Ukrainian Art History: Working Through Uncertainties (Paris, 4–5 Mar 27)

Institut national d'histoire, Paris, Mar 4–05, 2027
Deadline: Nov 8, 2026

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Ukrainian art history has been shaped by successive waves of political disruption, which affected both the objects available for study and the infrastructures and institutions through which knowledge was produced. Taking the Ukrainian context as a starting point, this conference asks how art history can engage with fragmented archives, contested cultural memory, under-documented artistic practices, and forms of knowledge that exceed institutional frameworks.

Rather than proposing a unified narrative, the project develops plural methodological approaches for addressing uncertainty, rupture, and epistemic instability as constitutive conditions of art historical research. By treating these conditions of knowledge as objects of inquiry in their own right, the conference moves beyond canonical narratives toward a critical examination of the contexts that determine historical legibility. It thus seeks to examine the conditions under which certain artistic practices, artists, exhibitions, and cultural histories become visible and historically legible, while others remain marginalised, forgotten, censored, or excluded from institutional archives and dominant art-historical narratives. By addressing these gaps and complexities, the project opens an interdisciplinary dialogue between art history, visual culture studies, memory studies, decolonial theory, and media studies.

The conference therefore asks:

- What happens to art-historical knowledge when the archives, institutions, objects, and narratives on which it relies become unstable, displaced, or destroyed?
- How do political regimes, institutions, and infrastructures shape the discipline of art history in Ukraine and the categories through which art histories are written?
- What circumstances render certain artistic practices historically legible while others remain obscured?
- How are memories of the past shaped, contested, and reconfigured through artistic practices and historical narratives?
- How do images and visual practices shape the way violence is presented, concealed, legitimised, or contested?
- In what ways do cultural objects and knowledge persist outside institutional archives and dominant narratives?

These questions are intended to be addressed through concrete artistic, archival, institutional, and historiographical cases rooted in the Ukrainian context. The conference welcomes contributions

that bring theoretical and methodological approaches into dialogue with specific artworks, artistic practices, exhibitions, archives, institutions, and other historically situated materials.

THEMES
The conference itself is structured around four thematic panels:

- Politics and Practices of Memory and Forgetting
This panel examines processes of erasure, omission, appropriation, and recontextualisation related to imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet legacies, as well as contemporary engagements with the past in Ukraine. It explores how political regimes reshape the meanings and uses of artworks, monuments, archives, and historical narratives, while also considering artistic practices that challenge official memory politics.

- Violence and Visuality
This panel explores violence in the Ukrainian context, not only as a subject of representation, but also as a condition embedded within visual regimes. It examines how images and visual practices shape the ways violence is seen, represented, concealed, and made intelligible, including through censorship, propaganda, and other forms of control over what can be shown. It also considers how images participate in the production of ideological imaginaries and structures of domination, as well as how artistic practices disrupt established modes of seeing through counter-images, alternative visualities, and strategies that question the spectacularisation and instrumentalisation of violence.

- Apocryphal Histories
This panel examines artistic practices and forms of knowledge that have persisted outside institutional archives and official narratives in Ukraine, including oral histories, ephemeral interventions, undocumented artworks, artist-run initiatives, and marginalised artistic figures preserved through memory and testimony. It mobilises methodologies from artistic research, oral history, counter-archival studies, and research into self-organised artistic communities. It asks how such practices and forms of knowledge can help reconstruct histories that remain absent from institutional archives and dominant narratives.

- Ruptures and Continuities of Art-Historical Writing
This panel investigates how successive political transformations have reshaped the institutions, methodologies, categories, and practices through which Ukrainian art history has been studied and written. It also traces continuities across periods often understood as radical historical breaks, asking how art history in Ukraine, both as a discipline and a profession, has responded to political transitions and historiographical instability.

APPLICATION
The conference invites contributions from researchers, scholars, visual artists, curators and cultural professionals at any stage of their careers, working across disciplines and approaches that critically engage with Ukrainian art history.

SUBMISSION
To apply, applicants must submit a single PDF containing:

- A paper proposal (max. 200 words), indicating the preferred panel
- A short bio (max. 100 words)
- Keywords

Papers must be presented in French or English.
Applications must be submitted to: methodologyseminar@gmail.com
Deadline: 8 November 2026
Selection results: mid-November 2026

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION
Travel, accommodation, and per diem expenses for selected participants will be fully covered.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
- Edit András (Institute of Art History, Budapest);
- Mathilde Arnoux (Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, Paris) ;
- Marion Boudon-Machuel (Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris) ;
- Iryna Klymenko (Research Centre Ukraine – Max Weber Foundation, Lviv) ;
- Valerie Mavridorakis (Sorbonne Université, Paris) ;
- Tristan Weddigen (Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Rome).

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
- Kateryna Filyuk (IZOLYATSIA. Platform for Cultural Initiatives);
- Oksana Karpovets (Sorbonne Université);
- Lesia Kulchynska (University of Amsterdam);
- Oleksandra Osadcha (Museum of the Kharkiv School of Photography).

PARTNERSHIP
The conference is organised by the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA), Paris, in collaboration with Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Rome, Research Centre Ukraine – Max Weber Foundation, Lviv, the Institut français, Paris, and the Ukrainian Institute in France, Paris.

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