

**PROTECTING PORTABLE HERITAGE DURING WAR:
A COMPARATIVE EXAMINATION OF THE APPROACHES IN ITALY DURING WORLD WAR TWO
AND IN UKRAINE DURING THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF 2022**

Cathleen Hoeniger

***Захист рухомої спадщини під час війни:
порівняльний аналіз підходів в Італії під час Другої світової війни
та в Україні під час російського вторгнення 2022 року***

Кетлін Гьонігер

У відповідь на нагальну потребу захисту культурної спадщини в Україні після російського вторгнення ця стаття досліджує нещодавно прийняті в Україні підходи до захисту рухомих об'єктів, надаючи розширене порівняння з методами, які використовувалися в Італії під час Другої світової війни. Досліджено три складові процедури охорони рухомих об'єктів: попереднє планування через створення списків музейних колекцій для визначення пріоритетів охорони; вибір і підготовка сховищ для укриття об'єктів; та роботи з пакування та переміщення упакованих предметів на депозити. Також звертається увага на перешкоди, які виникли під час Другої світової війни в Італії, які перешкоджали захисту рухомої спадщини. Мета – перевірити, чи зустрічалися в Україні ті самі проблеми та чи вдалося їх обійти, або ні. Хоча труднощі захисту спадщини під час конфлікту зрозумілі, навіть у випадку переносних матеріалів спадщини, це порівняння останніх методів в Україні з роботою в Італії на початку 1940-х років підкреслює продовження використання традиційних методів, хоча й з адаптацією, оскільки вони є ефективними. Однак деякі з тих самих перешкод також зберігаються, що свідчить про потенціал для пошуку кращих рішень. Наголошується на численних культурних фондах у релігійних установах, які можуть вийти за межі захисного компасу ініціатив національної спадщини і, отже, бути особливо вразливими під час війни. У цьому дослідженні також визнаються деякі нові характеристики охорони рухомої спадщини в Україні та відзначається вражаюча допомога, яку надають інноваційні способи агенції та організації спадщини за межами країни.

Ключові слова: рухома культурна спадщина, національна спадщина від час війни, Італія у Другій світовій війні, російсько-українська війна.

The enormous challenge of protecting cultural heritage during the war has attracted worldwide attention recently because of the Russian military incursion into Ukraine, which began in late February. Despite the impressive efforts of numerous individuals and organizations, primarily on the ground but also outside the country, a list published by UNESCO showed that 120 heritage sites had been heavily compromised in the first ten weeks of the conflict (UNESCO, 2022). Observers have compared the destruction of monuments and works of art in Ukraine to the incredible damage in European countries during World War Two. Moreover, the theft of antiquities and works of art by Russian soldiers in Ukraine awakens memories of the extensive looting perpetrated under Chancellor Hitler before and during WWII (Gettleman & Chubko, 2022). A comparison of approaches to the protection of moveable heritage in Ukraine and the experience of Italy in WWII, therefore, may not be out of place. In this article, the comparison will encompass the

initial planning for the safeguarding of portable objects in the event of war, the specific methods employed, and the most significant obstacles encountered. As will be shown, some of the approaches from eighty years ago in Italy resemble those employed in Ukraine, though significant differences also are evident. Yet rather than suggesting that nothing has been learned about heritage protection since WWII, this study will highlight the continued use of traditional but effective measures, sometimes in adapted forms, in addition to the introduction of new techniques. It will also be important to recognize that there are limitations to how effectively cultural heritage can be preserved, even in the case of portable objects, during a modern, military conflict.

In the discussion that follows, newspaper journalism and online interviews with heritage professionals in Ukraine will be the principal sources for information on the recent implementation of protection for portable objects. For the subject of heritage preservation in Italy during WWII, documentary evidence from archives in Italy and the United States will provide the primary materials, though some scholarship will be cited. However, most of the research on cultural heritage during WWII in Italy concerns destruction and looting, including the role played by the Allied Monuments Fine Arts and Archives Subcommittee (MFAA), not heritage protection (Coccoli, 2017). In relation to safeguarding, the woefully inadequate protection that was established, and the poor support from the Fascist ministry in Rome to the Soprintendenti, who managed heritage in the regions, have been acknowledged (Nezzo, 2011; Vitale, 2015). Yet the abundant, primary evidence on heritage protection has not been explored in detail for Italy as a whole, though there are excellent regional studies, as for Pisa Province (Franchi, 2006; Spinosa, 2011).

The primary documentation will provide the backbone for the Italian component of this comparative investigation. There are records from the federal and provincial levels of civil administration for cultural heritage. Although the protection had to be authorized and funded by the Rome ministry, the regional Soprintendenti put in place the safety measures with the assistance of the local Genio Civile (Public Works



Fig. 1. Panel-Paintings from the Uffizi and Pitti galleries in Florence are stored in the living room of the Sitwell's castle in Montegufoni, Tuscany, during WWII. Photograph by Capt. A. S. Pennoyer, 1944. (Photo: National Archives, RG 239-RC, College Park, Md.)

Office). Some of the Soprintendenti wrote catalogues of the repairs to damaged sites, and a few left memoirs of their wartime activities (Molajoli, 1948; Maiuri, 1956). At the federal level, the records are preserved in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome (ACS Roma) and each Soprintendenza has an archive (for example, Archivio della Soprintendenza di Pisa e Livorno, A.SBAP.PSAE-pi). Also valuable are the records of the MFAA Subcommittee, held in the National Archives, College Park, Md., U.S.A. (NARA), some of which are digitized (fold3). Though the MFAA officers focused on emergency rescue of damaged heritage, they also commented on safeguarding, as when Lieut. Frederick Hartt described the use of private estates in the countryside as deposits for portable art from Florence (Hartt, 1949, p. 19) (Figure 1).

Both in Italy before WWII and in Ukraine before the Russian invasion, planning was undertaken for the salvage of precious cultural objects. In Italy, the planning process was inefficient and protracted, and took time and resources away from the actual work of protection in the first years of the war. The major reasons for the slow planning in Italy during the 1930s were: the cumbersome structure for heritage administration in the federal government and civil service; inadequate funding for protective measures to be distributed by Rome to many regional Soprintendenze; and a lack of impetus for the funding and implementation of anti-aerial protection (Protezione Antiaerea, PAA) until Italy was engulfed by war. The planning began by making lists of portable art to be prioritized for PAA funding, which were drafted by the Soprintendenze for approval by Rome. Discussion of the procedure was broached in a meeting of ministers in 1924 (Coccoli, 2007, fn. 21), but lists were still being submitted by the provinces in 1943, long after Italy entered the war in June 1940 (Sanpaolesi, 1943). Once lists were approved, the transfer of funding from Rome to the Soprintendenze accounts was slow and the paperwork was labour-intensive, and these complications obstructed the establishment of protection for portable heritage.

In Ukraine, a similar approach to planning for the eventualities of war has been undertaken through the creation of prioritized lists, but the process has been more efficient. The framework for planning rests on the legal code of Ukraine, 'On Protection of Cultural Property' (Ukraine, 2000). Following the Russian invasion of the Crimean Peninsula in February and March 2014, national heritage institutions, including museums, were instructed to prepare lists of portable objects for protection. Valentyna Bochkovska, Director of the Museum of Book and Printing of Ukraine in Kyiv, described how museum holdings were analysed in relation to the value of the cultural objects to Ukraine as a nation, and separate lists were arrived at for items of greatest, medium, and lesser importance. In the case of the manuscripts, books and works of graphic art in the museum, which comprised about 58,000 objects altogether, only one percent could be listed as of greatest value (IFAR, 2022). Olesia Ostrovska-Liuta is the Director of the Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Museum Complex in Kyiv, which houses a collection of Ukrainian avant-garde art, literature, and music. She explained that a secret plan had been agreed upon before the invasion, and that in the first ten days of the war, all museum directors began to advance the protection of their holdings (Goodyear, 2022).

It is interesting to note that, similar to the situation described by Dr. Bochkovska for the museum in Kyiv, in Italy during WWII, prioritized lists were created in which debatable distinctions of value were embedded. Initially, in 1924, Mussolini's cabinet discussed in rather vague terms a system of ranking that would include artistic and religious significance. Eventually, A, B and C lists were created, and the terminology employed to differentiate the lists was that they represented artistic works of national, provincial, or only of local significance (Rinaldi, 2011, p. 75). As Dr. Bochkovska explained for the Museum of Book and Printing, only one percent of the collection was prioritized to be moved off-site to safe storage (IFAR, 2022). In Italy, a country with an enormously rich complement of cultural heritage, the Soprintendenze offices during WWII faced a similar dilemma of only being able to transfer to deposits a small amount of the art and antiquities in galleries and museums. In some instances, after the works on nationally approved lists had been stored, Soprintendenza staff, museum directors, librarians and archivists found a way to protect other objects, often in the basements of fortified buildings near by, or simply in the basement or ground level of museums and libraries. At the archaeological museum in the Villa Giulia in Rome, for instance, small objects of importance were crated and placed in a subterranean cave beneath the villa (Mancini, 1944).

Before the portable art on the national lists could be moved, the locations of the deposits had to be selected and the spaces renovated, to ensure the sites were secure and could function as suitable environments for storage. In Italy, for most of the Soprintendenza regions, the deposits were not ready in advance of the conflict. Minister Giuseppe Bottai (Ministero Educazione Nazionale) had announced before the war that national facilities would be available for the most famous art on the A lists, and the superintendents in northern Italy were informed that their A-list art would be sent to national shelters in central Italy. But, on the eve of the war, when the national sites had not yet been organized, the Soprintendente for the Marche, Pasquale Rotondi, offered to prepare the remote Rocca di Sassocorvaro, a Renaissance fortress, as a national shelter. Valuable paintings from northern Italy, including Giorgione's *Tempest*, were stored there for the first years of the war (Rotondi, 1945). However, after the German army began its occupation of Italy in September 1943, numerous cases were transferred to the Vatican for increased security out of fear that the insufficiently guarded Rocca would be looted (Rinaldi, 2011, pp. 77-87).

In contrast in Ukraine, where the ominous signs of war were in evidence for many months because of military build-up along the eastern border, places for storage were organized prior to the invasion to hold the most valuable objects from national museums. For example, over the course of about three weeks after the Russian incursion, about 580 works from the Museum of Book and Printing in Kyiv were carefully packed into metal crates and transported to shelters. It was especially important that these deposits be situated in the western part of the country, close to the Polish border, and far from the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, which was more closely allied with Russia (IFAR, 2022). In other words, the procedure of transporting the top one percent of portable heritage from national museums to deposits was undertaken soon after the conflict began.

Some national museums in Ukraine had accumulated crating supplies before the invasion so that portable objects could be moved, including the Museum of Book and Printing in Kyiv. However, for many museum curators, appropriate supplies were not readily available. At the Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum in Lviv, some objects were being wrapped and placed in cardboard boxes without tops, resembling the boxes used to transport vegetables (Armangué, 2022). In early March, workers at the Museum of the History of Religion in Lviv were busy building metal containers for works of art, which then were moved to basement storage (Gallager, 2022). In Melitopol, where a Russian battalion caused havoc beginning in late February, the Director of the Museum of Local History, Leila Ibrahimova, helped her staff to pack many objects from the collection of about 50,000 items in cardboard boxes and to hide them in the cellar. Tragically, the most precious holdings, which were antiquities from the Scythian empire, including a gold helmet dating from about the 4th century BCE, were later stolen and taken to Russia (Gettleman & Chubko, 2022).

But, as Ukrainians struggle to protect their portable heritage, international cooperation is manifest in the impressive response by many heritage organizations from outside the country. There is full awareness that the Russian invasion represents a war against the identity of the Ukrainian people, as evidence builds of the deliberate targeting of cultural heritage to demoralize populations and erase or rewrite their history. Several international agencies, first and foremost, UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICOM, and many other organizations have rapidly offered assistance, including for the storage of portable cultural objects. Bénédicte de Montlaur, President of the World Monuments Fund (WMF), stressed the importance of ascertaining the most urgent needs directly from heritage professionals in Ukraine (IFAR, 2022). Very notable has been the aid given by Polish museums to facilitate the packing of collections and their transportation to safe deposits (Armangué, 2022). Among many initiatives, the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH Foundation), which is based in Geneva, is supporting museums, libraries and archives by flying into the country substantial donations of supplies for packing and for the improvement of storage facilities (IFAR News, 2022). Other important approaches involve training for museum staff in Ukraine on the safe storage of cultural objects. Zoom consultations are being offered by conservators at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. (IFAR, 2022). In Rome, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) initiated a joint project with UNESCO and

the Maidan Museum in Kyiv to translate into Ukrainian and circulate the manual, *Endangered Heritage: Emergency Evacuation of Heritage* (IFAR News, 2022).

History has taught us about the difficulty, amidst the chaos of war, of obtaining adequate packing materials for cultural objects and vehicles to move cases to storage. Indeed, this was a major obstacle that stood in the way of the safeguarding during WWII in Italy. Soprintendenza offices and museums typically did not have supplies on hand, and often wooden crates had to be specially built in specific shapes for unique works of art. For example, in Viterbo, north of Rome, the city's librarian, Augusto Gargana, who was placed in charge of heritage protection, had organized before the onset of war for carpenters to build crates for a small group of important works of art, which were eight paintings and three sculptures. Only a few days after Italy entered the war, the crated art was transported to a monastery outside the city (Rinaldi, 2008, p. 220). But later in the war, when there was the need to store more works of art from churches and museums, Gargana was not able to have cases made or to obtain a means of transportation (Rinaldi, 2010, p. 121). In Pisa, a new Soprintendente, Piero Sanpaolesi, was appointed in the middle of the war and discovered that little had been done to shelter the city's artistic riches. To remove works of art to deposits, including the relief panels on the late medieval pulpits by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano in Pisa Baptistery and Cathedral, the superintendent had to have wooden cases made and hire movers with a van to transport them to deposits outside the city (Sanpaolesi, 1943). Undertakings of this kind were extremely difficult at a time when the war was being heavily felt in central Italy. The armies had confiscated most of the vehicles and supplies such as wooden planks were hard to source.

One of the most serious dilemmas facing heritage staff during military conflicts is the fact that a large number of cultural materials inevitably fall outside the government's official protective umbrella. In fact, as demonstrated both by the recent conflict in Ukraine and during WWII in Italy, typically most of the portable heritage in a country will be left unprotected. Individual objects, groups of cultural materials, or even entire collections, which are not listed as having national importance or are in private hands, may be vulnerable to war damage or complete destruction. As Dr. Bochkovska has said, only one percent of the collection in the Museum of Book and Printing could be given priority at the national level and transported to storage deposits in the first weeks after the invasion. The museum director then faced head-on the problem of safeguarding the rest of the collection. She has adopted a multi-pronged approach, one strategy being to create a virtual catalogue through digitization (IFAR, 2022). A responsibility of this nature can be overwhelming for those in charge or assisting on the ground, especially when surrounded by the violence of war. For example, in early March, Anna Naurobska, Head of the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books in the Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum in Lviv, as she oversaw the packing of a collection of more than 12,000 works of literature, spoke of the anxiety of not yet knowing where they would be stored (Armangué, 2022).

In Italy during WWII, some of the Soprintendenti, who experienced the frustrations of inadequate funding, few supplies, and depleted staff complements, recorded their frantic work to protect materials that were not on official lists. Typically, the superintendents had to undertake a lot of the work themselves. Emilio Lavagnino in Lazio and Amedeo Maiuri in Campania recounted some of the challenges and dangers in their war diaries (Lavagnino, 1946; Maiuri, 1956). The archivist of the Vatican Library, Prof. Giulio Battelli, documented the trials of moving many boxes of archival documents, manuscripts and rare books from Viterbo, when the city was under attack, to the safety of Rome (Battelli, 1944). Palma Bucarelli, who was the Director of the Gallery of Modern Art in Rome, described the fraught journeys to transport art to shelters as 'a Sisyphean labour' (Bucarelli, 1944, p. 148).

In these extremely demanding situations, it can be left to local people, whether trained or not, to initiate safeguarding for cultural materials that are not covered by national protection programs. For example, on 14 March, it was reported that a collective of artists in western Ukraine were building a shelter for contemporary works of art from all over the country. They were transforming a subterranean space, formerly used as a cafe, into a bunker (Bearak & Khurshudyan, 2022).

A large component of the portable heritage in both Italy and Ukraine is held in religious properties, many of which fall outside national supervision and funding for preservation. In Italy, the richness of the

cultural objects belonging to the Catholic church sometimes occasioned problems of responsibility during WWII. While the religious functions of ecclesiastic entities, including church services, were under the control of the church, preservation, which encompassed repair, restoration, and protection, was a more complex issue. Only a few ecclesiastical properties outside the Vatican City pertained to the Vatican for preservation. Moreover, strictly speaking, the Soprintendenze only had the authority to offer protection for religious art that had been registered at the state level (Regio Decreto, 1866). Nevertheless, because of extensive damage to churches, Rome issued directions in December 1942 for the Soprintendenze, under the exceptional circumstances, to urgently remove the most significant portable art on the A and B lists from churches in their territories (Bottai, 1942). At the beginning of the war, the ministry had distributed guidelines on safe storage of art to church offices, and many priests had complied to the best of their ability. But the clergy, who were the day-to-day custodians of churches, did not always welcome the intervention of the Soprintendenza for the protection of what they considered to be their property. In some cases, they wished to keep religious art in churches for the devotional needs of the congregation, and in others they feared the treasures would be taken permanently to national museums. In one example from Tuscany, two quattrocento triptychs by Fra Angelico and Sassetta in San Domenico in Cortona were stored by the *parocco* in a small space in the campanile, where the high humidity caused extensive damage. Even the Bishop of Cortona refused to disclose the hiding place to Ugo Procacci from the Soprintendenza of Florence. Later, the terrible condition meant extensive conservation treatments, involving transfers of the paint layers to new supports (Firenze Restauro, 1972, pp. 44-45).

But even after the extraordinary directive from Rome, a great quantity of religious art and other cultural materials in churches, monasteries and convents was not on the A or B lists or subject to government care. The onus for safeguarding was placed on the local church administration. Church and civic authorities often sheltered works nearby in their residential buildings, but, for heavy objects, a means of transportation was necessary, and the impoverished monastic orders rarely owned cars, especially during the war, when most vehicles were taken for military purposes (DeWald, 1945).

In an analogous way in Ukraine, there are numerous religious properties that contain cultural objects of note, and this poses a major problem for heritage protection during the Russian incursion. If the Crimea is included, there are 251 monasteries and convents belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Gettleman & Chubko, 2022). There are also other significant Greek Catholic, Armenian Apostolic and Jewish religious buildings. Ukrainian officials have lamented the destruction of dozens of Orthodox churches in the first two months of war. One exceptionally well protected monument, at least on paper, is the Holy Trinity Church in Zhovkva, since it is part of the UNESCO World Heritage site for sixteen wooden *tserkvas* of the Carpathian Region and is nationally recognized on Ukraine's State Register of Immovable Historical Monuments (UNESCO, 2013). Nevertheless, the church with its elaborate interior decoration illustrates the virtual impossibility of safeguarding monuments of this nature and complexity. It is a triple-naved, wooden church from the early 18th century and, therefore, is vulnerable because of the flammable nature of the old wooden planks, though it recently has been covered with a special fireproof material. As the priest, Father Vasyl Batyuk, explained, one of the treasures in the church, the 18th-century iconostasis, with an elaborately carved frame of linden wood, and about fifty inserted icon paintings, was carefully removed to storage (Schipani, 2022). But other icons remain in the church.

The custodians of many religious properties, however, may not have the capacity to adequately protect their art from war damage, particularly if the location is more remote, outside a major urban centre. For example, in the northwestern part of the country, a wooden village church, dating from the 19th century and dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, has been severely damaged from a Russian rocket attack. Extensively decorated on the interior, the unique religious building is on Ukraine's list for national protection (National Review, 2022).

During modern wars, in which powerful, military technology is used, precious cultural objects may be exposed to damage or destruction unless they are removed to safe shelters. Indeed, there is no full-proof way of protecting historic architecture, including religious monuments, from direct hits by bombs and other propelled explosives. For instance, the method employed to protect church windows, which, in the case of

the stained-glass windows of the Dormition Church and St. George's Cathedral in Lviv is plywood and aluminium sheeting, may cushion the glass from shrapnel thrown out when explosions occur nearby, but probably would not be adequate if the building was struck directly from the air (Frayer & Harbage, 2022).

Furthermore, when countries are completely engulfed by conflict, it may seem as if there is nowhere within the borders that is absolutely safe for storage of the most valuable works of art and antiquities. Therefore, the idea of a safe haven outside the nation under threat was considered already before WWII. In the 1930s, in reaction to the experiences of World War One, northern Europeans tried to develop a pan-European approach to the protection of portable art in advance of another conflict. The International Bureau of Museums (*Offices International des Musées*), established after WWI as an extension of the League of Nations, drafted a convention in 1937-38 in which neutral countries in Europe would be entrusted temporarily with the care of the most precious art of those nations that were belligerents in the war (International Museum Office, 1939). Some paintings were moved from Madrid to Geneva during the Spanish Civil War, but, at the beginning of WWII, heritage ministers in Germany and Italy did not have any desire to move their art to a neutral zone. Indeed, Minister Bottai asserted that Italy would take the responsibility for safeguarding her own patrimony (Bottai, 1938). Recently, however, the idea of 'safe havens' has been reintroduced. Since 2015, Switzerland, France and the United States have ratified national legislation to allow safe havens within their countries for threatened cultural objects from other nations (Paumgartner & Zingg, 2018). In Ukraine, museum directors, such as Ihor Kozhan at the Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum in Lviv, acknowledge the daily offers of help from cultural institutions in neighbouring countries (Armangué, 2022). Polish museum directors have reached out to offer safe storage of cultural objects and to meet other heritage needs in Ukraine.

This investigation has demonstrated that most of the protective work for portable heritage inside Ukraine since the start of the Russian campaign has been carried out using well established approaches, such as creating prioritized lists, crating objects, and moving the boxed items to storage. Some of the shelters were prepared carefully in advance, while others were arranged later as a result of urgent necessity. By comparing the approaches in Ukraine to the procedures from WWII in Italy, it has become evident that many traditional methods continue to be utilized because they are effective safeguarding techniques during the extraordinary circumstances of war.

A few of the serious obstacles that were encountered in the protection of moveable art in Italy during WWII also have been reviewed. The impression gained from the first months of war in Ukraine is that some of these problems have been circumvented, at least by national institutions. The preliminary planning has occurred in a more efficient manner and in some cases adequate crating materials were accumulated before the invasion. Nevertheless, because of the nature of the cultural heritage in the country, some significant issues, which Italian heritage staff confronted in the early 1940s, have persisted in Ukraine. In particular, problems may arise during military conflicts because of the limited compass of heritage preservation by national governments. Many of the cultural holdings of religious institutions do not receive government protection, and this creates vulnerability, especially if the property has a remote location.

Certainly, Italians have gained extensive knowledge of heritage protection because of the experiences of WWII. Soprintendenti, museum directors, and restorers acquired proficiency in the defence of art. How much Italy has learned is evidenced by the role Italian heritage professionals play today as leading advisers on an international level, both in the field and from a distance (Rush & Millington, 2015). These developments in Italy represent only some of the many innovations in cultural heritage preservation since the end of WWII. As is well known, particular attention has been given in international humanitarian legislation and by UNESCO to the vulnerability of monuments and cultural objects during military conflicts (Odendahl, 2010).

One remarkable change, strongly evident during the war in Ukraine, is the availability of assistance for heritage preservation from outside the country. In the first years of WWII, Italy was isolated because of their allegiance to Germany. Minister Bottai had rejected the proposals of the International Museum Office, and the Soprintendenti did not have help from outside to safeguard heritage. In contrast, some museum

staff and church custodians in Ukraine, confronted with the need to safeguard their most precious objects quickly, have received considerable help, whether in the form of packing supplies flown into the country, one-on-one instructions by conservators about safe storage via video meeting, or the possibility of safe havens for the protection of art in neighbouring countries. Technological advances in communications and computing have allowed heritage workers in Ukraine to signal what they need most, thereby facilitating constructive assistance. The gestures from so many outside institutions also convey the awareness on a global level of the profound importance of preserving Ukrainian cultural heritage from wartime destruction. The unique identity of Ukraine, which has arisen over the course of many centuries, and is strongly imprinted in their monuments and portable cultural objects, is at stake.

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***Protecting portable heritage during war:
a comparative examination of the approaches in Italy during World War Two
and in Ukraine during the Russian invasion of 2022***

In response to the urgent necessity of protecting cultural heritage in Ukraine in the wake of the Russian invasion, this article explores the approaches recently adopted in Ukraine to safeguard portable objects by providing an extended comparison with the methods used in Italy during World War Two. Three components of the procedure for protecting moveable objects are investigated: preliminary planning through the creation of lists of museum collections to determine priorities for safeguarding; the selection and preparation of storage deposits to shelter the objects; and the work of packing and moving boxed items to the deposits. Attention also is given to the obstacles encountered during WWII in Italy that hampered the protection of moveable heritage. The purpose is to probe whether the same problems have been met in Ukraine and if they have been circumvented or not. While the difficulty of protecting heritage during conflict is understood, even in the case of portable heritage materials, this comparison of recent methods in Ukraine to the work in Italy in the early 1940s highlights the continued use of traditional methods, albeit with adaptations, because they are effective. However, some of the same obstacles also have persisted, suggesting the potential to search for better solutions. Emphasis is placed on the abundant cultural holdings in religious institutions, which may fall outside the protective compass of national heritage initiatives and, therefore, be particularly vulnerable during war. This study also acknowledges some of the novel characteristics of the protection of moveable heritage in Ukraine and notes the impressive help that is being offered in innovative ways by heritage agencies and organizations outside the country.

Keywords: portable heritage, national heritage during war, Italy during Word War Two, Russian-Ukrainian War.

Cathleen Hoeniger, PhD, Professor of Art History, Department of Art History and Art Conservation, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario (Canada)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6955-6205>

Кетлін Гьонігер, докторка філософії, професорка історії мистецтв, кафедра історії мистецтв та реставрації мистецтва, Університет Квінз, Кінгстон, Онтаріо (Канада)