



Frames left behind after Russian art specialists removed thousands of paintings as they pillaged the Kherson Regional Art Museum in late October and early November 2022, while Russian forces still occupied Kherson. Photo taken on November 21, 2022.

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by **Maria Silina**

RUSSIAN CULTURAL EXPANSION IN UKRAINE

EXPLORING NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE REGION

abstract

The paper examines Russia's cultural expansionism that extends beyond the military invasion in Ukraine since 2014. In the first part, I trace Russia's systematic efforts to seize and manipulate Ukrainian heritage, often under the guise of protection. I also touch on the role of museums in this expansion, where they are used to preserve collections through coercive acquisition and to promote a Russian-centric narrative. The second part of the article delves into the historical relationships between Russia and Ukraine, especially in the context of the Soviet era's museum infrastructure. Overall, the text calls for new concepts and international efforts to critique Russia's actions and protect Ukrainian culture.

KEYWORDS: Russian-Ukrainian war, cultural heritage, museums, international relationships, history of the Soviet Union, culture.

Russia has historically understood culture as an integral part of political, economic, and military expansion. Ukraine is known for its decade-long efforts to defend its cultural heritage from the Russian expansionism. Thus since 1917, having gained independence, Ukraine has battled for its right to return its national heritage captured and taken to Russia on different instances. These were military trophies taken to Moscow at the end of the 18th century, as well as numerous archaeological findings of the rich Northern Black Sea region, which have been dispatched to the largest museums such as the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. Most of the efforts of Ukrainian scholars, diplomats, and experts, especially active during the 1920s and 1990s, met no response. The Russian-Ukrainian War (2014–) re-actualized the realities of (post)imperial violence against Ukraine and its culture. Now, as a hundred years ago, Ukraine is fighting for recognition of its culture, for



The museum building in the Chersonese, in 2010. In 2013 the Tauric Chersonese National Museum Preserve was UNESCO-listed.



The ruins of the ancient city of Chersonesos-Tavriiskiy, Sevastopol, 2011.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

returning its heritage and restoration of justice at the international level.

According to official data from Ukraine, as of January 2023, 1,271 cultural infrastructure sites were damaged¹, while 40 museums officially reported pillages by the Russian Army by October 2022.² More sites and collections were affected in areas of active battles, the scale of destruction in which cannot be assessed. Overall, Ukrainian heritage is exposed to a whole range of threats: from direct shelling (the Mariupol theatre in 2022)³ to man-made environmental disasters (destruction of the Kakhovka dam in 2023).⁴

IN ADDITION TO the direct damage caused by the war, over the course of 21 months, the Russian Federation has put in place an extensive legal and institutional framework designed for the unlawful seizure of Ukrainian heritage. The appropriation doesn't work straightforwardly. To silence Ukraine, new cultural production is generated with the Russian-centric narratives: through restoration of historical monuments in temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories and the display of artworks from looted museums at exhibitions held outside of Ukraine.

To trace these tendencies, in the first part of the paper, I will provide an overview of the crimes against Ukrainian heritage and museum collections in the during the Russian-Ukrainian war (2014–). It will illustrate how Russia misuses the sphere of culture to glorify itself. This exploitation creates complex patterns of expansion in the current war: preserving heritage through destruction and forcible appropriation. It also involves artwashing the war through museum and exhibition activities, both in the Russian Federation and in the occupied territories in Ukraine. Ultimately, this expansion occurs through the augmentation of the legal framework for heritage protection.

The second part of the article will focus on the review of the historical relationships between two countries. These realities

were of Russian imperialism: the establishment of museum infrastructure in the USSR, where Russia controlled the key elements of this system (types of museums and collections), as well as the routes of movement and redistribution of objects across the country. The aim of the article is to reveal the nature of the (post)imperial expansion that goes beyond the previously established scholarly frameworks of totalitarianism and purely militaristic interpretations of military invasions. In addition to the military dimension, Russia's cultural expansion in the region, both in the ongoing conflict and throughout the region's history, demands the development of new concepts to pursue justice. I will argue that one such concept is the production of knowledge on the state-controlled museum infrastructure established during the Soviet era, which facilitated the prolonged proliferation of Russian-centric narratives in exhibitions, museum politics, and the irregular alienations of cultural heritage from Ukraine.

Protection of cultural heritage through destruction and forcible appropriation

In 2014, immediately following the invasion of Crimea, Russia began to promote its efforts in heritage protection and obscured the fact that the need for rescue stemmed solely from Russia's invasion of the peninsula. February 2023, Russia created a law on inclusion of works of art and culture of Ukraine in the Russian Cultural Heritage Register and the State Catalogue, the official database of the country's museum collections.⁵ However, inclusion in the heritage register is often misleading. Protected monuments can still be seized, altered, or destroyed in the pursuit of altering the narrative.

Since 2014, the Russian Federation has been conducting territorial expansion via restoration and renovation of cultural and museum reserves in the temporarily occupied Crimea. Already since the days of the Russian Empire, Russia has actively nurtured the region as a significant hub for ancient archaeological

heritage and its own national Orthodox history, thanks to established routes from Byzantium to the peninsula. Today, Russia proclaims exclusive authority in the region and is actively shaping its own cultural policies within the area. The most high-profile case is the Tauric Chersonese National Museum Preserve (since 2013 on the UNESCO list). Now Russia is building a blockbuster Orthodox center there. In addition to museums and creative workshops, it is planned to build hotels and other facilities that will cover the potential territory of archaeological excavations. Under the guise of cultural development, a valuable archaeological site is being illegally buried beneath new construction.⁶

In Crimea, Russian experts' involvement in war crimes goes even deeper than the declarative layer of renovation. Artifacts are illegally acquired through the intensified archaeological excavations conducted by the forces of the Russian Federation after 2014. According to some reports, in 2022 – early 2023, 410 permits were issued by occupation authorities and 114 illegal excavations were recorded.⁷ Intriguingly, Russians themselves talk about more than 800,000 finds (160,000 of museum value) in Chersonese alone, according to data for the spring 2022.⁸ No one knows how many of them were taken from the territory of Ukraine.

IN AN EFFORT TO IDENTIFY potential destinations for archaeological findings from Ukraine, the primary focus is on major hubs, such as the Hermitage. This is a museum that for centuries has been the main beneficiary of illegal excavations and artefacts moved out from Ukraine and Crimea⁹. Mikhail Piotrovsky, the head of the Hermitage, claims that all the finds remain in place, i.e. in Crimea.¹⁰ According to Ukrainian experts, Russian museum workers actively accept new finds and catalogue them. For example, in Solkhat (the Old Crimea), Russian archaeologists discovered fragments of a medieval water pipeline: all six fragments were transported to the Hermitage.¹¹ It's reasonable to assume that the rotation of these items is, in part, facilitated through diplomatic initiatives, such as the joint project "Recall Where Everything Began" of the State Museum-Preserve Tauric Chersonese and the Hermitage.¹²

Using the motif of heritage preservation, archaeologists in Russia-occupied territories implement a reductionist and ideologically biased excavation program. For example, they are focused on the Christian heritage, while ignoring and destroying other, notably, the Crimean Tatars' heritage. During construction of the Tavrida highway (Kerch-Simferopol), the graves of the Muslim cemetery Kyrk-Aziz near Bakhchisarai, the Scythian ancient settlement "Kermen Burun" and others were revealed. They are buried beneath the asphalt and cannot be restored.¹³

In summary, in addition to widespread direct destruction,

Russia's main strategy in the occupied territories involves establishing a perception of Russian dominance at the expense of Ukrainian and local uniqueness. This is achieved through expanding into the heritage protection industry, creating new monuments, and implementing fast-track measures, such as simplified procedures for designating heritage sites, often without the necessary expertise, to rapidly absorb a large number of such sites.

Museums as agents of cultural expansion

In the realm of museums in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, we observe a recurring pattern - the preservation of collections through coercive acquisition. As of 2016, referring specifically to temporarily occupied Crimea, data reveals that 'over 1 million exhibit items' from the Ukrainian museum fund are unaccounted for.¹⁴

The location of museums, which have been looted and destroyed to this day, directly coincides with the territory occupied by Russia. The Kherson Art Museum was robbed in November 2022: soldiers supervised by an unnamed Russian museum worker took out several trucks with collection items. Shortly thereafter, it was confirmed that the collection is in the Crimea.¹⁵ In November of the same year, the Kherson Local Lore Museum was also looted.¹⁶ In Melitopol, Ms Leila Ibragimova, the Museum Head, who refused to show the Russian occupiers a location of the Scythian gold collection, was abducted and released only a few days later.¹⁷ Thus, rescue of objects of value by Russian Federation is a criminal offence against both heritage and people.

Nobody knows how many items have been destroyed in the war. According to Ms Natalia Kapustnikova, the Head of Mariupol Museum of Local Lore, about 95% of the museum collection has been lost during the battles for the city. Before the hostilities, the museum included over 60,000 items.¹⁸ Museums in the temporarily occupied Donetsk and Luhansk regions are particularly affected¹⁹.

For instance, the museums and cultural institutions in Severodonetsk were devastated during the city's capture by the Russian army. Russia, however, consistently asserts that it was the Ukrainians who deliberately destroyed them. Ukrainian museums have, in addition, become ensnared in the intricate dynamics of diplomacy at war. Following the breakdown of the Grain Deal negotiations involving Russia, Ukraine, and the EU, the Russian Federation systematically targets the Odesa port situated within the UNESCO-protected historical center, which also encompasses museums.²⁰

At the same time, the destruction of Ukrainian heritage is taking place through more indirect methods, such as forced assimilation and the integration of collections. Russia is actively utilizing Soviet

“USING THE MOTIF OF HERITAGE PRESERVATION, ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN RUSSIA-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IMPLEMENT A REDUCTIONIST AND IDEOLOGICALLY BIASED EXCAVATION PROGRAM.”



Art museum in Kherson in 2021:

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



The halls of the museum are empty after theft of art in November 2022.

PHOTO: YGORU/WARUKRAINE.UA



Damaged and looted expositions of the Kherson Regional History Museum, November 2022.

PHOTO: YGORU/WARUKRAINE.UA



heritage, both in redefining the pan-Soviet canon of art history and through the remnants of the museum management system infrastructure across the entire region. This is part of its expansion efforts, encompassing both military and cultural aspects.

FIRST AND FOREMOST, Russia is restoring Ukrainian museums, emphasizing a rhetoric of protection and care. Alongside building repairs, there is also a transformation of exhibitions to incorporate Russian content. Restoration work has been ongoing at the Museum in Sevastopol since 2018, with a particular focus on galleries of Russian and Western European art.²¹ This model, featuring two main exhibition focuses – Russian and Western European art, with local, in this case Ukrainian art, taking a back seat, was originally established during the early Soviet Union. Nowadays, it is being revived under the banner of “Soviet aesthetics and canon without the communist ideology.” The latter

means the rejection of references to Marx and Lenin and exhibits centered around class struggle. It’s crucial to highlight that these restoration efforts represent a shift in the conceptual and cultural direction of Ukrainian museums, erasing their national identity and unique institutional character.

Second, collections of the Ukrainian museums in temporarily occupied territories are entered in the register of the Russian Federation Museum Fund. Russian mass media are frank: they list treasures and their approximate price, off which the museum fund of Russian Federation will profit.²² As early as in 2022, large museum collections of Donetsk, Lugansk, and Berdyansk were absorbed by Russia. These collections, “rescued” from Ukrainian museums, are predominantly being relocated to Crimea. Moreover, they are possibly transferred to Russian territory, including the capital cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, often under the guise of temporary exhibition loans.

Finally, Ukrainian culture is also destroyed by means of creation of new exhibit items. These exhibits include artifacts from conflict zones, freshly crafted artworks portraying the war and the daily lives of “liberated” Ukrainians. They will serve as the foundation for new exhibitions that glorify Russia’s peacekeeping mission in Ukraine. In Russia, an inter-museum group is already in operation, having collected over 10,000 objects.²³ The plan is to build complete museums around these artifacts.²⁴ The Russian inter-museum group includes such institutions as the State Historical Museum, the Victory Museum and the Museum of Modern History of Russia. All of them have historically been engaged in servicing the foreign policy of Russian Federation in the field of cultural exchange and the display of diplomatic gifts, as well as trophies.

Artwashing the war

I wanted also to address the practice of incorporating and displaying art from Ukrainian museums in areas that have been taken over, in the exhibitions in Russia. The geography of such exhibitions is extensive: the Rostov region bordering Ukraine, as well as St. Petersburg, Moscow, as well as Yekaterinburg at the border between Europe and Asia.

Exhibitions featuring artifacts illegally taken from Ukraine to Russian territory (without permission from the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine) occur with the active collaboration of museums in the occupied territories and Moscow. Thus, the Sevastopol Art Museum named after M.P. Kroshitsky loans artworks to the State Historical Museum, as well as with ROSIZO Center, both located in Moscow²⁵. ROSIZO, the museum and exhibition center, which existed in different institutional forms from 1959 to 1994 in Soviet Russia and, later, in the Russian Federation, had its origins as a central hub for storing and exhibiting mass-produced socialist realist visual materials, a practice that was well-established during the Soviet era. In 2010, it was reinstated under the Russian Ministry of Culture and gradually assumed control over major exhibition projects and inter-museum collaborations across the country. With the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine, ROSIZO has shifted its focus to showcasing propaganda art and has also been involved in transporting artworks to temporarily occupied territories.²⁶

METAPHORICALLY, THE EXPRESSION of aggression through art exhibitions is promoted by Russian curators with two keywords: war and peace as a dialectical pair. The topic of war is prevalent in museum cultural activities and exhibitions, represented both through contemporary propaganda and the inclusion of museums’ collections, primarily dedicated to the Second World War. The metaphor of peace revolves around the motif of warmth,

comfort, and home. For those Russians, who do not want to directly support the slogans of war, amicable exhibitions have been mounted such as “Build and Live!” and “Happy Childhood” by ROSIZO²⁷; and “Architecture of Life” in Lugansk from collections of the Museum of Architecture (Moscow).²⁸ The State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg explores the theme through the “War and Peace” project, consisting of two parts, one of which is titled “Home and Family: Images of Peaceful Life.”²⁹ Russia is using the themes of peace and home in exhibitions to create a positive image, even though these themes emerged only because Russia initiated the war in Ukraine. The exhibitions aim to generate content for media consumption, creating a narrative that is separate from the harsh realities of the war.

Lastly, one of the most powerful means of cultural expansion is through “pure art” exhibitions. These exhibitions, known for their expertise and prestige, emphasize art without delving into ideology, politics, or overt propaganda.

Let’s take an example from the database of the Crimean Institute for Strategic Studies, a Ukrainian institution that monitors cultural crimes committed by Russia.³⁰

In August 2016, the Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow) opened an exhibition in honor of the 200th anniversary of the one of the most important academic painter Ivan Aivazovsky. He is renowned in the region for his marine paintings produced in Crimea. Ten works and 28 drawings by the artist were transported from the Aivazovsky Art Gallery in Feodosia to Moscow. While Ukraine publicly protested against the unlawful removal of these works for a temporary exhibition, Russian experts, in turn, did not view this move as illegal. In the spring and summer of 2023, the Museum of Moscow exhibited the heritage of modernist artists Kuzma Petrov-

“RUSSIA IS USING THE THEMES OF PEACE AND HOME IN EXHIBITIONS TO CREATE A POSITIVE IMAGE, EVEN THOUGH THESE THEMES EMERGED ONLY BECAUSE RUSSIA INITIATED THE WAR IN UKRAINE.”

Vodkin and Maria Lomakina, including works from the collections of occupied Crimean museums, the ownership of which falls under the responsibility of the Museum Fund of Ukraine. Russia is managing these collections under the conditions of war, violating all possible conventions. The seemingly innocent reason for conducting exhibitions focused on in-depth historical research about an artist or a specific time period, along with the high level of expertise in curating these exhibitions, serves as a means for museum professionals to unwittingly or more easily become involved in the crimes of a war in the domain of culture.

Museums as agents of international politics: regional specifics

How can we address Russia’s cultural expansionism?

In my opinion, a positive approach to criticizing Russia could involve a framework that encompasses international relations and the legal history of Ukraine’s and Russia’s interactions in the realm of heritage and museums.

Museums have consistently served as agents of international politics, with Russia and Ukraine employing their museum institutions in contrasting manners. Russia obscures misconduct and introduces ambiguities within museum practices, effectively creating gray areas. Conversely, Ukraine wants to resist these attempts to obscure historical relationships. In any case, to discuss post-war justice, it is necessary to consider the history of the region, which has the potential to provide a variety of legal and expertise-led means for analyzing and critiquing the invasion and its consequences.

IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIA inheriting the legacy of the USSR, the history of museums carries significant and potentially sensitive implications. Back in 1918, there was a vast nationalization effort that extended across the entire region. This effort included the seizure of architectural landmarks, collectibles, church assets, and even furniture. The act of nationalization still has far-reaching effects on international regulations and legal initiatives within the museum field. For instance, due to the contentious nature of the nationalization process that unfolded after 1918, Russia ceased to send exhibitions to the United States starting in 2011. This decision was prompted by laws that allowed for the potential reconsideration of the status of imported items, opening the door for claims from descendants of previous owners.³¹

Furthermore, after the USSR's breakup, newly independent countries sought to revisit the consequences of nationalization, which included the realm of museum and cultural heritage. These discussions were originally planned as part of the Minsk Agreements in 1993. However, Russia blocked any attempts at revision at the time. These negotiations continued, at least on a bilateral Ukrainian-Russian level, into the 2010s but didn't yield any concrete results due to Russia's consistent obstruction.³²

Such reluctance to negotiate is understandable: the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) was the core of the Union, and it was there, in the federal and all-Soviet center, that the finest cultural treasures from the entire USSR converged. This situation became possible thanks to the established Soviet system of museum management from the 1910s to the 1950s. This system had three main pillars.

FIRSTLY, THE NATIONALIZATION of valuables created a fund sufficient to fill museums and establish new ones across the country, including in republics like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, where memory and culture had not been institutionalized in museum forms before.

Secondly, Russian museum experts enthusiastically developed a comprehensive system of museum categories and types of objects, coordinating hierarchies of these types along two

axes: Eurocentric and Russocentric. For example, all Soviet art museums (or departments) were structured based on two dominant categories: Western European art and Russian art, as the most important and scientifically significant categories, especially within the paradigm of European classical culture.

Finally, museums as institutions were gradually transformed into purely administrative units within the centralized Soviet management system. This means that even the museum's exhibition program and collection development depended largely on the interests of the region to which it was budgetarily tied, rather than solely on the goals of the museum as a cultural institution.³³

Another layer of problematic Soviet museum history was added during the Second World War (1939–1945). Germany destroyed and looted a significant amount of cultural heritage on the territory of the USSR in the early 1940s. In response, towards the end of the war, the USSR carried out a massive plunder of German cultural heritage as compensation, unilaterally determined by the USSR. The exact number and composition of what was relocated by the USSR is undisclosed.

After the dissolution of the USSR, when the world became aware of the looted collections, there were hopes for their return or at least public disclosure as a gesture of cooperation with Europe. However, in practice, these military "trophy" art were unilaterally nationalized by Russia in 1998.³⁴

After gaining independence, Ukraine, just like Georgia, began to take steps to return the "trophy" art that ended up on their territory back to Germany and other affected countries. Russia reacts to these steps very badly and jealously. For example, Vladimir Putin personally made efforts trying to prevent Ukraine from resolving the issues of restitution with

Germany through diplomacy.

The second layer of the problem with the Second World War is that a part of the art returned by Germany after the war ended up in Russia as the negotiations leading country, and not in countries from which these items were taken, primarily Ukraine and Belarus. The Russian-centricity of returns is an issue of established hierarchies within the USSR, which eventually influenced the international practices of restitutions³⁵.

Now it is this imperial Soviet legacy that determines in many ways not only the nature of the war and cultural expansion, but also the prospects for post-war negotiations for both sides, as well as the conceptual framework of international community.

Russia's strategy

Regarding Russia, the country recognizes that museums play an active role in deepening and complicating the already contentious history, encompassing both the nationalization of 1918 and the unilateral legalization of "trophy" art from 1945. Russia's museum policy is consistent and remains unchanged regardless

“VLADIMIR PUTIN PERSONALLY MADE EFFORTS TRYING TO PREVENT UKRAINE FROM RESOLVING THE ISSUES OF RESTITUTION WITH GERMANY THROUGH DIPLOMACY.”

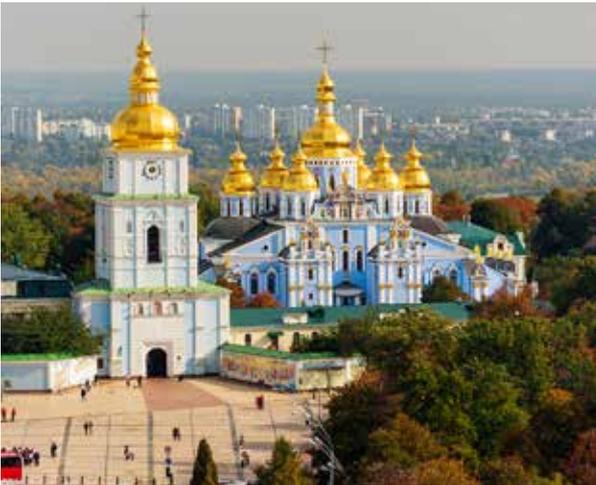


PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Left: St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery in Kyiv.

The prophet Samuel. The Fresco Painting. Circa 1112 From the Mikhailovskr Monastery of Kiev, handed over from Germany to Soviet (Moscow) after WWII.

of personnel and larger political shifts. Over the years, museums have steadfastly maintained a Russo-centric focus on art history while avoiding discussions of any contentious topics related to the history and origins of collections and items. At present, this narrative is further advanced by highlighting Russia's exceptional role as the staunchest protector of global heritage.

In the realm of local propaganda, Russia actively utilizes the theme of the Nuremberg Trials as a testament to its leadership in historical heritage preservation practices. The authorities in Moscow curate exhibitions with attention-grabbing titles like "The Nuremberg Toll: Without a Statute of Limitations," which delve into the legal prosecution of the Nazis, including their roles in heritage destruction. Russian filmmakers also produce movies centered on the systematic safeguarding of heritage during the Second World War. As an example, the film "Guardians of Art" chronicles the evacuation of the Hermitage's treasures to the Urals during the war and offers viewers a platform for discussions with the creators. These events aim to underline Russia's position as a global champion in heritage protection.

ON A LESS PUBLICLY visible but more profound legislative level, following the temporary occupation of Crimea, Russia is actively reassessing the so-called displaced (trophy) art funds. These funds consist of artworks that were stolen and illegally transported from Europe during and after the Second World War, which Russia unilaterally nationalized in 1998. To achieve this, since 2017, Russia has been conducting audits of the displaced art funds in the Southern Federal District, which, according to Russia's perspective, includes the museums of Crimea.³⁶ Starting in 2022, anonymous testimonies from various Russian museums suggest that inspections of trophy funds have commenced in central museums. Moreover, Federal Security Service personnel have been assigned to these museums as well.

Plans of the Russian Federation to use this heritage are double-barreled: showing it as world treasures in the role of a triumphant and legitimate winner of Nazism, and, at the same time, calculating the role of this heritage as a "petty cash" in future

attempts to partially pay off crimes in Ukraine to international organizations, which include the countries that are the legal owners of the "trophy" taken out by the USSR.

Prospects: Ukraine

Ukrainian museums play a crucial role in international politics by fostering communication and integration. Ukraine actively works with international organizations for protection of heritage and in sphere of illegal trafficking of art and cultural and historical items (UNESCO, ICOM, Blue Shield), with state (Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, Art Sanct Task Force), and, most importantly, numerous public initiatives (Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, Museum Crisis Center, Museum for Change, Heritage Emergency Response Initiative), among others.

The international community's cooperation with Ukraine primarily revolves around two key aspects. Firstly, it involves emergency efforts in documenting crimes, such as the compilation of lists of missing items (like the ICOM Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk for Ukraine) and the establishment and maintenance of databases accessible to interested organizations, including border controls.³⁷ These lists, analytical reports, and data are part of the long-standing and traditional understanding of the threat to heritage during wartime, as outlined in the Hague Conventions.³⁸ There is also a second, relatively recent line of strategic decisions regarding the fate of cultural heritage in times of war. This involves the development of legislation based on the American model of countering terrorism, imposing sanctions, and legally pursuing countries whose sovereignty is in question due to systematic violence. In line with this approach, the National Agency of Ukraine on Corruption Prevention (NACP), in collaboration with the Art Sanct Task Force and the Stanford-based International Working Group on Russian Sanctions, is currently working on creating databases containing lists and origins of items held in the private collections of Russian oligarchs. These items could potentially be used as compensation for Ukraine.³⁹ In this paradigm, heritage and art aren't just tangible assets that can be stolen or targeted during times of con-



EMERGENCY
RED LIST OF
CULTURAL
OBJECTS AT RISK
UKRAINE

RedList
Черво́ний Спiсок
ICOM

ICOM International Council of Museums

EMERGENCY RED LIST OF CULTURAL OBJECTS AT RISK - UKRAINE

Applied arts
Vessels and decoration, textiles (including folk art) and costumes, jewellery of the 19th-20th c.
Vessels and decoration

24. "Star" vessel (blue enameled glass), Lutsk-Podlaska region, 18th c. AD, 21.2 cm. © ICOM UK

25. Star glasses, white, color glass, Mstyslavsk-Senecy Factory, Kyiv region, 1831, 19.5 cm. © ICOM UK

26. Decorated enamel (the clay, enameled, decorated), Kyiv, Ivano-Frankivsk region, 1985, 21x 20x 8.5 cm. © National Center of Folk Culture - Ivan Hancher Museum

27. Glass vase (greenish translucent), Crimea, last quarter 19th - early 20th c. AD, 17.1 x 15.1 cm. © ICOM

28. Ceramic Star (light blue) (busts) (left) (Dnipro, blue, clay, gray, glazing), Crimea, last quarter 19th - early 20th c. AD. © ICOM

29. Carpet (wool, hand-woven), Podlissia area, 19th c. AD, 155 x 410 cm. © ICOM UK

30. Ritual staff (black oak) (long dark, hand-embroidered), Cherkasy region, late 19th - early 20th c. AD, 205 x 44 cm. © National Center of Folk Culture - Ivan Hancher Museum

31. Ritual staff (black oak) (long dark, hand-embroidered), Cherkasy region, late 19th - early 20th c. AD, 205 x 44 cm. © National Center of Folk Culture - Ivan Hancher Museum

32. "Mosaic" (black) ("jewellery" (gold metal, blue enamel, casting), Volynka, Chernihiv region, late 19th - c. AD, 39 x 8 cm. © National Center of Folk Culture - Ivan Hancher Museum

33. "Mosaic" (black) ("jewellery" (gold metal, blue enamel, casting), Volynka, Chernihiv region, late 19th - c. AD, 39 x 8 cm. © National Center of Folk Culture - Ivan Hancher Museum

34. Scythian ring with Panticapaeum cross, 4th c. BC, 2 cm. © ICOM

35. "Mosaic" (black) ("jewellery" (gold metal, blue enamel, casting), Volynka, Chernihiv region, late 19th - c. AD, 39 x 8 cm. © National Center of Folk Culture - Ivan Hancher Museum

36. Gold coin, Nymphaeum, 192-193 AD, 1.9 cm. © ICOM

37. Silver denarius (small coin), Roman Praetorium, Volynka region, 192-193 AD, 1.9 cm. © ICOM

Archaeological artefacts
Vessels and containers, sculptures and figurines, weapons, jewels and personal items, tools and accessories; plain and decorated, in terracotta, clay, bone, bronze, iron or gold; from various civilizations and eras (including Scythian objects).

Vessels and containers

38. Bronze vessel, ceramic, Trypillia, 5th c. BC, 18.8 x 20.5 x 11.5 cm. © ICOM

39. Ceramic jar, Cucuteni culture, late 5th - early 3rd millennium BC, Lutsk region, Ukraine, 30 x 8 cm, 2.5 cm. © State Shcherbinka University Archaeological Museum

40. Ceramic figurine, Cucuteni culture, Lutsk region, and 5th millennium BC, 1.8 cm, 17.7 cm. © State Shcherbinka University Archaeological Museum

Sculptures and figurines

41. Female figurine, ceramic, Ostroha, 4th - 3rd c. BC, 17.4 x 2 x 2.8 cm. © ICOM

42. Ancient Greek terracotta, Crimea, 7th - 6th c. AD, 11.8 x 8.5 x 3 cm. © ICOM

Weapons

43. Scythian arrowhead, 4th c. BC

44. Iron sword and dagger, Cherkasy region, 5th - 6th c. AD, 48 cm, 71 cm. © ICOM

45. Bronze battle axe, Khmelnyk, 14th - 15th c. AD, 26.2 x 5.6 cm. © ICOM

Jewels and personal items

46. Bronze temporal pendant, 19th - 1st half of 2nd millennium BC, 6.4 x 1.9 cm. © ICOM

47. Glass (hand-woven) string of rings, Crimea, 7th - 6th c. AD, 19 cm. © ICOM

48. Gold granule "net" (beadless pendant), 19th - 6th c. AD, 7.6 x 2.8 x 1.3 cm. © ICOM

49. Bronze mirror, Roman dynasty, 2nd - 3rd c. BC, 21 x 19.5 cm. © ICOM

Tools and accessories

50. Bone chisel (glass, metal), 19th - 6th c. BC, approx. 15.7-19.3 cm each. © ICOM

51. Scythian horse bridle decoration, 4th - 6th c. BC, individual elements approx. 16 x 16 mm, 25 x 20 mm, 20 x 18 mm.

52. Bronze plaques, Cherkasy, Roman period, Ukraine region, 1st - 4th c. AD, approx. 7 x 1 cm each. © ICOM

53. Bronze pinning, Roman, 1st - 4th c. AD. © ICOM

Experts from 11 museums across Ukraine have collaborated with ICOM's Heritage Protection Department to research and prepare this comprehensive Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk.

flict. They're now recognized as tools of influence, connected to money laundering, tax evasion, and a previously unacknowledged area where political and economic power intersects with the functioning of the military. The establishment of a potential framework for sanctions is already a significant development that formalizes the use of heritage and culture as instruments by regimes pursuing military expansion.

These various initiatives provide an opportunity to address the limitations of current approaches and underscore the need to develop more regionally appropriate concepts. As I have briefly outlined above, the way museums were managed by the state, involving the nationalization and transfer of objects based on Russian-centric hierarchies, can be a valuable basis for creating critical tools to understand the history of museums in the region. In the end, this framework could become part of the lexicon for post-war regional peacekeeping international initiatives in museum and heritage sphere, which is yet to be formulated.

TO ILLUSTRATE THE COMPLEXITY of negotiations and the importance of a tailored approach, consider the case of St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery in Kyiv. It was constructed and adorned with mosaics and frescoes between 1108 and 1113. However, during the 1930s, it was demolished by the Bolsheviks as part of their campaign against religion. Its interiors were disassembled and moved to various museums in Kyiv, as well as to

Leningrad and Moscow, all under the pretext of their national importance. Some frescoes were looted by the German Army during World War II and later returned to the Soviet Union, but not to Kyiv, Ukraine. Instead, they were sent to Russia, the federal center of the USSR. Ukraine restored the monastery in 1998 and regards it as one of its key national landmarks. The country has actively sought to reclaim displaced works of art that originally belonged to the monastery.⁴⁰

“THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE HAS DEEP HISTORICAL ROOTS IN IMPERIAL VIOLENCE AND THE RIGID HIERARCHIES OF SOCIALIST MUSEUM MANAGEMENT IN THE USSR.”

USSR. This led to the relocation of significant artworks to major exhibitions in Moscow, where they remain to this day. Finally, the systematic looting by the Germans during the Second World War, which was thoroughly examined by international organizations in the post-war period, faced no less systematic regional obstacles. Objects were not returned to their places of origin but were sent to the central authority that retained them. This means that

The request for restitution of the frescoes and mosaics at St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery showcases the intricate history of a single monument. This history doesn't easily fit within the current international legal or conceptual framework. The systematic removal of these artworks was influenced by various factors. Firstly, it was tied to the repressive policies of the Bolsheviks regarding religion, which led to the destruction of the cathedral. Additionally, the hierarchies between the federal capital and republican centers established the structure for museum management within the

EMERGENCY

Docum
Manuscripts and woodcut, gilding. Some books are Manuscripts, mi

1. Dnipro Gospel (Book of the Gospels), 1428 folios, parchment. © ICOM

2. Annals from Kyiv (Annals of 1050). © ICOM

3. Photo of the Tarnobrzeg Synagogue. © ICOM

Early printed bo

4. First complete printed edition of the Bible, 1564. © ICOM

5. Manuscript of the Holy Scriptures, 1564. © ICOM

6. First printed edition of the Holy Scriptures, 1564. © ICOM

7. First printed edition of the Holy Scriptures, 1564. © ICOM

8. First printed edition of the Holy Scriptures, 1564. © ICOM

9. First printed edition of the Holy Scriptures, 1564. © ICOM

Icons
Icons featuring figural silhouettes.

10. Icon of the Virgin Mary and Child Jesus, 1564. © ICOM

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