Amazing stories?

Crimean heritage and the reinvention of Ukrainian art history

Stefaniia Demchuk (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv & Masaryk University, Brno)

Abstract: *This essay reconsiders the place of Crimea's Islamic heritage in Ukraine's mainstream art histories. Unlike art and architecture originating among Orthodox Christian communities, the Crimean heritage, produced by a people ethnically, culturally and religiously different, presented a challenge in terms of patrimonialization for Ukraine's titular nationality. From the early 20th century, the Ukrainian art historical narrative was exclusive and ethno-centred; thus, it was sluggish in embracing the other paradigm of a multicultural state. This essay undertakes not only to expose the factors that impeded or even forbade the patrimonialization of early modern Crimean art but also to present possible methodological solutions that can facilitate reinventing the canon of Ukrainian art history.*

Early modern Ottoman Crimean art and architecture have been in the focus of studies for several decades, with a recent shift towards a transregional perspective.[1] In recognition of this trend, this essay will not explore particular artworks or monuments, but instead examine the ways that the Crimean heritage was incorporated into Ukrainian art history and identify the challenges that are still open. Thus, chronologically I shall focus on the times of the Crimean Khanate (1441–1783). Analysis of the patrimonialization process of the monuments that emerged from the extremely diverse and intertwined Crimean culture will facilitate the exposure of flaws in Ukrainian art history's existing narrative and

1 Kançal-Ferrari (2017, 2018 and 2022).

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reveal its methodological underpinnings stemming from Soviet times. The essay's first part discusses that narrative and its origins, whereas the essay's second part focuses on the post-2014 politics of memory as it is reflected in exhibitions. The closing paragraphs will offer a viable alternative that can reshape the old patterns of scholarship and memory culture.

Before 2014: Crimea, its heritage and Ukrainian art history

Ties between mainland Ukraine and Crimea developed over several centuries. This coexistence was marked by economic and cultural exchanges as well as by political and military conflicts. This impacted Crimea's patrimonialization within Ukraine after its inclusion in Ukrainian territory in 1954.

Once a part of Greco-Roman antiquity, Crimea and its steppe hinterland became a centuries-long site of conflict between the Eastern Slavs and steppe peoples like the Khazars and Cumans. On the coast, Greeks and Italians (Genoese) continued to be present. In 1475, a client state of the Mongol 'Golden Horde', which overran most of Ukraine in 1237, came under Ottoman suzerainty. This entity, known as the Crimean Khanate after 1441, remained that empire's vassal until its annexation by Russia in 1783.[2]

In the following period, new towns were founded and populations were moved around.[3] This process peaked in the 1944 wholesale deportation of Crimean Tatars to Inner Asia on account of their purported collaboration with the Nazis. Settlers from more 'loyal' ethnic backgrounds (Russians and, to a lesser extent, Ukrainians) repopulated Crimea, resulting in a completely changed ethnic composition.[4]

After multiple political and military conflicts, the Crimean Peninsula officially became a part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1954. It was in the same year that the Soviet Union celebrated the 300th anniversary of the "Union of Russia and Ukraine" – also known as the Pereyaslav Council.[5] No wonder that none of the (rather scarce) historical accounts of Ukrainian art

2 Zhirohov & Nicolle (2019), p. 6–8; Brook (1999), p. 253; Curta (2019), pp. 177–8; Cvetkovski & Hofmeister (2014), p. 370.

3 O'Neill (2017), pp. 317–8; Cvetkovski & Hofmeister (2014), p. 37.

4 Aydın (2019), p. 10.

5 Kasianenko (2005), p. 212.

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mentioned Crimea prior to this date, despite the traditionally strong economic and cultural ties between the peninsula and its Ukrainian hinterland.

This paradox's explanation lies both in the traditions of Russian cultural policy and in the dogma of the triune Slavic nation, which was designed as one of the Russian empire's tools of hegemony-building.[6] According to this dogma, three 'fraternal' modern nations originated from the people of the medieval Rus: Russians, Ukrainians and Belarussians.[7] Throughout history, they were divided because of the evil plots designed by other states such as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. But they had always striven to reunite, because only being united within one state was a natural state for them. These three nations constituted the so-called 'Russian world', in which 'Great Russia' should dominate the 'Little Russians' and 'White Russians'. This 'world' had to be Orthodox and Russian-speaking.[8] Other religions and cultures were considered foreign and imposed on the territories that should have been part of the 'Russian world', as, for example, in Ukraine.[9] Soviet authorities promoted the same dogma, but common language and shared culture, especially literature played the role of glue instead of religion.

Therefore, the Crimean khanate's medieval and early modern heritage could not constitute a natural part of the Ukrainian national canon during neither the Russian empire or the Soviet Union. Ukrainian art historians tended to produce art historical accounts based solely on the history of ethnic Ukrainians, and at the expense of all other groups that inhabited its territory in the past.[10] For example, Volodymyr Modzalevskyi asserted, in his 1918 book titled *Key features of Ukrainian art*, that,

> every people has its own art intertwined with the essence of its national countenance, and it is in the artworks that are nothing like art of the neighbouring people in which we can see the genuine examples of Ukrainian people's artistry.[11]

6 Krawchenko (1987), p. 31.

7 Metreveli (2020), p. 102.

8 Ibid., p. 102–3.

9 Biletskyi (1969), p. 232.

10 "Кожний нарід має своє мистецтво, тісно зв'язане з самою суттю його національного обличчя і якраз у речах, не схожих на мистецтво нікого із сусідніх народах, ми можемо побачити справжні зразки української народної творчости". Modzalevskyi (1918), p.4.

11 Ibid., p. 5 (translation by author).

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This approach legitimized the focus on 'people's art' as the true 'Ukrainian art', which corresponded with the Soviet idea of the people as the driving force behind both economic and cultural development. Modzalevskyi even renounced examination of Ukraine's Baroque and Classicist architecture, considering them products of foreign influences and lacking the typical features of a Ukrainian architectural style.[12]

Ukrainian scholars that fled from the Soviet regime were not restricted to exploring Ukrainian art history solely through Marxist dogma. Dmytro Antonovych refuted Modzalevskyi's statements in his *Short introduction to Ukrainian art history* of 1923, in which he emphasized the intertwining between national styles. He argued that every national style was part of a universal style, an integral part that cannot be taken from its context.[13]

Moreover, unlike Modzalevskyi, Antonovych acknowledged the difficulty one had to deal with when defining Ukrainian art. He pointed out that this question was relevant only in Ukraine because "For every other European cultured nation, this question would seem unthinkable."[14] All art created in France or by Frenchmen abroad is considered French, and so it is with German art, he stated.[15] However, in Ukraine, one wanted to be careful: "Although Ukrainian people live mostly on the territory of Ukraine, there are something like colonies interspersed amongst them that are not fully assimilated yet."[16] He explored Jewish and Polish art in the territory of Ukraine to come to the conclusion that, despite differences in culture and religion, their artwork could still be treated as Ukrainian.[17] With respect to the identities of Ukrainian-born painters, Antonovych suggested being flexible and discriminating between masters who were influenced more by the countries where they stayed or who kept true to their Ukrainian identity.[18]

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12 Ibid., p. 16.

13 Antonovych (1923), p. 3–4.

14 "У всякого іншого культурного європейського народу таке питання здавало-бися неймовірним"; Antonovych (1923), p. 6.

15 Ibid., p. 6.

16 "…хоч український народ живе компактною масою на території України, але між українською людністю здавна вкраплено невеличкі відносно колонії, які не вповні асимілювалися з Українцями, але тим часом вносять свій відносно невеликий, вклад в мистецьку творчість України"; Antonovych (1923), p. 7.

17 Antonovych (1923), p. 7-8.

18 Ibid., p. 9-10.

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Despite this rather outstanding statement for this period and time, the survey did not explore the Crimean heritage. Antonovych limited himself to examining Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish architecture, as did his predecessor, Hryhorii Pavlutskyi, whom he referred to in the introduction.[19]

No matter how progressive Antonovych was, he published his books in emigration and had no impact on Soviet scholarship, which adhered to the arguments expressed by Modzalevskyi. But not only methodology rooted in nationalism impeded a multicultural approach to art history; also the Soviet educational reform resulted in all departments of history and theory of art being either dismissed or transferred from the universities to the academies of art. That reform, together with the systemic persecution and execution of intelligentsia, broke the back of a Ukrainian art history that was showing signs of recovery in the 1950s, at the very time when Crimea became an administrative part of Ukraine and, thus, a new narrative was on the agenda.

But even then, the inertia of the triune dogma was still not so easy to overcome. In the 1950s and 1960s, many Ukrainian art historians tended to focus almost exclusively on Ukrainian art of the Rus and Baroque times. For example, in a monograph on Ukrainian portrait painting of the 17th and 18th centuries by Platon Biletskyi, one of the most famous Ukrainian art historians, it is stated that: "There is no need to include in the history of Ukrainian art everything that was once created in Ukraine or by its natives far from the homeland."[20] Ethnicity and Orthodoxy were regarded as the key characteristics of the 'Ukraineness' of art both in the Soviet times and in the first decades of Ukraine's independence.

Attempts to change the existing paradigm became evident only in 1967, when *The history of Ukrainian art* (1966-70), a multi-volume encyclopaedia supervised by Mykola Bazhan, was published. The survey was conceived a decade earlier by Ukrainian architect Volodymyr Zabolotnyi. He commissioned scholars from three academic institutions – the Institute for History and Theory of Architecture, the Institute for Artistic Industries and the Institute for Monumental Art and Sculpture – with the development of a conceptual framework for the future encyclopaedia.[21] In 1956, shortly after Joseph Stalin's death, the editorial board published a booklet entitled "The program for the study of

19 Ibid., p. 7.

20 Biletskyi (1969), p. 7 (translation by author).

21 Umantsev (2007), p. 98.

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Ukrainian art", where the necessity of a multi-volume survey was promoted.[22] The "program" had to pave the way for the larger publication that, however, emerged much later.

After the death of Zabolotnyi in 1966, a single-volume monograph titled *Studies in the history of Ukrainian art* was published.[23] Its concept dwelled on earlier publications with their ethno-centric narratives that meant once again exclusion of the art of other ethnic groups or religious minorities on the territory of Ukraine. Thus, the project planned by Zabolotnyi was still to be undertaken.

Eventually, Mykola Bazhan, a Soviet-Ukrainian poet, cultural historian and writer stepped forward and turned the initial idea into a six-volume encyclopaedia that covered Ukrainian art from prehistoric times to the 20th century. He insisted on the inclusion of Muslim and Jewish art, much in imitation of Hryhorii Pavlutskyi, who was as inclusive in his account of Ukrainian architecture in 1911.[24] Bazhan intended this survey to be written according to the territorial principle in opposition to the earlier ethno-centric accounts. It, too, had to emphasise "first democratic and then Socialist elements in Ukrainian art."[25]

The period that is of interest to us here is addressed in the second volume of Bazhan's encyclopedia.[26] Tatars are branded as a constant threat to Ukrainians, as invaders whose art and architecture were wiped out from the ethnocentric part of the book. The author started his account by stating that "Crimean architecture developed separately from Ukrainian architecture,"[27] although later on, he dismisses his own claim by pinpointing mutual influences.[28]

In general, Crimean Tatar art and architecture are discussed rather briefly (the account amounts to five pages) and sketchily. It states that the Tatars' culture was under Ottoman influence. At the same time, Nelgovskiy, the author of the section on Crimean art, mentions Italian architects at the khan's service, who were said to participate in the building of Or Qapi Fortress.[29] He also

22 Hirik (2021), p. 229.
23 Zabolotnyi (1966).
24 Hirik (2021), p. 232.
25 "демократичних, а потім і соціалістичних елементів українського мистецтва"; Bazhan (1966), p. 8.
26 Bazhan (1967), pp. 99-104.
27 Ibid., p. 99.
28 Ibid., p. 101, 104.
29 Ibid., p. 102.

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states that Ukrainian artists reluctantly contributed to the Tatars' arts and architecture being kept as their prisoners, but he failed to specify the sheer scale of this contribution. Nelgovskiy only briefly mentions Ukrainian elements being used in the ornamentation of Tatars' edifices.[30] He concludes by stating that,

> when Ukrainian masters were getting acquainted with artwork originating from countries conquered by Ottoman Turkey, they picked up different features and used them in their own artistic practice. But this issue has not been explored at all, so it is hard to talk about exact connections.[31]

Thus, one can surely deduce that Crimean art and architecture in the time of the Khanate were not considered a part of Ukraine's culture. Of course, the remains of palaces, residential houses, mosques or fortresses were considered during Soviet times and later as a cultural heritage that needed to be studied and protected, but it only idled on the periphery of the larger narrative and was doomed to be left out of any attribution.

Independence did not change much in the canon of Ukrainian art history. Ukrainian art historians adhered to the concept of the ethnic nation as a framework for art studies. Ukraine's natural cultural diversity was narrated in the same fashion as it had been done in the late 1960s in 'the history of Ukrainian art'.

The existing canon was supported by emerging new surveys of the history of art and the applied arts (which were seen as separate domains), and biographical sketches of the most prominent Ukrainian artists.[32] Despite being free from the pressure of Soviet Russian authorities, interpretations of art as a product of national spirit persisted and dictated the structure of all new surveys. Focus was placed on art created by ethnic Ukrainians, while the artistic development of other ethnic groups that lived on the territory of Ukraine was discussed separately.

Here I shall limit myself to the most comprehensive and authoritative account published before the occupation of Crimea: *The history of Ukrainian art* (in

30 Ibid., 101.

31 "Разом з тим, знайомлячись з витворами мистецтва країн, які захопила османська Туреччина, українські майстри переймали окремі риси цього мистецтва, переносили їх у свою творчість. Але це питання ще зовсім не досліджене і говорити про конкретні прояви зв'язків досить важко". Bazhan (1967), p. 104.

32 Avramenko (2006), Naiden (2011); Kashuba-Volvach (2012).

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six volumes, 2006–11). Produced under the auspices of the Rylsky Institute of Art Studies, Folklore and Ethnology, it claimed to explore how Ukrainian material corresponds with European periodization, both chronologically and in terms of content. But the use of the term 'Rus-Ukraine' when referring to the period from the 13th until the first half of the 16th century exposes the underpinning idea of building a continuous narrative of Ukrainian art as an uncontested entity rooted only in Slavic artistic culture.

Crimean late medieval and early modern art and architecture were studied in volumes 2 and 3 respectively. These accounts are longer and contain more details.[33] Generally, the Crimean Khanate was criticized for promoting wars and the slave trade.[34] Its late medieval art was rightfully considered a mixture of Western, Eastern Byzantine and Muslim artistic traditions.[35] "Western", that is, Western European Romanesque and Gothic styles blend with the Byzantine tradition, and as to the architecture of the Crimean Khanate, it undergoes "Orientalization" under the influence of Muslim counties of the Near East. However, the "Orientalization," in the authors' opinion, was not limited to the Khanate.[36]

They stated that despite religious and ethnic differences, Crimean artistic culture could be considered a unity based on its stylistic features. Supposedly,

> The same decorative floral patterns, namely shoots, helical and entangled stalks or various braids can be found in ornamentation in a Tatar mosque and medrese, in an Armenian or Greek church or palace, in a Jewish synagogue and even on Genoese plates with inscriptions from Kaffa or Soldaia.[37]

This conclusion is of strong importance as the authors actually outlined a strategy that could defy the existing canon and bring together the histories of art in

33 Skrypnyk (2011), pp. 743–60.

34 Ibid., p. 743.

35 Skrypnyk (2010), p. 86.

36 Ibid., p. 86.

37 "Одне й те саме декоративне оздоблення у вигляді рослинних пагонів, спіралеподібних і заплетених стеблин з потовщеннями чи різних плетінок трапляється в татарській мечеті та медресе, у вірменському чи грецькому храмі або палаці, у єврейській синагозі й навіть на генуезьких плитах з написами у Кафі та Солдайї". Skrypnyk (2010), p. 86.

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Ukraine. However, until now this comment has not led to any tectonic changes in art historiography, the possibility of which I shall discuss in the conclusion.

Crimean architecture of early modern times was regarded as a local variant of Turkish Ottoman architecture, which in itself is a mixture of Byzantine, Seljuk and Western European traditions, with Mimar Sinan (d. 1588) as the brightest representative. One chapter is focused on Kezlev (present-day Yevpatoria), its urban planning and, of course, the Friday Mosque (1552-64) designed by Mimar Sinan.

The author also briefly explored the Italian presence at the khan's court. He cited the example of Aloisio the New (possibly the Venetian sculptor Alvise Lamberti da Montagnana), who had been captured by Menli I Giray on his way to Moscow and worked on Bakchisaray palace, leaving behind a beautifully carved portal Demir-Kapu.[38] With respect to the Italian influence, the so-called Turkish Renaissance and so-called Turkish Baroque are mentioned as the dominant styles,[39] but the former is not explained any further, and the latter's description is limited to one sentence, where it was called "pronouncedly decorative" and highly ornamented in the "Khatai" style.[40]

A separate chapter studied Crimean Tatar applied arts, which were considered completely under the Ottoman influence through books, manuscripts, textiles, jewellery and pottery imported from Turkey.[41] Once again, the entangled nature of Crimean art becomes evident when Achukurina states that "Khatai" as a style transcended religious boundaries, being popular among both Muslims and Christians.[42]

Although the survey of 2011 does contain fairly detailed entries about Crimean Muslim late medieval and early modern art and architecture, the volumes themselves rely structurally on their Soviet predecessors. It is evident when it comes to the buildings' structure, and, although the survey covers

38 Skrypnyk (2011), p. 744.

39 The notion of a 'Turkish Baroque' is not explained fully in the Ukrainian encyclopaedia. An 'Ottoman Baroque' is outlined in the eponymous book of 2019 by Ünver Rüstem. He explores how Istanbul's architecture was transformed with the use of European models that had to reinforce the image of the Ottoman empire as a global force and convey to its capital a cosmopolitan look.

40 "Останній з них характеризується підкресленим декоративізмом архітектурних форм і застосуванням орнаментальних композицій, в основі яких лежав реалістичний рослинний і квітковий декор у стилі «хатаї»". Skrypnyk (2011), p. 744.

41 Skrypnyk (2011), p. 952.

42 Ibid., p. 953.

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all the important aspects of Crimean art and architecture in the times of the Crimean Khanate, it mostly fails to integrate the Crimean part into Ukrainian art history. Crimea stands on its own totally disconnected from the main narrative, which gives the reader an idea of the region's being only mechanically added due to political and economic reasons. On rare occasions, relations to what is considered a pure 'Ukrainian' culture are presented but they are not really explored. However, these accounts are far more advanced, and sometimes pave the way for a different perspective on the Crimean artistic tradition.

Therefore, the surveys published before 2014, if they mention it at all, tend to create an image of Crimea as an exotic Other of Ukrainian culture that has to be understood and appreciated, but not thought of as something that can be easily assimilated into a national narrative. And that is the biggest flaw that scholars of Ukrainian art history have to deal with right now.

Knowing thy Other? Post-2014 exhibitions

In late February 2014, when the so-called Revolution of Dignity in Kyiv entered its most dramatic stage, Russian military troops invaded Crimea and installed the pro-Russian puppet government there. An orchestrated referendum followed. It resulted in the declaration of Crimea's 'independence' on 16 March 2014, followed by the peninsula's incorporation into Russia two days later. The annexation of Crimea led to drastic changes in Ukrainian cultural politics. Crimean Tatars and their culture finally came into focus.

In 2015 the Crimean House (*Kryms'kyi dim*, *Qırım Evi*) was established in Kyiv as an educational and cultural centre that offered workshops, public talks, exhibitions, and publications in the Crimean Tatar language, as well as translations from it to Ukrainian. The Crimean House also partners in concerts and art exhibitions with museums (like the Art Arsenal) and musical groups, and advocates human rights by organising political actions in support of the political prisoners in Crimea and public talks with their relatives in Ukraine. Its representatives also join the bigger missions to advocate the rights of Crimean Tatars in the European parliament, the United Nations Security Council and the Council of Europe.

Two years later, in 2017, the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation (UCF) was created to, as it says in the statement, "introduce new mechanisms for result-oriented and competition-based state funding for initiatives in the field of culture

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and creative industries."[43] During the next three years, the UCF invested 13,5 million hryvnas (ca. 355,325 Euros) into fifteen projects related to Crimea. In 2021 Yuliia Fediv, the UCF's acting director, announced a special Crimean programme as a part of the next call for projects, developed by the UCF together with the Ukrainian Institute and the Crimean house.[44] That call for projects on the 'Culture of Crimea' has now been published on the UCF's official website.[45] Its stated priorities include a comprehensive retrospective understanding of Crimean culture through art, forming a vision of Crimea's future cultural landscape by emphasising the continuity of cultural ties between Crimea and mainland Ukraine, and the preservation, development and representation of the cultural diversity of Crimea, in particular the Crimean Tatar culture. The submitted projects were supposed to reach a wide audience in mainland Ukraine and Crimea, and foster new partnerships between organizations and institutes involved in the preservation and promotion of Crimean culture and human rights.

Ukrainian cultural policy is reflected in a wide range of projects aimed at bringing Crimean culture closer to Ukrainians. It was a necessary step towards both the integration of Crimean art into the Ukrainian art-historical canon and, more generally, the recognition of Crimean Tatar identity as a part of Ukrainian identity. Here I shall examine two recent exhibitions that addressed Crimean culture and contributed to the change in the narrative of Ukrainian art history.

'Amazing Stories of Crimea' (2019), in the Art Arsenal (*Mystetskyi Arsenal*) in Kyiv, offered insight into the complicated ethnic and cultural history of the peninsula. It was open from February 26 through May 5, the starting date being the 'Day of Resistance to the Occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol'. It commemorated the 2014 demonstration when thousands of Crimean Tatars assembled outside the parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, i.e. the day before Russian Federation sol-

43 "About us," *Ukrainian Cultural Foundation*, accessed 28 February 2023, https://ucf.in.ua/en/p/about.

44 Krymskyi, Ivan, "Krym v kulturnykh proiektakh Ukrainy," *Voice of Crimea*, 2 September 2021, https://voicecrimea.com.ua/main/articles/krim-v-kulturnix-proyektax-ukra%D1%97ni.html, accessed 28 February 2023.

45 "LOT 3. Culture of Crimea," *Ukrainian Cultural Foundation*, accessed 28 February 2023, https://ucf.in.ua/en/m_lots/61a62f0801635d328f689cd2.

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diers took armed control of the parliament in preparation for the annexation of Crimea.

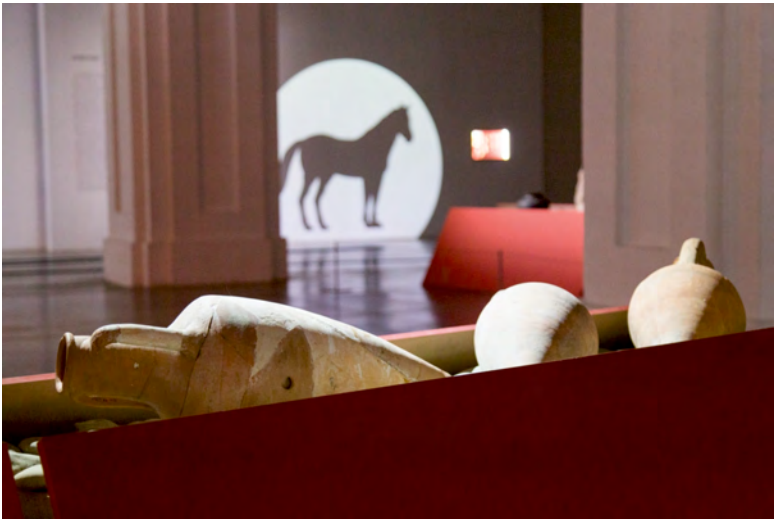

Fig. 1: General view of the exhibition "Amazing Stories of Crimea." Photo: Oleksandr Popenko / Mystetskyi Arsenal, 2019.

The curators pointed to the problem in the Ukrainian imagination that they wanted to tackle:

> The glimmering sea, the rustling cypress trees, the waves crashing beneath the steep cliffs, the faint smell of lavender, the endless steppe with wormwood and burial mounds, and the light ochre-coloured earth. This is the beautiful, but sometimes harsh, Crimea we see in pictures, drawings and photographs. And it seems like in the Ukrainian public consciousness, Crimea is more a space, a landscape, than the home of countless cultures – some well-studied, others mysterious.[46]

46 "Amazing stories of Crimea," *Mystetskyi Arsenal*, https://artarsenal.in.ua/en/vystavka/amazing-stories-of-crimea, accessed 28 February 2023.

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Basically, even in 2019, Crimea was perceived as an exotic Other of Ukraine. The variety of presented artefacts connected with stories was an attempt to bridge the gap between two cultures and, ultimately, integrate Crimea into a new, inclusive Ukrainian artistic narrative. The ethnic and religious otherness was supposed to be overcome by personal stories related to the presented objects, which eased the way for visitors to connect on an emotional level.

The exhibition also aimed to trace the paths of Crimean artefacts into mainland collections. An exhibition about Crimea without Crimean materials presented a challenge for the curators, who not only had to address existing stereotypes but also had to deal with the difficulties of obtaining objects for the exhibition. Thus, they requested objects of Crimean origin or related to the topic from museums in mainland Ukraine.

Fig. 2: Jewellery and cauldron, 4th century BC, bronze casting from burial mound near Mala Lepetykha village, Velykolypetskyi district, Kherson region, excavated in 1992 by Hennadiy Yevdokymov of the Institute of Archaelogy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Photo: Oleksandr Popenko / Mystetskyi Arsenal, 2019.

Fifteen museums and anonymous private collectors contributed to the exhibition. The title "Amazing stories" hints at the focus of the project, which

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treats the objects only as a pretext to tell stories of glory, wars, and personal tragedies. The real subject of the "Amazing stories" was the cultural memory of Crimean ethnic groups more generally, and Crimean Tatars in particular endangered by the annexation of the peninsula.

As Svetlana Biedarieva summed up in her review of the exhibition:

> It also reveals the uneasy history among Crimean ethnic groups. It is divided into areas, each presenting the culture of a particular group that lived in Crimea for centuries, such as Turks, Italians, Goths, Sarmatians, Scythians, Greeks, Khazars, Cimmerians, and Tauri, among others, presenting Crimea as a place of intensive cultural exchange before the 20th century.[47]

The exhibition was accompanied by a series of lectures titled "(Un)known Crimea", presented by Oleksandr Halenko, Evelina Kravchenko, Tetiana Shevchenko, Svitlana Tzurkan, Gulnara Bekirova and Yuliia Skubytska.[48] They are still available for watching at the webpage of the Art Arsenal.[49]

In 2021 a multi-genre project 'Crimean way/Yol Qırım' curated by Rustem Skybin and Vlodko Kaufman tackled the history and culture of Crimean Tatars. The exhibition was intended for a wide audience and for families in particular and, therefore, fluctuated between presenting a historical narrative of Crimean statehood, culture, religion and traditions, and entertaining features like listening to lullabies, immersing into the virtual reality experience of Bakhchysarai and its environs, or Crimean Tatars' board games for family and companies to play. The artistic component was represented by a newly formed collection of applied arts, which consisted of 200 items with pottery, textiles and jewellery amongst them.

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47 Biedarieva, Svitlana. "Crimea's amazing history told through art," *Hyperallergic*, 3 May 2019, https://hyperallergic.com/498027/amazing-stories-of-crimea-art-arsenal/, accessed 28 February 2023.

48 "Amazing stories of Crimea. Tsykl lektsii '(Ne)vidomyi Krym'" [The series of lectures "(Un)known Crimea"], *Mystetskyi Arsenal*, accessed 28 February 2023, https://artarsenal.in.ua/education/proekt/ne-vidomyj-krym-tsykl-lektsij/.

49 "Amazing stories of Crimea. Tsykl lektsii '(Ne)vidomyi Krym'" [The series of lectures "(Un)known Crimea"], *Mystetskyi Arsenal*, accessed 28 February 2023, URL: https://artarsenal.in.ua/education/proekt/ne-vidomyj-krym-tsykl-lektsij/.

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Fig. 3: Fragments of an Ottoman military tent, late 17th century, Lviv Historical Museum. Photo: Oleksandr Popenko / Mystetskyi Arsenal, 2019.

First, the curators stated that the Crimean Tatars were among the indigenous peoples of Ukraine, and that their cultural heritage as well as spiritual and material heritage were integral parts of the all-Ukrainian heritage. Second, admitting it as an integral part would open the 'way' to the non-mythical Ukrainian (in particular, the Crimean Tatar) history, and enable the personal perception of Crimean culture by the viewers as their own, close, and native culture. Vlodko Kaufman, one of the curators, aptly noted that:

> Addressing Crimea, Crimean culture and people means to show the topic as a raw wound. Despite the tragic history of the Crimean Tatars, the Ukrainian state remained blind and never addressed the problem for 30 years. This belatedness haunts us now. And although the annexation triggered bringing this problem of loss into the public space, we still have to feel it and perceive it on the mental level.[50]

50 "Piznai svoikh: ukraintsi maiut znaty pro kulturu krymskykh tatar," 3 October 2021, https://life.pravda.com.ua/culture/2021/10/3/246101/, accessed 28 February 2023.

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The belatedness and superficiality of Ukrainian art historians responsible for writing the grand narrative still constitute one of the major issues. Of course, there are art historians who explore Crimean culture in depth, but they are mostly known amongst their colleagues from abroad who study the same topic and not in the mainland Ukrainian art historical community with its centres in Kyiv, Lviv and Kharkiv.

Fig. 4: General view of the exhibition "Amazing Stories of Crimea." Photo: Oleksandr Popenko / Mystetskyi Arsenal, 2019.

The imposition of the Russian narrative in Crimea is one more issue that we have to deal with. As Sevgil Musaeva, the editor-in-chief of 'Ukrainian Pravda', one of the key Ukrainian media outlets, pointed out:

> Russian historiography did everything possible to erase the Crimean Tatars' narrative in Crimea. Ukrainians have to know that our people have a lot in common as (for example) our experience of opposing the empire, which aimed at erasing our languages, cultures, traditions and the peoples themselves. Unfortunately, we started to discover each other only after the an-

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> nexation of Crimea. But I'm sure this knowledge will strengthen us, and the culture of the Crimean Tatars will enrich Ukrainian culture.[51]

The exhibition was later transferred and became a part of the Crimean House's exhibit, and a part of the collection of applied arts was donated to the Museum of Folk Architecture and Everyday Culture 'Pyrohiv' in Kyiv, where a 'Crimean manor' was opened.[52]

Reinventing the canon of Ukrainian art history after 24 February 2022

Despite the efforts of artists, curators and public institutions, the foundations of Ukrainian art history remained largely unquestioned until the Russian invasion in February 2022. Art historians, who were responsible for narrating Ukrainian art history in lectures and texts, kept clinging to a nation-centred narrative that stemmed from the Soviet times, postulating that Ukrainian art should be limited to (preferably) Orthodox art created by artists who were ethnically Ukrainian. Being exclusive, the existing canon stands in the way of making Crimean art and architecture, especially of the early modern period, part of Ukrainian identity. It is considered not on the material and immaterial levels of Ukrainian cultural heritage, but rather on the level of state cultural policy. The large-scale war made the issues of cultural heritage even more pressing.

If one tries to deconstruct the canon it will become evident that a national canon means both selection of the most important artists and their key works, and an uninterrupted course of a nation's art history, which avoids dealing with ruptures and conflicts. In his critique of Panofskian iconology, Didi-Huberman claimed that Panofsky tried

> to eradicate the impurity, to resolve it, subsume it into an ordered schema that re-establishes the yearning of art history for aesthetic golden ages (the Renaissance was one) and reintroduces the enforcement by art history of coherent periods and 'systems of reference'.[53]

51 Ibid. (translation by author).

52 Halukh (2021).

53 Didi-Huberman (2003), p. 281.

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His observation is very true for a national canon too, for the surveys attempt to avoid "the impurity of time" and, I have to add, statehood, because in the Ukrainian case the people had to live under different regimes for the major part of their history.

Therefore, the first step towards a different canon should be acknowledging the plurality of art histories on Ukrainian territory, that is to say, starting with exploring 'histories of art', which would add another dimension to the patrimonialization of cultural heritage in general and that of early modern Crimea in particular.

It does not necessarily mean that the existing narrative's structure will be fully sacrificed for conflicting temporalities of artistic traditions. Historicism that grants coherency to the survey can still be preserved. In regard to the "History of Ukrainian art" of 2011, I mentioned the artistic unity in Crimea despite religious or ethnic differences. That moves the emphasis from particularities to general lines of development, which could be perceived as a good starting point for a discussion of periods. I do not imply that identities should be moulded artificially into generalizations. I would rather point to entanglements of traditions in Crimea and mainland Ukraine that are often overlooked and remain understudied.

However, at this stage of development, do we need a canon at all? In his essay on the formation of the canon, Hubert Locher cites Jan Assmann, who saw a canon as a necessary means for preserving identity in times of crisis, "the principle of a collective constitution and stabilization of identity, which is at the same time the foundation of individual identity."[54] Locher concludes: "The individual finds her- or himself addressed and represented in the canon. Its function is to give orientation that can only be achieved if the reference system is relatively stable."[55] In terms of a national canon, it means creating the type of reference system criticised by Didi-Huberman. Normativity in times of war and crisis can be considered a refuge and a secure connection, or "a nexus between the identity of the ego and collective identity," as Locher put it.[56]

Therefore, the importance of the national canon of art history cannot be denied for a society in danger, especially in the case of present-day Ukraine. Certainly, it should be viewed from a critical distance and sometimes deconstructed, but nevertheless, the canon can serve a very specific purpose.

54 Assmann, as cited in Locher (2011), p. 33.

55 Locher (2011), p. 33.

56 Ibid.

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Recent exhibitions conceived for a wide audience tried to appeal to viewers through artworks as well as through everyday tangible and intangible heritage; they tried to tell the stories of Crimean Tatars to Ukrainians, for whom Tatars until 2014 were often rather distant if not invisible. These and other exhibitions, as well as films and books produced in independent Ukraine, mostly put emphasis on the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in May 1944. They rarely dealt with a more distant history, which is understandable, as many artefacts, not to mention the architectural heritage, are no longer accessible while Crimea is still occupied.

Thus, until Crimea is liberated, the patrimonialization of its Islamic heritage can happen through surveys of the history of Ukrainian art, which are still an important part of every curriculum of every university or academy where art history is taught and are still read by a wide audience. But the vantage point should be shifted. This essay offers a possible solution based on concepts such as "connected histories" or "histoire croisée," which gained popularity in the early 1990s.

The term 'connected histories' was introduced by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, an Indian historian, who called for breaking the moulds of traditional 'historical objects' like nation or statehood and turning to cross-cultural and multidisciplinary studies of transfer (and not only cultural) between the regions and countries.[57] The notion of "histoire croisée" was elaborated in works of French historians Bénédicte Zimmermann and Michael Werner.[58] It, too, dates back to the 1990s, having been triggered by both globalization and the cultural turn.[59] Unlike comparativists, they question the categories that are usually used to explore histories of social or ethnic entities like nation or national culture, which are ahistorical and teleological. What Zimmermann and Werner propose in their programmatic essay is to find points of reference in the material and then move on to construct an argument.

In our case, developing connected histories or even "histoire croisée" will mean in-depth studies of artistic networks and exchanges in early modern Ukraine, both in Crimea and the mainland, without any preconditioned ideas about how politics, ethnicity or religion might have shaped the artistic culture of every group. The existence of artistic networks and exchanges beyond

57 Subrahmanyam (1997).

58 Werner & Zimmermann (2003); Zimmermann, Didry & Wagner (1999); Zimmermann (2010).

59 Werner & Zimmermann (2003), p. 7.

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boundaries of any kind was hinted at but not really explored in the surveys, which is unfortunate, as it could defy the narrative of constant enmity between the Tatars as Ottoman allies and Cossack Ukraine. Artistic unity in late medieval Crimea was obviously conditioned by artistic collaborations and connections between the artists and their clientele.

A survey with a title like "Entangled art histories in Ukraine" that would point to the inclusivity of the account, could be a solution as, without doubt, the lens through which we see early modern Crimean heritage has to be changed. The ethnocentric canon with its strict limitations and defensiveness towards the Other or the different, ethnically and/or religiously distorted the view of art historical development. It cut ties that were natural for the already globalised early modern world.

Therefore, the patrimonialization of the Crimean heritage is still a work in progress where Ukrainian cultural memory is concerned. The reinvention of Ukrainian art history should deconstruct the patterns adopted in Soviet times and find other, more productive ways to tell a story of Ukraine as a multicultural state with complex and connected histories.

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