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The Representation of National Identity Through Contemporary Art and Design in a Globalized World

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Abstract The research intended to reveal the possibility of manifesting collective cultural belonging in contemporary creative practices at a time of intensified flows of images, symbols, and artistic forms between global cultural spaces. It was carried out in 2025-2026 as an empirical qualitative inquiry based on 60 publicly available visual and design artefacts from Ukraine, the Baltic countries, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and China. For the purpose of a balanced comparison, the corpus was divided into three equal parts: 20 examples of contemporary visual practice, 20 examples of applied and media-oriented creative production, and 20 examples of digitally mediated or institutionally framed projects. The analysis showed that cultural belonging was not expressed through a single stable visual formula. It was a set of recurring markers that directed the viewer back to shared memory, local material culture, and recognizable forms of place-based identity. These markers came from heritage motifs, craft techniques, textiles, costume, ornament, landscape, historical memory, language, typography, museum narratives, and digital adaptation. The most frequent references were those of heritage and craft which appeared in 38 out of 60 units. These were followed by the curatorial framing of collective memory, in 34 units, and global adaptation of local visual forms, in 31 units. Five major models of representation include heritage continuity, historical re-narration, regional ecology, institutional translation, and hybrid adaptation. In contemporary visual practice, belonging was primarily expressed through memory, trauma landscape, displacement, and symbolic ambiguity. These forms did not simply describe identity but created a visual space in which collective experience could be felt, reconsidered, and sometimes deliberately unresolved. Applied creative production, in contrast, relied more directly on material and recognizable cultural codes—textile, ornament, costume, souvenir forms, archival fragments, and public installation. Results indicate that while in certain ways, globalization may have altered local distinctiveness significantly, it did not erase it. The markers of culture retained meaning as long as they were connected to memory, embodied practice, and material forms of culture. At the same time, however, the markers transformed once they were in museums, in digital space, in public spaces, and in international exhibition systems where the local signs began speaking to their communities as well as to wider global audiences.

Index Terms craft practices, design, ethno-artistic tradition, heritage motifs, visual culture

I. Introduction

And this issue of who we are as a nation has yet again reappeared in the cultural contexts of a melting pot of globalization. Transnational communication, digital image flows, the circulation of artistic forms, and the evolution of hybrid aesthetic codes have all refashioned communities' ways of communicating through visual culture. Identity can no longer be represented by fixed symbols, historical narratives or canonical cultural legacies: it is more and more produced via contemporary art, design, media images, showing art practices, digital platforms, popular daily visibility. Here, the work of art and design not only operates as ornamental or expressive arenas, but as cultural systems in which the negotiation of shared memory, belonging, difference, and symbolic

continuity occurs. This was in reaction to a worldwide tug of war between cultural sameness and the myriad ways that cultures want to be seen and represented. Globalization is said to have stripped away national identities, though this is just not the case, globalization has changed the means by which it is expressed [1]. The effects of globalization on national identity cannot be interpreted as a single-transmission or one-way process of cultural dissipation, but a relatively complex field where new meanings and expressions of bonding to national belonging can emerge in the face of changing social, political and communicative situations [2], [3]. G. Ariely argued a similar point that globalization and ethnic identity cannot be approached at the level of states or institutions alone. Identity was shaped also "from below" by everyday perspectives, local

events, and the ways individuals interpreted their connection with larger global processes [4].

It is at precisely the intersection of institutional representation and everyday cultural experience that contemporary art and design often function, and these observations matter for the discussion ahead. The digital layer of identity has also recast cultural symbols and spread them via social media, digital exhibitions, online archives, graphic interfaces, and visual communication channels [5], [6]. According to Bala [7] digital media offer new spaces of interaction which help reshape cultural identity, leading to challenges in terms of fragmentation, reinterpretation, and loss of contextual depth. In the case of today's art and design, this means that national identities are expressed not solely in works of art, public monuments, textiles, interiors and museums.

It is also represented by digital images, visual branding, online portfolios, algorithmic visibility, and cross-national reception. This is to say the same cultural sign can be used as both a signifier of regional belonging and as an object of visual reception made globally. Several problems of this subject have been covered in the literatures. In order to this end, A. Dyachenko [8] studied fine arts, the display of national identity and cultural heritage in the Fine Arts of the Baltic states and Ukraine. He argues that contemporary aesthetic practices can turn heritage motifs into current visual languages without reducing them to one-sided ethnographic quotations.

This view is key to moving the discussion beyond the simple divide between tradition and innovation. Some of these expressions of national identity could take the form of color traditions, structures of composition, symbolic images, historical memory, traumatic memories, landscape visuals or reinterpreted forms of folk art in modern visual arts. But in a world of high status exhibitions, digital media, or global art production, these very same things would carry radically different meanings [9]. Design studies of the identity also contribute to the conversation about identity and are less associated with other arguments about globalization and cultural representation. The present article argues for an interest in M. Filipová's analysis [10] of the relationship between design and national identity, noting that design has been a long-standing contributor to the production of national narratives through objects, styles, materials, and institutional histories. But design today is very unlike previous national design projects because it operates in global systems so they need to fulfill the world's aesthetic goals. As a result, product design, fashion, graphic design, interior design and media design can transform into ambivalent cultural forms in which recognisable national references get preserved in its own, however they are often turned into a spoken medium for a global audience. Some gaps in scholarly discourse persist. National identity as a political as well as sociological category and heritage is discussed first, whereas the representation of national identity by contemporary art and design does not constitute a cultural process.

The majority of the work on globalization focuses on radical changes; this, in turn, neglects the fine nuances of

how visual and design practices are negotiating identity. The transformation of national symbols in digital, institutional, and global cultural spaces is seldom, if ever in the canon of contemporary art and design (in studies of the subject), analyzed. So one had to explain how contemporary art and design embody national identity – not as a fixed, essential thing, but rather as the latter being dynamic, visually mediated and culturally adaptable. To see how the visual and design practices are able to preserve, change, or re-interpret national cultural imprints in both works and the nature of the national cultural imprint under global flow. Alternatively, the study would aim to analyse how theory might connect globalization and national identity, the role of digital media in cultural self-presentation, the significance of visual art in a revitalized understanding of cultural heritage and the role of design in the current construction of national identity.

II. Literature Review

Culturally sustainable sustainability, visual culture, design theory, fashion studies, heritage studies, museum sociology, and cultural policy, these have been discussed in similar vein. It is now a scholarly presumption as to whether national identity is a stable historical inheritance, inherited only from one generation to the next, and it is rather an interpretative and visual structure that is constantly reincarnated through artistic forms, material practices, institutional mediation, and the movement of cultural signs in global contexts. From this vantage point, contemporary art and design should not be viewed as secondaries to national culture, but operate as interactive cultural vehicles for the staging, reinterpretation, and even at times carefully, reassembly of collective belonging. A crucial series of studies connects nation-building to craft, heritage and sustainable cultural production. For example, Brown and Vacca [11] positions fashion and craft within an eco-system of cultural sustainability and maintains that the form of making rooted in traditions is to be understood as operating systems that cannot simply be regarded as relics from the past. This is significant, for it shifts the focus from heritage as preservation to heritage as a resource working within modern design. In line with this, Febriani, Knippenberg, and Aarts [12] analyze batik as a national icon in Indonesia. This research shows that a cultural object may have national significance not only because of its historical source, but also because it is the source of public narratives, institutions, and collective meanings that are built up through time. Hence, the authors define national identity in design as the result of symbolic selection, cultural storytelling, and continued social recognition.

Design studies indicate that national identity is predominantly realized through a process of transfiguration of local motifs into contemporary visual forms. Present-day visual culture does not confine ethnic and regional motifs to mere decorative aspects; rather, they are considered as visual resources that can be rearticulated within modern design practice. Rashdan and Ashour [13] argue a similar point in interior design with reference to heritage-inspired strategies critically through the concepts of regionalism and reflexive modernism.

Their stand suits this study in the sense that it does not reduce the relationship between tradition and modernity to a simple opposition. Direct folk ornament, historical style, or easily recognizable symbol do not form the basis of national identity in contemporary design. It can be through materials, spatial composition, symbolic references, craft techniques, and visual codes adjusted to the conditions of contemporary culture. This contention is further affirmed by Karim, Khidzir, Ibrahim, and Zali [14] who provide an example of how Malaysian national identity in sculpture proves that three dimensional and spatial design can also be a medium through which collective belonging is articulated.

Another highly topical research vector is that of media design and contemporary visual culture as domains of national identification. According to Holovko [15], media design can be a factor of national identification because it organizes visual communication, public symbols, and culturally recognizable images. A broader perspective on the ways in which national signs circulate in the visual environment was proposed by Pavlichenko [16], who analyzed the representation of national identity in contemporary visual culture. Such works are more valid as they shift the discussion from singular works of art to larger systems of visual communication. Posters, digital graphics, interfaces, exhibitions, public campaigns, branding systems, and online visual narratives all participate in the process of mediating national identity. Visual culture as a space wherein representations of national belonging are continually reiterated and made visible in everyday life.

The concept goes further, though, with digital visual art, changing the terms by which national identity is produced, distributed, and received. In Kazakhstan, Nurbossynova [17] identifies digital visual art as a "social integrator" (using the example of digital art). The point is also an important one because digital art can, in many cases, operate across borders while still referencing the local memory, cultural symbols, or a shared social experience. Simultaneously, digital circulation complicates identity representation; it also creates challenges that can arise when national visuals are divorced from their referential context and can be made simplified for wider audiences, or are made to meet global visual expectations. So digital art performs a double process: It makes a culture more apparent while at the same time rendering national identity a flexible and easily marketable visual code. It's what the literature on service design and cultural plurality has done with service design and pluralism that is to build that. Duan, Vink, and Clatworthy [18] emphasize the importance of narrating service design in a manner that takes serious account of cultural plurality. Their argument can likewise be extended to the national identity analysis based on the fact that 21st century design works in multicultural and transnational settings. Design is not just a limited one specific closed cultural system. More commonly it balances different cultural expectations, user experiences and symbolic frameworks. National identity in design should not be seen as a specific notion that operates as a static visual paradigm alone. Rather it is better to think of it as something to be negotiated visually and functionally

organized, particularly in a globalised world where the design products, exhibitions and digital spaces' audiences are not necessarily united along a certain historical memory or cultural literacy.

Fashion studies also explain how identity is presented. Transparency, vulnerability, and identity politics in contemporary fashion branding were issues brought about by Choufan [19]. This research is fashion-based, however, the implications for any wider field of designing and visual culture could definitely be useful if you have a large or small research project. Identity can be articulated through mechanisms like labeling, authorship, material origin, craft disclosure, and cultural positioning. i.e the fashion industry mustn't be boiled down to a mere look-off industry. It is a cultural conversation that can have national, ethnic, gendered and political connotations. Because fashion is globalized, it can retain its local identity through craft, narrative, and material memory. At the same time, it tends to compress that idea into a recognizable commercial sign that can be easily transported (though it loses part of its original depth).

Other works address contemporary art, globalization, and nation branding. For instance, Molho [20] explains about the manner in which cities are put on global art map through curatorial authority and nation branding. As noted through this research, contemporary art is often connected to cultural diplomacy, urban promotion, and the establishment of global reputation. Chao [21] examines the visual politics of Brand China and how visual representation mobilises historical narratives and speculative futures in another study. Later Chao and Browning [22] elaborate on this issue with the concept of China's cautious "facetuning" in cultural diplomacy and nation branding where contemporary Chinese art is concerned. Moreover, these studies are especially important since they show how national identity in contemporary art is not necessarily an organic or spontaneous cultural expression; it is also something strategically curated, institutionally framed, and politically managed.

The world of museum studies exposes another key feature of this process: globalization not only remakes national forms of culture but also the subjects that organize its display. Kharchenkova and Merkus [23] have analyzed visibility, selection, and institutional power around the experience of private contemporary art museums in China, in the context of globalization. Their study proves museums don't just reflect national art; they also configure the domain where certain artists, styles, and cultural narratives are made internationally recognizable. So in a globalized art system, national identity is not only constructed by artists and designers in particular, but also by curators, collectors, galleries, museums, cultural policymakers, and market actors. Identity representation is therefore a multi-faced phenomenon where creative expression is juxtaposed with institutional choice and globally disseminated circulation. The conversation exists within a wider institutional framework in which cultural policy research is situated. This author regards cultural policy as a site that is constantly in flux, oscillating between paradigmatic and

pragmatic orientations [24].

This framework is essential, because the means by which national identity is expressed through art and design does not depend solely on individual creative entities. Funding structures, heritage policy, educational agencies, international cultural exchange, and state-supported cultural promotion are also part and parcel of this process [25], [26]. Thus, the literature reviewed demonstrates that the national identity of contemporary art and design is at present an evolving cultural construction, constructed through the interplay of heritage, craft, digital media, visual culture, fashion, museum mediation, cultural policy, and global branding, as manifested in contemporary art and design. However, an important gap remains. Such dimensions have often been studied separately, and an integrated mechanism for national identity within the contexts of a globalized world with contemporary art and design has not yet received sufficient conceptual clarifications.

III. Materials and Methods

Research design and empirical setting. The study took place during 2025-2026 as an empirical qualitative inquiry into the ways in which national identity is visually represented through contemporary art and design under the conditions of globalization. In practical terms, the research was organized around a digital corpus since all selected materials were publicly accessible artefacts presented on museum websites, online exhibition platforms, official pages of artists and designers, digital portfolios, archives of cultural institutions, and open-access media platforms. Thus, the study did not include interviews, surveys, private observation, or any experimental intervention with human participants. For the analysis, therefore, only visual materials that had already been published were considered, along with their curatorial, institutional, or authorial descriptions aiding in clarifying their cultural context.

Corpus and sampling procedure. The empirical corpus was made up of 60 artefacts chosen by purposive non-probability sampling. The unit of analysis was defined as a single artwork, design object, digital visual project, or coherent curatorial presentation where it functioned as an identifiable representation of national, cultural, or heritage-based identity. To keep the comparison balanced, the corpus was divided into three equal groups: 20 examples of contemporary visual art, 20 examples of design practice (fashion, graphic, interior, product, and media design), and 20 examples of digitally mediated art or design representation (online exhibitions, cultural branding materials, and digital visual projects). The geographical scope involved artefacts related to Ukraine, selected Baltic states, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and China. These contexts were chosen because they allow one to observe, in different cultural settings, how symbolic, heritage-based, craft-oriented, and digitally adapted forms of identity are visually constructed.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria. Artefacts were included in the corpus if they met four main criteria: they were available in digital form; they contained an explicit or clearly identifiable

reference to national, cultural, or heritage identity; they were created or publicly presented between 2015 and 2026; and they were relevant to contemporary art, design, or digital visual culture. On the flip side, purely historical objects with no contemporary reinterpretation were left out of the study, as were commercial advertisements without visible cultural or national markers and political propaganda materials. Also excluded were anonymous images with insufficient contextual information. Works whose visual content could not be reliably accessed were also excluded since their interpretation would have rested more on assumption than on direct visual analysis.

Analytical procedure. The analysis proceeded in three steps. All artifacts were first entered into a corpus matrix that included title, author or institution, country, year, medium and platform, type of visual practice, and a brief contextual description. Second, each artifact was examined based on a coding scheme developed specifically for this study; it contained the following categories: national symbols, heritage motifs, ethnic and craft references, language and typography, historical memory, color and ornament, spatial or material identity markers, digital adaptation, and global stylistic transformation. Third, the coded materials were compared to surface recurring patterns and make explicit how national identity was being preserved, transformed, or recoded through contemporary art and design. It was a movement of the analysis from individual visual cases to broader interpretive models of cultural representation.

Research tools and limitations. The empirical work was carried out using a standard computer, a web browser, spreadsheet software, and the corpus matrix prepared for this study. No inferential statistical tests were applied, because the purpose of the research was qualitative interpretation rather than that of measuring correlation or statistical dependence. At the same time, descriptive coding counts were used as a supporting tool to indicate which visual markers appeared most often in the corpus. To minimize subjective bias, the coding procedure was repeated after a two-week interval, and only stable interpretive categories were retained in the final analysis. Set against the background of the above, the primary limitation of this study is that it dealt with publicly available digital representations and not with tangible interaction with artworks or design objects. As such, the analysis focused on visible form, contextual description, and digital presentation; this research did not consider the tactile qualities, exhibition atmosphere, scale, and direct viewer experience.

IV. Results

The empirical data also proved that national identity in contemporary art and design was not represented as a static cluster of inherited symbols but as an adaptable visual structure that changed with the medium, institutional context, digital circulation, and imagined audience in the corpus under analysis. The 26 original source pages were taken as source clusters as more than one artwork, design object, or curatorial unit appeared in the exhibitions and institutional projects. Of these original sources a total of 60 units of analysis were chosen and

coded per the method described in the Materials and Methods section. The corpus consisted of 20 units of contemporary visual art, 20 units of design practice and 20 units of digitally mediated or institutionally framed visual representation. The first outcome involves the distribution of identity markers over the corpus. Most of the time, it was national identity expressed by heritage motifs, craft practices and material culture.

This code was identified in 38 of the 60 units, and it appeared mostly in textiles, costume, glasswork, souvenirs, graphic materials, and object-based design. There was no explicit expression of belonging in these cases; it was carried through texture, ornament, technique and the recognisable visual traces of cultural memory. The second most used code was the curatorial framing of collective memory, which appeared in 34 units. This marker manifested itself mostly in museum exhibitions, retrospective projects, national art presentations, and public cultural programmes. In these locations, identity wasn't just constituted by the works, but by how the institution put them in order, explained them and related them to the larger narratives of history, loss, continuity or cultural survival.

The third recurring code was that of the global adaptation of national visual forms, identified in 31 units. These were cases which made clear how the signs of cultures at locality were translated into formats understandable to the international audience, such as biennale exhibitions, airport installations, digital archives, and English museum narratives. In global circulation, then, national identity did not disappear. It became more mobile, more mediated and, in some cases, slightly more simplified as local meanings had to speak within broader visual systems. The distribution of national identity representation markers in the empirical corpus is presented in Table 1.

As the above analysis shows, contemporary visual art mainly represents national identity through historical experience, memory, trauma, landscape, and cultural continuity rather than direct state symbolism. In the Ukrainian group, this tendency was especially visible in the projects presented by PinchukArtCentre and Mystetskyi Arsenal. The exhibition *Imaginary Distance* framed Lesia Khomenko's artistic trajectory as movement through recent Ukrainian history, visual heritage, and the transformation of painting under conditions of collective vulnerability [46].

Still Joy: From Ukraine into the World, however, situated the experience of Ukraine within an international biennale, where national identity was not a local tragedy to be isolated, but rendered into a wider visual vocabulary of resilience, memory, and human continuity [47]. In *Iliustroteka: Ukrainian Illustration Across the Twenties*, national belonging was expressed through illustration, book culture, and graphic language, demonstrating how contemporary visual culture does not merely negotiate through monumental or museum-based art, but also within printed, editorial, and digitally circulated forms of visual culture that can work alongside identity [42], [43].

In Kazakhstan-related materials, national identity was en-

coded through the interaction of ancestral memory, gendered embodiment, references to nomadism, and postcolonial cultural transformation. The retrospective *Almagul Menlibayeva: I Understand Everything* placed the artist's practice as interdisciplinary, combining painting, video, photography, performance, and textile. Its exhibition narrative connected Menlibayeva's artistic language with Central Asian history, indigenous cosmologies, mythology, gender, and the transformation of Kazakhstan from nomadic structures to forced settlement and contemporary global visibility [27]. A similar, though more object-oriented, model of identity appeared in the materials related to Gulnur Mukazhanova. *Bosağa - Transition: The Weave of Ancestral Memory* project used textile, bodily concealment, and the idea of the threshold to connect personal and collective identity [48]. The artist profile at Aspan Gallery also supported this interpretation since Mukazhanova's practice was framed through textile, felt, and cultural memory [29]. In Said Atabekov's *Prayer of a Thousand Horse Riders*, the national code was associated with equestrian culture, ritual memory, and the image of the steppe as a space of collective imagination [28].

The Baltic cases presented a somewhat different picture. In these cases, the most frequent channels for the expression of national identity were landscape, material restraint, regional memory, and the redefinition of modernist visual systems. Kumu Art Museum's *Landscapes of Identity: Estonian Art 1700-1945* offered a historical framework in which to view the function of landscape as a carrier of Estonian cultural self-recognition [34]. In the materials of the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, identity seemed less stable and more uncertain. *Identity: Behind the Curtain of Uncertainty* emphasized ambiguity rather than a unified national image, while Viktor Timofeev's *Other Passengers* shifted the articulation of identity toward themes of displacement, transit, and altered perception [35], [36]. The MO Museum project on Lithuanian contemporary art from the 1960s to the present enlarged the Baltic dimension by connecting national art history with international museum circulation and donation practices [38].

The Indonesian visual art materials closely tied between national identity, historical narration, locality, and the reinterpretation of colonial memory. Di sini, d.l.l. menggunakan frase dari teks proklamasi sebagai titik kooratorisnya. The exhibition linked landscape, locality, colonial experience, and representations of ordinary people with the formation of Indonesian national identity. This case was important because it showed that in contemporary art, national identity may be produced not only through new artistic works but also through re-reading historical paintings and museum collections in present-day questions about place, power, and public memory. Demikian pula, Galeri Nasional Indonesia menempatkan seni kontemporer sebagai wadah dalam menjaga dan melestarikan identitas budaya dengan seni lukis modern, instalasi, seni media, dan media alternatif.

As far as Chinese works are concerned, in contemporary art the construction of national identity often involved global artistic mobility and institutional framing. The UCCA exhibi-

Table 1: Distribution of National Identity Representation Markers in the Empirical Corpus

Empirical group	Number of coded units	Main countries / contexts	Dominant identity markers	Representative primary sources
Contemporary visual art	20	Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Indonesia, China	Historical memory, body and landscape, national trauma, postcolonial identity, cultural hybridity	Almaty Museum of Arts, 2026; Aspan Gallery, 2024; Kumu Art Museum, n.d.; Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, n.d., 2025; MO Museum, 2025; Museum MACAN, 2023; PinchukArtCentre, 2025, 2026; UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, 2023
Design practice	20	Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Malaysia, Indonesia	Ornament, textile, craft, typography, costume, souvenir, public art, material heritage	Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, 2020, 2022; Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, 2025; Malaysia Design Archive, n.d.; Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, 2025a, 2025b; National Art Gallery Malaysia, n.d.; Ukrainian Institute, n.d.; UNESCO, n.d.
Digitally mediated and institutional representation	20	Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Baltic countries	Online exhibition narrative, cultural diplomacy, archive logic, global visibility, institutional mediation	Almaty Museum of Arts, 2026; Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, n.d.; Malaysia Design Archive, n.d.; National Gallery of Indonesia, n.d.; Tselinny Center of Contemporary Culture, n.d.; UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, 2025

Note: One unit of analysis could contain several codes; therefore, the number of identified markers exceeded the total number of units in the corpus. Coding was carried out according to the following matrix: national symbols, heritage motifs, language and typography, historical memory, color and ornament, spatial or material identity markers, digital adaptation, and global stylistic transformation. Source: Compiled by the authors on the basis of the empirical corpus of primary materials [27]- [52]

tion, Painting Unsettled, also included the work of Chinese-born artists, and explored global uncertainty, technology, mythology, vernacular culture and cross-cultural visual languages. It also offered no Chinese national symbols to be simply affirmed. It was a portrait of how Chinese identity can be displaced, refracted or complicated by diaspora, global art education, digital image worlds, and the instability of painting as a medium. The Jealous Potter at UCCA Clay contributed another dimension to this situation by considering ceramic practice and craft-based materiality to be a channel between contemporary exhibition culture and longer cultural histories of making. It layered the context of the exhibition, presenting ceramic practice and craft-based materiality as a link between contemporary exhibition culture and longer histories of making. A second key finding relates to design practice. National identity in this group manifested more directly in material, craft, and functional objects. The best illustrated examples of this trend were textile, costume, ornament, souvenir, and public installation projects.

If the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia's exhibition Busana: Traditional Costumes of the Malay World showed costume can be a really saturated visual system of identity. Songket, batik, tenun, telepuk, embroidery, headdresses and ceremonial clothing were presented not as isolated decorative objects but were visual signs of status, rituals, spirituality and belonging as a part of Malay community culture [32]. Another illustrated that heritage, costume specific identity was transregional, because the Malay World was described as a cultural background stretching from the region of modern-day Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, southern Thailand, the Philippines [32]. This is the pattern that is mirrored in Indonesia's batik materials from a different perspective. In their intangible cultural heritage listing by UNESCO for Indonesia on batik, the collection and Museum MACAN and the Indonesian case were examples of how textile-based identity can advance from heritage recognition to contemporary visual storytelling. Batik operated as a work of craft as well as a nation sign. But the

value of its identity was not just determined by its historical context, but also by institutional justification, its public visibility or recognition, and its continued cultural utilisation. As a result, analysis showed that craft would serve only as a sign of a national identity when it remained socially expressive and visually comprehensible in contemporary settings.

The Ukrainian design materials demonstrated that the national identity itself can also become formats for promoting diplomacy and culture. The souvenir project of the Ukrainian Institute was an archetypical one. This prompted designs to feature Ukrainian culture overseas and grouped them with that of traditional culture and the Ukrainian avant-garde, as well as modern Ukrainian design [51]. Coded markers were visual image, textile, ceramics, authorial product, identity design, and symbolic storytelling. This case proved that design could be a conscious tool for cultural diplomacy. National identity was not only a single symbol but a curated object category that could articulate history, tradition, creative industries and contemporary visual quality. According to the Malaysia Design Archive, all materials about design and national identity in Malaysia have tended to see national identity as predominantly plural, spatial and visual accumulation over time.

The Archive presented a visual history of graphic design in Malaysia as an "archive" which contains the photographs found before independence down to the present day, with a focus particularly on the need to maintain visual history, repetitive images and common visual vocabulary [37]. Instead of being a system of exhibitions, an archive-based model framed identity as a mass of visual evidence rather than an individual curatorial event. KUL Art Airport, managed by the National Art Gallery Malaysia, brought new layers of public art and the spread of the globe. The project installed artworks in international airports and openly established a correlation between local artists and internationally placed artistic and cultural identities [44]. This was a story of Malaysian identity built up in different levels through cultural motifs, thatching geometry referencing East Malaysian tattoos, nature traditions

in Sabah, the Kenyalang bird and augmented reality.

The works involved in this narrative have been OH!Budaya, Polyhedron Pavilion, The Nature Mind of Landscape, Reciting Hope [44]. Sources from Estonia and Latvia said identity could be expressed through ornament and material form without direct national symbols. They showed that ornament could act as a bridge between modern design and regional cultural memory; therefore Baltic Modern Design 1955-1985 at the Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design [30]. It was in its exhibition on Jaanus Samma that the same institution further complicated this relationship: By doing so, it connected national motifs to power and demonstrated that ornament can have political implications, rather than being purely decorative [31].

In Layers: Baltic Contemporary Glass Art in the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, identity was conveyed by common materialistic sensitivity and the distinctly regional tone. The presentation uniting artists from Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, putting glass into position in a common tapestry of the same Baltic Sea, northern light, fog, forest, and a unspoken local sensibility that in a way converts material to memory [40]. In the very same museum, tapestries by Iveta Vecenāne, traditional blankets from the craftsmen of Latvia, preserve one more evidence that textile practices can still be among the most durable guardians in transmitting national and regional identity. In that exhibition Meadow the textile didn't merely depict tradition; it returned the viewer to a world defined by touch, pattern, labor and an inherited rhythm of seeing.

The third finding involves digital and institutional mediation. National identity in this group was not crystallised in the artwork or design object only. It was an act of production through which institutions defined, translated, archived, and disseminated the material. All of the 26 source clusters were accessible either in English or in bilingual digital form. This was critical as the English curatorial texts functioned as a mediating link between local cultural meanings and global audiences. In the corpus, 44 of the 60 units required institutional framing in order to have national identity legible outside of local context. This was illustrated in the contents of Almaty Museum of Arts, PinchukArtCentre, Museum MACAN, UCCA, Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia and National Art Gallery Malaysia [27], [32], [39], [44], [47], [49]. That is, it could be said that globalization weakened the national identity, no less in nature than in the mode of visibility that national identity was made to have. National tags were chosen, truncated, translated, and rearranged for global circulation. Most of the identities of Ukrainians were recorded through memory of the past, resilience, illustration, painting, and international exhibition platforms. Kazakh identity was played out as identity of ancestry, steppe memory, textile, gendered embodiment and indigenous cosmology.

A Baltic identity was expressed in landscape, material restraint, glass, ornament and shared regional atmosphere. Malaysian identity, through the forms of plurality, cultural modes, costume, public art, archive, and design diplomacy, symbolized the multilayered character of Malaysian identity.

Batik, independence stories, storytelling related to independence, locality, colonial collective memory, and its state image and national art establishment constructed Indonesian identity. Chineseness was expressed through the instability of painting, cross-cultural referents, craft media, and internationally mobile artists. Another key empirical gap is between design and art. The most direct representations of national identity were scarce, at least by contemporary art standards. These were frequently supplanted with uncertainty, trauma, memory, body, landscape, temporality, and curatorial analysis. In contrast, in design, identity tended to be expressed through visual and material codes: textile, ornament, costume, typography, public installation, souvenir, archive and utilitarian object. But this distinction is not a strict one. A number of current art works used textile, craft and material culture very actively for some of those contemporary art projects, while some of the works of design were infused with deeply political and historical significance.

The demarcation between art and design was therefore porous. This finding complements the case that, under a globalized visual economy, national identity must be conceptualised as a cross media process rather than as a property of any individual artistic field. The result was a question of the contour of national identity itself. The coding did not reveal a single dominant model of national representation. Instead, it revealed five common ones. The first set of models was heritage continuity. In this model, national identity was constructed from the labor of craftsmanship, fabric, clothing, ornament, and material memory. The second model was a historical re-narration. Here, an interpretation of old events, colonial history, collective memory or recent historical rupture played the form of identity. There was regional ecology as the third model. This model described topography, climate, natural forms, and material environment as the symbols of belonging. The fourth was translation of institutions. Museums, galleries, archives, and cultural agencies translate national culture into the language of exhibitions read by global audiences. The fifth model was hybrid adaptation.

Conventions of the nation were re-coded through digital media, public art, international biennales, airport installations, and transcultural artistic vocabularies. These findings indicate that contemporary art and design reflect not only the national identity in a global world but also how this identity is maintained and remade. Identity is retained when cultural markers, craft methods, history references and local materials are visible and culturally meaningful. At the same time, identity is transformed when identities are recontextualized through new media, international organizations, English language curatorial narratives and global cultural platforms. For such data, thus national identity in the corpus examined here did not function as a sealed cultural essence but rather as a dynamic visual mechanism for the entry of local memory into global circulation with visible cultural depth that was visible, culturally recognizable.

V. Discussion

The findings indicate that national identity in present-day art and design, rather than the static essence from which it stems, is an adaptive visual mechanism that shifts with institutional, digital, and global contexts. This discovery is significant precisely because, here, globalization does not necessarily erase national difference, but it reconfigures the way the features of the marking of a nation – whose selection and translation, representation, and legibility are conducted – are structured for different audiences. Identity on the empirical corpus was revealed through craft, textile, ornament, historical memory, landscape, costume, public art, digital archives, and the curatorial narratives. These forms demonstrate that national identity can remain culturally identifiable when recoded to circulate worldwide and today.

The result is consistent with Xiang et al. [53] that conceptualizes the design of cultural objects as one that needs to serve as a cultural carrier, an adaptation of cultural elements under new design conditions, and the incorporation of cultural elements in new design formats. The current research empirically supports this mechanism. In the cases analysed, national identity never had been incorporated in art or design no matter how one interpreted it from scratch. Ukrainian illustration, Malaysian costume, Indonesian batik, Baltic glass, and the Kazakh textile inspired work demonstrated that cultural elements became meaningful only when their visual, material or institutional aspects underwent the alteration process. Consequently, modern design did not just conserve heritage, but it repurposed heritage as a form appropriate for contemporary cultural communication.

The findings are also consistent with Yan et al. [54] arguing that the heritage crafts reflect the evolving ideas related to identity and worth. In our present corpus, craft-based materials were among the most durable indicators of national identity, particularly when it came to textile, costume, ornament and object-making. But value was not limited to technical ability or historical continuum. Crafts gained identity value as a material that was expressed as a living cultural object within exhibitions, archives, or in public and digital formats. In other words, national meaning was produced by the interaction of material practice, social memory, and the interpretation of our modernity through contemporary interpretation. It also consolidates Zhang et al.'s findings [55], which find that national identity formation and construction can be mediated through cultural memory and cultural learning is also echoed. The studied visual and design objects served the same role. They didn't just display national symbols; they helped audiences articulate how these symbols could be read. It sought to do so through descriptions of museums, curated texts, online archives and exhibition stories that explain why a costume, ornament, landscape, textile or graphic style could be deemed nationally significant. Here, in present art and design, national identity had not only been embodied in the visual product but had also been placed within the interpretation of the visual object.

The results are somewhat consistent with Yurchenko et

al. [56], who investigate national identity in contemporary art and design amid globalization processes. This study thus affirms their overarching thesis that art and design can serve as active media for the representation of national identities within a globally connected world. The empirical findings, on the other hand, provide room for a more distinct typology. Five models were identified: heritage continuity, historical re-narration, regional ecology, institutional translation, and hybrid adaptation. This typology shows that national identity cannot be accomplished through a single dominant aesthetic strategy. Rather, it consists of multiple, parallel mechanisms dependent on medium, contextualization, and audience.

One of the core things that this study demonstrates is that contemporary art and design are realms of cultural negotiation. Contemporary art was primarily about an indirect depiction of national identity via memory, trauma, landscape, displacement, and curatorial ambiguity. While design more literally epitomized identity as textile, ornament, costume, typography, souvenir, archive, and public installation. But this was not a clear differentiation. Certain pieces of work of art in the study featured craft and material culture, whereas much of the design content was imbued with complex historical and political meanings. This overlap appears to suggest that the line between art and design is most productive when we consider national identity in the context of a visually globalized world. The main limitation of this research is that it has been conducted at the point of compilation of empirical corpus.

The analysis was restricted to web-based public service descriptions and institutional documents instead of to tangible physical engagement with works of art and materials of the design phase. Thus, future research should engage in both digital corpus analysis and exhibition observation, and conduct interviews with artists and designers as well as audience reception studies. This would allow us to compare three related levels: how national identity gets coded by creators, how it gets framed by institutions, and how that is interpreted to audiences.

VI. Conclusions

The research demonstrated that national identity in contemporary art and design is not an inflexible or closed collection of symbols inherited from the past. It is a rather dynamic visual mechanism that has been constructed through heritage, material culture, historical memory, institutional mediation, and global circulation. The empirical analysis of 60 artefacts formed the basis of an equal group of modern visual art, design practice and digitally mediated visual representation in which the national identity manifested itself to the greatest degree through heritage motifs from craft, textiles, ornament, costume, landscape, historical narratives and curatorial framing. The result proved that modern visual art, on the whole, represents national identity indirectly. For this group, identity was mostly linked to memory, trauma, displacement, landscape, the body, postcolonial experience and symbolic ambiguity.

Ukrainian, Kazakh, Baltic, Indonesian, and Chinese cases in contemporary art have produced not only national symbols but also re-interpreted them in contemporary historical, cultural, and political circumstances. Design practice in contrast was more concretely manifested national identity, and articulated through material and visual codes such as textile, costume, ornament, typography, souvenir forms, and archival material, as well as public installation, and product forms. This is the divide which suggests that two disciplines (art and design) operate under different though related strategies of cultural self-representation. Through this coding process, the findings of the analysis led to the identification of five principal models of national identity representation: heritage continuity, historical re-narration, regional ecology, institutional translation, and hybrid adaptation.

Heritage continuity was manifest in craft, costume, textiles and ornament. History was re-narrated in a process where collective memory, the experiences of the colonial past, the recent ruptures, and historical events were reinterpreted. Landscape, natural systems, climate, and material environment as loci of regional ecology was linked. Institutional translation was contingent upon the function of museum, gallery, archive, and cultural agency in rendering national culture legible to an international audience. Hybrid adaptation was the most interesting in illuminating how the local cultural signs were reshaped on the digital plane, biennales, public art, airport installations, and global design languages. Therefore, these five models can be used to study the contemporary exhibitions, cultural branding projects, design collections, museum programmes, digital visual archives. The results may be of interest also to curators, designers and cultural institutions that aim to represent national identity not as ornamental folklore or reductive symbolic clichés.

This is why it is that, in addition to being an analytical device, the proposed typology serves as a subtle reminder to people that cultural identification is to be retained if memory, material depth and experience have the ability to transport them at a localized level. The study was restricted to digital materials that are freely available rather than seeing objects and models in terms of the physical artworks and design objects. Future research should address this limitation of a limited empirical corpus by broadening it to include audience reception and interviewing artists and designers. It should also compare how national identities are encoded by creators, encoded institutionally, and understood by audiences in different cultural contexts.

Ethics statement

The study did not involve human participants, animals, or the collection of personal or sensitive data. The analysis was based exclusively on publicly available visual and design artefacts. Therefore, ethical approval and informed consent were not required.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Competing interests

All authors declare no competing interests.

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Data Availability

The corpus analyzed in this study consists of 60 publicly available visual and design artefacts. The sources used to identify and examine these materials are publicly accessible, and no proprietary, confidential, or restricted datasets were used. The analyzed corpus and relevant source information are available from the authors upon reasonable request.

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