

The Role of Ukrainian Museums in the United States Diaspora in Nationalising Ukrainian Identity

Adrienne Kochman

Indiana University Northwest

Abstract

Ukrainian museums in the United States diaspora have attempted to construct a culturally authentic history outside Ukraine itself where, for the better part of the twentieth century, Ukrainian artistic endeavors were defined within a russified Soviet framework. Established largely by third wave post-World War II Ukrainian immigrants interested in seeing an independent Ukraine, these museums have been a symbolic testament to democratic self-definition. A separate Ukraine pavilion at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago of 1933 set an earlier precedent in its representation of Ukraine as an autonomous nation. This affirmed later permanent museums which collected indigenous Ukrainian folk art and artifacts as well as modern art – created by native Ukrainians and those of the diaspora – in opposition to the official Soviet Socialist Realist canon. Ukrainian independence in 1991 and increased national awareness after 2004 elections realigned these museums' mission from a cultural refuge to active participants in the new nation-building process.

Ukraine's assertion of its cultural and political independence from Russia during the Orange Revolution in Fall 2004 globalised an agenda that has existed in the diaspora since after World War II. Ukrainians abroad, outside the former Soviet Union, have been actively engaged in maintaining and preserving Ukrainian culture's distinctness from that of Russia – through the spoken and written language, indigenous customs and art – in ethnic communities. Ukrainian art museums represent this mission in institutionalised form and, like many other museums, use the objects they hold as a means of educating their community about the culture of which they are a

part. In the United States, however, Ukrainian museums assumed a semi-political role in Ukrainian nation-building through democratic self-determination and cultural solidarity. They have existed as local entities within a larger Ukrainian diaspora network where they have been free to operate as cultural institutions by the US government. Their collection patterns, exhibition strategy and purpose were largely defined by the World War II, or third wave immigrant generation, whose own wish for an autonomous Ukraine generated a nationalised narrative. This was validated years later as a result of Ukraine's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 when Ukrainian museums in the US became an important reference point for Ukraine's new national identity formation.

Ukrainian museums in the United States diaspora have attempted to construct a culturally authentic history outside Ukraine itself, where until relatively recently, Ukrainian artistic endeavors were overshadowed, assimilated and/or suppressed within a russified Soviet framework.¹ Formed in opposition to the official Soviet canon, Ukrainian museums have documented and generated a parallel history of Ukrainian art and culture outside the geographical space of Ukraine's political borders. This pursuit has been realised through the convergence of two factors unique to the Ukrainian diaspora community – the World War II displaced person (DP) experience and the adoption of public exhibition as a venue for articulating national identity, manifested in the United States in the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago where Ukraine was featured for the first time in its own pavilion. Both elements will be considered here as a basis for the practical and ideological foundation of these museums followed by a discussion of how these institutions have participated in nationalisation through their inherited legacy.

Ukrainian museums in the United States were essentially founded after World War II, by Ukrainian immigrants opposing the sovietisation of Ukraine.² In the United States alone a total of sixteen exist (Russnak 1996), primarily as small museums or galleries for folk art and as repositories for archival material of the local Ukrainian immigrant community. In Chicago, the Ukrainian National Museum was established in 1952 followed later by the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art (hereafter UIMA) in 1971 and the Ukrainian Museum in New York City in 1976. Considered by Ukrainians to be the three most prominent museums of Ukrainian art in the United States, they are all located in the center of urban Ukrainian ethnic communities, where the high concentration of Ukrainian immigrants provided a financial base and an audience supportive of the national preservationist goal of the institution. Preservation, in this context,

constituted safeguarding Ukrainian cultural artifacts in opposition to the Soviet government's pattern of erasing indigenous culture in Ukraine. Here, erasure included the burning of churches, documents, artwork (Horbachov 2005; Hankewych 2005: 68) – anything which did not fit into the concept of the idealised Soviet collective, as well as the relegation of Ukrainian culture to a diminished, secondary status.

The concept of a diaspora and the notion that one is displaced from one's homeland, generally unwillingly, materialised for third wave immigrant Ukrainians in the German and Austrian Displaced Persons (DP) camps after World War II. Krill (n.d.), reporting on a lecture by Orest Subtelny (7 March 2003), indicates that over two million Ukrainians found themselves political refugees in Germany and Austria at the end of the war.³ The majority were repatriated by the Soviets or returned voluntarily, although some 200,000–220,000 remained, generally for fear of being exiled or shot. About 80,000 of these were political activists, an 'urbanized, educated intelligentsia' according to Subtelny, who had been fighting for an independent Ukraine (Krill n.d.). While some arranged private housing outside the DP camp infrastructure, 70–80 per cent lived in the camp system, which provided temporary housing and food until permanent resettlement was found. Most of the camps were located in Bavaria, in the American zone (Krill n.d.). Their organisation around nationality – about eighty of the 700 DP camps were all-Ukrainian - and the ability to elect their own officials, open schools, parishes and cultural organisations created a microcosm of self-governance and self-determination, and were thus 'often referred to as "DP republics"' as Subtelny states (2000: 555). Ukrainians transferred this infrastructure with them when they emigrated, arriving to their new land "'pre-organized" – a phenomenon never before observed in any culture' (Krill n.d.). The largest emigration, of over 80,000, went to the United States (Subtelny 2000: 557).

It is important to underscore the vast extent of political, social and cultural activity in these camps. Subtelny reports that '2 university-level institutions, about 40 *gymnazia* ... over 100 elementary schools ... and 85 parishes' were created (2000: 555). Krill (n.d.) notes that twelve political parties were active, and despite sometimes severe clashes among them, their mutual nationalistic interests in realising an independent Ukraine, developing a national identity and rejection of communism established a working ideology which continued into the diaspora. Cultural events, in particular, flourished. Krill cites about '1820 plays, 1315 concerts, and 2044 lectures' were publicly presented in American zone camps between 1946 and 1947. In addition, there were '49 choirs and 34 drama groups.

Each group had 2 or 3 events staged every week' (n.d.). Subtelny suggests that the high level of activity was due to several factors, including the need to establish constructive ventures to offset unemployment in post-World War II Germany and the need to 'express what had long been repressed' in Ukrainian culture (2000: 555).⁴

On one level, the Ukrainian museum in the US diaspora is a cultural recreation of the resettlement experience first witnessed in the DP camps. It represents a site of territorial control, where culture, history, community and education intersect under the rubric of national identity. Internal conflicts within the diaspora community, such as those between Catholics and Orthodox, are minimised within the boundaries of the museum itself and negotiated within a larger loyalty to Ukrainian national identity (Satzewich 2002: 14). Literary, music and other forms of cultural programming – frameworks through which national identification is manifested – accompany exhibitions of art and artifacts in permanent and temporary displays. These characteristics, however, are also synonymous with public nineteenth-century exhibitions of national culture, epitomised in the international exposition format. Initiated by the 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations in London, and followed in the United States by the International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures and Products of the Soil and Mine in Philadelphia in 1876, expositions offered the promise of a better future in the wake of political and economic hardship (Rydell 1993: 5). Furthermore, the national rubric under which many exhibits appeared, complemented by others in technology and manufacturing in both Europe and the US, served imperialist aims by affirming cultural and industrial development (Rydell 1993: 6). A stable empire and a better tomorrow could only be built on the shoulders of progress – in the form of national stability, cultural growth, and modernisation.

The Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, 1933 recognised Ukrainian national status through the inclusion of its own dedicated pavilion. In doing so, it discounted the current political situation of a divided Ukraine under predominantly Soviet and Polish rule and reinforced ideas of self-determination and democracy which had been articulated in Ukraine's brief independence from 1917 to 1919. Indeed, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt's opening message to the fair conveyed its importance as a forum for overcoming not only the material devastation of the Great Depression domestically and its repercussion for the world, but the importance of mutual understanding and the pursuit of human knowledge across nations in erasing 'slavery, private wars, piracy, brigandage

and well-nigh universal tyranny' (President's Message: 1933). The press elucidated further, suggesting that previous scientific advancement had failed society and culminated in 'unemployment and misery, in chaos, in dictatorship, in loss of faith in old forms of government and in old political principles for which rivers of valiant blood were shed' (Duffus 1933). The exposition was an indicator of future achievement and social betterment, its exhibits 'representative of the life of man on earth . . . ten, twenty . . . and a hundred years from now' (Duffus 1933). Grassroots support reinforced this concept, as the Chicago fair was unique in that its primary funding came from the general public, not the US government (Century 1933: 18). The fair's ability to create jobs during the Depression – and ultimately secure a profit - made it a rallying point for demonstrating the importance of human resourcefulness and teamwork in achieving seeming insurmountable aims. Chicago's existing Ukrainian immigrant population identified with this ideal and appealed to its international émigré community for financial support for a national pavilion from as far away as Brazil. Despite Ukraine's official nation-less status, the fundraising announcement stated that 'Americans treated them as a nation' and that demonstrating their national unity before the 'civilised' world would 'help our brothers back home' (Klimchak 2006). Protests by both the Soviet ambassador to the US and representatives for Poland arguing that Ukraine should be included under its national pavilion were overturned by fair organisers (Klimchak 2006). Attracting attention to Ukrainian culture at such an international fair, the fundraising announcement implied, would increase public awareness of the political persecution of Ukrainians in their homeland.

The Ukraine pavilion featured a combination of fine and folk art exhibitions, a theater and restaurant. The building itself was a recreation of a rural Galician church, in keeping with many other pavilions designed to simulate a foreign experience such as the sixteenth-century Belgian village. In the former, the fine art section highlighted forty-four works by internationally recognised modern artist Alexander Archipenko in a solo exhibition (Leshko 2005: 222). The folk exhibit centered on 800 artifacts lent by the Lviv co-op *Ukrainske Narodne Mystetstvo* in Western Ukraine. Embroideries and weavings were draped across presentation tables, leaned upon vertical supports and hung on walls, in keeping with traditional display formats for domestic handicraft at arts and industries exhibitions in nineteenth-century Europe, such as the 1873 Vienna World's Fair which included Ukrainian artifacts from Galicia (Shmahalo 2005: 104–16). This system was similarly applied by numerous foreign national and U.S. state exhibits at the Chicago fair such as those for the Philippines and South Dakota – The Court of States (Century of Progress 1933). Dance, music

and choral performances complemented each nation's stationary exhibits, part of 'National Day celebrations' dedicated to honoring the culture of 'American citizens of foreign descent' (Century 1933: 110). Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Austrian, Hungarian and other nationalities were represented, designed to 'bring . . . the feeling and atmosphere of all spots on the globe' (Century 1933: 111).

Rydell indicates that such exhibits were often given ideological permanence in museums, developed after such fairs had closed (1993: 31). Purchasing exhibitions of artifacts from world expositions for museums elsewhere was common – the Museum of Ethnography and Crafts in Lviv (1874) incorporated exhibits from the 1873 Vienna Exposition for the purpose of educating future crafts professionals at affiliated schools (Shmahalo 2005: 105) and numerous US museums acquired exhibits from the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago (Rydell 1993: 31). Among the 1933 Ukrainian exhibits, those lent by the co-op *Ukrainske Narodne Mystetstvo* were purchased by the Ukrainian National Women's League of America (UNWLA) in New York for the sum of \$2,225 (Wolynetz 2007). In 1976, the UNWLA, with a membership now largely made up of DP's from the World War II camps mentioned earlier, donated the same collection to the newly established Ukrainian Museum in New York as one of its first core holdings. Other artifacts from the folk collection were acquired by the Ukrainian National Museum in Chicago, which was founded through the combined efforts of second and third wave émigrés, including Dr Myroslav Simenovich (Siemens), who had led the funding campaign for the 1933 Ukraine pavilion (Klimchak 2005: 73).

The Ukrainian museums' establishment was facilitated by the continuity of migrations of Ukrainians towards the same urban areas, their ability to connect with one another over time (Subtelny 2000: 559) and their ideological agreement over the importance of preserving Ukrainian culture in a public forum. Artifacts were kept privately until adequate funding could be raised for the preparation of an appropriate venue, no matter how many years it took. The third wave DP camp immigration inherited a preexisting legacy of cultural activity in the US which had in part been developed by the second wave immigration and its ability to preserve and promote a Ukrainian national identity within the host system, as in the Century of Progress. Also, the systematic destruction of archives, museums and national culture in Ukraine itself during World War I and the Russian Revolution had set a precedent for the creation of cultural institutions abroad, as in Prague (1925) (Shmahalo 2005: 114–15). In order to ensure the survival of artifacts, a decentralised model was adopted, with

collections dispersed among various localities in the US and Canada (Shmahalo 2005: 114–15).

Long-term financial support is predominantly provided for the museums by the Ukrainian diaspora community through membership and donations, supplemented by grants from US federal, state and city governments. Attendance includes diasporans and non-diasporans with fluctuations based on such factors as programming and exhibition content. UIMA estimates that its visitors are divided equally between both groups (Sawicki 2007), while the Ukrainian National Museum estimates that 25 per cent of its 6,000 annual visitors are from the diaspora – the other 75 per cent being Americans and international visitors (Ukrainian National Museum 2006). In New York, the Ukrainian Museum had approximately 8,350 visitors in 2006, of whom roughly 3,000 were diaspora Ukrainian. Non-Ukrainians comprised 70 per cent of 4,834 one-time paying visitors and approximately 85 per cent (506 persons) of those visiting without a fee, such as dignitaries and press (Bajko 2007).

Staff and supporters recognise that these museums allow the diaspora Ukrainian to experience their culture of origin, separate from the larger sphere of the host nation and the acculturation and assimilation that becomes a part of one's daily existence (Baczynsky and Labrosse 2005: 13). The degree of identification with their heritage varies – it may reinform memories of a past forgotten to a native-born Ukrainian; it may be a vehicle for romanticising the homeland, of desiring eventual return or expressing ongoing support (Clifford 1997: 247). The museum's ability to provide this experience meaningfully is directly apparent in the presentation of folk art – such as woodcarving, weavings, regional costumes and ceramics – which grew more ideologically politicised in the context of the World War II and DP camp experience. The socio-cultural and artistic context for these objects became, in effect, a metaphor for organic, life-affirming existence. Embroidered *rushnyky* or ritual cloths – used to drape around icons, over Easter baskets or to commemorate a funeral or wedding ceremony (Figure 1) – had ritualistic significance which was deeply connected to the lives and religious practices of the local community. The function of the object was tied to local Ukrainian custom, but the pattern in which each one was designed was also unique and specific to regions within Ukraine. The embroidery patterns from the region of Poltava, east of the capital city of Kyiv in central Ukraine, for example, commonly incorporate floral elements with cutwork and white, blue or pastel colors (Figure 2), while those found in the regions of Western Ukraine, closer to Poland tend to be more geometric and rectilinear, without cutwork and, often, in a

Figure. 1 Kyiv Province, Dobranychivka (attributed origin) *Wedding Ritual Cloth*, early 20c. embroidery. Private collection of Natalie Kononenko assembled with the help of Halyna Kapas



wide-ranging palette of red, orange, green, black and yellow (Figure 3). The distinction maintained between each individual region serves its purpose as an identity marker for the maker and the keeper of the piece who were typically of the same village, as in the case of a mother gifting a wedding *rushnyk* she had embroidered to her daughter. The regional pattern identified the familial birthplace and home of origin and,

Figure. 2 Poltava Province, Woman's Shirt (Sorochka) (detail). 20c. embroidery. Private Collection



consequently, was intrinsically connected to the land upon which the family had lived. Zaporozhian Cossacks, for example, going off to war, traditionally were given a piece of embroidery by their mother, sister, wife or fiancée to be taken with them on their journey so that, in the event of death, survivors could locate his region of origin and subsequently find his family, as indicated by the former curator of the Ukrainian National Museum, Olha Kalymon (1993). Post-World War II Ukrainian immigrants, who were predominantly political refugees, took such objects from their home to protect their families' history and to preserve its cultural authenticity and memory. Not only were these personal family heirlooms, but leaving them behind made them vulnerable to physical destruction and erasure, as mentioned earlier, from Ukrainian history through sovietisation.

The Ukrainian National Museum in Chicago houses a collection of over 1,100 predominantly folk art objects and a library of over 20,000 titles. The Ukrainian Museum in New York City, the largest in the international diaspora, has a folk art collection of over 8,000 artifacts, a fine art collection of 4,500 objects and over 30,000 works in its archives including rare books, maps and currency. The purpose of both museums is preservationist and educational, and focuses on featuring regional folk art such as the Demus family embroideries shown at the Ukrainian National Museum in 2005 from the Yavoriv region in western Ukraine. It also concentrates on resurrecting memories of art which was thought forgotten, such as the Ukrainian Museum's exhibitions 'The Lost Architecture of Kiev' (1982); 'Ukraine-Images from 5000–4000BC: Treasures of the Trypilian Culture' (1993) and 'Ukrainian Sculpture and Icons: A History

of Their Rescue' which opened on 13 December 2006. The fear of losing ties to Ukraine through geographic displacement and assimilation has been offset by these institutions' goals, stated by the Ukrainian Museum as keeping 'alive the customs and traditions brought from the homeland by the immigrants' (Baczynsky and Labrosse 2005: 13).

Yet the site at which this history has been kept alive has resided with the object itself, probably more so than the exhibitions of which they are a part. This has occurred because, in the US diaspora, the objects ultimately represent cultural and national relics (Hankewych 2005: 69). They are remnants of Ukraine's past, not Russia's, and serve as historic proof of the distinct nature of both cultures. Their integral if not symbiotic tie to the region and land from which they emerged, through the birthplace origin of the artist of the artifact as well as its recipient, its ritual and commemorative function within that particular region, represent pathways with which the individual Ukrainian, at home or abroad, could identify.⁵ This significance attributed to the objects has, in turn, placed the museums which house them in the role, for Ukrainians, of institutionalised spaces of Ukrainian national identity. This relationship between object and institution is reminiscent of a church housing the relics of a saint – the relics representing material evidence that the saint existed and also offering a tangible connection to the saint's life, thereby increasing the significance of the patron in the present. In a similar dynamic, cultural objects, housed in the 'cultural sanctuary' of the museum (Baczynsky 2006: 8) become a material witness to a past for diaspora Ukrainians whose national existence was threatened and unreachable during the Soviet period.

A more complicated component of Ukrainian museums in the diaspora has been the collection and exhibition of twentieth-century modern and contemporary art because its origins cannot be tied to a single culture nor does its style lend itself to the kind of immediate cultural recognition afforded many folk art examples, such as the *pysanka*. Also, unlike the notion of the folk artifact as an object of national survival and its acquisition as rescued evidence from destruction, most examples of modern art were obtained much later, through donations, direct purchase from the artist and in some cases, at auction. They do not share the same history. Yet this development has been equally important for its association with twentieth-century western modernism and the concept of progress.

The representation of modern art has also been constructed as an opposition to sovietisation in Ukraine – and, especially, to the pressures to conform to the Soviet government's official Socialist Realist style. Set in

Figure. 3 Ternopil Province, Woman's Blouse (detail), early 20c. embroidery. Chicago, Ukrainian National Museum



place under Stalin's regime in 1934 when it was made into official doctrine (Morozov 2003: 74), artists were forced to adhere to it by producing idealised, 'dream factory' (Groys and Hollein 2003) images of the rich life experienced by hard-working citizens, as in Tatiana Yablonskaya's (1917–2005) *Bread*, 1949 (Figure 4). Here, references to Ukrainian identity are made through the embroidery patterns subtly painted on the sleeves of women working on a collective farm. Happy, energetic and productive for the Soviet state, these women are cast in a positive light, their Ukrainian national allegiance sublimated to a secondary, if not coincidental, status by the small and distant pictorial depiction of the embroidery itself (Simpson 2000: 161). While Yablonskaya complied with official Soviet expectations and managed to succeed within the state system, not all artists chose to do so. Such artists suffered economically by not gaining access to work through the government-controlled Artists Union, which provided jobs, commissions and exhibition opportunities for member artists. Alla Horska (1929–70), whose case represents the extreme, was an artist who publicly opposed the Soviet government's suppression of Ukrainian national identity during the 1960s and used her art to express her views. Her sketch for the final version of a stained glass window *Shevchenko, Mother*, 1964 (Figure 5) (Horska, with Opanas Zalyvakha, Liudmyla Szemykina and Halyna Zubchenko) is among the most direct in this manner. Designed for the Red Building at Kyiv University, the stained glass composition depicted Ukrainian poet, artist and national icon Taras Shevchenko (1814–61). Flanked on either side of him were, to his left, an image of a mother and child and, to his right, an image of a *kobzar* – the legendary storyteller playing the bandura, the Ukrainian national instrument. Surrounding Shevchenko's image, in the borders of the glass inset was the text, taken from his poem 'Imitation of Psalm XI', 'I will glorify those

Figure. 4 Tatiana Yablonskaya, *Bread*, 1949. oil on canvas. Moscow, Tretyakov Gallery



insignificant, mute slaves and will place my word next to them to guard them' (*Vozvelychu malykh otykh rabiv nymykh, ia na storozhi kolo nykh postavliu slovo*) (Shevchenko 1989: 422).⁶ Just as Shevchenko used his poetry to speak for Ukrainians against the Russian tsarist regime, so did Horska use Shevchenko's work with her own to represent Ukrainian cultural recognition against the Soviet government. On the order of communist and university officials, the piece was destroyed the night it was hung. As a result of her continued efforts to raise national consciousness, Horska was murdered by the KGB in 1970. Opposition was not tolerated and did not exist within the Soviet Union.

Ukrainian museums in the US have presented Western European modernism as the core of the opposition to Soviet Socialist Realism. Characterised by self-determined artistic interests, non-representation, experimentation, non-conformity and most importantly *freedom*, modernism embodied what Socialist Realism was not. The exhibition program and collection pattern of UIMA, for example, has adhered to this goal throughout its 37-year existence. Unlike its counterparts, UIMA is the only Ukrainian museum in the diaspora devoted solely to modern art, educating Ukrainian community members to art forms by artists of Ukrainian heritage working outside the traditional folk sphere (UIMA 1972). This agenda is conceptually reinforced in the curvilinear concrete façade of the building, designed by prominent Chicago architect Stanley Tigerman (Figure 6). It exhibits work by artists of various cultural heritages, including Ukrainian, and currently houses a permanent collection of 800 objects, including works on paper, paintings and sculpture. Its collection features the work of such internationally known earlier twentieth-century Ukrainian artists as Alexander Archipenko (Figure 7), Mikhailo Andreenko (1894–1982), and Alexis Gritchenko (1883–1977). Works by Ukrainian-born Canadian, European

Figure. 5 Alla Horska, with Opanas Zalyvakha, Liudmyla Szemykina and Halyna Zubchenko, *Shevchenko, Mother* 1964 sketch for stained glass panel, original destroyed



Figure. 6 Stanley Tigerman, *Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art*, 1978 façade, Chicago. Photo by Jaroslava Kuchma



and United States artists, such as Volodymyr Strelnikov (b. 1939) Anton Solomukha (b. 1945) and Jacques Hnizdovsky (1915–85) (Figure 8) are also included, as well as Chicago artists of diverse ethnic backgrounds, such as Michiko Itatani and Paul La Mantia, and British Pop and Abstract artists Patrick Caulfield, John Hoyland and Gillian Wise. Many objects of the collection were donated by artists who had exhibited at the UIMA, a consequence of the organisation's request that exhibiting artists contribute one of their works to the collection. Other objects were acquired through donation by collectors or purchased outright, through income received from government granting institutions, such as the state's Illinois Arts Council.

Figure. 7 Alexander Archipenko, *Two Figures*, nd. screenprint. Chicago, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art. Photo by Jaroslava Kuchma



One of the features of UIMA's exhibitions has been the presentation of Ukrainian diaspora artists within the context of Western modernism – as an opposition to Soviet Socialist Realism. Modernism's link with progress and the improvement of society through rational thought and self-criticism (Harrison 1997: 18) challenged the irrationality of the Soviet totalitarian model. As an authoritarian regime, governmental self-criticism didn't exist and rationality had little use in a system designed to keep its population under control. Furthermore, modernism's association with skepticism and empirical thought (Harrison 1997: 18) also discounted the Soviet model, as individual observation and experience associated with confirming reality could not be validated in a system dictating what reality ought to be (Groys and Hollein 2003). The importance of the imagination in modernism, as a mechanism for furthering human freedom, as Harrison (1997: 18) has indicated, is a feature which was probably the most dangerous within the

Figure. 8 Jacques Hnizdovsky, *Metro Poinconneuse*, 1957, oil on canvas, Chicago, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art. Photo by Jaroslava Kuchma



Soviet system, for it validated individuality and was internally driven – it could not be controlled by the state and could ultimately undermine its existence. In art, situating Ukrainian identity within a modernist context through Archipenko's work, for example, asserted Ukraine's ability to produce imaginative, individualistic and innovative art before it was suppressed by sovietisation after the Soviet Union's formation in 1922. That Archipenko achieved his most revolutionary, radical achievements before this time, in his polychromed *Médrano* sculptures and sculpto-paintings (Leshko 2005: 52) was a testament to the potential an artist could realise in an environment in which creative freedom was supported, as in the Century of Progress.

For the current diaspora, the opposition upon which it thrived has shifted from the Soviet Union to, most recently, Russia, its new geo-political successor. The move began in 1991 with Ukraine's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union on 24 August. As it became clear that the Soviet bloc was collapsing, diasporans envisioned a wish come true – reconnection with the homeland and validation for their

preservationist agenda (Satzewich 2002: 190). Diaspora museums generally adjusted their roles from an oppositional anti-Soviet position to one of receptiveness and integration with their native land. This included re-establishing connections between the diaspora and museums in Ukraine through lending artworks for exhibitions and the display of non-representational art by contemporary native Ukrainian artists, as in UIMA's 'Nexus' exhibition in 2003 (17 January–21 February). The Ukrainian diaspora, which had been geographically excluded and politically shunned by the Soviet regime, was more forcefully seen as a vital historical resource by many native Ukrainians seeking to fill in missing pieces of history (Stepovyk 1993: 44). This relationship was also reflected in political policy in Ukraine. The Institute of Diaspora Studies was established in 1994 by the government of first president Leonid Kravchuk as a forum for researching history, establishing contacts and exchanging information with the estimated 10 million Ukrainians living abroad (Institute of Diaspora Studies n.d.; Ukraine Government n.d.).

Satzewich (2002: 212) demonstrates that this period was one of euphoria, followed by a 'reality test' and general 'compassion fatigue' where efforts to reconnect practically and emotionally could not be achieved by everyone. The Ukrainian museums' role in the US diaspora, as keepers of Ukrainian cultural and national identity, was not in clear affinity with cultural self-identity in a newly independent Ukraine. Sovietisation had not disappeared, its level of entrenchment leading to the introduction of the derogatory term *homo sovieticus* (Satzewich 2002: 196). Indeed, despite the removal of Lenin statues throughout the former Soviet bloc, Socialist Realism was still a prominent aesthetic in Ukraine. The increase in Ukrainian national self-awareness in the 1990s and the reassertion of its independence from Russia in the 2004 elections realigned these museums' mission with that of the new Ukrainian government.⁷ President Viktor Yushchenko's appointment of his first Minister of Culture and Art in early 2005, political activist and pop music star Oksana Bilozir, represented a symbolic fusion of native Ukrainian and Western cultures. An 'Our Ukraine' party member and strong supporter of the Orange Revolution, Bilozir advocated Ukrainian national self-determination through her political activities and her music. Her first initiative was 'the establishment of a new Department of Diaspora and International Collaboration' (Matviichuk 2005: 3) which officially embraced both native-born Ukrainians and those of subsequent generations identifying with their Ukrainian nationality within the sphere of Ukrainian cultural development. One could argue that such a forum already existed in the earlier Institute, yet the publicity generated to the diaspora by Bilozir's comment ensured that

Ukraine's interest in maintaining that relationship beyond its borders was legitimate and ongoing. The significance of the diaspora to Yushchenko's platform is reinforced on his website, despite changes in Ministry staff,⁸ with a section devoted to the diaspora.⁹ The latter's preservationist mission had secured it a 'holding pattern' place, enabling Ukrainian institutions in Ukraine to tap into the cultural resources museums in the diaspora contained. As repositories, the objects these museums held offered a vehicle for reviving Ukrainian national awareness for native Ukrainians attempting to access their own cultural heritage, which was already becoming lost through sovietisation. In this context, the preservation of folk art has become a symbol of progress in Ukraine, exemplified in the establishment of the Ivan Honchar Museum in Kyiv in 1993, featuring over 15,000 Ukrainian folk and decorative art objects in its collection. As Honchar (n.d.) himself stated, 'Let everything you will see in the Museum bring out the best in you, your love for the poetic soul of your motherland Ukraine, and let your love become a stimulus for her bright future and her prosperity.' Reviving and institutionalising the past through the history of Ukraine's art objects has insured a future for re-establishing Ukrainian national identity.

The concept of a shared national spirit over the course of time has been the organising principle for both the Ukrainian government and the US diaspora. The Ukrainian Museum's foremost goal in preserving the past through its acquisition of art works, has been taken into the present to meet this need, 'to present the Ukrainian experience, past and present. Through its exhibitions the museum has sought to bring to light the fact that the cultural legacy of the Ukrainian people has always been a significant factor in their turbulent journey through history and struggle for independence' (Baczynsky and Labrosse 2005: 13). That spirit and fight for freedom was asserted in two exhibitions appearing shortly after the 2004 elections and subsequently thereafter: the earlier two – the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art's *Artists Respond: Ukrainian Art and the Orange Revolution* (2 December 2005–28 February 2006) and the Ukrainian Museum's inaugural exhibition, *Alexander Archipenko: Vision and Continuity* (3 April 2005–18 September 2006) which marked the opening of their new state-of-the-art 25,000 sq. ft. building in New York's East Village in Spring 2005. UIMA's show, which culled objects made in response to Ukrainians' assertion of the democratic process through free and fair elections in Fall 2004, some of them from Kyiv's Independence Square or *maidan* itself, asserted Ukrainian cultural distinction from Russia through the lens of contemporary art. In New York, the Ukrainian Museum presented *Archipenko* – a project comprising sixty-five works primarily from the

collection of the artist's widow Frances Archipenko Gray, private collectors, and such museums as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Yale University Art Gallery, and the artist's international reputation to assert the Museum's position as the international Ukrainian cultural institution in the United States, if not the global diaspora. Both exhibits temporally bracket, if not bracket out, Ukraine's Soviet era in favor of those periods in Ukrainian history distinguished by political self-determination. The *Archipenko* show marks the brief years of independence from 1917 to 1919 before the Soviet era began and Archipenko's symbolic connection to autonomous expression. The *Orange Revolution* distinguishes Ukraine's ultimate break from Russian hegemony and its implied extension of former Soviet rule. Ukrainian democratisation and self-determination after 1991 independence thrust local Ukrainian museums in the US diaspora into an international playing field and transformed them from sites of cultural and political refuge into active participants in the nation-building process.

Notes

¹ The extent of russification in Ukrainian culture has been documented largely through its language. In English see Bilaniuk (2005); Shevelov (1989) and Velychko (2006), although the issue often reappears in the current Ukrainian and Ukrainian diaspora press.

² One exception is the Ukrainian Museum and Library in Stamford, CT, founded in 1935 as part of a Ukrainian Catholic High School. It is excluded from this discussion as it only received not-for-profit status as an independent cultural institution in 2000 (Ukrainian Museum Stamford).

³ Most of these initial refugees were forced laborers sent into the area to work farms or factories, civilians escaping Eastern Front fighting and the scorch and burn tactics of the Soviet Army, and others. Those remaining after repatriation were largely from Galicia, with a minority from Eastern Ukraine, 75 per cent of them belonging to the 18- to 35-year-old age group (Krill n.d.)

⁴ The emphasis on cultural expression was also likely a partial resumption of the cultural renaissance in Ukraine of the 1920s, then violently suppressed in the early 1930s – which many DP camp refugees would have remembered if not experienced firsthand. In Eastern Ukraine, under the Soviet's, this was influenced by Ukrainisation, the Communist government's policy of gaining political power in Ukraine through official promotion of indigenous, national culture. Literature, art and education flourished as the Bolsheviks sought to solidify proletarian ideology in Ukraine and modernise the republic from a predominantly agrarian to an urban industrial region. In Western Ukraine, under predominantly Polish and Romanian rule, Ukrainian national sentiment was fueled by opposition to government assimilation policies (Subtelny 2000: 434). Unable to achieve national self-determination on an official level under Poland, for example, Ukrainian cultural, social and political activities were maintained at smaller, localised organisations, such as cooperatives and underground schools (Subtelny 2000: 434).

⁵ The Ukrainian Museum announces on its website, 'Learn About your Ukrainian Roots!' Persons of Ukrainian heritage are encouraged to visit the Museum as a place where one's

roots can be 'shown' and 'established'. In other words, those who are connected with their heritage can demonstrate it to others through the presence of material objects – a process of witnessing; those that may know of their heritage but are not knowledgeable about its culture can discover it there. On becoming a member, the site states, 'you will enjoy many privileges, but the best one will be – finding your way home' (Ukrainian Museum n.d.).

⁶ All translations from Ukrainian are my own unless otherwise indicated. An English translation of the poem, slightly different from my own, is found in Andrusyshen and Kirkconnell (1964: 507).

⁷ It is important to note however, that the *Crossroads: Modernism in Ukraine 1910–1930* exhibition which opened at the Chicago Cultural Center on 22 July 2006 and traveled to the Ukrainian Museum in New York was already being organised before the 2004 elections. The exhibition was produced in the United States by the Chicago Sister Cities International Program with input from the diaspora community.

⁸ The current Minister of Culture and Tourism (note the title change by the government in 2005) is Vasyl Volodymyrovych Vovkun who was appointed on 18 December 2007. He is the second such minister after Ihor Dmytrovych Likhovyi who was appointed in October 2005 and had adopted a lower profile than his predecessor. In 2006 he visited the United States to explore the Ukrainian diaspora community's cultural activities that included meetings with museum personnel, such as UIMA and the Ukrainian National Museum in Chicago.

⁹ The Ukrainian government's website (Ukrainian Government n.d.) begins its 'Diaspora' section with the etymology and definition of 'diaspora', 'from the Greek word diaspora – scattering – the scattering of a nation, expelled from their homeland by foreigners'. While the Ukrainian and English meanings are synonymous, in Ukrainian, *rozsiannia* (scattering) has agricultural connotations regarding the scattering of seeds during the planting season, which will be harvested later. This is parallel to the history of diaspora Ukrainians who planted roots in other geographic places to be harvested later by their native homeland. The importance of stating its Greek origin may also be an attempt to establish a historical lineage with the principles of democracy introduced in Ancient Greece. Thus, those Ukrainians who fled the Soviet Union into the diaspora supported an established and deeply significant notion of democracy that could not be taken lightly as an opportunity to take advantage of western capitalism (this was a typical Soviet response to discount western society as materialistic, commercial, greedy and lacking spiritual/ideological substance). This same strategy to connect with Ancient Greece has been used in the past by a number of emerging democratic nations, as in the United States' neo-classical architectural program during the post-revolutionary period.

References

- Andrusiv, Petro. 2004. 'Ohliad Ukrainskogo Mystetskoho Zhyttia v SSHA', *Obrazotvorche mystetstvo* 3, 51: 19–23. In text as (Andrusiv 2004).
- Andrusyshen, C.H. and Kirkconnell, Watson (trans.) 1964. *The Poetical Works of Taras Shevchenko The Kobzar*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. In text as (Andrusyshen and Kirkconnell 1964: 507).
- ArtUkraine.com. 2006, 'The Life and Death of Alla Horska', *Crimes of Communism Against Ukraine and Her People*. retrieved on 16 January 2006. Available at <http://www.artukraine.com/commcrimes/aalap2.htm>
- Baczynsky, Marta. 2006 'Who Built the Ukrainian Museum?', *Ukrainian Museum*, retrieved on 8 February 2006. Available at <http://www.ukrai>

- nianmuseum.org/news_011007whobuilt.html. In text as (Baczynsky 2006: 8).
- Baczynsky, Marta and Labrosse, Romana. 2005, 'Presenting the Ukrainian Museum: A Cultural Experience', *The Ukrainian Weekly* LXXIII, 13, 27 March: 13. In text as (Baczynsky and Labrosse 2005: 13).
- Barchuk, Myroslava. n.d. 'The Rebellious Generation of the Shistdesyatyky', *Welcome to Ukraine*, retrieved on 3 October 2005. Available at <http://wumag.kiev.ua/index2.php?param=pgs20044/48>.
- Bajko, Daria. 2007, Email correspondence with author, dated 6 March. In text as (Bajko 2007).
- Bilaniuk, Laada. 2005. *Contested Tongues: Language Politics and Cultural Connection in Ukraine*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. In text as (Bilaniuk 2005).
- Century of Progress. 1933. *Official Guide, Book of the Fair 1933*. Chicago, IL: Cuneo Press. In text as (Century 1933).
- Century of Progress International Exposition. 1933. *The Official Pictures of a Century of Progress Exposition, Chicago 1933*. Chicago, IL: Reuben H. Donnelley. In text as (Century of Progress 1933).
- Clifford, James. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. In text as (Clifford 1997).
- Danyleiko, Volodymyr. 2003, 'Cherez 100 lit', *Obrazotvorche mystetstvo* 4: 53–5. In text as (Danyleiko 2003).
- Duffus, R.L. 1933. 'The Fair: A World of Tomorrow', *New York Times* 28 May. In text as (Duffus 1933).
- Groys, Boris and Hollein, Max (eds.) 2003. *Traumfabrik Kommunismus : die visuelle Kultur der Stalinzeit / Dream Factory Communism: The Visual Culture of the Stalin Era*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz and Frankfurt: Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt. In text as (Groys and Hollein 2003).
- Hankewych, Iaroslav. 2005. 'Skhorony pamiaty', *Obrazotvorche mystetstvo* 2, 54: 68–9. In text as (Hankewych 2005).
- Harrison, Charles. 1997. *Modernism: Movements in Modern Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. In text as (Harrison 1997: 18).
- Honchar, Ivan. N.d. 'Ivan Honchar Museum', retrieved on 14 March 2006. Available at <http://www.honchar.org.ua/english.htm>. In text as (Honchar n.d.).
- Horbachov, Dmytro. 2005, Conversation with the author, 19 April, Chicago, IL. In text as (Horbachov 2005).
- Institute of Diaspora Studies. n.d. *Zahalni dani*, 1, retrieved on 10 April 2006. Available at <http://idd.ukrsat.com/main.php?p=1>. In text as (Institute of Diaspora Studies n.d.).

- Kalymon, Olha. 1993. Conversation with the author 13 October, Chicago, IL. In text as (Kalymon1993).
- Klimchak, Maria. 2005. 'Persha Ukrainska Prezentatsia Oleksandra Arkhipenka v Amerytsi', *Obrazotvorche mystetstvo* 2, 54: 70–3. In text as (Klimchak 2005: 73).
- Klimchak, Maria. 2006. 'Ukrainian National Museum at Chicago – Ambassador of Ukrainian Culture in the World', lecture presented at University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, 25th Annual Conference on Ukrainian Subjects, typescript. In text as (Klimchak 2006).
- Krill, Hanya. n.d. 'What did your parents do in the DP camps after the war?', *The Ukrainian Museum*, retrieved on 21 March 2007. Available at http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org/news_030311subtelny-DPcamps.html.
- Leshko, Jaroslaw. 2005. *Alexander Archipenko: Vision and Continuity*. New York: Ukrainian Museum. In text as (Leshko 2005).
- Leyten, Harrie and Damen, Bibi, eds. 1993. *Art, Anthropology and the Modes of Re-presentation: Museums and Contemporary non-Western Art*. Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute.
- Matviichuk, Tatiana. 2005. 'Ukraine's New Ministers Proclaim Ambitious Goals to Benefit People of Ukraine', *The Ukrainian Weekly* LXXIII, 9, 27 February: 3. In text as (Matviichuk 2005: 3).
- Memorial. n.d. 'Alla Horska (1929–1970)', *Rozstriliane vidrozhennia (osvitna prohrama). Knyha pamiati Ukrainy. Khudozhnyky*, retrieved on 10 April 2006. Available at <http://memorial.org.ua/education/frameset.htm>
- Morozov, Alexander. 2003. 'Socialist Realism: Factory of the New Man', in Boris Groys and Max Hollein (eds.), *Traumfabrik Kommunismus: die visuelle Kultur der Stalinzeit / Dream Factory Communism : The Visual Culture of the Stalin Era*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz and Frankfurt: Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt. In text as (Morozov 2003: 74).
- Nelson, Steven. 2006. 'Diaspora: Multiple Practices, Multiple Worldviews, in Amelia Jones (ed.), *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Pawliczko, Ann Lencyk, ed. 1994. *Ukraine and Ukrainians throughout the World*. Toronto: University of Toronto for the Shevchenko Scientific Society.
- 'President's Message to the Fair' 1933. *New York Times*, 28 May. In text as (President's message 1933).
- Russnak, Iryna. 1996. *Ukrainian Museums, Galleries & Collections in the Western Diaspora*. Toronto: World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations. In text as (Russnak 1996).
- Rydell, Robert W. 1993. *World of Fairs: The Century of Progress Expositions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago. In text as (Rydell 1993).

- Sawicki, Nickolas. 2007. Email correspondence with the author, dated 28 February. In text as (Sawicki 2007).
- Satzewich, Vic. 2002. *The Ukrainian Diaspora*. London and New York: Routledge. (In text as Satzewich 2002).
- Shevchenko, Taras. 1989. *Poezii 1837–1861*. Kiev: Radianskyi pysmennyk. In text as (Shevchenko 1989: 422).
- Shevelov, George. 1989. *The Ukrainian Language in the First Half of the Twentieth Century (1900–1941)*. Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. In text as (Shevelov 1989).
- Shmahalo, Rostyslav. 2005. *Mystetska osvita v Ukraini seredyny XIX – seredyny XX st.: struktuvannia, metodolohia, khudozhni pozytsii*. Lviv: Ukrainski tekhnolohii. In text as (Shmahalo 2005).
- Simpson, Pat. 2000. ‘A Re-vision of Ukrainian Identity: Images of Labouring Peasant Women in Tatiana Yablonskaia’s *Corn*, 1949’, in Valerie Mainz and Griselda Pollock (eds.), *Work and the Image I: Work, Craft and Labour*. Aldershot: Ashgate. In text as (Simpson 2000: 161).
- Stepovyk, Dmytro. 1993. ‘Impresio Halyny Novakivskoi’, *Obrazotvorche mystetstvo* 3–4: 44–5.
- Subtelny, Orest. 2000. *Ukraine: A History*. 3rd edn. Toronto: University of Toronto. In text as (Subtelny 2000).
- Sverstyuk, Yevhen. n.d. ‘Alla Horska, a once and future artist’, *Welcome to Ukraine*, retrieved on 3 October 2005. Available at <http://www.wumag.kiev.ua/index2.php?param=pgs20044/52>.
- Ukrainian Government. n.d. ‘Ukrainska Diaspora’, *Uriadovii portal*, retrieved on 16 January 2006. Available at http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=169709&cat_id=31295. In text as (Ukrainian Government n.d.).
- Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art. 1972. *Persha Mystetska Vystavka, Exhibition Catalogue*. Chicago, IL: Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art. In text as (UIMA 1972).
- Ukrainian Museum. n.d. *Welcome*, retrieved on 8 February 2006. Available at <http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org/about.htm>. In text as (Ukrainian Museum n.d.).
- Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford, Connecticut. 2006. ‘History and Mission of the Museum’, retrieved on 2 April 2007. Available at <http://www.umlsc.org/history.htm>. In text as (Ukrainian Museum Stamford).
- Ukrainian National Museum. 2006 website retrieved on 28 February 2007. Available at <http://www.ukrainiannationalmuseum.org//eng/about/history.html>. In text as (Ukrainian National Museum, 2006).

Velychko, Stephen. 2006. 'The Politics of Public Language-Use Or Why English Should be Ukraine's Second Language', *The Action Ukraine Report* 653, Article 25, Washington, DC. (Friday 3 February), retrieved on 2 April 2006. Available at <http://eng.maidanua.org/node/513>. In text as (Velichko 2006).

Wolynetz, Lubov. 2007. Email correspondence with the author, dated 28 March. In text as (Wolynetz 2007).

Adrienne Kochman is Associate Professor of Art History at Indiana University Northwest. Her research explores national identity and diaspora and its relationship to modernism. Most recently, she has been contributor and guest co-editor with Anna Brzyski of 'Parallel Narratives' for the journal *Centropa* (September 2008) on national art histories in Central Europe, and is currently working on a book entitled 'Islands of Identity: Chicago's Multicultural Art Museums'.