

*International Conference*

# RELIGION AND WAR IN UKRAINE

The Political,  
the Public, and  
the Possible

March 14th-16th, 2024

Telus 134 - Telus International Centre  
University of Alberta  
11104 87 Ave NW - Edmonton

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Session: Reacting to the Experience of War

1:30PM MST, March 15, 2024

## Social ethos of icons in Ukraine during wartime

Lidiya Lozova, British Academy Fellow in the Theology and Religion Department, University of Exeter

In Orthodox tradition, the icon testifies to the reality of God's Incarnation in history and the image of God in each person. Although icons have a didactic quality, they are believed to be mystagogical, (leading the viewer towards the divine); theologically speaking, they show "heaven on earth" and are a prayer themselves. However, can icons also say something about "the earth" as such, meaning the social and political reality around them? Usually, it is said that the icon presents a social ethic not of this world. The current situation in Ukraine challenges this assumption. I explore the social ethos of icons and "icon like" images that refer to the war. I examine experimental icons (eg. Icons on Ammo Boxes), modern "sacred art", and secular artworks that function as social statements about the war using iconographic motifs. Finally, I consider social practices that involve icons and these images.

Lidiya Lozova is a British Academy Fellow in the Theology and Religion Department, University of Exeter, since the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. Prior to that, Lozova defended her doctoral thesis in the History and Theory of Art History at the Modern Art Research Institute, Ukrainian National Academy of Art, in 2015 and was a researcher at the European Humanities Research Centre of the University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy on Christian theology, ecumenical relations, and civic peacebuilding. She also continues to work as a translator and editor at "Spirit and Letter" Research and Publishing Association (Kyiv). Her current research concerns the social ethos of Eastern Christian icons, specifically modern icons and icon-like images that appear during wartime in Ukraine. She is recognized as one of the finest and most promising young scholars working in the areas of iconography, Orthodox social ethos, and the encounter between traditional Orthodox spirituality and modernity.