

We are proud to present the graphic novel (comic) "Odesa. Museum Diary of War. Marisel and Panna Kota save Cultural Heritage and themselves".

It is a story of resilience, art, and the fight to preserve culture amidst the challenges of war.

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has posed a direct threat to the physical existence of our country's cultural heritage, particularly in Odesa.

Dry historical chronicles and news reports fail to convey the deep emotional experience, the psychological state of the civilian population, and the daily professional heroism of museum staff.

There was an urgent need to find a universal, non-trivial, and unpretentious language to talk about war, fear, destruction, and evacuation—primarily with the international community.

This graphic novel is entirely based on a true story. The heart of this graphic novel beats through the eyes of two ordinary cats, Marisel and Panna Cotta. For years, they have called the museum home, serving as its unofficial "art curators" and beloved "cat therapists."

In February 2022, their world changed. Through their eyes, the diary chronicles the real-life events, struggles, and everyday bravery of the entire museum collective. It is not just a personal story of the creators, but a voice for the whole team as they united to pack exhibits, endure blackouts, and protect Ukraine's endangered cultural heritage alongside the animals who share their sanctuary.

Infused with the signature Odesan optimism, the narrative explores the museum's resilience and its struggle to stay active amidst a full-scale war.

A silent yet powerful character in this story is Odesa itself. The book captures the city's transformation—its streets and soul reshaped by these extraordinary, trying times.

Supported by a prestigious grant from the Documenting Ukraine program at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna (IWM), the graphic novel was successfully published, making its international debut at the Bremer Zine Festival in Germany in 2025, and in early July 2026, it was proudly presented at the international WARM Festival in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Through its bilingual format (Ukrainian and English) and approachable artistic lens, the book acts as an effective educational and therapeutic tool. It helps both children

and adults process the trauma of war while safeguarding the memory of Ukrainian cultural resilience for future generations.

This autumn, the project will officially launch its dedicated website. This digital platform will ensure free, worldwide access to the graphic novel, allowing international and local audiences alike to experience the story of Marisel and Panna Cotta online from anywhere in the world.

The Visionaries behind the Project:

Olena Iliasova – the author of the idea, storyline, and texts of the graphic novel. Acting Director and Chief Curator of the Bleschunov Odesa Municipal Museum of Personal Collections, and ICOM member.

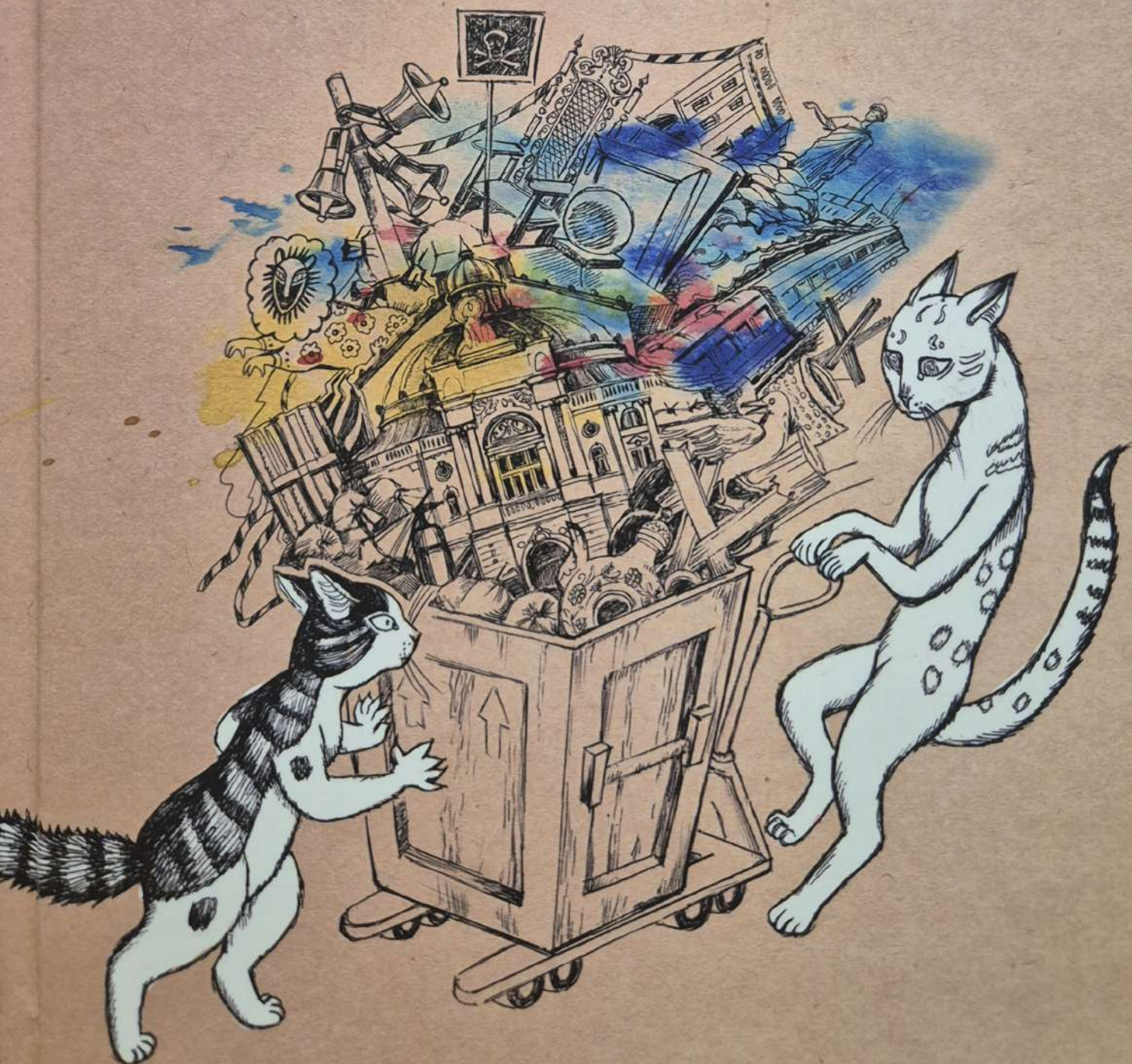
Maria Apriatova – co-author and illustrator, Head of the Exhibition Department at the Bleschunov Odesa Municipal Museum of Personal Collections, and ICOM member.

Olena Iliasova, Mariia Ap'riatova.

12+

Odesa. Museum Diary of War

Marisel and Panna Kota save cultural heritage
and themselves









Hello!
My name is Marisel,
and this is my colleague,
Panna Kota.

We are
museum cats.





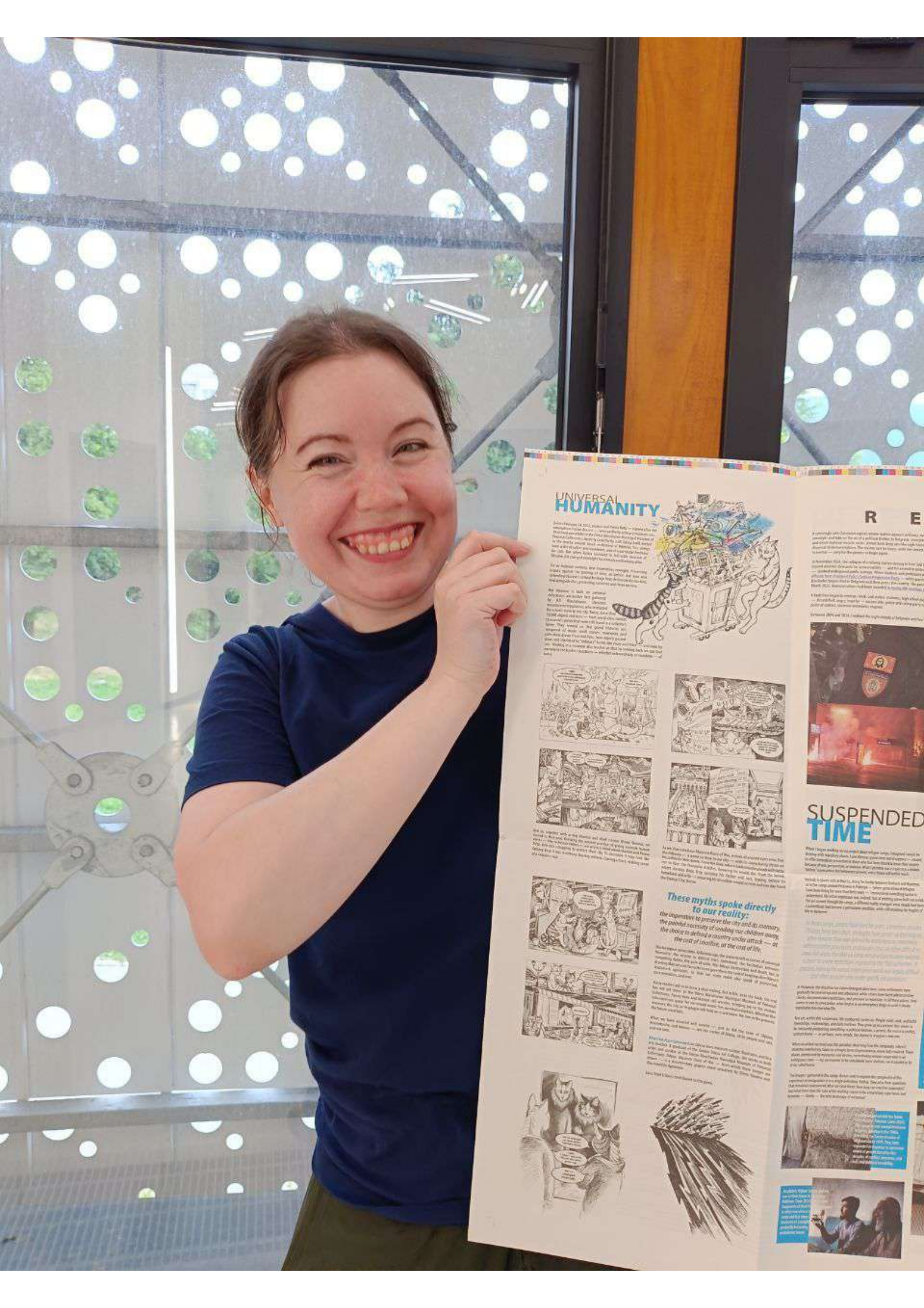














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Odessa Museum Diary of War
Marsel and Hanna Kots save cultural heritage and themselves
Olena Ilizova, Maria Aghajanova



Odessa Museum Diary of War