



Ukrainian Cultural Heritage and UK Institutions: Shifting Perspectives and Practice

Full programme



15 September 2026
The Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Lecture Theatre
V&A South Kensington

Made possible with support from the British Council.

Image: Oleksii Ishchenko (maker), Pair of Holy (altar) silver-gilt gates, silver-gilt and iron backing, Kyiv, 1784.
Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Conference programme

10:00 **Arrival and registration**

10:30 **Welcome**

10:45 – 11:30 **Session 1: Setting the context: from crisis to collaboration**

Chair: Laura Searson, Senior Programme Manager, Culture in Crisis, British Council

Speakers: Maria Blyzinsky, Trustee and former Co-chair, ICOM UK
Supporting Decolonisation in Museums: Focus on Ukraine – a case study in collaboration during crisis
Published in English in 2025 and in Ukrainian in 2026, ‘Supporting Decolonisation: Focus on Ukraine’ is the result of a major international partnership between the Ukrainian Institute, ICOM UK, ICOM Ukraine and the Museums Association, supported by the British Council. Researched and written during wartime – and with input from over 100 global experts - the guide is a case study in UK-Ukraine cooperation across the cultural heritage sector. The speakers will reflect on the challenges and lessons learnt during the development of the guide, which is free to download from the project partners’ websites.

Marina Okhrimenko, Chief Specialist of the Department of Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine

Museums on the Front Line: Transformation, Resilience, International Support and the New Role of Memory Institutions Amidst War

Russia’s full-scale invasion has severely impacted Ukrainian museums through destruction, displacement of collections, and resource shortages, while also forcing rapid adaptation to protect heritage. In response, museums have transformed into resilient cultural, digital, and civic hubs, supported significantly by international cooperation—particularly from the UK—through preservation efforts, cultural diplomacy, and professional exchange.

Caecilia Dance, art and cultural heritage lawyer, Wedlake Bell LLP

The destruction and displacement of cultural heritage during Russia’s invasion of Ukraine raise difficult questions about restitution, reparations and accountability. Drawing on research into Russia’s historical and ongoing impact on Ukrainian cultural heritage, the discussion considers the role law can play in supporting recovery and redress. It also explores how lawyers, museums and heritage professionals can work together to address these challenges.

11:30 – 13:00 **Session 2: Responding to war: museums, heritage and cultural practice**

Chair: Glenn Cumiskey, Digital Preservation Manager, Collections Care and Access, V&A

Speakers: Ihor Boldin, Founder and Director of ‘Wings of Liberty’ Programme, Director, Culture.UA Foundation

Wings of Freedom: Battle of Britain 1940 & Ukraine 2022

Russia's invasion has severely damaged Ukraine's cultural heritage, prompting urgent digital preservation efforts and international cooperation, including UK and EU partnerships led by Culture.UA. The 'Wings of Freedom' exhibition uses shared UK-Ukrainian wartime histories to highlight resilience, ethical repatriation, and cultural diplomacy through a major international tour supported by British institutions.

Dr Gabriele Salciute-Civiliene, Senior Lecturer, Digital Humanities, King's College London; Dr Oksana Yarema, Associate Professor, Ternopil National Pedagogical University, Visiting Lecturer, King's College London; Darrel Butlin FRSA, Founder / CEO of Hexology and AIM25 Trustee

Interpreting Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Through Geospatial Digital Media

The paper presents a citizen-led, geospatial publishing model developed by UK SME Hexology and trialled with academic partners in the UK and Ukraine to publicly document and safeguard Ukrainian cultural heritage through location-based digital micro-collections. It shows how this authentic polyvocal curatorial approach counters cultural erasure while enhancing visibility, ethical representation, social diplomacy, and wider societal well-being.

Dr Natalia Marakhovska, Associate Professor in the Department of Romance and Germanic Philology, Mariupol State University, Kyiv, Ukraine; Researcher in the Department of Social Education, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

University Museums: Intersecting Narratives of Ukrainian Resilience from Mariupol to Hull

The research examines how university museums in Ukraine and the UK are fostering cultural resilience and amplifying Ukrainian voices in response to the war, focusing on exhibitions developed by Mariupol State University and the University of Hull. It shows how these institutions act as spaces of cultural defence, inclusion, and intercultural dialogue, reshaping resilient interpretations of Ukrainian heritage and identity.

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch and tour of *Sacred Treasures of Kyiv* display

14:30 Welcome back

14:30 – 16:00 Session 3: Collecting Ukraine: objects, provenance and memory

Chair: Alice Minter, Senior Curator, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection, V&A

Speakers: Anna Yanenko, Head of Research, National Preserve 'Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra,' non-residential fellow, French Research Center in Humanities and Social Sciences

How the Soviets Sold Ukraine: Mechanisms of Appropriating and Commercialising Ukrainian Cultural Heritage in the 1920s–1930s

The paper analyses how Soviet institutions systematically appropriated and commercialised Ukrainian cultural heritage, tracing the removal of museum objects into domestic and international trade networks that erased their Ukrainian identity. It shows how this state-led dispossession transformed heritage into economic capital, reshaped museum collections at home and abroad, and continues to shape debates on provenance and restitution today.

Dr Ludmila Pekarska, Curator, The Shevchenko Library & Archive, London (AUGB)

The Many Lives of a Kyivan Treasure: Crafted in Princely Kyiv, Preserved by Collectors, Celebrated in London

The paper traces the transnational journey of an 11th–12th-century Kyivan Rus' jewellery hoard, illustrating how masterpieces of Kyivan art moved from their original context into major Western museum collections, including the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Following the treasure through the hands of dealers, collectors, and the international art market, it explores how medieval Kyiv cultural legacy was dispersed and transformed into museum heritage.

Dr Iryna Odrekhyivska, Lecturer, Ukrainian and East European Culture, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London

From DP Camps to the British Library: Ukrainian Displacement and the Afterlives of Cultural Objects

The paper analyses the British Library's collection of Ukrainian Displaced Persons camp publications as displaced cultural heritage that reveals how Ukrainian identity, memory, and diasporic culture were preserved and shaped within UK institutional contexts after WWII. Drawing on transnational archival research, it interprets these materials as postmemory artefacts whose material histories gain renewed significance in light of the current war in Ukraine.

16:00 – 16:45 Tea break

16:45 – 18:00 Session 4: From archives to communities: preserving Ukrainian heritage

Chair: Evgeniya Ravtsova, International Programmes Manager, V&A

Speakers: Dr Dóra Mérai, Lecturer in Heritage and Museum Studies, Newcastle University; Dr Volodymyr Kulikov, Lecturer in Ukrainian History, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL

Hughesovka/Donetsk in UK Collections: Wartime Reinterpretation

The paper examines the narratives generated by past and current museum and archival practices surrounding UK-held collections on Hughesovka, later Donetsk. It explores new interpretative possibilities for two collections in Cardiff, held by the Glamorgan Archives and National Museum Wales and their significance as historical evidence under wartime conditions that restrict access to related museum and archival collections in Ukraine and Russia.

Larysa Bolton and Alexandra Mitchell, Association of Ukrainian Women in Great Britain

Folk Art as Memory, Life and Resistance: Heritage Collections in the Ukrainian Diaspora in the UK

The paper examines how the Ukrainian diaspora in the UK has preserved cultural identity through grassroots collecting and making, focusing on the Association of Ukrainian Women in Great Britain and its folk-art collections. It highlights the enduring value of these volunteer-led collections and their renewed significance since 2022, particularly in sustaining intangible heritage and lived experience.

Nataliya Garbut, Gloucester Branch Chair for the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain; Nataliia Romanenko, Ukrainian artist and historian; Clare Bebbington, Chair, Board of Trustees, Voices Gloucester; Jacqui Rodger, Director, Voices Gloucester

From Materiality to Memory: Diasporic leadership and the preservation of Ukraine's tangible and intangible cultural heritage

The paper explores how the Ukrainian diaspora in Gloucester, supported by UK institutions, is leading community-driven preservation of both tangible and intangible Ukrainian cultural heritage through cross-generational collaboration. It highlights how everyday objects, stories, and creative practices have been transformed into authentic expressions of Ukrainian experience, with lasting archival legacies supported by local cultural organisations.

18:00 – 18:30 Concluding remarks and reflections on the day

Max Gorbatskyi, Head of Exhibitions, OpenEye Gallery, Liverpool

18:30 – 20:00 Drinks reception

Download the *Supporting Decolonisation in Museums: Focus on Ukraine*:

- In English: [Guide](#) & [Essays](#)
- In Ukrainian: [Guide](#) & [Essays](#)

Speaker biographies

Maria Blyzinsky is a trustee and former co-chair of ICOM UK (the UK national committee of the International Council of Museums) and a trustee of Blue Shield UK. An independent museum consultant with Anglo-Ukrainian heritage, her interests lie at the intersection of exhibition-making, cultural diplomacy and the protection of culture under threat. She was the lead writer for 'Supporting Decolonisation in Museums: Focus on Ukraine.'

Caecilia Dance is an art lawyer at Wedlake Bell LLP, where she advises museums, artists, collectors, galleries and others on diverse art law issues. Alongside her commercial and regulatory art law practice, a significant element is cultural heritage law. Caecilia advises on Nazi-looted art disputes and explores colonial-era underwater cultural heritage claims. She frequently writes and speaks on cultural heritage and museums (see Arts & Collections and Museums Journal). Caecilia's LLM dissertation (2024) was 'Avenues and prospects for restitution and reparation of damage to Ukraine's tangible cultural heritage in the Russia-Ukraine conflict' and this is a topic close to her heart.

Maryna Okhrimenko is the Chief Specialist of the Department of Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine. Maryna has more than 5 years of experience in the field of cultural heritage protection and more than 10 publications on museology, protection of architectural monuments and movement of cultural values. Maryna participated in trainings such as: Internship Cultural Heritage Protection in Times of Crisis (June 2025, France), Workshop "Ukrainian Heritage Digitization and Dissemination Initiative" – a joint project of the "Archaica" Research Laboratory and CyArk (USA) (October 2025 in Kraków (Poland), etc.

Ihor Boldin is Director of Charitable Foundation "Culture.UA" in Dnipro, Ukraine and specialises in wartime cultural diplomacy and heritage preservation. With over a decade in non-profits, Ihor spearheads the MOD/GLA-backed "Wings of Freedom" exhibition (2026), curates Vasyl Slipak memorials in Lviv/Paris, and collaborates with Cambridge University Ukrainian Society on Neznamni.UA for audio stories and parliamentary outreach. Ihor advances the "Kyivan Rus – European Heritage" consortium (28 partners, ERIC pathway), securing EU/NATO endorsements. He navigates Ukrainian British laws for international projects, prioritizing material culture amid conflict.

Dr. Gabriele Salciute Civiliene SFHEA is Senior Lecturer in Digital Humanities / KCL, specialises in digital innovation for linguistic, intellectual and cultural heritage. She is the founder of the Un.censor.ing network, King's Digital Futures Institute Fellow 2025, King's Culture Creative Practice Catalyst Award 2006 recipient and Co-Director of the King's Institute of Human and Synthetic Minds. She pioneered cross-linguistics methods for Distant Reading across Languages/DRaL, leads VR-ELL and curatorial initiatives "KCL Films for Ukraine" and EPinUK-funded "Ukraine: Architectures of Despair and Hope". Gabriele is a passionate advocate for informational and cultural justice in her research and teaching.

Dr Oksana Yarema is Visiting Lecturer at King's College London and Associate Professor at Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University (Ukraine), specialises in digital discourse analysis, linguistics, and digital humanities. Since 2022, she has advanced the global visibility of Ukrainian academic and cultural work through international collaborations with UK universities and UK-Ukraine academic mentoring programmes. She co-develops Hexology's geospatial digital heritage initiatives and promotes Ukrainian cultural projects through local council campaigns. Her current research includes a recently awarded British Academy-funded project on Ukrainian leadership discourse.

Darrel Butlin FRSA is the Founder and CEO of Hexology and a Trustee of the Historical Archive Portal / Charity AIM25. An award-winning creative industries innovator, technologist and visionary entrepreneur, with international experience of working at the highest end of the digital film industry, he develops frontier technologies to create positive social impact via UK SME Hexology - Winner of an Innovate UK / DCMS Create Growth Award.

Dr Natalia Marakhovska is an Associate Professor in the Department of Romance and Germanic Philology at Mariupol State University, relocated to Kyiv. As an Associate Researcher at the French Research Centre in Humanities and Social Sciences in Prague, she undertakes a project, "Embracing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) through Art in Culturally Responsive Teaching". Alongside her academic activities, Dr Marakhovska designs and facilitates workshops for Ukrainian refugees in Europe and the international community, using art to cultivate intercultural competence, challenge intersectional stereotypes and promote EDI. Her expertise spans teacher training, leadership development, inclusive teaching, museum education and art-based pedagogies.

Dr Anna Yanenko is Head of the Research Department of Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and Museums History at the National Preserve "Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra" (Ukraine) and a Non-Residential Fellow at Research Center in Humanities and Social Sciences (CEFRES) in France (UAR 3138 CNRS-MEAE, France). She holds a PhD in Archaeology (2013) from the Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Her research focuses on the visual history of Ukrainian museums and archaeology during the 1920s-1930s, museum iconography, provenance studies, and the role of museums in Soviet ideology. Since 2022, she has been actively involved in the preservation and digitization of cultural heritage under wartime conditions. She co-founded the Research Seminar on the History of the Humanities in Ukraine and coordinates conferences on the history of the humanities, archaeology, and museums. She is a member of the Ukrainian Association of Archaeologists and ICOM Ukraine.

Dr. Iryna Odrekhivska is Lecturer of Ukrainian and East European Culture at University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies. Her research interests lie in translation, literary, intercultural and memory studies.

Dr Ludmila Pekarska is an art historian and archaeologist born in Kyiv, graduated from Kyiv State Shevchenko University and began career at the National Museum of the History of Ukraine, also participating in archaeological excavations in Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria, and Austria. Since 1991 has lived in London, working in the Medieval Department of the British Museum and later as a Whitney-Fund Fellow conducting

research at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other U.S. institutions, resulting in two monographs. Since 2001 has served as Curator of the Shevchenko Library & Archive in London Association of Ukrainians in GB and has published widely in Ukraine and abroad.

Alice Minter joined the V&A as Curator of the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection in July 2018. Prior to that, she worked at Sotheby's London as specialist in ceramics, silver and gold boxes for 10 years. At the V&A, she has led a complete refurbishment and expansion of the Gilbert Galleries, which opened in March 2026 and includes the Holy Gates from Kyiv Pechersk-Lavra. Alice has also co-organised a major public symposium: *The V&A and Its Jewish Heritage: Objects and Stories* (November 2024). Her latest publication is *Mosaics and Micromosaics: Art, Craft and Identities* (V&A Publications, 2026). Alice is a regular member of vetting committees at TEFAF and other international art fairs and is Chair of the Strawberry Hill Collection Trust.

Larysa Bolton and Alexandra Mitchell are third-generation Ukrainian and grew up in the Ukrainian diaspora community in Greater Manchester. Both are members of Association of Ukrainian Women's national committee and have responsibility for its museum and archive collections. Larysa and Alexandra are both professional archivists. Larysa is co-Director of Kazky, a consultancy specialising in archives, libraries and heritage which builds on her 20+ years of experience in a variety of archive settings, including local authority, business and university services. After completing her PhD, Alexandra qualified as an archivist and was the inaugural archivist for Peel Holdings. She is currently Archivist at the University of Salford.

Dr Dóra Mérai is a Lecturer in Heritage and Museum Studies at Newcastle University. With a background in art history and archaeology, her research lies at the intersection of these and critical heritage studies, memory studies, and visual and material culture studies. She has conducted research on museum collections and objects in Central and Eastern Europe, and she studied built heritage and its adaptive reuse in the framework of EU-funded international collaborative projects. Her current research addresses the relationship between cultural heritage and planning in Central and Eastern Europe, including the integration of heritage in recovery planning policies and practices in Ukraine.

Dr Volodymyr Kulikov is a historian and Lecturer in Ukrainian History at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London. His research focuses on the business and economic history of Eastern Europe, with particular emphasis on industrialisation, natural resource extraction, and enterprise development in Ukraine and the Russian Empire.

Nataliia Romanenko is a Ukrainian artist and historian whose artistic practice focuses on the exploration of historical memory, collective trauma, and the consequences of post-traumatic historical cycles. Through her work, she examines the relationship between personal memory, social transformation, and the lived experiences of war, loss, and forced displacement. In Ukraine, she collaborated with the National Museum of Military History of Ukraine, where she participated in the research, interpretation, and transcription of archival materials, working extensively with historical sources and documentary heritage

Jacqui Rodger is Director of Voices Gloucester, a Museum and Heritage award winning charity that provides funding, mentoring and creative expertise. We create a platform for local people to amplify their voices by exploring, celebrating and sharing their heritage stories.

Clare Bebbington chairs the Board of Trustees for Voices Gloucester. She has previously been on the Boards of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, the John Smith Trust and the External Advisory Board of the History Faculty for Oxford University.

Max Gorbatskyi is the Head of Exhibitions at Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool, UK. He was a curator of Ukrainian National Pavilion at the 60th Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (2024), the HOME programme for EuroFestival/Eurovision 2023 in Liverpool City Region, as well as exhibitions at BredaPhoto Festival, Stills Centre for Photography in Edinburgh and UK Parliament in London. Previously, Gorbatskyi was a curator at Mystetskyi Arsenal in Kyiv, Ukraine. He is the co-founder of the research platform Ukrainian Photographies. Max is an Academy member of the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize, was a jury member for the British Journal of Photography's Portrait of Humanity award, and selector for the Royal Photographic Society International Exhibition. He holds an MA in the History of Photography from Birkbeck College, University of London, and an MA in Cultural Management from the University of Bologna.