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Марія Трив

Foundation to Preserve Ukraine's Sacral Arts Welcomes Ukraine's Monuments Officers to the U.S.

Martha Jarosewich-Holder, Branch 78, Washington, DC



Photo: Ukraine House

Ukraine's Ambassador to the U.S. Oksana Markarova and the first cohort of Ukraine's Monuments Officers.

The Foundation to Preserve Ukraine's Sacral Arts (FTPUSA) together with the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI) welcomed Ukraine's first cohort of Monuments Officers at a reception held at Ukraine House in Washington, DC, on August 22. Over 100 guests attended the event, including Ukraine's Ambassador to the U.S. Oksana Markarova, Smithsonian Distinguished Scholar and Ambassador-at-Large Dr. Richard Kurin, and UNWLA Branch 78 President Irena Chalupa. UNWLA members who are active supporters of the Foundation were also in attendance.

The Foundation is grateful to the UNWLA and welcomes its support as we share a common mission to preserve, protect, and advocate for Ukrainian cultural heritage. Specifically, FTPUSA's mission is to train local craftsmen to preserve Ukrainian churches and sacral arts, and to serve as a catalyst for transferring

expertise on heritage protection to forgotten and less fortunate communities. Since March 2, 2022, FTPUSA has been the U.S. partner to the Lviv-based Center to Rescue Ukraine's Cultural Heritage.

A few examples of the Foundation's work include the restoration of the "gonty," or wooden shingles, of a wooden church built in 1670 in Stariy Yar, Yavoriv region, and the restoration of an iconostasis from the 1800s in Velyka Bilyna, Sambir region. Since the war began, with the help of the Center to Rescue Ukraine's Cultural Heritage, FTPUSA has distributed 440 water-mist fire extinguishers to Ukraine's historic wooden churches — including eight UNESCO World Heritage List Wooden Tserkvas of the Carpathian Region in Poland and Ukraine — in a project with the World Monuments Fund (WMF) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).

Efforts to protect, preserve, and advocate for Ukraine's cultural heritage are vital to Ukraine's survival. Six members of the Ukrainian military joined military members from the U.S., U.K., France, and Poland for the weeklong (August 21-25) Army Monuments Officer Training (AMOT) program organized by the Smithsonian and the U.S. Army in partnership with the departments of State, Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security.

The training focused on the military's responsibility to implement the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in Times of Armed



Photo: Adrian Gawdiak

Officers from the U.S., U.K., France, Poland, and Ukraine at Ukraine House.

Conflict. Participants in the week-long AMOT program also learned new techniques and methods of evaluating significant cultural objects, and how to document the details of their destruction. The training of these officers builds on the history of the efforts to recover art stolen during World War II, popularized by Robert M. Edsel, author of *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History*, which subsequently became a blockbuster Hollywood movie in 2014.

At the reception at Ukraine House, FTPUSA President Khristina Lew welcomed guests and spoke of the work of the Foundation, including its latest project in support of the Church of Yuri the Victorious, located on the military base of the Vinnytsia National Guard of Ukraine.

In her remarks, Ambassador Markarova noted that “Russia attacks our freedom, independence, homes, land — but also our identity, culture, and Ukrainianism. Recent missile strikes of the Russian Federation on the historical and cultural centers of Odesa, Chernihiv, Lviv, and other cities prove that not only the cultural heritage of Ukraine, but also the world is under threat.”

Dr. Kurin spoke of the importance of protecting Ukraine’s cultural heritage in a time of war and the Smithsonian’s part in doing so. He founded SCRI after Haiti’s 2010 earthquake and has worked to save cultural heritage endangered by natural disasters and human conflict around the world.

SCRI’s mission is to protect cultural heritage threatened or impacted by disasters and to help U.S. and international communities preserve their identities and history. SCRI communicates with in-country contacts who have completed the training “First Aid for Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis.” SCRI continues its work with the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab, together with its research partnership at the Virginia Museum of Natural History, which uses geospatial information system data to assess damage to cultural sites. Throughout its efforts, SCRI remains in active contact with its interagency partner, the Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee, which is chaired by the U.S. Department of State and continues to facilitate the sharing of data and knowledge.

At the welcoming reception, Khristina Lew presented Ambassador Markarova with a painting by Ukrainian poet and artist Serhij Tatchyn, and explained its significance. Tatchyn volunteered for the National Guard of Ukraine in the first days of the Russian invasion, taking part in military operations in the Donetsk region. He was wounded in action, and

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Photo: Ukraine House

Khristina Lew, President of the Foundation to Preserve Ukraine’s Sacral Arts (r), presents Ambassador Markarova with a painting by Ukrainian poet and artist Serhij Tatchyn.



Photo: Jeremy Norwood/Smithsonian Institution

From left: Kateryna Smaglyi, First Secretary, Public & Cultural Diplomacy, Community Relations, Embassy of Ukraine in the U.S.; FTPUSA President Khristina Lew; Smithsonian Distinguished Scholar and Ambassador-at-Large Richard Kurin; FTPUSA Board Secretary Martha Jarosewich-Holder.



Photo: Martha Jarosewich-Holder

AMOT graduation.



Photo: Serhij Tatchyn

Church of Yuri the Victorious, located on the military base of the Vinnytsia National Guard of Ukraine.

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awarded the Military Service to Ukraine and Cross of Freedom medals.

Lt. Tatchyn leads a team of four soldiers who are painting the interior frescoes and icons of the Church of Yuri the Victorious, FTPUSA's latest project. The team of three men and one woman are all artists who saw combat and were wounded defending Ukraine.

At the AMOT graduation, which took place at the National Museum of the American Indian on August 25, Ambassador Markarova emphasized that for Ukraine, whose cultural identity is being destroyed by Russia, cooperation with international institutions that document war crimes in the cultural sphere is extremely important. She also noted that, according to UNESCO, 284 objects have been damaged in Ukraine since February 24, 2022, and cultural losses as a result of Russia's war amount to close to \$7 billion.

The Foundation to Preserve Ukraine's Sacral Arts (ftpusa.org) is a 501(c)(3) public charity based in Washington, DC. Martha Jarosewich-Holder is Secretary of the Board of the Foundation, and an active member of Branch 78 in Washington, DC.