

Sacred Heritage on View (Wrocław, 18–20 Jun 26)

Wrocław, Poland, Jun 18–20, 2026

Deadline: Jan 5, 2026

Agata Kubala

Sacred Heritage on View. Religious and Post-Religious Museums of the Modern Era.

Artefacts associated with religious worship form a significant part of the collections held by numerous types of museums. The Institute of Art History at the University of Wrocław, in collaboration with the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław, invites you to participate in a conference devoted to museums that focus on collecting objects of religious heritage and regard their public presentation as a central aspect of their mission.

The inspiration for organising the conference is the reopening of the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław. Following several years of renovation, this Catholic institution, with a history spanning over 120 years, was reopened to the public in 2024 with a completely renewed exhibition. While wishing to situate the Wrocław museum within the context of comparable institutions, we do not, however, intend to restrict the thematic scope of the conference to the sphere of Catholic or Christian collections. On the contrary, we aim to encourage a broader discussion concerning the collection and display of sacred heritage from a variety of religions and denominations, undertaken by different types of museums.

Our primary focus is on museums operating within the organisational structures of various religious denominations, as well as those managed by entities identifying with religious teachings. We are also interested in former places of worship and prayer (including temples, churches, synagogues, mosques, and others) which, no longer serving religious functions, have been transformed into museums dedicated to the preservation and presentation of sacred heritage in as integral a form as possible. It is primarily with such institutions in mind that we have used the term 'post-religious museums' in the title of the conference. We also propose including in this category various types of secular institutions which, having no religious agenda per se, collect and exhibit artefacts once used in worship and present their histories to audiences in a secularising world.

The main issues we wish to discuss are:

- the musealisation of objects used for worship within religious and post-religious museums – between secularisation and the preservation of (the illusion of) sanctity
- the role and functioning of former places of worship converted into museums – the theatrum sacrum in the era of secularisation
- works of art, objects of artistic craftsmanship, archaeological and ethnographic artefacts, etc. – the diversity of collections in religious and post-religious museums and the methods of their classification
- monoreligious museums versus those collecting the heritage of various religions and denominations

- non-religious (secular) objects in the collections of religious and post-religious museums – the reasons for their acquisition and their place in relation to the dominant sacred exhibits
- buildings of religious and post-religious museums in relation to the traditions of sacred and museum architecture – their ideological programmes, formal characteristics, and functional solutions.

In addition, a separate panel is planned, devoted to the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław. We invite contributions examining the history, profile, and collections of this institution, as well as its position within the wider context of other Catholic diocesan museums.

The topics to be addressed at the conference fall within the scope of interest of a range of academic disciplines and research traditions. Accordingly, we aim for our meeting to be interdisciplinary in nature. We invite specialists in art history, museology, cultural and religious studies, archaeology, heritage studies, and related fields to participate in the conference.

Proposals that do not directly address the issues identified above are also welcome.

Presentations should last no longer than 20 minutes. The official language of the conference is English.

Organising institutions

The University of Wrocław Institute of Art History

The Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław

Conference venues

The Institute of Art History, ul. Szewska 36, Wrocław

The Archdiocesan Museum, pl. Katedralny 16, Wrocław

Submission guidelines

Contribution proposals, including a 200-word abstract and a short biographical note, should be emailed by 5 January 2026 to agata.kubala@uwr.edu.pl and joanna.lubos-koziel@uwr.edu.pl

Notification of acceptance of contributions will be sent by 15 February 2026.

Conference fee

The conference fee is €150 and €120 for PhD candidates. The fee includes meals (lunch Thu–Sat, dinner Thu–Fri) and conference materials.

Post-conference publication

After the conference, selected papers will be published in a double-blind peer-reviewed volume.

Organising committee

Dr hab. prof. UWrocław Agata Kubala (University of Wrocław Institute of Art History)

Dr Joanna Lubos-Koziel (University of Wrocław Institute of Art History)

Dr Milena Woźniak-Koch (University of Gdańsk Institute of Art History)

Scientific Committee:

Prof. Mgr. Ondřej Jakubec, Ph.D. (Masaryk University Art History Department)

Dr hab. prof. UW Hubert Kowalski (University of Warsaw Faculty of Archaeology)

Dr Zvi Orgad (Bar Ilan University Department of Jewish Art)

Dr hab. prof. UWrocław Renata Tańczuk (University of Wrocław Institute of Cultural Studies)

For updates, including detailed information on the conference venues and programme, please check the website:

<https://historiasztuki.uni.wroc.pl/Instytut-Historii-Sztuki/Badania-menu-dolne/Konferencje>

Reference:

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