

R. Turkalo**THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE “DUKAT” ART FOUNDATION
IN THE PROMOTION UNOFFICIAL UKRAINIAN ART
OF THE LATE 20TH CENTURY**

Ukrainian unofficial art (nonconformism) of the second half of the 20th century is a vital yet insufficiently systematized part of national artistic culture. Its study and popularization are crucial for filling historical and scholarly gaps in Ukrainian art history.

This article examines the Dukat Art Foundation in Kyiv — a leading institution engaged in exhibiting, researching, publishing, and promoting Ukrainian art, especially from the 1950s–1980s. Since independence, Ukraine’s art scene has evolved from Soviet models toward professional and globally integrated practices. Dukat has played a major role in this process, supporting nonconformist artists, developing the art market, and preserving cultural heritage.

The Foundation’s work includes exhibitions, scholarly publications, and a digital archive of artists who worked under censorship and political pressure. These initiatives restore continuity in Ukraine’s cultural memory and integrate underground art into the broader national and international context. Acting as both a cultural and a market institution, Dukat influences valuation practices and promotes Ukrainian art abroad.

Amid wartime challenges, the Foundation faces threats to collections and archives. Its provenance research, cataloging, and documentation are vital for safeguarding heritage. Dukat also participates in professional debates on authenticity and attribution — notably concerning Fedir Tetyanych’s works — emphasizing the importance of transparency and trust within the art community.

The study concludes that Dukat plays a central role in the professionalization and internationalization of Ukraine’s art sector by combining cultural preservation with market development. Its activities strengthen national identity and resilience in times of war.

The methodology. *The research applies source and archival analysis, along with comparative and cultural approaches, to evaluate Dukat’s role in heritage protection and market formation.*

The results. *The Foundation unites preservation with commercialization, shaping national identity and sustaining Ukraine’s artistic legacy.*

The scientific novelty. *The article presents the first complex analysis of Dukat as an institution that ensures both art market growth and cultural resilience under wartime conditions.*

The practical significance. *The findings may guide cultural policy and institutional strategies for protecting heritage, enhancing provenance research, and balancing preservation with development in Ukraine and beyond.*

Keywords: *art scene, cultural heritage, nonconformist artists, art market, underground art, art community, Ukraine’s art sector.*

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The relevance of the research. In recent years, particularly following the outbreak of Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine, public interest in national culture and art has increased significantly, creating favourable conditions for the development of the art sphere.

The study of artistic galleries, and in particular the *Dukat Art Foundation*, is centred on processes that are key to the formation of national cultural space and identity. *Dukat* devotes special attention to the work of Ukrainian nonconformist artists of the second half of the twentieth century, who, despite working under conditions of censorship and repression, laid the foundations for contemporary understandings of artistic freedom. An examination of the foundation's activities allows not only for an assessment of its contribution to the development of the Ukrainian art market but also for an evaluation of the role of private commercial institutions in preserving cultural heritage, shaping public consciousness, and responding to external challenges. During the period of full-scale war, when culture has become an essential instrument in the struggle for the nation's survival, these institutions face dual risks: the physical threat of destruction of artworks through bombardment, and the necessity of combating illegitimacy and contested provenance. This activity requires specific approaches to working with people — establishing relationships of trust with artists' families and collectors, while simultaneously resisting fraudulent schemes and the falsification of artworks.

Research problem. During the period of Ukraine's independence, against the backdrop of growing public interest in national culture, the domestic art market has been taking shape. However, this process is accompanied by a series of challenges that require careful academic analysis. In particular, there is a striking lack of comprehensive research and systematic studies of Ukrainian unofficial art of the second half of the twentieth century. This art developed outside official institutions, which makes its study and proper systematization especially complex. These circumstances create difficulties in tracing the provenance of artworks and in establishing their legitimacy. An analysis of the activities of key players in the art market, such as the Kyiv-based *Dukat Art Foundation*, makes it possible to examine the practical mechanisms by which private institutions adapt to contemporary challenges, as well as their role in preserving cultural memory and resisting external threats. Addressing these problems carries significant practical importance for the stabilization of Ukraine's art industry and for strengthening its position on the international stage.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review. Over the past decade, Ukrainian society has shown an increasing interest in national culture and art, which has given impetus to the development of art galleries and museums of contemporary art, museum and exhibition centre, auction houses, and other institutions (Ukrainian Gallerists Association, 2025). One of the most renowned establishments engaged in the exhibition, research, and sale of works of Ukrainian art from the second half of the twentieth century is the Kyiv art foundation *Dukat*. In the context of the formation of Kyiv's art industry during the period of independence, the *Dukat Art Foundation* has played a significant role, particularly in the development of the auction market and gallery activities (Hrytsuk, 2015).

One of the main directions pursued by the *Dukat Art Foundation* is Ukrainian unofficial art of the second half of the twentieth century ((M17 Art Center, 2025). This was a difficult period in the history of Ukrainian art, when, following the 1932 decree, creative experimentation was prohibited, and only one officially approved style (so-called socialist realism) was sanctioned by the authorities. Many artists whose works are now the focus of *Dukat's* attention worked unofficially, concealing their creations not only from the authorities but also from the wider public, showing them only to a close circle of trusted acquaintances. Such clandestine conditions resulted in a certain scarcity of information that still requires study and processing today. Establishing and maintaining connections with the relatives of artists from that era is one of the key tasks of the art historians who collaborate with the *Dukat Art Foundation*.

In the study by Anna Luhovska and Olga Lagutenko, "The Formation of Art Institutions in Kyiv (1990s–2020s)", the authors trace the complex transformation of Kyiv's

art institutions during the period of independence — their evolution from a regional, post-Soviet model toward a civilized international practice characterized by accountability, taxation, and the cataloguing of artworks (Luhovska, et al., 2023). A turning point for the perception of contemporary art came in the first decade of the new millennium, when, in the early 2000s, Ukraine lacked institutions that could support this field. Although the Soros Centre for Contemporary Art (SCCA) had been operating in Kyiv since 1993, post-Soviet Ukrainian society largely failed to embrace this unfamiliar niche. Only with the emergence of the PinchukArtCentre in 2006 did Ukraine acquire a platform for the active presentation of current artistic trends — ones that, even then, were not easily accepted by the public.

Alongside the PinchukArtCentre and the Mystetskyi Arsenal, the *Dukat* Auction House appeared in the second decade of the 2000s, within which a gallery operated as part of its structure. *Dukat* established itself as a key player in the art market, influencing the formation of prices and demand for artworks, as well as the popularization of Ukrainian art — particularly the unofficial art of the 1950s–1990s and contemporary art. The gallery activities of *Dukat* are analysed as part of Kyiv’s artistic environment, contributing to the presentation of Ukrainian artists. In a broader context, *Dukat* is viewed as an integral component of the overall process of art industry formation in Kyiv, especially regarding the emergence and development of commercial art institutions, and in comparison with other Kyiv auction houses such as “Corners” (since 2006) and “Золотое сечение” (rus.) (established in 2004, later renamed “Goldens”).

A certain shift in the function of galleries during the wartime period is described by Larysa Zelenska in her article “Art Galleries and Their Role in Preserving and Promoting Ukrainian Art” (Zelenska, 2023). At present, workers of the art industry carry a specific mission that involves not only the promotion but also the protection and preservation of artworks threatened with destruction by the Russian–Ukrainian war. The author emphasizes the importance of galleries in Ukraine’s struggle for its own identity, defining the gallery as a cultural hub, a resource for forming collective memory, and a means of social consolidation aimed at sustaining collective identity. The *Dukat* Art Foundation serves as an example of such an institution that actively shapes the cultural space, combining commercial activity with the mission of preserving and promoting national art. Zelenska views *Dukat* not merely as a platform for selling artworks but as an active participant in cultural dialogue, contributing to the preservation of artistic heritage and its reconsidering in the contemporary environment. Special emphasis is placed on *Dukat*’s ability to adapt to market conditions while maintaining its cultural significance and influence on the formation of public taste.

In a co-authored article by Larysa Zelenska and Vadym Mykhalchuk, “Popularization of National Art in the Space of Art Galleries: Challenges and Opportunities in the Realities of Global Crises and War” (Zelenska et al., 2023, p. 248), the *Dukat* Art Foundation is considered an important element in the promotion of national art during wartime. The study highlights *Dukat*’s active role in supporting Ukrainian artists, particularly through organizing charity auctions such as “Ukrainian Bravery: Art for Victory” and “The War Collection for the Museum of Victory,” the proceeds of which were directed to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Zelenska notes *Dukat*’s effective use of event technologies to engage audiences in exhibition projects and its contribution to shaping a patriotic discourse within Ukrainian culture.

In her article “Functionaries of the Contemporary Ukrainian Art Market: Activities of the Private Art Segment,” Tetiana Mironova examines the transformation of the Ukrainian private art segment from the 1990s to the 2020s (Mironova, 2022 p.119). The researcher analyses the role of key participants in the art market, particularly institutions such as the *Dukat* Auction House and the Goldens Gallery, in the formation of the modern Ukrainian art market. Special attention is paid to the crucial role of private galleries as platforms for

promoting art and supporting artists. The study also outlines several systemic challenges, including conservatism among audiences and limited demand for new artistic practices. T. Mironova stresses the need to enhance transparency and legitimize media art as a factor for the stable development of the art industry in Ukraine.

A satirical reaction of artists to Russia's war against Ukraine is described by Olha Petrova in her article "The Hyperrealism of a Shaken Consciousness." (Petrova, 2022). The article focuses on Vitaliy Kravets's project "Anatomy of the Spineless," hosted by the *Dukat* Gallery. The series of graphic works was created to mock the constructed image of Russian culture, revealing the true face of the aggressor state. Such projects are an essential element in transforming the consciousness of a post-colonial society, as satire becomes a means of overcoming fear in the face of war.

In contrast to the cultural environment within Ukraine itself, interest in unofficial art in Western countries has somewhat declined over the past thirty-five years. For example, the study by American scholars Margaret J. Wyszomirski, Thomas A. Oleszczuk, and Theresa C. Smith, "Cultural Dissent and Defection: The Case of Soviet Nonconformist Artists" (1988), conceptualizes artistic dissent primarily as a Soviet phenomenon (Wyszomirski et al., 2010). In the Ukrainian context, however, nonconformist art should be regarded as a crucial component of national cultural resistance. Similarly, the article "Soviet 'unofficial' art" (1975) by the prominent collector and one of the organizers of the "Bulldozer Exhibition" (Moscow, 1974), Aleksandr Glezer, presents the phenomenon of artistic nonconformism in the USSR to Western audiences under the label of "Russian nonconformism". Such interpretation vividly exemplifies the broader framework of Russian colonial discourse, as analyzed by Stepan Yankovsky in his essay "The Little Russian Theme of Russian Colonialism." (Yankovskyj, 2025)

Of particular note is the article by Emma Luisa Leahy, researcher at the University of Rome La Sapienza, titled "State Murals, Protest Murals, Conflict Murals: Evolving Politics of Public Art in Ukraine." The author explores the theme of Ukrainian unofficial art of the second half of the twentieth century, emphasizing the acute shortage of specialized institutions dedicated to representing Ukraine's unofficial art—especially that which emerged within the nonconformist practices of the 1960s–1980s.

The article aims to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the role of the *Dukat* Art Foundation in the formation of the Ukrainian art market and in the development of Kyiv's cultural and artistic environment during the period of independence. In pursuing this objective, particular attention is devoted to the institution's combination of auction, exhibition, and cultural-educational activities, as well as to its contribution to the preservation and promotion of Ukrainian unofficial art of the second half of the twentieth century. The study also analyses the specific features of *Dukat* as an institution that shapes cultural memory and fosters social consolidation in times of war. Moreover, the article seeks to identify the key risks faced by private art institutions in Ukraine, including disputes over authenticity and provenance, underdeveloped mechanisms of cataloguing and reporting, and the physical threat of destruction of cultural objects as a result of Russian aggression. Realizing this objective makes it possible not only to reveal the significance of *Dukat's* work, but also to outline the current challenges to the functioning of Ukraine's contemporary art industry.

Analysis. The art gallery in the contemporary cultural space functions not only as an exhibition venue but also as an institutional model of the sociocultural world of artists. It constitutes a dynamic environment where artistic ideas and practices are legitimized and circulated. As a key institution, the gallery performs both active and passive functions: it generates new cultural meanings and discourses by setting directions for artistic development,

while at the same time reflecting already established values, social codes, and aesthetic norms characteristic of society.

A central aspect of the gallery's work is ensuring that these created and reflected meanings are accessible to a broad audience. Through curatorial practices, exhibition strategies, and educational programs, the gallery acts as a mediator, transforming the artistic object from a closed artifact into an element of public dialogue. In this sense, the gallery does not merely preserve or display works of art, but actively shapes the communicative field in which the interpretation and actualization of artistic heritage and contemporary trends take place.

Given this, the activity of those galleries that today assume the function of systematizing and publicly presenting Ukrainian nonconformist artists of the second half of the twentieth century is of particular relevance. By introducing this body of unofficial art into academic and public circulation, they help fill significant gaps in cultural memory.

Despite growing interest in the subject, several factors continue to hinder the full understanding and popularization of this cultural legacy. These include the absence of a national museum or centralized institution for unofficial art; the reliance on private-sector initiatives; the fragmentary nature of research and exhibition efforts; vulnerability to wartime conditions; and limited international visibility. Private galleries, such as *Dukat* in Kyiv, have taken upon themselves the role of researchers, curators, and popularizers of unofficial art. This, however, also highlights the insufficient level of state support, since much of the cataloguing, exhibition, publishing, and public-discourse work is conducted on voluntary or commercial bases rather than through sustained governmental frameworks.

Since its founding in 2008, the *Dukat* Foundation has organized a series of significant exhibitions and auctions of Ukrainian contemporary and unofficial art. To promote national art, it has published books on Ukrainian artists, ensured the release of the journal *Antykvav*, and catalogued the creative legacy of numerous Ukrainian painters and graphic artists.

Among the most ambitious projects of the foundation are: the launch of the digital archive "UU Archive" (2025), which systematizes information about Ukrainian unofficial artists of the 1950s–1990s (Ukrainian Unofficial); the large-scale exhibition at the National Art Museum of Ukraine *Another History: Kyiv Art from the Thaw to Perestroika* (2016) (Sherman, 2016); the first personal exhibition of the artist Myroslav Yahoda in Kyiv, entitled *Ya+GOD+A* (2020) (Hrozovska, 2020), which attracted a record number of visitors to the National Art Museum of Ukraine since independence; and two large exhibitions at the Ukrainian House: the retrospective exhibition of the artist Alla Horska Boryviter (March–April 2023) and the exhibition *ProZori* (May–June 2025), featuring works by Florian Yuriev, Fedir Tetianych, Valerii Lamakh, Ada Rybachuk, and Volodymyr Melnychenko. The foundation has also overseen the unique publication of the artistic legacy of the renowned Lviv graphic artist Oleksandr Aksinin (Iliukhina, 2017).

Thanks to the work of *Dukat's* team of art historians — including Mykhailo Kulivnyk, Kateryna Lisova, Olena Hrozovska, and others — extensive efforts have been undertaken to collect, systematize, and present biographical data on Ukrainian unofficial artists of the second half of the twentieth century (Ukrainian Unofficial). Their work has led to a re-evaluation of the artistic achievements of the first, second, and new waves of Ukrainian nonconformist art. This has laid a solid source base for the study of Ukrainian unofficial art, simplified research practices, and established certain standards in the conceptual and categorical framework for studying and interpreting this field.

Given the scope of research into Ukraine's art industry in recent years, one can observe professional coverage of the real situation on the domestic art scene, where the *Dukat* team has established itself as highly qualified experts who enjoy unquestionable authority among professionals in the field. Because of these achievements, the foundation has earned a

high level of trust among collectors, artists, and their families. This good reputation has opened access to valuable works from private collections, significantly expanding the foundation's exhibition capacity.

By combining its mission to preserve and promote artistic heritage with active commercial practices, the *Dukat* Art Foundation has become one of the most active and influential participants in Ukraine's art market. Yet, this combination of cultural and commercial activity also entails certain risks. For instance, a public scandal erupted concerning several works by Fedir Tetianych that were exhibited at the ProZori exhibition, organized jointly by *Dukat* and the Ukrainian House. More than a month after the opening, the artist's family, together with artist H. Hutgarts, held a press conference at the "Territory of Reforms" media centre, alleging that six works displayed at ProZori and two works from the earlier exhibition *I Had a Dream*. Fedir Tetianych at the *Dukat* Gallery were not authentic pieces by Tetianych. Instead, they argued, these were works by Petro Hulyn, who, according to the plaintiffs, had never been acquainted with Tetianych and could not have obtained his works as gifts.

In response, Petro Hulyn recorded a video for the YouTube channel "UU Archive" titled *An Artist on an Artist: Petro Hulyn on Fedir Tetianych*, in which he described his acquaintance and friendship with Tetianych (Arkhiv UU, 2025). The controversy further attracted attention when the well-known artist Ivan Marchuk publicly confirmed their friendship on his Facebook page (Pobozhii, 2024).

Over the past decade, disputes of this magnitude have been rare, though similar conflicts have occurred. One notable example was the exhibition of Myroslav Yahoda *Am I Here, Am I There* at the Lviv National Art Gallery, dedicated to the anniversary of the artist's death. Following the opening, the artist's family raised objections, including doubts about the authorship of the work *New Year* (2015). Yahoda's sister, Maria Dyka, organized a solitary protest demanding explanations from the gallery administration, though her request was left unanswered.

Such conflicts illustrate the risks faced by galleries and the broader art community. Scholars such as A. Luhovska and O. Lagutenko have emphasized in their studies that the introduction of practices common in Western countries — such as systematic cataloguing, transparent reporting, and provenance tracking — can significantly reduce these risks, though they cannot fully eliminate them (Luhovska, et al., 2023).

In the context of contemporary challenges to cultural heritage, one of the most pressing risks faced by Ukrainian art galleries, including the *Dukat* Foundation, is the threat of physical destruction of exhibitions as a result of Russian military aggression and targeted missile attacks on civilian infrastructure. Unlike museum institutions, many of which have evacuated significant parts of their collections, private and commercial galleries continue to display twentieth- and twenty-first-century artworks, consciously operating under the heightened danger of losing unique cultural objects.

An illustrative example of the potential harm to cultural assets occurred on October 10, 2022, when a missile strike by the Russian Federation on the historic centre of Kyiv damaged the building of the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts. This event highlighted the fragility of Ukraine's cultural infrastructure in wartime conditions and underscored the risks that private galleries face when continuing their activities.

The *Dukat* Art Foundation not only performs an important educational and research function but also contributes significantly to the shaping of cultural memory, ensuring both continuity and dynamism in the development of the national art environment. It occupies a prominent place among Ukraine's cultural centres, demonstrating a high level of professionalism and efficiency. Its reputation, built upon the quality of its work as both an

exhibition venue and an educational-research platform, has allowed *Dukat* to establish itself as a multifunctional institution integrating exhibition, educational, and commercial activities.

Conclusion. The study has identified the distinctive features of the establishment and activities of the *Dukat* Art Foundation within the broader development of Ukraine's art market and Kyiv's cultural institutions. It has traced the dynamics of transformations in the artistic environment from the 1990s to the present and outlined the role of auction houses and private galleries in shaping cultural memory and market mechanisms.

Particular attention has been paid to the risks faced by Ukraine's art industry, including challenges of attribution and provenance, insufficient cataloguing practices, weak institutional support, and the threats posed to cultural heritage under wartime conditions. These factors significantly affect both the development of the art market and the functioning of institutional networks.

The importance of this research lies in expanding the theoretical understanding of the processes shaping Ukraine's art industry, while also providing practical recommendations. These include the creation of a unified electronic register of artworks, strengthening institutional support through grant programs, and developing standards for the preservation of cultural assets during wartime. Such measures may be employed in cultural policy strategies, the activities of art institutions, and the organization of art markets.

Implications for future research. Future research on this topic should focus primarily on a more in-depth study of Ukrainian unofficial art of the second half of the twentieth century, which remains insufficiently examined due to the lack of systematized sources and catalogues. It is necessary to conduct comprehensive work on the collection and verification of biographical and creative materials, in close collaboration with artists' families and private collectors, in order to ensure the reliability of provenance data.

Further academic inquiry may also be directed toward analysing the role of private art institutions — particularly the *Dukat* Art Foundation — in shaping cultural memory, promoting nonconformist artistic practices, and integrating them into the international art discourse.

Another important avenue of study is the analysis of the impact of wartime challenges on gallery activities, especially in the context of the risk of physical loss of artworks. This, in turn, stimulates the development of strategies for preservation and digital duplication of collections.

The ethical and legal aspects of authenticity verification likewise require systematic study, as conflicts surrounding attribution — such as the disputes involving works attributed to Fedir Tetianych — point to the urgent need for improved expertise.

In a broader perspective, research in this field should aim at formulating a comprehensive concept of the development of the Ukrainian art market — one that would combine cultural and educational missions with the economic sustainability of institutions, thereby supporting Ukraine's integration into the global cultural sphere.

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ВНЕСОК АРТФУНДАЦІЇ «ДУКАТ» У ПОПУЛЯРИЗАЦІЮ УКРАЇНСЬКОГО НЕОФІЦІЙНОГО МИСТЕЦТВА ДРУГОЇ ПОЛОВИНИ ХХ СТОЛІТТЯ

У поданій статті розкрито значення артінституції у впровадженні інноваційних практик у національній культурний простір. Метою статті є культурологічний аналіз діяльності артфундації «Дукат» у популяризації і збереженні творчого доробку українських художників-нонконформістів. На основі міждисциплінарного підходу опрацьовано результати досліджень вітчизняних і зарубіжних науковців, систематизовано виставкові, освітні, благодійні та аукціонні проекти, представлено порівняльну характеристику артфундації із іншими культурно-мистецькими установами Києва. У результатах проведеного аналізу узагальнено та з'ясовано ключові принципи функціонування культурно-мистецької інституції, її впливу і ролі у просуванні творчого доробку митців. Окремо висвітлено взаємозв'язок ефективності використання певних культурних практик у розв'язанні супутніх ризиків. Серед перспективних напрямків розвитку дослідження підкреслимо нагальну потребу у критичному аналізі проектної діяльності у реалізації стратегічних завдань популяризації у світовому, європейському, вітчизняному публічному просторі здобутків українського образотворчого мистецтва.

Ключові слова: культурні практики, мистецька спадщина, культурно-мистецькі інституції, приватні інституції, художники-нонконформісти, культурне поле, культурний простір.