

Taras Dovhaliuk*

Specialist in Urban Planning, Architect
Lviv Polytechnic National University
79013, 12 Stepan Bandera Str., Lviv, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0858-5891>

The place and role of memorial murals in urban environments

Abstract. The relevance of this research was driven by the increasing demand for new commemorative practices amid the ongoing war caused by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The aim of this study was to analyse contemporary methods for creating memorial murals, to determine their role in shaping public memory, and to explore their integration into urban spaces. The research employed methods of visual analysis, field study, interviews, and discourse analysis. In research was examined the phenomenon of memorial murals as a distinctive form of public art operating within urban environments. It was defined that murals had emerged as an effective tool for documenting collective memory, constructing identity, and shaping the symbolic spatial landscape of cities. The focus was placed on mural practices in Ukrainian cities, with particular attention to the author's experience in implementing memorial mural projects. The findings identified key transformations in the design of such works across five dimensions: sociocultural, spatial, communicative, technological, and political. It was established that in wartime conditions (2022-2025), memorial murals transcended their artistic form and became carriers of meaning – acting as social markers, emotional responses, and critical interpretations. The study revealed that the effectiveness of such projects depended on the quality of engagement with local communities, professional dialogue with the urban context, and the presence of a solid methodological foundation. Risks associated with unprofessional approaches – such as retraumatisation, environmental distortion, and the loss of symbolic value – were also highlighted. The practical value of this research lies in the development of approaches for the meaningful creation of memorial murals, which can be scaled nationally and integrated into international cultural discourse

Keywords: visual memory; public space; urban identity; collective memory; spatial commemoration

INTRODUCTION

A mural was a form of monumental painting executed directly on architectural surfaces and functioning within public space. The concept of the “mural” had been actively used in Ukrainian scholarly and artistic discourse since the late 20th century. Since the early 2000s, the term had acquired new meaning in the context of the growing popularity of street art, particularly murals, which had gradually evolved into one of the leading tools of visual communication in urban environments. Murals had become not only a means of façade decoration but also a significant

mechanism for encoding and transmitting identity, memory, and social messages. As S. Marusek & A. Wagner (2024) observed, “through the visible accessibility of public memory painted in dynamic spaces of public infrastructure, the mural enlivens the relationship between culture and cultural heritage, making visible the painted narrative and spatially significant public forum to which the public audience is invited”. A particularly relevant context for studying memorial murals was Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. In these times, murals became carriers of memory

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*Corresponding author



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that not only honoured the fallen but also form a symbolic map of the urban space. It became a form of visual resistance, a mode of social response, and a catalyst for collective reflection on events. At the same time, the rapid proliferation of commemorative murals brought with it a number of challenges – from the danger of superficial interpretation to the risk of losing deep historical meaning. B. Gavryliuk (2018) emphasised the growing role of murals in post-colonial societies. In post-Soviet countries, murals served as a means of distancing from the imperial past and forming new identities. T. Meikle (2020) noted that in Jamaica, memorial murals depicted not only criminal “dons” but also ordinary people, highlighting the multiple meanings and multifunctional nature of these commemorative works.

In Europe, the emphasis was on patriotic motifs: Polish patriotic murals served as “examples of forms of collective memory”, materialising a specific vision of the past (Hołda, 2020). A global trend was that memorial murals were increasingly designed as interactive “walls of memory” that included digital and social components. A similar effect had been described in the Portuguese context. A.V. Simões (2023) noted that in Aveiro, street art had become a “wall of memory” conveying the cultural narratives of the community, transforming residents’ relationships with their environment. In a study of rural historic settlements in China, the authors P. Wu *et al.* (2025) showed that artistic interventions significantly enhanced the environmental attractiveness, socio-cultural values, and economic development of such areas. A. Krzywik (2021) noted that memorial murals in Polish cities were increasingly perceived not only as decorative embellishments but as carriers of socially agreed memory, initiated by state or municipal structures. S. Juzeleniene & S. Petroniene (2025) indicated that multilingual urban murals function as a form of cultural activism – it promoted pride in the city and a deeper immersion in local history. Contemporary approaches to designing commemorative objects increasingly took into account not only formal symbolism but also the spatial integration of these objects into the urban fabric. G. Chen & V. Suneta (2024) noted that in the context of place-making, memorial objects were regarded as catalysts for social interaction, critical reflection, and cultural identity. Instead of a straightforward depiction, contemporary murals aim for emotional engagement and critical reflection on historical experience. The aim of this study was to examine contemporary trends, challenges, and prospects of memorial murals in Ukraine and to develop a methodology for devising approaches to and implementing memorial murals that correspond to the historical context, contemporary aesthetic criteria, and community needs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted an interdisciplinary approach that integrated both analytical and practical components, combining methods of visual analysis, field observation, interviews, discourse analysis, and self-reflection. Such a framework enabled an exploration of memorial murals not only as

artistic objects but also as complex sociocultural practices intimately linked to urbanism, historical memory, emotional response, and place-making. Visual content analysis – a systematisation and classification of memorial murals was conducted based on themes, stylistic features, locations, authorship, and degree of integration into the urban environment. Special attention was given to compositional strategies, symbolism, colour schemes, and common visual narratives. Field research – observations were carried out to document public and passerby reactions to existing memorial murals, as well as to record specific interactions between murals and the surrounding architectural context. Interviews and surveys – semi-structured interviews were conducted with artists, urban planners, project commissioners, local government representatives, and residents during the realisation of previous projects. The focus was placed on the experience of mural creation, attitudes toward such works, the perception of memory through visual means, and the perceived role of murals in public space. Communication took place in the format of working meetings, on-site studies, and informal discussions (no fewer than 2-3 meetings for each project). The main topics of discussion included project concepts, project development, the integration of murals into the environment, audience reactions, and the technical maintenance of the murals (The Declaration of Helsinki, 2013). Discourse analysis – media publications, social networks, cultural platforms, and specialised journals addressing memorial art and public space were examined to identify prevailing discursive frameworks and representations.

Also, attention was paid to documenting the stages of the process – from conceptualisation to realisation – including technological, communicative, social, and ethical dimensions. The application of these methods allowed for the reconstruction of the modern landscape of memorial murals as a coherent, multi-layered system operating at the intersection of visual art, collective memory, and urban development. The material for analytical interpretation was partially grounded in the author’s experience as curator and executor of memorial mural projects in Lviv, Stryi, Kamianets-Podilskyi, and other cities across Ukraine.

RESULTS

The process of creating murals is often a dilemma of balancing between an appropriate act of commemoration and public reception. In many cases, mural projects are initiated by private individuals who assume the role of institutions, managing projects based on ad hoc procedures. Due to a lack of experience in such matters, officials and institutions often hesitate to take responsibility for decisions related to memorialisation, visual representation, or anticipated public reactions. However, successful initial projects tend to become models for replication and improvement, providing a foundation for deeper analysis of memorialisation through murals within urban environments. Conversely, when projects are initiated by public institutions or communities, there is often a reluctance to embrace bold or unconventional decisions. Organisers may prioritise anticipated public reception



over artistic or conceptual integrity, placing creators within restrictive frameworks that limit freedom of expression. In many cases, the idea of memorialisation becomes a form of visual populism, reducing the artist to a hostage of broad audience expectations and aesthetic compromises. Combined with the frequent time constraints imposed on organisers, the mural creation process risks becoming a conveyor-belt product devoid of thematic depth, architectural coherence, or contemporary relevance. Such conditions may paradoxically generate negative impressions from well-intentioned efforts. Fostering public dialogue, involving qualified professionals, and ensuring personal responsibility from all stakeholders positively influences commemorative practices and their integration into the architectural and design fabric of the city. Memorial murals are becoming a vital component of the visual culture of Ukrainian cities and serve as a means of preserving and transmitting collective memory amid contemporary social transformations. Based on visual analysis, artistic practice, and shared experiences with colleagues, five key dimensions of transformation in the design of memorial murals in urban environments have been identified.

The sociocultural dimension concerns memorial murals that increasingly address themes of trauma, loss, solidarity, and empathy. They reshape societal expectations – shifting from conventional heroic imagery toward personal stories and visual narratives that represent local values, experiences, and emotions. The spatial dimension reflects the transition of murals from a marginal phenomenon to elements occupying central urban spaces and integrating into the symbolic landscape. They transform the environments in which they appear, alter the status of public places, and generate new points of attraction and routes of remembrance. The communicative dimension marks a shift from an authorial monologue to a dialogue with the community. The involvement of local residents in mural creation, open workshops, crowdfunding initiatives, and multimedia components (such as QR codes linking to personal stories) enhance interactivity and public engagement. The technological dimension is manifested in the growing application of emerging technologies, including augmented reality, digital design, 3D modelling, specialised effect paints, and programmable surfaces (Horichko, 2025). These innovations enable murals to offer new modes of perception that reinforce their commemorative function. The political dimension reveals that memorial murals function not only as civic initiatives but also as forms of political expression. Their creation becomes a site of symbolic contestation where official and unofficial memory narratives coexist and compete. At the same time, the lack of clear criteria or competitive selection mechanisms introduces risks of unprofessionalism and manipulation. An example of a mural in the sociocultural dimension is the mural dedicated to the serviceman Mykola Ozeryv (Fig. 1). The mural was created by artists Taras Dovhaliuk and Andriy Savchynshyn in 2024. The mural was dedicated to the fallen Lieutenant Colonel Mykola Ozerov (“Krym”). The surface for the artwork was the end wall of a five-storey residential

building in one of the city’s residential districts, previously insulated, area – 230 m², materials – facade and artistic acrylic paint, aerosol paint, gold potal, protective varnish. The mural portrays the figure of the hero Mykola Ozerov, depicted as a guardian of the highest values. Grandeur is conveyed through a monumental full-length silhouette, with a determined gaze and confident posture, standing as a symbol to greet and accompany those who pass by in their “daily struggles”. The words of Lina Kostenko testified to his dedication and service. A restrained colour palette and the interplay of vertical and horizontal elements created a close dialogue with the surrounding architectural ensemble. The attributes, details, symbolic elements, and the type of military uniform underscored his image, character, and individuality. In the background of the composition was a battlefield landscape with silhouettes of soldiers, symbolically representing the wounded, the fallen, and those missing in action. Above the peaceful skies of Donetsk rose the “Ukrainian Sun” – a symbol of hope and a source of strength for everyone (made of gold potal). The next example was a mural in honour of Yuri Dadak (Fig. 2).



Figure 1. Mural dedicated to Mykola Ozerov
Note: address – 15 Halytska Str., Stryi, Lviv region
Source: K. Tuziak (2024)



Figure 2. Mural dedicated to Yurii Dadak “Ruf”
Note: address – 12 Kolomyiska Str., Lviv
Source: V. Onisimova (2024)

The mural was created by artist Taras Dovhaliuk in 2024, project was created by artist Andrii Vlasiuk. The mural was dedicated to the fallen Ukrainian poet, publisher, screenwriter, founder of the conceptual literary project “Dukh Natsii” (The Spirit of the Nation), and soldier Yurii Dadak “Ruf”. The wall was the end façade of a nine-storey residential building in a suburban district, previously insulated, area – 330 m², materials – facade acrylic paint, aerosol paint. The mural symbolically integrated the fundamental principles of Ukrainian nationalist philosophy. The number 10 represented the “Decalogue” – the ten commandments

of the Ukrainian Nationalist; 12 stood for the twelve traits of a Ukrainian Nationalist; and 44 referred to the forty-four rules of life of a Ukrainian Nationalist. At the center of the composition was the “Dontsov Beast” – a symbol designed by D. Dontsov (2024) for the first edition of his book “Nationalism”, embodying the nobility of a lion, the strength of a wolf, and the impregnable nature of a hedgehog. The mural also featured the phrase “I am the spirit of the eternal element”, a line taken from the preamble to the points of the “Decalogue”. Interesting examples included the murals created by the artistic group Kailas-V and Andriy Palval (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Murals dedicated to Kuzma Skryabin and Taras Shevchenko

Note: a – mural in honor of Kuzma Skryabin (address – 23A Rymarska Str., Kharkiv); b – mural in honor of Taras Shevchenko (address – 30 Sadovyi Ln., Kharkiv)

Source: MuKha (n.d.a; n.d.b)

The mural dedicated to Kuzma Skryabin was created by the artist group Kailas-V and Andriy Palval in 2020, area – 90 m², materials – acrylic paint, aerosol paint. The mural was dedicated to the Ukrainian singer, writer, TV host, producer, and actor Kuzma Skryabin and was created within the framework of the “Mural-Fest 2018” festival. The photograph used as the reference for the mural was taken during a photoshoot Skryabin did in Kharkiv. The people, who provided the photo knew the musician personally. Kuzma was a person, who walked a thorny path toward volunteering and self-sacrifice, embodying sincerity, courage, and dedication. The mural

dedicated to Taras Shevchenko also was created by this art group in 2014, area – 570 m², material – aerosol paint. The sketch for the mural was based on a portrait painted by Ivan Kramskoi. The mural featuring the portrait of the great Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko adorns the façade of a sixteen-storey residential building. It was created to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the poet’s birth. The artwork had been included in the National Register of Records of Ukraine as the largest portrait on the wall of a residential building (Official website of..., n.d.). The main works presented by Oles Baziuk were murals on honor of Oleh Kliufas and Avhustyn Voloshyn (Fig. 4).

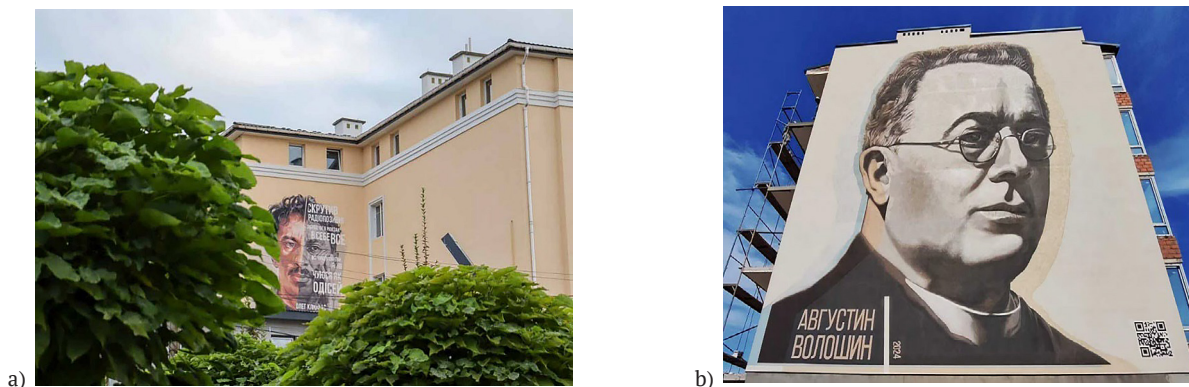


Figure 4. Murals dedicated to Oleh Kliufas and Avhustyn Voloshyn

Note: a – mural in honor of Oleh Kliufas (address – Rynok Square, Mostyska, Lviv region); b – mural in honour of Avhustyn Voloshyn (address – Kapushanska Str., Uzhgorod)

Source: N. Studnya (2024), M. Pylypko (2024)



The mural dedicated to Oleh Kliufas was created in 2024, area – 60 m², material – facade and artistic acrylic paint. The mural depicted Oleh Kliufas in a symbolic image that unites his poetic talent, philosophical wisdom, and military bravery. Oleh Kliufas was killed on 13 June 2023 near the village of Rozdolivka in the Bakhmut district of Donetsk region. Oleh served as a senior mortar operator, performed his duties diligently and with high professionalism, distinguished by a strong sense of personal responsibility for every task entrusted to him. The mural on honour of Avhustyn Voloshyn was created in 2024, area – 64 m², material – facade and artistic acrylic paint, wall – facade of a residential building. Avhustyn Voloshyn – the first president in the history of Carpathian Ukraine – was not only a politician but also an outstanding public figure, priest, and writer. Voloshyn was an active participant in the national liberation movement and a significant figure in the history of Zakarpattia. The mural became a symbolic gift to Uzhhorod on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Avhustyn Voloshyn’s birth, and it served as the final element completing the commissioning of the residential complex. Figure 5 depicted a mural of Symon Petliura, created by Taras Dovhaliuk.



Figure 5. Mural of Symon Petliura

Note: address – 5b Zарvanska Str., Kamianets-Podilskyi, Khmelnytskyi region

Source: I. Oliynyk (2019)

The mural was created in 2019, area – 200 m², materials – facade acrylic paint, aerosol paint, wall – facade of a residential building. The mural depicted Symon Petliura, Head of the Directorate of the Ukrainian People’s Republic. According to the project’s organiser and patron Oleksandr Beilyk, this was not the first but the largest mural dedicated to honouring the memory of this prominent fighter for Ukraine’s independence. The image of Symon Petliura, the Chief Otaman of the Armed Forces of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, was based on a photograph taken during his stay in Kamianets-Podilskyi. Also, Taras Dovhaliuk and Andriy Savchyshyn were the authors of the murals depicted in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Murals dedicated to Nazar Pidkovych and Crimean Tatars

Note: a – mural in honour of Nazar Pidkovych (address – 127 Shevchenko Str., Stryi, Lviv region); b – mural in honour of Crimean Tatars (address – Zakhysnykiv Ukrainy Str., Lviv)

Source: O. Yarlykova (2018), The interactive platform “Memorial Heritage “Glory and Honour” (2024)

The mural was “Nazar Pidkovych” created by artists Taras Dovhaliuk and Andriy Savchyshyn in 2019. The wall was the end façade of a residential building, area – 126 m², materials – facade and artistic acrylic paint, aerosol paint. The mural was dedicated to Nazar Pidkovych, the fallen deputy commander of the 2nd Assault Company of the “Karpatska Sich named after Oleh Kutsyn” battalion. Also, this artists created the mural in commemoration of the 72nd anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, in 2016. The artwork was located on a retaining wall, materials – acrylic paint, aerosol paint, area – 30 m². The artwork was complemented by a thematic poem by Lilia Budzhurova. Examples of murals that were no longer marginal phenomena, but had occupied central urban spaces and integrated into the symbolic landscape, included murals dedicated to Serhii Nigoyan and Naftali Herz Imber (Fig. 7). The Portuguese street artist Alexandre Farto (VHILS) created on the building overlooking Heavenly Hundred Heroes Square an image of Serhii Nihoyan in 2015. The wall was the end façade of a residential building. Area: 70 m², material – perforated plaster. The artist used a unique technique of carving and working through multiple layers of materials. In Kyiv, Alexandre Farto first applied layers of concrete and plaster onto the wall and, once dried, began chipping away fragments to reveal the portrait of the Hero of the Heavenly Hundred. The central element of the



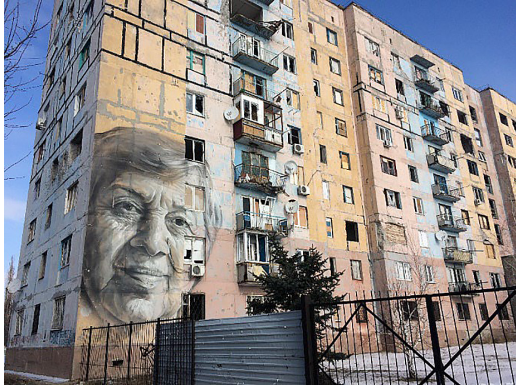


Figure 9. Mural dedicated to Maryna Marchenko
Note: address – Avdiivka, Donetsk region
Source: N. Dym (2016)



Figure 11. The artwork of Banksy
Note: address – Borodianka, Kyiv region
Source: A. Durbin (2022)



a)



b)

Figure 10. Examples of murals with a political dimension
Note: a – mural in honour of Petro Sahaidachnyi, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, Dmytro Dontsov, Sviatoslav Khorobryi (address – Dnipro River embankment, Kyiv); b – mural in honour of Volodymyr Zelenskyi (location – Warsaw, Poland)
Source: Mukachevo.net (2022), I. Miller (2025)

The mural in Figure 10 (a) was created by an unknown artist in 2025. The central figure on the wall was General Valerii Zaluzhnyi. Beside him were depictions of Sviatoslav the Brave, Petro Sahaidachnyi, and Dmytro Dontsov. The mural in Figure 10 (b) was created by the artist Yaroslava Holysh in 2022, area – 90 m², material – acrylic paint. The mural depicted Volodymyr Zelenskyi along with the inscription “Slava Ukraini!” (“Glory to Ukraine!”).

The artwork was likely created by the British artist Banksy in 2022, material – stencil, aerosol paint (Fig. 11). The image depicted a boy throwing Putin over his shoulder, with both figures wearing judo uniforms. So, the results of practical experience had demonstrated that: 1) in many cases, memorial murals were implemented without sufficient dialogue with the architectural context, resulting in visual dissonance; 2) the lack of professional competition or selection procedures endangered the representativeness and aesthetic quality of memory images; 3) without proper ethical guidance, memorial murals can provoke controversial reactions, from retraumatisation to trivialisation. The study found that, when guided by an interdisciplinary approach, meaningful community engagement, and careful site selection, murals can become not only acts of remembrance but also catalysts for deeper reflection on complex historical events. It may significantly influence the urban landscape – both visually and contextually. Within commemorative practices, both aesthetic and moral factors emerged, requiring a responsible approach to every stage of the process – from concept to realisation. An additional analytical vector involved comparing the architectural and urban contexts, in which memorial murals were created, particularly in democratic societies versus totalitarian regimes. This comparison proved essential for understanding the relationship between public space and the potential for collective memory.

In democratic urban environments, architecture and public space were structured around human needs: pedestrian-friendly scales, accessibility, inclusivity, and navigability prevail. In such settings, memorial murals became an organic part of the city’s daily rhythm, integrated rather than imposed. Commemorative projects often emerged from civic initiatives, public discourse, and community collaboration. In contrast, totalitarian urban structures used architecture as a tool of control and submission (Fig. 12). These spaces were shaped by centralisation, monumentalism, and rigid geometry. Rather than inviting interaction, it imposed authority. Monuments and large-scale imagery in these environments functioned rhetorically, reinforcing power and ideology. Citizens in such contexts were subjects rather than participants; the space became a stage

for power, not a site of memory. Quantity overrode quality, superficiality replaced depth, and form dominated substance. This was evident in the commemorative practices of the aggressor state – practices, whose replication under Ukrainian conditions presented real danger.



Figure 12. Propaganda

Note: Pyongyang, North Korea

Source: Unian (2017)

This mural located on one of the major central squares, where ideological monuments and propagandistic murals were typically concentrated. Theme of the mural: mass support for and glorification of the state leader. The comparison of these environments underscored the role of memorial murals as a living form of public art. In open societies, it served as interlocutors – provoking reflection and participation. In closed regimes, its risk becoming façades of control, where memory was not activated but preserved in state-sanctioned forms. Thus, a city’s capacity to serve as a space of memory was directly shaped by the political nature of its urban environment.

Compared to European practices, creators of memorial murals in Ukraine were compelled to assume not only artistic but also ideological responsibility for the content of their works. Unlike most European countries, where clear competitive procedures, thematic frameworks, and selection mechanisms existed, in the Ukrainian context decisions regarding the appearance, content, and style of a mural were most often made by the artist or the commissioner without the involvement of a professional expert community. Such autonomy offered certain advantages (a high degree of creative freedom), but it also entailed significant risks – namely, the absence of a critical filter or methodological guidelines. The problem of non-professional approaches lain in the spontaneous creation of murals without consideration of architectural context or ethical dimensions. This results in several issues, such as: retraumatisation of audiences through aesthetically or conceptually inappropriate depictions of events; distortion of the environment due to unqualified intervention in façades or public space; and the speculative use of memory – such as the commercialisation of tragedy in visual form. Consequently, cases of social resistance or even prohibition of such initiatives (moratoria) arise, hindering the development of high-quality commemorative art.

The uniqueness of the Ukrainian context, in contrast to global traditions of commemoration, stemmed from its functioning within the conditions of ongoing war. This produced a dual task: to document events, heroes, and communities for future generations; to deconstruct the Soviet monumental legacy that still persisted in urban space as a form of visual noise. This necessitated new methodologies: artists must not merely depict, but create an ethical, emotional, and cultural alternative to the models of the past. In this sense, Ukrainian murals constituted not only artistic works but also political actions that asserted new values through imagery of memory. Such practices may form a foundation for future projects, provided it was critically examined and accompanied by effective implementation strategies; even negative examples can serve as points of reference and carry practical value. It was also important to note the shift from direct illustrativeness to interpretive openness. A significant number of murals do not convey events literally but instead create space for personal reflection. The artwork became a mediator between the environment and the viewer, who projected their memories, emotions, and interpretations onto the image. This mode of perception allowed for a deeper internalisation of experience – not merely as historical information, but as lived, participatory memory.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirmed that memorial murals fulfilled a complex commemorative function within the urban environment. These works done more than convey memory of events or individuals – it was integrated into the social fabric of the city, influencing spatial perception, forming symbolic axes, and reshaping the routes of everyday attention. Murals became not simply paintings on façades, but interventions in public space, carrying distinct emotional, political, and identity-related meanings. Urban memorial murals functioned not only as artistic expressions, but also as complex communicative structures capable of embedding themselves into collective memory and contributing to the formation of national identity. Y. Zhou *et al.* (2024) emphasised that public art projects in urban contexts contributed to strengthening cultural values and social cohesion, while simultaneously supporting the economic growth of cities. S. Juzeleniene & S. Petroniene (2025) demonstrated that murals “are woven into collective memory”, transforming residents’ relationships with their surroundings. E. Doss (2010) emphasised that visual forms of public memory – including murals – were increasingly replacing traditional monuments by focusing not only on heroism, but also on emotional, traumatic, and controversial aspects of the past. Similarly, Ukrainian memorial murals often focused not on glorification, but on personalisation of loss, empathy, and collective solidarity. In A. Rigney’s (2018) terms, it became expressions of “memory of hope”, which not only recalled the past but also offered visions for the future.

An important outcome of the study was not only the identification of practical transformations in mural



production, but also the recognition of a new role of the city – as an active environment of mnemonic interaction that shaped not only the urban landscape but also the very mode of remembrance. In this context, the artist, architecture, and community became co-creators of a complex, multilayered narrative that not only represented but also interpreted historical trauma. The global context demonstrated that murals often functioned as forms of alternative historical narration. In the work of D. Drozdowski *et al.* (2016), a similar tendency was observed in Berlin and Warsaw, where street art reinterpreted traumatic pasts and contributed to the formation of local cultures of memory. Ukrainian memorial murals fitted within this logic but also encountered their unique challenges – particularly those related to the Soviet legacy of monumental art and the urgent need to de-aestheticise propagandistic narratives. I. Upalevski (2017) argued that, despite murals' potential to democratise memory, most Warsaw murals reproduced official, state-supported, nation-centered and male-dominated historical narratives – effectively acting as “secondary memory makers” under institutional influence rather than as independent, subversive voices. R. Schacter (2013) profiled over 100 of the most influential urban artists worldwide – from New York to São Paulo to Melbourne – and situated their work in both geographic and historical context, tracing the evolution of street art from its early mural roots in Latin America to the spray-can graffiti and mural culture of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Murals can contribute to social cohesion, give visual form to collective memory, and serve as instruments of cultural activism (Simões, 2023; Juzeleniene & Petroniene, 2025). The author R. Cappeller (2024) noted that the effective creation of a memorial mural was possible only through meaningful dialogue with the community and a contextually informed approach. B. Blankley (2021) emphasised the role of the artist not only as a documentarian but as a “memory-maker”, who introduced new meanings in relation to events and protagonists. Z. Ge & M.F. Sedon (2025) and H. Bitaijeva (2025) noted that the sustainable development of a culture of remembrance in Ukraine required the establishment of ethical and methodological criteria that drawn upon global experience and promoted the responsible creation of murals as intentional artefacts of collective memory. The experience of Ukrainian memorial murals can be understood as a form of hybrid commemoration that combined elements of traditional monumental art, street-level activism, local self-organisation, and global visual trends. This highlighted the need to formalise methodological foundations for the creation of such works, as well as the necessity of involving a broad range of specialists – artists, urbanists, historians, and psychologists – in their development. Unlike many Western practices, the Ukrainian context was characterised by a lack of institutional support, the absence of standardised procedures, competitions, or criteria for producing commemorative murals. Successful projects – such as the memorial mural dedicated to Mykola Ozerov in Stryi, the work

commemorating Naftali Herz Imber in Lviv, and pieces by Vhils in Kyiv – demonstrated that, when artistic, ethical, and urbanistic principles were respected, memorial murals can acquire profound symbolic power. These works had the potential to transform the urban environment not only physically but mentally – creating places of memory, emotional resonance, and social discourse.

CONCLUSIONS

So, throughout the research, five key dimensions of transformation in mural design were identified: sociocultural, spatial, communicative, technological, and political, which helped to better understand how memorial murals were shifting the function of public art – from the aesthetic enhancement of urban space to a tool for remembrance, critical reflection, and communal identification. The mural dedicated to Mykola Ozerov in Stryi illustrated the socio-cultural relevance. It transformed a residential facade into a site of collective memory and hope through a heroic narrative. In Kyiv, the mural depicting Serhiy Nigoyan demonstrated spatial transformation. Its carved portrait overlooks the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred Square, symbolically recreating a contested urban space as a sacred landscape of memory. The mural on the Dnipro Embankment in Kyiv features Petro Sahaidachny, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, Dmytro Dontsov and Prince Sviatoslav the Brave demonstrated the political dimension of the confrontation between official and unofficial narratives of memory. Experience in mural implementation confirmed that effective creation of a memorial mural required a holistic and considered approach. Key factors included the architectural and social context, the community's emotional state, the nature of the commemorated event, and visual representation that avoided superficiality or trauma. Dialogue between the artist, community, experts, and space was essential. Misguided decisions may provoke reactions, from indifference to rejection. Excessive literalism can devalue memory, while artistic metaphor or open interpretation encouraged deeper engagement and lasting emotional impact. In the context of Russian full-scale invasion, the role of murals had grown significantly. It allowed for the visual expression of loss, solidarity, resistance, and dignity in everyday urban spaces. Its scale, placement, and emotional power helped overcome indifference and evoke resonance. Memorial murals brought the past into the present, integrating symbolic and emotional experiences into the city landscape. It also served as focal points for community identification, embedding collective memory into the city's architecture and daily life. Creating memorial murals required not only artistic skill but also conscious responsibility to society and future generations. The process must be intentional, as any lack of awareness could lead to devaluation. Prospect of the research is to develop ethical, methodological, and artistic criteria as a framework of responsibility that will provide a foundation for the sustainable development of visual culture of memory in Ukraine – one that remains meaningful and comprehensible for generations to come.





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None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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Тарас Довгалюк

Спеціаліст з містобудування, архітектор
Національний університет «Львівська політехніка»
79013, вул. Степана Бандери, 12, м. Львів, Україна
<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0858-5891>

Місце та роль меморіальних муралів в урбаністичному середовищі

Анотація. Актуальність цього дослідження зумовлена зростаючою потребою у нових комеморативних практиках в умовах триваючої війни, спричиненої збройною агресією російської федерації проти України. Метою дослідження став аналіз сучасних методів створення меморіальних муралів, визначення їхньої ролі у формуванні публічної пам'яті та дослідження особливостей їх інтеграції в міський простір. У роботі застосовано методи візуального аналізу, польового дослідження, інтерв'ю та дискурсивного аналізу. У межах дослідження розглянуто феномен меморіальних муралів як специфічну форму публічного мистецтва, що функціонує в урбаністичному середовищі. Визначено, що мурали постали ефективним інструментом фіксації колективної пам'яті, конструювання ідентичності та формування символічного просторового ландшафту міста. Основну увагу зосереджено на муральних практиках в українських містах, із особливим акцентом на авторському досвіді реалізації проєктів меморіальних муралів. У результаті дослідження виявлено ключові трансформації дизайну таких творів за п'ятьма вимірами: соціокультурним, просторовим, комунікативним, технологічним і політичним. Встановлено, що в умовах воєнного часу (2022-2025) меморіальні мурали виходять за межі суто художньої форми та набувають значення носіїв смислів – виконуючи функції соціальних маркерів, емоційних реакцій і засобів критичної інтерпретації дійсності. Дослідження засвідчило, що ефективність реалізації таких проєктів залежить від якості взаємодії з локальними спільнотами, професійного діалогу з міським контекстом та наявності ґрунтовної методологічної основи. Також окреслено ризики, пов'язані з непрофесійним підходом, зокрема ретравматизацію, спотворення середовища та втрату символічної цінності. Практична значущість дослідження полягає у формуванні підходів до змістовного створення меморіальних муралів, які можуть бути масштабовані на національному рівні та інтегровані в міжнародний культурний дискурс

Ключові слова: візуальна пам'ять; публічний простір; урбаністична ідентичність; колективна пам'ять; просторове вшанування