

2025

# Navigating the War as Artists in Ukraine: A Practical Resource



Image on the cover:  
Kinder Album, *Ecocide*, watercolor on paper, 2023. From UMCA  
(Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection

## Contents

4	<b>Foreword</b>
6	<b>Special Thanks</b>
8	<b>Introduction</b>
12	<b><u>Vision and Methodology</u></b>
13	Data collection methods
14	<b><u>Life and Work Under War Threat and Occupation</u></b>
14	Challenges in the Territories Under Military Attack
20	Life Under Occupation
25	Leaving the Occupation
27	Documenting Threats
32	<b><u>Section 2: Career Challenges / Supporting Mental Health / Finding Resources</u></b>
32	How to Work During Wartime
38	Mental Health — How to Take Care of Yourself as an Artist
50	Finding Resources
52	<b><u>Section 3: Evacuation</u></b>
52	How to Leave the War-Torn Country
53	Evacuation and Relocation for Artists
53	Artists who Emigrated from Ukraine and Try to Maintain Their Artistic Work Abroad
56	How to Evacuate Works
62	<b><u>Section 4: Art, Resistance, and Activism</u></b>
62	Artists Joining the Armed Forces
67	Digital Activism in Times of War
72	<b><u>Section 5: Professional and Public Representation / Boycott / Dealing with Smear Campaigns</u></b>
81	Decolonization and the Status of Artists from Postcolonial Countries
86	Aspects of Cooperation Abroad
90	<b>Conclusion</b>

# Foreword

In times of crisis such as war, solidarity should be a reciprocal practice. Those in danger or threatened need help and support, but they can also share their experiences and lessons learned about how to survive a crisis. Crises increase our need for collective action, self-organization, caring for others, and finding ways to support each other.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine—first in Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions in 2014, and then the full-scale invasion in 2022—triggered a national crisis. Shared and individual traumatic experiences, dangers and threats have forced Ukrainian society to adopt new strategies of existence. Artists, in turn, have changed their approaches to life and work.

*Navigating the War as Artists in Ukraine: A Practical Resource* is a collection of lessons learned about staying safe in a full-scale war developed in consultation with artists who have lived through the reality of war in Ukraine. We began working on this publication in 2024, two years after the full-scale Russian invasion began, when the experience of living in crisis had become somewhat routine for the society. Drawing on sociological research methods and the experiences of artists who have found themselves in new circumstances in the midst of war, *Navigating the War as Artists in Ukraine: A Practical Resource* is a project by Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) NGO inspired by the Artists at Risk Connection's (ARC) *Safety Guide for Artists*.

Read:

the *Safety Guide for Artists*

[artistsatriskconnection.org/guide/safety-guide-for-artists](https://artistsatriskconnection.org/guide/safety-guide-for-artists)

This publication is based on open-source data, research, conversations, and personal observations of the processes taking place in the Ukrainian art and culture sectors under pressure from the Russian invasion and war. Created by people who are working despite regular Russian airstrikes, power outages, emotional pressure from the loss of loved ones, and growing social insecurity, this publication also serves as a tool to document Russia's military pressure on Ukraine, which is revealing itself in all spheres of public and private life and stimulates various forms of resistance.



↑ Danylo Movchan, *Stop*, watercolor on paper, 2022. From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection

# Special Thanks

We are sincerely grateful to everyone who contributed to the project with their thoughts, words, advice, and deeds: Yuliia Fediv who led the initial research; project sociologist Kateryna Zagryvenko and MZ Research Hub; artists and curators who contributed to the publication; Tetyana Filevska, Creative Director of the Ukrainian Institute; the Institute's team who shared their experiences and advice for the text; and psychologist Yuliia Bashlakova.

Visit the websites of our friend organizations:

[↗ARC](#), [↗MOCA NGO](#), [↗Wartime Art Archive](#), [↗UMCA](#),  
[↗Ukrainian Institute](#), [↗Raphael Lemkin Society](#), [↗HeMo: Ukrainian Heritage Monitoring Lab](#)

Thank you to Artists at Risk Connection (ARC)'s Executive Director Julie Trébault and ARC's Regional Representative for Ukraine Oleksandra Yakubenko for sharing their valuable resource, the *Artists Safety Guide*, as well as for connecting MOCA NGO with Ukrainian artists and cultural workers, recipients of ARC's emergency and resilience grants as well as the cultural leaders who contributed to the preliminary research for the project:

Elmira Ablyalimova  
Kateryna Lysovenko  
Anatoliy Levchenko  
Pavlo Makov  
Yuliia Manukian  
Natalia Matsenko  
Clemens Poole  
Max Robotov  
Stanislav Turina  
Tamara Turliun  
Tetyana Filevska

Vision and curating:

MOCA NGO team (Yuliia Hnat, Olga Balashova, Ilya Zabolotnyi),  
and Lisa Korneichuk

Edited by

Lisa Korneichuk

Translation and proofreading by

Les Vynogradov

Designed by

Ostap Yashchuk

Illustrations for the publication are courtesy of the artists,  
Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art (UMCA) collection based  
on the Wartime Art Archive and artists from the Artists at Risk  
Connection (ARC) support programs.





1

“Over 10,200 civilians have died since the start of Russia’s invasion, including one child who died in captivity – UN,” Suspilne Novyny, accessed December 17, 2024, [suspilne.media/658596-pond-10-200-civilnih-zag-inulo-vid-pocatku-vtorgnenna-rosii-zokremadna-ditina-pomerla-v-poloni-oon/](https://suspilne.media/658596-pond-10-200-civilnih-zag-inulo-vid-pocatku-vtorgnenna-rosii-zokremadna-ditina-pomerla-v-poloni-oon/).

2

“Over 700,000 Ukrainian children have been taken to Russia,” Current Time, accessed December 17, 2024, [www.currenttime.tv/a/v-rossiyu-vyvezli-bolee-700-ty-syach-ukrainskih-dety/32527102.html](https://www.currenttime.tv/a/v-rossiyu-vyvezli-bolee-700-ty-syach-ukrainskih-dety/32527102.html).

3

“Find and bring abducted Ukrainian children back home,” Bring Kids Back, accessed December 17, 2024, [bringkidsback.org.ua/](https://bringkidsback.org.ua/).

4

“The World Bank and Ukraine: Laying the Groundwork for Reconstruction in the Midst of War,” World Bank, accessed December 17, 2024, [www.worldbank.org/en/results/2023/11/30/the-world-bank-and-ukraine-laying-the-groundwork-for-reconstruction-in-the-midst-of-war](https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2023/11/30/the-world-bank-and-ukraine-laying-the-groundwork-for-reconstruction-in-the-midst-of-war).

5

“Damaged Cultural Sites in Ukraine Verified by UNESCO,” UNESCO, accessed December 17, 2024, [unesco.org/en/articles/damaged-cultural-sites-ukraine-verified-unesco?hub=66116](https://unesco.org/en/articles/damaged-cultural-sites-ukraine-verified-unesco?hub=66116).

# Introduction

Following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the country faced enormous social upheaval:

Approximately 6.5 million Ukrainians became refugees abroad, including about 1.2 million in Russia. More than 3 million people remained in the temporarily occupied territories where some citizens were forced to obtain Russian passports.

According to various estimates, more than 2 million Ukrainians have lost their homes as a result of Russian attacks.

Thousands of people have been killed or injured, but the exact figures remain classified due to martial law. A significant number of casualties are civilians, including children.<sup>1</sup>

Since February 24, 2022, Russia has been forcibly removing Ukrainian children from the occupied territories. Russian officials estimate that 700,000 Ukrainian children have been taken into Russia—effectively, they have been transferred by force.<sup>2</sup> The Ukrainian Bring Kids Back project documented 19,546 cases of illegal deportation and transfer of children from Ukraine.<sup>3</sup>

According to the World Bank, the proportion of Ukrainians living in poverty increased from 5.5% to 24.1% in 2022, pushing an additional 7.1 million people into poverty and setting back 15 years of progress.<sup>4</sup>

Although there is no accurate data on the loss of artworks, numerous museums have reported significant damage and loss of exhibits due to shelling and the removal of valuables from collections in the occupied territories.

According to UNESCO, 457 cultural heritage sites in Ukraine have been damaged since February 24, 2022, including 143 religious sites, 231 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, 32 museums, 33 monuments, 17 libraries, and one archive.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, according to the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine, since the beginning of the invasion in 2022, Russian forces have damaged or destroyed 1,179 cultural heritage sites and 2,109 cultural infrastructure sites.<sup>6</sup> The team of the independent initiative Ukrainian Heritage Monitoring Lab

6

“Cultural Heritage Sites Damaged in Ukraine Due to Russian Aggression,” Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine, accessed December 17, 2024, [mcsc.gov.ua/news/1179-obyektiv-kulturnoyi-spadshhy-ny-postrazhdaly-v-ukrayini-cherez-rosijsku-agresiyu/](https://mcsc.gov.ua/news/1179-obyektiv-kulturnoyi-spadshhy-ny-postrazhdaly-v-ukrayini-cherez-rosijsku-agresiyu/).

7

Information was shared by ARC’s Regional Representative for Ukraine Oleksandra Yakubenko in an interview with MOCA NGO on December 10, 2024.

8

Impact Report of the MOCA NGO, March 2022–March 2023, Ukrainian Emergency Art Fund, accessed December 18, 2024, [drive.google.com/file/d/1WazmEbOT4N-0STEXeRIHs-3H6uyt3Hts-/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WazmEbOT4N-0STEXeRIHs-3H6uyt3Hts-/view?usp=sharing).

9

“The Russian Federation’s Escalating Commission of Genocide in Ukraine: A Legal Analysis,” New Lines Institute, accessed December 17, 2024, [newlinesinstitute.org/rules-based-international-order/genocide/the-russian-federations-escalating-commission-of-genocide-in-ukraine-a-legal-analysis/](https://newlinesinstitute.org/rules-based-international-order/genocide/the-russian-federations-escalating-commission-of-genocide-in-ukraine-a-legal-analysis/).

(HeMo Lab) has researched and documented 784 cultural heritage sites affected by Russian attacks.

According to data from Artists at Risk Connection (ARC), between 2022 and 2024, ARC received 3,145 requests for emergency and resilience grants and provided direct assistance to 1,261 Ukrainian artists and their dependents. The majority of these artists remain in Ukraine—73% under the Emergency Programme and 92% under the Resilience Programme—while the rest have relocated abroad. ARC’s data also reveals that more than half of the supported artists are women (56% in emergency support and 58% in sustainability grants), with 1.6% identifying as LGBTQIA+. Geographically, beneficiaries are primarily concentrated in Kyiv (36%) and other regional centers (42%), with support extending to areas like Odesa, Kharkiv, Dnipro, and Lviv.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Impact Report of the Museum of Contemporary Art NGO, from March 2022 to March 2023, the Ukrainian Emergency Art Fund (UEAF) initiative received and processed 2,418 support requests and provided assistance to 894 cultural professionals and artists. Additionally, between March 2022 and December 2024, UEAF, in partnership with institutions such as The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the International Renaissance Foundation, the Peace for Art Charitable Foundation, and the InterAKT initiative, launched scholarship programs from three to six months. These programs were designed to support artists and cultural professionals, helping them maintain their professional activity and ensuring the significant impact of their work. A total of 69 scholarship recipients were supported.<sup>8</sup>

In May 2022, the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights published a report providing sufficient grounds to believe that Russia engaged in direct and public incitement to commit genocide. In July 2023, they updated the report titled “The Russian Federation’s Escalating Commission of Genocide in Ukraine: A Legal Analysis.”<sup>9</sup> The updated document expands on previous conclusions, asserting that the Russian Federation bears state responsibility for violating the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide during its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

In the spring of 2023, an international group of lawyers, commissioned by the European Parliament’s Committee on Culture,

"Protecting Cultural Heritage from Armed Conflicts in Ukraine and Beyond," Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, 2023, accessed December 18, 2024, [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/733120/IPOL\\_STU\(2023\)733120\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/733120/IPOL_STU(2023)733120_EN.pdf).

"Countering the Erasure of Cultural Identity in War and Peace," Council of Europe, accessed December 17, 2024, [rm.coe.int/countering-the-erasure-of-cultural-identity-in-war-and-peace/1680b00420](http://rm.coe.int/countering-the-erasure-of-cultural-identity-in-war-and-peace/1680b00420).

presented a study establishing that cultural heritage has become a direct military target for ideological reasons by the aggressor.<sup>10</sup> In June 2024, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution clearly stating that the destruction of cultural heritage is evidence of an intent to destroy Ukrainian national identity.<sup>11</sup> The systematic and large-scale attacks on Ukrainian cultural sites and cultural figures, as well as the evidence gathered from documenting such attacks, indicate that Ukrainian culture is a direct target of the enemy in this war.

This publication arises from the need to share valuable experiences of navigating crises with those who need it now, as well as with those who want to prepare for an uncertain future. Divided into thematic sections, it addresses issues of personal safety and survival, the work of artists during wartime, collaboration with international colleagues, and the civic role of individuals in times when life becomes obstructed on all fronts. However, the experience of war cannot be fully encapsulated by a set of instructions, no matter how comprehensive.

A crucial part of this publication consists of case studies and the voices of artists—personal accounts by individuals who have faced various challenges during the full-scale war and continue to endure the crisis. Their experiences demonstrate that an event of this magnitude, which transforms the world on multiple levels, compels people to act beyond prescribed guidelines. At times, unconventional, counterintuitive decisions and groping in the dark become effective survival strategies.

The goal of this publication is to compile the most comprehensive list of dangers and challenges and ways to counteract them and to show that surviving a crisis can mean a variety of, sometimes contradictory, decisions and actions. War is characterized by unpredictability, and some of the experiences described here may seem irrelevant to the narrow concept of "safety." One of this publication's objectives is to expand the understanding of what "safety" entails—stretching beyond physical self-protection to include the safety of a community's culture under attack.

Ultimately, in conditions of high political turbulence, this publication becomes a valuable resource of crisis experiences for artists who observe global instability from a place of relative safety.



↑ Alina Yakubenko, *The Horrors of War*, ink on paper, 2024. From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection



# Vision and Methodology

The project's concept and vision are based on two interconnected levels—internal and external—where the main challenges caused by the war unfold.

At the internal level, we focus on issues of personal survival and livelihoods at risk. This includes ensuring physical safety, supporting mental health, facilitating evacuation and securing access to basic resources. Professional challenges encompass preservation, relocation, and development of artistic practice. Additionally, we emphasize fostering civic engagement, collaborating with authorities, and encouraging participation in volunteer efforts and defense or humanitarian initiatives.

The external level focuses on the challenges faced by artists living outside Ukraine, particularly in maintaining and enhancing professional and cultural links. Key priorities include overcoming colonial frameworks and other forms of misrepresentation, addressing aspects of international collaborations, and countering disinformation. We also highlight the risks of “identity ghettos” in the arts, emphasizing the importance of keeping the Ukrainian context central while resisting cultural assimilation and safeguarding indigenous heritage. Attentive integration of Ukrainian experience into international and cultural practices is envisioned as a foundation for creating a tool that empowers artists to navigate crises efficiently.

For the research that underpinned the project, we examined the diverse experiences of Ukrainian art professionals impacted by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Drawing on these case studies, we have compiled practical recommendations for artists in crisis.

## Data collection methods:

**In-depth interviews:** Conducted with 11 selected arts professionals whose stories reflect the current challenges and resilience of the Ukrainian art community using open-ended questions to encourage interviewees to freely express their thoughts and feelings.

**Focus groups:** Facilitated group discussions using scripts to uncover shared experiences, challenges, and the solutions artists devised while adapting to new realities.

**Questionnaire:** The Artists at Risk Connection (ARC) distributed a questionnaire to 120 artists who received Emergency and Resilience grants from ARC to identify key challenges and adaptive strategies during the crisis.

Recognizing the value of diverse perspectives, we intentionally involved participants with unique experiences of surviving and working in crisis conditions, both in Ukraine and abroad.



↑ Katya Libkind, *Are You Safe?*, graphite pencil and pastel on paper, 2022. From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection

# Life and Work Under War Threat and Occupation

## Challenges in the Territories Under Military Attack

War has brought many difficulties into the lives of Ukrainian artists. While the war impacts all civilians and poses dangers that are beyond individual control, since 2022 we have discerned several common challenges for artists who have remained in Ukraine and present strategies for survival.

**Threats to physical security.** The threat of air, missile, and drone attacks has been present in all Ukrainian cities since the first day of the invasion. In the regions bordering with Russia, these attacks have been exacerbated by constant artillery and guided missile bombardments, and the high speed of missile attacks makes it impossible to respond to the danger in time. But even in regions far from the front line, the risk of attack remains, as Russian troops often target civilian infrastructure. This creates psychological pressure and increases anxiety in society. For cultural processes, these challenges mean that many events and activities are forced to take place in bomb shelters or risk being disrupted at any time by air strikes.

### Quote:

Artist Viktoriia Slavinska:

“There are no shelters in my city. It is absolutely impossible to save your physical body in a typical Ukrainian town. The advice from local chat rooms at the time of rocket attacks was ‘the rule of two walls and prayer.’ So, you trust God and hope that everything will end soon.”

### Tools:

WiRED Health and First Aid Training Program for Ukraine

[wiredinternational.org/global-health/wired-releases-health-and-first-aid-training-for-the-people-of-ukraine](https://wiredinternational.org/global-health/wired-releases-health-and-first-aid-training-for-the-people-of-ukraine)

### Case:

Artist Nikita Kadan remained in Kyiv when the full-scale war broke out, staying at the underground Voloshyn Gallery in Kyiv, which had served as a shelter during the Soviet era. He moved there on the third day of the invasion, where he and several other artists hid from the air raids. While living in the gallery, he continued to work and document what was happening around him, even putting together a small exhibition of the artworks that were in the gallery’s vault at the time. The artist reported on events in Ukraine to his network of artistic contacts abroad.

### More:

More about Nikita Kadan’s experience in The Art Angle podcast here (in English)

[news.artnet.com/multimedia/the-art-angle-podcast-ukraine-2086454](https://news.artnet.com/multimedia/the-art-angle-podcast-ukraine-2086454)

### Case:

Artist Pavlo Makov who represented Ukraine at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022 with his solo project “Fountain of Exhaustion” returned to Kharkiv, a large city on the north-eastern border with Russia, after the exhibition. For Makov, engagement with and close observation of the social context of Ukraine is an important factor in continuing his work despite living under constant aerial bombardment and danger.

### Quote:

Pavlo Makov:

“When we returned home, things immediately became a little easier. [...] Our dacha was under occupation, but it was liberated in September 2022. We were delighted to be back on our land, our garden, where we had lived for 25 years, almost from the beginning of spring to the end of fall [...] And then we were prohibited from going there: although there are no hostilities there, it is very close [to Russia]. So this positive thing was taken away from our lives. And this feeling of danger is hard to get used to. But on the other hand, what can you do?”

### Tools:

Security Guide in Times of War

[osvitoria.media/experience/yak-vryatuvatyts-bezpekovyj-gid-pid-chas-vijny/](https://osvitoria.media/experience/yak-vryatuvatyts-bezpekovyj-gid-pid-chas-vijny/)

**Economic difficulties.** War means unpredictable expenses: food and medicine, evacuation services for you and your family, fuel, etc. This is particularly painful for artists who are an economically vulnerable social group. The war dramatically reduced the number of commercial orders, commissions, sales, and projects inside Ukraine, while businesses have reduced their

marketing budgets, affecting the prospects of artistic collaborations with brands. The solution for many creatives has been to look abroad for funding and support—commissions from foreign collectors, participation in projects with international institutions, and commercial work with foreign companies.

**Quote:**

Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:

“It seems to me that young artists, very young artists who have not yet found their artistic language and are still searching for it, have it the worst. For example, the way I survived before people started buying my art in Ukraine was to work part-time on commercials or give workshops. This allowed me to endure the tough years of establishing an art career. But now, all these side gigs for artists in Ukraine have disappeared; they no longer exist. Some find their voice quite quickly, but artists are like fruits: they ripen at different times. And this time of ripening needs to be endured somehow. The circumstances now are incredibly difficult and challenging for younger and older artists alike. It’s especially hard for older people, as it is even harder for them to change their place of residence. When you have an established way of life you’ve been dreaming about and building for years—a studio, an apartment, a garden, a family—it’s very hard to leave it all behind and adapt [abroad].”

**Logistical difficulties.** Participating in or organizing exhibitions and cultural events abroad is complicated by security issues, curfews, and logistical constraints. International travel and mobility for artists is made difficult by the no-fly zone over Ukraine, which restricts all international travel to overland only, with professional travel taking 24 hours or more. Visa restrictions are also a problem as embassies in Ukraine do not issue visas due to martial law, forcing artists to travel to neighboring countries with visa-free entry such as Poland, Romania, etc. Border restrictions and security issues also hinder the mobility of artists.

**Quote:**

Artist Volodymyr Rainhearth:

“The restrictions on mobility hurt me a lot. During the occupation, I lost the opportunity to participate in interesting projects, and now it’s the same but for foreign projects. I did manage to leave once, though, because I was a project curator abroad, but you have to make a lot of effort

and it’s not a given that you will be allowed to leave, even if you have permission from the acting Minister of Culture.”

**Divided artistic communities.** With many artists emigrating, the gap in the experiences and perceptions of the artistic community has widened. This results in both the practical difficulties of organizing joint projects and events and the deeper deterioration in relationships, connections, and fragile networks that have been weakened by distance and the different realities that artists face and work in.

**Quote:**

Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:

“Those who stayed experience and change in one way, while we experience and change in another. Some feel resentment toward those who left. It’s a difficult topic to discuss because, obviously, it’s harder for them there with the rockets and everything. But on the other hand, it’s easier because they don’t have to adapt to new contexts. For some reason, there’s a widespread perception that we’re living our best lives here, like it’s a luxury hotel, with grants and all that. [...] Yet many artists have eventually returned because not everyone can withstand the period of adaptation and the feeling that you’re a complete nobody here. Nobody knows you, and you have to tell a new story about yourself and build your life from scratch.”

**Quote:**

Artist Pavlo Makov:

“When [artists] work abroad for a long time, they [lose] a sense of the reality that is happening to us. Since I’ve been abroad a lot, I can say that a big gap is constantly widening between us, Ukraine and the West. And the bridge over this gap is getting harder and harder to cross.”

**More:**

More about Pavlo Makov’s “Fountain of Exhaustion” project here (in English)

[↗2022.ukrainianpavilion.org/](https://2022.ukrainianpavilion.org/)

The gap also widens at the gender level: Female artists have more opportunities to travel and seek collaborations abroad, while the mobility of male artists is limited by the state travel ban for all men subject to mobilization. Thus, male artists’ opportunities to work are severely limited, creating additional psychological pressure.



**Increased vulnerability of marginalized artists.** Artists from marginalized communities (e.g. LGBTQ+, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities) have experienced increased vulnerability and are more likely to face discrimination or lack of support. The war has exacerbated social inequalities, making it more difficult for these artists to access resources and safe spaces. Depending on the context and proximity to the occupied areas, different support strategies can be helpful or harmful. For example, better visibility of marginalized groups in peacetime is an asset in a democratic society; in the context of occupation or potential occupation, however, such visibility can be a direct threat. Nevertheless, it is through horizontal solidarity networks that vulnerable groups at risk can receive the most support.

**Tools:**

Wartime Safety Guide for People with Disabilities, Children, and the Elderly

[bf.in.ua/u-voiennoy-chas/](https://bf.in.ua/u-voiennoy-chas/)

LGBT Human Rights Center Nash Svit

[gay.org.ua/](https://gay.org.ua/)

**Case:**

In the spring of 2022, Stanislav Turina and Katya Libkind, artists and co-founders of [atelienormalno](#), an inclusive studio for people with and without Down syndrome, decided to volunteer at a psychiatric hospital in Kyiv, helping hospital staff to care for patients, washing and shaving them, and providing them with leisure activities and art therapy (here and below are quotes from Stanislav Turina's interview on September 12, 2024).

**Quote:**

Artist Stanislav Turina:

"Every few days we asked each other the question [about leaving]. We had no intention of leaving, so we stayed. Before the invasion, we created a Telegram group of close people and continued communicating: 'Who is staying?' It was like a roll call. Then, when the invasion began, we asked each other who stayed in Kyiv to help. We hardly saw each other, since we lived in different neighborhoods. It was dangerous to travel around Kyiv then, we had no means of transportation. We were in different city districts, different sides of the river, different suburbs. Some of us were even under occupation. But we remained in contact. We decided to stay, thanks to advance preparations and a pamphlet on what to do in case of war and emergency. [...] On January 22, I saw a video about

Debaltseve on ArmyInform TV and realized that Ukrainians would fight to the end. This film made me realize that the Ukrainian army has its pantheon of people of honor and dignity, of bravery. And they ended up leading everyone else. Although I don't know their names. It's just a 'cloud' without specific personalities."

**More:**

Stas Turina's story in BLOK Magazine (in English)

[blokmagazine.com/profile-stas-turina](https://blokmagazine.com/profile-stas-turina)



→ Kateryna Lysovenko, Untitled, oil on canvas, 2022. From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection

Another form of support can be professional solidarity: in 2024, Katya Buchatska, artist and tutor at the inclusive studio Workshop of Possibilities, invited her fellow artists with autism spectrum disorders and Down syndrome to create a collaborative project for the Venice Biennale. The work “Best Wishes,” which reflects on relationships after a full-scale invasion through the eyes of neurodiverse people, represented Ukraine at the international exhibition and became an example of using art as a platform for professional solidarity and directing one’s resources in favor of social responsibility and collective interest. An important indicator of solidarity and collaboration based on peer-to-peer principles was ensuring that all project participants could attend the exhibition opening in Venice with their accompanying persons. This was made possible thanks to the support of the Ukrainian Emergency Art Fund and Teiger Foundation.

## Life Under Occupation

It has become virtually impossible to gather reliable advice for safety and security from the Russian-occupied territory. Ukrainian artists had different experiences under Russian occupation: Some managed to survive until the Ukrainian army liberated their city; some found a way to leave; and some were imprisoned by the occupation authorities. Self-preservation is the priority for those remaining in the occupied territories, which sometimes means that artists have to sacrifice their creative work.

In conditions of occupation, civilians have to focus on safety and physical survival—find the safest place available and stock up on food, water, and medicine.

**Quote:**

Yuliia Manukian, an art critic from Kherson, was in the city when the Russian army entered:

“The occupation was a horrible experience. We spent the first two weeks looking for food. First, we had to recover and accept this terrible reality. Everything began to disappear: food, medicine, and basic necessities. [...] I did not let my husband and son out of the house because I did not understand what the Russians could do to them—the attitude towards women and girls was slightly better. [...] This fear of starvation was total: if there is no medicine and your husband has hypertension, you

realize that if you don’t get it somewhere, he will simply die.”

**Quote:**

Anatoliy Levchenko, director of the Mariupol Drama Theater, was in Mariupol during the fighting in the city:

“In May 2022, the Russian military took me to the prison in Mariupol. I also met our military there. That is to say, political prisoners, civilians, and the military were all kept next to each other.”

Try to protect yourself from risk by deleting any documents, files, and social media posts that could incite violence against you or your family. If you have social networks where you have written anything on political issues that could be considered threatening or hostile to the occupying forces, it is not enough to simply log out of your accounts on your gadgets. You must delete the account. Even if you have deleted the content from social networks, it remains in the phone’s memory and it is this folder that needs to be deleted.

**Quote:**

Anatoliy Levchenko:

“I was imprisoned because of my activities in social networks and performances of my theater. Although I told the Russian military during interrogations: ‘I never agitated. I never engaged in propaganda.’ In the end, they admitted it themselves—they downloaded all my videos from Facebook and said: ‘We didn’t find any elements of a crime.’ But I was still imprisoned because of my Facebook posts: ‘You wrote that Putin is not a good person. And that is an insult to the first state official.’”

**Quote:**

Artist Serhii Kovachov:

“A few months before the full-scale war, we received quite a large number of copies of our art project. [...] But unfortunately, we could not keep them all. Under occupation, the fact that your work or activities are somehow connected with Ukraine, even the Ukrainian language, is enough to force you into becoming a ghost. It’s better not to share it even with friends. That’s why all we managed to save were a few copies of our art book, which we managed to put in a parcel in a bag of clothes. If your art practice is connected with Ukraine, it is better to hide it as best you can. I carefully archived such information on

my hard drive, password-protected it, and hid it deep in folders that would not arouse suspicion. Artists are the first the occupiers try to oppress and break morally.”

---

**Tools:**

Digital Security Tips

[yak.dslua.org](http://yak.dslua.org)

Digital Security Knowledge Base

[nadiyno.org/category/baza-znan](http://nadiyno.org/category/baza-znan)

Avoid keeping photos, audio, or video recordings made during the occupation, even if you really want to show what life is like in the occupied territory. If you have communicated with someone through various messaging apps, understand that the occupation forces can check your correspondence at any time. When communicating with others, avoid political topics and assessments of the occupation authorities, and limit your communication to everyday topics.

---

**Quote:**

Anatoliy Levchenko:

“To communicate during the occupation, buy the cheapest phone, a Russian SIM card, and register it. It is also better to get a Yandex [Russian tech company] e-mail. During the occupation, you should not try to be a hero. It is better to imitate a normal Russian citizen. You should use this phone to look for contacts in Ukraine and abroad to leave. You should take this phone when leaving because Russians check phones at checkpoints.”

---

**Quote:**

Artist Volodymyr Rainhearth:

“We were lucky that the electricity in Kherson was not cut off because we are 12 kilometers from the front, but we always have to have a backup plan in case of shelling and network failure, so we have power banks, a charging station, and three different internet connections in case one goes down. During the occupation we used a VPN connection, it helped us navigate [in the occupied territory], the VPN was verified by volunteers from Kherson who know what works and what doesn’t, and it’s still used by those who stayed on the left bank [currently occupied by Russians].”

Gather information from both the occupier’s sources and the country’s official ones. However, it is important to not fully trust

any single source of information without attempting to verify it. Due to the lack of access to the occupied territories, Ukrainian state sources may be poorly informed, while both sides may use information for their interests. While under occupation, do not subscribe to official government channels. To find information online, use search engines, ideally in incognito mode. Be sure to unsubscribe from government channels before crossing checkpoints manned by occupation forces. Clear your search history on browsers and delete your social media accounts.

Do not subscribe to Ukrainian channels, Ukrainian YouTube, and social media. To get updates from the free areas, it is better to search in incognito mode on search engines each time and then clear your search history. When you start evacuating, clear your browser history and social media searches.

---

**Quote:**

Anatoliy Levchenko:

“If you end up in prison or a camp, you should try to contact your relatives in Ukraine or abroad, tell them where you are, ask them to look for you, and put you on exchange lists. Sometimes, for a bribe, the camp guards will allow you to make a video for your relatives or to call them.”

Be careful when communicating with neighbors: do not discuss your political views or how you feel about the occupying authorities.

---

**Quote:**

Yuliia Manukian:

“To be honest, an artist under occupation should keep a low profile—that is the only useful advice. But people can’t do that, especially those who are very active, so you have to hide everything every day, clean it up. For me, it has just become the norm. If you can’t help it, you have to be very careful, keep quiet. Don’t talk to anyone. No one, not even close ones, because people close to you or your friends can be caught and questioned—you don’t want to endanger others. If you do something, do it quietly.”

---

**Quote:**

Volodymyr Rainhearth:

I continued to create artworks during the occupation, it was thanks to honoraria from collaborative projects that we were able to survive this period. Of course, I hid my

works, worked under a pseudonym, stored my files in a cloud storage, and tried not to show up anywhere.”

**Quote:**

Anatoliy Levchenko:

“Occupation is not a place for heroism. If you worked as a plumber or a janitor, for example, that is not collaboration. But as soon as you cooperate with the authorities and get a managerial role in the occupation, it is collaboration with the enemy. The same applies to educational and political activities, even if you are a school or kindergarten teacher. If you don’t have money, sign up as a caretaker, you won’t get prosecuted for it.”

At present, the Russians are forcing people in the occupied territories to accept Russian citizenship. According to the law of the Russian Federation on the "incorporation" of new regions into its territory, Ukrainian passports are valid until 2026. If you are leaving the occupied territories, a Russian passport may be useful, so you should take it with you if possible. If you have been issued an occupation passport after 2023, Ukrainian law considers such an ID to have been issued to you under duress.

Living under occupation requires collective action. Try to establish a support network that will help with domestic and urgent issues: find water, food, or medicine. Try to connect with family and friends nearby, and contact people you know in the non-occupied territories.

**Quote:**

In occupied Kherson, it was important for Yuliia Manukian to keep in touch with like-minded people, to share traumatic events, and to resist through culture.

“When the protests started, it lifted us up a bit. We were very brave, we didn’t realize what it meant. It gave us a sense of freedom, an unprecedented joy, even though we knew it could end at any moment.

For the first few weeks, no one met anyone because we were busy surviving. And then I had an idea: why not set up an art residency in the occupation? We weren’t scared yet, we didn’t see that other people’s houses had already been searched and torture chambers had begun to appear. We didn’t know that yet. Back then, looking at the protests [against the occupation], we had a feeling that something could be done. I invited five people and we found a local

artist’s studio in the basement, an underground apartment. We didn’t meet very often: we could only see each other in the morning because after 2 PM the city died, it was dangerous. Some people just couldn’t physically get there because they had to cross the occupiers’ checkpoints, which was scary and risky. But we met and the artists worked. Thank God the occupiers didn’t get to them, all our residents either left or survived the occupation.”

**More:**

About Yuliia Manukian’s experience in The Guardian (in English):

[↗suspilne.media/culture/386042-mistectvo-v-okupacii-kolonka-ulii-manukan-pro-opir-hersona](https://suspilne.media/culture/386042-mistectvo-v-okupacii-kolonka-ulii-manukan-pro-opir-hersona)

## Leaving the Occupation

Before you leave, learn as much as you can about the conditions for your departure: think about the route, choose a means of transport, and find out what you are and aren’t allowed to carry with you when leaving. Try to save as much money as possible for your departure.

**Quote:**

“You can take your hard drives. But you have to understand that there should be no Ukrainian or military content on them,” says Anatoliy Levchenko.

If you want to backup files from your digital art archive, it is better to use cloud storage.

**Quote:**

Yuliia Manukian:

“Miranda Bryant, a journalist from The Guardian, invited me and a colleague to write a diary about the occupation of Kherson. So, we did four big pieces without realizing the security risks we were facing, because even then [Russians] were already searching for journalists. I deleted files and hid my laptop, but it would have done no good—Russians would have found everything on the hard drive if they wanted to. When the Kherson City Council posted one of our publications on their social media, to which many collaborators were subscribed, we realized that we had to run away.

It was a miracle that I was not searched at the checkpoints. I deleted everything from my phone, but I forgot the Ukrainian banking app with the yellow and blue icon, so



I was lucky they didn't notice. You are supposed to delete everything, but out of ignorance I didn't delete posts from Facebook, I just closed the page. Later, in a conversation with local journalist Oleh Baturyn who was one of the first to be abducted from Kakhovka, I learned about the methods of luring—when occupiers invite people to a meeting through relatives or friends and arrest them.”

12

“People Are Most Afraid of Filtration”: The Path of Ukrainians through Belarus with Kolotylivka Checkpoint Closed” (in Ukrainian), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, accessed December 17, 2024, [radiosvoboda.org/a/shlyakh-ukrayint-siv-bez-kolotylivky-cherez-bilorus/33084449.html](https://radiosvoboda.org/a/shlyakh-ukrayint-siv-bez-kolotylivky-cherez-bilorus/33084449.html)

There are several routes to leave the occupied territories of Ukraine but the options depend on documents you have. The most common routes are through Russia, Belarus and on to the EU or directly to Ukraine. If you have a passport, you can travel through Belarus to Poland.

For those with only a Ukrainian ID or those who have lost their papers, the options are limited. They can only travel through Russia to third countries or to entry points to Ukraine where they'll have to undergo additional filtering and document checks by border guards from both sides. These stages are particularly difficult at Russian and Belarusian border crossings.<sup>12</sup>

**Quote:**

Anatoliy Levchenko:

“Today there are three exit corridors from the occupied territories of Ukraine. The first is through Russia to Lithuania and then to any EU country. This corridor is only for people with an ID or a passport. Lithuania will not let you without a valid passport. There are Russian buses to Lithuania from occupied Mariupol, Berdiansk, and [occupied parts of] Zaporizhzhia [region]: the average cost is \$200. If you have a problem with your documents, it is better to go through Rostov to South Ossetia, the Upper Lars crossing, so you can stay in Georgia or go to Turkey.

The third crossing is Kolotylivka-Pokrovske between Sumy and Belgorod regions. This is the largest, easiest, and cheapest way from the occupied territories. This crossing works only in one direction—for the return of Ukrainian citizens to Ukraine. Information on how the crossing works, what you need to take with you and what is forbidden can be found in specialized Telegram channels.” [This information is relevant as of October 2024 and should be verified]

Be prepared for your belongings, phone, and equipment to be checked by the military and special services on both sides of the border as you cross from the occupied territories. If possible, take money, contacts of people who can help you cross the checkpoints, and everything you need for a long trip.

**Quote:**

Anatoliy Levchenko:

“When I got out of prison and was able to contact my friends in Ukraine, they collected [money]. It is very difficult for a person without money to leave. That's why it's important to have a job during the occupation. It cost me 120,000 hryvnia [around \$3,000] to leave.”

**Checklist:**

A list of organizations that help people leave the occupied territories:

- [Проліска](#)
- [Helping to Leave](#)
- [Zmina](#)
- [East SOS](#)

## Documenting Threats

Since artists can face risks from many perpetrators and for various reasons, it is crucial to understand the nature of the threat against you.<sup>13</sup> You can do so more easily by familiarizing yourself with the kinds of risks experienced by other artists. Such an assessment requires asking yourself a number of questions, including:

What is the source of the threat? Who is threatening you? Is it a state or non-state agent?

Why are you being threatened?

How are you receiving threats? Is there anything you can do now to reduce the ability of the perpetrator to threaten you?

What is the threat? Could it escalate, and if so, how?

Has there been a pattern of threats over time?

Who is the threat directed at: only you, or also your family, colleagues, or other artists working on similar topics?

Is there anyone else you know personally or know of who has experienced a similar threat?

What is the likelihood that this threat can or will be put into action?

13

“New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders,” Protection International, 2009, p. 41.



---

If the threat is from a non-state actor, is there a possibility of protection or redress from the police or authorities? Or will involving law enforcement create greater challenges?

Answering these questions will allow you to determine more easily what types of assistance you should look for and can help you find relevant cases of artists at risk that might serve as a roadmap.

After conducting a threat analysis, your priority should be to document your threats wherever and whenever possible. When assessing your case, the number one request from a lawyer or human rights professional trying to help you will be for robust, thorough, and accurate evidence of you experiencing risk. The more information you can provide, the more swiftly they will be able to assess your case and activate assistance. Below are stages of risk, from non-physical kinds, including online and verbal harassment, all the way to imprisonment and torture.

**Documenting online harassment.** Save abusive emails, voicemails, and texts, take screenshots, and save hyperlinks of abusive content on social media. Documenting online abuse provides a record of what happened, tracks available information about the perpetrators, and alerts you and others to patterns of abuse and escalations.

---

**Tools:**

Online Harassment Field Manual, PEN America  
[onlineharassmentfieldmanual.pen.org](https://onlineharassmentfieldmanual.pen.org)

Make sure to save all relevant evidence and not just information that paints you in a favorable light. For example, if you contributed offensive dialogue or heated language to an online exchange that you're planning to document, be sure to include those aspects of the exchange along with the rest.

If your online harassment is repetitive, ongoing, or severe, consider creating a log to record specific information, including the following:

- date and time;
- type of electronic communication (direct message, posted image, social media comment, etc.);
- name of the platform;

- any available geolocation data;
- nature of the online incident (a threat of sexual violence, a racially motivated attack, etc.).

**Documenting physical harassment, threats, and attacks.**

As with all forms of risk, make sure you keep track of when it happens in a log, recording the date, time, place, manner of attack, and motivation if it can be determined. If the physical assault has left visible marks on your body, we strongly suggest taking photographs of yourself, logging the date and time they were taken, and storing these photos in a safe, accessible place such as cloud storage.

You should also take measures—as safely as possible—to document who the perpetrators are. If it is possible to take photographs, all the better, but we strongly advise against doing so if it might risk provoking the perpetrators. Instead, if you experience physical assault, you should take time afterward to write down all the identifying features of your attackers that you can recall, including their heights, appearance, voices, how many were present, and what they said.

Sometimes physical attacks can come from police and state agents themselves. Any evidence, including photographic evidence, of police mistreatment should be documented immediately upon your release, as soon as you have access to a method of documentation. These pictures can be part of a forensic report that can be presented in court and in front of international law institutions.

**Documenting arrest, detention, or imprisonment.** More than other threats, documenting arrest or imprisonment may require the support of family, peers, or colleagues. If you are arrested, make sure to keep track of:

- when and where the arrest occurred (time, place, location);
- why the arrest occurred—was there a warrant? If not, what was the context and cause for your arrest?
- who carried out the arrest;
- were there any witnesses?

If you are detained, do your best to identify the location of your detention as well as its duration, the circumstances, and the events that transpired during your detention. Sometimes you

may experience physical assault, even torture, during your detention. If so, make sure to keep track, as much as possible, of when, why, and how the assault occurred.

If at any point you are formally charged, make sure you or someone close to you can keep records of all legal documents related to your case. If you are called to court, keep track of which court, which judge is presiding, and which prosecutors are on your case. If you are formally sentenced and imprisoned, make sure to keep a record of your sentence on file.

Unfortunately, maintaining such records for yourself may be nearly impossible during the draining and demoralizing experience of navigating jails, court hearings, and prisons. But many legal systems allow you at least some form of communication with the outside world. If so, make sure to dispatch all relevant information to a trusted source, including an attorney and peers in your network.

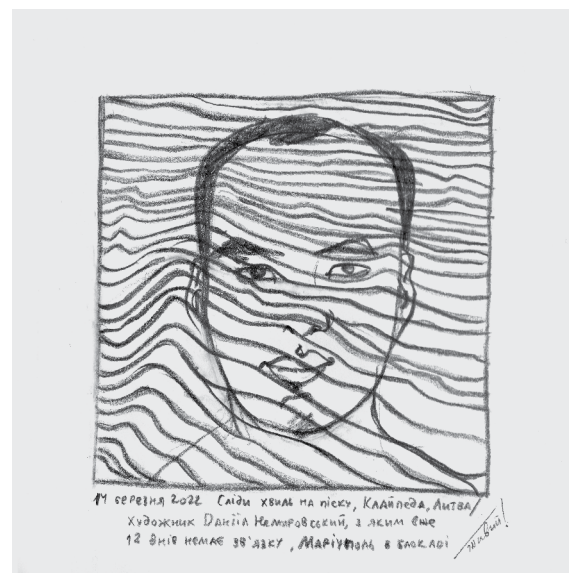
Sometimes such communications are not possible or are deliberately prevented by state agents. In such cases, it is crucial to have a safety network that can be mobilized to document your situation on your behalf. Make a security plan with your network, addressing the following points:

- If you are arrested, who will log relevant information?
- If jailed, who will monitor your jailing, keep records, and make decisions on issues such as bail and counsel?
- If you go through formal proceedings, make sure your legal team and/or network is keeping records of all court documents.

While navigating such legal proceedings can be immensely difficult, making the effort to maintain detailed records will increase the likelihood of receiving reprieve and justice down the line.



↑ Inga Levi, *9 March 2022* from *Double Exposure* series, graphite pencil on paper, 2022. From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection



↑ Inga Levi, *14 March 2022* from *Double Exposure* series, graphite pencil on paper, 2022. From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection

# Career Challenges / Supporting Mental Health / Finding Resources

## How to Work During Wartime

Over time, war transforms from an extreme event that destroys normality into a heavy routine that normalizes the burdens and difficulties of daily existence, turning dangers into an everyday backdrop. In addition to physical dangers, living through war has implications for work, career development, and the social existence of artists.

**Blackouts, power cuts, and destroyed infrastructure.** Frequent power outages and damage to infrastructure (e.g. heating and water systems) disrupt daily life and make it difficult for artists to work. These disruptions can affect artistic production, such as the ability to fire ceramics, work with light-sensitive materials, or access digital tools. Power and heat outages also impede studio work, adding another layer of financial burden for artists. To protect yourself from a complete power outage, consider purchasing a home energy storage device such as EcoFlow or Bluetti. Keep a few permanently charged power banks at home to stay connected during a prolonged power outage. Stock up on candles and flashlights for household needs. In the event of a total power outage, consider your safety on the road in the dark by purchasing reflective clothing.

**Quote:** Sculptor Oleksandr Rudenko:  
“My work is very dependent on electricity, so I pay maximum attention to it. Since the beginning of the war, when I had almost no resources, I used what I had—garbage, essentially—to create conditions for a normal life for me and my family. I am gradually improving the

alternative energy supply. I am studying the structure and construction of solar power panels (SPPs), I have completed a training course for IDPs and veterans, and I am improving my knowledge and experience through numerous specialized chats on social media. This knowledge gave me the impetus to build my own charging station with powerful, modern batteries (4\*280a LiFePo4) and save money thanks to my skills. Thanks to the financial support of ARC, I have already purchased the elements for the power supply system. My next plans are to buy several solar panels.”

**Quote:** Artist Ihor Kobelniuk:  
“During power outages, it’s crucial to ensure access to drinking water. Specialized storage containers are best suited for this purpose. It’s better to use containers of at least 20 liters [~5 gal.]. This allows you to make do for some time and cover various household needs such as washing dishes, taking a shower, or flushing the toilet. A portable camping shower powered by a rechargeable battery can also come in handy.”

**Tools:** How to Stay Online During the Blackouts  
[↗suspilne.media/771337-optovolokno-ne-panacea-ak-zalisatisa-z-internetom-pid-cas-blekautiv](https://suspilne.media/771337-optovolokno-ne-panacea-ak-zalisatisa-z-internetom-pid-cas-blekautiv)

**Cheklis:** How to Act During the Blackouts  
[↗visitukraine.today/blog/999/how-to-prepare-for-emergency-power-outages-detailed-instructions](https://visitukraine.today/blog/999/how-to-prepare-for-emergency-power-outages-detailed-instructions)

**Case:** Documenting the experience of living through extreme situations has inspired some artists to continue their creative work under difficult conditions. In 2023, artists Anna Ivanenko and Jenya Polosina of the studio seri/graph published a comic book *Blackout: Chronicles of Our Life During Russia’s War Against Ukraine* about how the society experienced the destruction of critical infrastructure.

**More:** About the comic book on Suspilne.Kultura (in Ukrainian)  
[↗suspilne.media/culture/491737-knizka-pro-blekaut-stvoruvayas-u-blekaut-u-kievi-prezentuut-komiks-pro-sprotiv-temravi](https://suspilne.media/culture/491737-knizka-pro-blekaut-stvoruvayas-u-blekaut-u-kievi-prezentuut-komiks-pro-sprotiv-temravi)



**Limited access to materials.** Due to disrupted supply chains, access to art materials has become a significant problem for many artists. This has become another challenge that can be addressed in a variety of ways: paying more attention to materials and tools at hand and thematizing them; exploring other available media such as digital art or performance, which require less complex means of production; and choosing new, unconventional materials.

In March 2022, artist Katya Buchatska was confronted with the virtual absence of paints in the art shops in Lviv:

“[...] Ukraine had been exporting most paints from Russia, and our own factories in Kharkiv and Chernihiv suffered from the war. Then it occurred to me that in addition to all the heavy losses that war brings, there are also smaller, more insignificant losses, niche losses, so to speak, inconspicuous ones, like the loss of paints by artists. I felt that I, a painter, had even been deprived of paint, and the only thing that remained was Ukraine, its land and soil. And paint is actually made from soil. As soon as the Kyiv region was liberated, I went to collect soil in Irpin, Moshchun, and Hostomel. I ground it and crafted hand-made paints. I named them after the places where I collected the soil: Moshchun Umber, Hostomel Red, etc. It was important for me to record where they came from to mark our territory. I created my first monochrome paintings with these paints.”<sup>13</sup>

13

“The Bucha Tragedy: Now You See Us,” The Ukrainians, accessed December 17, 2024, [theukrainians.org/spec/nowyouseeus/buchatska](https://theukrainians.org/spec/nowyouseeus/buchatska)

#### More:

Katya Buchatska’s experience on The Ukrainians (in English):

[theukrainians.org/spec/nowyouseeus/buchatskaeng](https://theukrainians.org/spec/nowyouseeus/buchatskaeng)

**Difficulty with long-term planning.** In an uncertain and unstable situation, long-term planning for projects or career development is almost impossible. Many artists work on a short-term basis, responding to immediate conditions and are unable to plan for the future, which affects both the scope and sustainability of their work.

**Legal and bureaucratic barriers.** For artists seeking to organize exhibitions, fund projects, or travel abroad, navigating the legal and bureaucratic systems can be particularly challenging in times of war. Processes for receiving grants, exporting artwork, or obtaining visas may be delayed, making it difficult for artists to maintain international collaborations. One solution may



↑ Katya Buchatska, *Moshchun Umber*, *Hostomel Red*, *Horenka Ochre*, hand-made oil paint on paper, 2022. From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection

be to work with friendly international initiatives that can take on some of the organizational and bureaucratic responsibilities.

The bureaucratic difficulties are especially hard for mothers with children and male artists subject to mobilization regulations, for whom professional travel abroad is significantly complicated. When they need to travel abroad, artists must obtain special permits from government agencies that allow them to cross state borders.

#### Checklist:

Approximate list of documents that a male artist planning a professional trip abroad needs to collect to obtain a permit in Ukraine:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Scanned copy of the application form;
- \_\_\_\_\_ Scanned copy of the passport;
- \_\_\_\_\_ Scanned copy of the invitation from a foreign institution;
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ukrainian translation of the invitation;
- \_\_\_\_\_ Scanned copy of the Ukrainian citizen’s ID;
- \_\_\_\_\_ Certificate of residence;

---

- Scanned copy of military ID card;
- Extract of the sole proprietorship registration document;
- Extract from the taxpayers register of the sole proprietor;
- Updated status in the Reserve+ application;
- Visa confirmation from the country to which the applicant is traveling.

### **Changes in themes and relevance of art during the war.**

The war significantly changed the idea of what is appropriate and relevant in art. Artists faced the challenge of finding a balance between the need to respond to the war and present the experience of surviving through the invasion to international audiences, and the desire to explore more complex issues and critically reflect on social processes. The pressure to create socially or politically relevant art often limits artistic freedom and creates internal conflicts related to the choice between creative autonomy and social responsibility.

---

#### **Quote:**

“I can’t not draw about the war,” says illustrator Sergiy Maidukov, who has been drawing about Ukraine for The Guardian, The New Yorker, The Washington Post, and others since the full-scale war began.

---

#### **More:**

Learn more about Sergiy Maidukov’s position in the Vidbii Tryvohy podcast (in Ukrainian)  
[youtube.com/watch?v=bwadVov9P50](https://youtube.com/watch?v=bwadVov9P50)

War itself produces shocking scenes and stories that are shared as symbols through media and social networks. These stories often become the basis for artistic work. Using conventional approaches, artists create works that attempt to recreate their experiences and respond to events. At the same time, the role and meaning of art is in crisis.

---

#### **Quote:**

Art critic Yuliia Manukian:  
“Art seemed so powerless. Reflection is thinking, which requires distance. These were the first reactions, but some artists could not help but react. They showed that the artistic community was not dead, that it couldn’t stand aside. Others took a break. Still others simply left to rescue their families.”

---

#### **Quote:**

Artist Stanislav Turina:

“No one can say that there is no war in Ukraine now. But it is significantly different from the first three weeks of the invasion, from the first ten days, from the first three days of the invasion. [...] and art is different. People don’t stop making art anymore. But they did then. Then they stopped, though not everyone.”

Many artists chose to create works about war out of an inner need to respond to their own helplessness by using art as a means of communication or activism. For some, the process was therapeutic. However, this sharp turn to war significantly limits the space for artistic autonomy, as artists feel obliged to reflect on social realities, which sometimes hinders their ability to remain free from the pressure of urgency.

---

#### **Quote:**

Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:

“Many people travel back and forth. It’s easier when you don’t have children, you have more mobility. Male artists, unfortunately, have found themselves in the most vulnerable position; most don’t have the option to leave. For art, experiences at the edge are significant—they always lead to transformations. That’s why Ukrainian artists abroad and those living in Ukraine are, in essence, speaking about the same things. But for me, it’s important to understand that I won’t do with my experience here what I would have done if I had lived through the war in Ukraine. In Ukraine, everything changes so quickly. The very sense of reality and space shifts depending on when the [latest] attacks occurred, whether there’s power supply or not. People who are constantly in Ukraine can speak about this with great precision. Those who left, for instance, can talk universally about violence. Many of them take materials from the internet and create something from that. But those who remain in Ukraine can convey the changes in current experience with great accuracy—you can’t create what you can’t imagine. As for me, I’ve always worked universally. It’s always been important for me to translate everything into a language without nationality or roots, so that anyone in the world, regardless of culture, could see and understand what it’s about. On the other hand, I only take on what I personally live through and feel. The combina-



tion of universality and lived experience is essential for me as an artist.”

**Case:** Curator and researcher Kateryna Iakovlenko turned the space of her own tragedy into an opportunity for artistic reflection by creating a pop-up exhibition in her rocket-hit apartment in Irpin.

**More:** About Kateryna Iakovlenko’s project “Everyone is Afraid of the Baker, But I Thank Him” on Suspilne.Kultura (in Ukrainian)  
[↗suspilne.media/culture/275390-slova-vdacnosti-kuratoroka-zrobila-vistavku-u-vlasnij-zrujnovanij-kvartiri](https://suspilne.media/culture/275390-slova-vdacnosti-kuratoroka-zrobila-vistavku-u-vlasnij-zrujnovanij-kvartiri)

**Isolation from the international art community.** As the war affects travel, artists in Ukraine often find themselves cut off from international events, exhibitions, and residencies. At the same time, few foreign professionals enter the country during the war. This limits opportunities for professional development and collaboration with international artists or curators. However, the increased interest in art from countries at war also creates a certain vacuum of knowledge about the local cultural field on the international scene, which can be filled by curated tours for professionals to the rear regions of a country at war, or by online networking between art professionals from Ukraine and abroad.

Another way to improve visibility and communication is to be active in social media—if possible, publish your archive of works, notes, observations, or diaries of life in the war. This will allow you to communicate and exchange with international colleagues. One example of opportunities designed to counter the cultural isolation of Ukraine are residencies for international artists in Kyiv organized by the German artist Paul Anton Maciejowski. Maciejowski believes that exchange and collaboration in cities under the stress of invasion are important for continuing dialogue and countering stereotypes about war shaped by the media.

**More:** Learn more about Paul Maciejowski’s project “Ich komme und sehe” here (in Ukrainian)  
[↗ichkommeundsehe.org](https://ichkommeundsehe.org)

**The impact of displaced persons on the art scenes in the rear.** The war caused internal migration of communities to the rear regions. Despite all the difficulties of assimilation and adaptation to a new professional environment, this process can

also be an opportunity to explore new themes, share experiences and perspectives with others, and facilitate new collaborations.

**Case:** In 2022, Asortymentna Kimnata gallery in Ivano-Frankivsk, together with the artist Lesia Khomenko, launched the Robocha Kimnata (“The Working Room”) residency for artists who had moved to Ivano-Frankivsk as part of the evacuation. The purpose of the residency was to continue working together and engaging in dialogue about how our understanding of the human body and life is changing, how dehumanization works in the context of war, and how war affects not only humans but also non-human actors. The residency lasted three months and aimed to become a space for creation under difficult conditions.

**More:** Read more about Robocha Kimnata residency here (in Ukrainian)  
[↗asortymentna-kimnata.space/robocha](https://asortymentna-kimnata.space/robocha)

**Destruction of exhibition spaces and museum collections.** Threatened with the loss of their collections and valuable cultural heritage, state museums were forced to hide or evacuate their exhibits. As a result, Ukraine’s most valuable art disappeared from public view, and it is now easier to see works by Ukrainian artists in Western museums than at home. For museums, this situation poses a huge challenge. A possible solution is to create opportunities for emerging artists and feature their works in the vacant exhibition spaces.

**Case:** The Khanenko Museum in Kyiv came up with a solution: in collaboration with contemporary artists, the museum used empty display cases and walls to create a space for artist residencies in its premises to reflect on the role of art during the war. The residency also became an opportunity to think about what the future postwar exhibition should look like, what to show after the war, and how to tell the story of what happened through art. The result was the exhibition “Meanwhile at the Khanenkos House.”

**More:** About the exhibition “Meanwhile at the Khanenkos House” on ArtsLooker (in Ukrainian)  
[↗artslooker.com/meanwhile-at-the-khanenkos-039-conversation-about-the-museum-in-wartime-emptiness-and-love](https://artslooker.com/meanwhile-at-the-khanenkos-039-conversation-about-the-museum-in-wartime-emptiness-and-love)

## Mental Health — How to Take Care of Yourself as an Artist

War leaves a mental mark. Artists who remain in Ukraine face the emotional burden of living in a conflict zone, loss, trauma, and the constant stress of survival. This psychological pressure can negatively affect their creative productivity and quality of life.

The very nature of artistic perception requires a highly sensitive contact with reality and the ability to process it internally. According to Yuliia Bashlakova, a practicing psychologist, processing horrific reality and excessive experiences is an incredibly difficult inner work and a great burden on the psyche. This can be exacerbated by a strict demand for self-esteem in difficult times, a desire to be at the forefront of experience, to be active in the volunteer movement, to take care of the weakest. Mental structures react to such stress with faster exhaustion.

People cope better with acute stress than with chronic one, especially if they have time to recover from it. War is a long, continuous stress and a real threat to life and all available resources. Typical mental health problems caused by war are anxiety, depression, and stress disorders, accompanied by symptoms such as chronic fatigue, body aches, narrowed emotional range, sleep disturbances, depressed mood, decreased cognitive and creative abilities, flashbacks, nightmares, and intrusive negative thoughts. Another consequence of chronic stress and traumatic events can be an extreme form of anxiety—panic attacks. If you are experiencing these symptoms, you should seek professional help, online or offline.

### Tools:

“How are you?” All-Ukrainian Mental Health Program

[howareu.com](http://howareu.com)

In cases of increased anxiety and obsessions, pay attention to your daily routine and adjust your basic needs—first and foremost, sleep, good nutrition, and rest. Learn to monitor your physical condition and respond to your body’s needs in a timely manner. Because of our biological nature, the body is the first to react to stress and trauma. Severe trauma can cause a loss of contact with one’s body: dissociative disorders, a state of “freezing,” and spasticity. Recovery also begins with the body, with regaining contact with the body as it is under stress: tired, numb, weakened.

### Tools:

The most effective methods are body-oriented therapy, breathing exercises and moderate physical activity, especially those that restore flexibility. Mental adaptability is directly related to physical plasticity. Excessive physical activity can increase stress if not accompanied by adequate rest and relaxation.

Basic cognitive-behavioral strategies for managing stress:

- Identify and challenge negative thoughts;
- Identify automatic negative thoughts that cause anxiety. Consider whether these thoughts are overly pessimistic or useless;
- Challenge these thoughts by questioning their validity. Ask yourself if there is evidence to support or refute the thought;
- Replace the negative thought with a more balanced or realistic one. This may help reduce the anxiety’s intensity;
- Practice deep breathing and relaxation techniques;
- Use deep breathing exercises to calm your nervous system. Adopt the most comfortable position possible. It is important that your back and/or feet feel supported. If you don’t have anything to lean on, imagine that your clothes are that support. Try to slowly inhale through your nose for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, and exhale through your mouth for 6 counts;
- Gradual muscle relaxation can also be helpful: tense and then slowly relax each muscle group in your body, starting with your toes and working your way up;
- Keep a thought diary;
- Write down anxiety-provoking thoughts as they occur. Include details about the situation, your mood, and your reaction. This process will help you identify patterns and gradually work on your anxiety triggers.

Losing your home, job, or loved ones can lead to feelings of hopelessness, apathy, or depression. It is important to maintain social contacts and turn to loved ones for emotional support. If your loved ones are also emotionally exhausted and don’t have enough bandwidth, it is better to turn to those who can provide professional support. Psychotherapy, especially cognitive behavioral therapy, can help you cope with negative thoughts. Seek medical advice should the situation require more help. In Ukraine, there is a wide range of pharmacology available, leading to widespread self-diagnosis and self-treatment, which are often incorrect and

have a negative impact on mental health. See a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist, even though there are many stigmas in society about seeking treatment from such specialists.

Analyze the information around you and filter the news and media you consume. Avoid platforms that present information in a depressing or panicked tone or use triggering images. Stress interferes with the ability to critically evaluate information from multiple sources. Attention becomes selective and it picks up from the information space what reinforces internally formed guidelines or what is easier to accept without mental effort, i.e. emotionally colored and visually reinforced messages. Filter the news and media you consume and reduce the amount and time you spend monitoring them. Avoid watching the news before bed, as emotional arousal has a very negative impact on sleep quality and psychophysiological recovery.

#### Tools:

StopFake Guide on How to Identify a Fake

[stopfake.org/en/how-to-identity-a-fake](https://stopfake.org/en/how-to-identity-a-fake)

Conscious Use of Information in Wartime Video Training by the Pylyp Orlyk Institute for Democracy

[youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmkgIqAlfzecIoasWmpAuCOG4BfoEaO0b](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmkgIqAlfzecIoasWmpAuCOG4BfoEaO0b)

What you practice regularly gradually becomes your life. Balance your state with positive emotions and actions that support your vital functions. Taking an interest in life is the most important human skill. Nurture your curiosity. Post-traumatic growth is only possible after you have accumulated resources to overcome the devastating effects of trauma: physical, mental, creative, and relational.

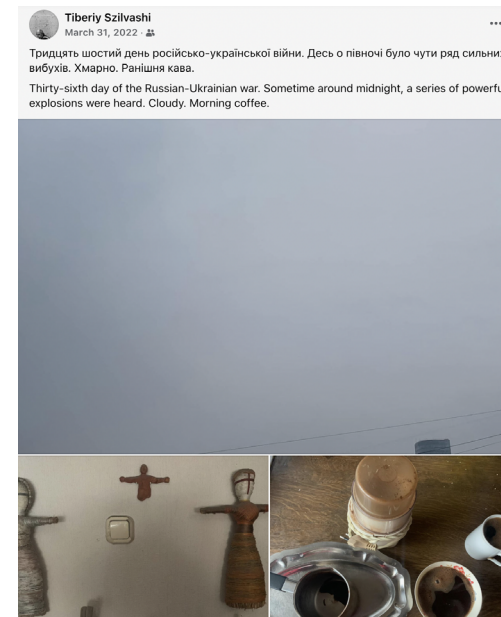
#### Quote:

To balance his mental state, artist Stanislav Turina offers a method he calls the "Jackie Chan Method":

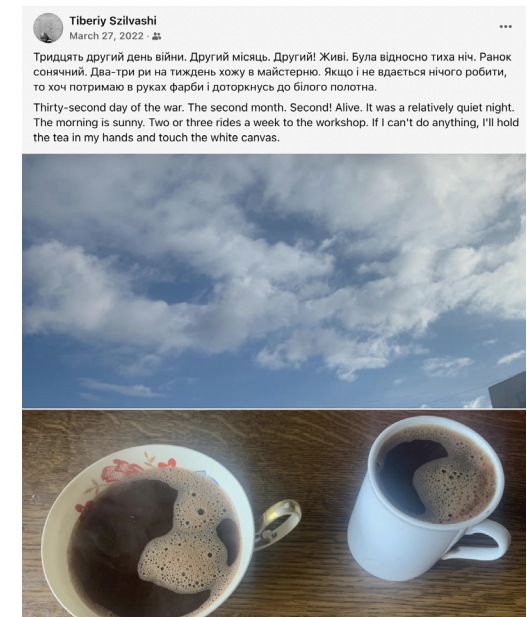
“When Jackie Chan falls down, he doesn’t get up immediately, he doesn’t defend himself but rolls to a safe place or his gun. When I have problems, I’m also rolling. Sometimes you have to roll away and stay home for a week. Sometimes you have to freeze so no one sees you. If there is a problem, you have to duck, give yourself time to assess the situation. I learned how to duck.”

In the situation of the moral pressure of armed conflict, it is important to develop small steps of self-sufficiency and normali-

↓ Screenshots from Tiberiy Szilvashi's Facebook page. March 2022.



zation of your routine that will allow you to remain emotionally stable.



#### Case:

After the start of the full-scale invasion, artist Tiberiy Szilvashi who remained in Kyiv under the threat of occupation kept a short diary on Facebook. The artist posted short notes summarizing his day and the events that took place, as well as photos of the sky and a cup of coffee. This routine became a way of communicating with the outside world and maintaining personal peace.

Instead of focusing on the loss of your old life, focus on creating a new normal. Allow yourself to change your lifestyle and outlook and normalize your new needs.

Artist Stanislav Turina:

#### Quote:

“There is a method of physical rehabilitation called the Feldenkrais Method. It uses the metaphor of sails: do not think of anchors, think of sails. Change is a great challenge. There is a Chinese proverb: ‘In times of great change and new winds, we must build windmills.’ That is, build windmills to master the wind, not to protect yourself from it with walls. Or build ships and hoist the sails.”

**Guilt, inequality, and gender pressures.** Some artists who remain in safer regions or have relocated outside active conflict zones may feel guilty or alienated for not being on the frontlines or in more affected areas. This internal conflict may affect their creative motivation or cause them to question the relevance of their work, especially when compared to the struggles of those in active war zones.

**Quote:**

Artist Stanislav Turina:

“I am unfit for military service and have been removed from the military register. I have a mental disability. But I face the question: ‘Can I serve?’ I face this question every day. The military medical committee said no. But what can I do in this life to be able to do it? And then I get worse and I realize: ‘No, I definitely can’t.’ This question disappears until the moment I feel normal again. [...] Now men of all professions are worried, they have a question: ‘Where will they be tomorrow? What are they going to do?’ [...] We have never experienced, not only war, but also such wartime art. Art is becoming peculiar. It lives by its own new rules.”

In such conditions of social pressure, it is important to support and care for each other, to rely on networks of family and friends, and to create safe spaces to express each other’s fears and pains. Building your own network of trust becomes a key factor in maintaining a stable mental state.

**Quote:**

Artist Stanislav Turina:

“My friends with disabilities help me a lot. [...] We rarely see each other. But personal support is very important. [...] I write to my friends and share different emotions. I’m learning to share the negative. And I’m trying to share the positive, too.”

**Emotional and creative burnout.** Constant exposure to news of war, trauma, and violence harms mental health. For artists, this emotional exhaustion can lead to creative burnout, affecting their ability to create new work. The need to remain resilient while living in stressful conditions makes it difficult to maintain a stable artistic practice.

**Quote:**

Artist Pavlo Makov:

“I’m having this thing called procrastination, which unfortunately is present and growing. I can work in the studio, but I can’t concentrate for more than half an hour. Then I get distracted. Someone calls, you pick up the phone and there’s news. And then two hours later it’s three o’clock in the afternoon and you haven’t worked, you’ve been sitting around wasting time.”

If you procrastinate, try to reduce the pressure on yourself and allow yourself to be less productive or slower. Break your tasks down into smaller ones and complete them one step at a time. Don’t forget to praise yourself for completing even simple and small tasks.

Another moral pressure and cause of burnout can be the loss of community—the dispersal of ties due to emigration and displacement can exacerbate the identity crisis and loss of meaning.

**Quote:**

Artist Stanislav Turina:

“There are a huge number of voids in Kyiv. I even started to make a list of those who have left—many artists, people from other professions. There are so many gaps in meetings and collaborations.”

In such circumstances, focus on restorative ways to relax. Identify the ways of spending quality time that are fulfilling for you. Create new habits that add meaning to your practice and activities. Don’t neglect new relationships. Avoid forms of relaxation that are emotionally draining or make you feel guilty or anxious.

**Quote:**

Artist Stanislav Turina:

“I do not celebrate. None of us do. A good evening means sitting quietly with friends, smiling, joking. Maybe listening to some music a little louder.”

**Self-censorship and ethical challenges.** War changes the context and discourse of our language, imposing internal restrictions on what is acceptable and what is not. On the one hand, the space for experimentation, free critical expression, and political diversity is shrinking. At the same time, more radical forms of media are normalized, and we see and tolerate more



violence, cruelty, and dehumanization. If it is impossible to resist such changes, they should be monitored and noted.

At the same time, it is important to find the strength to understand the complex processes that everyone goes through individually and as a community during a crisis. In a society mobilized by the crisis, protection and the right to self-defense (and aggression as an essential fuel in these processes) guarantee the right to dignity and justice that is an integral part of humanity. Human need in war is to survive both physically and mentally. Under these conditions, the psyche seeks ways to restore equilibrium in the face of increasing intensity of external destruction. Adaptation to the new environment occurs in several ways: Mental defenses are activated, resulting in emotional blunting and reduced empathy; positive emotions are replaced by anger, rage, and irritability; brutal, black humor becomes a channel for aggression in an attempt to diminish the importance of the enemy, a productive response to the fear that people experience from time to time.

**Quote:**

Artist Stanislav Turina:

“It’s a small deviation, but we’re getting crueler. We can laugh at things that people in the world usually don’t find appropriate to laugh at. We can laugh at death. Not that we laugh at individual deaths, but we laugh at death as such.”

At the same time, war poses existential challenges to all of us, forcing us to make difficult life choices. While some artists may make the difficult decision to go to the front or will have to mobilize, others may decide to leave the country to save their lives and peacetime freedoms, even by doing so illegally. Such cases deepen the ethical challenges in society and create additional tensions and misunderstandings among the community. Ethically, these challenges are also manifested in the way artists and cultural practitioners work: what issues they choose to tackle, how they build exhibition projects, which voices they include and which they don’t.

**Quote:**

Artist Stanislav Turina:

“[The question arose] how to include the art of those who have left, especially men. I know some curators who are trying to approach [such] programs and issues, trying to speak publicly: ‘What to do with all those who left

illegally?’ It’s a big political decision not to trample on these people. These are not just our colleagues, for some people, they are friends who have lost contact with their friends here. This is an elephant in the room that nobody notices. Or you can ask veterans what they think about it. This is a wide range of questions being raised. Because they are silenced, they become a problem.”

**Quote:**

Artist and soldier Max Robotov:

“Today Ukraine must be represented internationally through culture. [...] That’s why I have a very positive attitude towards artists who have gone abroad and are working for the benefit of Ukrainian art. That said, if they now use this situation selfishly, having gone on an artistic mission and saying: ‘We’re not interested in coming back,’ I have a negative attitude towards them, I don’t want to defend them, it’s selfishness. But if they develop their art, position themselves as Ukrainian artists, and work programmatically, that’s another thing. Many people are studying abroad now, and this is also useful because they will come back here with a different level of education, which they received in art institutions there.”

Working on exhibitions also raises questions about the mental health of viewers: how and what to show to avoid trauma and triggers? What precautions are necessary? How can art spaces be more inclusive for people affected by war, veterans, and displaced persons?

**Quote:**

Stanislav Turina who curates exhibitions while pursuing an artistic practice of his own notes that the issue of including or not including traumatizing works in exhibitions is becoming more acute in curatorial approaches today.

“Thank God, not everyone follows this rule when it comes to art. Every artwork now takes veterans’ points of view into account. Every artwork takes into account those who have experienced or are experiencing various forms of violence. That is, children, people from occupied territories. Everything is going through a mental check to see if it’s triggering in one way or another.”

In addition, there are basic requirements for adapting spaces: avoiding stuffy rooms, providing access to shelters, access to



drinking water and first aid kits, and training in non-triggering communication.

**Case:**

In the summer of 2023, the Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art initiated the exhibition “How Are You?,” a major show of art created after February 24, 2022, as well as a public program on commemoration. Building on the Wartime Art Archive project, which aims to document the artistic process following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the exhibition brings together more than 400 works by 100 Ukrainian artists. Many of the works in the exhibition deal with the extreme experiences of war and trauma. To monitor how art about trauma affects visitors, the MOCA NGO commissioned Anima Neurotechnology to test exhibition visitors for anxiety and depression before and after visiting “How Are You?.” The tests consisted of psychological questionnaires and an assessment of attention span using a webcam to track eye movements. After the exhibition, 50% of the visitors experienced a decrease in anxiety. It is noteworthy that the most significant changes were observed among those who had high levels of anxiety before visiting the exhibition. Those who started out less anxious became more attentive and focused.<sup>15</sup>

15

“Arts as a Healing Touch: White Paper,” *Anima*, accessed December 17, 2024, [blog.anima.help/pdf/whitepaper\\_arts\\_healing\\_touch.pdf](https://blog.anima.help/pdf/whitepaper_arts_healing_touch.pdf).

**More:**

Learn more about the “How Are You?” project here

[howareyou.umca.art/en/?space=0&startlookat=-844.9,-3.55,104.78,0,0;](https://howareyou.umca.art/en/?space=0&startlookat=-844.9,-3.55,104.78,0,0;)



→ Alina Yakubenko, Untitled from *Military* series, marker pen on paper, 2022–2023. From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection



↑ Vlada Ralko, Untitled from *Lviv Diary* series, ballpoint pen and watercolor on paper, 2022. From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection

## Finding Resources

Below are resources that provide psychological support for people affected by war and traumatic events. Do not neglect the opportunity to seek professional help if you feel you cannot cope on your own.



↑ Vasyl Tkachenko-Lyakh, *02.05.22*, oil on canvas, 2022. From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art)

### **Center for Psychological Assistance at the Ministry of Health of Ukraine**

Offers free support for those experiencing stress, anxiety, or depression due to the war

↗[moz.gov.ua](https://moz.gov.ua)

### **Tell Me platform**

Offers online consultations with psychologists

The platform is focused on providing immediate assistance in times of crisis

↗[tellme.com.ua](https://tellme.com.ua)

### **Project “You Are Not Alone”**

Free psychological assistance for IDPs and war victims

Support includes online counseling and psychological training

↗[ty-ne-odin.org.ua](https://ty-ne-odin.org.ua)

### **Mental Health for Ukraine (MH4U)**

Psychological programs for war victims

Offers free services of psychologists and psychotherapists, in particular for children and adolescents

↗[mh4u.in.ua](https://mh4u.in.ua)

### **Diia.Digital Education platform**

Offers a series of courses for those in need of psychological support, including webinars on stress management and overcoming anxiety

↗[osvita.diia.gov.ua](https://osvita.diia.gov.ua)

### **Educational project “Know How”**

Offers online courses and resources for parents, teachers, and adolescents on psychological support and emotional management during war

↗[znatyjak.org.ua](https://znatyjak.org.ua)

# Evacuation

## How to Leave the War-Torn Country

Decisions to leave a country at war are very personal and depend on many factors, including assessment of your capabilities and potential risks to your and your family's safety.

During wartime, information can be easily distorted and manipulated, particularly by state actors involved in the fighting. In a context of weak institutions on state and local levels, rely not only on official reports but also on trusted media to assess possible danger and new developments. Think in advance about what you would do in the event of a possible evacuation and imagine your plan of action if confronted with direct threats.

Prepare a kit of essential items in an emergency suitcase for quick access, including:

- Identification documents (passports, birth certificate, driver's license);
- Cash and credit cards (ATMs may not work in an emergency);
- Medicines (at least a week's supply) and basic first aid supplies;
- Basic hygiene items (soap, toothbrush, sanitary products);
- Clothing for different weather conditions, including sturdy shoes;
- Portable phone chargers and extra batteries for communication devices;
- Non-perishable food and water (enough for at least 72 hours).

Make digital copies of important documents and store them on a USB drive or a cloud storage.

Identify multiple evacuation routes, as some roads may be closed

or blocked. Check regularly on the status of border crossings, the location of checkpoints, and available transportation. Avoid active conflict zones and follow the instructions of local authorities. Save an offline map on your mobile device.

Share your evacuation plan and routes with your close ones ahead of time. Arrange a meeting place or contact person in a safer location if you become separated from your family. Use messaging apps that offer encrypted communication (e.g. Signal).

Secure your home before you leave. If time permits, turn off gas, water, and electricity to minimize risks while you are away. Lock doors and windows and notify trusted neighbors of your plans.

### Quote:

Artist Pavlo Makov:

"The only thing that has changed is that I used to leave my car in the open in Kharkiv. But since the beginning of the winter bombardment of Kharkiv, I started to put the car in a garage with an iron door and a concrete ceiling, because it can be damaged on the street. The car is our evacuation vehicle."

Remain calm. Avoid unnecessary risks and be aware of potential hazards such as mines, debris, or crossfire.

### Tools:

Evacuation and Relocation for Artists

[↗Resources for Ukrainian Artists](#)

[↗Office Ukraine](#)

[↗Artistic Freedom Initiative](#)

## Artists who Emigrated from Ukraine and Try to Maintain Their Artistic Work Abroad

**Adapting.** Evacuating to a safe place challenges artists to adapt to that place, its community, and its context. Try to establish contacts with local communities of interest, look for social initiatives in your neighborhood, and get in touch with organizations from your home country that have offices abroad.



**Connections and networks.** When evacuating abroad, try to stay connected with institutions in your home country. Let colleagues in your country know where you are. Stay informed of the local context to create potential for collaboration and professional exchange.

**Case:** At the time of the full-scale invasion, artist Kateryna Lysovenko evacuated Kyiv with her two children and her cat. She first moved to a village in the Kyiv region, then to Lutsk, a city in western Ukraine. From there, Kateryna traveled to Poland and finally to Austria.

**Quote:** Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:  
“Ukrainian artists who work in the international environment, who know what contemporary art is, are doing more or less well. Much better than many of them did before. New opportunities for collaboration have emerged. In the past, you’d apply for a residency and get rejected; now, you’re accepted. However, a significant issue remains: even if you’re already visible in Ukraine and your career is developing there, in the international context, you’re a complete nobody, a no-name. This also reflects a failure in Ukraine’s cultural policy. Artists alone cannot change this. Culture is always a part of diplomacy, and it’s always tied to the state’s political interests. Most ‘great’ artists come from ‘great’ countries, and it’s painful to acknowledge that.”

**Organize your documents.** Keep your documents in order and up to date. Carry with you important documents such as passports, visas, ID, birth certificate, and work and education certificates. Familiarize yourself with the legal requirements in your host country regarding residency, work permits, and professional practice. If possible, seek legal assistance from organizations that provide free legal services to displaced persons to help you navigate the bureaucracy and ensure that your rights are protected.

**Quote:** Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:  
“[In the beginning, there were] many opportunities because the international art community mobilized. For me, as a mother with children, the downside was that these were all short-term opportunities. Many artists without children are still migrating between residencies

because it’s excellent for their careers. You go to different places and people remember you. But if you have children, you can’t afford that kind of mobility. So we initially came to Graz, a small city in Austria. I worked there, and I appreciated that those residencies weren’t just about providing basic living conditions—they also offered the chance to create something.”

The most difficult part of adaptation is the bureaucracy of the host country. It becomes very difficult for outsiders, especially those traumatized by war and the loss of their homes, to deal with it. Ask for help from your Ukrainian colleagues who have experience, look for emigrants who left before the war, and ask for advice or counseling. Ask your neighbors for advice and monitor expatriate communities on social media, where there are often people who have faced similar situations. Finally, you can seek advice or assistance from a professional lawyer.

**Adjust to work.** Despite the difficulties of relocation, try to adjust to returning to work. This will help you adapt more easily and quickly to the new environment and reduce the psychological pressure of the new circumstances.

**Quote:** Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:  
“The most important thing, in any conditions, is to continue developing your practice and creating, with thoughtfulness, honesty, and diligence. And to make sure people see what you’re doing because then they’ll know they can work with you. Especially now, Ukrainian artists get a lot of attention. For young artists, my advice is to reach out to an international audience and expand it. Many, especially very young ones, currently work only in Ukraine and do nothing to broaden their audience. That’s possible while you’re still young and can manage to live in significant poverty. But when you’re 35–40 years old, you start to burn out—it’s hard to work your whole life without receiving something in return.”

**Make yourself visible.** Create and maintain your website, update your résumé and portfolio. Publish your work on social media and connect with colleagues whose work interests you. Establish a regular publishing schedule.



**Quote:**

Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:

“To [gain visibility], you need to work and showcase what you’re doing on Instagram and Facebook. Send your portfolios to curators you know—curators do look at social media. If you have the opportunity, it’s worth going somewhere to study right now. For an artist, just like for scholars, it’s important to see international contexts. That exposure makes you more professional and more knowledgeable, which means you create better work. So it’s essential to go on a residency or spend some time studying elsewhere.”

## How to Evacuate Works

The destruction of cultural monuments and works of art is a serious concern for Ukrainian society, as artists are forced to fight for the preservation of their works and the cultural identity and memory of Ukraine against Russia’s efforts to deny Ukrainian identity. At the same time, museum institutions are largely unprepared to operate in the face of an invasion, complicating both the evacuation and the subsequent return of works to collections.

If you have time before evacuation, you should sign and pack all your works for transport, even if you cannot remove them yourself. In the face of imminent danger, prepare in advance: make a complete list of your works, take photos of all your works, and save them to cloud storage. Get into the habit of archiving and inventorying your work yourself: keep a tag with the name, year, size, technique, and a brief description of the work, so that in the event of loss you can at least estimate what you have lost, or, if you cannot evacuate, pass this information along with the works to other people for storage.

**Quote:**

Artist Mykola Koidan:

“After I emigrated, my paintings stayed in Ukraine. However, when some of them were sold through online platforms, my relatives were able to send them to customers, even abroad. When I left, I took only a small set of paints and brushes with me, which was enough to get me started. And after receiving a grant from ARC, I was able to buy more quality materials and some digital equipment. Now my sales are paintings made in exile.”

Contact friendly institutions such as museums, galleries, art councils, or collectors who may be able to take custody of your artwork or help you move it to a safer location.

**Tools:**

Reach out to IFACCA members to explore assistance options for temporarily evacuating and storing artworks

[ifacca.org/members/current-members](https://ifacca.org/members/current-members)

**Case:**

In March 2022, Insha Osvita NGO and Olha Honchar, director of the Territory of Terror Museum in Lviv, founded the Museum Crisis Center, an initiative to help local museums in Ukrainian cities withstand the onslaught of invasion and occupation. One of the goals of the initiative was to provide financial support to frontline museum workers in the face of withheld salaries and possible occupation. At the same time, Insha Osvita, led by Alyona Karavay, evacuated works of contemporary art from various parts of Ukraine at the request of the artists themselves. The team’s task was to preserve works that were not a priority for the state and the Ministry of Culture. The team responded to each artist’s request to evacuate a collection, using horizontal grassroots connections to move the works of Ukrainian artists to safe shelters.

**More:**

Read more about the experience of the Museum Crisis Center’s co-founders on Hyperallergic (in English)

[hyperallergic.com/719347/this-group-is-helping-museum-workers-in-ukraine](https://hyperallergic.com/719347/this-group-is-helping-museum-workers-in-ukraine)

Museum Crisis Center website

[mccukraine.com/uk](https://mccukraine.com/uk)

Take advantage of all available resources that could be useful for evacuating your works—see if it is possible to evacuate works through grant programs that support artists.

Unite with other artists for joint actions to ship or pack works.

As a private citizen, you cannot evacuate cultural property from museums and government institutions. In order to evacuate museum collections, you need to obtain a number of permits from the Ministry of Culture. Even during the crisis, museum workers and directors of local museums could not evacuate museum collections without the Ministry’s permission. The evacuation of cultural property during the initial phase of the invasion was chaotic, allowing the Russian army to steal thousands of artifacts

from Ukraine. According to the Ukrainian authorities, more than 15,000 objects were taken from museums in the occupied territories of southern Ukraine alone.<sup>16</sup> Due to the lack of access to the occupied territories, the exact amount of stolen valuables and artifacts remains unknown.

#### Case:

Without official authorization, historian Leonid Marushchak evacuated more than two million objects from museum and private collections (according to Babel), circumventing the bureaucratic restrictions imposed by the peacetime cultural heritage export procedure developed by the state. Marushchak's risky approach allowed him to remove exhibits from museums in Bakhmut, Sloviansk, and other frontline towns while fighting was still underway, as well as family collections of works by major Ukrainian artist Alla Horska. Marushchak used private transportation, packed the works himself, gained access to the collections from museum staff, and transported the works to storage facilities, having received informal permission from the Ministry to evacuate them. All the time Leonid Marushchak was in contact with the Deputy Minister of Culture Kateryna Chuyeva and acted with the authorization of the Ministry, which allowed him to save the collections in a situation of institutional inability to respond to the risk. However, the story of Leonid Marushchak is an exception rather than a rule or a guide to action.

#### More:

Read more about the circumstances of Leonid Marushchak's rescue of works from museum collections in *The Guardian* (in English) [theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/30/ukraine-death-defying-art-rescuers](https://theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/30/ukraine-death-defying-art-rescuers)

In 2014, Elmira Ablyalimova, director of the Crimean Institute for Strategic Studies, was in charge of the Bakhchysarai State Historical and Cultural Reserve in Crimea when Russia annexed the peninsula. She approached the problem of evacuating museum collections both from the perspective of a person in charge on the ground—the director of a cultural institution—and from a strategic perspective as part of an advisory platform on cultural heritage protection.

#### Quote:

Elmira Ablyalimova, cultural manager:

"The first thing we need to do is develop a code of conduct for museums and consider all potential situations museum workers might face. During an occupation, the primary task of museum staff is to preserve museum

objects. But where is the line when priority must shift to human life and personal safety, or the safety of one's family? The conditions and methods of warfare are changing—they can unfold in humanitarian, informational, and economic domains. Unfortunately, museums, research institutions, and educational establishments are increasingly becoming tools in the hands of totalitarian regimes. Therefore, there must be a clear boundary: where preservation remains a professional duty and where it turns into collaboration or aiding in altering identity and narratives.

A significant problem lies in the lack of continuity in cultural policy. The constant turnover of key political players responsible for culture results in every new Minister of Culture starting with strategies and reforms, neglecting the groundwork laid by their predecessors. Thus, developing a code of conduct and creating a system of protection during emergencies is of utmost priority. We conducted surveys with museum professionals immediately after the outbreak of the large-scale war and developed a roadmap outlining the essential first steps for building such a system."

#### More:

Russian Aggression Against Ukraine: From Monitoring to the Concept of Cultural Heritage Protection (Roadmap)

[drive.google.com/file/d/17IRDSTIF9IsIkEtPS5M5EtSDZhw7jde/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17IRDSTIF9IsIkEtPS5M5EtSDZhw7jde/view)

If you work for a cultural institution that houses a collection, learn about evacuation procedures and mechanisms in advance, inspect storage facilities, and familiarize yourself with bureaucratic procedures in the event of the need to evacuate collections.

#### Quote:

Elmira Ablyalimova, cultural manager:

"Museums reached out to the Ministry of Culture, but the Ministry didn't know what to do. At best, they responded, 'Do what you think is necessary.' There were cases where a director left the country, and someone with a different level of responsibility took over the work. There were also instances where, on the day of the invasion, a security guard was the only staff member who showed up for work besides the director. We need to have a very clear understanding of the director's responsibilities. Directors face the challenge of having to think about



the collections, the buildings, and the staff. The chain of actions must be clear—what the guard, accountant, director, or deputy director should do in the event of occupation, partial damage, or total destruction. In addition, we must establish secure electronic registries of movable and immovable objects in cloud storage, whether it's a national or regional museum. These registries should include inventory numbers, detailed descriptions, high-quality photographs, and more. Items may be removed, stolen, or lost in the chaos of war, but having proper documentation allows investigative bodies and prosecutors to begin efforts to locate and recover them.”

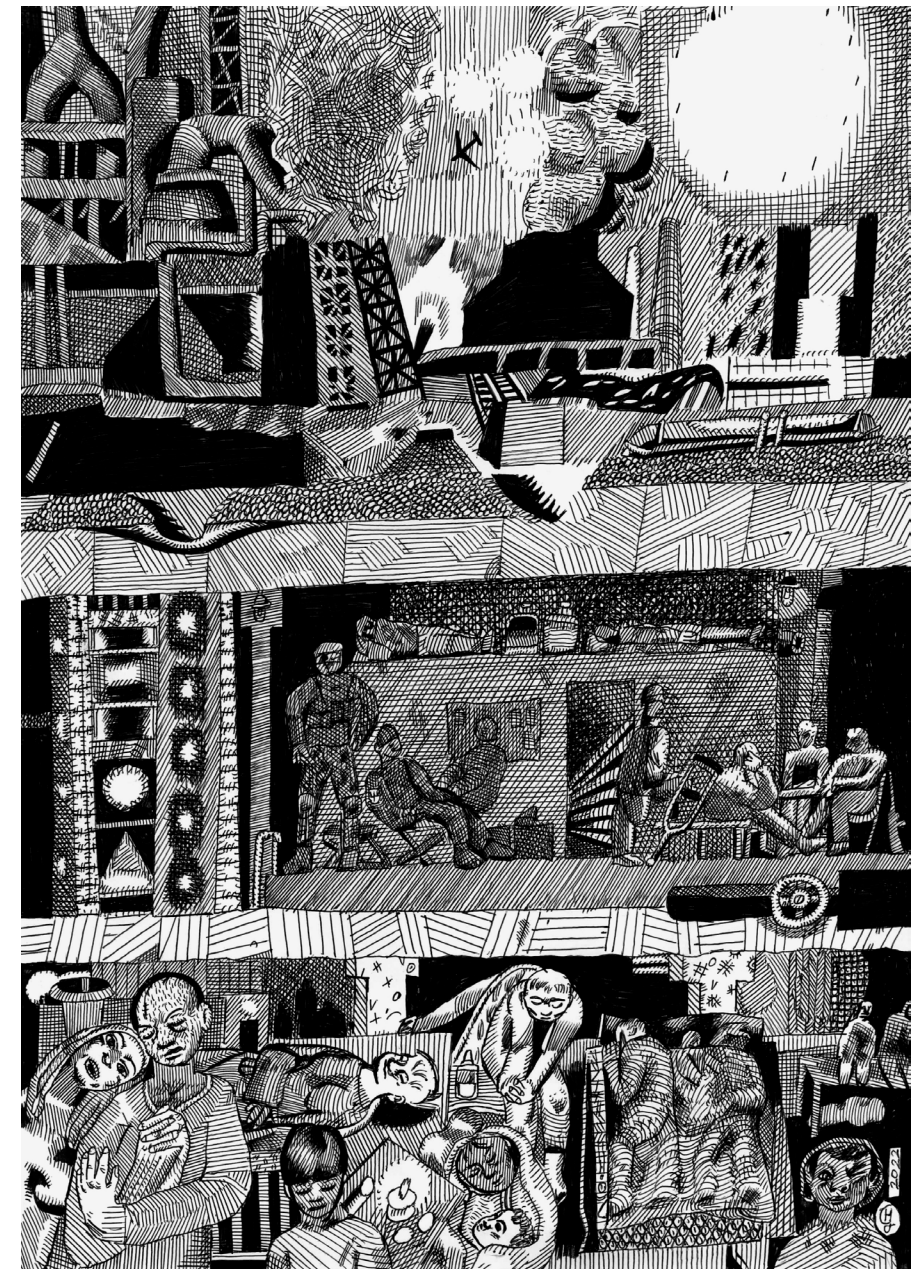
**Sourcebase:**

Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (in Ukrainian)

↗ [mcsc.gov.ua/kulturna-spadshchyna/zakhyst-kulturnykh-tsinnostey-u-razi-zbroyno-ho-konfliktu](https://mcsc.gov.ua/kulturna-spadshchyna/zakhyst-kulturnykh-tsinnostey-u-razi-zbroyno-ho-konfliktu)

Cultural Heritage Under the Influence of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine: Challenges and Responses

↗ [maidanmuseum.org/uk/node/1059](https://maidanmuseum.org/uk/node/1059)



↑ Daniil Nemyrovskiy, *Azovstal, Mariupol*, black ballpoint oil pen on paper, 2022.  
From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection  
← Viacheslav Snisarenko, *Dove of Peace*, etching on paper, 2024.

# Art, Resistance, and Activism

For artists, war—like any global crisis that reduces people’s lives to their most basic needs—becomes a powerful existential shock. Practicing artists face the questions such as “Why make art?” and “How can I be useful?” Not everyone can find reasons to continue their artistic activity in such circumstances. For some, the priority is to help others practically and respond to the most pressing needs—mobilization to the army, humanitarian volunteering, and helping civilians and the military in the rear.

## Artists Joining the Armed Forces

When making such a decision for yourself, consider your resources and abilities, as well as those who depend on you. Choose an activity that is physically accessible to you, will make you feel better psychologically, and will not put you under more mental stress and pressure than you can handle. Consider what practical skills, especially those related to your artistic activity, might be helpful to you.

### Quote:

Artist Pavlo Makov:

“I understand [writer] Serhiy Zhadan’s decision to join the army as an artist’s decision. On the other hand, if Homer had taken part in the siege of Troy, probably no one would have learned anything about Troy because Homer would have died during the siege. We need to preserve emotional memory and therefore preserve artists. On the other hand, if we take an artist out of reality and put them in an artificially protected situation, they lose the ability to adequately convey what they feel.”

### Case:

After founding a volunteer group of artists engaged in digital

activism for the national government, Max Robotov, an artist and co-founder of Photinus Studio, a community of artists and musicians working in media art, mapping, and VR, joined the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

### Quote:

Artist and serviceman Max Robotov:

“I decided for myself that I would be more useful in the army because I had good military training as a student, I was good at it. After we started helping the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Administration and volunteering in the field of media, information and culture (simple video editing, searching and working with content, video dubbing, subtitling—this help was lacking at the beginning of the war), I didn’t get bored exactly but I realized that I would rather join the Armed Forces and invest in the victory in a different way.”

Here are some aspects for you to consider before mobilizing.

### Legal and administrative procedures:

**Registration:** If you are eligible for military service, you must register at your local military commissariat or update your Reserve+ application. You will undergo a medical examination to determine your fitness for military service.

**Documents:** Ensure all necessary documents (national ID, military ID, medical certificates, etc.) are in order. It is crucial to know the rules and legal requirements to avoid administrative problems.

**Mobilization Law:** Familiarize yourself with the legislation on mobilization in Ukraine, including the rights and obligations of military personnel.

**Physical and mental training.** It is essential to maintain a good level of physical fitness. If possible, begin an exercise program to improve your endurance, strength, and agility. Understand that military service, especially in times of war, can be very stressful. Mental preparation is just as necessary as the physical one. Access to mental health resources or prior consultation with a psychologist can help you cope with difficulties. You may receive basic training after mobilization, but prior familiarization with the basics of military service (e.g. first aid, basic survival skills, understanding the military hierarchy) is an advantage.



**Personal and family considerations.** Establish reliable ways to stay in touch with family and friends. Prepare them for possible communication gaps during your deployment. Organize your finances, such as giving power of attorney to a trusted person or setting up automatic payments for necessary bills. Ensure your loved ones know who to contact in an emergency, including your military unit and local authorities.



↑ David Chichkan,  
*Untitled 2*.  
*Anti-Authoritarian  
Leftists in the Ranks  
of the Ukrainian Armed  
Forces*, watercolor on  
paper, 2022. From UMCA  
(Ukrainian Museum  
of Contemporary Art)  
collection

---

**Case:**

To facilitate civilian procedures for military personnel, Ukraine has introduced online marriages, especially for those in the armed forces. Artist Max Robotov married his partner, artist Lesia Khomenko, via video link while Lesia was working on a residency in the United States, and Max served in the Transcarpathian Regional Military Unit.

---

**More:**

Read more about artists' online marriage at *Ukrainska Pravda*.Life (in Ukrainian)

[life.pravda.com.ua/society/629c77700c2c2](https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/629c77700c2c2)

**Equipment and supplies.** Although the military provides equipment, some personal items may be useful, such as quality thermal clothing, a first aid kit, and personal hygiene products. Consider purchasing additional protective equipment, such as body armor or helmets, if possible. Ask friends and family who may be able to help you raise funds to purchase the equipment or start a small collection for you to use to meet urgent needs for you and your unit during your deployment. Keep important documents safe and carry a copy of your medical records, identification, and emergency contact information.

**Understand your rights and responsibilities.** Familiarize yourself with the military code of conduct, disciplinary regulations, and your legal rights as a soldier. Understanding these can help avoid misunderstandings and ensure that you are treated fairly.

In the event of mobilization, consider how realistic it will be to continue your artistic practice in your position.

---

**Quote:**

Artist and serviceman Max Robotov:

"I am currently teaching a course on new media at the Transcarpathian Academy of Arts. I do it in my free time as a volunteer, without being paid. I was on rotation in Zakarpattia and was able to negotiate this opportunity with the administration. [...] During the [full-scale] war I was almost not engaged in artistic activity because it is very difficult to combine it with military service. I made music for a series of Lesia Khomenko's works and was involved in the Media Club, a musical formation of the Photinus media community [for the art of new media]. We are engaged in various musical experiments: during

the war, it became a challenge because everyone was in different countries, in different situations, and we had to figure out how to do gigs, and we came up with concerts that we perform online. The concept is that we have a certain place where the concert takes place and one of our members is there, while others from the community perform online. I become something of a conductor, I give orders and adjust the concert in a deliberately military-like fashion. Sometimes orders don't work, sometimes they are inappropriate, and sometimes they go unheard—but music still happens. I have nothing but a telephone, internet connection, and my headphones. There are no musical instruments here, though I wish I could play. We called this idea a Victory Day rehearsal. There is a bit of criticism of the army and a bit of irony, a bit of realism in it."

---

**Quote:**

In the Army, you will meet people from different professions, social groups, and cultural backgrounds. Consider whether you should tell them about your practice and how best to do so to avoid misunderstandings, stereotypes, and unwanted questions. "When you are in the army, it is very unhelpful to say you are an artist because they perceive you as an idiot, as someone completely useless. I usually say that I am a manager of large projects," says Max Robotov.

---

**Tools:**

How are you, commander? How to talk in the army to build mutual trust and credibility  
[yakty.com.ua/commander](http://yakty.com.ua/commander)

At the same time, the system of service in the army, which focuses on following orders from the command and deprives the individual of autonomy in decision-making and private life, can be a challenge to the artist's spirit. Pay attention to what insights your service can give you about society, how this experience differs from your life before service, and what new observations are worth recording and reflecting on.

---

**Quote:**

Artist and serviceman Max Robotov:  
"For the most part, the army helps you understand what is important and what is not. It also teaches you to be focused all the time because you have to be available 24/7, mobile, and active. You have to be in good shape, always

working. If you have free time, you check the news. If you have more free time, you study and read official documents: orders, Statutes [of the Armed Forces of Ukraine], etc. You are always, always working. The [army] trains the habit to work exhaustingly in all conditions, at all times."

Finally, whether you choose to serve in the military or remain a civilian artist, war will inevitably change the context of your life and work, so accepting the new reality and honestly assessing your resources, skills, and goals will help you make important life decisions in times of crisis.

---

**Quote:**

Artist and serviceman Max Robotov:

"For a Ukrainian artist during the war, the most important thing is to understand the need to work for victory, no matter how pretentious it may sound. No matter how much of an anti-state nonconformist and a lover of all the hippies in the world you are, it's war and you need to focus on that and work for victory."

## Digital Activism in Times of War

For Ukrainian artists who maintained their civilian status during the war, the question of how they could be useful and help the country at war became increasingly urgent, compounded by a deep sense of guilt. Despite their physical distance from the front, artists felt the need to join the common cause and found various ways to support society and the army.

Among the main areas of assistance were charity auctions of artworks, fundraising, and using the proceeds for the army's needs and humanitarian initiatives. Artist Pavlo Makov joined the Front-Art charity organized by the art dealer Ihor Abramovych.

---

**Quote:**

Artist Pavlo Makov:

"We have already bought 59 or maybe 60 vehicles, in addition to medicine, drones, etc. We have been cooperating with art collectors for two and a half years. It's not like we are helping the army—the army is giving us a chance to live. Besides, I have friends I help at the front, and I started helping them before the invasion. When

people ask me how my wartime life is different from my prewar one, I say: ‘It’s almost the same but I’ve never given so much money to strangers.’”

In addition to donations and charity artwork sales, artists use other creative strategies that vary in scale and complexity. These range from traditional charity events such as concerts, exhibitions, screenings, and even flea markets to digital activism—social media gatherings that use artistic methods to highlight important political and social issues. For many, art has become a communication tool to maintain public awareness of the war abroad and to mobilize the public to take action.

---

**Quote:**

Artist Mykhailo Rai:

“Digital activism is probably the most important thing an artist can do during war and occupation. I created my art project during the occupation of Kherson and immediately published it on my social media, describing the events that took place in Kherson, the feelings and attitudes of the local residents towards these events, the occupiers, and the occupation in general. My project quickly attracted the attention of journalists, and representatives of large and small media began to contact me for interviews. They are willing to talk to artists because artists are not representatives of the authorities and are not restrained in their comments. In this way, I was able to contribute to the fight against Russian disinformation.”

---

**Case:**

In February 2023, a year after the full-scale invasion, artist Zhanna Kadyrova launched the “Russian Rocket 2022” project. It is a set of small stickers shaped like the Russian Kinzhal missile that the artist offers to buy and stick on the bus, train, and airplane windows around the world. The sticker missiles look realistic, especially on the glass of a moving vehicle. The artist donates the money from the sale of the stickers to a fund that supports artists in the Ukrainian Armed Forces. In this way, her artistic gesture becomes a form of online activism.

---

**More:**

Read more about Zhanna Kadyrova’s project on Don’tTakeFake (in Ukrainian)

[donttakefake.com/hudozhnytsya-zhanna-kadyrova-stvoryla-novyj-proyekt-seriyu-nalipok-rosijskyh-raket](https://donttakefake.com/hudozhnytsya-zhanna-kadyrova-stvoryla-novyj-proyekt-seriyu-nalipok-rosijskyh-raket)

Friendly fundraisers on social media have become one of the most common ways to raise money for the front. Through online banking services, artists have been able to open auxiliary fundraisers, splitting a large target sum into smaller ones that several people collect simultaneously through their decentralized networks. Social media, especially Instagram, has become the main platform for spreading such initiatives. At the same time, artists use their work as gifts or hold auctions to encourage more significant donations to attract more people.

---

**Case:**

Artist Tamara Turliun has held many fundraisers on Instagram using her paper cutouts, custom lamps, or baking cakes to encourage donations. Like many of her peers, she used both raffle and auction methods, selling her work to help meet the needs of the military.

---

**Quote:**

Artist Tamara Turliun:

“I know some people in the military and many volunteers, whose fundraising efforts I try to join. I usually fundraise through art, often selling everything I can. I always try to use creativity, to choose something thematic and trendy. For example, add music, choose something that makes people feel good, to get their reaction. So I promised to make a pie and post my step-by-step making-of, sharing the recipe for this pie. I also used AI to generate images to attract people; for example, I generated a drone pie. I try to look for unconventional methods.”

If you plan to launch your small fundraiser on social media, communicate clearly. State what you are collecting for and who the funds will go to, and try to be as specific as possible. Include information about who the person is whose needs you plan to meet with the fundraiser—this will draw more empathy to your appeal. Add a photo to your post—selfies or your own photos are most effective. Take care of the fundraising report—publish a list of donors, photos, and receipts for purchases or transfers of funds for the stated need.

Another way to incorporate activism and volunteering into art is to use materials and equipment in your artwork, exhibitions, and projects that can be donated to the army or humanitarian needs after they have been dismantled—from wax paper, fabrics that can be used to weave camouflage nets, and tin cans for trench candles to laptops, flashlights, and even drones.



**Case:** In 2024, artist Maksym Khodak created the work *Emoji Peace Dove*, in which he critically comments on the superficial pacifism of foreign observers of the war, which, instead of real help, manifests itself in symbolic gestures of support—posts and comments on social networks with wishes for peace. Maksym’s work consists of a civilian DJI Mavic 3 drone, currently used by the military to survey the enemy, attached to a flyer depicting a peace dove. After the exhibition where the work was presented, the artist gave the drone to the unit where his friend and colleague serves. In this way, the work becomes not only a critical statement but also a form of help and solidarity, allowing us to critically rethink how, in times of crisis, we can redistribute our resources to support others without interrupting our professional activities.

**Case:** Tamara Turliun acts similarly, asking the institution to buy a large block of wax for her to produce her work. After the exhibition, Tamara will give the wax from her artwork to volunteers to make trench candles to keep the military warm in the winter.

**Quote:** Artist Tamara Turliun:  
“I made the artwork with wax specifically so that I could give the wax to volunteers for trench candles after the show. I try to make art so that it can be useful later.”

The logic of usefulness, however, is very difficult for artists to accept because art has historically fought for its autonomy and relative freedom from serving society. A fundamentally non-beneficial act sometimes becomes the very purpose of art. These were the concerns of artist and curator Clemens Poole, an American who lived and worked in Ukraine for several years before the full-scale invasion. When the war broke out, Clemens volunteered at the Polish border and later returned to Kyiv to launch the “Drones for Drones” initiative. The project releases cassette compilations of drone, noise, and ambient music by international and domestic artists and raises money to buy UAVs for musicians in the military.

**More:** Listen about Clemens Poole’s project on A Closer Listen podcast (in English)

[acloserlisten.com/2024/06/23/ukrainian-field-notes-xxxiv](https://acloserlisten.com/2024/06/23/ukrainian-field-notes-xxxiv)

**Quote:** Artist Clemens Poole:  
“Music became something I wanted to spend my time

with, there was no activist element to it at all. It was during the blackouts, I was working on my computer hotspotting my phone and then as soon as the power would come on I would be playing guitar for a little bit. This inversion of what I should be using electricity for, like power comes on and I start to do the most pointless thing imaginable, awful music that nobody wants to listen to, that nobody cares about and then as soon as the power goes off I’m like, ‘Okay back to work.’ I felt that it is ethically irresponsible but I started to think maybe it has an internal philosophical meaning, I needed something that was so shitty it was protected from ever being useful, the unlistenability becomes defense because everything else you do needs to be justified as useful and practical in this moment. Maybe this music is not the music you should be trying to raise money with, but I think of it as a zeitgeist in Ukraine—the noise scene is huge in Ukraine right now. Plus the idea that the sound of mechanized warfare changes our perceptions of sound.”



↑ Mykhailo Markin, *Hedgehog*, sculpture, ceramics, 2024.

→ Mykhailo Markin, *Alien Tanker*, sculpture, ceramics, 2023.





# Professional and Public Representation / Boycott / Dealing with Smear Campaigns

## Shifting priorities and challenges in cultural diplomacy.

War and crisis fundamentally reshape priorities in the cultural field. When society focuses on survival and recovery, culture is increasingly perceived as a tool of international diplomacy. Artists are compelled to take on representative roles that often resemble the duties of civil servants rather than creative practitioners. Advocating for societal and national interests becomes not only the task of cultural institutions but also an ethical challenge for the artists themselves. In a protracted conflict, there is no universal solution or single rulebook for action. Strategies evolve with changing circumstances both within the country and abroad. Every collaboration with international partners becomes a test: how to clearly articulate one's position, convincingly justify it, and choose the best strategy?

In such conditions, exchanging experiences with peers becomes a vital tool. It helps artists better understand themselves, shape their ideas, and respond more effectively to the challenges of the time. Despite all difficulties, artists also speak of the dangers they feel internally. Lessons drawn from this painful experience serve as a guide for future actions. They are a reminder of how to proceed so that culture remains a subject in its own right, even when it is often viewed as a tool of diplomacy.

### Quote:

Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:

“People abroad are doing what Ukraine should be doing but cannot do in full measure. You go around advocating for Ukraine's interests everywhere. You tell your new

friends that they shouldn't vote for pro-Russian parties because it's dangerous both for them and for us. Moreover, many highly qualified professionals are now working in areas where only Russians used to represent Eastern Europe. Russian rhetoric about the 'friendship of nations' and the Soviet Union dominated the academia, the circles where public opinion is shaped. Enter Ukrainians who are telling different stories now.”

Societal priorities and consensus about the role of culture are also shifting in favor of more direct social or therapeutic functions of the arts, including those that involve advocacy. This shift may affect the distribution of funding and public interest in certain artistic practices.

### Case:

At the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it was important for many cultural figures and institutions to minimize the Russian cultural presence at Western art venues, which resulted in various forms of boycotts, protests, and attempts to cancel Russian professionals' participation in festivals, exhibitions, and forums of national representation. Such reactions were intuitive for many, based on the reasoning that Russian cultural elites have repeatedly proven themselves incapable of confronting the violence of the Russian government and society and share responsibility for inaction during Russia's wars and military campaigns since the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, with the passage of time and the prolongation of the war, the effectiveness of cancellation as a tactic has raised more and more doubts and discussions within the community—there is currently no unified position in Ukraine on how to respond to Russian cultural representation abroad.

### Quote:

Artist Pavlo Makov:

“The democratic world has inherited and absorbed what we call Russian culture. It is important to realize with a cold mind that the boycott [of Russian culture] doesn't work. I used to do it myself. The 3Z Studio designers and I used to put up [#CancelRussia] posters in Venice during the Venice Biennale, but it was all emotion. Eventually, the emotions run out and you need common sense. It makes no sense for us to deny Russian culture because all Russian literature, music, fine arts—everything that Russia has been promoting for 300 years has become part of Europe's

identity. And we have to acknowledge it. That's why I think we need a different strategy. If we want to build a bridge [between us and the West], we need to pour millions into promoting Ukrainian culture and do so right now. Not to deny the Russian [culture] but to promote our own so that we become interesting. The war will end. What can we bring to the table to interest other societies?"

#### **Dialogue and cooperation with Russian cultural figures.**

Since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, invitations to Ukrainian cultural figures to participate in events abroad have often included dialogue or cooperation with Russian counterparts. In the view of many Western institutions, their role was to act as moderators of the conflict and create a space for dialogue. This model received much criticism and resistance in the cultural community in Ukraine, but no unified strategy for cooperation or non-cooperation was developed.

**Case:** The Ukrainian Institute, a diplomatic institution aimed at promoting Ukrainian culture internationally, has issued a call to suspend cooperation with Russia. The Institute does not participate in events where Russian and Belarusian officials are present and asks its delegates, representatives, and staff to adhere to this position during the Institute's events.

**Quote:** "The call for a temporary suspension of cooperation with Russian cultural figures and institutions is not intended to 'ban' Russian culture as a whole. Rather, it is a call to rethink and analyze its involvement in the broader political context, outside of which culture cannot exist."

**More:** Read the Ukrainian Institute's Call to Suspend Cultural Cooperation with Russia and International Presentation of Russian Culture here (in English)  
[ui.org.ua/en/news-en/stop-cooperation-with-russia-2](https://ui.org.ua/en/news-en/stop-cooperation-with-russia-2)

**Quote:** Creative Director of the Ukrainian Institute Tetyana Filevska:  
"Our position as a state institution is that we cannot take part in the same events with Russians, Belarusians, and Iranians. This does not mean that we cannot participate, for example, in a large festival with many participants. We have an algorithm that we developed at the beginning of the full-scale invasion on how to act. First of all, we

always warn our partners that Russians cannot be among the participants. If it suddenly turns out that they are, we start communicating, explaining, arguing that the Russians have always been in a privileged position, and at least now, when they are waging this aggressive war, it is not the time to give them the floor again. We try to be very unemotional and rational so that we are not accused of being traumatized."

**Quote:** During the two years of the full-scale invasion, curator Natalia Matsenko organized a series of cultural events and exhibitions of Ukrainian art in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Mexico, and other countries.

"I never had to get into situations where I would find out after the fact [about the Russians' involvement]. So, I always had the opportunity to just say no if I saw that something wasn't right. I always try to give a reasoned explanation. The word 'cancel' without additional explanation frightens liberal representatives of Western European culture because they immediately see totalitarianism, discrimination, and in fact everything that Russian propaganda accuses us of. Therefore, it is essential always to be prepared to provide a detailed justification of your position, explaining the cause-and-effect relationships that may not be obvious to foreign colleagues."

**Quote:** Artist Ivan Zhuk:

"I have a personal desire to avoid any interaction with Russians and I am literally sick of talking about their culture, especially when they support aggression and fight against innocent people. Dialogue can only begin with an apology, recognition of Ukrainian culture, and a serious examination of the horrors that grew out of Russian and Soviet culture. If a Russian artist recognizes this and experiments with new forms and meanings, I might agree to participate in an exhibition with him or her. But contemporary Russian culture is full of imperial symbols that need to be deconstructed."

If you are going to publicly debate the ban, boycott, or sanctions, prepare for a difficult conversation, formulate and write down the arguments reinforcing your position, think of historical examples and facts that will support your thesis, try to imagine possible

counterarguments to your thesis from your opponents, and prepare responses to them in advance. Prepare for the fact that this conversation may be emotionally draining and that your counterpart may be ill-informed about your situation or insensitive to your trauma.

---

**Tools:**

Decolonization. Selected Articles and Materials

[ui.org.ua/en/sectors-en/en-projects/decolonization-selected-articles-published-in-the-aftermath-of-russias-invasion-of-ukraine](https://ui.org.ua/en/sectors-en/en-projects/decolonization-selected-articles-published-in-the-aftermath-of-russias-invasion-of-ukraine)

---

**Quote:**

Curator Natalia Matsenko:

“You don’t have to reinvent the wheel every time—the other side’s arguments are often stereotypical. But it doesn’t get easier emotionally over time: even if you know exactly what to say, you become more and more vulnerable. I once had a discussion with the editor-in-chief of a Swiss newspaper. He attended a Ukrainian exhibition in Switzerland, which I co-curated, and wanted to argue about the great representatives of Russian culture and how there are no Ukrainian figures of the same caliber. I had an answer to his question. We talked about Malevich, about repressed and appropriated writers and artists. As a result of this conversation, he invited me to give a lecture at the university where he teaches and also said: ‘You’re doing pretty well for a person who lives through a war.’ It was cynical because he realized that this was a triggering issue, but he went on anyway. There are a lot of people who don’t care about our emotional state, who want to make us angry so that we show them this image of an unbalanced, traumatized Ukrainian. That’s why I try to keep my balance, to show that it’s not about emotions. We do not come to these conclusions because of trauma, and this is not the main reason for our unwillingness to cooperate with the Russians.”

---

**Case:**

For artist Kateryna Lysovenko, collaboration is possible if it is ethical. In September 2024, Lysovenko took part in the exhibition “The Assault of the Present on the Rest of Time” at the Schinkel Pavillon in Berlin curated by the Russian curator Katya Inozemtseva. The exhibition was criticized for the Russian curator’s failure to condemn Russia’s annexation of Crimea in a previous interview, and for appropriating a poem by the poet Victoria Amelina killed by a Russian missile by presenting it in a distorted

translation in the exhibition catalog. In the end, Kateryna Lysovenko and several other artists withdrew their works from the exhibition, and Lysovenko’s Ukrainian colleagues sharply criticized her.

---

**More:**

Read more about the case on Suspilne.Kultura (in Ukrainian)

[suspilne.media/culture/573125-prisvata-amelinij-ta-pitanna-krimu-comu-obgovoruut-dvi-vistavki-u-berlini-a-galerea-pibrala-imena-hudoznikov](https://suspilne.media/culture/573125-prisvata-amelinij-ta-pitanna-krimu-comu-obgovoruut-dvi-vistavki-u-berlini-a-galerea-pibrala-imena-hudoznikov)

---

**Quote:**

Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:

“I look at people—whether Russians or Belarusians—and talk to them. If someone is anti-war and non-imperialist, I can work with them. If, for example, they’re anti-war but hold imperialist views, I don’t work with them. I no longer work with Russians who didn’t particularly react to the [invasion] after 2014. [...] I didn’t use to check, but now I do—what the person has said, where they’ve been—because it’s also about my reputation. I also try to consult like-minded people if I have doubts. There are some people who don’t work with Belarusians or Russians at all. They have every right to that, and I understand it.”

---

**Quote:**

Artist Pavlo Makov:

“In the summer of 2022, I was approached by a well-known Viennese institution with a request for copyright permission to use my work as the main visual of an international conference. I agreed and asked for a copyright fee. They said yes, although they didn’t expect a Ukrainian artist to charge for it. Even though this is absolutely normal for any Western artist. But then I came to my senses and asked if there would be Russians at the conference. It was the summer of 2022 when the idea of canceling Russia raged in all of us. The organizers replied that the Russians would be there but they were against the war, against Putin. I refused. They wrote me a letter with honest confusion but my position was clear: ‘Invite whoever you want, it’s my right to refuse.’ But now let’s look at this problem from another side: the Russians came anyway, they talked to them, they saw them. They did not see Ukraine, though they could have seen it. And so the question for me was whether I did the right thing or the wrong thing. I still don’t know. On the one hand, I feel uncomfortable. But on the other hand, no one saw

Ukraine, I did not earn the money, of which I would have donated at least a quarter to the army. That means that not only I but also the army has lost.”

**Quote:**

Curator Natalia Matsenko:

“There is a lack of a clear state strategy: It is strange to be engaged in rational ‘cancellation’ and then see how [Russian] Marat Gelman is allowed to take part in the Free Russia Forum in Lviv. It’s one thing when the Defense Intelligence of Ukraine uses Russians on the territory of Russia for its work. Or when Russians fight for Ukrainian independence. But in the cultural sphere, everything works differently. This is a public sphere, and without sufficient caution, one can inadvertently become a tool in yet another imperialist project.”

**Case:**

Beyond boycotts and protests, there may be more inventive ways to reject the policy of dialogue and co-participation with the Russians. In the summer of 2022, artists Kateryna Aliinyk, Clemens Poole, and critic Milena Khomchenko held a performance intervention during a residency in support of Ukrainians at the tranzit.sk gallery (Slovakia). The group developed a presentation on the state of the Ukrainian art scene after several months of full-scale war with Russia. In response to the presence of the Russian art group Chto Delat at the tranzit.sk exhibition (the exhibition opened on April 29, 2022, long after the Russian invasion of Ukraine), the Ukrainian participants used the sound from Chto Delat’s video work, which was played loudly during the presentation to interrupt and drown out the words of the Ukrainian artists. This was a response to the imbalance of Russian and Ukrainian voices on international art platforms and the priority given to Russian artists by institutions.

**More:**

Read more about “VOICES FROM THE UKRAINIAN ART SCENE” here (in English)

[clemenspoole.com/22-07-13-Voices-from-the-Ukrainian-Art-Scene](https://clemenspoole.com/22-07-13-Voices-from-the-Ukrainian-Art-Scene)

**Quote:**

Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:

“The problem is that some anti-war Russians are building careers off this. They’re being asked to stay silent, to step back, to give space to others, but they continue to work and speak out. Meanwhile, those with a conscience and heart, who could genuinely speak the truth about

their regime and criticize it, have gone silent because Ukrainians said that all Russians should stay silent. As a result, the people who could actually contribute and take meaningful action are silent, while the opportunists speak endlessly. Artists need to show solidarity with those who genuinely critique the regime and distance themselves from imperialists who try to present themselves as the main victims.”

The question of professional interaction with a party that represents or is formally associated with the enemy remains a personal ethical decision. In deciding whether or not to engage in such cooperation or contact, consider the benefits to you and how it relates to your political position and strategies. Consider the extent to which such cooperation could undermine your reputation and the risks to your future career in your home country and professional communication with colleagues. Consider whether such cooperation allows you to maintain your agency and speak as a subject, not an object, and whether such dialogue would be traumatic for you.

**Quote:**

Artist Pavlo Makov:

“The only safeguard is your own conscience. Take part if you think it’s acceptable, and if it’s not, don’t. It seems to me that there is no other safety measure. Just like with most of our actions in this life.”

The lack of a unified position in the community can lead to a sense of insecurity and confusion because, in times of crisis, the sense of belonging to the community comes to the fore and becomes a form of protection and survival. In such circumstances, self-censorship and atomization of the community increase.

**Quote:**

Creative Director of the Ukrainian Institute Tetyana Filevska:

“In fact, the discord within the community is even harder than the encounter with the Russians. At first, we felt that we had a community, solidarity, and support inside, and when it broke up, everyone felt very vulnerable. The lack of a common position weakened us in every way. There were many internal conversations about how we should reconsider these approaches and create a ‘white-list’ [of Russians], but none of these conversations ended in anything. We could not come to an agreement. This



led to some people losing the opportunity to speak out of fear of being hated.”

**Quote:**

Curator Natalia Matsenko:

“On the one hand, one person’s consent to cooperate with the Russians negates the efforts of many other people. On the other hand, the consequences that this has in society are also quite monstrous, and there is a sense of disunity. Given that we already have quite toxic professional communities, these situations also resulted in active social condemnation, which sometimes led to bullying. But we cancel Russians, not Ukrainians. Before canceling Ukrainians, we should first delve into the nuances of each specific situation. Otherwise, we risk canceling each other entirely—and losing the war in the process.”

**Quote:**

Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:

“The problem is that you find yourself in a situation of cyberbullying, receiving both fair and constructive criticism as well as accusations of being a collaborator, a traitor who sold out your homeland. People write whatever comes to their mind. In a totalitarian society, there is uniformity of opinion, whereas in democratic communities, there are different approaches, different positions, which can often conflict with one another. Many Ukrainian artists supported me simply out of the principle that people have a right to make mistakes and to hold differing opinions. [...] We’ve developed a ‘correct’ public language and a more private, intimate one—the kind used in close circles. The danger of having only one ‘correct’ opinion is that some people who crave power will live as they wish but still dictate how to live to others. If artists have any kind of social function, it’s to prevent societies from sliding into authoritarianism and to always criticize power.”

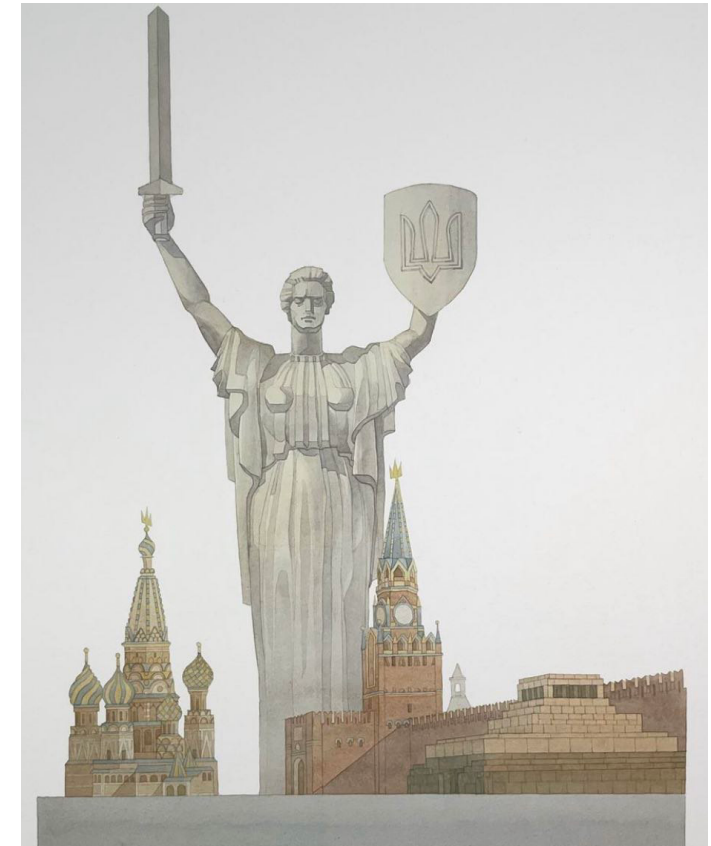
**Quote:**

Creative Director of the Ukrainian Institute Tetyana Filevska:

“I think our value is precisely that we remain a free society and everyone can make their own decisions. Even if we make some kind of joint decision, it should be an individual responsibility.”

## Decolonization and the Status of Artists from Postcolonial Countries

With the outbreak of a full-scale war, Ukrainians became more aware of their oppressed and colonial position vis-à-vis Russia. For a long time, Ukrainian culture had been dependent on Russian policy, which manifested itself in the imposition of certain canons, the subjugation of Ukrainian cultural heritage, and the marginalization of Ukrainian identity. In response, artists and cultural workers began to actively use the methods of decolonial theory. They analyzed how imperial ideology influenced cultural identity and created new narratives that emphasized the uniqueness of the Ukrainian experience. This gave impetus to the restoration of their cultural agency and the struggle for adequate representation on the international stage.



→ Pavlo Velychko,  
*Berehynya of Kyiv*,  
watercolor on paper,  
2022. From UMCA  
(Ukrainian Museum of  
Contemporary Art)  
collection

An important component of this struggle has been the denial of the victimization that war imposes on all spheres of life, including culture. Ukrainian artists seek to avoid the role of victim and instead present themselves as active creators of a new cultural landscape. At the same time, the war has exposed the problems of Western institutions, which often continue to function in a colonial hierarchical model. This calls for a decolonial revision of both the way they work with their collections and the optics with which contemporary curators, museum professionals, and art theorists operate, which will allow them to rethink their approach to countries that have long remained on the periphery of the global cultural map.

When it comes to cooperation and participation in international projects outside of Ukraine, the ethical component of preparation is also important: how well you as a participant are informed about the project as a whole; its organizers' vision, values, and public stance; other participants; and aspects of the project's representation. For this cooperation to have a positive effect, it is important that both parties show respect and solidarity, and have the opportunity for free communication and empathy.

---

**Quote:**

Creative Director of the Ukrainian Institute Tetyana Filevska:

"The most important criterion is the ability to overcome imperialism. It is very difficult to identify it. Saying 'war is bad' is not enough. It's not what a person says but what they do and how they do it. The 'great Russian culture' is part of the imperial narrative. If you continue to reproduce this imperialist approach, it's a problem. Here 'Russian' does not mean ethnic origin, but imperialist, chauvinist, colonizer, and aggressor. [...] In these situations, it is always important to build trust through a mutual acquaintance, through ethical approaches, when you are informed, when your opinion is asked, and you are asked how you will feel."

---

**Quote:**

Curator Natalia Matsenko:

"Equating the Ukrainian and Russian experiences is yet another danger and a very unpleasant issue that Ukrainians abroad might face. I've had to explain the fundamental difference between these experiences, as sometimes individuals and even entire institutions genuinely don't understand. They often sincerely sympathize with Russian dissidents just as much as with Russian emigrants,

believing that they are victims of the war in the same way as Ukrainians. This leads to providing Russians with platforms and resources meant for those affected by the Russian-Ukrainian war."

When participating in international projects that have political support for Ukraine in their agenda, it is worth paying attention to some details and markers to achieve effective representation and protect your reputation from unwanted criticism.

If you are participating in a group exhibition, pay attention to who else is participating and whether their position is the same as yours. Check who is funding the project or institution and whether there are donors with a problematic reputation. Check the curator's previous practice and if necessary, ask about their position on representation, their motivation to work with this topic, and the depth of their understanding of the subject. Pay attention to the curatorial text for the exhibition: Does it directly address the parties to the conflict or does it try to smooth out the corners and neutrally describe the situation? Does it contain political appeals with which you disagree? Check the captions to the works in the exhibition: Is your name transliterated correctly? Is your city and country of origin indicated correctly?

---

**Quote:**

Artist Pavlo Makov:

"I was born in Saint Petersburg and this is sometimes manipulated. Sometimes I am marked as a Russian artist on foreign websites. My lawyer contacts them and we stop this. But you have to keep an eye on it and fight against it all the time."

Sometimes the inclusion of city and country may indicate that you are being instrumentalized as a participant. Pay attention to whether the same system of representation is applied to you and other participants. For example, if your Western colleagues are represented by institutions they belong to or by the expertise they possess while you are represented by your country of origin, it is worth inquiring whether the organizers objectify you as a "Ukrainian voice" / voice from the crisis. Be aware that if there is an increased interest in artists from the conflict zone, many will expect you to speak on behalf of the whole community or nation. Analyze how this perception will affect what you want to say and consider this context.

The team of the Ukrainian Institute advises to be cautious when communicating with the media: be careful not to give comments to representatives of the Russian media, check the reputation of the publication with which you are going to communicate, and see how they have covered similar topics before. If possible, clarify the topic and details of the story or publication in advance, find out the questions to be discussed, and ask to proofread the interview before publication or to verify quotes.

#### Tools:

What's Wrong With Art "For Peace"? A Memo for Ukrainian Artists Abroad

[ui.org.ua/en/news-en/whats-wrong-with-art-for-peace-2](https://ui.org.ua/en/news-en/whats-wrong-with-art-for-peace-2)

**Counteracting the “victim artist” label.** When the crisis is global, voices from the region of crisis become visible to many people simply because of where they come from. Attention to artists in such moments is often conditioned primarily by their identity and traumatic experience, rather than by their art or professional interests.

#### Quote:

Artist Kateryna Lysovenko:

“Artists are a somewhat privileged group. After all, most artists had better conditions as refugees than ordinary people. [Artists] were quickly integrated into the infrastructure. Everyone wanted to help us and give us the opportunity to speak. As a result, yet another generation of artists has reached the international level. It’s sad that this only happens for us in moments of great upheaval. If you analyze it, all our artists who are visible on the international stage didn’t get there in the gradual, normal way (through sustained interest and institutional collaboration). Our first wave of artists became known when the Soviet Union collapsed because that was the trend at the time. Then came a series of revolutions, bringing new generations to the forefront. In Ukraine, it’s almost impossible to survive as an artist without a connection to the international market. Our local market is very small; it can’t cover the cost of studio rent, housing, and living expenses.”

In this case, it is important for artists to first understand the

conditions under which you are being offered professional support or invited to a conversation—to determine whether the proposed collaboration has a place for the exchange of your professional experience and expertise, or whether the emphasis is on the affective experience of going through a crisis.

#### Quote:

Artist and curator Clemens Poole:

“[Wartime] artwork seems to be chasing down a very specific idea of what an image is supposed to do during war. It’s like you show me a dead soldier and I don’t care, so you show two dead soldiers but still I don’t care, what if I show you a dead child, what if I show you ten dead children... It is an addictive idea of how to make people care about things but this makes me question whether it is a kind of propagandistic approach to art-making. I think it does work for a lot of people, there’s a lot of people in the world for whom an image of the most anguished and suffering person on the planet means giving \$10 more when they knock on their door and ask for money. Obviously, it works. The problem is with the assumption that space of sympathy is limited, that people need to fight over like there’s only this much sympathy space.”

→ Denys Salivanov,  
*Safe Place*, oil on canvas,  
2022. From UMCA  
(Ukrainian Museum of  
Contemporary Art)  
collection





Think about how the proposed collaboration will allow you to promote your own interests and values from an agency perspective. Be wary of generalizations about your country or community that you hear from others or use yourself.

**Quote:**

Artist and curator Clemens Poole:

“The minute you say that our main historical narrative is this narrative of victimhood you lose so much. I don’t agree with the idea that Ukrainians should push to establish themselves as victims, I think Ukraine is legitimate without people victimizing it. Emphasizing victimhood is a slippery slope.”

## Aspects of Cooperation Abroad

It is important to consider the context of the country where you participate in a project. Avoid mentioning controversial topics, national stereotypes, or points of historical tension, research what the local society knows about your country and your art, and familiarize yourself with the country’s art and culture.

**Quote:**

Curator Natalia Matsenko:

“Of course, attention to Ukrainian culture and art has grown a lot. And with that comes the danger of instrumentalization. Sometimes the invitation of Ukrainian artists, curators, and speakers can look like a mere formality or a tool for obtaining a grant. Such situations have been rare, though. [...] Speaking about challenges, the threat is when [an invitation to collaborate] conceals certain information. If the invitation mentions right away that, for example, there will be this pool of speakers, or that this curator has this background, you can immediately articulate your position, talk about it, and make an appropriate decision. But I’ve heard of cases where, already understanding how Ukrainians might react, organizers concealed the fact that someone from Russia would be present, and then it surfaced during the project.”

**Quote:**

Artist Pavlo Makov:

“Something needs to be done at the state level. If today there were enough Ukrainian events organized by

Ukraine abroad, I wouldn’t have to decide whether to participate [in events with Russians] or not. My own events would be enough for me. Artists do not need the state, but the state needs artists. Art is the eyes of the state. We must quickly [allocate money] for Ukraine’s representation abroad, for showcasing the state as a cultural community because the war will end and all interest will [disappear]. Our window of opportunity is already closing and if we don’t step into this gap and try to expand this window, we will just be a wild field with a good army defending Europe from an invasion from the East. I don’t want that kind of future for myself.”



↑ Elena Subach, *Untitled from Hidden series*, c-print, 2022. From UMCA (Ukrainian Museum of Contemporary Art) collection



If you want to represent your country culturally and collaborate with colleagues abroad, make sure you have the right tools: improve your English and other languages, create an English version of your personal website, and translate your portfolio.

**Quote:**

Creative Director of the Ukrainian Institute Tetyana Filevska:  
“The resources we have are incomparable to those in the West. In order to cooperate, we need to better understand how these institutions work, to understand this system.”

**Quote:**

Curator Natalia Matsenko:  
“We need to develop strategies, and of course, these strategies should include an understanding of instability and unpredictability of circumstances. But it is not just a question of what we should do. I try to communicate this when I work with colleagues abroad—they need to change as well. Because the challenges we face are largely the challenges the world faces. One of the most important things for successful cooperation is a common temporality: our dynamics, speed, and planning need to coincide. On the one hand, we need to have a strategy; on the other, they need to accelerate. This situation highlighted how unprepared our colleagues can also be for challenges, stuck in their relaxed schedule, where they believe they can afford to plan several years ahead. Yet, in reality,



**Quote:**

Creative Director of the Ukrainian Institute Tetyana Filevska:  
“At the beginning of the full-scale invasion we had to show our solidarity, these were one-off actions in support of Ukraine. Every institution did something, hung a flag, organized an exhibition, but then the institutions that are sustainable think strategically. Why should we start working with a region about which we know nothing, do not understand its prospects, actors, and have no representatives? So far I don’t see any deep interest on their part: Ukraine is an additional investment, and there is almost no motivation to develop sustainable cooperation with Ukraine. We continue to work with those we already knew [before].”

Think about the key messages and insights you are willing to share in a collaboration. Try to find common ground and themes that transcend your experience and resonate with the experiences of your international colleagues. Don’t overlook the opportunity to add your individual perspective to the broader discussion.

**Quote:**

Curator Natalia Matsenko:  
“The need for ‘emergency’ solidarity to some extent has been fulfilled. Now, we need to understand what it means to collaborate for mutual benefit as equal partners. One of the great tools is the practice of artists. Many people who attended our exhibition in Brussels had never seen Ukrainian art in their lives and they were genuinely surprised that there were works they really liked. We have to work very hard to make people stop being surprised. Ukraine has some cool content to offer. It is crucial now, taking advantage of our unfortunate window of opportunity, to make the world—our audiences and partners—understand this. I believe this is our strength, rooted in our complex history and turbulent life, but not only that. Western institutions should not feel like mere donors; there should be an exchange.”

← Vladyslav Riaboshan, *Subway in Kharkiv*, acrylic on canvas, 160x210 cm, 2023. Courtesy: the artist.

# Conclusion

This document is not so much a guide to action as a companion to navigate through extreme unpredictability such as war. Its flexible structure recognizes that in a situation where almost nothing can be predicted, universal advice may not be effective. The aim of this document is not to provide one-size-fits-all solutions, but to share the experiences of those who have been through a crisis, and sometimes several, in the belief that living voices speaking from the frontier of experience can be more useful than dry advice from a place of relative safety. Most importantly, this publication is designed to help you imagine a crisis before it happens, so that you can not only prepare for the worst but also protect yourself from it.

The current war has made it very clear that the safety of artists is not limited to physical survival. The document touches on a wide range of situations: from emergency evacuation and survival in occupation to organizing exhibitions in broken houses, to issues of international dialogue and ethical responsibility. These stories vary in their drama and absurdity, but they all point to the need for a common understanding of the challenges of crisis.

This publication does not claim to be exhaustive, as the variety of issues facing the Ukrainian cultural community cannot be covered in a single document. It can be supplemented in the future, and related issues can be explored in greater depth: How to bridge the gap between evacuated artists and those who stayed behind or joined the army; how to adapt to the emergency aid system; how to resist the use of culture as a propaganda tool; how to conduct commemoration in an ethical and inclusive manner.

The answers to these challenges are still being formed, but they are the key to survival. And that survival entails, not only the physical safety of individuals, but also the preservation and development of a community capable of creating its own culture, even in times of war.



↑ Lesia Synychenko, *500 kilos of despair near my windows in Chernihiv*, *The Morphing* series, diptych, paper, acrylics, tape, 2022.

**ARC**  
**[artistsatriskconnection.org](http://artistsatriskconnection.org)**

**MOCA NGO**  
**[moca.org.ua/en/main](http://moca.org.ua/en/main)**

**Wartime Art Archive**  
**[waa.umca.art/en](http://waa.umca.art/en)**

**UMCA**  
**[umca.art/en](http://umca.art/en)**

**Ukrainian Institute**  
**[ui.org.ua/en](http://ui.org.ua/en)**

**Raphael Lemkin Society**  
**[lemkin.org.ua](http://lemkin.org.ua)**

**HeMo: Ukrainian Heritage  
Monitoring Lab**  
**[heritage.in.ua/en](http://heritage.in.ua/en)**