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Space of Transformation: four Models of Contemporary Art Centres in Kyiv

In my research I look at four chosen artistic spaces created in independent Ukraine, which represent four functional models. Selected venues are PinchukArtCenter, Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Museum Complex, Visual Culture Research Center, and IZOLYATSIA. Platform For Cultural Initiatives in Kiev (IZOLYATSIA moved to Kiev from Donetsk due to the political situation in 2014.) I believe that it is justified to think of Ukraine as a post- and neo-colonial country. Therefore, in my doctoral dissertation I look at how the processes of decolonisation are manifested in the cultural, linguistic and narrative politics of chosen art institutions, and whether efforts are made to deal with the legacy of the colonial (Soviet) past.

I am specifically interested in the following issues:

- analysis of four models of institutions - private, state, civic, and the "mixed" model
- processes of collecting, contextualising and exhibiting works of art
- art institutions as spaces of post-colonial and post-Soviet transformation
- curatorial and institutional narratives
- political and historical conditions that shaped selected institutions; ideological needs behind each of them
- messages behind the visual side of each institution.

The research aims to conceptualise selected institutions as "places". Therefore, I resort to methodologies derived from humanistic geography, such as topophilia, and concepts of "place" and "space". My main methodology, however, is that derived from postcolonial studies, primarily the thoughts of Homi Bhabha and Leela Gandhi, and their concepts of therapeutic processes of postcolonial transformation. In my opinion, these processes are visible in the activities of the above-mentioned institutions after 2014, i.e. the end of the Maidan revolution, the annexation of Crimea, and the beginning of the military conflict with Russia in eastern Ukraine, in the Donbas, which continues to this day. I also apply Homi Bhabha's 're-membering', the idea that understanding, but also accepting, the colonial past is a step towards full autonomy. Another important concept I refer to is hybridity, a kind of "third space" that arose during the Maidan revolution, where elements of anti-colonial nationalism were mixed with post-colonial elements. The "third space" is also a phase in the process leading from colonialism to full national autonomy.

Four selected institutions:

Mystetskyi Arsenal was established in 2005 on the initiative of the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko. It was supposed to be a space for contemporary art under the aus-

pices of a modern (independent) state. I analyse architecture and its influence on the program and design of exhibitions and museum space.

The PinchukArtCentre was established in 2006 as a "Western museum" in the hands of the Ukrainian oligarch. I look at the location, architecture, exhibition space, schedule and program of the center, as well as "territorial expansion", which includes participation in the Venice Biennale.

VCRC was founded in Kiev in 2008 as a platform for cooperation between academia, art and activists. It is a completely independent cultural initiative - independent of the state, as well as of a private donor.

IZOLYATSIA was established in 2010 as a non-profit organisation on the site of the former insulation material factory in Donetsk. In June 2014, the area was occupied by the armed forces of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, which forced the foundation to move to Kiev, where it managed to find a place referring to its industrial roots.