken from the past with the current tragedies, such as war in Donbas, or the 2018 attack on the Roma people in Kyiv. It is conquering the memory. Kadan's works throughout the exhibition continue to focus on the chosen past events (fascist ideology and concentration camps [*The Inhabitants of Colosseum*, 2018], Lviv pogroms of 1941 [*Pogrom*, 2016], the work of avant-garde and the Soviet utopia they believed in [*Future in the Past*, 2021, *Anonymous. Tarred*, 2021, *Victory (White Shelf)*, 2017], Great Purge of 1937 [*Spectators*, 2016], the deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944 [*Everybody Wants to Live by the Sea*, 2015]. The viewer must look back, and the exposition of works on the show even forces them to – to understand the sound heard throughout the exposition, which is part of *The Inhabitants of Colosseum*, one should reach the end of the exhibition and then turn back to its beginning:

“According to the curator of the exhibition Björn Geldhof, it teaches us that just looking at the past, no matter how painful, can give us the energy we need to create the future. According to the author, Nikita Kadan, referring to historical quotations, he seeks to show how we are constantly rewriting and reinventing our own past” (Kulchynska 2021).

In the words of Tymothy Snyder: “The ability to think what’s behind us, is an essential part of thinking about what’s ahead of us” (VPF, “Ukraine and the Future”). On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March, two weeks after the Russian aggression on Ukraine, Nikita Kadan was awarded the Ukrainian Taras Shevchenko National Prize for *Stone Hits Stone* in the category of Visual Arts.<sup>210</sup>

## **IV.10. Conclusions**

### **a. A Contemporary Identity: A Beacon in the Art World**

As described by the PCA Stream, responsible for the transformation of the PAC’s building’s space into the art centre, the PAC is “a beacon for contemporary art in Eastern Europe and has contributed to the promotion of cultural exchanges between the East and West” (PCA-Stream, n.d.).

I do this – says Pinchuk – for the sake of the new country. It is a brand-making thing for us, here in the middle of nowhere. Our team got to the quarterfinals in the World Cup; in art, too, we must play in the highest league, speak the most universal language. On the day Turkey started negotiations with the EU, they opened a museum of contemporary art in Istanbul. This is how I promote Ukraine in the west (Conrad 2006: 43).

Pinchuk’s brief statement clearly explains the vision of his art centre. The PAC was created to be a part of the international art environment. Its programme shifts in 2014 is really a historical irony, when we think about his parallel of the EU negotiations and the opening of the contemporary art museum in Istanbul. “We now have civic values” – Pinchuk continued – “We know how to be civil. What we must do is show the west that we are civilised” (Conrad 2006: 43). Also the PCA Stream website mentions a correlation between the West-oriented values and a contemporary identity, mentioning that the building “asserts itself as a forerunner of the modernization of Ukrainian society and mentalities” (PCA-Stream, n.d., also Somer Cocks 2006) This modernization, according to the Pinchuk’s foundation, should be achieved through the contact with the West – therefore one of the most visible goals of the PAC was introducing the blockbusters of the Western world into Ukraine. The “international language of contemporary art would teach Ukrainians about modern ways of thinking” (Somers Cocks 2006). A way, that would have tangible effects especially on the lives of young audience. Pinchuk:



The change [in young people's mentality], you can feel it very fast. To have material results will take time. For example, these people [visiting the gallery] will become citizens, they will be more active in the life of the society, some of them will go into politics, they will become decision makers, they will be more modern. I absolutely believe that contemporary art is one of the most revolutionary forces in the world and it works. I am sure (Ruiz 2011).

According to Rosaria Puglisi, Pinchuk's strategy of "employing culture was to be the medium to create a more favourable environment for Ukraine's integration into the EU, called the soft integration" by Inna Pidluska, the director of Pinchuk's Yalta European Strategy, YES (Puglisi 2008: 73). As Puglisi underlines, YES promoted the idea of Ukraine as a potential member of the European Union already in 2005, and in their long-term strategy the Ukrainian membership in the EU was planned to be accomplished by 2020<sup>211</sup> (Puglisi 2008: 73). Today we know that it didn't happen, but Pinchuk's pro-European and pro-Western preferences will have an important impact on the shaping of the PAC's programme and mission from the very beginning. Ironically, the very position of an oligarch is seen by the West as a Soviet-made and threatening to the civic and economic freedom. Such a situation reflects, in my opinion, something about the PAC, where the Western models are somehow haunted by the Soviet ghosts. Just like in the economics – while the EU is a dream, Russia is a fact.<sup>212</sup>

The PAC Informs on its website to be the first contemporary art centre in Ukraine, which is not entirely true. Soros Centre for Contemporary Art in Kyiv was founded in 1994 and worked under the Soros Foundation until 1999 (Łabowicz-Dymanus 2016: 117). Later it lost the financial support of Soros and became independent institution operating until 2008. In December 2008, it officially closed its gallery space and took on the new name – Foundation Centre for Contemporary Art. However, it still functions as an archive and continues to support education and outreach programs, often in partnership with other organizations (Babij 2009). Soros centre was also bringing to Kyiv superstars like Warhol and Beuys.

A very important mission of the PAC as the contemporary art centre was to become nationally, and, most of all, internationally visible. The managers, Erckard Schneider and Björn Geldhof, being foreigners themselves, investigated the Western environment for inspiration and conceptual models. An important figure was also Nicolas Bourriaud, who was helping Victor Pinchuk with establishing his private collection, and curated the PAC's

opening show (together with Oleksandr Soloviov). Although an association with the Soros Centre for Contemporary Art in Kyiv might appear, the centres were also based on the Western model – that of the American Ford Foundation, followed by Salomon Guggenheim, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, or the Rockefellers, which combines donor’s private taste (and collection) with aspirations to be socially recognisable, to invest in education and social well-being by enabling free contact with art: “You can like the art bought by Pinchuk or you can hate it, but what you can’t deny is that the collector has given people who are interested in contemporary art and culture a place to go in Kiev. They may go there to admire his exhibitions or to argue about them and disapprove but that, after all, is what modern society is all about” (Ruiz 2011).

Over time, the PAC manages aimed at developing a unique model of contemporary art centre by focusing on Ukrainian art<sup>213</sup> and emerging international artists. This shift began to be visible after the political struggles of 2013-2014, Maidan revolution, annexation of Crimea, war in Donbas.<sup>214</sup>

In its first years its main goal, next to the recognition, remained the education of the Ukrainian society. In 2009 60 percent of the PAC visitors were age 16-30, which confirms the effectiveness of the strategy to familiarize future generations of Ukrainians with the international art. Ukrainian art itself was somehow always present in the institution as well – the introduction of Western art was accompanied by some timid attempts to include Ukrainian art in the international framework. The symbolic presence of Ukrainian artists in the first years was often criticised, mainly by Ukrainian artists themselves, but also by the foreign spectators.<sup>215</sup> The same celebrity artists’ names continued to be present: Damien Hirst, Takashi Murakami, Olafur Eliasson, and what was lacking is more critical approach to the curatorial practices – the main rule adopted by the PAC was to simply present art works by contemporary world-famous artists. Geldhof: “In the earlier times there was a need in Ukraine to discover what is contemporary art. We always wanted to work with broad audience and bring art to the society” (Geldhof 2021).

#### **b. National Identity in the Context of International Challenges**

The situation changes around 2014-2015, when the chip blue artists begin to give way to the Ukrainian artists, both of younger and older generation,<sup>216</sup> and the *review* exhibitions to multifaceted curatorial narrations. The recurring topics are transformation (*Research Platform: Transformation, Motherland on Fire, Anonymous Society, Remember Yesterday*), past, history and memory (*Hope and Fear, Hope!, Guilt, Red Book: Soviet Art in Lviv*,

*Remember Yesterday, Stone Hits Stone*), war (*Hope and Fear, Hope!, Fragile State*). It all can be seen as a way of a natural development of the art institution, which it was. The revolution did not pop up from the void. Geldhof:

But the fact, that the museum changed its approach has more to do with the changed country. Maidan is one moment in that change. The war in the East is not identified by the change. The change happened well before Maidan. It just materialised as something that everybody could see at that moment. People said, we're not going to go in that direction, we have another direction we want to go to. And as an institution, if you have any sense of what is happening in society, you prepare yourself for such a change. And we were. (...) The PAC is not responsive to single events. Sometimes – well, *Fear and Hope* was a response to a single event. But a structural strategy is not responsive to single events. What we are trying to do is to understand what happens in a country and to evolve together with the country. That is why we remain relevant (Geldhof 2021).

Similarly, the processes that took place at the PAC are an outcome of a set of events – which confirms, that these events do have an impact. The number of important changes that emerged specifically soon after Maidan and the beginning of the war in Donbas in 2014 cannot be unnoticed. Specifically, when the recurring themes include such problems as understanding the past and focusing on country's own history to re-tell it. All those were already present in individual practices – history and Soviet heritage were the topics of Nikita Kadan works as early as in 2009 (*Procedure Room*, 2009-2010, *Fixing*, 2010, *Pedestal. Practice of Exclusion*, 2009-2011, *Yesterday Today Today*, 2012, *Small House of Giants*, 2012, *Private Suns*, 2013, *Babooshka (Ensuring Mausoleum)*, 2013), and decommunization was previously signalled in the works like *Monument / Platforms* (2011) by Mykola Rydnyi, or his *Shelter* (2013),<sup>217</sup> presented at the 55th Venice Biennale. However, they were completely absent at the PAC until 2014. It is the same year when young Ukrainian curators joined the team – the graduates of the PAC's Curatorial Platform, and the curators of the Research Platform. Recently (from 2019) the numbers of art shows got significantly reduced to only three per year (comparing to more than ten in the first operational years), while the major impact is officially put on young artists – both from Ukraine and abroad, instead of the artists, whose position is already stable. Also, topics that relate to the current world-problems, like ecology, entered the scene (*Tailings Dam*), minorities (*Dot, Line, Possibilities*). It might seem intuitive that the contemporary art centre

should react to current issues, but in a case of the PAC it did not happen until 2014. It was focused on building its international recognition and educating Ukrainians. Geldhof: “The exhibitions are more critical because the audience has changed. They would not accept today what we were doing in 2008 or 2009. The PAC’s role was ground-breaking in educating the audience – without any doubt” (Geldhof 2021).

Within years the PAC has turned its attention from chip-blue art to Ukrainian art and emerging artists,<sup>218</sup> and yet the audience is similarly interested - the numbers of visitors are not falling, they remain stable from the beginning (Malykh 2021). It means that the PAC managed to achieve its position as one of the leading institutions of contemporary art in the country, if not the leading one. It is also known for being stable as an institution, with fixed plans and good budget, as opposed to most Ukrainian art centres. The fact is, that its educational program is impressive – guided tours, collection tours, theme tours, art talks, career talks for those who wish to work in arts and curating, lectures, literature meetings, meetings designed for teachers, meetings with artists and curators, family activities, as well as those for kids and teenagers, including courses for elementary schools and high schools. And not only did it manage to educate Ukrainians, so they remained open not only to celebrity artists, fuel interest in the emerging artists as well, but also to promote Ukrainian artists abroad, through such events as the participation in the Venice Biennale or including home artists in the international Future Generation Prize both in Kyiv and Venice. Geldhof:

Many institutions remain in the same place for a long time. We have moved quite fast. And now we try to anchor ourselves in that emerging international art scene hub, and be the point of contact for the world with Ukrainian art. It is not a final station, because there’s no such thing, but it is a station where we will be comfortable for the next five years. Perhaps for the next ten years. And you can be comfortable in that station (Geldhof 2021).

The PAC gathers both awe and critique – from praise for promoting Ukrainian art, supporting young artists, giving Ukrainians possibility to commune with the art of world-famous artists, and promoting Ukrainian art abroad, to accusations of solely warming an image of an oligarch, Victor Pinchuk.<sup>219</sup> Alisa Lozhkina: “He was not a nice guy, and he is not a nice guy, Ewa. (...) He is a cancer of Ukrainian society. But there is a dark side, and there is a bright side” (Lozhkina 2022). Cause the PAC’s impact is immense. It has been also criticised for its simplistic choices of celebrity-artists<sup>220</sup> – which is today a thing of the

past. Nevertheless, the centre has had a tremendous cultural impact on the country and has succeeded in sparking enthusiasm for the arts in Ukraine.

## **V. Government-Sponsored Conception of the New Museum Space – Mystetskyi Arsenal**

Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Museum Complex was founded in 2005<sup>221</sup> by the initiative of the President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko. Already in 2003 it was granted the status of a cultural and artistic institution by the Presidential decree and received the name Mystetskyi Arsenal. Arsenal was thought to be a modern independent state-run institution, which presence would booster the prestige of the capitol city and the country itself, as “(...) a big, showy art museum could announce to both national and international businesses and banking communities the arrival of a city financially and politically<sup>222</sup> (Duncan 1995: 54). Additionally, a government-run contemporary art centre would not only validate the good reputation, but also a state’s civic status as one that cares about the society and its cultural and educational needs: “Even small societies in relatively remote places ensured that they were seen as publicly useful bodies that contributed to the common good, and their public presence often cantered on the creation of a local museum” (Forgan 2005: 579).

Ukrainian state needed contemporary art centre also to underline its modernity and readiness to participate in contemporary art discourse.

Arsenal is a public institution, set in the public building, on the public ground. But the state is somehow not able to ensure a stable funding, therefore, although founded as a state enterprise and controlled by the governmental Ministry of Culture, it also runs a foundation – the Non-state Voluntary Charitable Organisation Mystetskyi Arsenal. It was established due to the constant funding struggle of the institution, to be able to gather additional funds and apply for grants.<sup>223</sup> Viktor Yushchenko was not such a big fan of the whole affair – he did see an opportunity for the country to open such venture, however lost his enthusiasm soon – which meant constant under-financing for Arsenal. The situation changed with the new president Viktor Yanukovich, who understood the importance of the art centre, but also saw the possibilities the space itself could give – as a place for fancy business meetings. During his presidency a major reconstruction works took place, and an additional storey was built. Linda Norris, the Fulbright scholar in Ukraine, summed up some substantial problems of institutional funding in her 2010 article:

The ministry and other governmental entities have endless regulations, but those regulations sometimes exist more in theory than in practice. For instance, the law states that museums cannot generate income (...) Government funding is often inadequate and sometimes misused. As a result, collections and buildings at state-run museums are in a perilous state. (...) The combination of a lack of resources and training, corruption, and limited access to current best practices means that the country's cultural heritage is at substantial risk (Norris 2010: 10).

Arsenal must look for additional funding for almost every project, and is also dependent on the commercial projects, such as business events – Victor Pinchuk was renting Arsenal's space multiple times. A commercially (and substantially) successful project is the so-called Book Arsenal – *The International Arsenal Book Festival* – the biggest book fairs in Ukraine, that is being held since 2011. It truly is a fantastic event, and within a decade it hosted international authors from more than 35 countries,<sup>224</sup> while around 200 Ukrainian publishers present their publications each year. Arsenal also hosts art fairs (Kyiv Art Week). The entrance to all events, including temporary exhibitions, is ticketed<sup>225</sup>.

Today Art Arsenal has nine departments, including contemporary art, education and book, communications, legal and accounting, IT, economic, graphics (design), security and visitor's and partnership department.

## **V.1. Mission**

There were multiple concepts, of how to use the building of an Arsenal, one of those included Pinchuk's contemporary art centre. Another idea was of the state-run museum, that would present the treasures of Ukrainian art and culture collected from the multiple museums (Shkalyeva 2021). It was meant to be the Ukrainian Louvre (Mystetskyi Arsenal, "How It Works: Olha Melnyk, Olena Onohda, Ihor Hyrych About"). President Viktor Yushchenko was a big fan of this conception, however it could not be executed, as other institutions had no plans of relieving their most prestigious and precious exhibits to the newly founded museum.

The mission of Arsenal and its foundation was described as "(...) spreading the traditions of patronship in the arts for development of the Ukrainian nation and its cultural heritage"<sup>226</sup> (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2015d ). So the figure of the patronship (the state) is clearly highlighted, as well as the focus on Ukrainian culture - as opposed to what was initially undertaken by the PAC. Art centre can be an attempt to enter the international

environment, as well as a reemphasis on the region as an independent unit - a *badge of identity* (Forgan 2005: 580). The first director of the complex was Igor Didkovsky, who was also Pinchuk's advisor<sup>227</sup> (Lozhkina 2022). Already in 2010 Natalia Zabolotna took his place. Oleksandr Soloviov, who previously worked as a curator at the PinchukArtCentre, became the art director of Arsenal and still holds the position (2022). Olga Viieru was the director of the Charity Fund. In the 2015 report, published at the occasion of the grand opening of the Arsenal after its partial renovation, Zabolotna stated the goals of the institution - she underlined the importance of being a place of interest for both, Ukrainian and international public, to open to the world and to learn from international experience. Zabolotna:

The museum will represent the art of the peoples who have inhabited the territory of Ukraine throughout the last several thousand years, as well as contemporary Ukrainian art, and masterpieces of international art. The main goal of the complex is to become the museum of new generation, one that will encompass a wide variety of contemporary cultural forms of communication, and will offer an extensive educational program, multimedia library, and special activities for various types of audience. (...) Also, electronic Ukrainian art heritage archives and databases; auditoriums; lecture halls, art, and music studios; school of art of Mystetskyi Arsenal (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2015d: 7).

In terms of the programming, the mission was not completed. It was finally changed as the new director of Arsenal, Olesia Ostrovska Lyuta, was appointed in 2017, and remained in the office also for her second cadence in 2021. The Arsenal, according to the initial assumptions, aimed at being a platform for “the synthesis of historical heritage and innovative contemporary experience” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2015d: 11). This might seem a natural choice for an art centre placed in a building of a historical value, which aims at presenting contemporary art phenomena. Also, Ukraine still does not have a state-run museum of contemporary art, and in the initial phase of its formation it seemed like the Arsenal was thought of a museum, not an art centre – the word museum still even remains in the official name. However, although Arsenal continues working on the permanent collection, it is still not available to the audience,<sup>228</sup> and what remains the main area of operation are temporary exhibitions – some of them partly based on the collection, but most of them not. After Ostrovska-Lyuta started her cadence, a programme board that works on programming and administration was created. Ostrovska-Lyuta: “Part of our mission is to

ask questions that are valid for contemporaneity. Contemporary culture has a very strong signalist function. It is a good system to see the ideas valid at the time, to see the shape of the society at the time” (Ostrovska-Lyuta 2021).

It is a goal of the programme board to work on those ideas, although Ostrovska-Lyuta admits, that due to the lack of a greater number of intellectual content-workers, most of their time is occupied with the administration and management (Ostrovska-Lyuta 2021). Still, when Ostrovska-Lyuta took the office, the biggest challenge for her was that the projects in Arsenal would have an intellectual value, and not only aesthetic or emotional values. The new director also wanted to understand why Arsenal could be important for the society, as it is society that funds its existence. Another important issue was the internal restructuring to give a clearer pattern for the functioning of the institution and to build a competent team (Ostrovska-Lyuta 2021). Apart from that, Arsenal was (and still is) an unfinished building. In 2021 there were hopes for a bigger infrastructural reconstruction, but currently (2022) due to the Russian invasion in Ukraine, all plans have been suspended.

Before the Russian invasion in February 2022, the programming was quite stable. In May there was Book Arsenal, in September (bi-annually) NEOsvitnii Arsenal. A couple of annual commercial events that would secure additional funding, and three, up to four, big exhibitions yearly. Today the core of the program is based on rediscovering important figures of Ukrainian art of the last thirty years, the three decades of independence, artists such as Oleg Golosiy, Andrii Sahaidakovsky, Oleksandr Hnylytsky. According to Ostrovska-Lyuta, although they were undisputedly very important figures in Ukrainian art history, they remained marginalised. The programme board of Arsenal decided to exhibit their works to include them in the narratives of contemporary art history. The second program line are the projects related to the 1920s, which is also focused on rediscovering and rethinking Ukrainian heritage. Today, on the Arsenal’s website we still read that the institution aims at contributing to the “modernization of Ukrainian society and Ukraine’s integration into the global context based on the axiological potential of culture” (Mystetskyi Arsenal, n.d.a). In order to achieve it, the institution wants to respond with their events to the actual social issues, develop international connections, and present the outstanding work of artists and intellectuals, as well as stimulate its development. The educational component is also very important: “Arsenal acts as a medium between the experts and the general public – it talks about cultural and social phenomena, explains their reasons and trajectories” (Mystetskyi Arsenal, n.d.a). It also wants to reach different audiences and be



the place that is widely accessible. The entrance is ticketed, but its cost, around EUR 3 for adult ticket, is financially accessible to Ukrainians.

An important part of Arsenal's mission are educational activities. The education department was created only a couple of years ago, when Olesia Ostrovska-Lyuta became the director. It organizes the biennale NEOsvitnii Arsenal (Mystetskyi Arsenal, n.d.c), that takes place every September and is focused on children and their parents. Secondly, the education department interprets every exhibition through mediators and audio guides to create a platform of communication between the artwork and a viewer. Lastly, the department organizes several additional activities around each exhibition, such as guided tours or Slow Thursdays, when one or two artworks are discussed in small groups, or guided tours.

The institution owns its own collection, that currently holds around four thousand items (Shkalyeva 2021). It is also very diverse – it includes archaeological findings, works of art, as well as ceramics and household items. The core of the art collection are artworks from Ihor Dychenko collection, donated to Arsenal in 2015. This collection is being constantly expanded by the purchases of the artworks by Ukrainian artists of the 20th century, as well as contemporary. There are also plans to establish a cultural archive, that would gather not only artworks, but all kinds of objects connected to cultural production, such as manuscripts or theatre decorations. The aim is to continue to multidisciplinary approach to culture (Ostrovska-Lyuta 2021).

## **V.2. Location and history**

Mystetskyi Arsenal is placed in the Pechersk district, an area named by Roman Adrian Cybriwsky one of the three hearts of Kyiv. The first one is the Old Kyiv (where the PinchukArtCentre is located), the second is Pechersk (Mystetskyi Arsenal), and the third one is Podil (Cybriwsky 2016: 153). For a long time, it was not possible to carry out any detailed research of Arsenal's architecture due to its military status. This changed in early 2000's, when it was proclaimed, that the art centre will emerge here. The main archives of the building remain in Moscow and St. Petersburg and were not accessible to Ukrainian researchers for a long time. "This is how this structure became the focus of a historical myth," says Kateryna Honcharova from UkrProektRestavratsiya Institute, who carried out archival research in Kyiv, Moscow, and St. Petersburg at the beginning of the 21st century (Mystetskyi Arsenal, "How It Works: Olga Melnyk and Kateryna Honcharova").

At the times of hetman Ivan Mazepa (1639-1709) Pechersk was the most developed part of Kyiv, which at that time consisted of those three separate areas. The Monastery of the Caves Complex (Sviato Uspenskyi Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery),<sup>229</sup> a UNESCO world heritage site that dates to 1051, is located just across the street from the Arsenal (il. 31). From the 1540s there was also a female monastic community within the structure of the Lavra (Mystetskyi Arsenal, n.d.b). In the 17th century another religious complex grew around the Lavra – the Ascension Convent (Voznesenskyi Pechersk). The Cathedral of the Ascension, its main building with three apses and five cupolas, was placed on site which is today's the courtyard of the Arsenal (il. 32). The founding and building of the monastery were financed by the family of hetman Ivan Mazepa.<sup>230</sup> The Ukrainian baroque style is sometimes even referred to as the Mazepa style. Mazepa's mother, Mariia Mazepyna (Maria Magdalena in monastery) was the abbess of the monastery in 1688-1707 (Mystetskyi Arsenal, n.d.b) Thanks to the hetman's Mazepa and Mariia's patronage the monastery developed and grew – in 1701-1705 the five-headed cathedral replaced the wooden Ascension church, and the Protection of the Virgin Church was erected (Mystetskyi Arsenal, n.d.b).

In 1707<sup>231</sup> the Russian Emperor Peter the Great ordered the construction of the Pechersk Fortress on the site of the Voznesenskyi (Ascension) Monastery, and most of the nuns moved to the Florovsky Monastery in Podil in 1711-1712, and the Pechersk area was destroyed to build the fortress (Shkalyeva 2021). However, both churches were only dismantled in 1798, when the construction of the Arsenal began. The Ascension Monastery (along with the Pokrovska Refectory Church) was destroyed, so that the Arsenal could be built – even the bricks from the churches were used to build the Arsenal. The remnants (foundations and a burial complex) of the Voznesenska Church were found at the inner yard of today's Arsenal during the archaeological excavations in 2005<sup>232</sup>. These were probably the biggest archaeological excavations in contemporary Kyiv, says Olena Onogda, archaeologist, who worked at the excavation site, and currently works in Arsenal, and they took place both inside and outside of the main building (Onogda 2021). Because Arsenal was a military building, no excavations took place here for 200 years. Due to its military purposes, the building itself was preserved in its original form. And so, the culture of the 17th century and previous times was conserved and remained almost intact. The great number of ceramics, but also jewellery and crosses, and even chess pieces, as well as some items connected to the military history, was also excavated, and currently forms part of the

Arsenal collection and is looked after by the art conservators and archaeologists, including Olena Onogda.

According to the historian Ihor Hyrych, the fortress, as well as the Arsenal itself, were never meant to serve for the actual protection:

The fortress was intended not for protection but rather for controlling the area. Russian tsars, not expecting support in this region, turned fortresses into gathering points for Russian troops. (...) It was very important for Russia to keep its army here because this land was not Russian – it was Ukrainian. The region was hostile to the Russian state, and therefore, troops had to be kept here on a constant basis. (...) That is, this fortress<sup>233</sup> was built not for use in military action, but to intimidate the local population and show who's the boss (Mystetskyi Arsenal, "How It Works: Olha Melnyk, Olena Onohda, Ihor Hyrych, and").

It is quite common for the imperial regimes to make a powerful symbolic use of the physical environment, and architecture and urban design can often be manipulated in the service of the politics<sup>234</sup> (Vale 1992: 3). The Arsenal was built by Catherine the Great on the territory of the fortress – the decree on constructing Arsenal was signed in May 1783 (Mystetskyi Arsenal, n.d.b). The construction works took place between 1784 and 1803 (Mystetskyi Arsenal, "How It Works: Olha Melnyk, Olena Onohda, Ihor Hyrych, and"). The empire was then embroiled in wars, so the empress had to demonstrate the greatness of the state by building the massive construction, alien to the architecture of the area, dominated by the baroque architecture, which is culturally connected to the period of the Cossack Hetmanate<sup>235</sup> (il. 33, 34). Arsenal, designed by Karl Johann Speckle,<sup>236</sup> the architect of the Russian Empire's Army Corps of Engineers,<sup>237</sup> was the biggest building in Kyiv. It represented powerful, structured classicism, although it bears some baroque features, such as the rounded corners, grandiose design of the portals, composition of the facade which is based on the play of light and shade (Mystetskyi Arsenal, "How It Works: 50 Years"). Arsenal stayed in a strong opposition with its environment. It meant to represent Russian victories, but in fact was mainly used to manufacture, repair, storage and fix military equipment (Shkalyeva 2021). Still, it was built bigger than the other Arsenals of the Russian Empire, the decision which had a clear political context - the imperial ambitions in the architecture of Kyiv as the capital of the governorate (Mystetskyi Arsenal, "How It Works: Olga Melnyk and Kateryna Honcharova"). Kyiv was one of the main cities of the empire and a few grandiose transformations in the urban planning took place in the 18th

century. Just like the churches built by Mazepa<sup>238</sup> were the symbols of Ukrainian presence, so was the Arsenal for the Russian Empire. Olga Melnyk, Head of Museum Development department:

Arsenals in St. Petersburg and Nizhny Novgorod, for example, are much smaller in scale. And we have every reason to assume that the Kyiv Arsenal not only performed a strategic military function, but to some extent asserted an imperial presence in the former Hetmanate. The construction of buildings of this type emphasized the owner of these areas. So that no one could remember the former historical victories and the former greatness of the Hetmanate (Shkalyeva 2021).

It was also unique by being the first building in Kyiv of classicist style, built of yellow bricks without the use of external stitching. Kateryna Honcharova: “This is not typical for this period – open brickwork that is polychrome and shimmers in different shades of yellow and orange. This is a rather unique thing for that time, because usually the brick was plastered (Mystetskyi Arsenal, “How It Works: Olga Melnyk and Kateryna Honcharova”).

The building has a form of a rectangle with four wings and an inner yard. Each wing had its own entrance so that each could remain autonomous. It was designed soon after completing the Arsenal in St. Petersburg, that was also designed by Speckle. He was never in Kyiv, and so he simply used the traditional design for these types of buildings. Honcharova: “He stuck this St. Petersburg-sized, huge, high-profile structure into the rather limited framework of the Kyiv Citadel.” The result is that this fortification unit is very vulnerable and easy to attack. “It is not a fortress building. It is an urban building, it is a building in a city, not a building in a citadel” (Mystetskyi Arsenal, “How It Works: Olga Melnyk and Kateryna Honcharova”).

In the 19th century the building was transformed into the warehouse complex and lost its theoretically defensive role. Many of the entrance gates were disassembled, and ramparts were cut to fix and develop the streets, passages and railroad tracks (Mystetskyi Arsenal, n.d.b). In 1941 the Arsenal was severely destroyed. After the World War II the building was reconstructed again – a process that lasted until the 1970s. In the 1940s and 1950s the new buildings were placed on the territory of the citadel, the ones that remain in today’s courtyard. These auxiliary structures, where the workshops are placed today, correspond aesthetically to the style of the main building. Only in 1979 the complex with the adjoining territory received the status of an architecture and military engineering

heritage, but still, until the early 21st century it was used for the military and industrial needs.<sup>239</sup> There was also a polygon, sanatory house, a club, and even a museum, that today does not exist anymore (Mystetskyi Arsenal, “How It Works: 50 Years”). The Soviet history of Arsenal is still not very well recognised. Olena Melnyk: “It is a blank spot in historiography and source materials’ – says Olena Melnyk – ‘because all the archives relating to the Arsenal ended up in Moscow, and, in particular, Podolsk, where the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation is located. These documents are still marked ‘secret’” (Mystetskyi Arsenal, “Yak tse pratsyuye: How It Works: Olha Melnyk, Olena Onohda, Ihor Hyrych, and”).

In the early 2000s Arsenal was partially abandoned and still used for military-industrial purposes. The building was handed over to the city of Kyiv only in 2005, and this is when the history of the cultural institution slowly begins. The complex was not even officially opened until 2009, but still had no toilets, no floor. “It was half-renovated with a very corrupt approach. So it was renovated in a way that they would install the most expensive windows, but don’t make any toilets” (Lozhkina 2022). Today its area covers 9.8 hectares, but only small parts were conserved. Most of the area stays abandoned and partly destroyed, due to the constant lack of funds. The operation of Arsenal as an art centre goes hand in hand with its attempts to preserve and renew the whole grand area of the complex. The area is 10 hectares, the exhibition space is 60,000 m<sup>2</sup>, but also most of it is still not available and is under construction, or rather awaits the funding that might allow the conservation works to fully begin. The space that is currently in use is the first floor and part of the second floor, the area that covers 12,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

### **V.3. Entering the Arsenal**

Arsenal’s original main entrance is not accessible to the viewers and stays at the back of the building at the today’s Cytadelna street (il. 35, 36). The viewers enter Mystetskyi Arsenal from the Lavrska street, just in front of the Pecherska Lavra Monastery complex. The main facades faced the main three gates of the citadel - the Vasylykivsky, Moscow and Kyiv gates. The more modest facade, today’s main entrance, faced the Pechersk Lavra (Mystetskyi Arsenal, “How It Works: 50 Years”). Inside the building there are 32 massive columns in each wing, with eight metres space between them. The ceiling height reaches 11 metres. The construction has four floors,<sup>240</sup> the fourth one being more of a half-floor, as well as attic rooms under the roof. The additional space was added while the government wanted to increase the area of the building now when the conception of the Ukrainian

Louvre was still considered. At that time the original roof was changed, the attic was built on and the historical one was demolished. The dormer windows, which were authentic, were lost (Mystetskyi Arsenal, “How It Works: 50 Years”). The basement floor is located only under one wing of the Arsenal – the one facing Cytadelna street, that used to be the main entrance. Only one floor, however, sometimes two, is currently used for the exhibition purposes. The building is under construction and renovation since 2005, but the lack of funding constantly stays in the way. It does not have a central heating and lightning, so all exhibition spaces need to be heated and lit additionally, which generates massive costs. The offices are situated in the neighbouring building, because even in summer Arsenal remains cold. “The Arsenal is a co-author of each of our projects” (Melnyk 2021). It always must be taken into consideration when the exhibition space is designed. Only the projects of grandiose scale can be exhibited there, and since the original architecture must stay intact, there is always a need for the design and construction of the exhibition small architecture.

The neighbouring building is a space for offices and the little gallery of Arsenal – The Laboratory for Contemporary Art “Mala Gallery”, which a place for low-scale curatorial projects and research.

#### **V.4. First Exhibitions**

In 2007 Arsenal was opened to the visitors, while the constructions works were continued. Before its official grand opening in 2009, it hosted some events for the external organisations such as *GOGOLfest*<sup>241</sup> and *Museum of Contemporary Art – Laboratory-Improvisation*<sup>242</sup>, and the two shows of Ukrainian artists.<sup>243</sup>

Arsenal’s first official project as a state art centre was the exhibition of Ukrainian art *De Profundis* opened in 2009. In the following years it presented both contemporary art, and art of the 16th-20th centuries, by Ukrainian and international artists. In the same year another edition of *GOGOLfest*<sup>244</sup> took place in Arsenal.

The events of 2010-2012 are listed in the 2015 report of Mystetskyi Arsenal, published for its grand opening after the next phase of reconstruction (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2015d) They included one project in 2010<sup>245</sup> (V International Art Fair Art Kyiv Contemporary, 11-14 November 2010), nine in 2011,<sup>246</sup> and six in 2012. Although the report was published in 2015, it does not cover what was happening in 2013 and 2014, when Arsenal was again under construction, and the Arsenal’s website presents the program only from mid-2014 on.

Initially the program was based mainly on big cross-sectional shows, and covered antique as well as contemporary art, in all its themes and forms, international, and Ukrainian likewise. Until 2014 the program pretty much covers everything, and a clear thematic line is missing, although there is a repetitive theme of *fair, salon, and biennale*. 2011 included the V Grand Sculpture Exhibition<sup>247</sup>, First International Week of Contemporary Art,<sup>248</sup> VI International Art Fair Art Kyiv Contemporary<sup>249</sup>, '60 Years of Modern and Contemporary Art',<sup>250</sup> IV Grand Antique Salon<sup>251</sup>, 'Fine Art Ukraine',<sup>252</sup> Book Arsenal,<sup>253</sup> and two exhibitions that seem to come over a more critical approach than just exhibiting objects, however when researched in more detail, they actually are also not much more than the overview of objects gathered around a motif – *Vasyl Yermilov. Exhibition Project*,<sup>254</sup> and *Retrospective Exhibition. Independent: Ukrainian Art from 1991 to 2011*.<sup>255</sup>

*Vasyl Yermilov. Exhibition Project* was organised together with the PROUN gallery in Moscow and gathered works by the prominent Ukrainian avant-garde artist from Kharkiv, with the works from the public and private collections in Kyiv, Moscow, and London. The *Retrospective Exhibition. Independent: Ukrainian Art from 1991 to 2011* was a show organised at the 20th anniversary of Ukrainian independence. It presented Ukrainian art from the times of transformation, the Ukrainian New Wave, the art groups of the 2000s (R.E.P., SOSka), including Oleksandr Hnylytsky, Arsen Savadov, Vasyl Tsagolov, Oleg Golosiy, Oleg Tistol, Oleksandr Roytburg, Maksym Mamsikov and others. From the interview with Oleksandr Soloviov, curator of the show: "(...) this is a curatorial project, curatorial opinion and of course it has its subjectivity. But this subjectivity is compensated by aspirations to present the picture of contemporary art as wide as possible (Soloviov 2011: 10-17).

This approach will be present in Arsenal until 2014, and I believe the reason for it was the massive need for the representation of art - contemporary and antique – in Ukrainian public space, which still in the 2010s was extremely limited. The exhibition was widely criticised, both in the memorial book of the show, and media (Myched 2013).

In 2012 the cross-sectional shows continued, including the VI Grand Sculpture Salon,<sup>256</sup> Book Arsenal,<sup>257</sup> Art Kyiv Contemporary 2012<sup>258</sup> (il. 37), and V Grand Antique Salon.<sup>259</sup> The SPARK! LAB IN KYIV. Innovation Project for Children and Teenagers was also introduced.<sup>260</sup> The most important event of the year was the First Kyiv Biennale of Contemporary Art Arsenale 2012,<sup>261</sup> a project that evolved into the Kyiv Biennial, an important and internationally recognized art show taken over and run since 2015 by the Visual Culture Research Center. The Biennial currently forms the East Europe Biennial

Alliance together with Matter of Art Prague, Biennale Warszawa, OFF-Biennale Budapest, and Survival Kit Festival Riga. Arsenal 2012 took as its subject “the cyclical nature of contemporary art and how this is related both to our lives today and to our continually changing perspectives on past and future” (Biennial Foundation 2011). The art show was constructed around the question of human capacity of not only destroying themselves, but also the environment and nature. It presented more than 200 artworks by over 100 international and Ukrainian artists, including Ai Weiwei, Louise Bourgeois, Yoi Kusama, Ilya Kabakov, Boris Mikhailov, and attracted more than 100,000 visitors.

The annual projects continued in 2013 (Book Arsenal,<sup>262</sup> Great Sculpture Salon,<sup>263</sup> Art Kyiv Contemporary,<sup>264</sup> Grand Antique Salon)<sup>265</sup>, followed by two inter-museum projects (Exhibition of Johann Georg Pinsel – *From the Louvre to the Art Arsenal*<sup>266</sup> and *Fata Morgana*)<sup>267</sup>, and an event for an opening of the upcoming Taras Shevchenko’s year in celebration of the 200th anniversary of poet’s birth.<sup>268</sup>

Exhibition of Johann Georg Pinsel – *From the Louvre to the Art Arsenal*, was the largest exhibition of works by the famous sculptor, collected from various museums in Ukraine, that was presented in the Louvre, and thereafter in Arsenal. Pinsel is indeed an outstanding figure in history of art, and the Louvre show gained international attention, bringing it also to Ukraine, where Pinsel lived and worked. However, Pinsel was not Ukrainian – he is most probably of German ethnic origin and worked in Eastern Galicia in the first half of the 18th century, which back then was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Therefore, I found it puzzling, to discover him being described as the “Ukrainian master” and “Ukrainian artist” (Lazareva 2012, Tereshchuk 2012, Shamanska 2012, ART Ukraine 2013). The overall narrative underlined the importance of the international cooperation with the institution of such fame as the Louvre. The manager of the project was Natalia Zabolotna, Arsenal’s director.

*Fata Morgana* was also an all-Ukrainian inter-museum project, which aimed at demonstrating the history of Ukrainian painting from its origins to the present day. The project included an international conference and an extensive educational program (ART Ukraine 2013) At that time Arsenal was following its founding idea of being a Louvre of the Ukrainian museums, having an actual Louvre included in this cooperation.

2013 was marked by the huge image crisis of the institution. On July 25, one day before the visit of President Viktor Yanukovych, the Arsenal’s director Natalia Zabolotna made a decision that cast a shadow over the ensuing years on both – Arsenal, and her professional career. The director decided to censor the work by Volodymyr Kuznetsov's of



the R.E.P group *Koliivschina: Judgment Day*, a mural commissioned by Arsenal for the exhibition *Great and Grand* dedicated to the anniversary of the baptism of the Kievan Rus (il. 38). The painting illustrating “a flaming nuclear reactor with priests and judges semisubmerged in a vat of red liquid” was painted over with black paint (Solash 2013). An act caused protests, critical comments from the art environment, the lawsuit by Kuznetsov, the resignation of the curator (Oleksandr Soloviov), and Art Ukraine magazine, led by Zabolotna, editor (Kateryna Stukalova), boycott of the second Kyiv Biennale, and the cancellation of Zabolotna from the art environment in Ukraine – even though she continued being Arsenal’s director until 2017. Lozhkina:

It was a huge scandal, and everybody was traumatised. It was very painful for all of us. It was a mistake, it was obviously a huge reputational damage to the institution, but still the institution continued to exist, and the reason why it wasn’t solved quickly, was that almost immediately the revolution and war started. And when there’s war in your country you don’t think that much about the nuances. There was a much bigger challenge back then. (Lozhkina 2022)

## **V.5. Maidan and after**

Lozhkina: “The explosions were just around Arsenal, so we were hiding our collections. We’ve spent around three months just hiding things, crying, and going to Maidan. We waited with our exhibition program” (Lozhkina 2021).

In 2014 Arsenal opened *Shevchenkomania*,<sup>269</sup> an exhibition that featured more than 50 art works by the Ukrainian poet and artist, coming from the collection of the Taras Shevchenko National Museum in Kyiv. “We sincerely wanted to cancel it” – says Lozhkina – “but we finally decided to open the exhibition and it had immense amount of people. They would come and cry, saying, that they needed that so badly. This is what we needed because we are devastated” (Lozhkina 2022). The show included watercolours and etchings of 1830-1850, created by Shevchenko during the Aral and Karatau expeditions, as well as in Novopetrovsk fortress, his manuscripts, and albums of his ethnographic sketches of the 1840s, as well as the editions of *Kobzar* (LB.ua 2014). The project also included cinema, music, and poetry night, as well as a video installation by Sergei Proskurny *Our Shevchenko*, a collection of videos documenting a variety of people reading Shevchenko’s poetry today – including the participants of Maidan revolution, which outburst in November the previous year. In February, at the time of the opening of the exhibition, the

revolution has just finished with President Yanukovich fleeing the country on the 21st of February 2014. On the opening day, the 27th of February, the new government headed by Arseniy Yatsenyuk was formed. During the long weeks of Maidan revolution Shevchenko was an important figure:

Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Franko, and Lesia Ukrainka have become unofficial patrons of the Maidan. Each of these figures is associated not only with Ukrainian culture, but also with active anti-Russian activity. Shevchenko created poetry in Ukrainian at a time when it was considered a peasant dialect. Likewise, Lesia Ukrainka. For both authors, the nature of Ukraine, folklore, traditions, and folk beliefs play a huge role. Franko, also a poet and writer, as well as a social activist, devoted his life to the attempt to create an independent Ukrainian state in the first half of the 20th century. Their choice as patrons of the revolution is therefore extremely transparent – as the faces of Maidan, they were supposed to lead people towards a new, sovereign Ukrainian state. The visual side of the depictions is also interesting, with the “holy trinity of Maidan” often depicted in a modernized manner as revolutionaries who, if they were alive today, would certainly also take to the streets (...). (Sulek 2021).

As much as the exhibition and the political events coincided around the figure of Shevchenko, it was not a conscious move on the part of Arsenal to comment on current situation in the country via this project. The show was planned already before the revolution, and the choice of topic was connected to the 2014 Shevchenko year, and not the phenomena that I am trying to describe here – the re-consideration and re-discovery of Ukrainian past. However, two following exhibitions of 2014 can already be considered in this category. In the meantime, Arsenal also presented *The Show Within the Show*<sup>270</sup> to celebrate the year of William Shakespeare and continued the annual Book Arsenal project.<sup>271</sup> Lozhkina: “The popularity of those events in 2013-2014 showed us, that there was a demand for cultural activity” (Lozhkina 2022).

In June *The Ukrainian Avant-Garde Scene*<sup>272</sup> exhibition was opened (il. 39). Around 100 works were provided by The Ukrainian State Museum of Theatre, Music, and Cinema, The National Folk Decorative Art Museum, and the private collections of Ihor Dychenko, Ihor Voronov, and Dmytro Gorbachov. It included works by such prominent Ukrainian artists as Vasyl Yermilov, Viktor Palmov, Maria Synyakova, Oleksandr Bogomazov, Solomon Nikritin, or Oleksandr Archipenko, scenographic projects of Oleksandra Ekster,

Anatol Petrytskyi, Vadim Meller, Oleksandr Khvostenko-Kvostov, Boris Kosarev, as well as works by folk artists of the time, Hanna Sobachko-Shostak, Maria Prymachenko, Vasyl Dovhoshia, and Yevmen Pshechenko. It is not the first time that the art shows presented after 2014 focus on this period of Ukrainian art history. As was already described in the fragment about Nikita Kadan's *Stone Hits Stone*, it is a contact moment of revolutionary artistic practices with the utopia of Soviet system, that put Ukraine in the sphere of Russian influence and totalitarian system for another decades. It is also time, when Ukrainian artists experimented creatively along their colleagues, but later became widely recognized as part of the *Russian avant-garde*. Although already in 2011, an art show was dedicated to Vasyl Yermilov, an avant-garde artist, this time the context was somehow different. In a video made by the Art City, the information about the exhibition is preceded by stills from Maidan and 2014 war in Donbas. The authors of this material underline, how important it is now to recognize the uniqueness of Ukrainian cultural heritage (Art City. "Scene").

*A New Ukrainian Dream* was an art show opened in July<sup>273</sup> (il. 40). Its curator, Oleksandr Soloviov gathered works by more than 40 contemporary Ukrainian artists of different generations and from multiple regions, including Arsen Savadov, Vasyl Tsagolov, Oleh Tistol, Oleksiy Sai, Ihor Husyev, Maxim Mamsykov, Oleksandr Roitburd, Ilya Chichkan, Myroslav Vajda, Vlada Ralko. The show aimed at reflecting the changes in the country within the last months (since the beginning of Maidan), and artists' hopes for a new Ukraine. (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2014a) The exhibition was accompanied by the charitable project of the Ukrainian Charitable Exchange, that raised funds for the migrants from eastern Ukraine and the transit centre in Dnepropetrovsk. The curatorial idea for the show is to look at art as a mean for change and artists – as the forerunners of change. There were three main thematic lines: Ukraine and the European Union, internal economic problems in the country, and the war and annexation of Crimea (Shapiro 2014). The opening work of *A New Ukrainian Dream*, that also seems to summarize the exhibition, was Oleksiy Sai's *Do Not Step on Rake* (2014). An installation of 350 rakes, *which compulsively makes one thinking about each step* (Do not step on rake), is a symbol of aspirations and dreams, that need to be cautiously pondered, because of the cyclical nature of recurring mistakes (Shapiro 2014). It is an introduction and a warning for a viewer, who should be careful and attentive while entering the space of dreams, hopes, but also the possibility of their clash with reality.

In 2015 the annual Great Sculpture Salon<sup>274</sup> took place, and a new festival – the International Festival of Traditional Cultures "Etnosvit"<sup>275</sup>. These three days event, which

focus was folk art and crafts, was meant to be held annually, but the 2015 edition was its first and last one. It presented the traditional crafts from Ukraine and other countries, including France, Greece, Belarus, or Lithuania.

*Vikna*<sup>276</sup> (Windows) was also inspired by the ethnographic research of artist Petro Honchar, who photographed windows from all over Ukraine during his travels and expeditions. The exhibition included 100 unique Ukrainian ethnic costumes from late 19th-early 20th century stemming from multiple museum collections. As we read on the exhibition's website:

The project aims to demonstrate the highest examples of folk art, while actualizing the sources of modern identity. Indeed, there has been a significant revival of interest in the Ukrainian national culture and traditions against the backdrop of social transformations taking place in Ukraine recently. Ethnic symbols became a part of our daily life, a sign of solidarity, of belonging to a political nation formed on the principles of civil society (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2015e).

It is an interesting example of the phenomenon that I am trying to reveal here - re-discovering the roots while discerning oneself through the deeply rooted elements such as folk traditions and heritage – which are unique to Ukraine. At the times of unrest, they constitute stability and provide unity within the nation, that battles the foreign interference.

During the summer Arsenal presented *Kateryna Bilokur. I want to be an artist!*<sup>277</sup>, curated by Alisa Lozhkina (il. 41). Lozhkina: “I just love Kateryna Bilokur, but nothing promised any success. It was just that the newly appointed director of a small Yahotyn Museum came to me and asked to show the art works from the collection” (Lozhkina 2022). The works from the State Museum of Ukrainian Decorative Folk Art were also presented outside the institution for the first time, as well as from many other collections. Bilokur's work, although widely recognized, was merely seen through the floral motifs or decorative patterns and felt into the category of folk art. Lozhkina aimed at rediscovering the much deeper dimension of her works and pay attention to her biography – of a Ukrainian woman and artist, “who sought art practising in Ukrainian province during the period of serious historical and political circumstances of the twentieth century” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2015c). The exhibition included about 100 works by Bilokur from the collections of Ukrainian museums and was her biggest show in independent Ukraine. Bilokur's (1900-1961) work “was shaped during a difficult historical period that broke people's personalities and

politicized the notion of ‘creative freedom’ to an unprecedented extent” (Zhmurko 2019: 40). But why is Bilokur’s exhibition important considering the postcolonial perspective, that I propose here? By this wide-scale presentation of her art, not only it touches the issue of female practice (which became important after Maidan, as I already mentioned before), and Bilokur is a fine example of a brave woman, who broke social expectations and followed her own path. She never got married, and her family did not accept the fact, that she wanted to be an artist. Remaining unrecognized until her 40s, her art was later forced into discourse of folk and decorative arts, *typical for women*. What I find important, however, is the fact, that the kind of art Bilokur created was seen as an expression of the search of national identity already in the early 20th century. “It was considered that the countryside, with its cultural codes that existed for thousands of years, was capable of preserving cultural otherness” (Zhmurko 2019: 42). In the Soviet times the myth of Ukrainian village as the source and essence of Ukrainian culture was a construct that helped to colonize the country.<sup>278</sup> On the one hand, primitivist artists were fully supported by the regime, who claimed to acknowledge Ukrainian art and culture on the same level as Russian. Works by artists such as Bilokur were also seen back then as cheerful and optimistic, features that were desired at the time, due to Stalin’s cultural policy that art should express the joy of a communist system (Zhmurko 2019: 46). The depreciation pertained to both – woman-artist, and Ukrainian-artist. On the other hand, however, it pushed it into area of folk and countryside creation, similarly to the procedure executed on Ukrainian language – perceived as a dialect of the *main language* – Russian. George Grabowicz in his preface to the Harvard Ukrainian Studies issue on Ukrainian Modernism mentions a 1993 essay entitled “Mutual Influences in Ukrainian and Russian Art” by Jewgenja Nikolajewna Petrova (Petrova 1993: 52), Russian renowned scholar, an expert on Russian art of the early 20th century and a deputy director of the State Russian Museum at that time. Petrova first explains a strong influence of the Russian institutions and art innovations on Ukrainian artists, while later names the influences that Ukraine might have have on Russians, including “folklore, local colour, or a natural mode of life” (Grabowicz 2019: 247). I am mentioning it to prove that the imperial policy of *folklorisation* of Ukraine started much earlier than in Soviet times (Petrova considers early 20th century art), and this legacy only continued. Lozhkina recalls, that the opening of the exhibition felt like going back to Maidan – in terms of the number of people who came to see Bilokur’s works. Lozhkina:

You have no idea. People were just suffocating. And it was due to the need of researching our national identity. It was unbelievable. I have never seen in my entire life so many people at the exhibition. It was a huge surprise for all of us. And then we continued with other exhibitions of the same kind – *Windows, Maria Prymachenko*. And the works were in public museums all this time, but no one thought of them before. (Lozhkina 2022)

The following exhibition was *Harlequin is leaving...*,<sup>279</sup> a private collection of Ihor Dychenko, Ukrainian artist, art historian and art critic, who collected works by Ukrainian and international artists of the 20th century, including works by Dychenko himself, and such prominent artists as Kazimir Malevich, Viktor Pal'mov, Oleksandr Bohomazov, Oksana Pavlenko, Mykhailo Boychuk, David and Volodymyr Burluk, Alla Gorska, Vasyl Yermilov, Maria Prymachenko, or Salvador Dali (Melnyk 2015). The idea was continued in Autumn, when the widowed wife of Dychenko, who died in May 2015, Valeriya Virska, passed his collection to Arsenal. The second collection exhibition was entitled *Open Collection. Ihor Dychenko, Valeriya Virska – to Ukrainian People*,<sup>280</sup> and was opened two weeks after the ceremony of the donation of more than 500 artworks, that now became part of the Museum Fund of Ukraine. Lozhkina underlines, that the collection was donated to Arsenal due to the personal effort of Natalia Zabolotna, who managed to convince Virska to make such a generous gift to the public institution.”It is the only decent collection that Arsenal has, and it remains the core of it” (Lozhkina 2022).

Another collector’s exhibition was opened the same year – *World Plastic Art Masterpieces*,<sup>281</sup> a sculpture collection of Igor Voronov, including works by such prominent artists as Edgar Degas, Olexander Arkhipenko, Jean Arp, Constantin Brancusi, Rembrandt Bugatti, Paul Gauguin, Salvador Dali, Alberto and Diego Giacometti, Jacques Lipschitz, Aristide Maillol Henry Moore, Hannah Orlova, Pablo Picasso, Auguste Rodin, Ossip Zadkine, Demetre Haralamb Chiparus.

The annual X ART-KYIV Contemporary<sup>282</sup> also continued the collector’s lead – within the Special Project *Museum Collection. Ukrainian Contemporary Art 1985-2015 From Private Collections* 40 largest Ukrainian collectors presented the best pieces by more than 70 artists. Another Special Project, *DIALOGIA. Ukrainian Art in Times With No Name*, curated by Oleksandr Soloviov, Alisa Lozhkina, Solomiya Savchuk and Illia Zabolotny, aimed at representing “the current state of Ukrainian art” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2015g). Like a number of exhibitions at the PAC carried out after 2014, this show also looked at

transformation, changes and traumas that came along: “An ordinary state of affairs has been disturbed, while the new state of society between peace and war has no final definition. We still do not venture to name those changes and allow ourselves to give this epoch a definition that became common for art – *Untitled*” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2015g).

Already at that point it is easy to see that at both art centres similar issues are starting to be visible, and it might not be anything special, looking into one’s past, if not for the fact, that it only appeared in its critical form after the Maidan.

In January 2016 Arsenal presented *Ivan Marchuk. The Genotype of Freedom*<sup>283</sup> (il. 42). Just one year before, I was working on his exhibition under the same title<sup>284</sup> in Warsaw, and I remember a huge respect that the Ukrainian team had for the artist. The exhibition in Warsaw was attended by the Ukrainian Culture Minister Vyacheslav Kyrylenko, Minister of Culture and National Heritage in Poland, Małgorzata Omilanowska, Ambassador of Ukraine in Poland, Andriy Deszczycia, and Ivan Marchuk himself. Marchuk, awarded the title of National Artist of Ukraine, exhibited all over the world and participated in more than 200 exhibitions. He spent 12 years abroad, as an artist who did not fit into the social realism dogma and came back to live and work in Kyiv only in 2001. I must admit that I am not a big fan of his work, but there is something about it that attracts audience all over the world – maybe the unique technique of *pliontanism* (from Ukrainian *pliontaty* – to weave, to knit), that for sure distinguishes his landscapes and portraits – the paintings seem to be created from densely intertwined threads. What is important however, is that his art shows usually performed the function of public diplomacy: affirming Ukraine’s place in European art context (Strypko 2016: 5). The title of the exhibition touches upon the problem of creative freedom and the need for unfettered artistic creation, which was not possible in the Soviet times for the Ukrainian artists, who either had to abide by the rules of Socialist Realism, leave the country, or stay unrecognized and underrated.

Arsenal follows the thread of folk artists, or rather those connected to the background of Ukrainian village, with the solo show of Mariya Prymachenko<sup>285</sup>, whose story is somehow like that of Kateryna Bilokur, although unlike Bilokur, Prymachenko managed to gain artistic education - she studied at the Central Experimental Workshop of Folk Art at the Kyiv Museum of Ukrainian Art (il. 43). Prymachenko was born and spent most of her life in a little village of Bolotnya. She still, however, gained recognition, and “appeared on the art map in 1936, in the midst of political expressions, which resulted in the destruction of an entire generation of modernist artists” (Zhmurko 2019: 45). Her works were displayed on folk art exhibitions all over Ukraine and abroad – even making to the

Soviet Pavilion at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1937. Like Bilokur, her art slot into Stalinist slogan “Life has become better, life has become more joyous” (Zhmurko 2019: 45, after Honchar et al. 2017: 13), which led to misunderstanding and simplification of the unique artistic value she created. The peasant and folk art became representatives of Ukrainian art and culture, at the same time when people in the villages were being under terror and living in unimaginably poor conditions. Zhmurko:

The new image of Soviet Ukraine was communicated through the perspective of an agrarian, rural nation with fertile lands and happy creative peasants. It is worth mentioning that after the introduction of the policy of collectivization (the 1920s–1930s) and the emergence of the first collective farms, the peasants were effectively forced back into serfdom, as they were left without passports and, accordingly, without the right to freely leave the territory of their village (Zhmurko 2019: 46).

The presentation of Primachenko’s works brings around all those issues and allows further discussion about Ukraine’s past and its real place within the Soviet Union. I am writing these words during the Russian invasion on Ukraine, invasion that takes lives of civilians, women, and children, but also the one that physically destroys Ukrainian heritage – including that of Mariya Prymachenko. On February 27, the fourth day of the Russian invasion, Russian troops burned down the Ivankiv Historical and Local History Museum, where 25 of artist’s works were stored – luckily, some of the works were saved by a local man, who run into the burning building (Stańska 2022). There is an interesting continuation, of how the empire allows the creation, but only within the frame imposed by the empire. When the frame is exposed, the art works become dangerous, as the carriers of meanings that can denounce the real relationships between the two subjects of the colonial circumstance.

Yet another issue is brought up by the show *MALEVICH*<sup>+286</sup> (il. 44). In his 2019 essay George Grabowicz mentions the words of the mayor of Munich, Georg Kronawitter, who noted in a preface to the 1993 catalogue of the exhibition *Avantgarde & Ukraine* that “many of the key artists who transformed our understanding of art at the turn of the century, including Kazymyr Malevych, were either born in Ukraine or considered themselves Ukrainian” (Grabowicz 2019: 243). This notion could have been a motto for the 2016 exhibition, which aimed at pointing out the Ukrainian roots of a numerous artists, who are still widely considered to be representants of the Russian avantgarde. Already the 2014



show *The Ukrainian Avant-Garde Scene* strongly emphasized the national belonging of a certain group of artists generally considered to be Russian. Another event that carefully looks at this issue seems to be a conscious effort to “postcolonially ‘reclaim’ Ukraine for Ukraine” (Sułek 2020: 25). There has been a long-lasting dispute whether Kazimir Malevich was a Ukrainian artist – a dispute without an answer. Malevich was ethnically Polish, was born and lived in Kyiv, which was at the time part of the Russian Empire. Ukrainian scholars, such as Dmytro Horbachov or Myroslav Shkandrij, have repeatedly underlined the influence of Ukrainian environment on Malevich and his work, making him a representant of Ukrainian, and not Russian avant-garde – Ukrainian, based not only on ethnicity, but understood as a separate phenomenon<sup>287</sup> (Shkandrij 2002, Horbachov 2006, 2016<sup>288</sup>, Grabowicz 2019). An issue further discussed during the forum *Nova heneratsiya: khudozhnyk i yoho pokolinnya* (New generation: a painter and his generation), that took place in the M17 Contemporary Art Center in Kyiv 21–24 February 2019, within the 140th jubilee of Malevich’s birth. Scholars from all over the world, including Christina Lodder (Malevich Foundation, USA), Myroslava Mudrak, Jean-Claude Marcadé, Myroslav Shkandrij, Alexandra Kaiser and Matthew Stephenson (Archipenko Foundation, USA) and more, discussed how does the environment influence the formation of the artist (remembering that Malevich was born in Kyiv in 1879, where he also studied, before leaving to Kursk and Moscow, and later Vitebsk and Petersburg, later renamed to Leningrad) and what is the contribution of Ukrainian artists to the world avant-garde.

*MALEVICH+* presented the works of the Ukrainian avant-garde artists from the collection of Arsenal, and Malevich was included in that group: “During the summer, visitors will be able to see the unique cultural and artistic phenomenon of Ukrainian avant-garde, in particular, the original works of the signature artist of the XX century – Kazimir Malevich, whose life and work were inherently connected with Ukraine, a fact that is still largely ignored by foreign art experts” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2016c).

The narrative of the show touches upon an issue discussed earlier – an importance of regaining and understanding not only a singular artist, but the whole separate phenomenon of the Ukrainian avant-garde, that remains widely considered within the frame of the Russian one. The fact, that there are only two artworks by Malevich in Ukrainian public collections, speaks for itself.<sup>289</sup> *MALEVICH+* was based on the fund collection of Arsenal, which core was constituted by the donation of the collection of Ihor Dychenko, that was previously exhibited internationally (France, Japan, Russia, Germany, the United Kingdom) presenting a new (Ukrainian) angle to the phenomenon widely known as the

Russian avant-garde (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2016c). The exhibition at Arsenal referred to the show of the same title that took place in Poland in 1997<sup>290</sup> and focused on the re-establishment of “historical and artistic justice” for the artists who used to be labelled anti-Soviet and thus forgotten and removed from official narratives for years (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2016c). Similarly, Ukrainian artists, such as Boychukists, became victims of the Stalin’s terror, losing the ability to work, and often even losing their lives.

In July 2016 it was announced, that the new director of Mystetskyi Arsenal will be Olesya Ostrovska-Lyuta,<sup>291</sup> who will also be re-elected in 2021 to continue her work at Arsenal. Ostrovska-Lyuta proposed some important changes in programming and operational structures of the institution. The new program was announced with its motto to “integrate, develop, and strenghten”<sup>292</sup> the mission of the institution (Prohrama rozvytku NKMMK).

The first art show executed under the guidance of the new director was *Event Horizon*<sup>293</sup> (il. 45). The curators tried to visualize an ambiguous connection between art and reality in a moment of dramatic changes in the country. It was the first exhibition that tried to comment on the events of Maidan and war in Donbas and to see a broader picture behind them - a picture of a society that has been struggling for decades with several factors, including political, historical, or economical, to have a better life. The title refers to the scientific discourse and the conception of the *event horizon* – a hypothetical border beyond which “the light ends up in the ‘trap’ of a black hole and never comes back again” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2016a). It is a powerful image that raises ontological questions about the state of humanity and the direction where it’s been heading. The show’s premise is universal, pointing to the problems of constant changes, technological innovations, and progress. However, its implementation stays local. The issue of the society that heads towards destruction and oblivion, as opposed with hope and anticipation of cardinal transformations, is deeply rooted in Ukrainian context, with its difficult history, but also contemporaneity and the situation of confusion and instability (Balashova 2016). Within the narrative of the exhibition, that aims to signalize the panglobal tendencies, the Ukrainian tragedy seems to form a part of the uncertainty and humanitarian crisis that has been ruling the world in recent years. Maidan has ended more than two years ago, the Crimea remains annexed, the war in Donbas continues. The enthusiasm of the last days of February 2014, when Viktor Yanukovich fled the country, is long gone. I have visited Kyiv in November 2016 and met the curator Alisa Lozhkina for a conversation after visiting the show. I remember her disappointment and lack of hope for the future that were clearly

present throughout our conversation. The same mood prevailed at the exhibition, which bright spot was Alexander Chekmenev's photo project *Passport*. In 1994-1995 the photographer was asked to take passport photographs for people who due to their illness of old age could not leave their homes. The new passports were needed in a new country, a place that suddenly emerged for those who have spent all their lives in the Soviet Union, and now they could rather die in Ukraine, than travel. I found the *Event Horizon* a bit messy, with some of the curatorial threads being unclear or missing. But it was an important exhibition in terms of Arsenal marking its new goal, focusing on contemporary Ukrainian artists, that want to comment reality, the actual, tangible world we live in. With its difficult to follow for a random viewer narrative thread (yet maybe not very polished as for the professional viewer), Arsenal entered a new stage, slowly cutting itself off the more commercial projects.

At the same time another art show was presented, that for some reason is not mentioned on Arsenal's website or media. A fantastic exhibition of the 20th century posters entitled *Euphemoids* took place in the Arsenal's ground floor. Its narrative was also focused on the humanitarian crises present in the preceding century. Crises that were overcome and now belong to the past, giving a ray of hope to the predominant mood of doom present on the upper floor of Arsenal. Writing those words in 2022, during the horrors of the Russian invasion on Ukraine, I see how the *Event Horizon* was closer to the reality, pointing out to several unsolved problems and remnants of the past, that came to haunt the present.

*Oleksandr Hnylytsky. Reality of Illusion*<sup>294</sup> presented the work of Hnylytsky, who was part of the Ukrainian New Wave (Ukrainian transvanguard or Ukrainian Neo-baroque) in the 80s, and the "Paris Commune"<sup>295</sup> group in the 90s (il. 46). The Ukrainian New Wave was one of the most influential non-formal art movements that arose in the late 80s to the early 2000s as a set of creative undertakings and initiatives in response to the turbulent events of the collapse of the USSR, creation of independent Ukraine, and transformation. Many of the artists connected to the movement, including Hnylytsky, aimed at reinterpreting previous traditions and, in its later period, introducing new technologies into the area of fine arts and worked with video and actionism.<sup>296</sup>

This show marks an introduction of the new program, as announced by Ostrovska-Lyuta, with its focus on Ukrainian artists of the 80s and 90s, whose artistic practice was somehow forgotten, even if they remained important artistic figures of Ukrainian art history. It is worth mentioning though, that the Ukrainian New Wave had its major exhibition in 2009 in the National Art Museum of Ukraine (*New Wave*, 2009, curator

Oksana Barshynova). Two years later the individual exhibition of Oleksandr Hnylytsky was opened in the same place.

*Pure Art*<sup>297</sup> continues Arsenal's path of the rediscovery and reinterpretation of the issues of folk or naive art, previously examined in projects such as *Vikna*, *Kateryna Bilokur*, *I want to be an artist*, and *Maria Prymachenko. Imperfect*. The show included the works of Bilokur and Prymachenko, as well as other artists widely considered as "primitive", such as Heorhii Maliavin, Hnat Tarasiuk, Olexandr and Yevhen Leschenko, that were juxtaposed with those by contemporary artists, regarded as professionals in the field of fine arts, including Arsen Savadov or Oleksandr Roytburg. The project attempted to "bring the naïve art beyond the traditional 'ethnographic' field and to put it in the broader context of the national artistic tradition development", a problem signalled previously, and developed here (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2017c).

*In Progress. Ukrainian Dress Code Since Independence*<sup>298</sup> looked at the recent history of Ukrainian fashion in relation to history and society. It presented works by Ukrainian designers since 1991 until today with the focus on relations between fashion and world views at certain times: "If you pass through all the halls in sequence, you will see the way that our society has also passed from feeling as the inhabitants of one of the republics of the USSR to their sense of being citizens of an independent country, which is on its way to Europe. This path has not yet been completed; it continues to this day" (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2017b).

The exhibition was popular among audience, attracting those who simply wanted to enjoy the history of fashion, as well as those looking for some deeper meanings between the material objects and the times that shaped them. The focus on the process and transformation clearly indicates the importance of topics that somehow remain related to political and social reality, even if they stay more on the commercial side.

Simultaneously the project entitled *Art Work*<sup>299</sup> was opened on the first floor of Arsenal, an exhibition that was curated by me and Alisa Lozhkina (il. 47). It was an official collaboration between Arsenal and Galeria Miejska in Wrocław, Poland, financially supported by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. It is quite an unusual project in the history of Arsenal and emerged from the desire to cooperate between me and Alisa Lozhkina. Since our first encounter already in 2014, we've been discussing the possibility to organize a Polish-Ukrainian exhibition, that would dwell on topics appropriate to both Polish and Ukrainian experience. It was also a moment when the Ukrainian curators were becoming tired of political art and a constant requests of art shows

commenting Maidan and the war. We've decided to dedicate the exhibition to the topic of work, which at that time has already been widely discussed in Polish art environment, but not that much yet in Ukraine. We wanted to look at the ambiguous relationships present on the art market and connected to the idea of work and artwork itself. Since we came out of this playful idea, that the word "work" applies to both an activity that people perform to make money, as well as a material outcome of those activities, including art works themselves, we also wanted to comment on the very idea of work, and the changes it undergoes. The exhibition turned out to be a huge success, with more than 10,000 viewers within just one month of display, and a huge media coverage.

Working in Arsenal gave me a profound insight into the way it operates. As mentioned already, budget is always an issue, and despite being the state institution, Arsenal must look for money on each project they plan to endeavour. In case of *Art Work*, such a cooperation that included transporting works by almost 30 Polish artists to Kyiv, was only possible thanks to the support of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The show further travelled to Poland and was exhibited in Wrocław at Galeria Dworcowa<sup>300</sup>, however was significantly reduced in size. This is another thing that I understood working for Arsenal – space really is a deciding factor for most of the projects. It is vast, it is crude, and needs a separate mounting system. Galeria Dworcowa, which itself is a difficult space, due to some architectural decorations and peculiarities like extremely narrow doors to exhibition rooms, managed to store not even a half of the original exhibition. It has also affected its reception, as the element of simply being amazed by the pure scale and craftwork of some artworks was now missing.

In Autumn Arsenal hosted the first edition of the Festival of Young Ukrainian Artists.<sup>301</sup> The event had a form of an open competition for artists under 35. The jury was composed of curators and artists from Ukraine and working with Ukrainian art – Björn Geldhof, Jerzy Onuch, Taras Polataiko, Mikhail Rashkovetsky, Tetyana Tumasyan, Monika Szewczyk, and was curated by the three young Ukrainian curators Lizaveta German, Maria Lanko and Kateryna Filyuk. The winners of the first edition were Maria Plotnikova, Piotr Armianowski and Viacheslav Poliakov. The festival aimed at figuring out whether a new generation of artists emerged during the years following Maidan, and whether the political and social changes influenced their artistic experience (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2017a). The artists participating in the festival were asked to prepare projects circulating around the idea of change which: "Characterize the present time – blurring of topographical boundaries, fragility of national states, variety of identities, disappearance of boundaries between

private and public. According to the curators, there were shifts in understanding the time and history categories, and conceptual limits of understanding the past, present, and future are now interchangeable (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2017a).

The event was founded by the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine as a biennial; however, the 2019 edition did not take place, and the project's second edition was executed only in 2021.

In December 2017 two exhibitions were opened – *Japanese Art Exhibition*<sup>302</sup> curated by Yuliya Vaganova, that presented works by the Japanese artists from the Ukrainian museums, libraries, and private collections, and *Boychukism. Great Style Project*<sup>303</sup> (il. 48). *Boychukism* goes in line with the PAC's *Nikita Kadan. Stone Hits Stone* in its narrative about the creators of utopia who became victims of their never implemented dream. Mykhailo Boychuk, and a group of artists who surrounded him, created a unique style based on a return to historical heritage and a collective creation. The phenomena known as boychukism, *Renovation Byzantine*, or Ukrainian monumentalism, was an attempt “to realize the great style in Ukraine, and to reform Ukrainian art so that it became truly national and would enter into the everyday life of a person” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2018a). Boychukists, just like many avant-garde artists, to which Nikita Kadan refers in *Stone Hits Stone*, truly believed that they can build an ideal society through their art. Similarly, they believed that the Bolshevik ideology might bring better future and were similarly destroyed by the system that they hoped will save them. Mykhailo Boychuk and several artists from his circle were executed during the great purge of 1937, as part of the generation of the so-called Executed Renaissance, and a majority of their works were destroyed. *Boychukism. The Great Style Project* does two things – rediscovers the unique art phenomenon, in the context of both Ukrainian and international art, and points to the complicated relations between artists and power, and their failure, reminding at the same time of the terrors of the Bolshevik and Stalinist systems. In 1933 Boichuk and artists that surrounded him were commissioned to decorate the interior of the Red Industrial Plant Theatre in Kharkiv: “Frescoes at the Red Industrial Plant Theatre<sup>304</sup> in essence glorified the Soviet regime; at the theatre Ukrainian officials who were directly involved in organizing mass famine in Ukrainian rural areas proudly posed alongside the frescoes depicting industrial engineering feats” (Bilokin 2018: 55).

Their art had to be aligned with the Communist ideology, and the artists devoted themselves to “converging Neo-Byzantine art and Soviet architecture within the new monumentalist style” (Oharkova 2018: 84). In the work of Boichuk and his fellow artists

one will find the adherence to social realism, along with innovative avant-garde elements, as well as the folk, archaic (Assyrian, Egyptian, Fayum mummy portraits), Early Renaissance, and Byzantine tradition. It is “riddled with paradox and contradiction” (Oharkova 2018: 80).

All these elements are part of the narrative changes and can be interpreted according to the model I propose. The rediscovery of Ukrainian art, redefinition of the history, including non-obvious moments, such as the utopian beliefs in communist system, along with the attention on the atrocities and terror – all fit into the idea of postcolonial healing, that offers a bold gaze into the past that needs to be accepted with all its complicacies and ambiguities. The emphasis placed on the discerning of a unique phenomenon, as well as incorporating it into the world’s history of art,<sup>305</sup> is a way of rebuilding and rediscovering identity, but without cutting out the unwanted elements. The recognition of the terrors of Soviet system is yet another way to deal with the past that leads to healing and acceptance. Serhii Bilokin in his article for the catalogue of the exhibition mentions yet another problem connected to decolonization – the way Boychukists art was deprecated and devalued by the Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopaedia, and how Ukrainians at the beginning of the 20th century are referred to as Russians or Little Russians – two of the artists, Mykhailo Tkachenko and Mykola Pymonenko were referred to as Russians by the Kharkiv newspaper, while the French *La Démocratie Sociale* would call them the Little Russians, pointing also to the idea of Ukrainian culture being *unsophisticated* (Bilokin 2018: 48-50). Guillaume Apollinaire also shared a similar view:

Unfortunately, they consciously limit themselves to imitation; they lack talent to create an image of the contemporary man. Despite all effort, when they paint a man in a necktie, the Byzantine tinge is gone, and what we are left with is somewhat coarse art by the Little Russians, who still have to learn how to paint in a contemporary manner which is different and more complex than gilded icons of the Ukrainian cathedrals (After Oharkova 2018: 83).

Pointing out the mechanisms of historiography and the way the reception of history is formed by those who have power, are a clear indicator that the decolonizing processes are taking place. *Boychukism* was also Arsenal’s first exhibition that included an extended research project – similar initiative to Pinchuk’s Research Platform. Among the team of the project there are no longer only artists and curators, but also scientific consultants, specialists, researchers, and art scholars. This pattern will remain, and it also confirms

Ostrovska-Lyuta's willingness to restructure Arsenal and give some clearer patterns of assignments and responsibilities.

*Flashback. Ukrainian Media Art of the 1990s*<sup>306</sup> opened in 2018 was a presentation of the Ukrainian video art, and exhibition that continues the program line of Arsenal devoted to the forgotten or under-researched phenomena of the Ukrainian art of the last decades. It was followed by the solo exhibition of Kirill Protsenko *Impassioned*<sup>307</sup>, which aligns to the same program line. Protsenko, who died in 2017, was an artist related to the Paris Commune squat like Oleksandr Hnylytsky.

*Instant Time*<sup>308</sup> was a winning project of a 2017 open competition for curators, and was another exhibition dedicated to the transformation and the 90s. The authors of the project, Viktoriia Bavykina and Asia Tsisar, tried to capture an experience of transformation under the metaphor of an instant time – the time of acceleration and rapid changes, but also of the craving for the new. Bavykina and Tsisar invited nine curators from different cities and regions of Ukraine<sup>309</sup> to create nine different stories and perspectives that form a view on the socio-political phenomena of that time, implemented by a great number of artists of different generations – those born in the 90s, and those who worked and created contemporary art back then. The transformation, sometimes described as the “transition from nowhere to nowhere” (Prygodych 2018: 185), remained for many the time of disappointment, as the bright new future never came. What came was economic decline, unemployment, inflation, devaluation of the currency, and privatisation that made rich even richer (“all today's oligarchs originate from the 1990s”, Prygodych 2018: 189), and poor even poorer. But it is also a moment of birth of independent Ukrainian state, with its currency, flag, and constitution - the symbolic elements of the autonomous identity. The 1990s is also the time of the creation of new communities of artists, who “gained the opportunity to work at the workshops that were central to the formation of collaborations, and they have contributed the decolonization of Ukrainian contemporary art” (Prygodych 2018: 195).

*Kurbas: New Worlds*<sup>310</sup> goes along with the narrative line focused on the Ukrainian avant-garde, which remains very under-researched (il. 49). The exhibition was a collaborative project with the Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinema of Ukraine and Yara Arts Group from New York, curated by Virlana Tkacz, Tetiana Rudenko, and Waldemart Klyuzko, who were invited by Arsenal to this project. Kurbas is yet another representative of the Executed Renaissance. The theatre and movie director and actor was shot along with other Ukrainian intellectuals in 1937 in the Sandarmokh forest in Karelia after being kept



in the Solovki prison camp. His experimental theatre work in Kyiv and Kharkiv remains an important phenomenon. He worked with film, and multimedia, and engaged the innovative conception of language (its sound and musicality) and movement on stage. The exhibition provides an example of Arsenal's multidisciplinary and its aim to focus not only on visual arts, but a broader phenomenon of Ukrainian culture: "The exhibit includes the original set model and costume, sketches, posters, director's scripts, documentary photographs from the Theatre Museum's collection. Yara Arts Group has created the installations which bring Les Kurbas's directorial concepts to life" (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2018c).

2018 marked the fifth anniversary of the outburst of the Maidan revolution. In November Arsenal opened *Revolutionize*<sup>311</sup> (il. 50), curated by Kateryna Filyuk and Nathanja van Dijk, that looked at the Ukrainian revolution in a broader context of the world revolts and protest movements (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2018d). The project analysed the revolution as a social phenomenon and put questions about the need for art in time of political disturbances. It might also be seen as a summarizing act, an attempt to look back, and try to redefine the events in retrospect. After five years, Maidan already belongs to the past, and forms another step in Ukrainian history. However, the history is still very recent, and it takes time to examine the events and to heal. The exhibition is a tool to talk about the past, but also to form it – to find patterns, new dimensions of events, and new contexts, and to link it to the present. This attempt was taken by James Beckett, who in a series of *Couplings*, installations, that repeatedly appeared throughout the exhibition, juxtaposed the artefacts from the National Museum of the Revolution of Dignity, the real objects from Maidan, with contemporary ones:

The artist paired the museum's artefacts with mundane, consumer objects, emphasizing the unique nature of the revolutionary moment and its power to alter the function of ordinary things that could turn into a weapon or protection as well as symbolic agents of historic events. (...) Moreover, Beckett's couplings allude to the commodification of history: the process in which the past is turned into a source of entertainment and commerce, implying standardization and a loss of diversity of historical memory (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2018d: 7, 46).

The uncanny resemblance of the objects, paired in still-life manner in the dualistic assembles, recurrent in the space of the exhibition, plays with memory, and brings from oblivion the suppressed memories. As if the artist wanted to point to the possibility of amnesia, that might appear after the traumatic events – a phenomenon that I am also

discussing here in terms of the postcolonial amnesia. It is the same process, and Beckett, by bringing the objects from the past and putting them in front of the viewers eyes, forces to confront the trauma.

2019 was a year of important and memorable exhibitions, all of them having a significant meaning from a postcolonial perspective that I propose here. *The Amazing Stories of Crimea*<sup>312</sup>, prepared by a group of authors and curators in cooperation with the Crimean House, featured objects from several Ukrainian museums as well as private collections, that were connected to the history of the peninsula (il. 51). Opened at the time of the fifth anniversary of the annexation of Crimea by Russia, it might have been seen as a gesture of reclaiming the land, however the authors were wary with this kind of narratives. “As a big institution we must be very careful with the messages”, says Yuliya Vaganova, the Deputy Director of the Museum and Exhibition Activities, and one of the curators. Vaganova: “There are different narratives, and it was difficult to balance between them. The final decision was to look at the period before the presence of the Russian Empire in Crimea, before the times of the Empress Catherine the Great, because of its multinarratives. After, there was unification – of culture, habits, and history, which used to be Crimean” (Vaganova 2021).

Crimea used to be a multicultural pot of different ethnic groups, without a dominant culture. The Russian Empire annexed the Crimea in 1783, and the peninsula remained under the Russian rule until 1954, when it was incorporated (without the city of Sevastopol) into the Ukrainian SSR. The curators decided to also not favour the story of Crimean Tatars, but give the same amount of voice and space to each culture present at the peninsula since antiquity: “The Cimmerians, the Tauri, the Scythians, the Greeks, and later the Goths, the Sarmatians, the Byzantines, the Khazars, the Cumans (Polovtsi), the Genoese and the Venetians, the Ottoman Turks, the Crimean Tatars” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2019a).

Vaganova: “People don’t know much about the story of Crimea. They know the leisure aspect, and the rest is connected to the Russian history, because it is architecture of the imperial and Soviet times that remained visible” (Vaganova 2021).

The curators decided to present what is not visible anymore and worked with multiple museum collections and private collectors in Ukraine, to build a narration based on objects, that were physically long gone from Crimea. As much as the curators of *Revolutionize* tried to recognize, how memory of the recent events can be built with the use of artefacts and museum space, *The Amazing Stories of Crimea* ask, what memory of the long gone period remained, and how memory can be shaped by those, who are in power.

Reaching out towards the pre-Russian period of Crimea was a subversive strategy, that revealed the colonial aspirations of Russia more than if it would be called it by its name. The exhibition also included two works by contemporary artists, Pavlo Makov and Maria Kulikovska, originally from Crimea, whose works opened and closed the exhibit (Aliev and Mystetskyi Arsenal 2019: 6-7, 122-123).

The next art show was also focused on the region partially under the Russian occupation – Donbas (il. 52). “Obabich”,<sup>313</sup> curated by Jerzy Onuch, featuring works by Viktor Marushchenko and Mark Neville, as well as a graffiti by Sasha Kurmaz, based on the relationships between Marushchenko photographs of Donbas taken more than fifteen years ago, and Neville’s current ones, building a bridge between the past and the present: “Every history, every narrative, has its origins, its pre-history, its ancient times – in other words, its own past” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2019b). The decision was to focus on Donbas, a place where the forgotten (at that time) war is taking place since 2014, but not to show the military conflict, but a regular life of region’s inhabitants, who back in the days had dreams and hopes of the better future, and now learn how to live in new conditions of warfare. The focus of the show was also neighborhood and the way people, societies or nations live next to each other or together (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2019b: 5). Today, it is difficult not to put this issue into the frame of the Russian invasion, and the inability of living side by side of two different, separate, and individual nations, with Russia’s imperial and colonial claims towards Ukraine.

Simultaneously with *Obabich*, that was presented on the upper floor of Arsenal, downstairs there was an exhibition of Oleg Holosiy *Non-Stop Painting*.<sup>314</sup> It was curated by a team composed of the curators from Arsenal (Soloviov, Oksametnyi, Savchuk) and National Art Museum of Ukraine (Barshynova, Zhmurko). Holosiy is another representant of the Ukrainian New Wave connected with the Paris Commune squat in Kyiv, next to Protsenko and Hnylytsky, who’ve already had their solo shows at Arsenal. The show was composed of the works from museums and private collections and was organised in a cooperation with the National Art Museum of Ukraine and The Naked Room gallery. In 2020 another artist of the New Wave generation had its solo show. *Andriy Sahaidakovsky. Scenery. Welcome!*<sup>315</sup> was a total installation prepared by the artist himself. In terms of institutional structure, it is worth mentioning, that Sahaidakovsky’s show included work of several specialists, and all of them are mentioned on exhibition’s page. Apart from curators, there are project managers and supervisors, designers, technicians, PR, and education specialist, documentalists and photographers, partners and visitors’ coordinators, catalogue

and print managers and designers, installation team, legal, accounting, and administrative service, and grant managers. It is a first project that mentions all the team in a clear and structured way, and I see it as part of the gradual development of Arsenal as well managed institution. Another novelty was an introduction of interactive virtual tour – a tool that became indispensable during the pandemic, but that only a well-organized and well-developed art institutions could offer. Arsenal will continue working with the virtual tours, that also include audio-guides in both English and Ukrainian, until its last exhibition before the Russian invasion, when all institutional plans had been abruptly interrupted.

Since 2016 and the presence of the new director Olesia Ostrovska-Lyuta, Arsenal is following the clear program lines. *Paraska Plytka-Horytsvit. Overcoming Gravity*<sup>316</sup> is another exhibition devoted to the not that much a rediscovery (although Paraska Plytka-Horytsvit is not that well known to public as Prymachenko), but a reinterpretation of a “folk” artist (il. 53). Plytka-Horytsvit was a “Hutsul painter, folklorist, ethnographer, philosopher, and photographer” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2019c). Like Prymachenko and Bilokur, she has also worked and lived in the small village called Kryvorivnia, and like Bilokur led a solitary life, devoted to creation of her art. Her life was also marked by tragedies, universal to many fates of the time – she has joined the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, and in the 40s and 50s she’s spent almost a decade in labour camp and prison in Germany and Siberia. The exhibition was a research project undertook by several scholars and researchers. It included photography, texts, ethnographic notes, documents, letters, and paintings.

*Special Cargo! The History of the Return of Ukraine’s Cultural Property*<sup>317</sup> is probably the first project that openly uses the term “colonial”: “It’s impossible to calculate exactly how many millions of cultural objects Ukraine lost because of its colonial status and the historical cataclysms of the 20th century” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2019d). The art show’s focus was Ukrainian cultural heritage that was lost due to the relationships of power, mainly of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, but also the German occupation, but that has successfully returned to Ukraine. This positive narration gives hope to further processes of regaining cultural property that was forcefully appropriated.

In March 2020 the world pandemic of COVID-19 begun. Arsenal opened its first 2020 exhibition in July – *Imprint. Ukrainian Printmaking of the XX-XXI Centuries*.<sup>318</sup> In the meantime the exhibition was installed and dismantled twice, and the video guides and online access for the viewers were provided (Tykhonenko 2020). *Imprint* was an overview

of Ukrainian printmaking in relation to European trends, and with the focus on the characteristics and uniqueness of the national scene.

Another pandemic-time exhibition was *Every Day. Art. Solidarity. Resistance*<sup>319</sup> was a statement of support for protests in Belarus, that started in 2020 and continued. It was thought that they might turn into a second Maidan, with its bright and dark sides, including the arrests and torture of protesters, but also hopes for changes. Unfortunately, in the case of Belarus, the protests did not manage to remove Alexander Lukashenko from power. The title, *Every Day*, referred to the slogan of the protesters who, just like in Maidan, went out on the streets every day. Ukrainians, who were in the same place just 8 years ago, could now look at the Belarusians' struggles from the place of their own experience. Curated by Belarussian (and one Ukrainian) art workers, the space was given for a cross-section of contemporary art activities of resistance and collectiveness (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2021).

*Sensitivity. Contemporary Ukrainian Photography*<sup>320</sup> looked at the last three decades of Ukrainian photography. Grouped not in a chronological, but more processual way, the show was a grand and fantastic overview of different approaches, methods, and topics, that form a fascinating recent history of Ukrainian photography. It was the penultimate exhibition before the escalation of war and the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022.

I find it somehow meaningful, that the last show was entitled *Futuromarenia*<sup>321</sup> (il. 54). It was closed at the end of January. War came to Kyiv at the time when Arsenal was preparing itself for a grand renovation, and no further exhibition plans were made. But the big dreams for the future were there – dreams broken by the Russian bombs. When the war started, I remember my pain connected to that lost opportunity – that of a better life. I have been visiting Ukraine constantly since summer 2014 and observed the changes and transformations the country went through since then. There was still a lot to do, many challenges, hopes, and insecurities, but the country was developing and offering new possibilities, now taken away from Ukrainians because of the imperial, colonial war. The futurists dreamt about the better future with optimism, but also there was always some uncertainty about what lies ahead. The futurists encountered the World War I, the biggest humanitarian tragedy of contemporary world at that time. Futurism, which originated in Italy, had found its original form in Eastern Europe, including a separate phenomenon of Ukrainian futurism. As in the case of the broader phenomenon of Eastern European avant-garde, which is usually connected to Russia, Ukrainian futurists needed recognition and

separation from that colonial perspective. The exhibition focused mainly on theatre and literature, less on visual arts, giving a broad spectrum of the cultural context. It also did not openly touch upon the issue of colonisation of Ukrainian futurists, as *Malevich+* in 2016 did. I believe this stems from a deeper research and conceptualisation undertaken since Olesya Ostrovska-Lyuta took over the management. *Futuromarenia* simply presents the phenomenon, leaving no doubts, that it remains separate and unique.

## V.6. Conclusions

Arsenal is one of the most powerful cultural centres in the country and the biggest art institution. Multidisciplinary international festivals, exhibitions, and various cultural events have been taking place here for more than a decade – so far around fifty events were carried out. Arsenal's goal as a state-run institution is to be the leading centre engaged in various art forms – from contemporary art, music, theatre, and literature to museum development. This multidisciplinary and multidimensionality is understood as its asset, as something that distinguishes it. This goal was formed gradually, as initially Arsenal aimed to be the Ukrainian Louvre, represent the history of Ukrainian art from antiquity to the present, host collections of masterpieces from the leading world museums and become a powerful centre for the development of creative initiatives. Over time its program became more adjacent to the actual possibilities of the institution, that constantly struggles with funding.

Arsenal had three leaders,<sup>322</sup> but there were two of them, Natalia Zabolotna and Olesia Ostrovska-Lyuta, who really shaped the institution, even if the two management styles remained very different. Balashova: “Arsenal, led by Natalia Zabolotna, often neglected the professional audience, populously flirting with the general public of Ukraine” (Balashova 2016).

The first years are marked by the displays, the panoramas, repetitive events of the art review, all of them lacking deeper critical analysis – a situation like the PAC's first years. However, according to Alisa Lozhkina, all those events were extremely important at that time, and some of them, like Book Arsenal initiated by Zabolotna, remained so:

They would bring people together, and people from all kinds of background would come. These were the most important events of the year because we didn't have any art fairs at that time – they were immensely popular and were also all over the media. And later Arsenal got gradually deserted – due to many reasons. But back then it really was a place, it was mind-blowingly popular. It also held all kinds of events – so not only for art, but it was also very diverse, and very lively.

Arsenal now is a shadow of the old place. Now it functions in a slightly different way. It's more like a Western institution. And back then, it was a place of its own time. It was a specific condition. Arsenal under Olesia functions like a proper art institution. Before it was more like a very creative, very bright, very beautiful improvisation which had a plenty of drawbacks, but also a lot of inspiring and impressing moments. It was created by passionate lunatics and taken by bureaucrats – it is a normal way to proceed (Lozhkina 2022).

The modification in programming happens in 2014, which indicates, that it was not the change of the Arsenal's director, that initiated that – Ostrovksa-Lyuta took office in 2016, which does not change the fact, that Zabolotna's Arsenal was a completely different institution than Ostrovska-Lyuta's Arsenal. Lozhkina:

You cannot compare Arsenal with Zabolotna and Arsenal with Ostrovska-Lyuta. It was a different type of institution, with different type of management. Olesia and Yuliya are more systematic. But the first stages always conquer, even if you have a lot of drawbacks. When I came to Arsenal, she has just become a director and it was in 2010. There was nothing there. Sporadic, weird exhibitions and that's it (Lozhkina 2022).

One of the biggest challenges when Ostrovska-Lyuta started working at Arsenal was that the projects would have intellectual value, and not only aesthetic or emotional values. Arsenal earlier would build a facade, and maybe not dig deep enough. Therefore, also structural changes were needed, although Ostrovksa-Lyuta admits, that there are still not enough people in Arsenal who would work content-wise (Ostrovska-Lyuta 2021).

Before 2014 most of the events were the displays, the panoramas, repetitive events of more entertainment than problematic and critical value. In 2014-2015 some of them were still present (like *Open Collection. Ihor Dychenko, Valeriya Virska – to Ukrainian People, World Plastic Art Masterpieces*, “The Great Sculpture Salon” – but the 2015 was its last edition), but in general the program enters a completely new stage. The similar set of issues and topics as in the case of the PAC is being introduced, including memory and history shaping, as well as the question of the past and Ukraine's place in it, its re-discovery, and re-shaping, with a special attention put on the Ukrainian avant-garde (*The Ukrainian Avant-Garde Scene, MALEVICH+, Boychukism. Great Style Project, Kurbas: New Worlds, Futuromarenia, The Amazing Stories of Crimea*). This thread aligns with one of the

narrative lines deliberately chosen by Ostrovska-Lyuta, with the impact on the Ukrainian artists of the first three decades of the 20th century. The topics of re-interpretation might be also ascribed to the set of events dedicated to the Ukrainian “folk” artists (*Vikna, Kateryna Bilokur. I want to be an artist!, Mariya Prymachenko. Boundless, Pure Art, Paraska Plytka-Horytsvit. Overcoming Gravity*). The second line puts impact on the last three-four decades, including the transformation period, and began before Ostrovska-Lyuta took charge, but only after Maidan (*Oleksandr Hnylytsky. Reality of Illusion, Flashback. Ukrainian Media Art of the 1990s, Kirill Protsenko. Impassioned, Instant Time, Oleg Holosiy. Non-Stop Painting, Andriy Sahaidakovsky. Scenery. Welcome!*).

Ostrovska-Lyuta:

We understood the demand for contemporary art, but one that is already gone, the art of the 80s and 90s. The immediate past. Only in 2014 and 2015 it started to have this meaning of the heritage. After Maidan we had a strong feeling that the post-Soviet period really belongs to the past now. And everything that was created at that time becomes to belong to the past and heritage. So, we’ve decided to take care of that (Ostrovska-Lyuta 2021).

Finally, the three events commenting on Maidan, war in Donbas, and the current political situation in the country (*Event Horizon, Revolutionize, Obabich*). So, the shift in programming towards the same issues happens in both institutions at the same time. It is also connected to the change of people who are in charge, as well as the natural development, but what is striking, is that the topics that become so visible, were those that were an issue also before, as they come from the past, but were never (or hardly) addressed earlier. Lozhkina: “Maidan did not happen on the deserted land. The progressive ideas and values were already there, starting from late 2000s and visible in art centres. All the institutions were built then. Already Orange Revolution was extremely important for that (Lozhkina 2022).

Vaganova adds, that in Ukraine there were no big museum exhibitions in Ukraine about any period. The methods to work with the collections, museums, problems, concepts, and narratives have only been developing within the last years (Vaganova 2021). It seems, that the changes visible in Arsenal are an outcome of multiple factors, that were, however, deeply influenced by the country’s socio-political situation. Within years it became a platform, a place of contact, and a place of common exchange of ideas. Ostrovska-Lyuta: “I am a theorist of culture, and not an art historian, so I was trained to see the connections.



Therefore, my viewing was very much shaped by that, and it made an impact how to deal with Arsenal. I still think it was a right approach (started 6 years ago), and I still see a lot of potential in this interdisciplinarity (Ostrovska-Lyuta 2021).

## **VI. Summary**

Already in 1917, at the time of a struggle for the creation of an independent Ukrainian state, it was clear that art and culture institutions can be a valuable tool of support, that produce and maintain systems of knowledge. Today we also look towards museums to understand the nation's past, and towards contemporary art centres to see its present, and maybe even have a glimpse into the future. Thus, the lack of state-run centre for contemporary art is a huge deficiency, that is partially filled with the work of such institutions as PinchukArtCentre and Arsenal. With the still conservative art education, that leads to the teaching of safe, artisanal, and commonly accepted art practices, leaving no space for experiments of contemporary art, the PAC and Arsenal were, and still are, meaningful places in terms of the very presence of contemporary art. The two operational models, state and private, come with some benefits, and some shortcomings – state institution struggles with funding and lack of infrastructure, while the private one might be accused of the real motivation behind founding it. There is also a third way, briefly mentioned here – initiatives associated with artists and activists, such as ParCommune and the Visual Culture Research Center – they constitute, however, different topic, which should be examined separately. In an interview in 2013 curator and a former director of the Soros Art Centre in Kyiv, Jerzy Onuch, described the PAC as the “Dubai project”, which means:

To create artistic reality in Ukraine by importing art, artists, managers to the significant exclusion of their own capital. It is to base the construction of artistic reality on such a scheme, in which an adequate amount of money is enough. (...) If we speak of a breakthrough, then certainly the new generation has begun to integrate into the non-Ukrainian art world. However, there is still a longing to take shortcuts, not to take additional independent initiatives, since something in the mechanism of the functioning of art has already sparked since the late 1990s. There is a tendency to act on the principle: we will hire a great curator from abroad, let him do everything. But what's next, what's the result? (Laufer 2013).

It is an accurate observation of the institution in its first years. Interestingly, the same accusation is given to Arsenal and its first exhibitions – biennales and art reviews. The interview is given in 2013, so exactly before the significant changes that I am describing here. Onuch further describes, how Ukrainians do not try to engage in critical discussions, discover binding narratives, universal discourses. What is needed, he says, are painful processes of self-discovery (Laufer 2013). What was needed is decolonisation of memory and its complex relations with the past and history (Tlostanova 2017: 157), as well as decolonisation of knowledge, and I hope that this thesis, which brings closer understanding of Ukrainian contemporary art, is also a part of that. These are the processes that finally took place, and are still taking place, even more deliberately and intensely now, in the times of a full-scale war in the country.

## **VI.1. Back to history**

Eastern European identity politics caught in a paradoxical race to catch up between coming to terms with the past and a neoliberal imperative to reform. From her point of view, one thing is clear: the West has indulged in a colonial-style arrogance, denouncing Eastern Europe peoples' attempts of coming to terms with history as nationalistic – and thus depriving them of agency (Botanova 2022).

Ukraine of the beginning of the 21st century was still marked by historical amnesia, just like at the beginning of independence. The dreams of constructing the new Ukrainian-European identity, deprived of any Soviet accretions overwhelmed the social realm. Nikita Kadan: “Ukrainian Eurorenovation of the 2000s consisted of replaceable surfaces, drywall, and plastic. Eurorenovation is a self-identification through consumption, an expensive spectacle of representative democracy rapidly deteriorating in meaning, the euphoria of an ‘eternal today’, a plastic sheet of printed advertisement glued onto a granite of the Soviet metro...” (Franceschini 2015: 15). This pressure on the present, which promised new possibilities, was rapidly broken during events of 2013-2014. I remember Ukrainian writer and scholar Oleksandra Ivaniuk telling me many years ago, how incredible it is, how Poland is stuck in the past, while Ukraine cares only about the present. This atmosphere has changed. Art centres find themselves in the situation where they had to adapt to the new political circumstances.

As noticed by Dorota Kołodziejczyk, there is certainly an evident postcolonial sensitivity to be observed in the way Eastern Europe articulates its historicity and present in relation to Europe as such, as it conceptualizes the place of the region in the European project (Kołodziejczyk 2010: 33). In that sense Euromaidan was postcolonial revolution, as its main idea was manifestation of the longing of Ukrainians to be part of the European, and not the Russian world. Postcolonial condition, on the one hand, aims to settle accounts with the imperial history. On the other, the relation of Eastern Europe to its Western part, is also postcolonial, with the precognition that East is somehow the subaltern of the West, its poorest version, less politically and culturally developed (Kołodziejczyk 2010: 33). Numerous features describe the decolonisation processes and the point at which a place can be considered free of the colonial accretions, the most striking one being the restoration of values and principles, which are independent from the Soviet and Russian. They manifest in normative and cultural dimensions, which are key factors in gaining autonomy from the heritage of the colonial power. According to Yaroslav Pasko and Gennadiy Korzhov, who compared Polish and Ukrainian postcolonial communities after the vantage points (driving forces) of Polish Solidarity (1989) and Ukrainian Maidan (2014), the Ukrainian one did not learn their lesson. (Pasko and Korzhov 2020) The authors give two patterns of colonial dependency in Poland and Ukraine, the Ukrainian one being related to several deep cultural influences, such as the heritage of the imperial times and cultural and civilizational dependence stemming from the former metropole. They underline, that in this pattern the reflections about the future of the nation are missing (Pasko and Korzhov 2020: 26). In my 2020 article for the French magazine SwitchOnPaper about the aspects of memory politics in contemporary Ukrainian art, I have described briefly the idea of the *historiographical turn*.<sup>323</sup> It was first mentioned in 2009 by the art critic Dieter Roelstraete, as a phenomenon that took place in the visual arts at the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>324</sup> Roelstraete connects it to the unrest caused by the rise of terrorism, the 9/11, the 2003 US invasion in Iraq, and the general growth of fear and uncertainty of the modern world. He sees this turn into history within the escapist framework. A way to forget about the terrible world we live in, and to swim, instead, in the misty waters of the past. What is happening in the visual arts in Ukraine is, however, the complete opposite. There is nothing dreamy or aestheticizing in what Ukrainian artists propose. Although it might seem like it at first. Boris Groys mentions already in 2008, that: “The post-Communist subject travels the same route as described by the dominating discourse of cultural studies – but he or she travels this route in the opposite direction, not from the past to the future, but from the future to

the past; from the end of history (...) back to historical time. Post-Communist life is life lived backward, a movement against the flow of time” (Groys 2008: 154–5).

A phenomenon connected to the specific condition of the post-Socialist space, which previously was the sphere of destruction of history and heritage. In that sense, the historiographical turn in Ukraine is a natural condition, that can be placed within the theoretical frames proposed by some theoreticians. What is interesting, is that in both the art centres that I consider here, the main contemporary art institutions in the country, representing the private and public models, this turn is clearly visible only after the Maidan revolution – although some first signs might be traced earlier.

Anamnesis, a method in psychoanalysis described by a French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, is a concept which helps patients to associate current problems in their lives with the past events, and so to find hidden meanings and new associations.<sup>325</sup> An approach that inspired postcolonial scholars, Leela Gandhi and Homi Bhabha, to coin the term of the *therapeutic retrieval of the colonial past*, a method widely used in their practice. Accordingly, past should be re-visited, re-membered and questioned to understand better the current condition, and to heal. Healing means also accepting difficulties and the non-obvious instead of erasing it. The themes present in contemporary Ukrainian art, such as the Soviet past, the importance of memory, of myths, the problem of the devastated and removed Soviet monuments, are all in dialogue with the obscurity and the non-subjectivity of multiple narratives in the Soviet historiography. In a country full of the unwanted history, unwilling to accept it as it is, and come to terms with the fact that it is this very history that shaped what Ukraine is today, is a challenging quest. And thus, the recurring topics serve as re-gaining the images, so that they belong to those who were at some point deprived the possibility to own them. The narrations imposed by the imperial or colonial powers can be re-interpreted according to one’s own will, and the private memories are as valid, because the voice is now given to the people.

In this thesis my focus is not the post-coloniality itself, but rather the question about the decolonising processes and how (or if) they are manifesting themselves in the contemporary art spaces. Both art centres have experienced a massive change in the narrations of the exhibitions, as well as major program changes. The transformational practices take different form, depending on the model of the institution, but all of them bare common traits. The themes presented in exhibitions also confirm the theory of postcolonial healing, based on the emergence of the topics, which were earlier absent from the official narrations of the contemporary art spaces that I analyse here – although they were not

completely absent from the Ukrainian art sphere. In 2012 the National Art Museum of Ukraine presented the exhibition entitled *Myth. Ukrainian Baroque*, curated by Oksana Barshynova and Galyna Sklyarenko, which examined the history of Ukrainian art, including contemporary, from the “baroque perspective”. The baroque era and the model of culture developed back then have largely determined the features of the national consciousness and have been important to a great number of Ukrainian artists, prevailing the representatives of the so-called New Wave.

As was mentioned at the very beginning of this dissertation, many Ukrainian scholars remained sceptical or at least ambiguous about the postcolonial method I propose – something that has changed dramatically after the Russian invasion in February 2022, which led to a number of publications on the need of the postcolonial perspective on Ukrainian art (Badior 2022, Botanova 2022, Dostliev and Dostlieva 2022, Hrytsenko 2022, Iakovlenko 2022, Levchenko 2022, Moser 2022, Radynski 2022, Sheiko 2022).

“Colonialism is all about the recognition of a subject (...). So, for Ukraine it is an existential situation. Russia must see that Ukraine actually exists” (Democracy Now!, “Historian Timothy Snyder”). Therefore, all the topics that emerged around 2014 and are visible in the narratives - it is about Ukrainians seeing themselves from their own, and not the others, perspective.

## VII. Endnotes

1. “The War in Ukraine: A Community Conversation”, 9 March 2022, Harvard University.
2. Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, “War in Ukraine: A Community Conversation.” March 11, 2022; YouTube video, 1:50:18. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6CB3zpec6Y>
3. See also: Hans Kohn, “Dostoevsky’s Nationalism.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 6, No. 4 (Oct. 1945): 385-414.
4. In the winter of 2021-2022 the Russian Federation gathered troops and military equipment along the Ukrainian border in Russia, Belarus, and the territory of occupied Crimea. It was believed that Ukraine might be attacked in mid-February. The full-scale invasion started on the 24th of February 2022.
5. Although the concept itself is also criticised as being derogatory. See more: Marc Silver. “Memo To People of Earth: 'Third World' Is an Offensive Term!” *NPR*. Last modified January 8, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/01/08/954820328/memo-to-people-of-earth-third-world-is-an-offensive-term?t=1627564569231>.
6. See also: Bill Ashcroft “Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts”, or “Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction” by Robert J. C. Young.
7. Although in Russian-Ukrainian relations this one is not obvious, as in theory Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was equally part of the Soviet Union.
8. See also: Kołodziejczyk and Sandru 2012: 113.
9. “Imperialism is the policy of a country to influence other countries, colonialism is the practice of setting up colonies and settlements in other countries.” Betts, Jennifer, “Imperialism vs. Colonialism: Differences Made Clear.” *YourDictionary*. Accessed March 14, 2022. <https://examples.yourdictionary.com/imperialism-vs-colonialism-differences-made-clear>.
10. Stephen Velychenko, “The Issue of Russian Colonialism in Ukrainian Thought. Dependence, Identity, and Development.” *Ab Imperio*, no. 1 (2002): 323-367. Anton Saifullayev also mentions this problem in his article (Saifullayev 2015: 78-79).
11. Moore underlined that the societies of the former Soviet areas are extraordinarily postcolonial (Moore 2001).
12. Myroslav Shkandrij, who writes about the problem of colonialism through Ukrainian literature, notes that Ukraine already in 1812 was understood as a “historically contested territory whose cultural heritage required assimilation into narratives of empire” (Shkandrij 2011: 282).
13. Another interesting note that Snyder takes is the similarity in Russia’s ideological approach in the 1930s and in 2014, *marrying the colonial with decolonial* (Snyder 2015: 706). Earlier the Bolshevik state taking the colonial steps wanted to free the world from colonial-capitalist system. Today, bringing up the topic of American colonialism, *the international American conspiracy* (Snyder 2015: 706) and its influence in Europe, Russia colonially attacks Ukraine.
14. The difference between Soviet Union and the Western world colonies, where the nation states were created earlier, before colonisation, is that they could easier and faster come back to the pre-colonial state. Kuzio names two exceptions – Algeria and Ireland (Kuzio 2002: 242).
15. An idea valid up to this day, as can be seen in contemporary Russian politics towards these countries.

16. Vladimir Putin's 2021 article "On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians" proves the still existing imperial state of mind of Russia. (Domańska and Żochowski 2021)

17. A detailed description of the colonial character of the Soviet Union is also given by Moore. (Moore 2001: 123)

18. Democracy Now!, "Historian Timothy Snyder: Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Is a Colonial War." May 5, 2022; YouTube video, 15:20. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7d21K\\_csDds](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7d21K_csDds).

19. See also: "Already in April 2014 social scientists from several Ukrainian cities met in Kharkiv to discuss the new post-Maidan social realities, and only few of them (employed by the state police academy) resorted to the language of colonial dependence – and only to explain the motivation of separatists, not revolutionaries. (...) It is not only probably inaccurate to frame the evident political, economic, and especially cultural dependence of Ukraine and many Ukrainians on Russia in the recent past in colonial terms; more importantly, it seems that many Ukrainians find it offensive to even think of themselves as former 'colonials'" (Gerasimov 2014: 25).

20. Shkandrij makes an interesting point, that the notion of humiliation was something that hold scholars from different countries from examining their national traumas – like Ukraine's great famine of 1932-33 (Shkandrij 2009).

21. This theory is somehow criticised by Dorota Kołodziejczyk, who claims that the reasons for the reluctance to the postcolonial theory as a method to study post-Soviet countries is much more complicated than this. Kołodziejczyk mentions that in the 80s, when the postcolonial theory was formed, there were still an iron curtain that obstructed the flow of information. The language barrier was also an issue (Kołodziejczyk 2010: 22, 29).

22. Riabchuk proposes, that Ukrainian language can play the role of the "black skin" in the colonial discourse (Riabchuk 2021).

23. "Their authors have clearly demonstrated the colonial and postcolonial experiences of the Ukrainian people and their existence as the subaltern in the Russian and Soviet empires. It has been pointed out that 'Ukrainian society shows a remarkable similarity to other colonized societies, in terms of the patterns and syndromes already described and elaborated at length by Frantz Fanon' (Riabchuk, 2009: 8)." (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2017: 3).

24. Anton Saifullayeu also recognizes the postcolonial state of Eastern Europe in its condition of postdependence (Saifullayeu 2020: 11).

25. Kołodziejczyk analyses mainly the situation of Poland.

26. Author's translation from Polish.

27. On the other hand, Ilya Gerasimov writes that: "The concept of an anticolonial uprising makes sense when people rise against either direct or indirect alien rule (...)" (Gerasimov 2014: 25).

28. OUN – Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists; UPA – Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Both organizations connected with Ukrainian extreme nationalism, which Timothy Snyder calls "a marginal phenomenon in Western Ukraine" (Democracy Now!, "Historian Timothy Snyder").

29. Another scholar who believes that both, the colonised, and the coloniser, are affected by the colonial encounter and entangled in the cross-cultural dynamics, is Mary Louise Pratt (Pratt 1992:406, Gandhi 1998:131).

30. See: "Estetyka i narracje rewolucji na Majdanie wobec dyskursu postkolonialnego" (Sułek 2021a).

31. As described by Lyotard, it is a method in psychoanalysis, which helps patients to associate current problems in their lives with the past events, and so to find hidden meanings and new associations (Lyotard 1992:93, after Gandhi 1998:8).

32. According to Pasko national community is one of the markers of decolonization (Pasko and Korzhov 2020: 34).

33. The historical narratives started to be focused on the Ukraine's path to independence with its peak in 1991. The "Great Patriotic War", the Soviet narrative of the World War II, dated to the 1941-1945 (Hitler's invasion to the USSR) has also been criticized. For more see Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2017: 5.

34. Yushchenko posthumously awarded Stepan Bandera with the title Hero of Ukraine in 2010.

35. On the 22nd of February 2014, when the parliament voted for the impeachment of Viktor Yanukovich.

36. If not stated differently, all translations by the author.

37. To read more about the narratives in the streets of Kyiv during the Euromaidan and after see Sułek 2018b, 88-108, and Sułek 2020a and 2020b.

38. Viatrovych used to be the head of the Lviv based Centre of Research of the Liberation Movement, an institution created in 2008, that is during the Kuchma's government and his policy of nationalisation.

39. "The law on granting access to the archives of the repressive institutions of the Communist totalitarian regime 1918–1991" (VRU 2015c).

40. "The law on the commemoration of the victory over Nazism in the Second World War 1939–1945" (VRU 2015b).

41. Yurii Shukhevych is the son of Roman Shukhevych, a military leader of UPA – Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

42. "The law on the status and commemoration of the fighters for the independence of Ukraine in the 20th century" (VRU 2015d).

43. "The law on the condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and a ban on the propaganda of their symbols" (VRU 2015a).

For example, Dnipropetrovsk was changed to Dnipro. Until 1926 it was known under the name of Katerynoslav, and then renamed after the Soviet revolutionary Grigory Petrovsky. The name was changed to Dnipro in 2016.

44. An open letter to President Petro Poroshenko and to the Chairman of Verkhovna Rada, Volodymyr B. Hroysman, was published by a group of Ukrainian and international scholars, who requested to withdraw the laws, that violate the freedom of speech (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2017: 11). Also, a special commission of experts advised the president to not sign the laws, which were, however signed without any alterations.

45. Центр сучасного мистецтва Сороса (Soros Center for Contemporary Art, SCCA). The SCCA was closed in 2008.

46. Marta Kuzma, the first director of SCCA. She was replaced by Jerzy Onuch in 1997.

47. For more see: Victor Pinchuk Foundation Website, [https://pinchukfund.org/en/?clear\\_cache=Y](https://pinchukfund.org/en/?clear_cache=Y).

48. Such as Sarah Morris, Olafur Eliasson, Oleg Kulik, Olexandr Gnilytsky, Carsten Holler, Arsen Savadov. Names given by Kseniya Dmitrenko (Dmitrenko 2007 A10: 30).

49. The information from the PAC website from the end of the 2019. <http://new.pinchukartcentre.org/en/about>.

50. According to the PAC official new website: <http://new.pinchukartcentre.org/en/about>.



51. According to his official LinkedIn profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/bj%C3%B6rn-geldhof-49a0277?originalSubdomain=ua>.

52. Gelman was also a political consultant of Viktor Yanukovych during the Orange Revolution. In 1990 he opened Gelman Gallery in Moscow, one of the first Russian private contemporary art galleries, that run until 2012. In 2008 he became the head of the PERMM – Perm Museum of Contemporary Art and held this position until 2013.

53. “Legalizatsiya”, *Vlast’ Den’g*, no.51-52, 2006, 3.

54. For more see: Droitcour 2012 and Harris 2012. The installations followed Olafur Eliasson’s exhibition *Your Emotional Future* at the PAC in Spring 2011.

55. For more see: Schmidt and Haberman 2018.

56. “A source close to Pinchuk, who asked not to be named, sheds further light on the billionaire’s motivations. Pinchuk’s father-in-law, Leonid Kuchma, had been implicated in the murder in 2000 of the investigative journalist, Georgiy Gongadze (Kuchma was finally charged with involvement in the killing earlier this year. He denies the charge and says it is politically motivated). The family was battered by bad headlines and Pinchuk hired a PR company based in Paris to help. One of their recommendations was to buy art and put it on public display” (Ruiz 2011).

57. “In 2013, Britain’s Telegraph revealed that he had donated 320,000 pounds to the Tony Blair Faith Foundation. He became a major donor to the Atlantic Council, one of the most prominent U.S. think tanks. The council reports his foundation as having given between USD 250,000 and USD 499,999 in 2018 alone, and he sits on the organization’s international advisory board” (Hess 2020).

58. The opening is planned for 2023. For more about the Ukrainian oligarchs and their enterprises see Kowal 2013.

59. Pinchuk’s steel tube company Interpipe Corp is tied to trade with Russia (Soldak 2014).

60. Pinchuk’s foundation Worldwide Studies supports the Ukrainians to obtain a Master’s degree programs on the international universities. There is also a programme called Zavtra.UA held by the Victor Pinchuk Foundation, which is the largest private scholarship programme in Ukraine. The Foundation is also responsible for the creation of the Kyiv School of Economics.

61. *Reflection*, 6 October 2007–24 February 2008, participating artists: Serhiy Bratkov, Peter Doig, Ilya Chichkan & Blue Noses, Antony Gormley, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Oleg Kulik, Jeff Koons, Christian Marclay, Sarah Morris, Takashi Murakami, Gabriel Orozco, Richard Phillips, Marc Quinn, Arsen Savadov, Sam Taylor-Wood, Oleg Tistol, Vasyl Tsagolov, Piotr Uklanski.

62. However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century elite culture often gave even greater honour to the Good Citizen – the public-spirited individual who sacrificed his desire for personal aggrandizement to enrich the holdings – and presumably, thereby advance the educational mission – of public institutions. Of course, giving spiritual treasures to the public in any form could bring a certain kind of social-moral credit to men who might have had a special need to repair their public image or (admittedly, what is less likely) salve a bad social conscience (Duncan 1995: 82-83).

63. I do not take into consideration commercial art galleries and foundations, only art centers with public exhibitions and/or education programmes or collection that is available for a public view.

64. In the second half of the 19th century, Ukrainian sugar plants produced over three million pods of sugar per annum, which was nearly 80 percent of the empire’s total production. Moreover, half of all sugar refineries (a fashionable technological innovation

of the time) in the Russian Empire were in Ukraine. Despite some owners going bankrupt, total output increased. Small and medium-sized enterprises were replaced by gigantic plants which used new imported equipment and were located close to railway branch lines. By the beginning of the 20th century, the number of sugar plants fell by about 33 percent, while sugar production increased almost fivefold. (Sokyrko 2012)

65. Erected 1874-1879, destroyed in 1941 during the Khreschatyk explosions, when the Red Army was retreating before the Germans, setting the booby traps, enabling the Germans to set up their administration in the buildings (Cybriwsky 2016: 157).

66. Owner of the 20 refineries which produced 25% of sugar consumed in the Russian empire (Cybriwsky 2016: 155).

67. Sholom Aleichem (1859-1916) was a Yiddish writer and playwright, author of the *Fiddler on the Roof*.

68. The complex was sold by Firtash's DF Group to Ukrainian oligarch Sergiy Tigipko.

69. Polish historian of architecture Maciej Czarnecki has confirmed that the facades and some interiors are at least partially original (Czarnecki 2020).

70. The official website of the A.V. Koval bureau calls it the "Reconstruction of the Bessarabian quarter in Kyiv, shopping, and entertainment centre 'Arena', gallery PinchukArtCentre, 2003-2005." (Akoval.com.ua, n.d.)

71. Translated from Russian by the author.

72. Solpol is currently in the process of being demolished (March 2022).

73. Although it is known, that at some point Pinchuk wanted to erase a new building dedicated for the art centre (Ruiz 2011).

74. The other two being Pechersk and Podil.

75. Plans that most probably changed due to the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022.

76. "The crowd at the opening were Versace-inspired, with more bling and fetishist high heels than at the Oscars. Bentley cars have a showroom in Kiev, but most people use the subway, where tickets cost the equivalent of a dime" (Somers Cocks 2006).

77. Exhibition was entitled *Contemporary Art in Ukraine* and took place in the Papadopoli Palace. Curator: Nicolas Bourriaud. The show presented Ukrainian artists as well as works by foreigners like Elafur Eliasson or Philippe Parreno (Turchak 2018: 294). Participating artists: Arsen Savadov, Boris Mykhailov, Vasiliy Tsagolov, Philippe Parreno, Navin Rawanchaikul, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, Carsten Höller, Olafur Eliasson.

78. Which is also put on display.

79. His private at-home collection consists of mainly late 19th and early 20th century art (Somers Cocks 2006).

80. "What saves Pinchuk's collection from being a museum of Jay Jopling is that the Ukrainian has started to widen his scope. He says he now prefers to buy directly from artists, rather than dealers, and he has started to add several Chinese works to his collection" (Ruiz 2011).

81. At some point he was said to buy only from Joplin, and to have spent with the White Cube Gallery around USD 180 million (Ruiz 2011).

82. *New Space*, September 16, 2006, curators Nicolas Bourriaud (France), Oleksandr Soloviov (Ukraine).

83. Claire Staebler, also curator at Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2002-2007) was later appointed artistic director of the PinchukArtCentre in Kyiv, Ukraine (2007-2009).

84. 19 January–25 March 2007, curators: Peter Doroshenko and Olexandr Soloviov.

85. This word appears again and again in the exhibition catalogue (PinchukArtCentre 2007).

86. *Vik Muniz: A Survey*, 14 April–20 May 2007, curator Claire Staebler.
87. *An Instinctive Eye: A Selection of Contemporary Photographs from the Sir Elton John Collection*, 16 June–12 August 2007, participating artists: Edward Burtynsky, Chuck Close, Gregory Crewdson, Philip-Lorca DiCorcia, Rineka Dijkstra, Anthony Goicolea, Nan Goldin, Katy Grannan, David Hilliard, Zhang Huan, David LaChapelle, Loretta Lux, Sally Mann, Ryan McGinley, Richard Misrach, Tracey Moffatt, Luiz Gonzalez Palma, Matthew Pillsbury, Angela Strassheim, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Sam Taylor Wood, Ruud van Empel, Angela West, Charlie White. More: <http://pinchukartcentre.org/en/exhibitions/7438>.
88. *Reflection*, 6 October 2007–24 February 2008, participating artists: Serhiy Bratkov, Peter Doig, Illya Chichkan & Blue Noses, Antony Gormley, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Oleg Kulik, Jeff Koons, Christian Marclay, Sarah Morris, Takashi Murakami, Gabriel Orozco, Richard Phillips, Marc Quinn, Arsen Savadov, Sam Taylor-Wood, Oleg Tistol, Vasyl Tsagolov, Piotr Uklanski. Curator: Oleksandr Soloviov. More: <http://pinchukartcentre.org/en/exhibitions/7155>.
89. The title refers to Alexander Dovzhenko 1958 movie of the same title.
90. “The Venice Biennale” – Ukraine Pavilion, Palazzo Papadopoli, San Polo 1364 – 30125 Venezia, 10 June–21 November 2007, participating artists: Serhiy Bratkov (UA), Alexander Hnilitsky/Lesia Zaiats (UA), Boris Mikhailov (UA), Juergen Teller (D), Mark Titchner (UK), Sam Taylor-Wood (UK) and Dzine (USA). Curator Peter Doroshenko.
91. Mariko Mori, *Oneness*, 12 April–15 June 2008.
92. *Paul McCartney. Paintings*, 17 June–13 July 2008.
93. *Patriotism. Art as Present*, 28 September–2 November 2008.
94. Революційний Експериментальний Простір – Revolutionary Experimental Space.
95. For more see Hołda 2008, Brożyński 2012.
96. SOSka, *Dreamers*, 14 November–12 December 2008, curator Oleksandr Soloviov.
97. R.E.P. in 2004, SOSka in 2005.
98. *Rhine on the Dnipro: Julia Stoschek Collection/Andreas Gursky*, 28 September–14 December 2008.
99. *Keita Sugiura. Dark Forrest*, 17 November 2008–1 March 2009.
100. *Sam Taylor-Wood. Solo Exhibition*, 17 January–1 March 2009.
101. *Damien Hirst, Requiem*, 25 April–20 September 2009.
102. *21 RUSSIA*, 17 January–1 March 2009, curator Oleksander Soloviov.
103. *Red Forest*, 31 October–20 December 2009.
104. *Steppes of Dreamers*, Ukrainian Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale, Illya Chichkan, Mihara Yasuhiro, curator Wladimir Klitschko. The exhibition opening was accompanied by the show of the pop-drag-performer Verka Serduchka.
105. “PinchukArtCentrePrize”, 31 October–20 December 2009, participating artists: Myroslav Vayda, Artem Volokitin, Andrii Galashyn, Hamlet Zinkovskiy, Mykyta Kadan, Zhanna Kadyrova, Mayya Kolesnik, Volodymyr Kuznetsov, Lada Nakonechna, Oksana Protsenko, Oleksii Saj, Oleksii Salmanov, Olesia Khomenko, Oleksii Khoroshko, Ivan Chubukov, Masha Shubina, BLUEMOLOKO, Hat, SOSka and SYN groups; curator Olexander Soloviov.
106. Currently, in 2021. In 2013 it was UAH 100,000.
107. Sergey Bratkov, *Ukraine*, 23 January–21 March 2010
108. *Sexuality and Transcendence*, 24 April–19 September 2010, participating artists: AES+F, Matthew Barney, Louise Bourgeois, Maurizio Catellan, Illya Chichkan, Elmgreen & Dragset, Jan Fabre, Jenny Holzer, Anish Kapoor, Jeff Koons, Sarah Lucas,

Paul McCarthy, Annette Messenger, Boris Mikhailov, Takashi Murakami, Richard Prince, Tino Sehgal, Cindy Sherman, Hiroshi Sugimoto; curator Olexander Soloviov.

109. Takashi Murakami, 30 October 2010–09 January 2011, curator Eckhard Schneider.

110. Other artists presenting at YES were Jeff Koons, Jakob Steensen, Olafur Eliason, and Damien Hirst.

111. Eckhard Schneider: “Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Andreas Gursky and Takashi Murakami are Mentor Artists for the Future Generation Art Prize, providing advice and support for the winning artist. According to the concept of the Prize one of the Mentor artists has a parallel show at the same time as exhibition of the 21 shortlisted artists of the Future Generation Art Prize” (PinchukArtCenter 2012).

112. “21 Shortlisted Artists of the Future Generation Art Prize”, 30 October 2010–09 January 2011, participating artists: Ziad Antar, Lebanon; Fikret Atay, Turkey; Fei Cao, China; Keren Cytter, Israel; Nathalie Djurberg, Sweden; Simon Fujiwara, United Kingdom; Nicholas Hlobo, South Africa; Clemens Hollerer, Austria; Runo Lagomarsino, Sweden; Cinthia Marcelle, Brazil; Gareth Moore, Canada; Mircea Nicolae, Romania; Ruben Ochoa, United States; Wilfredo Prieto, Cuba; Katerina Seda, Czech Republic; Guido van der Werve, Netherlands; Nico Vascellari, Italy, Jorinde Voigt, Germany; Artem Volokytin, Ukraine; Emily Wardill, United Kingdom; Hector Zamora, Mexico. The winner was Mircea Nicolae.

113. The artists participating in this project also receive budgets for new works.

114. Vasyl Tsagolov, *Fear Has Many Eyes*, PAC-UA, 12 February–13 March 2011.

115. Arsen Savadov, *Blow-Up*, PAC-UA, 21 May–26 June 2011.

116. Oleksandr Roytburg, *If There is No Water Running From Your Tap*, PAC-UA, 29 October–27 November 2011.

117. Illya Chichkan, Psyfox, *Backside Entrance To the Museum*, 7 December 2011–8 January 2012.

118. *Collection Platform 1: Circulation*, 12 February–2 October 2011, participating artists: Sergey Bratkov, Cecily Brown, Illya Chichkan, Gregory Crewdson, Peter Doig, Tracey Emin, Oleksandr Hnylytskyi, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Gary Hume, Jeff Koons, Oleg Kulik, Boris Mikhailov, Julie Mehretu, Takashi Murakami, Richard Prince, Oleksandr Roitburd, Thomas Ruff, Arsen Savadov, Robert Therrien, Sam Taylor Wood, Jeff Wall.

119. *Collection Platform 2: Circulation*, 29 October 2011–1 April 2012, participating artists: Banksy, Maurizio Cattelan, Chuck Close, Olafur Eliasson, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Oleg Kulik, Liza Lou, Boris Mikhailov, Takashi Murakami, Richard Phillips, Marc Quinn, Thomas Ruff, Sam Taylor-Wood, Oleg Tistol, Fred Tomaselli, Vasiliy Tsagolov.

120. Damian Ortega, *Tool Bit*, 12 February–17 April 2011.

121. Candice Breitz, *You+I*, 12 February–17 April 2011.

122. Olafur Eliasson, *Your Emotional Future*, 21 May–2 October 2011.

123. Exhibition of the 20 shortlisted artists for the PinchukArtCentre Prize 2011, 29 October 2011–8 January 2012, participating artists: Daniil Galkin, Andriy Halashyn, Dobrynia Ivanov, Mykyta Kadan, Zhanna Kadyrova, Taras Kamennoy, Olesia Khomenko, Alina Kleitman, Volodymyr Kuznetsov, Lada Nakonechna, Serhiy Petlyuk, Serhiy Radkevych, Stepan Riabchenko, Mykola Ridnyi, Mykyta Shalennyi, Masha Shubina, Natasha Shulte, Ivan Svitlychnyi, Hamlet Zinkovskyi, Salmanov-Kornienko group (Oleksiy Salmanov, Dmytro Koronienko); curator Björn Geldhof.

124. Future Generation Art Prize, Pallazzo Papadopoli, Venice, 1 June–7 August 2011, participating artists: Ziad Antar, Lebanon; Fikret Atay, Turkey; Cao Fei, China; Keren

Cytter, Israel; Nathalie Djurberg, Sweden; Nicholas Hlobo, South Africa; Clemens Hollerer, Austria; Runo Lagomarsino, Sweden; Cinthia Marcelle, Brazil; Mircea Nicolae, Romania; Ruben Ochoa, United States; Wilfredo Prieto, Cuba; Katerina Seda, Czech Republic; Guido van der Werve, Netherlands; Nico Vascellari, Italy, Jorinde Voigt, Germany; Artem Volokytin, Ukraine; Emily Wardill, United Kingdom; Hector Zamora, Mexico; curator Björn Geldhof; commissioner: Eckhard Schneider.

125. *Transfer*, the exchange program of Polish and Ukrainian artists was indeed quite politically engaged, with some projects considering work conditions, violence, history, reflections on Soviet utopia. The same can be said about the PAC-UA shows of 2012 by Zhanna Kadyrova and Mykola Matsenko.

126. The exhibitions in Warsaw were presented between the 5th of June and the 12th of August, while those in Kyiv between the 28th of August and the 30th of September.

127. *Beauty*, Gary Hume, 4 February–1 April 2012, curator Björn Geldhof. It was the first exhibition of Hume in Eastern Europe.

128. Jeff Wall, *In Light, Black, Colour, White, and Dark*, 4 February–1 April 2012, curator Björn Geldhof. It was the first exhibition of Wall in Eastern Europe.

129. Anish Kapoor, solo exhibition, 19 May–30 September 2012, curator Björn Geldhof.

130. Damien Hirst, *Two Weeks One Summer*, 3 November 2012–13 January 2013, curator Björn Geldhof. The exhibition of the Mentor Artist of the Future Generation Art Prize.

131. Mykola Matsenko, *Neofolk*, 4 February–1 April 2012, curator Björn Geldhof.

132. Pavlo Makov, *Blanket, Garden, Tower, Cross, Fate*, 19 May–17 June 2012, curator Björn Geldhof.

133. Zhanna Kadyrova, *Crowd*, 27 June–19 August 2012, curator Björn Geldhof.

134. *Collection Platform 3: Forever Now*, 19 May–13 January 2013, participating artists: Maurizio Cattelan, Olafur Eliasson, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Boris Mikhailov, Takashi Murakami, the winner of the first edition of the PinchukArtCentre Prize Artem Volokytin, the winner of the Future Generation Art Prize Cinthia Marcelle.

135. *Collection Platform 4: Emotion and Technology*, 17 May–5 October 2012, participating artists: Sergey Bratkov, Ilyya Chichkan, Olafur Eliasson, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Carsten Höller, Martin Kobe, Gregory Crewdson, Julie Mehretu, Boris Mikhailov, Vik Muniz, Richard Prince, Marc Quinn, Thomas Ruff, Juergen Teller, Vasyil Tsagolov, Xavier Veilhan.

136. Serhiy Bratkov, *The Good Buys the Evil*, 27 March–21 April 2013, curator Björn Geldhof.

137. Tony Oursler, *Agentic Iced Etcetera*, 16 February–21 April 2013.

138. Jake & Dinos Chapman, *Chicken*, 16 February–21 April 2013.

139. Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *Verses*, 2 November 2013–5 January 2014.

140. *China China*, 18 May–6 October 2013, participating artists: Ai Weiwei, Cao Fei, Chen Zhen, Sun Xun, Sun Yuan & Peng Yu, Xu Zhen, Yan Xing, Yang Fudong, Zhang Huan, Zhao Yao, Zhao Zhao; curator: Björn Geldhof.

141. “The Future Generation Art Prize @ Venice 2013”, participating artists: Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (UK), Jonatas di Andrade (Brazil), Micol Assael (Italy), Ahmet Ogut (Turkey), Ryan Tabet (Lebanon), Marwa Arsanios (Lebanon), Meris Angioletti (Italy), E bigail Deville (USA), Aurelien Frohman (France), Nikita Kadan (Ukraine), Meiro Koizumi (Japan), André Komatsu (Brazil), Eva Kotatkova (Czech Republic), Tala Madani (Iran), Basim Magdi (Egypt), Amalia Pica (Argentina), Agnieszka Polska (Poland), Emily Roysdon (USA), Jan Xin (China), Joan Maria Guzman + Pedro Paiva (Portugal) and R.E.P. (Ukraine); curator: Björn Geldhof, Palazzo Contarini Polignac, Venice, Italy.

142. Exhibition of the 20 shortlisted artists for the PinchukArtCentre Prize 2013, 2 November 2013–5 January 2014, participating artists: Yevgenia Belorusets, Anatoly Belov, Daniil Galkin, Oleg Gryshchenko, Andriy Hir, Dobrynya Ivanov, Zhanna Kadyrova, Olesia Khomenko, Alina Kopitsya, Mariia Kulykivska, Oleksandr Kurmaz, Roman Minin, Lada Nakonechna, Mykola Ridnyi, Ivan Svitlychnyi, Volodymyr Vorotniiov, Anna Zvyagintseva, Melnychuk-Burlaka Group, Open Group, and Synchrondogs. The main prize went to Zhanna Kadrova. Curator: Björn Geldhof

143. *Where There's a Will, There's a Way*, a joint exhibition of the AntiAIDS Foundation and the PinchukArtCentre, 16 November 2013–13 April 2014, participating artists: Damien Hirst, Nan Goldin, Félix González-Torres, Ai Weiwei, Sergiy Bratkov, Ilya Chichkan, Tony Oursler; curator: Björn Geldhof.

144. Daria Bezakosta, *Inspired by Life*, the winner of the Victor Pinchuk Foundation “Pride of the Country 2012”, 25 September–6 October 2013.

145. *Jan Fabre. Tribute to Hiëronymus Bosch in Congo (2011-2013)*, 7 February–5 October 2014, curator Björn Geldhof. The show reflected on Belgium's colonial past.

146. “21 Artists Shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize 2014”, 25 October 2014–19 April 2015. Participating artists: Neil Beloufa, Rossella Biscotti, James Bridle, Kudzanai Chiurai, Cécile B. Evans, Aslan Gaisumov, Ximena Garrido-Lecca, He Xiangyu, Jia Aili, Nikita Kadan, Zhanna Kadyrova, Mauricio Limón, Adrian Melis, Nástio Mosquito, Carlos Motta, Pilar Quinteros, Jon Rafman, Cally Spooner, Allyson Vieira, GCC, Public Movement.

147. *(De-)Construction. Reality & Fiction – Pierre Huyghe, Diana Thater, Christian Marclay*, 7 February–19 April 2014, curator Björn Geldhof. The show included Thater's “Chernobyl” 2011 video installation about the nuclear disaster zone in Ukraine.

148. *Collection Platform 4: Emotion and Technology*, 17 May–5 October 2014, participating artists: Sergey Bratkov, Ilya Chichkan, Olafur Eliasson, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Carsten Höller, Martin Kobe, Gregory Crewdson, Julie Mehretu, Boris Mikhailov, Vik Muniz, Richard Prince, Marc Quinn, Thomas Ruff, Juergen Teller, Vasyl Tsagolov, Xavier Veilhan.

149. *Contemporary Ukrainian Artists and the Panston Chair*, 7 February–30 March 2014, participating artists: Artem Volokitin, Igor Gusiev, Oleksandr Zhyvotkov, Alina Kopitsya, Pavlo Kerestey, Oleksandr Klymenko, Anatoliy Kryvolap, Pavlo Makov, Mykola Matsenko, Roman Minin, Vinni Reunov, Viktor Sydorenko, Marina Skugarieva, Taisha 3.14, Oleg Tistol, Vasyl Tsagolov, Mykyta Shalennyi. Project in cooperation with DAVIS company.

150. Alevtina Kakhidze, *TV Studios / Rooms Without Doors*, 17 May–30 June 2014.

151. Open Group, *Biography*, 10 July–24 August 2014, curators: Björn Geldhof, Tatiana Kochubinska.

152. Ivan Svitlychnyi, *Subimage*, 11 September–5 October 2014.

153. *Fear and Hope*, 17 May–5 October 2014, participating artists: Nikita Kadan, Zhanna Kadyrova, Artem Volokitin, curator Björn Geldhof.

154. I write wider about this exhibition here: Sulek 2018b.

155. Since the beginning of Maidan several art works emerged with a great number of Ukrainian artists being personally and artistically engaged in the events in Maidan. For more see Sulek: 2018a.

156. Removed in 2015 and after because of the introduction of the decommunization laws, but Kadan's work dates from 2012-2014.

157. *Hope!*, Pavilion of Ukraine, 56th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, 8 May–2 August 2018, participating artists: Yevgenia Belorusets, Nikita Kadan,

Zhanna Kadyrova, Mykola Ridnyi & Serhiy Zhadan, Artem Volokitin, Anna Zvyagintseva, Open Group; commissioner: Ministry of Culture of Ukraine; curator: Björn Geldhof.

158. Geldhof: “To work in a beautiful old palazzo seemed wrong now since the country is fighting to renew itself.

Instead, we propose a temporal, completely transparent glass pavilion on the Riva dei Sette Martiri. It expresses, as our title, *Hope!* for a new Ukraine, a Ukraine that is transparent and is reaching out to the world” (ArtReview 2015).

159. “Inside, the Open Group collective is presenting a young artist on hunger strike, sitting at a table with a water jug and a glass and staring at nine live video feeds showing the homes of Ukrainian soldiers who have been drafted. Whenever a soldier returns from the front, the artist ends his hunger strike, and another takes over” (Nayeri 2015).

160. *First Acquisitions*, participating artists: Olafur Eliasson, Carsten Höller, Boris Mikhailov, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, Philippe Parreno, Navin Rawanchaikul, Arsen Savadov, Vasily Tsaholov, curator Nicolas Bourriaud, Palazzo Papadopoli, Venice.

161. Mariia Kulykivska: “It was this huge institution built by a rich guy to show only stars from the West” (Gratza 2016).

162. Zinaïda Lihacheva, *Mute*, 30 May–4 October 2015.

163. Feminist approaches alongside the problems of the LGBTQ community in Ukraine started making their appearance in Ukrainian contemporary art more often after 2014. It is a phenomenon that so far was not researched, it is only a feeling that I have and share with others whom I interviewed for this thesis (ex. Ksenia Malykh and Olha Shyshlova, interviewed in August 2021). For more see: Channell-Justice 2020.

164. *Borderline. Ukrainian Art 1985-2004*, 30 May–4 October 2015, participating artists: Sergey Bratkov, Oksana Chepeylyk, Illya Chichkan, Oleg Golosiy, Yuri Leiderman, Pavlo Makov, Masoch Fund, Boris Mikhailov, Natsprom, Vlada Ralko, Alexander Roitburd, Jury Rupin, Andrii Sahaidakovsky, Arsen Savadov, Georgiy Senchenko, Oleg Tistol, Vasiliy Tsagolov, Leonid Voitsekhov; curators: Björn Geldhof, Tatiana Kochubinska.

165. Exhibition of the shortlisted artists for the PinchukArtCentre Prize 2015, 31 October 2015–17 April 2016, participating artists: Yevgenia Belorusets, Daniil Galkin, Mykola Karabinovych, Alina Kleitman, Daria Koltsova, Kinder Album, Sergii Melnychenko, Roman Mykhailov, Sergiy Petlyuk, Mykola Ridnyi, Ivan Svitlychnyi, Sergiy Yakimenko, Katerina Yermolaeva, Anna Zvyagintseva, Melnychuk-Burlaka Group, Open Group (Yuri Bieliey, Pavlo Kovach, Anton Varga); curator Tatiana Kochubinska.

166. The theme of the war on monuments is nothing new, however. Only the scope has changed. Already in 2009, the work by Nikita Kadan (*Pedestal. Praticce of Exclusion* 2009-2011) was commenting this post-Soviet phenomenon in Ukraine. Kadan and his work were awarded the main PinchukArtCentre Prize in 2011. The work was bought in 2021 by Centre Pompidou, only after Kadan’s solo exhibition at the PAC. The work will become part of the 2022 exhibition *Ukraine at Pompidou* (Vogue.ua 2021).

167. Carlos Motta, *Patriots, Citozens, Lovers...*, 31 October 2015–17 April 2016, curator Björn Geldhof.

168. Kateryna Iakovlenko, researcher and curator: “The war could become an impulse to promote research on Ukrainian art” (Iakovlenko 2021).

169. Lada Nakonechna, *Exhibition*, 21 May–4 September 2016, curator Anna Smolak.

170. Research Platform: *Transformation*, 21 May–2 October 2016, participating artists: Oleg Golosiy, Edouard Kolodiy, Oleksandr Roitburd, Vasyl Tsagolov, Illya

Chichkan, Svitlana Martynchik & Ihor Stiopin, Institution of Unstable Thoughts (Oleksandr Hnylytsky and Lesja Zajac); curator Tatiana Kochubinska.

171. Research Platform: *Guilt*, 21 May–2 October 2016, participating artists: Sergey Bratkov, Nikita Kadan, Alevtina Kakhidze, Yuri Leiderman, Mykola Ridnyi, Lesia Khomenko, Fast Reaction Group, Masoch Fund; curator Tatiana Kochubinska; co-curator Björn Geldhof.

172. It is important to discern that these kinds of questions were put by artists before but were not recognised within the curatorial narrations of the institution.

173. *Loss: In Memory of Babi Yar*, 21 May 2016–15 January 2017, participating artists: Christian Boltanski, Nerlinde de Bruyckere, Jenny Holzer; curator Björn Geldhof.

174. I am describing this exhibition in more detail in an article for the Wilson Center. (Sulek 2021).

175. Jewish topics has been recently present in works of such Ukrainian artists as Nikita Kadan, Dana Kavelina or Yaroslav Futymyskyi.

176. *PARCOMMUNE. Place. Community. Phenomenon*, 20 October 2016–15 January 2017, curators: Tatiana Kochubinska, Ksenia Malykh.

177. Artists had to form groups to support themselves in the face of almost non-existent commercial and institutional art environment.

178. *The Marble Angles With Bows Were Shaking in Shadows Their Small Penises, Bending Their Bows and Carelessly Laughed at Death*, Sasha Kurmaz, 22 December 2016–15 January 2017, curator Tatiana Kochubinska.

179. Exhibition of *21 Artists Shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize 2017*, 25 February–16 April 2017, participating artists: Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Iván Argote, Firelei Báez, Dineo Seshee Bopape, Phoebe Boswell, Vivian Caccuri, Sol Calero, Asli Çavuşoğlu, Vajiko Chachkhiani, Carla Chaim, Christian Falsnaes, EJ Hill, Andy Holden, Li Ran, Ibrahim Mahama, Rebecca Moss, Sasha Pirogova, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Martine Syms, Kemang Wa Lehulere, Open Group; curator Anna Smolak. The same group of artists participated in the Future Generation Art Prize @ Venice 2017, 11 May–13 August 2017, curators Björn Geldhof, Anna Smolak, Palazzo Contarini Polignac, Dorsoduro 874, Venice, Italy.

180. *Research Platform: Versus*, in the context of PAC-UA Re-Consideration, 17 June–15 October 2017, participating artists: Yulia Golub, Zina Isupova, Alina Kleytman, Aleksandr Kutovoy, Anna Rotayenko, Dmitry Starushev; curator Sergey Bratkov.

181. Research Platform: *Motherland on Fire*, intervention by Concrete Dates Collective, 17 June–15 October 2017, participating artists: Serhiy Bratkov, Volodymyr Kozhukhar, Eduard Kolodiy, Mykola Matsenko, Boris Mikhailov, Georgiy Senchenko, Illya Chichkan and group Peppers (Oleg Petrenko and Liudmyla Skrypkina), Concrete Dates Collective; curator Tatiana Kochubinska.

182. Research Platform: Anna Zvyagintseva, *Misplaced Touches*, in the context of PAC-UA, 27 October 2017–6 January 2018, curator Tatiana Kochubinska.

183. Research Platform: Fedir Tetyanych, *Canon Fripulia*, 17 June–15 October 2017, invited curator Valeriy Sakharuk, co-curator Tatiana Kochubinska.

184. Research Platform: *Anonymous Society*, 27 October 2017–6 January 2018, participating artists: Sergei Anufriev, Yevgenia Beloruset, Sergey Bratkov, Oleksandr Chekmenev, Oksana Chepelyk, Zhanna Kadyrova, Victor Palmov, Evgeny Pavlov, Serhiy Popov, Kirill Protsenko, Roman Pyatkovka, Larisa Rezun-Zvezdochetova, Oleksandr Roitburd, Vasyl Tsagolov, Leonid Voitsekhov; curator Tatiana Kochubinska.

185. *Fragile State*, 17 June 2017–6 January 2018, participating artists: Marina Abramovic, Jan Fabre, Urs Fischer, Douglas Gordon, Damien Hirst, Carlos Motta, Oscar Murillo, Santiago Sierra, Barthelemy Toguo and Ai Weiwei; curator Björn Geldhof.



186. Research Platform: Lesia Khomenko, *Perspektyvna*, in the context of PAC-UA, 23 June–9 December 2018, curator Ksenia Malykh.

187. Research Platform: *Red Book: Soviet Art in Lviv in 80s-90s*, 23 June–7 October 2018, participating artists: Boris Berger, Stas Horskyi, Halyna Zhehulska, Oleksandr Zamkovskiy, Oleksii Iutin, Mykola Kumanovskiy, Illia Levin, Iryna Nirod, Ihor Podolchak, Platon Silvestrov, Rostyslav Silvestrov, Iurii Sokolov, Volodymyr Surmach, Bronislav Tutelman, Mykola Filatov, Ivan Frank, Mykhailo Frantsuzov, Ihor Shuliev, Iurii Shcherbatenko, Myroslav Iahoda, Myroslav Iaremak, Serhiy Yakunin; Invited curators: Stanislav Silantiev and Halyna Khorunzha; founders of the First Jean Jaures Proletarian Reserve curatorial group.

188. *A Space of One's Own*, 30 October 2018–6 January 2019, participating artists: Yevgenia Beloruset, Kateryna Bilokur, Yana Bystrova, Oleksandr Chekmeniov, Oksana Chepelyk, Semen Ioffe, Zhanna Kadyrova, Alevtina Kakhidze, Oksana Kazmina, Alina Kleitman, Alina Kopytsa, Oksana Pavlenko, Maria Prymachenko, Polina Raiko, Vlada Ralko, Anna Scherbyna, Maryna Skugareva, Hanna Sobachko-Shostak, Mykola Trokh, Kateryna Yermolaeva, Margarita Zharkova, Anna Zvyagintseva; curators: Tatiana Kochubinska, Tetiana Zhmurko.

189. All publications of Research Platform are available for free online.

190. Solo Exhibition of Dineo Seshee Bopape, the Main Prize winner of the Future Generation Art Prize 2017, 24 February–13 May 2018, curator Björn Geldhof.

191. Exhibition of shortlisted artists for the PinchukArtCentre Prize 2018, 24 February–13 May 2018, participating artists: Mykhailo Alekseienko, Iuliana Golub, Taras Kamennoi, Mykola Karabinovych, Pavlo Khailo, Alina Kleitman, Vitalii Kokhan, Yulia Krivich, Sasha Kurmaz, Larion Lozovyi, Roman Mikhaylov, Oleg Perkowsky, Sergii Radkevych, Yevgen Samborsky, Dmytro Starusiev, Ivan Svitlychnyi, Kateryna Yermolaeva, Anna Zvyagintseva, Yarema Malashchuk and Roman Himey, Revkovskiy and Rachinskiy (Daniil Revkovskiy, Andriy Novikov); curator Tatiana Kochubinska.

192. *Democracy anew?* 23 June 2018–6 January 2019, participating artists: Francis Alÿs, Allora & Calzadilla, Maurizio Cattelan, Olafur Eliasson, Damien Hirst, Zoë Leonard, Goshka Macuga, Takashi Murakami, Sondra Perry, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Luc Tuymans, Rachel Whiteread; curator Björn Geldhof.

193. The presidential elections of 2004 were thought to be fraudulent and caused the outburst of the Orange Revolution. The initial victory of Victor Yanukovych was announced an electoral fraud, leading to the final election of Victor Yushchenko in December 2004.

194. *How to Be Cool*, 19 December 2018–6 January 2019, participating artists: Anna Bekerska, Kateryna Berlova, Ksenia Hnylytska, Dobrynya Ivanov, Iryna Kudrya, Katya Libkind, Bogdan Moroz, Stanislav Turina-Shameful-Cunning-Shameless-Caught(?)-Servant of God and Studio 12345678910; curators: Oleksandra Pogrebnyak, Leo Trotsenko, Alexandra Tryanova, Valeria Schiller and Daria Shevtsova.

195. Exhibition of 21 Artists Shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize 2019, 9 February–7 April 2019, participating artists: Monira Al Qadiri, Yu Araki, Korakrit Arunanondchai, Kasper Bosmans, Madison Bycroft, Alia Farid, Gabrielle Goliath, Rodrigo Hernández, Laura Huertas Millán, Marguerite Humeau, Eli Lundgaard, Taus Makhacheva, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Sondra Perry, Gala Porras-Kim, Emilija Škarnulytė, Jakob Steensen, Daniel Turner, Anna Zvyagintseva, Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, Cooking Sections; curators: Björn Geldhof, Tatiana Kochubinska.

196. Future Generation Art Prize @ Venice 2019, 11 May–18 August 2019, Palazzo Ca' Tron, San Croce, 1957, 30135, Venice, Italy, participating artists: Monira Al Qadiri, Yu Araki, Korakrit Arunanondchai, Kasper Bosmans, Madison Bycroft, Alia Farid, Gabrielle

Goliath, Rodrigo Hernández, Laura Huertas Millán, Marguerite Humeau, Eli Lundgaard, Taus Makhacheva, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Sondra Perry, Gala Porras-Kim, Emilija Škarnulytė, Jakob Steensen, Daniel Turner, Anna Zvyagintseva, Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, *Cooking Sections*; curators: Björn Geldhof, Tatiana Kochubinska.

197. *Ain't Nobody's Business*, 25 April–27 December 2019, participating artists: Mykola Karabinovych, Ignas Krunglevičius, Angelina Merenkova, Zamir Suleymanov, Lyuba Tokareva, Fabiana Faleiros, Sergei Shabokhin; curators: Alexandra Tryanova, Valeria Schiller.

198. Boris Mikhailov, *The Forbidden Image*, 28 June–27 December 2019, curators: Björn Geldhof, Martin Kiefer, Alicia Knock.

199. *Crossing Lines*, 28 June–27 December 2019, participating artists: Andrey Avdeenko, Sergey Bratkov, Victor & Sergey Kochetov, Pavlo Makov, Oleg Malyovany, Yevgeniy Pavlov, Misha Pedan, Roman Pyatkovka, Juri Rupin, Sergey Solonsky, Oleksandr Suprun and Alina Kleytman, Sasha Kurmaz, Sergey Melnitchenko, Mykola Ridnyi; curators: Björn Geldhof, Martin Kiefer, Alicia Knock.

200. Exhibition of the 20 Artists Shortlisted for the PinchukArtCentre Prize 2020, 9 February 2020–3 January 2021, participating artists: AntiGonna, Katya Buchatska, Uli Golub, Pavlo Grazhdanskij, Ksenia Hnylytska, Alexandra Kadzevich, Nikolay Karabinovych, Anton Karyuk, Oksana Kazmina, Iryna Kudrya, Larion Lozovoy, Timothy Maxymenko, Elias Parvulesco, Valentina Petrova, Anna Scherbyna, Alina Sokolova, Dmytro Starusiev, 12345678910 Studio, Yarema Malashchuk and Roman Himey, Daniil Revkovskiy, Andriy Rachinskiy; curator Alexandra Tryanova; co-curator Björn Geldhof. Yarema Malashchuk and Roman Himey won the Main Prize. Nikolay Karabinovych and Uli Golub received Special Prizes.

201. Yarema Malashchuk and Roman Himey, *Live Stream*, HD video with sound, 17 min., 2020.

202. Emilija Škarnulytė, *Chambers of Radiance*, 9 February–1 May 2020, curator Björn Geldhof.

203. *Dot, Line, Possibilities*, 11 September 2020–3 January 2021, participating artists: Anastasia Averina, Heorhii Alaverdov, Yelizaveta Bukina, Katya Buchatska, Bohdan Horda, Maria Vykhrova, Mark Volkov, Olha Zholobetska, Nazar Yonenko, Nikita Kadan, Anastasia Kravchuk, Daryna Malyuk, Yevhenia Mysik, Petro Mikhaylov, Oleksii Ovdienko, Artem Oliynyk, Oleksandr Pylypenko, Kyrylo Smereka, Pavlo Khomenko, Artem Tsarenko, Varvara Shyshlova and Anna Scherbyna; curators: Olha Shyshlova, Katya Buchatska.

204. Future Generation Art Prize 2021, exhibition of 21 shortlisted artist, 25 September 2021–27 February 2022, participating artists: Alex Baczynski-Jenkins, Wendimagegn Belete, Minia Biabiany, Aziz Hazara, Ho Rui An, Agata Ingarden, Rindon Johnson, Bronwyn Katz, Lap-See Lam, Mire Lee, Paul Maheke, Lindsey Mendick, Henrike Naumann, Pedro Neves Marques, Frida Orupabo, Andres Pereira Paz, Teresa Solar, Trevor Yeung, Calla Henkel & Max Pitegoff, Yarema Malashchuk and Roman Himey, Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings; curator Björn Geldhof; assisting curators: Oleksandra Pogrebnyak, Daria Shevtsova. The Main Prize winner was Aziz Hazara.

205. Daniil Revkovskiy, Andriy Rachinskiy, *Tailings Dam*, 27 February–15 August 2021, curator Björn Geldhof.

206. *Remember Yesterday*, 27 February–15 August 2021, participating artists: Julia Beliaeva, Sasha Kurmaz, Roman Himey and Yarema Malashchuk, Anna Zviagintseva, Lesia Khomenko, Sergey Bratkov, Oleg Holosiy, Pavlo Makov, Oleksandr Roytburd, Oleg Tistol, Vasyl Tsagolov; curators: Björn Geldhof, Ksenia Malykh.

207. It also included works by Ukrainian artists but was preoccupied with the big names of the international collection.

208. Kadan's R.E.P. colleague, Zhanna Kadyrova, also the Main Prize winner of 2013 PinchukArtCentre Prize, as well as Special Prize winner in 2011, will have her retrospective at the PAC in 2023.

209. Nikita Kadan, *Stone Hits Stone*, 27 February–15 August 2021, curator Björn Geldhof, assistant curator Kateryna Iakovlenko, exposition architecture and design Dana Kosmina.

210. Along with Tiberiy Silvasi for the installation *Wings*.

211. "The document stated: 'Ukraine's future lies firmly in the European Union. The country's tradition has been a profoundly European one. Its history is rich on the one hand and difficult on the other. The people of Ukraine cannot be held to account for everything they had to endure in the past. More reason for Europe to respect and honour the achievements of the Ukrainian people. Their aspirations should be treated as a voice in favour of a stronger and more native European Union'" (Puglisi 2008: 73).

212. Or at least was a fact before the full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine in 2022.

213. Alisa Lozhkina claims though, that Pinchuk only focused on Ukrainian art when he got poorer and could not afford buying and working with blockbusters artists anymore (Lozhkina 2022).

214. Both, Björn Geldhof (Geldhof 2021), and Kateryna Iakovlenko said, that the shift in topics happened before Maidan, but was not visible. Iakovlenko: "Media and especially international journalists would cover only the big international shows. That gave impression that they were the only ones on view" (Iakovlanko 2021).

215. "Shouldn't culture be local, like food, rather than envying a pre-packaged, savourless internationalism?" (Conrad 2006: 43).

216. The main shows' focus is Ukrainian art (retrospectives of Fedir Tetyanych, Boris Mikhailov, Sergey Bratkov, Nikita Kadan), and the PAC-UA series of small exhibition of Ukrainian artists is lauded.

217. Mykola Rydnyi: "*Monument / Platforms* from 2011 was touching the issue of a demolition of a Soviet heritage in public space while the "Shelter" from 2013 was related to the topic of military education and conditions of bombproof shelters. Today it is visible that these issues have been grown from rare stories into problematic waves and they became anxiety points of public discussions" (Lendeczki 2015).

218. "And we're going further with this. For now, we are leaving completely behind the kind of bigger names and we're going 100 percent to the direction of the emerging artists. So, our full program will be based on production with and commissions of emerging artists. International and Ukrainian. We have our Ukrainian line as well. To my mind it is a logical evolution. We understand our audiences and Ukraine as a society" (Geldhof 2021).

219. "This centre is part of a myriad of costly initiatives undertaken by Ukrainian oligarchs to boost their country's international reputation" (Leclézio 2016).

220. "The centre's curatorial choices, privileging mainstream artists often associated with nouveau riche taste (or absence of it), prompted yet more negative comments about the unoriginal, market-oriented direction adopted by Eckhard Schneider" (Leclézio 2016).

221. In 2010 it was granted the national status.

222. Carol Duncan discusses the American public art museums, which background is very different from the Ukrainian ones. However, the given statement is true regardless the socio-geographical circumstances.

223. The foundation was run by private people, and not institution. Right now the foundation does not operate.

224. I had a pleasure to be one of them in 2018.

225. The current adult ticket price is 100 Hryvnia – the equivalence of 3 Euro.

226. The objectives of the foundation were further described as: “Filling the Ukrainian society with ideas of humanism and creative vision; accomplishment of charitable activities to meet social needs; popularization of best examples of art, widening access to the Ukrainian and world cultural heritage; creating and updating the Arsenal’s museum collection, retention and development of Ukrainian cultural traditions, adjustment of international relations, relationships and cooperation in culture and art; support of outstanding contemporary artists and talented youth; conducting of educational activities, promoting development of Art” (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2015d).

227. Interview with Alisa Lozhkina by author, online, May 2022.

228. Unless it is presented within the frames of temporary exhibitions.

229. The Lavra that is up until today connected to the Church of Moscow, which brings up a lot of controversies, especially after the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, founded in 1992 and not recognized by other Orthodox churches, together with the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (founded in 1917), officially separated itself from Moscow in 2018 (after 300 years) to form the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. “The process was ratified in a ceremony in Istanbul on Orthodox Christmas Eve, 2019, when the Metropolitan of Kyiv, the young Epiphanius I received Tomos from the Constantinople Patriarchate. The document granted autocephaly to the newly formed and newly recognised Orthodox Church of Ukraine” (Mamo 2021).

The parishes can choose whether to stay under the Ukrainian or Russian patriarchate, and the Pechers lavra stayed under the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

230. There is another church complex just in front of the Arsenal – the church of Theodosius Pechersky (Theodosius of the Caves), built by Konstiantyn Makiyevsky, Ivan Mazepa’s cousin, in 1700.

231. Kyiv was part of the Tsardom of Russia from 1686 until 1721, when it took the name of the Russian Empire.

232. The excavations took place between 2005 and 2009 (Onogda 2021).

233. There were two fortresses surrounding the Arsenal – one built by Peter the Great, and another one by Nicolai I Romanov, which surrounded both, the Arsenal, and the older fortress. The old one had bastions, while the new one six to eight towers.

234. For more see Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National identity*, New Haven-London, 1992.

235. The Hetmanate was created in 1649 as an autonomous state in today’s central Ukraine. It was liquidated by Katherine the Great in 1764.

236. The construction works were made by the military engineer Charles de Chardon and completed in 1801 by Mykhailo Hryhorenko, Kyiv merchant. (Mystetskyi Arsenal, n.d.b) Kateryna Honcharova also mentions the bricklayer Helmer and the local contractor Matvei Begichev (Mystetskyi Arsenal, “How It Works: Olga Melnyk and Kateryna Honcharova”).

237. Speckle also designed the Arsenal in St. Petersburg, which did not survive to this day, multiple bridges of St. Petersburg. He also works in Vitebsk (Belarus) and Finland.

238. Mazepa financed the rebuilding of Saint Sophia Cathedral, the Epiphany Cathedral, the building of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, and more.

239. In the times of the Cold War the Arsenal switched to the production of high-precision equipment (Mystetskyi Arsenal, “How It Works: Olga Melnyk, Olena Onogda, Igor Gyrych and”).

240. The original building had two.

241. International Festival of Contemporary Art GOGOLfest, 7-14 September 2007.
242. Exhibition of works by the finalists of the competition *Museum of Contemporary Art – Laboratory-Improvisation*, 18-27 May 2007.
243. Exhibition of Alexander Pechora and Alexander Zhukovsky, *Southern Colors*, 05-30 March 2008; photo project by Maxim Afanasyev, *Landscapes*, 01-20 April 2008.
244. International Festival of Contemporary Art GOGOLfest, 11-27 September 2009.
245. Another one hosted in 2010, the Third Great Antique Salon, 15-26 December 2010, was not mentioned in the publication. The Salon gathered works from Ukrainian museums under the title *Masterpieces of Sacred Art of Ukraine of the XVI-XVIII Centuries*.
246. Igor Gaidai's personal photo exhibition *Together.UA*, 30 September–9 October 2011, was not mentioned, as well as the exhibition *Truth Saves From Death*, 25 November 2011.
247. V Grand Sculpture Exhibition, 17 February–12 March 2011. International and Ukrainian works of the 20th century and old – from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages. The exhibition included famous artists of the 20th century like Alberto Giacometti, Auguste Rodin, Pablo Picasso, Hans Arp, Henry Moore, Edgar Degas, and Ukrainians Alexander Archipenko and Gregor Kruk.
248. Space Odyssey 2011. First International Week of Contemporary Art, 5-17 April 2011. Exhibition of contemporary Ukrainian and international art, exposition of space artefacts, a film program, and numerous educational events and forums.
249. VI International Art Fair Art Kyiv Contemporary, 1-13 November 2011.
250. *60 Years of Modern and Contemporary Art*, 24 November–4 December 2011. The exhibition of the collection of Agostinho Cordeiro, in cooperation with Cordeiros Galeria in Portugal, including works by Andy Warhol and Antoni Tapies.
251. IV Grand Antique Salon, 8-18 December 2011. It gathered the fine art of numerous Ukrainian museums.
252. *Fine Art Ukraine*, 12-22 May 2011. *Fine Art Ukraine* gathered the show of the contemporary Ukrainian artists and the exhibition entitled *SCHOOL*, which presented the works of the prominent figures of Ukrainian art in the period 1930-1980, who graduated from the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture in Kyiv, including Tatyana Holembiyevska, Sergei Grigoriev, or Aleksandr Danchenko.
253. Book Arsenal – International Arsenal Book Fair & Festival, 27 May–1 June 2011. The first edition of international book fairs, that soon became one of the most important cultural events in Ukraine, being noticed also abroad – in 2019 it received the International Excellence Award at the London Book Fair in the category Literary Festival. Every year more than 150 Ukrainian publishing houses present their publications in the Arsenal.
254. *Vasyl Yermilov. Exhibition Project*, 21 June–17 July 2011.
255. *Retrospective Exhibition. Independent: Ukrainian Art from 1991 to 2011*, 22 August–18 September 2011, project director Natalia Zabolotna, curator Oleksandr Soloviov.
256. VI Grand Sculpture Salon, 13-23 September 2012.
257. Book Arsenal. II International Arsenal Book Festival, 4-7 October 2012.
258. Art Kyiv Contemporary 2012. VII Contemporary Art Fair, 1-11 November 2012.
259. V Grand Antique Salon, 6-15 December 2012.
260. Spark! Lab in Kyiv. Innovation Project for Children and Teenagers, 6-30 September 2012.

261. First Kyiv Biennale of Contemporary Art Arsenale 2012, *The Best of Times, The Worst of Times. Rebirth and Apocalypse in Contemporary Art*, 23 May–31 July 2012, commissioner: Natalia Zabolotna, art director: David Elliott, curator of the special program: Oleksander Soloviov.

262. The III International Book Arsenal Festival, 28 May–02 June 2013.

263. VII Great Sculpture Salon, 15-27 October 2013.

264. VIII Art Kyiv Contemporary, 07-17 November 2013.

265. The VI Grand Antique Salon, 28 November–08 December 2013.

266. Exhibition of Johann Georg Pinsel – *From the Louvre to the Art Arsenal*, 19 March–20 April 2013.

267. *Fata Morgana*, 15 August–15 September 2013

268. *Shevchenko: Status Quo in the XXI Century*, 12-22 May 2013.

269. *Shevchenkomania*, 27 February–10 March 2014.

270. *The Show Within the Show*, 29 April–01 June 2014, curators: Solomia Savchuk, Oleksandr Soloviov.

271. Book Arsenal, 9-13 April 2014.

272. *The Ukrainian Avant-Garde Scene*, 08-29 June 2014.

273. *A New Ukrainian Dream*, 11 July–3 August 2014, curator Oleksandr Soloviov. The exhibition was part of the annual Forbes Ukraine project.

274. The VII Great Sculpture Salon, 05-15 March 2015.

275. International Festival of Traditional Cultures “Etnosvit”, 15-17 May 2015.

276. *Vikna*, 05 February–09 March 2015.

277. *Kateryna Bilokur. I Want to Be an Artist!*, 16 June–09 August 2015, curator Alisa Lozhkina.

278. “Quasi-colonial relations were ethicized. Thus, ‘blackness’, i.e., backwardness, poverty and backwardness against wealthier and class-progressive urban dwellers, was associated here not only with rural origin and lower (peasant) social status, of Ukrainian origin, with a lower status of the Ukrainian language and culture, with the inferiority of rural Ukrainian-speaking ‘blacks’ as opposed to urban Russian-speaking ‘whites’” (Riabchuk 2021).

279. *Harlequin is Leaving....* in memoriam of Ihor Dychenko, 20 August–06 September 2015.

280. *Open Collection. Ihor Dychenko, Valeriya Virska – to Ukrainian People*, 29.10-22.11.2015.

281. *World Plastic Art Masterpieces*, 6 November–6 December 2015.

282. X ART-KYIV Contemporary, 22 September–10 October 2015.

283. *Ivan Marchuk. The Genotype of Freedom*, 13-31 January 2016.

284. *Ivan Marchuk. The Genotype of Freedom*, 19 February–8 March 2015, Galeria Kordegarda, Warsaw, Poland.

285. *Mariya Prymachenko. Boundless*, 9 February–13 March 2016, curator Alisa Lozhkina.

286. *MALEVICH+*, 09 June–07 August 2016.

287. “A few other Ukrainian cities – Lviv, Kharkiv, Odesa – also occupy positions of prominence, but Kyiv surely stands out, particularly in the history of Ukrainian modernism. Rather striking in this connection is how seemingly seamlessly such, as Marcadé notes, ‘leading representatives of the future avant-garde’ – Oleksandr Bohomazov, Alexandra Exter, Abram Manevich, Volodymyr Burliuk – emerge from under the wings of the leading Ukrainian realist genre painter Mykola Pymonenko (1862–1912). (Grabowicz 2019: 254); Malevich’s biography, his autobiographical statements, and his works from the

late peasant period of 1928-1-30 suggest stronger links to Ukraine and primitivism than has sometimes been admitted. (Shkandrij 2002: 405)

288. Horbachov is the author of the book *Avantgarde. Ukrainian Artists of the First Third of the 20th Century* (Horbachov 2016) Among the Ukrainian artists he names figures such as Oleksandr Archipenko, Sonia Delaunay, Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Tatlin – artists who were on the one hand appropriated by Russian or even Western European avant-gardes, on the other – their ethnic and personal identity remains debatable. Horbachov cites a fragment of Malevich's autobiography published posthumously in the "Ukraine" magazine (1988, no 29), where the artist writes: "We recollected Ukraine. He and I were Ukrainians" (Horbachov 2016: 208).

289. "We currently have two paintings by Kazimir Malevich – in the collection of P.F. Lunev Parkhomivsky historical artistic museum and in Art Arsenal. The visitors of the *Malevich+* project have a unique chance to see one of the two rarities" (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2016c).

290. I don't know which exhibition is mentioned here and did not find any exhibition of Malevich's works in Poland in 1997. There was a show of his works in 2007 at the Polonia Palace Hotel in Warsaw.

291. Natalya Zabolotna lost the job due to the muddle around the creation of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, in which she was engaged, and misunderstandings between Zabolotna and President Petro Poroshenko. (Lozhkina 2022)

292. Mystetskyi Arsenal, *Development Program of NKMMC "Mystetskyi Arsenal" for 5 Years* [in Ukrainian], <https://artarsenal.in.ua/povidomlennya/programa-rozvytku-nkmmc-mystetskyj-arsenal-na-5-rokiv/>.

293. *Event Horizon*, 27 October–27 December 2016, participating artists: Mykhailo Alekseenko, Anatolii Belov, Andriy Boyarov, Artem Volokitin, Oleg Voronko, Maria Gelman, Dmytro Erlikh, Alevtina Kakhidze, Darya Koltsova, Natasha Masharova, Roman Minin, Anna Mironova, Roman Mikhailov, Zoya Orlova, Sergiy Petlyuk, Stepan Ryabchenko, Anatol Stepanenko, Serhii Torbinov, Bronislav Tutelman, Oleg Kharchenko, Alexander Chekmenev, Illya Chichkan, Mitya Churikov, Nikita Shalenny, Masha Shubina, Tenpoint; curators: Oleksandr Soloviov, Alisa Lozhkina, Solomia Savchuk.

294. *Oleksandr Hnylytsky. Reality of Illusion*, 23 February–26 March 2017, curators: Oleksandr Soloviov, Solomia Savchuk.

295. See: *PARCOMMUNE. Place. Community. Phenomenon*, 20 October 2016–15 January 2017, PinchukArtCentre, curators: Tatiana Kochubinska, Ksenia Malykh, scientific consultant: Oleksandr Soloviov.

296. For more see: Salatyuk 2021.

297. *Pure Art*, 13 April–09 May 2017, curators: Lidiia Lykhach, Petro Gonchar.

298. *In Progress. Ukrainian Dress Code Since Independence*, 15 June–06 August 2017, curator Zoya Zvynyats'kivska.

299. *Art Work*, 29 June-30 July 2017, participating artists: Sylwester Ambroziak, APL315, Julia Beliaeva, Marcin Berdyszak, Svitlana Biedarieva, Andriy Boyarov, Michael Buksha, Uliana Bychenkova, Evgeniy Chernyshov, Bolesław Chromy, Julia Curyło, Tomasz Domański, Dmytro Erlikh, Michał Frydrych, Igor Gaidai, Anatoly Gankevich, Katarzyna Górna, Igor Gusev, Rafał Jakubowicz, Kornel Janczy, Boris Kashapov, Ute Kilter, Olga Kisseleva, Adrian Kolarczyk, Dmitriy Koloskov, Darya Koltsova, Alina Kopytsa, Kacper Lecnim, Diana Lelonek, Pavel Markman, Karolina Melnicka, Roman Mikhaylov, Mariusz Mikołajek, Alexander Milstein, Eugeniusz Minciel, Roman Minin, Yevgen Nikiforov, OK.ART, Dominika Olszowy, Viktor Pokidanets, Tomasz Poznysz, Karol Radziszewski, Stephan Riabchenko, Irmina Rusicka, Oleksiy Sai, Arsen Savadov, Solomiia Savchuk, Nikita Shalenny, Janek Simon, Yaroslav Solop, Michał Stachyra,

Mikołaj Starowieyski, Szuper Gallery (Susanne Clausen & Pavlo Kerestey), Karolina Szymanowska, Mariusz Tarkawian, Oleg Voronko, Vova Vorotniiov, Robert Wałęka, Semen Khramtsov, Alina Yakubenko, Aleksey Yalovega; curators: Alisa Lozhkina, Ewa Sułek.

300. Art Work PL-UA / Artyści o pracy, 22 September–31 October 2017, Galeria Dworcowa, Wrocław, Poland.

301. Festival of Young Ukrainian Artists, 28 September–29 October 2017, curators: Lizaveta German, Maria Lanko, Kateryna Filyuk; participating artists: Mykhailo Alekseienco and Madlen Franko, Piotr Armianovski, Alex Bykov, Kateryna Buchatska, Open Group, Vova Vorotniiov and ZA\_S\_XID Project, Attila Hazhliniski, TSE (THIS) Gallery, Daniil Galkin. Vira Ganzha, Iuliana Golub, Serhii Gryhorian, Petro Gronsky, Sasha Dolgiy. Olena Dombrovska, Andrii Dostliev, Lia Dostlieva, Kateryna Yermolaeva, Zhuzhalka, Misha Zavalnyi, Polina Karpova, Anna Kakhiani, Borys Kashapov, Alina Kleytman, Taras Kovach, Yevgen Korshunov, Vitalii Kokhan, Olha Kuzyura, Sasha Kurmaz, Ishtvan Kus, Alexander Kutovoi, Ola Lanko, Pavlo Lysyi, Luhansk Contemporary Diaspora, Maksym Maksymiv, Dmytro Mykytenko, Viktoria Myroniuk, Denys Nechai, Yevgen Nikiforov, Bogdan Pilipushko, Maria Plotnikova, Viacheslav Poliakov, Oleksiy Radynski, Sergii Radkevych, Olga Sabko, Yurii Savter, Vasyl Savchenko, Anton Saienko, Mykhailo Stefura, Elena Subach, Serhii Torbinov, Members of the Montazh project, Vitaly Fomenko, Anna Khodkova, Semen Khramtsov, Lilya Chavaga, Aleksandr Chepelev, Mitya Churikov, Anton Shebetko, Alina Yakubenko, Vitaly Yankovy, Mariana Yaremchyshyna, Kristina Yarosh, Alina Mann & Coco Schwarz, APL315, Art-cluster R+N+D, Etching Room #1, Kinder Album.

302. *Japanese Art Exhibition*, 09 November–17 December 2017, curator Yuliya Vaganova.

303. *Boychukism. Great Style Project*, 7 December 2017–28 January 2018, curators: Olga Melnyk, Victoria Velychko, Igor Oksametnyi.

304. Mykhailo Boichuk, Antonina Ivanova, *The Farmer's Family of the New Age*, fresco, 1933-1935. The frescoes at the Red Industrial Plant Theatre in Kharkiv, along with most other works of Boichukists, were destroyed later in the 30's.

305. "Guillaume Apollinaire, André Salmon, and other art critics mentioned Boichukists in their reviews" (Bilokin 2018: 50). The Boichukists were exhibiting at the Paris Salon multiple times. Boichuk also spent a couple of months in Vienna and Italy and studied at the Krakow Art School (later reformed to Academy), and at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts.

306. *Flashback. Ukrainian Media Art of the 1990's*, 01 March-06 May 2018, participating artists: Akuvido, Vasyl Bazhaj, Andriy Bludov, Andriy Bojarov, Oleksander Vereshchak, Glib Vysheslavskyi, Anatolii Gankevich, Tetyana Gershuni, Risa Horowitz, Oleh Hnativ, Oleksander Hnylytskyj, Natalia Golibroda, Igor Gusev, Dmytro Dulfan, Margarita Zinets, Volodymyr Yershykhin, Illya Isupov, Andriy Kazandzhiy, Gleb Katchuk, Vlodko Kaufman, Olga Kashimbekova, Yuriy Kruchak, Pavlo Kovach Sr., Eduard Kolodiy, Miroslav Kulchitsky, Victor Malyarenko, Maksym Mamsikov, Vyacheslav Mashnytskyi, Oleg Migas, Volodymyr Muzhesky, Viktoria Parkhomenko, Phil Perlovsky, Taras Polataiko, Taras Prokhasko, Kirill Protsenko, Oleksander Roitburd, Arsen Savadov, Solomia Savchuk, Georgiy Senchenko, Vitaliy Serdiukov, Yuri Solomko, Petro Starukh, Anatol Stepanenko, Valeria Trubina, Natalia Filonenko, Masoch Fund, Igor Hodzinsky, Vasyl Tsagolov, Ivan Tsupka, Vadym Chekorsky, Oksana Chepelyk, Illya Chichkan, Kyrylo Chichkan, Oleksander Shevchuk, Serhiy Yakunin, Szuper Gallery; curators: Oleksandr Solovioiv, Solomia Savchuk.

307. *Kirill Protsenko. Impassioned*, 21 June–29 July 2018, curator Oleksandr Solovioiv.



308. *Instant Time*, 12 July–12 August, authors of the idea, curators: Viktoriia Bavykina, Asia Tsisar; curators: Olena Afanasieva, Maks Afanasiev, Viktoriia Bavykina, Anatolii Zvizhynskiy, Maks Kovalchuk, Anastasiia Nechyporenko, Andrii Palash, Nadiia Pryhodych, Kateryna Rusetska, Kateryna Semeniuk, Tolik Tatarenko, Asia Tsisar; participating artists: Emma Andiiivska, Potr Armianovskiy, Maks Afanasiev, Anna Bekerska, Marharyta Bolhar, Oleksii Borysov, Bu-Ba-Bu, Oleksandr Vereshchak, Daniil Halkin, Andrii Horokhov, Serhii Hryhorian, Liia Dostlieva i Andrii Dostliev, Kateryna Yermolaieva, Yurii Yefanov, Stas Zhalobniuk, Oleksandr Zhukovskiy, Opanas Zalyvakha, Anatolii Zvizhynskiy, Hamlet Zinkivskiy, Yurii Izdryk, Illia Isupov, Volodymyr Kabachenko, Vlodko Kaufman, Myroslav Korol, Rostyslav Koterlin, Yurko Kokh, Vlodko Kostyrko, Mykola Lukin, Liera Malchenko i Oleksandr Hants, Andrii Mentukh, Volodymyr Mulyk, Yevhenii Pavlov, Ihor Pereklita, Serhii Petliuk, Liubomyr Petrenko, Yuliia Polunina-But, Roman Piatkovka, Stepan Riabchenko, Solomiia Savchuk, Petro Starukh, Kostiantyn Tereshchenko, The Masoch Fund (Ihor Podolchak, Ihor Diurych, Roman Viktiuk), Ihor Chekachkov, Illia Chychkan, Oleksandra Chychkan, Anastasiia Chibitseva, Volodymyr Shaposhnykov, Yaroslav Yanovskiy, Myroslav Yaremak, Anthony Davies, Anne Dykmans, Hussein Elgeballi, Herman Hebler, Krolikowski Art, Sato Kyoko, Hiroshi Mimura, Masae Miyamoto, Tonia Nikolaidou, Synchrondogs, Son-Ah-yoo, Antonia Talamini, Temporary group, Yoshizumi Toshio, Opy Zouny.

309. Lviv, Crimea, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, Odesa, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv. (Mystetskyi Arsenal 2018: 3).

310. *Kurbas: New Worlds*, 17 October–02 December 2018, curators: Virlana Tkacz, Tetiana Rudenko, Waldemart Klyuzko.

311. *Revolutionize*, 21 November 2018–27 January 2019, curators: Kateryna Filyuk, Nathanja van Dijk; participating artists: Francis Alÿs (BE), Lara Baladi (EG), James Beckett (ZA), Maksym Bilousov (UA), Marinus Boezem (NL), Adelita Husni-Bey (IT), Irina Botea (RO), Nazar Bilyk (UA), Latifa Echakhch (MA), Harun Farocki (CZ), Jack Goldstein (CA), Hamza Halloubi (MA), Yuriy Hrytsyna (UA), Iman Issa (EG), Illya Isupov (UA), Alevtina Kakhidze (UA), Lesia Khomenko (UA), Sasha Kurmaz (UA), Dariia Kuzmych (UA), Cristina Lucas (ES), Basim Magdy (EG), Lev Manovich (RU), Olexa Mann (UA), Olaf Nicolai (GE), Maria Plotnikova (UA), Leticia Ramos (BR), Vlada Ralko (UA), Fernando Sanchez Castillo (ES), Wolfgang Tillmans (GE), Mona Vatamanu (RO) & Florin Tudor (RO), Vova Vorotniiov (UA), Pavel Wolberg (RU). With the participation of the Planning for Protest, Mystetskyi Barbican, Strike Poster, Piotr Armianovski, Aftermath VR: Euromaidan.

312. *The Amazing Stories of Crimea*, 26 February–05 May 2019, authors: Alim Aliev, Yuliya Vaganova, Viktoriya Velichko, Oleksa Haiworonski, Olga Melnyk, Anna Oryshchenko, Olesia Ostrovska-Liuta, Anna Pohribna; art director Lera Guevska; exhibition architecture Oleksandr Burlaka; technical director Serhiy Diptan.

313. *Obabich*, 22 May–30 June 2019, participating artists: Viktor Marushchenko, Mark Neville, Sasha Kurmaz, curator Jerzy Onuch.

314. *Oleg Holosiy. Non-Stop Painting*, 13 June–11 August 2019, curators: Oleksandr Soloviov, Ihor Oksametnyi, Solomia Savchuk, Oksana Barshynova, Tetiana Zhmurko.

315. *Andriy Sahaidakovsky. Scenery. Welcome!*, 18 September 2020–24 January 2021, curators: Solomia Savchuk, Oleksandr Soloviov, Pavlo Gudimov.

316. *Paraska Plytka-Horytsvit. Overcoming Gravity*, 17 October 2019–19 January 2020, curator Kateryna Radchenko.

317. *Special Cargo! The History of the Return of Ukraine's Cultural Property*, 12 December 2019–19 January 2020.

318. *Imprint. Ukrainian Printmaking of the XX-XXI Centuries*, 03 July 2020–16 August 2020, curators: Iryna Borovets, Kateryna Pidhaina.

319. *Every Day. Art. Solidarity. Resistance*, 25 March–06 June 2021, participating artists: #дамаудобнаявбыту, A.Z.H., Raman Aksionau, Tasha Arlova, Yauhen Attsetski, Rufina Bazlova, Anatoly Belov, Bergamot group, Vika Biran & Olga Łaniewska, Nadia Buzhan, Mitya Churikov, Problem Collective, Alena Davidovich, Paul Dorokhin, Andrei Dureika, Dzmitry Dzmitryjeu, eeffff, Free Choir, Zhanna Gladko, Janna Grak, Mikhail Gulin, Work Hard! Play Hard!, Honest People, Uladzimir Hramovich, Hutkasmachnaa, Boris Iwanow, Nikita Kadan, Nikolay Karabinovych, Karol Radziszewski, Sergey Kiryuschenko, Aleksander Komarov, Sergey Kozhemyakin, Zakhar Kudin, Alexei Kuzmich, Yuriy Ledyan, Ulia Liashkevich & Julia Golovina, Lipovy Cvet group, Victoria Lomasko, Artyom Loskutov, Alexey Lunev, Sergiy Maidukov, Angelina Mass, Victor Melamed, Vika Mitrichenko, Hanna Murajda, Marina Naprushkina, Ulyana Nevzorova, Nikolay Oleynikov & Anya Kurbatova, Nick Osadchyy, Vasilisa Palianina, Uladzimir Pazniak, Lesia Pcholka, Dan Perjovschi, Ales Pushkin, Ania Redko, Maxim Sarychau, Ala Savashevich, Nadya Sayapina, Daria Sazanovich, Konstantsin Selikhanov, Sergey Shabohin, Jana Shostak, Olga Shparaga, Jura Shust, Antanina Slabodchykava, Slavs and Tatars, Anton Snt, Anna Sokolova, Tamara Sokolova, Olia Sosnovskaya, Karolis Strautniekas, Masha Svyatogor, Aliaxey Talstou, Alexey Terexov, Igor Tishin, Jouri Toreev, Raman Tratsiuk, Daria Trublina, Vladimir Tsesler, Maxim Tyminko, Igor Varkulevich, Alexander Vasukovich, Yaugen, Ilia Yerashevich, Oleg Yushko, Alesia Zhitkevich; curators: Aleksei Borisionok, Andrei Dureika, Marina Naprushkina, Sergey Shabohin, Antonina Stebur, Maxim Tyminko.

320. *Sensitivity. Contemporary Ukrainian Photography*, 29 July–05 September 2021, participating artists: Gera Artemova, Maksym Afanasyev, Anna Bekerska, Taras Bychko, Valentine Bo, Andrey Boyko, Mishka Bochkarev, Andriy Bojarov, Olena Bulygina, Anna Voitenko, Stas Volyazlovsky, Igor Gaidai, Oleksandr Glyadelov, Alena Grom, Maxim Dondyuk, Valeriia Dopirchuk, Andrii Dostliev & Lia Dostlieva, Olga Drozd, Yurko Dyachyshyn, Kyrylo Kovalenko, Viktor & Sergiy, Kochetovy, Vladyslav Krasnoshchok, Sasha Kurmaz, Anastasiya Lazurenko, Jane Laptiy, Sergiy Lebedynskyy, Oleksandr Liapin, Victor Marushchenko, Sergey Melnitchenko, Valeriy Miloserdov, Borys Mykhailov, Yevgen Nikiforov, Rita Ostrovska, Evgeniy Pavlov, Mikhail Palinchak, Misha Pedan, Victoria Pidust, Polina Polikarpova, Viacheslav Poliakov, Roman Pyatkovka, Andriy Rachinskiy & Daniil Revkovskyy, Mykola Ridnyi, Arsen Savadov, Julia Savenko, Sergiy Solonsky, Yaroslav Solop, Dmytro Starusiev, Elena Subach, Mykola Trokh, Maryna Frolova, Nazar Furyk, Vasyl Tsagolov, Igor Chekachkov, Alexander Chekmenev, Illya Chichkan, Anton Shebetko, Ani Zur, Julie Poly, GORSAD, Join The Cool, SOSka group, Synchronodogs; curators: Maksym Gorbatskyi, Solomia Savchuk, Oleksandr Soloviov.

321. *Futuromarenia*, 15 October 2021–30 January 2022, curators: Viktoriia Velychko, Ihor Oksametnyi.

322. Igor Didkovsky, Natalia Zabolotna, Olesia Ostrovska-Lyuta.

323. Ewa Sułek, *The Past Living in the Future: Ukrainian Politics of Memory in Visual Arts After the Maidan Revolution*, Switch On Paper, Art et sociétés, Nîmes, Last modified 04 September 2020, <https://www.switchonpaper.com/en/geopolitics/memory/the-past-living-in-the-future-ukrainian-politics-of-memory-in-visual-arts-after-maidan-2/>.

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## IX. Illustrations

### *Image sources*

- Il. 1-4, 31-32, 35-36 – Photo by Ewa Sułek.
- Il. 5-8 – Courtesy of PinchukArtCentre.
- Il. 10 – Courtesy of PinchukArtCentre, photo by Markus Tretter.
- Il. 12 – Courtesy of PinchukArtCentre, photo by Maksym Nesterenko.
- Il. 11, 13-24 – Courtesy of PinchukArtCentre, photo by Sergey Illin.
- Il. 26 – Courtesy of PinchukArtCentre, photo by Alexander Pilyugin.
- Il. 25, 27-30 – Courtesy of PinchukArtCentre, photo by Maksym Bilousov.
- Il. 33-34 – Source: Як це працює 02.12.2020.
- Il. 37 – Source: Artmargins.com 25.08.2012.
- Il. 38 – Source: rferl.org, 26.07.2013.
- Il. 39-45, 51, 52 – Courtesy of Mystetskyi Arsenal.
- Il. 46 – Courtesy of Mystetskyi Arsenal, photo by Maksym Bilousov.
- Il. 47, 53, 54 – Courtesy of Mystetskyi Arsenal, photo by Oleksandr Popenko.
- Il. 48, 49 – Courtesy of Mystetskyi Arsenal, photo by Yevgen Nikiforov.
- Il. 50 – Courtesy of Mystetskyi Arsenal, photo by Bohdan Poshyvailo.

II. 1. Khreshchatyk street leading to the Bessarabska Square.



II. 2. PinchukArtCentre is located within the commercial complex of buildings situated in the historical Bessarabsky Kvartal.



II. 3. The Arena City with the Harem Men's Club.



II. 4. The Arena City.



Il. 5. PinchukArtCentre – the interior.



Il. 6. Sky Art Café on the top sixth floor of the PinchukArtCentre.



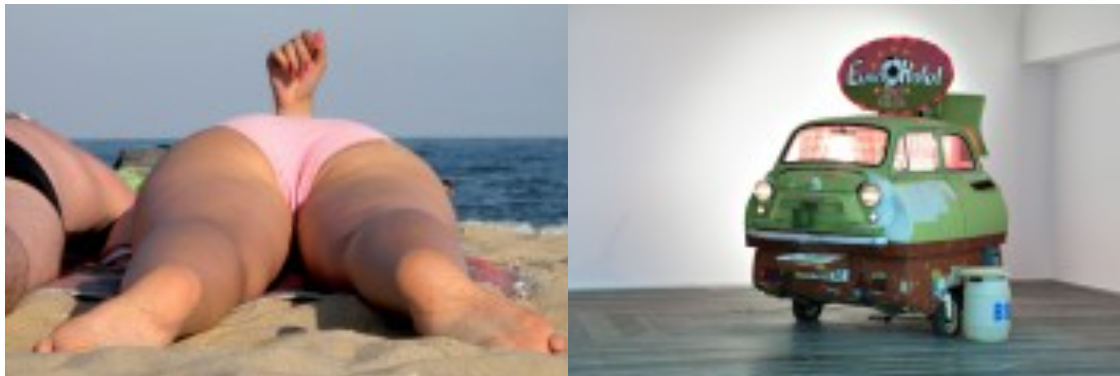
II. 7. *New Space*, the opening evening, 16.09.2006, PinchukArtCentre.



II. 8. *Patriotism. Art as Present*, R.E.P., 28.09-2.11.2008, PinchukArtCentre.



II. 9. *Ukraine*, Sergey Bratkov, 23.01.2010-21.03.2011, PinchukArtCentre.



II. 10. *Sexuality and Transcendence*, 24.04-19.09.2010, Pinchuk Art Centre.

Left: Takashi Murakami – *Lonesome Cowboy*, 1998; right: Jeff Koons – *Baloon Rabbit (violet)*, 2005-2010.





Il. 11. *Collection Platform 1: Circulation*, 12.02-02.10.2011, PinchukArtCentre.  
Arsen Savadov, from the series *Donbass-Chocolate*, 1998; Oleksandr Hnylytsky, *Mermaid*, 2004.



Il. 12. *Biography*, Open Group, 10.07-24.08.2014, PinchukArtCentre.



Il. 13. *Fear and Hope*, 17.05-05.10.2014, PinchukArtCentre.  
Zhanna Kadyrova, *Untitled*, 2014.



Il. 14. *Fear and Hope*, 17.05-05.10.2014, PinchukArtCentre.  
Nikita Kadan, *Yesterday, Today, Today*, 2012 – 2014.



Il. 15. *Fear and Hope*, 17.05-05.10.2014, PinchukArtCentre.  
Artem Volokitin, *Irreversible Beauty I*, 2014 from a series *Ready, Steady, Go!*



Il. 16. *Hope!* Pavilion of Ukraine at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, 08.05-02.08.2015.



Il 17. *Hope!* Pavilion of Ukraine at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, 08.05-02.08.2015.

Yevgenia Belorusets, *Please don't take my picture! Or they'll shoot me tomorrow*, 2014-2015.



Il. 18. *Hope!* Pavilion of Ukraine at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, 08.05-02.08.2015.

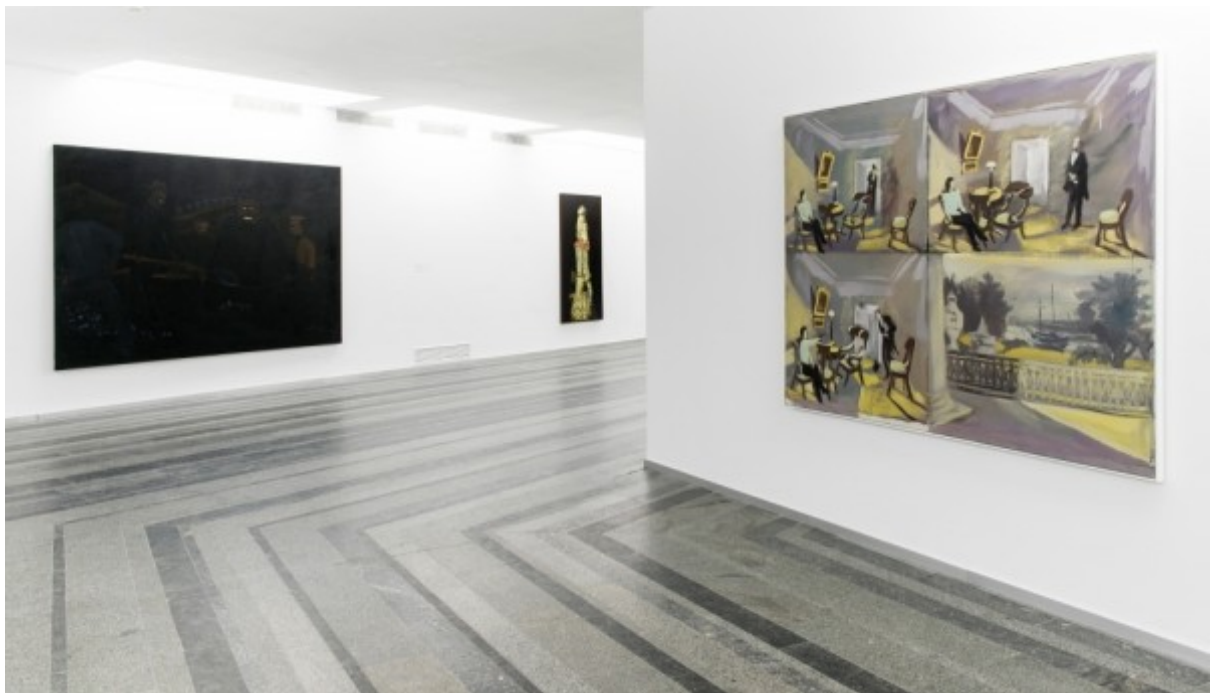
Anna Zvyagintseva, *The Cage*, 2010.



II. 19. *Hope!* Pavilion of Ukraine at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, 08.05-02.08.2015.  
Mykola Ridnyi and Serhiy Zhadan, *Blind Spot*, 2014.



II. 20. *Research Platform: Transformation*, 21.05-02.10.2016, PinchukArtCentre.  
Oleg Golosiy, *Shot*, 1991.



Il. 21. *Research Platform: Guilt*, 21.05-02.10.2016, PinchukArtCentre.  
Fast Reaction Group (Sergey Bratkov, Boris Mikhailov, Serhiy Solonsky), *If I were a German*, 1994 (with participation of Vita Mikhailov).



Il. 22. *Loss. In Memory of Babi Yar*, 21.05.2016-15.01.2017, PinchukArtCentre.  
Christian Boltanski, *Le Chemin de Babi Yar / The Path of Babi Yar*, 2016.



II. 23. *Parcommune. Place. Community. Phenomenon*, 20.10.2016-15.01.2017, PinchukArtCentre.  
Oleg Golosiy, *Muse (Trip)*, 1991.



II. 24. *Fragile State*, 17 .06.2017-06.01.2018, PinchukArtCentre.  
Santiago Sierra, *Veterans of war facing the corner*, 2017.



II. 25. *Red Book: Soviet Art in Lviv in 80s – 90s*, 23.06-07.10.2018, PinchukArtCentre.



II. 26. *A Space of One's Own*, 30.10.2018-06.01.2019, PinchukArtCentre.  
Reproduction of Murals of Polina Raiko House.





II. 27. *Democracy Anew?*, 23.06.2018-06.01.2019, PinchukArtCentre  
Luc Tuymans, *The Swamp*, 2017.



II. 28. *The Forbidden Image*, Boris Mikhailov, 28.06-27.12.2019, PinchukArtCentre.



Il. 29. *Stone Hits Stone*, Nikita Kadan, 27.02-15.08.2021, PinchukArtCentre.  
Nikita Kadan, *Tiger's Leap*, 2018.



Il. 30. *Stone Hits Stone*, Nikita Kadan, 27.02-15.08.2021, PinchukArtCentre.  
Nikita Kadan, *Pogrom*, 2016.



II. 31. View from Mystetskyi Arsenal towards the Sviato Uspenskyi Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery.



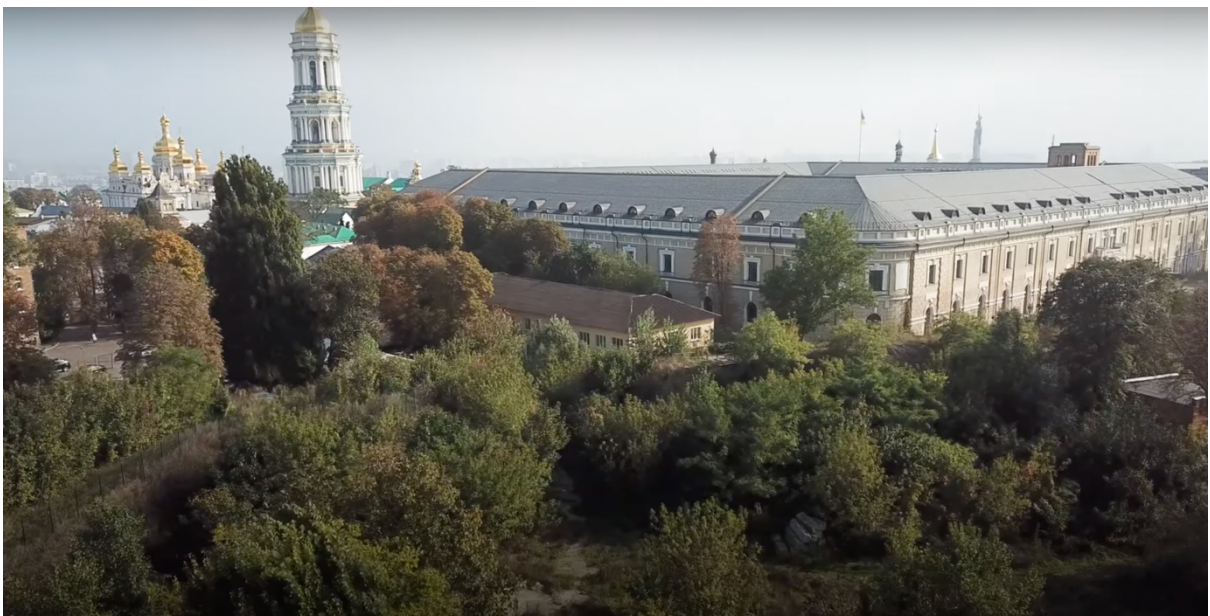
II. 32. The main court of today's Mystetskyi Arsenal. November 2022.



Il. 33. Mystetskyi Arsenal. View from above.



Il. 34. Mystetskyi Arsenal. View from the back (Cytadelna Street).



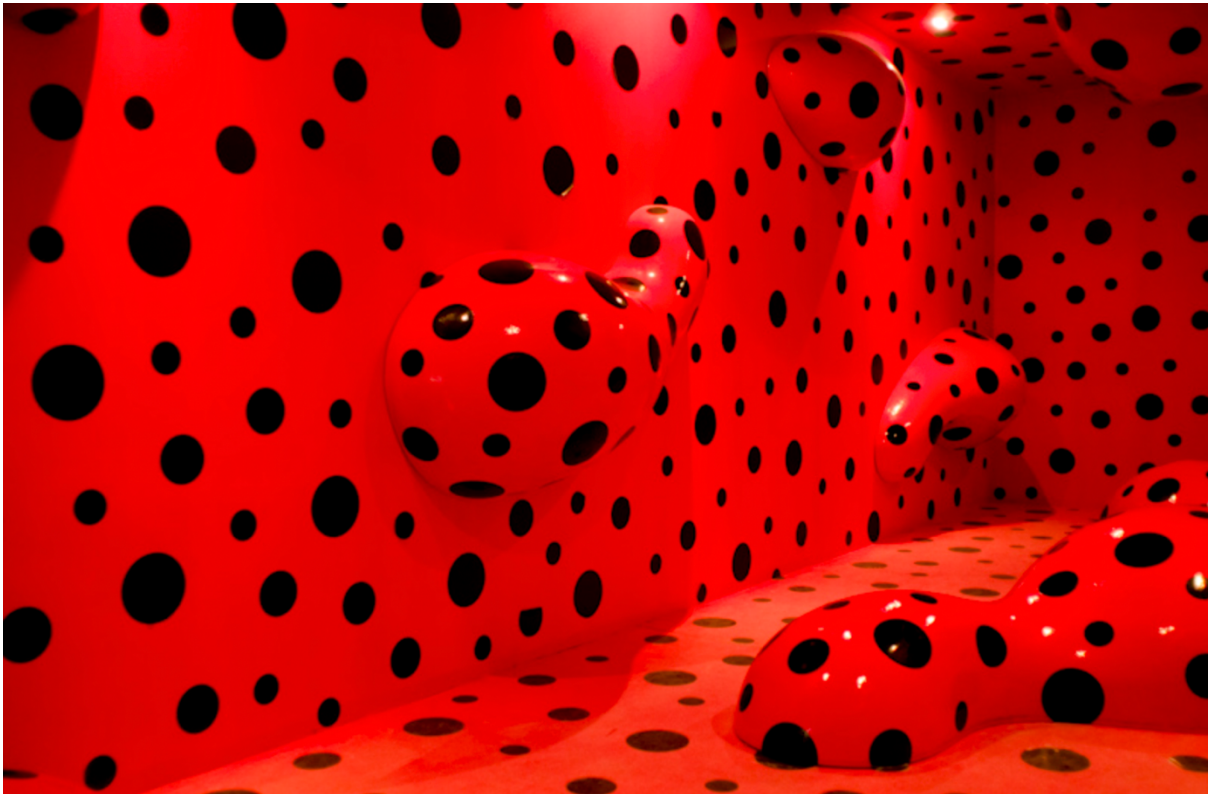
II. 35. The former main entrance to the Arsenal. View from Cytadelna Street.



II. 36. The basement floor of Mystetskyi Arsenal.



Il. 37. First Kyiv Biennale of Contemporary Art *Arsenale 2012*, 01.11-11.12.2012, Mystetskyi Arsenal.  
Yaoi Kusama, *Footprints to the Future*, 2012.



Il. 38. Volodymyr Kuznetsov, *Koliivschina: Judgment Day*, Mystetskyi Arsenal, July 2013.



II. 39. *The Ukrainian Avant-Garde Scene*, 08.06-29.06.2014, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



II. 40. *A New Ukrainian Dream*, 11.07-20.07.2014, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



II. 41. *Kateryna Bilokur. I Want to be an Artist!*, 16.06-09.08.2015.



II. 42. *Ivan Marchuk. The Genotype of Freedom*, 13.01-31.01.2016, Mystetskyi Arsenal.





II. 43. *Maria Prymachenko. Boundless*, 09.02-13.03.2016, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



II. 44. *MALEVICH+*, 09.06-07.08.2016, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



II. 45. *Event Horizon*, 27.10-27.12.2016, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



II. 46. *Oleksandr Hnylytsky. Reality of Illusion*, 23.02-26.03.2017, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



II. 47. *ART WORK*, 29.06-30.07.2017, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



II. 48. *Boychukism. Great Style Project*, 07.12.2017-28.01.2018, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



Il. 49. *Kurbas: New Worlds*, 17.10-02.12.2018, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



Il. 50. *Revolutionize*, 21.11.2018-27.01.2019, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



II. 51. *The Amazing Stories of Crimea*, 26.02-05.05.2019, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



II. 52. *Obabich*, 22.05-30.06.2019, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



Il. 53. *Paraska Plytka-Horytsvit. Overcoming Gravity*, 17.10.2019-19.01.2020, Mystetskyi Arsenal.



Il. 54. *Futuromarennia*, 15.10.2021-30.01.2022, Mystetskyi Arsenal.

