



Cultural Heritage & Museums Organisations and initiatives France Ukraine Ukraine Crisis

## Four Icons evacuated from Ukraine to France displayed for the first time in the Louvre-Lens

Four rare Ukrainian icons were transferred to France via land and are being displayed to the public until June 2025 at the Louvre-Lens Museum. The object relocation was part of a larger effort between Ukraine and France in 2023 in a bid to protect Ukrainian cultural heritage.&nbsp;

Four Ukrainian artefacts of religious iconography have been put on display at the the Louvre-Lens, around 200 km north of Paris, in an [exhibition](#) titled Icônes venues d'Ukraine.

Among the works are a 15th-century icon of the Virgin and Child and a 16th-century depiction of Saint John the Baptist.

Additionally, the museum has selected two unusually large icons, each measuring 2 metres by 2 metres, depicting The Last Judgment and Hymn to the Virgin by Greek Renaissance painter Theodoris Poulakis, to be part of the exhibition.

"The goal was to ensure the best possible conservation conditions for the icons," [said](#) Maximilien Durand, curator of the exhibition and director of the Department of Byzantine Art at the Louvre Museum.

In May 2023, [sixteen icons](#) were secretly evacuated from the Khanenko Museum in Kyiv. This came after a 2022 Russian airstrike to the museum that blew out the windows and damaged some of the interior.

The mission to evacuate the works of art was a highly sensitive one, conducted by the Louvre Museum. "It's a country under martial law, and security measures and discretion are essential. The icons left Ukraine secretly by land, accompanied by all the

necessary protective measures. The icons crossed the border into Poland and Germany before arriving in Paris," explained Durand.

The Khanenko Museum in Kyiv is Ukraine's premier museum of Western and Asian art, renowned for its rich collection of European masterpieces, Asian artefacts, and Byzantine icons.

Its collection, including the circle of Hieronymous Bosch, Rembrandt and Lucas Van Leyden, has all been relocated to a safe area since the beginning of the war.

Objects in the collection are among the hundreds of pieces of Ukrainian art and cultural heritage that have been put in jeopardy since the onset of the Russian Invasion. Hundreds of artefacts have been destroyed or damaged, and the scale of the destruction has been declared [cultural genocide](#) by the council of Europe.

The icons arrived at the Louvre-Lens as additions to its collection of items on loan. According to the museum, they will remain at their temporary home in France until the end of the war.