

Transformations of Exhibitions in War-Affected Ukraine: 2024 Perspectives on Art-Driven Inclusion and Socialization

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Transformations of Exhibitions in War-Affected Ukraine: 2024 Perspectives on Art-Driven Inclusion and Socialization

This article explores the transformation of exhibition practices in Ukraine amidst the ongoing conflict, focusing on the period up to 2024. It examines the extensive damage to cultural monuments and museum collections caused by Russian aggression and highlights the adaptive strategies of Ukrainian cultural institutions. The study addresses the shift towards decolonisation, with museums increasingly prioritising Ukrainian and international artworks over Russian cultural displays. It also discusses the role of contemporary art forms, such as photography, in resisting and responding to the challenges of war. The paper also considers the emerging emphasis on accessibility for people with disabilities, driven by the growing number of people affected by war injuries. In addition, it highlights the importance of art therapy as a tool for psychological support, aiding in the emotional recovery of those affected by trauma. Through these lenses, the article highlights the resilience and innovation of Ukrainian cultural practices in the face of adversity.

Keywords: Ukraine; cultural heritage; art therapy; inclusion; decolonization

Introduction

Historical experiences show that wars affect not only people but also architectural objects. Ukraine, since the time of Kyivan Rus, has repeatedly fallen victim to brutal destruction, resulting in most monuments not surviving to this day in their original form. Destroyed buildings were often rebuilt with little care for preserving their historical appearance. The fate of Ukrainian monuments was particularly tragic in the twentieth century when they suffered first during the First World War, then as a result of the Communist struggle against religion in the 1930s and 1940s, and again during the Second World War. The destruction of religious buildings also continued in the post-war period. The decades following the end of the Second World War blurred the memory of the horrors that armed conflicts always bring. The generations that remembered those times were gradually passing away. Destroyed cities were gradually rebuilt, living standards improved and architectural monuments were meticulously restored. European societies began to forget the destructive effects of war. This is why the

Russian aggression against Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, came as a real shock to Europeans and the rest of the world.¹ Due to the highly dynamic changes in the conflict, the sources analysed in the article are largely drawn from websites of, among others: UNESCO, Institute of Central Europe, Ministry of Culture, and Strategic Communications of Ukraine.

The full-scale war currently taking place in Ukraine not only has wide-ranging international political, economic, social and military consequences, it has also changed many areas of the country's socio-economic life. The protection of historical monuments, archival and museum studies, and methods for protecting and presenting art collections during the ongoing military conflict are only a few small areas in which changes have been forced upon the country.

It is clear that for the Russians, every object they shoot at takes on the character of a military facility, with no respect for international law or the rights of the civilian population. The loss of material monuments and cultural property is particularly severe. By acting this way, Russia is violating a number of international agreements, including the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention;² the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage;³ the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property; and provisions related to the protection of documentary heritage.⁴

The Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Politics has kept a register since the beginning of the war documenting the scale of the losses suffered. The register is operated through an interactive platform. In the first months of the war, important historical sites were destroyed including:

- former site of the Chernihiv Regional Historical Museum named after V. V. Tarnovsky;
- Dnipropetrovsk House of Organ and Chamber Music;
- Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God in Kharkiv; and
- Kharkiv Korolenko State Scientific Library.⁵

The world recognises the intentionality of the Russian war machine when it comes to the loss – often irreversible – of material cultural monuments in Ukraine. Data on cultural property devastated during the war is maintained by the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications. According to this data, from February 2022 to 1 August 2024, a total of 1,096

¹ PAWŁOWSKA, Aneta, Yulia IVASHKO, Serhii BELINSKYI and Andrii DMYTRENKO. The War in Ukraine: Between the Past and the Future. Historical and Existential Aspect. In: *Історико-політичні проблеми сучасного світу: Збірник наукових статей*, 47, 2023, pp. 334–346, Chernivtsi: Chernivtsi National University.

² *Convention for the protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention, The Hague, 14 May 1954*, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/1954_Convention_EN_2020.

³ UN. *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 16 November 1972*, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>.

⁴ UN. *1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*, 14 November 1970, 2022. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000133378>.

⁵ On the destruction of monuments in Ukraine in the first phase of the war: BELINSKYI, Serhii et al. *Oblicza wojny na Ukrainie. Zniszczenia i koncepcje odbudowy*. In: Grabarczyk Tadeusz et al. (eds.). *Narzędzia wojny, Oblicza wojny*, T. 8, 2023, pp. 15–35 and MURAVSKA, S. and HODOVANSKA, O. Organization of museums of western Ukraine after the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation. In: *Museologica Brunensia*, 12(2), 2023, pp. 12–19.

monuments were destroyed, including 121 of national significance, 892 of local significance, and 83 so-called “newly discovered” monuments.⁶

It must be noted that the war in Ukraine varies in its intensity depending on the region. For example, at the end of 2023, Svitlana Muravska and Oksana Hodovanska described “Western Ukraine as a relatively safe territory for museums during the war”⁷. However, the more recent Russian missile attacks on Lviv, particularly on the 4 of September 2024, caused significant damage to the city’s historic buildings and monuments. The destruction mainly affected buildings located in UNESCO-protected areas. Among the damaged objects were several buildings included in the State Register of Historic Monuments of Ukraine, located on Konovaltsia and Kokorudza Streets.

One of the important historical buildings damaged is the eclectic villa of Joseph Franz (completed in 1893), designed by architect Jan Perosia with interiors by Edmund Pliszewski. It should be stressed that this is a culturally and historically important site in Lviv. Its rich history brings together the transformations the city has undergone. After the First World War, Karol Richtman-Rudniewski lived in this villa. He was an engineer, an architect and a military officer, as well as an enthusiast of automobiles and passenger balloons. In the 1930s the building was owned by Count Mieczysław Chodkiewicz and his wife Felicja, and after the Soviets occupied the area it became a clinic for tuberculosis patients. More recently, the building underwent modernisation for another purpose, becoming home to the Regional Centre for Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation. The damage to the building, which is a high-class architectural monument of local significance, was severe. The windows, façade and ceilings were damaged in the explosion.

According to the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications, 2,185 cultural institutions have been damaged or destroyed,⁸ and it is these that will be the primary focus of the authors of this text. The barbaric destruction of historic buildings, the looting and destruction of archives and museum collections are unacceptable and represent a devastating attack on Ukraine’s cultural heritage. For the most part, the war damage in Ukraine is unquestionably unfavourable and difficult to accept. In particular, we are referring to the barbaric destruction of historic buildings, the looting and destruction of archives and museum collections.⁹ However, the authors also identify some positive outcomes from this destruction including, for instance, the increased interest in Ukrainian art and culture within Europe.¹⁰ Another positive aspect could be changes in how museum collections are displayed. In this regard, we have in mind

⁶ KALĘBA, Julia. *Ponad tysiąc zabytków zniszczono od początku wojny w Ukrainie. Straty szacowane są w miliardach dolarów*, <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/ponad-tysiac-zabytkow-zniszczono-od-poczatku-wojny-w-ukrainie-straty-szacowane-sa-w>.

⁷ MURAVSKA and HODOVANSKA, Organization of museums ...

⁸ The Odessa Journal, *The Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine plans to create the Ukrainian Heritage Fund to protect cultural values*, <https://odessa-journal.com/the-ministry-of-culture-and-information-policy-of-ukraine-plans-to-create-the-ukrainian-heritage-fund-to-protect-cultural-values/>.

⁹ A remarkable number of sites in the Donetsk, Kyiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhia and Kherson regions have been completely destroyed. These include the Museum of History and Archaeology of Mariupol State University, the Archip Kuindzhi State Museum of Art in Mariupol (Donetsk region), the Museum of Local History in Ivankov (Kyiv region), the Museum of Ukrainian Antiquities and Tarnovsky House (Chernihiv region). See: Halyna ROSHCHYNA, *Kultur und Krieg: Zerstörung und Rettung ukrainischer Archive und Museen*. In: *Forum RGOW*, September 2023, <https://rgow.eu/zeitschrift/2023/9/kultur-und-krieg-zerstoerung-und-rettung-ukrainischer-archive-und-museen>.

¹⁰ MCIP, *Cultural Diplomacy of Ukraine: Building Bridges Through Art and Heritage*, <https://mcip.gov.ua/en/news/cultural-diplomacy-of-ukraine-building-bridges-through-art-and-heritage/>.

both the issue of the choice of collections presented (e.g., moving away from the presentation of hostile Russian culture or a greater share of new media art in museums) and the modes of presentation (e.g. creating challenging display narratives instead of historical ones). Another positive change that we are likely to see is a movement towards making monuments, exhibitions and collections more accessible to people with access needs and disabilities after the conflict has ceased. This demographic is growing rapidly in Ukraine as it includes not only seniors and people with long-standing disabilities but also those who have lost mobility as a result of frontline combat or bombing. A further consequence of war addressed in this article is the issue of the psychological damage caused to both soldiers and civilians by the war. Here, the authors draw attention to the validity of using art in the form of art therapy.

Current problems of preserving Ukrainian museum collections

As has already been hinted at, the reality of the Russian–Ukrainian war has changed all areas of Ukrainian public life and has also affected such the normally conservative field of museology.

One fundamental change is that museums have shifted away from their traditional function of presenting mostly permanent exhibitions towards an approach more commonly associated with galleries by presenting temporary exhibitions. This is an outcome of the war, which poses a level of danger to Ukrainian museology not seen since the Second World War. Museums located in the occupied territories have been looted by the invaders and their collections taken deep into Russia. The fate and whereabouts of these looted collections is unknown. Museums in Ukrainian-controlled areas are also falling victim to rocket and drone attacks, posing a great threat to the unique collections. According to the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine, Russian officials have seized more than 480,000 works of art. They took more than 28,000 items from the Kherson Regional National History Museum alone, including ancient coins, weapons, Sarmatian jewellery, a collection of icons, paintings, antique furniture from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and an entire archaeological exhibition, as well as hard drives containing the museum's catalogue. The collections of the Kherson Regional Museum of Art named after Oleksiy Shovkunenko were also stolen (more than 10,000 exhibits out of the 14,000 in the collection were taken) and the Albert Gavdzinskiy Art Gallery in Nova Kachovka was also looted.¹¹ According to the head of the Cultural Heritage Sites Registration Department at the Ministry of Culture and Industry of Ukraine Olha Pakhomova: “Unfortunately, we [...] have cases where cultural institutions are suffering repeatedly, have been damaged again [...]. We cannot be completely sure of them, because part of the territory remains occupied and in these territories it is practically impossible to monitor data in this regard. It will only be possible to do so once these territories have been released.”¹²

In February 2024, UNESCO estimated that the war in Ukraine had caused the destruction of \$3.5 billion worth of cultural heritage and assets in the country.¹³ Among others, two UNESCO World Heritage sites, the historic centres of Lviv (already mentioned above) and Odesa, have

¹¹ BAZHENOVA, Hanna. *Niszczenie dziedzictwa kulturowego Ukrainy w czasie rosyjskiej agresji*, <https://ies.lublin.pl/komentarze/niszczenie-dziedzictwa-kulturowego-ukrainy-w-czasie-rosyjskiej-agresji/>. Additionally, on the significance of cultural heritage in museology: GEISLER, Robert, NIEROBA, Elżbieta. Museum transition toward market-oriented identity: Between social issues and public policy. In: *Muzeologia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 10(4), 2022, pp. 6–8.

¹² KALĘBA, Julia. *Ponad tysiąc zagabytków...*

¹³ UNESCO, *podczas wojny na Ukrainie zniszczono dziedzictwo kulturowe wartości 3,5 mld dol.*, <https://dzieje.pl/dziedzictwo-kulturowe/unesco-podczas-wojny-na-ukrainie-zniszczono-dziedzictwo-kulturowe-wartosci-35>.

suffered. Therefore, according to Pakhomova, “At the moment, the most important task for us is to preserve what we have, these museum collections that we have [...]. By this I mean the removal of monuments to quieter regions, and the construction of warehouses. This is happening. Also, an important task is the digitisation of heritage, the creation of 3D models, in other words, preserving what we have, in the broadest sense of the word.”¹⁴

Exhibitions of outstanding works from Ukrainian museums in Europe

As a consequence of the threats cited above, the most valuable collections are also exported to European partner museums for temporary storage and display there. One example of this is the export of the most valuable paintings from the National Art Gallery in Lviv to the National Museum in Poznań at the beginning of the conflict in March 2022. Another important action of this type was the removal of priceless so-called “Sinai” icons from Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts in Kyiv.¹⁵ In May 2023, as a result of rocket bombardment by the Russian Federation, the museum lost its windows and was partially destroyed inside by debris and shockwaves. The dramatic decision was then taken to transport the 16 most valuable objects in strict secrecy, using specially made air-conditioned containers in a military convoy that went through Poland and Germany to France.¹⁶ It should be added that four of the exported artefacts date from the sixth century and are among the few from this period to have survived the period of iconoclasm, which led to the irretrievable destruction of most of the holy images of the Eastern Church in 730–843. The icons at The Khanenko Museum in Kiev are painted using the encaustic technique on wood (an ancient painting technique involving a beeswax binder, used most notably to create the so-called Fayum portraits) from the monastery of St Catherine of Sinai. They belong to both the iconographic tradition of the Roman period (based on naturalistic observations) and Byzantine art (inclined towards abstraction). From 14 June to 6 November 2023, an exhibition centred around these priceless works was held at the Louvre, entitled *Aux origines de l'image sacrée. Icônes du musée national des arts Bohdan et Varvara Khanenko de Kyiv* [Near the Origins of Sacred Imagery. Icons from the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Art in Kyiv]. This gave rise to widespread interest from the art world of Western European countries into what was previously the relatively unknown world of ancient Ukrainian art. The transportation of the objects also meant they could be carefully examined in highly specialised conservation workshops, thus broadening the knowledge of these objects and presenting this vision in Europe¹⁷.

Other exhibits from Khanenko Museum in Kiev were presented in Poland at the Royal Castle in Warsaw from 1 June 1 to 30 July 2023.¹⁸ These included works by renowned artists such as Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, author of the “Portrait of Stanisław August in the

¹⁴ KALEBA, Julia. *Ponad tysiąc zabytków...*

¹⁵ Athena Art Foundation. *The Origins of the Sacred Image. Icons from the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts in Kyiv*, <https://www.athenaartfoundation.org/take-a-look/the-origins-of-the-sacred-image-icons-from-the-bohdan-and-varvara-khanenko-national-museum-of-arts-in-kyiv>.

¹⁶ SKOTNIKOVA, Olha. *Секретна місія: як на початку війни з Києва вивезли раритетні ікони*, <https://vechirniy.kyiv.ua/news/94281/>.

¹⁷ HAKOUN, Agathe. *Le musée du Louvre expose des chefs-d'œuvre de l'art sacré évacués d'Ukraine en secret*, <https://www.connaissancedesarts.com/musees/musee-louvre/le-musee-du-louvre-expose-des-chefs-doeuvre-de-lart-sacre-evacues-dukraïne-en-secret-11183153/>.

¹⁸ Zamek Królewski w Warszawie. *Masterpieces from The Khanenko Museum in Kiev*, <https://www.zamek-krolewski.pl/en/aktualnosc/1788-masterpieces-khanenko-museum-kiev>.

Costume of Henry IV” (1797), and Bernardo Bellotto, who painted “Architectural Capriccio with Ruins of a Temple” (1762–1766).

Decolonial activity¹⁹ in the museums of Ukraine - The Kyiv National Art Gallery

Another important Ukrainian museum which has been exhibiting works for more than a century, Kyiv National Art Gallery (KNAG), not only reopened, despite the destruction caused by a rocket attack and the still-ongoing rocket shelling of Kyiv but began an intensive programme of decolonialisation.²⁰



Fig. 1: War damage in Kyiv National Art Gallery (KNAG). Source: Projector запускас відеокурс про київський модернізм. Виручені кошти передадуть на відновлення культурних установ – Хмарочос, hmarochos.kiev.ua (accessed: 3 October 2024).

It should be noted that the activities undertaken by the museum after the attack involved both a considerable act of courage and entrepreneurship. As a result of the shockwave from a rocket attack in the city centre of Kyiv on 10 October 2022, most of the windows on the side façade and the glass ceiling in the exhibition halls were shattered. The museum was closed for a short period of time due to urgent renovations.²¹ However, thanks to contributions from donors, repairs were quickly made and the museum management declared. As the museum’s website states in a post dated 10 October 2022, “Despite the extremely hard situation resulting from the invasion by Russian army and the declaration of a state of war has in Ukraine, the KNAG has not stopped its activities, considering them its contribution to the future victory, defence of national interests on cultural front, fight for spiritual values, liberation from impacts of imperial colonial policy, renovation of historical justice [and] promotion of the image of a Ukrainian as a European country, enriched with own history, original culture, and art”²² (see Figure 1).

¹⁹ The decolonization practices that are currently being undertaken in Ukrainian museums in most cases refer to the liquidation of souvenirs of the Russian Empire from exhibitions. A document discussing these issues in Ukraine is a Ukrainian Institute study with suggested practices of activities entitled *Pidtrymka dekolonizatsii v muzeiakh* [Supporting Decolonization in Museums], https://ui.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/supporting-decolonisation-in-museums-ukrainian-traslation_pidtrymka-dekolonizacziyi-v-muzeyah_.pdf.

²⁰ Although use of the word “decolonization” in relation to Russian political and cultural practices towards Ukraine still meets with some resistance, this is not the situation Alexander Etkind writes about, “Just a few decades ago, the idea that Ukraine or even Central Asia were colonies of the Soviet Empire evoked furious resistance on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In the 1990s, postcolonial experts still debated the reasons for not applying their concepts to the emerging countries of the post-Soviet space”; ETKIND, Alexander. *Internal Colonization. Russia's Imperial Experience*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011, p. 249. This is why the authors use the word “decolonialization” in reference to the actions taken by the Ukrainian authorities in the face of Russian aggression.

²¹ КАТАЄВА, Maria. *Київська картина галерея відзначає 100-річчя: цікаві факти*, <https://vechirniy.kyiv.ua/news/74195/>.

²² Ibidem, (trans. by A. Pawłowska)

KNAG is a large, multi-departmental public institution with a collection of 14,000 objects. The museum's post-colonial name, Kyiv National Museum of Russian Art, was changed as recently as March 2017 to the National Museum "Kyiv Art Gallery", thus returning to the original name of 1922. In fact, years before the outbreak of full-scale war with Russia, art from the Soviet (Socialist Realist) period was only presented during thematic exhibitions. Nevertheless, before February 2022, the core of the collection on display was still made up of works related to the culture of the dominant aggressor. Therefore, another significant change that began at KNAG after the 2022 attack concerned the removal of Russian artworks from the exhibition and their replacement with works by Ukrainian and foreign artists. These included Old Russian icons and works by recognised nineteenth-century painters of Russian origin such as Viktor Mikhaylovich Vasnetsov (1848–1926), Ivan Shishkin (1832–1998) and Mikhail Aleksandrovich Vrubel (1856–1910). After the outbreak of war, it was decided that the exhibition halls would be replaced and the "organisation of contemporary art exhibitions and other art events became the basic form of the Kyiv National Art Gallery activities, [offering] the means to reflect actual problems through the prism of the best artists of modern Ukraine".²³

One interesting project exhibited at KNAG was entitled "114 days", showing works from the collection of the Centre for Contemporary Art's "White World" [ЦСМ "Білий світ"]. From 17 June to 20 July 2022, more than 100 works created by 53 contemporary Ukrainian artists were presented in the classic, highly traditional exhibition halls of the KNAG. All the works were created before the full-scale Russian invasion began; the exhibition's curators intended to indicate that the new situation provided a new context for the reception of these works. We should add that the exhibition was conceived as problematized (in contrast to previous historical narratives). Works were organised under categories such as anxiety, courage, trauma, safety, hopelessness, hope, despair, routine and humour, memory and freedom – all referring to feelings and emotional states caused by the ongoing war in Ukraine.



Fig. 2: *Vladyslav Shereshevsky, Sextinets, 2019.* Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shereshevsky.vladyslav/> (accessed: 3 October 2024).

An interesting and emphatic case of such a change of context can be seen in a huge oil painting entitled "Сextинетц" (Sextinets), painted in 2019 (Figure 2). The work is by the renowned contemporary artist Vladyslav Shereshevsky, who works with pop art aesthetics. In this work, presented in the exhibition among several of his other works, he shows an impressionistically painted Virgin Mary holding a red cat in her arms instead of Jesus. Since 2016, Shereshevsky has been making humorous references in his work to the "Sistine Madonna" by the eminent Italian Renaissance artist Raphael Santi. This treatment is close to

the concept of pastiche, often found in contemporary art.²⁴ However, this work, which is rather comical at first glance, in the light of the events of the war, acts as a reminder of the fact that

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Information based on the artist's Facebook page.

even in times of war, Ukrainians do not abandon their animals but rescue and protect them on an equal footing with humans.

Now, after more than two years of defensive warfare in Ukraine, more and more exhibitions relating to historical figures important to Ukraine are appearing at KNAG. This was the aim of a project by Ukrainian graphic artist Nadiya Hart entitled “In Your Name” (13 August to 15 September 2024). The artist created a series of portraits of figures from the period of Soviet terror in the 1930s and 1940s in Ukraine using analogue printmaking. Through portraits created based on historical photographs, Hart aimed to restore and maintain the memory of Ukrainian cultural personalities who were not afraid to express themselves in a pro-freedom and patriotic manner despite the terror of Soviet rule. “In Your Name” presented material on the actor and theatre director Les Kurbas (1887–1937), the visual artist Alla Horska (1929–1970) and the futurist poet Mykhailo Semenko (1897–1937). The works created between 2022 and 2023 were Hart’s reaction to Russia’s war crimes against Ukrainian culture in the occupied territories. The artist believes that the destruction and theft of museum collections by Russia takes Ukrainian society back to its past history, in which similar evils and destruction of culture by the colonial invaders took place.

Decolonisation efforts have been undertaken at Kyiv’s museum and exhibition centre, the Museum of the History of the City of Kyiv, where the museum’s “Kyiv O.S. Pushkin Museum” branch, which has been in operation since 1999, was renamed “Kudryavka Manor” on 1 March 2022. The collection is currently being revised to move away from displaying memorabilia of the Russian Romantic period poet Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) to artefacts that tell the everyday story of Kyiv life in the nineteenth century.

The role of photographs as documentary evidence and artefacts

The arrangement of contemporary photographic exhibitions in museums is not typical, at least for Kyiv museums traditionally oriented towards ancient art, but this change has been forced upon them by the circumstances. At the same time, it is an interesting idea as it allows unique, valuable artefacts and collections – the loss or damage of which would be significant – to be replaced by photographs that can easily be reprinted from digital archives.

In our view, art photography harbours the unique potential to enable art museums to function efficiently in wartime. On the one hand, it is a type of art; on the other hand, the loss of such exhibits is not final and they can easily be reproduced. Therefore, exhibitions of photography in places threatened by conflict have many advantages compared to works of painting, sculpture, design, or jewellery art, which are more susceptible to damage and more difficult to restore or replace.

An interesting example of this can be seen in the photographic exhibition on Ukrainian cultural heritage being destroyed by Russia, presented from 4 to 19 May 2024 at the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Art, cited above. The exhibition entitled “За об’єктивом: культура у вірі війни” [Behind the Lens: Culture Under Attack], was the result of a collaboration between the Ukrainian Institute of Mass Information (IMI) and UNESCO, both of which asked Ukrainian journalists, reporters and photographers to document the

impact of the damage caused by Russian aggression to churches, theatres, libraries and cultural figures themselves²⁵.

The exhibition brings together the works of 65 photojournalists. Through the prism of the artists' sensitivity, we see church facades covered with damage from bullets and bomb splinters, broken windows of community centres, collapsed ceilings of theatres, burnt libraries. The basic curatorial idea of the exhibition was to draw the public's attention to the destruction of cultural heritage sites; photographs, video screens, and artefacts were placed in line with this. They were preceded by information about the essence of the project and the participants—photographers. The placement of the exposures in dark, underexposed rooms created an additional effect of tragedy. By also recording the activities of artists and performers, cultural personalities and volunteers who continued to work under wartime conditions, the photographers clearly indicated that despite the great losses associated with the destruction of historic buildings, the indomitable spirit of Ukrainian cultural luminaries and artists is invincible.

Subsequently, the entire collection of photographic works was presented in Berlin during the Reconstruction of Ukraine Conference on 11–12 June 2024. An excerpt that stands out from the many comments related to the event was by Oksana Romanyuk, director of the Mass Information Institute: "These are not just images – they are striking stories of communities being rebuilt, of lives being restored, of horrific Russian war crimes. The IMI and UNESCO photo exhibition aims to provide an effective visual complement to the discussions and decisions made at the conference, reminding participants of the human faces behind policies and strategies".²⁶ In turn, UNESCO representative Chiara Dezzi Bardeschi stressed that to "rebuild the country, we need to be informed about the impact of the war on culture, education, and science, therefore it is important to support a strong media sector in Ukraine."²⁷

Raising awareness of the problems of damage to monuments through photographic exhibitions

Another role that can be attributed to exhibitions of photographs from war-torn Ukraine (although this can, of course, be extrapolated to other war photography) is to direct international public opinion towards the evil that occurred. The photographic exhibition "Kyiv – Das unzerbrechliche Herz Europas" [Kyiv – The indestructible heart of Europe] depicting everyday life in war-torn Kyiv was presented at Leipzig's City Hall from 9 to 31 May 2023. The 16 photographs documented not only the destruction caused by Russian rocket fire but also the everyday life of people in this war-stricken area. The photographs showed what damaged youth basketball courts, parks and playgrounds look like in a city hit by Russian rocket fire and how public institutions such as the fire brigade, metro stations, electricity and water supply continue to work. In a word, how the heroic civilian population of Ukraine lives daily in this exceptional state.²⁸

²⁵ Institute of Mass Information. *Exhibition about Ukrainian Cultural Sites Destroyed by Russia Displayed at the Ukraine Recovery Conference*, <https://imi.org.ua/en/news/exhibition-about-ukrainian-cultural-sites-destroyed-by-russia-displayed-at-the-ukraine-recovery-i61953>.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ LUCIUK, Lesia, *Виставку про знищену Росією українську культурну спадщину представили на Ukraine Recovery Conference*, <https://imi.org.ua/en/news/vystavku-pro-znyshhenu-rosiyeyu-ukrayinsku-kulturnu-spadshhynu-predstavly-na-ukraine-recovery-i61946>.

²⁸ Stadt Leipzig. *Fotoausstellung zeigt Lebensalltag im vom Krieg gezeichneten Kien*, <https://www.leipzig.de/newsarchiv/news/fotoausstellung-zeigt-lebensalltag-im-vom-krieg-gezeichneten-kiew/>.

In turn, the exhibition “Bericht aus der belagerten Stadt Tschernihiw” [Report from the Besieged City of Chernihiv], which ran from 1 February to 31 March 2024 at the headquarters of the Polish Institute in Leipzig,²⁹ was conceived as a photographic reportage providing a chronological record of the first days of the war in the heavily attacked city of Chernihiv. By 22 March 2022, after three weeks of continuous shelling, the city was on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe. Now, as the city that is slowly coming back to life, multibillion-dollar losses are being documented. In the Chernihiv region, more than 600 km of roads and 16 bridges have been destroyed. According to preliminary estimates, the reconstruction of the city and its surroundings may take up to 50 years.³⁰ With unique architectural monuments dating back to the Kyivan Rus', the 300,000-strong city of Chernihiv was a magnet for domestic and foreign tourists before the attack.³¹ Some medieval religious buildings survived, such as the Church of St Paraskeva, the Cathedral of St Boris and Gleb, and the Cathedral of the Transfiguration. Russian shelling destroyed, among others, schools, libraries, and the ski station of the Ukrainian Olympic biathlon team. On 6 March 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy awarded Chernihiv the title of City of Heroes.

From the beginning, young amateur photographers Valentyn Bobyr and Vladislav Savienok documented the Russian attack on their hometown. The exhibition was inspired by photographs of bombed houses, educational and sports facilities, cultural institutions and local authorities.³²

Photography exhibitions related to the project “And light shines in the darkness”

The organising principles of exhibitions being proposed in Ukraine during the war with the Russian Federation differ from those used to create traditional museum exhibitions because, as we have already noted, under these conditions Ukraine's museums must act more like art galleries. Due to the threat to valuable exhibits, they are often hidden in warehouses or even taken out of the country. In addition, exhibitions are changed much more frequently and there is a greater role for digitized material and videos.

Similar, more performative exhibition activities were based on a series of art photography exhibitions as part of the project “A światło świeci w ciemności” [And light shines in the darkness] and a scholarship awarded to Prof. Yulia Ivashko (Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture) as part of the Scholarship Competition for Ukrainian Scientists, funded by a 2% increased subvention for universities that entered the Excellence Initiative – Research University competition.

Thanks to a collaboration with the University of Lodz, the works were presented in five exhibitions. The first was from 21 October to 15 December 2022 at the University of Lodz in Galeria Wozownia 11, under the title “A światłość w ciemności świeci i ciemność jej nie ogarnęła” [And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overwhelm it] (Jn 1:5), as part of an artistic and scientific project on the reconstruction and adaptation of industrial facilities that were destroyed in Ukraine, as well as artistic expression in times of military conflict. Belinski's works were then presented at the University of Ostrava in the Czech Republic from 24 November 2022 to 20 January 2023 at Galerie Na Půdě under the title “A to

²⁹ Dhi. Raport z oblężonego Miasta Czernihowa. Wystawa, <https://www.dhi.waw.pl/veranstaltungen/ausstellungen/detail/austellung-bericht-aus-der-belagerten-stadt-tschernihiw/>.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ More on the importance of tourism, e.g.: BITUSIKOVA, Alexandra. Cultural heritage as a means of heritage tourism development. In: *Muzeologia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 9(1), p. 82, DOI: 10.46284/mkd.2021.9.1.5.

³² Dhi. *Raport z oblężonego Miasta...*

světlo svítí ve tmě a tma je nepohltila”; at the Silesian University (Slezská Univerzita) in Opava in the Hauer Gallery 4 (13 February to 26 March 2023); and at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań in the main hall of the Collegium Maius as part of the celebration of the Ukrainian Days “Ukraine 2022–2023” (15 March to 12 April 2023).³³ The curator of the project and of the exhibitions in Lodz, Krakow, Opava and Ostrava was Aneta Pawłowska, a professor at the Institute of Art History. The same exhibition was presented at the Technical University of Łódź under the curatorship of Marek Pabich, a professor and director of the Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning at the Technical University of Łódź. At this point, the authors would like to add the information that the shocking and at the same time poetic photographic accounts scientifically elaborated in the monograph *In good and bad fortune. Stylistic transformations of Serhii Belinskyi's photography* by Yulia Ivashko, Aneta Pawłowska and Oleksandr Ivashko³⁴, was awarded the IPA 2024 Honourable Mention in the professional monograph book category at the International Photography Awards (IPA) competition (Figure 3).³⁵



Fig. 3: Book cover *In good and bad fortune. Stylistic transformations of Serhii Belinskyi's photography* by Yulia Ivashko, Aneta Pawłowska and Oleksandr Ivashko, awarded at the IPA 2024 competition, photo by A. Pawłowska.

These photographic exhibitions were based on the same principles as the photography exhibition at the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts in Kyiv, combining a visual display with a series of short films, artefacts – fragments of rockets and missiles with which the Russian army bombarded Ukraine, and audio recordings of literary essays about the individual photographs presented. The first exhibition at Wozownia 11 Gallery was particularly noteworthy, with a selection of Belinski's photographs that most fully depicts all aspects of contemporary war – images of sol-

diers, civilians in basements, animals, landscapes and destroyed buildings. As mentioned above, the exhibition was complemented by a performance which, in our opinion, is precisely the way to attract a wide audience to this type of event, as it extends the emotional value of the artistic event.

A light installation was placed in front of the entrance to the room, complemented by an audio recording of literary essays by a Ukrainian actress in Ukrainian about the photographs on display. This mentally prepared the audience to view the exhibition. Catalogues with photographs were placed in front of the entrance, complemented by texts which further “introduced” the viewer to the tragic atmosphere of the war.

The framed pictures were placed on the walls in a specific way. All the pictures were placed on the white walls facing the windows, fragments of rockets hung in the middle of the wall

³³ IWASZKO, Julia et al. *W dobrej i złej doli. Przekształcenia stylistyczne fotografii Sergija Belinskiego*. [In good and bad fortune. Stylistic transformations of Serhii Belinskyi's photography]. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkiego Towarzystwa Naukowego, 2023, pp. 13–15.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ International Photography Awards. <https://photoawards.com/winner/zoom.php?eid=8-1709176936-24>.

on the bedside table, and the key finishing touch of the exhibition were three short films “Horror”, “Struggle”, and “Hope”, which symbolically introduced the viewer to the stages of modern war and the hope of victory. The most symbolic of the three films is “Hope”. A military man plays a tune from the film “The Umbrellas of Cherbourg” on a surviving piano in a ruined village school. He died in the region around Kherson and passed away, yet continues to



Fig. 4: *Catalogues of exhibitions related to the project “And light shines in the darkness”, photo by B. Kałużny*

live on through this short film, which has been presented at exhibitions around the world. In addition to the exhibitions, two richly illustrated catalogues were published: one featuring photographs, and the other containing literary essays accompanying some of the images. (Figure 4).

To sum up, when an exhibition becomes a multimedia event and a kind of performance that involves different types of visual arts – fine art photography, cinematography, literature, or poetry – we obtain much greater artistic integrity, approaching the cathartic functions of art, a theme to which we will return below.

Accessibility – a new challenge in Ukrainian museology

Although the war unfolding in Ukraine is not yet over, there is another important issue to consider. This relates to full access to exhibitions for people with disabilities – including those who are visually impaired, hard of hearing, in a wheelchair – an issue that has not yet been sufficiently addressed. During the war, as a result of injuries and deep psychological problems caused by the trauma of war and accompanying displacement, the number of people with disabilities, both among soldiers and the civilian population, has increased rapidly.³⁶ Therefore, the issue of creating a welcoming and adapted environment without barriers to access culture and the arts will be relevant for Ukraine for several decades.

It should be added that the importance of the issue of accessibility in Ukraine³⁷ was significantly reinforced on 29 February 2024 when Ukraine acceded to the European Social Charter and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other related international documents.³⁸ In doing so, the country committed itself to creating conditions not only for the full rehabilitation of people with disabilities but also for their employment and for making full use of their knowledge and skills and guaranteeing access to cultural and artistic goods. Ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness in higher education

³⁶ According to a report published on 24 May 2024 by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the consequences of two years of war in Ukraine include the displacement of about 10 million people: 3.67 million are internally displaced and 5.97 million are refugees. Almost 17.5 million people require help to physically survive (as of 13 February 2024), and 10 million, including 1.5 million children, need psychological and psychiatric help. Moreover, nearly 10 million people are at risk of or have a mental health condition and 3.9 million are experiencing moderate to severe symptoms. Children are particularly affected by conflict, with stress, anxiety and other mental health problems exacerbated by the disruption to their education due to constant attacks. . See further: *Ukraine: Situation Report, 24 May 2024*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-situation-report-24-may-2024-enuk>.

³⁷ A list of laws and decrees published in Ukraine until 2020 related to legal regulations supporting persons with disabilities can be found at: <https://ud.org.ua/zakonodavstvo/ukazi-ta-zakoni>.

³⁸ Gov.ua. В Україні вивчають міжнародний досвід доступності освіти та працевлаштування людей з інвалідністю, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/v-ukraini-vyvchaiut-mizhnarodnyi-dosvid-dostupnosti-osvity-ta-pratsevlashtuvannia-liudei-z-invalidnistiu>.

and access to culture is one of the operational goals of the Strategy for Higher Education Development in Ukraine for 2021–2031.³⁹

However, at the time of writing (April 2025) there are few examples in the cultural field of institutions being made accessible to people with disabilities. Commendable examples include Kyiv's Taras Shevchenko National Museum, which has been implementing the "Culture without Barriers" programme since 2014, and the Mystetskyi Arsenal cultural and artistic complex. In the second institution, elements of Universal Design⁴⁰ by Alina Holovatyuk have been introduced in 2018, referring to the combined experience of the Irish Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD), Gallaudet University in Washington DC and the Metropolitan Museum of Arts in New York. These amenities are supported by tactile strips on the floor and stairs, tactile stickers on handrails, the absence of obstacles on major traffic routes and the use of braille on all signs.⁴¹ Outside the national capital, other noteworthy projects include the "Accessible Ivano-Frankivsk" web portal⁴² and the option of audio description for theatre performances in Lviv⁴³. In addition, a new project, "PURVital – for the elderly and disabled", has appeared in the Kyiv Museum and Exhibition Centre.

However, it should be noted that there is a lack of broader solutions in Ukraine in the area of accessibility for people with access needs, which, given the ongoing war and the rapidly increasing number of people affected by disability as a result, should be taken into account more intensively in research and museum practice.

Art as a therapeutic medium

Art therapy began to be used in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from the 1940s onwards. The term art therapy was coined by the British artist Adrian Hill in 1942.⁴⁴ Hill, while recovering from tuberculosis in a sanatorium, discovered the therapeutic benefits of drawing and painting during recovery. He wrote that the value of art therapy lies in "the total absorption of the mind (as well as the fingers) [...] the release of the creative energy of the often-inhibited patient".⁴⁵ Hill's therapeutic practices were soon carried forward by the artist Edward Adamson, who was demobilised after the Second World War and extended these activities to British psychiatric hospitals. One of the ways in which Adamson practised therapy through art was by encouraging patients to depict their emotions in the art they created. In contrast, American art therapy pioneers Margaret Naumburg and Edith Kramer began to refer to the educational value of art therapy during a similar period. Naumburg, argued that "therapy through art is psychoanalytically oriented" and that free artistic expression "becomes a form

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ According to United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities "Universal design" means "the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. "Universal design" shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed"; <https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/definition-and-overview>.

⁴¹ To see more: <https://ud.org.ua/priklady/muzeji-galerei-teatri/316-proekt-dizajnu-prostoru-natsionalnogo-kulturno-mistetskogo-kompleksu-mistetskij-arsenal>.

⁴² <https://ud.org.ua/priklady/290-portal-dostupnij-ivano-frankivsk>

⁴³ <https://ud.org.ua/priklady/362-audioopisovij-komentar-dlya-teatralnikh-vistav-rezultati-vprovadzheniya-mikro-proektu-z-universalnogo-dizajnu-u-lvovi>

⁴⁴ HOGAN, Susan. *Healing Arts: The History of Art Therapy*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2011, p. 135.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

of symbolic speech that ... leads to an increase in verbalisation during therapy”.⁴⁶ Naumburg developed the concept of “dynamic” art therapy, based on the theory that creative expression allows patients to express subconscious content. Edith Kramer emphasised the therapeutic effect of the art-making process itself. During this period, art therapy began to be applied, among others, to war veterans suffering from symptoms associated with a post-traumatic stress disorder, then termed “shell shock”. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was officially defined in 1980 when it was introduced into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III). During this period, art therapy became more popular among psychotherapists as a tool to support the treatment of patients suffering from PTSD. It was recognised that art allows the expression of emotions and experiences that are often difficult to describe in words, which is crucial when working with traumatised individuals. Contemporary neuroscience research confirms the effectiveness of art therapy in processing trauma, as creative processes engage different areas of the brain, which can promote the integration of emotions and traumatic memories.⁴⁷

Today, art therapy is recognised as an effective tool to support traditional treatments for PTSD, helping patients to process emotions, express difficult experiences and support healing and social reintegration processes.

In our opinion, an additional aspect of art therapy in the case of people with disabilities is that through art they can gain additional competences and a new profession in place of their lost profession. And among the possible artforms of music, literature, painting or sculpture, it is artistic photography that, in this sense, offers a more universal form of art accessible to the general public. The development of modern photographic technologies has opened up new possibilities for artistic photography. The events of the current Russian–Ukrainian war have proven that artistic photography has a place not only in studio spaces and in peacetime, but also in wartime, on a par with reportage photography. And therein lies the difference between the role photography played during previous wars and its current role: war photography has taken on the qualities of artistic photography and tragic lyricism, moving away from simply presenting or juxtaposing facts. A good example is the world-famous photographs of Dmytro Kozatsky, known by his nickname Orest, during the siege of the Azovstal steel plant, the last stronghold of the destroyed Mariupol. The young soldier (born 1995) served as head of the press service of the Azov Regiment, documenting the lives of the defenders and civilians who took refuge in the plant. His photographs, taken under extremely difficult conditions, became a symbol of the perseverance and courage of the Ukrainian armed forces. They depicted the everyday life of those under siege alongside dramatic images of the destruction and conditions faced by the wounded and their caregivers. A particularly eloquent shot entitled THE LIGHT WILL WIN/ #SaveAzovstalDefenders with a soldier illuminated by a ray of May sunshine streaming into the interior of the destroyed factory, is closer to art photography than reportage. At the same time, as experts have pointed out, Orest’s visual documentation has contributed to a global understanding of the Mariupol tragedy and the difficulties faced by the community there. Orest’s photographs show deep emotions, reflecting both the suffering and heroism of the defenders of Azovstal. His works are therefore not so much a documentation of the war but rather a form of art therapy through which he was able to express his own emotions and

⁴⁶ NAUMBURG, Margaret. *Psychoneurotic art: Its function in psychotherapy*. New York: Grune & Stratton, 1953, p. 3.

⁴⁷ HETRICK Sarah E., et al. Combined pharmacotherapy and psychological therapies for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In: *Cochrane Database Systematic Reviews*, (7) 2012.

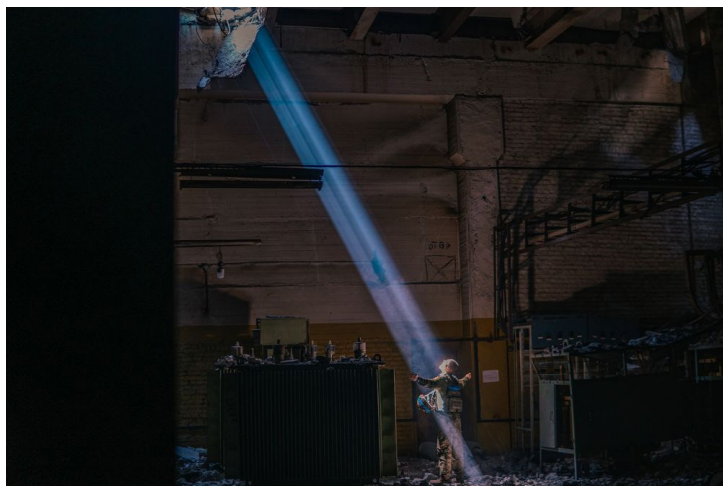


Fig. 5: Orest's (Dmytro Kozatsky) photograph *The Light will Win*. Source: <https://www.photoawards.com/winner/zoom.php?eid=8-1660076295-22> (accessed: 3 October 2024).

from profitable commercial photography of young couples, among others, to document the war. In an interview with the Ukrainian *Vogue* magazine, they stated “We will continue to do military photo-documentation until our victory, until the complete liberation of Ukraine”⁴⁹ (Figure 6).

cope with the trauma of war, while also serving to document what was happening inside the complex. Before the surrender of the Mariupol defenders in May 2022, Orest published his photographs, calling them the “last internet”, which further emphasised the tragedy of the situation⁴⁸ (Figure 5).

Of similar importance are the photographs of the married photographers Kostiantyn and Vlada Liberov who, for the duration of the war in Ukraine, have moved away



Fig. 6: Kostiantyn and Vlada Liberov, *Untitled*. Source: <https://elle.ua/ludi/interview/voni-bachili-viy-nu-na-vlasni-ochi-konstantin-ta-vlada-liberovi-pro-te-yak-ce--buti-fotografami-na-viyini/> (accessed: 3 October 2024)

⁴⁸ MODINA, Olha. Toy samyy fotohraf z “Azovstali” pishov u polon: istoriya “Oresta” ta 10 yoho svitlyn. [The same photographer from Azovstal was captured: The story of “Orest” and 10 of his photos] In: *Liga.Life*, 20 May 2022.

⁴⁹ Vogue UA. Костянтин і Влада Ліберови – українські фотографи, які чесно й емоційно показують війну, <https://vogue.ua/article/culture/lifestyle/kostyantyn-ta-vlada-liberovi-ukrajinski-fotografi-yaki-chesno-i-emociyno-pokazuyut-viy-nu-49483.html>.

Art therapy mechanisms

Art therapy is now playing an increasingly important role in the recovery of war trauma. It enables people experiencing the effects of trauma to express and process their emotions in ways that may be difficult to achieve through conventional therapeutic methods. Art therapy can use a variety of artforms, such as painting, sculpture, music, dance and writing, to help patients recover mentally and emotionally. Activities of this type are being undertaken in the twenty-first century by many museums. Projects the authors are directly familiar with include the activities associated with “Kongres empatii pod nazwą: Kultura dyskryminacji. Dyskryminacja w kulturze” [Empathy Congress under the name Culture of Discrimination] on 8 December 2019 at the Museum of Art in Łódź; the inclusive therapeutic activities for seniors undertaken at the art museum at University College Cork in Ireland (The Glucksman Gallery) as part of the “Lifelong Learning” project (2023–2024); and a project aimed at young people called “All Together” (Summer 2023). A similar art therapy project is being carried out at the Zamek Museum in Oświęcim and the Powiat Środowiskowy Dom Samopomocy (District Self-help Centre) in Kęty with an outpost in Brzeszcze, called “Cholery, Choroby czy Licha” (loosely translated as Cholera, Disease, or the Devil) exhibiting sculptures on the theme of pagan deities made by patients of the neurological ward, with which the museum has a cooperation agreement. Although these works were created under the guidance of professional sculptors, the feelings expressed in them are, above all, therapeutic for the creators and help them face their own demons caused by their illness.

In the context of the war in Ukraine, art therapy has become an important tool for psychological support. Organisations such as “Art Therapy Ukraine” and “Art Shelter” offer workshops for children and adults where patients can express emotions related to the trauma of war through art. The artworks created as part of these initiatives often depict scenes from life before the war, as well as symbolic images related to the hope of a return to normality.

According to the developers of HyFlex’s hybrid art therapy course, classes include an exploration of psychoanalytic and analytic approaches, expressive art therapies, programmes such as Compassionate Arts Psychotherapy (CAP) and Mindfulness Art Therapy based on Trauma (MBAT).⁵⁰ The aim of art therapy education is to implement concepts related to reformulating, reforming and recovering.⁵¹

According to authors Kateryna Bondar, Olena Shestopalova and Vita A. Hamaniuk, these terms can be understood as follows. Reframing entails altering the viewpoint or interpretation of an experience, situation, or piece of art. Within the context of art therapy, reframing prompts individuals to investigate alternative meanings, narratives, or emotions associated with their artistic creations. This change in perspective facilitates clients in acquiring new understandings, confronting detrimental thought patterns, and uncovering diverse ways to comprehend themselves and their lived experiences. Reforming in art therapy signifies the modification or transformation of components within an individual’s artwork or creative output. This process may include the exploration of new techniques, deliberate alterations, and the investigation of various artistic forms. Reforming provides clients with the chance to undergo personal development, articulate emotions, and cultivate new avenues for communication and self-

⁵⁰ BONDAR, Kateryna et al. Evaluating transactional distance and student engagement in HyFlex art therapy education amidst the war in Ukraine. In: *CTE 2023 Cloud Technologies in Education 2023*, 2023, pp. 164–177.

⁵¹ Based on: JACOBSON-LEVY, Mindy, and MILLER, Gretchen. Creative destruction and transformation in art and therapy: Reframing, reforming, reclaiming. In: *Art Therapy*, 39, 2022, pp. 194–202.

expression. Reclaiming refers to the process of restoring personal agency, identity, or elements of oneself through creative endeavours. It enables individuals to reconnect with their true selves, core values, and inherent strengths. Art therapy fosters a nurturing environment where clients can express themselves openly, heal from previous traumas, and regain control over their experiences and personal narratives.⁵²

Furthermore, through the expression of emotions, art therapy allows patients to express difficult emotions and thoughts that may be difficult to express in words. Through art, people experiencing trauma can find ways to externally visualise their inner experiences. Creative activities can have a relaxing effect and reduce stress levels. The creative process engages the mind and body, which can lead to a reduction in symptoms of anxiety and depression. Finally, art therapy can help individuals to rebuild their identity, which may have been shaken by war experiences. Creating art enables patients to discover and strengthen their inner strength and abilities. At the same time, as art therapy pioneer Margaret Naumburg has already pointed out, art is a universal language which can help communication between patient and therapist.⁵³ This can be particularly important in the case of people who have difficulty verbally expressing their experiences. In such cases it is not the capturing of a particular event that comes to the fore but the human factor, the transfer of emotion from the artist who has experienced a tragic event, to the viewer. It is worth noting that in contemporary artistic war photographs, emotions are widely represented through landscape and inanimate objects – military equipment or ordinary objects in an unusual perspective. We see in this a certain allusion to the principles on which traditional Japanese art is built, namely the indirect transmission of human emotions and impressions through nature and inanimate objects. This approach encourages the viewer to co-create and evoke their own emotions.

Conclusions

The transformation of exhibitions in war-torn Ukraine as of 2024 reflects a complex interplay between preservation, adaptation and innovation in response to the ongoing conflict. The Russian invasion has inflicted severe damage on Ukraine's cultural heritage, leading to the destruction and looting of numerous historical monuments and museum collections. Despite these challenges, Ukraine's cultural institutions have shown resilience and adaptability, finding new ways to present and protect cultural assets. The war has prompted a re-evaluation of exhibition practices, emphasizing inclusion and socialization through art. There is a growing focus on decolonization, with museums shifting away from showcasing Russian culture and instead highlighting Ukrainian and other international works. This shift is accompanied by an increased interest in contemporary art forms, such as photography, which offer a resilient and reproducible medium suited to the current circumstances. Furthermore, the conflict has accelerated the need for accessibility in museology, addressing the needs of people with disabilities resulting from both pre-existing conditions and war-related injuries. The integration of universal design principles and digital technologies is becoming crucial to ensure that cultural experiences are available to a broader audience. Art therapy emerges as a significant tool in this context, supporting individuals affected by war trauma.

The therapeutic potential of art extends beyond traditional methods, helping individuals process emotions and rebuild identities. Through exhibitions, Ukraine not only preserves its

⁵² BONDAR et al., *Evaluating transactional...*, p. 166.

⁵³ NAUMBURG, Margaret. *Psychoneurotic art...*

cultural heritage but also uses art as a medium for healing and resilience. As Ukraine rebuilds, the lessons learned from this period may lead to lasting changes in how cultural institutions operate, fostering a more inclusive and adaptive environment that embraces both historical preservation and contemporary artistic expression. This transformative journey underscores the power of art as a catalyst for social cohesion and recovery, even amidst the devastation of war.

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