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Artistic heritage as a foundation of cultural identity in contemporary typographic design in Ukraine

Abstract. A prominent thematic focus in the humanities and design fields in the 21st century has been the exploration of cultural identity in the context of globalisation, the promotion of unity in diversity, the recognition of the value of local cultures, and the development of methods to influence graphic design processes. This article aimed to analyse typographic design with Ukrainian identity from 2014 to 2024 and to investigate the sources of Ukraine's cultural heritage that 21st-century designers have drawn upon in the creation of typefaces and lettering. The findings confirmed that typographic design was a vital element in expressing cultural identity within the work of Ukrainian designers, aligning closely with international practice. It was established that the reflection of Ukrainian identity in typefaces and typography was achieved by referring to four groups of cultural heritage sources: traditional Ukrainian writing systems, the synthesised experience of early 20th-century typographic art, the work of specific 20th-century graphic artists, and selected typographic artefacts (handwriting of cultural figures, archival photographs of urban shop signs, book and magazine graphics from the first half of the 20th century, and archival documents). Two distinct stages in the development of digital typeface content reflecting Ukrainian identity over the period 2000–2024 have been identified: 1) the creation of typeface families that made historical developments accessible (including cursive scripts, as well as the work of Heorhii Narbut and his followers); 2) the rise of Ukrainian fonts characterised by glocal design, along with the expansion of the source base referencing cultural heritage. The study identified both implemented approaches and existing gaps in the engagement with Ukrainian cultural heritage. It demonstrated the research-driven, synthetic, and experimental nature of typographic design in Ukraine during 2014–2024. It has been shown that Ukrainian designers approached the development of fonts with distinctly Ukrainian visual features in a deliberate and thoughtful manner, actively promoting their use through social communication. The findings are of value to both Ukrainian and international scholars, as they reveal the particularities of Ukraine's engagement with a broader international trend in graphic design in the 2020s

Keywords: graphic design; cultural heritage; Ukrainian identity; font; typography

INTRODUCTION

Socio-cultural identity is one of the pressing issues of 21st-century society, as well as of contemporary humanities and design practice. Visual communication and graphic design play a significant role in addressing the crisis of

identity, conceptualising the notion of cultural hybridity, and promoting the values of unity in diversity and of glocal cultures – issues explored in depth across various studies. Linda Kudrnovská, co-author of the documentary research

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project “Identity”, which focused on Czech graphic design, observed that graphic designers create visual identities for individual brands, public figures, communities, and events. Collectively, this contributed to shaping the visual identity of the environment, which, in turn, influenced the identity of those who inhabit it (With Aleš Najbrt in the footsteps..., 2023). Visual production thus became a complex platform for interpretation: through the decoding of embedded visual messages, recipients form a sense of themselves as members of a particular society. Graphic design thereby participates in the shaping of a society's identity as a community of recipients.

The issue of cultural identity embedded in graphic design projects and conveyed through them in the information and communication space has become the subject of academic research across various countries. A. Yeo & F. Cao (2021) developed a design methodology aimed at creating graphic design with African identity, specifically that of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). Drawing on theories of culture and cultural identity, the authors explored the visual language of traditional African culture and concluded that effective outcomes were achieved through the use of graphic symbols, traditional colours, writing systems, and other elements of the cultural framework. E. Tunstall & E. Agi (2023) focused on decolonising design and the rejection of the European modernist paradigm in favour of positioning the local cultures of Indigenous peoples of the Americas – both in the organisation of everyday life and in the visual concepts of design projects. T.H. Nguyen (2024) emphasised the importance of preserving and promoting cultural identity under globalisation, using Vietnam as a case study. The research addressed the challenges faced by Vietnamese graphic design students studying in international programmes, which lacked dedicated courses on national history and cultural traditions. S.M. Hassan & T.A. Al-Dajani (2025) explored the significance of design in preserving culture and reinterpreting the cultural experience of Saudi Arabia within the framework of the national Vision 2030 programme. They identified the aesthetic and artistic dimensions of Saudi heritage that can be represented through bold and contemporary visual design solutions and reflected on the creation of a cultural brand that resonates with both local and global audiences. As representatives of local cultures, the authors provided a scholarly rationale for the need to preserve cultural diversity in the context of globalisation. They regarded graphic design as a powerful communicative tool for sustaining diversity and conveying it to the international arena. The studies cited above highlight a shared concern: the development of a distinctive aesthetic and semantic language in design projects grounded in cultural heritage. They identified mechanisms for integrating traditional forms into contemporary design and offered predictions regarding the effectiveness of such approaches.

In addition to comprehensive studies that have addressed the broader issues of cultural identity, the

examination of more specific aspects of graphic design has become increasingly important in academic research. Within the context of cultural identity and the search for its sources in local artistic heritage, typeface and typographic design have emerged as key areas of focus. For instance, S. Elbardawil (2022) investigated cultural heritage in Arab countries through the lens of Arabic typography. The author examined the use of Naskh-style fonts in navigation systems and signage as part of the visual urban heritage of the United Arab Emirates and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The study demonstrated that typographic design contributed a unique character to the visual urban landscape in the Arab context. Scientist advocated for the preservation and documentation of Arabic typographic heritage in urban spaces, including its history, methods, processes, and artefacts. In doctoral research, W. Wang (2024) classified modern Chinese characters and analysed both traditional and contemporary forms of hieroglyphs using various graphic design projects as case studies. As a result of her research, the author raised the issue of the interrelation between the morphology and imagery of Chinese characters, questioning how the use of more pronounced artistic techniques and the enhancement of a character's visual-expressive qualities might affect the perception of the symbol as a whole. D. Maisuradze (2024) examined the typographic heritage of Sakartvelo and explored the prospects for its digitalisation in graphic design during the third decade of the 21st century. Meanwhile, M. Ling (2021), in the study of calligraphic heritage and the development of innovative typeface content based on it, introduced a cross-cultural approach. In the context of Ukrainian typography and typographic heritage, significant academic and journalistic attention has been devoted to the Ruthenia project by V. Chebanyk *et al.* (2024), which presented the full trajectory of the project's development, along with a rationale for the underlying concepts and typeface designs.

This study aimed to analyse the development of typographic design that reflected Ukrainian cultural identity and to identify the layers of Ukraine's cultural heritage that were readily accessible and capable of broadening the creative horizons of contemporary graphic designers. It was worth noting that, in Ukraine, international design trends were being intensified by the social upheaval of war – an assault aimed at the eradication of Ukrainian identity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was carried out through two parallel processes: the collection of a source base and the analysis of design projects. The source material consisted of two categories of design work from the period 2014–2024. The first group comprised completed graphic design projects, whose artistic expression was based on the use of distinctive typographic elements with Ukrainian identity. The collection of this group was conducted in two stages: 1) empirical observation of sites, where the projects were in use (bookshops, grocery stores, street

signage, public events), which confirmed the real-world presence of the identified trends; 2) examination of the context, in which the collected projects were created, as outlined in annotations posted on the social media pages and websites of the designers or design studios responsible. In the first stage, the selected projects were compared with others that had already been recognised by the professional community as containing elements of Ukrainian identity. The comparison focused on key typographic features – such as the character of letterforms and the presence of elements developed throughout the historical evolution of Ukrainian typographic culture. In the second stage, a textual analysis of annotations was carried out to identify the sources of Ukrainian typographic identity referenced by the designers and to assess the extent to which they reinterpreted historical cultural heritage. All data obtained during the analysis were synthesised into a table.

The second group of source material consisted of functional digital typeface families, available for purchase or free download and use in projects, created between 2000 and 2024. The selection criterion for inclusion in the core sample was that the designers explicitly identified their typefaces as containing Ukrainian identity. The study of this category involved the collection, systematisation, and analysis of descriptions of developed typeface families. Based on this analysis, the types of cultural heritage objects referenced by designers were identified. Key resources for this group included the websites and pages of type designer Dmytro Rastvortsev (Rastvortsev & Bulanov, 2020; Rastvortsev, 2021a; 2021b), specialised platforms such as the Rentafont blog (2025), the Alfabravo (2025) design studio, UKRfonts.com (n.d.), and the site of designer Bohdan Hdal (Fonts, n.d.).

By applying the method of abstraction, the data enabled conclusions to be drawn regarding the stages of type culture development in the period 2000–2024. Additionally, online interviews with Ukrainian designers Oleksii Chekal, Oleksandra Korchevska, and Kyrylo Tkachov were analysed, focusing on their personal experiences and design approaches as discussed during the presentation of the book *Graphic Design with a Ukrainian Face (How to make Ukrainian..., 2023a; 2023b)*. Further insights for both research processes were drawn from review publications by Ukrainian journalists featured on specialised media platforms such as Projector (*Identities of Ukrainian..., 2021*) and Suspilne Media (Kuzmenko, 2023). Analytical input also included an expert publication by K. Tkachov (2020), which, based on practical experience, addressed key themes relevant to the analysis of contemporary type design in Ukraine.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Between 2014 and 2024, Ukrainian graphic design saw significant enrichment – both through projects in which typographic elements became the central expression of national cultural identity, and through the creation of new

typefaces imbued with distinctively Ukrainian character. This process became particularly prominent against the backdrop of the ongoing Russian–Ukrainian war, which began in 2014 and escalated dramatically with the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation in February 2022. In the context of attempts to erase national identity, cultural forms have emerged as vital tools for asserting uniqueness and maintaining visibility on the global map of cultural diversity. Graphic design has become one of Ukraine's most powerful instruments of soft power in positioning the country and its heritage internationally.

Among the most notable and expressive design projects of the 2014–2024 period were visual identity systems, packaging, labels, and covers. A significant portion of modern territorial branding (for cities and regions) has been based on the adaptation and reinterpretation of historical type heritage and the works of Ukrainian graphic artists. Examples included the typographic components of the identities of Lutsk, Kyiv, Kyiv Region, Cherkasy Region, Vorokhta, and Chernivtsi (Fig. 1). In project descriptions, designers often justified their creative decisions by referencing the legacies of Vasyl Krychevskyi, Pavlo Kovzhun, and Vasyl Yermilov. For example, the identity of the Rivne Region (Fig. 1, c) features a distinctive font executed in small caps, drawing on the styles of Heorhii Narbut, Yakov Hnizdovskyi, and Robert Lisovskyi. A now-classic yet still highly relevant example in Ukrainian design was the limited-edition release of Chernihivske beer. In 2015, metal cans were decorated with refined calligraphic lettering in the style of Ukrainian “skoropys” (fast-writing style), created by the Lopukhina sisters. The label design for Umanske beer featured a distinctive inscription based on the aesthetic of Narbut-inspired typefaces and patterns incorporating geometric elements derived from the natural floral motifs of the Ukrainian landscape. The minimalistic and simple layout highlighted the inscription itself, successfully combining modernity with elements of cultural and artistic heritage. A particularly striking example of rebranding in favour of stylised typographic composition can be seen in the redesign of the Volia energy drink can. At the beginning of 2023, the can's defining visual element was a vertical composition built from traditional Ukrainian embroidery patterns, which contributed to a structured layout and enhanced the emotional tone of the character depicted. However, following a consumer feedback analysis, the design team revised their approach at the end of 2023 (Updated “Volia” from..., 2023). The selected word “nezlamna” (unbreakable), chosen to express the essence of the brand and the core values of Ukrainian resilience, was reimagined as a typographic composition inspired by the layout of titles and headings in Gospels printed in Ukrainian printing houses of the 15th–16th centuries (Fig. 2). As a result, they can retain high recognisability in fast-paced visual contexts among competitors, while gaining originality and conceptual depth through the reinterpretation of Ukrainian typographic and lettering heritage.



Figure 1. Typographic elements in the visual identities of Ukrainian cities and regions

Note: a – Kyrylo Tkachov. Font Lutsk for the city’s identity; b – Dmytro Rastvortsev. Typeface compilation for the identity of Kyiv Region; c – Oleksandra Korchevska. Typographic component of Rivne Region’s identity; d – Dmytro Rastvortsev. Typographic component of Cherkasy Region’s identity; e – White Studio Design. Logo for the city of Vorokhta; f – OCB Agency. Logo for the city of Chernivtsi

Source: K. Tkachov (2017); D. Rastvortsev & D. Bulanov (2020); D. Rastvortsev (2021a); D. Rastvortsev (2021b); Identities of Ukrainian regions worth seeing (2021); The city of Chernivtsi has received a new branding (2024)

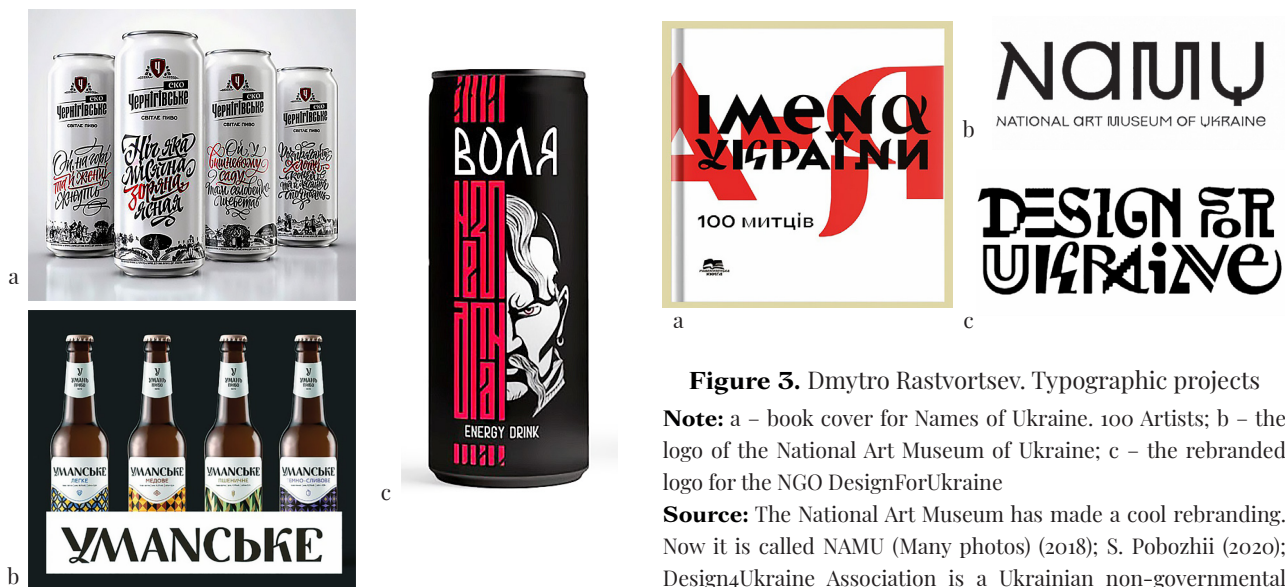


Figure 2. Beer packaging design

Note: a – metal cans from the limited-edition Chernihivske beer series; b – label design for Umanske beer; c – can design for the Volia energy drink

Source: BBDO studio – Ukrainian songs (2015); Updated “Volia” from “Morshynska” (2023); Umanske. Exquisite mild taste (2025)

A large-scale typographic project was developed by designer Dmytro Rastvortsev as part of the visual identity for the National Art Museum of Ukraine. While the logo appeared visually minimal – consisting of only four letters – it was supported by a comprehensive type system comprising nine typeface families. The foundation of the project was archival material from the museum, spanning from early printed books to works from the early 20th century. This type of system has since been adapted for various applications, including the aforementioned identity for the Kyiv Region, book covers, and the redesigned logo for the public organisation DesignForUkraine (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Dmytro Rastvortsev. Typographic projects

Note: a – book cover for Names of Ukraine. 100 Artists; b – the logo of the National Art Museum of Ukraine; c – the rebranded logo for the NGO DesignForUkraine

Source: The National Art Museum has made a cool rebranding. Now it is called NAMU (Many photos) (2018); S. Pobozhii (2020); Design4Ukraine Association is a Ukrainian non-governmental organisation that aims to shape a holistic society (n.d.)

A synthesised Ukrainian typographic identity also underpins the visual style of the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts, developed to mark its 100th anniversary. The variable typographic compositions, created by Oleksii Chekal, were based on a fusion of lettering styles by Borys Kosarev, Sviatoslav Hordynskyi, Vasyl Yermilov, and Vasyl Krychevskyi (Chekal, 2021). Logotypes for the magazine “The Ukrainian” and the KyivDesignWeek project (Fig. 4) were developed from a combination of calligraphic flourishes and digital grotesques that also reference various cultural periods in Ukrainian visual history. The covers and overall design of printed publications featuring cultural references typically draw on adapted and compiled calligraphy inspired by “skoropys”, the titles of early printed books, inscriptions on the walls of religious buildings, works by 20th-century Ukrainian graphic artists, and even the handwriting of prominent figures.



Figure 4. Oleksii Chekal. Typographic projects

Note: a – lettering and graphic symbolism of the visual identity of the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts; b – covers of The Ukrainian magazine; c – logo for the KyivDesignWeek project

Source: Ya. Trehubova (2020); O. Chekal (2022); O. Kmelyovska (2023)

A notable area of application for a typographic design featuring Ukrainian visual identity has been the creation of film logos for Ukrainian cinema. One of the most active contributors in this field is designer Bohdan Hdal. The logo for “Hutsulka Ksenia” was developed using his Old Kharkiv font, enhanced with decorative elements. For the film “Black Raven”, Hdal’s Vernyhora typeface was used in both the logo and visual identity. The logo for “Dovbush” (Fig. 5) underwent several design phases, evolving from sketches referencing the angular, carved Hutsul aesthetic to a more modern look – yet retaining a distinctive Ukrainian character, especially in the stylised letter “V” based on the ligature “OV”.

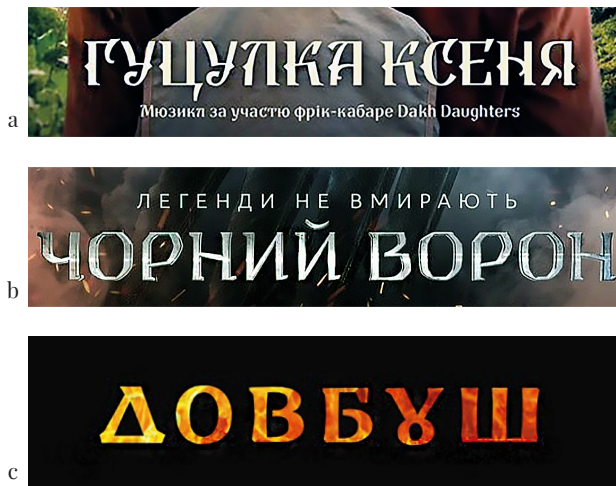


Figure 5. Bohdan Hdal. Logos for Ukrainian films

Note: a – logo for the film “Hutsulka Ksenia”; b – logo for the film “Black Raven”; c – logo for the film “Dovbush”

Source: Logotypes for the films Dovbush, Hutsulka Ksenya and The Stranger (2021)

Among the most prominent authors of widely used typefaces and typographic concepts are Vasyl Chebanyk, Henadii Zarechniuk, Viktor Kharyk, Kyrlo Tkachov, Bohdan Hdal, Andrii Shevchenko, Dmytro Rashtvortsev, Oleksii Chekal, and Marchela Mozhyna. In his article, K. Tkachov (2020) highlighted the rapid emergence of new names in the field of type design and the active development of the discipline between 2020 and 2022. The design work of individual creators has also been explored in publications by A. Dubrivna & S. Doronina (2021), I. Cherkesova (2023), and A. Koliesnikova & O. Pasko (2023). However, these articles do not offer an in-depth analysis of cultural heritage as a foundational source of identity – an area of increasing importance in defining future directions for the development of typographic culture in Ukraine.

The study also examined 50 of the most widely known and used typeface families that, according to their designers, embody Ukrainian identity. The selected typefaces were created to a high professional standard and feature full functionality, including complete character sets, case systems, and at least four styles or weights. Most also support multilingual usage: approximately 75% of the typefaces are suitable for use in 80 to 100 languages, while the remainder support three languages. The analysis focused on reviewing and organising the design concepts and approaches presented in the typeface descriptions provided by the designers. The primary aim was to identify patterns in the references to Ukrainian cultural heritage objects that serve as the conceptual basis for these contemporary typeface projects. The source analysis of 50 typeface families produced the following data (Table 1).

Table 1. Sources of Ukrainian cultural heritage in the design of contemporary typefaces

Number typefaces	Type of cultural heritage serving as a conceptual source	Typeface names
10	Traditional Ukrainian writing systems (uncial, semi-uncial, Kyiv-style vyaz, skoropys, graffiti on the walls of ancient churches)	Ancient Kyiv, Hajdamaka, Ukrainian Barokko 2D, Bravestone, Palitura, Kyiv Region Type, Kyiv, Kudriavchenko, Ascetic 2D, Veles
6	General experience of type design from the early 20 th century in Ukraine	Irpina Type, Zlam, Almaz, e-Ukraine Head, Aleksa, Kyiv Region Type

Table 1. Continued

Number typefaces	Type of cultural heritage serving as a conceptual source	Typeface names
20	Work of a specific 20 th -century Ukrainian graphic artist or designer	Narbut Abetka, Narbut Classic, Narbut Narrow Contrast, Narbut Extra Wide, Narbut Whirl, Abetka Kirnarskoho, Yakutovych, Kyiv Region, Ukrainka, Repyakh, Zluka, Homenko, Zahar, Yurchi, Hordyi, Holos, Volja, KSADA, Vernyhora, Kalyna
14	Some cultural artefacts, including:	
	handwriting of prominent cultural figures	KobzarkS, Bairak Script, Kudriavchenko, Іван Гончар
	shop signage from the first half of the 20 th century (retro photographs)	Old Kharkiv, Lviv Towers, Konfekt, Univermag
	book and magazine graphics from the early 20 th century	Lutsk Type
	archival documents	NAMU Old Style, Koziyar
	urban street graffiti	Kharkiv Tone
	posters from the 1930s and credits from silent films of the all-Ukrainian Photo and Cinema Administration	ReImagineUA Dziga
	contemporary Ukrainian music	Mak

Source: compiled by the author

The integration of cultural motifs and patterns into typography adds meaning and establishes a deeper connection with the audience (Karahana, 2024). The identification and classification of Ukrainian cultural heritage objects that served as sources for contemporary typeface design revealed trends and patterns within the creative practices of Ukrainian type designers. Overall, the experience of Ukrainian designers is shaped in alignment with international design trends. For instance, among young African designers, a group of followers of Saki Mafundikwa has emerged – developing projects based on adapted ethnic scripts that he helped to revive (Johanet & Fesson, 2016). Designer and researcher S. Mafundikwa (2004) published a book in which was explored the ancient writing traditions of Africa in detail, comparing writing systems from Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, the Congo, Angola, and other countries across the continent. As noted by W.M. Aleshawie (2019), in Saudi Arabia, 95% of surveyed designers used typography to express visual identity, reproducing traditional forms of writing in their projects. A similar trend was observed in Lebanon, where researchers M.P. Khoury & T.E. Khoury (2017) proposed a development strategy for design and design education based on integrating distinctive cultural features into design projects. Their approach was rooted in authentic typography, yet emphasised the importance of modernisation and a synthesis of local and global influences. D. Maisuradze (2024) described typefaces created by contemporary Georgian designers – including his own – that were based on palaeographic scripts drawn from historical documents, ancient manuscripts, and the handwriting of various Georgian public figures from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Engaging with the cultural heritage of a particular ethnic group or nation may involve more than reproducing or reinterpreting entire traditional writing systems or typefaces created by professional artists. It can also include modelling letterforms based on specific artefacts – such

as shop signs, slogans on posters, the graphic elements of iconic household items, or architectural structures. For example, N. Noordyanto *et al.* (2022) analysed the semantics and morphology of the sickle used by the Madurese ethnic group in Pamekasan Regency, Indonesia, and developed a typeface based on its visual characteristics, integrating these into the structural foundation of the typeface design. In Ukrainian type design, such an approach has appeared in conceptual proposals and has mostly been realised through student experiments involving decorative typefaces. Another interdisciplinary study by J. Burns & D. Jarratt (2022), which focused on typography in tourist destinations at an English seaside resort, demonstrated that “inscribed, painted, or fabricated letterforms play a significant role in constructing the recognised “image” and our experience of the seaside”. Thus, in certain areas of local community life, the cultural heritage of the everyday was created through design – and specifically through typography – which in turn became a source of identity. According to the authors, “interpretation of the value of typography provide depth to a design proposal, but it would emphasise the heritage/traditions associated with these distinctive places”. These traditions form a conceptual foundation for contemporary typographic design.

At the same time, Table 2 revealed that the majority of typefaces have been developed based on references to the work of specific Ukrainian graphic artists and designers of the 20th century, or through the synthesis of selected elements from their works. This reflected a significant and distinctive feature of Ukrainian culture – artistic and historical continuity – characterised by the transmission of visual methodologies and identity-forming approaches from earlier generations of artists to newer ones. This finding led to the next stage of the study: an analysis of how the heritage of individual artists was represented in a sample of 20 typefaces from Table 1, to identify the most influential figures.

Table 2. Representation of Ukrainian artists' heritage in contemporary typefaces

Ukrainian graphic artist (20 th century)	Contemporary Ukrainian designer	Typeface name	Year
Heorhii Narbut	Henadii Zarechniuk	Narbut Abetka, Narbut Classic, Narbut Narrow Contrast, Narbut Extra Wide, Narbut Whirl, Abetka Kirnarskoho	2000–2003
	Oleksandra Aleksandrova, Lukian Turetskyi	Kalyna	2014
	Bohdan Hdal	Vernyhora	2017
	Dmytro Rastvortsev	Ukrainka	2018
		Kyiv Region	2021
	Oleksii Chekal	KSADA	2021
Vasyl Krychevskiy	Bohdan Hdal	Vernyhora	2017
	Dmytro Rastvortsev	Ukrainka	2018
		Kyiv Region	2021
	Oleksii Chekal	KSADA	2021
Vasyl Khomenko	Henadii Zarechniuk, Viktor Kharyk, Kostiantyn Holovchenko	Homenko	2010, 2020
Volodymyr Yurchyshyn	Henadii Zarechniuk, Viktor Kharyk	Yurchi	2017
Vasyl Yermilov	Dmytro Rastvortsev	Ukrainka	2018
	Oleksii Chekal	KSADA	2021
Petro Kholodnyi	Henadii Zarechniuk, Viktor Kharyk	Zluka	2018
Heorhii Yakutovych	Henadii Zarechniuk	Yakutovych	2000–2003
	Henadii Zarechniuk, Viktor Kharyk	Zahar	2019
Borys Kosariev	Oleksii Chekal	KSADA	2021
Nil Khasevych	Marchela Mozhyna	Volja	2022
Sviatoslav Hordynskiy	Hanna Kovalenko	Hordyi	2023
Pavlo Kovzhun	Alona Korysta	Holos	2023
Mykola Butovych	Dmytro Rastvortsev in collaboration with LevType studio	Repyakh	2024

Source: compiled by the author

It was important to note that Table 2 included only those typefaces, whose accompanying annotations explicitly name the artists, whose work served as the visual and structural foundation for the design. In the annotations for such typefaces as Kyiv Region Type, e-Ukraine Head, Almaz, Zlam, and Irpin Type, designers referenced the general aesthetic of Ukrainian 20th-century avant-garde and modernism. These stylistic movements were embodied in the works of many of the artists listed in Table 2. Designers most frequently referred to the legacy of Heorhii Narbut, who laid a robust foundation for the aesthetics of Ukrainian identity and established a methodological framework for reinterpreting typographic heritage. These contributions were supported by an in-depth analysis in the article by S. Fedorenko *et al.* (2025), which provided new evidence of Narbut's lasting significance – both for his contemporaries and for his successors in the 21st century.

Therefore, based on the analysis of typefaces and inscriptions, two distinct stages in the development of digital typographic content with Ukrainian identity were identified over the period 2000–2024. The first stage involved the creation of typeface families that made the historical context accessible to a wide range of users. Fully functional and widely available fonts such as Narbut Abetka, Narbut Classic, Narbut Narrow Contrast, Narbut Extra Wide,

Narbut Whirl (2000–2003), Abetka Kirnarskoho (2000–2003), Homenko (2010), Ascetic 2D (2010), Ukrainian Barokko 2D (2010), Yakutovych (2000–2003), Ruthenia, Kalyna (2014), and Skoropys17 (2016–2017) became digital versions of typefaces – either fully or partially reconstructed – that reflected historical scripts or were originally created in the 20th century as products of Ukrainian cultural expression. This process of practical digitisation was carried out in parallel with theoretical research and the public dissemination of information concerning earlier periods of Ukraine's typographic heritage. Notable in this context were numerous academic publications and the doctoral research of I. Dudnyk (2019). This stage made it possible to enrich a wide variety of design projects with Ukrainian fonts that carried cultural significance and opened up opportunities for a new generation of designers to engage in a creative dialogue with the typographic legacy of the past.

The second stage, spanning predominantly from 2018 to 2025, was characterised, firstly, by a significant expansion of the source base of cultural references (including newly acknowledged names within Ukraine's artistic heritage), and secondly, by a marked increase in the number of Ukrainian typefaces that can be classified as examples of glocal design (Udris-Borodavko, 2024). Designers of the late 2010s and early 2020s demonstrated a predominantly synthetic mode

of thinking, expressed through the simultaneous application of citation, graphemic interpretation, and heuristic combination. This approach enabled the creation of variable compositions of typographic graphemes that reflected Ukrainian identity, while remaining contemporary and aligned with global design trends. This development was likely influenced, at least in part, by Ukraine's intensified integration into the European context following 2014, the growing participation of Ukrainian designers in professional competitions and festivals, and their increasingly prominent presence within the international design community.

Each contemporary Ukrainian designer developed a personal approach to typeface design, crafting individual project concepts. For example, Dmytro Rastvortsev's design philosophy centres on experimenting with the fusion of authenticity and modern forms, based on the belief that harmonious combinations will prove viable, while eclectic ones were unlikely to take root. In an interview, Dmytro Rastvortsev also emphasised the importance of harmony and gradual progression in typographic innovation, noting that the acceptance of new typefaces by professionals and audiences alike required time for adaptation. According to Marchela Mozhyna, a modern type designer must study authentic type traditions – such as early printed books and manuscripts. However, in contemporary typeface design, it was no longer sufficient to simply replicate original sources: “One should extract ideas or isolate a single parameter and blend it into a modern typeface” (Kuzmenko, 2023). For Bohdan Hdal, the primary aim of a project was not the perfection of letterforms or strict historical accuracy, but the ability to convey spirit and meaning – to communicate mood and emotion to the viewer (Kapustynska, 2024).

In a 2023 interview, O. Chekal, when addressing historical typographic heritage, also advised against designing in a way that would make the historical prototype overtly recognisable. Artist stressed that, for Ukrainian design, it was crucial to consider both context and appropriateness. O. Chekal highlighted the importance of selecting a particular style suited to a specific theme, carefully and thoughtfully choosing historical references, reworking them, and incorporating modern features (How to make Ukrainian..., 2023a). For example, master adapted a technique used by Ukrainian graphic artist S. Kosarev – imitating the appearance of letters cut by glass – for a contemporary poster design using a modern typeface (Chekal, 2021). Additionally, in research, O. Chekal (2023) provided a theoretical rationale for drawing upon the handwriting of H. Skovoroda as a foundation for contemporary typeface design. In everyday design practice, Chekal frequently experiments with combining elements from different historical periods – for instance, integrating “skoropys” with Ukrainian avantgarde aesthetics. Artist often referred to his projects as post-historical – works grounded in historical context, but contemporary and relevant in their overall expression. In projects, the designer conveyed the importance of defending national distinctiveness and embracing a humanistic approach in art, as

well as skilfully referencing artistic imagery. According to K. Tkachov, the call to recognise “Ukrainianness” in graphic design first emerged in the early 20th century, with H. Narbut and V. Krychevskyi laying the foundations for a design methodology that drew on primary sources of folk motifs. Both artists began shaping a direction that was later continued following Ukraine's independence in 1991 – namely, the quest to reflect the uniqueness of Ukrainian culture. The key approach identified by K. Tkachov in his own experience was to avoid direct copying and instead create new design products informed by previous developments. Moreover, a designer's pursuit of a distinctive style should not follow a linear path, but rather be branching and constantly evolving. A designer must demonstrate individuality not only in their creative solutions, but also in their choice of source material (How to make Ukrainian..., 2023b).

The conducted study has demonstrated, firstly, that font and typographic design serve as vital components in expressing cultural identity and, secondly, that leading Ukrainian type designers approach the creation of fonts with a distinct “Ukrainian character” in a deliberate and thoughtful manner, drawing on a diverse range of historical sources. This aligned with the design practices in other countries, where the question of identity was also brought to the fore by wider social developments. Between 2000 and 2024 – particularly since 2014 – a considerable number of typefaces have been developed in Ukraine, enabling other designers to incorporate Ukrainian identity into a broad spectrum of visual communication projects, across various functions and audiences. The reproduction of Ukrainian identity in fonts and typography has relied on references to objects of Ukrainian cultural heritage, which can be broadly categorised into four distinct groups. Ukrainian type designers have not only mastered the craft of digital font creation, but have also established it as an online business model that supported the continued growth of the field by: a) ensuring access to fonts for all users on varying financial terms; b) motivating type designers to create new work; c) offering a coherent representation of the overall quality of type design in the country. In addition, the practice of distributing newly developed fonts for free public use has contributed significantly to raising the overall standard of graphic design.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the study, it was established that the active use of the expressive potential of typography to present cultural identity has become a general trend globally and in Ukraine in particular. Furthermore, during the post-independence period, a significant part of the development of Ukraine's typographic culture has involved the creation of fonts or unique branded lettering that reflect Ukrainian identity. It was found that such design work has been grounded in Ukraine's cultural heritage – especially traditional Ukrainian scripts, the overall experience of typographic art in early 20th-century Ukraine, the work

of specific Ukrainian graphic artists and designers of the 20th century, and a range of cultural artefacts (such as the handwriting of cultural figures, retro photographs of shop signs from the first half of the 20th century, book and magazine graphics from the same period, and archival documents). The study also revealed that the development of digital typographic content with Ukrainian identity between 2000 and 2024 has already gone through two distinct stages. The first stage involved the creation of typefaces that made historical heritage widely accessible to the general public (such as fonts based on the cursive script and the work of H. Narbut and his followers). The second stage has been marked by the spread of Ukrainian fonts within the context of glocal design and a deepening engagement with sources of cultural heritage. While the first stage was characterised by the adaptation of existing fonts to digital design environments – often involving a degree of authorial reinterpretation and supplementation dictated by technical requirements – the second stage was associated with innovation. This included the simultaneous application of citation, graphemic interpretation,

and heuristic combination to achieve distinctive results in type design. It has been established that the leading figures of the new generation of Ukrainian typographers agree that engaging with cultural heritage should take a research-oriented, synthetic, and experimental approach. The result should be a unique product that represents the identity and at the same time meets modern global trends. Future research should focus on identifying and substantiating new sources of cultural heritage that embody Ukrainian identity and can serve as a foundation for font and typographic projects, as well as on assessing their impact on Ukrainian audiences.

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Мистецька спадщина як фундамент культурної ідентичності в сучасному типографічному дизайні України

Анотація. Актуальним тематичним напрямом гуманітарної сфери і проєктної діяльності в XXI столітті стало вивчення культурної ідентичності в умовах глобалізації, втілення ідеї єдності розмаїття та цінності локальних культур та формування методів впливу на процеси графічного дизайну. Мета статті полягала в аналізі типографічного дизайну з українською ідентичністю впродовж 2014–2024 років та дослідженні джерел культурної спадщини України, до яких зверталися дизайнери XXI століття у розробці шрифтів і літерацій. Результати підтвердили, що типографічний дизайн – важливий компонент відтворення культурної ідентичності в проєктах українських дизайнерів, що цілком узгоджувалося з міжнародною практикою. З’ясовано, що відтворення української ідентичності в шрифтах і типографії здійснювалося зверненням до джерел культурної спадщини України 4-х груп: традиційна українська писемність, синтезований досвід шрифтового мистецтва початку XX століття, творчість конкретних художників-графіків XX століття, окремі типографічні артефакти (почерки культурних діячів, ретросвітлина вивісок міських крамниць, книжкова і журнальна графіка першої половини XX століття, архівні документи). Було виявлено два етапи розвитку цифрового шрифтового контенту з українською ідентичністю в період 2000–2024 років: 1) створення шрифтових сімейств, що зробили доступними історичні напрацювання (шрифти скоропису, Георгія Нарбута та його послідовників); 2) зростання українських шрифтів глобального дизайну і розширення джерельної бази звернень до культурної спадщини. Визначено реалізовані підходи та незаповнені лакуни у зверненні до культурної української спадщини, доведено дослідницький, синтетичний і експериментальний характер проєктування в типографічному дизайні України 2014–2024 років. Показано, що українські дизайнери свідомо ставилися до розробки шрифтів з українською візуальністю та просували ідею необхідності їхнього використання за допомогою соціальної комунікації. Результати є корисними для вивчення теми українськими та зарубіжними науковцями, оскільки вони відкрили особливість українського досвіду поширеної міжнародної тенденції в графічному дизайні 2020-х років

Ключові слова: графічний дизайн; культурна спадщина; українська ідентичність; шрифт; типографія