

Ukraine and Russia fight over Crimean heritage

Culture

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The violent long-running conflict between Ukraine and Russia has spilt over into a cultural tug of war over the artistic heritage of Crimea

From AFP, Sep 30, 2017 Simferopol - The painting Moonlit Night by famed 19th century maritime artist Ivan Aivazovsky is a study in tranquillity two boats sailing calmly across a placid sea. But now the masterpiece is caught up at the centre of a storm between Ukraine and Russia as the violent feud between the two neighbours has spilt over into a cultural tug of war. At Ukraine's request, last month Interpol added the painting, and 51 others by artists such as Ivan Shishkin and Isaac Levitan, to its list of stolen artworks. Kiev insists the collection -- valued at some \$1.3 million (1.1 million euros) -- was illegally spirited away into Russian-controlled territory as Moscow took over and then annexed the Crimea peninsula in 2014. The tussle over the artworks -- owned by the Simferopol Art Museum in the Russian-held region -- is just the tip of the iceberg in a furious dispute over artistic heritage and cultural identity raging between the two foes. When Moscow seized Crimea, an estimated 1.2 million museum pieces fell under Russian control, according to the Ukrainian culture ministry. These are incredible losses for Ukraine, Mykola Yakovyna, the head of the Ukrainian chapter of the Blue Shield cultural protection group, told AFP. [⋮]

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