

ART CRITIQUE

Art World Roundup: working through the pandemic

By [Katherine Keener](#) Published on 1 May 2020 at 17 h 40 min

For this week's Art World Roundup, we look at the ways individuals and organizations are uniting to tackle issues around the COVID-19 pandemic.

AN AUCTION OFFERING UNIQUE EXPERIENCES TO SUPPORT THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

Google and Sotheby's have teamed up to present the **Mayday COVID-19 Charity Auction** – an event that will auction off unique online experiences to benefit the **International Rescue Committee**, a charity working to mitigate the effects of the pandemic in some of the hardest-hit places. Included in the auction line-up are a number of incredible opportunities. For the politically-minded, you could get the chance to have coffee with Hillary Rodham Clinton (over Google Meet, of course) or an online chat with Madeleine Albright, the first female US Secretary of State. The arts more your thing? Bid on the opportunity to get acting pointers from Sir Patrick Stewart, himself, record a song with Sting, or pick the brain of interior designer Jacques Grange. Other experiences include a private virtual tour of Highclere Castle, best-known to many as the fictional Downton Abbey, and a conversation with Apollo 9 astronaut Russell Schweickart. Each experience will be auctioned off through Sotheby's with Google Meets being the sole platform used to bring the experiences to fruition. This unique auction kicks off today, with bids starting as low as \$50 (roughly £40) and will run through May 8th.



Courtesy Sotheby's.

FOTOFOCUS NIXES 2020 BIENNIAL TO PROVIDE ARTS COMMUNITIES WITH FUNDING

Based in Cincinnati, FotoFocus is a nonprofit that has supported photography and other lens-based art forms since 2010. Part of their programming includes a biennial that has become the US's largest photography-based art fair. The fifth edition of which was set for later this year in October, but in light of the world's current situation, FotoFocus has foregone this year's biennale. Instead, **the nonprofit has pledged** to use the show's funding to provide relief to arts organizations in their region, including greater Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky, Columbus and Dayton, Ohio. \$800,000 (£627,000) will be distributed in the form of unrestricted grants to more than 100 partners and venues, including 15 academic organizations, that were slated to participate in the 2020 biennale. The next FotoFocus biennale is now scheduled for October 2022.



Courtesy FotoFocus.

CONCERNED THAT THE UK WILL BECOME A “CULTURAL WASTELAND,” CREATIVES SIGN PETITION

Spearheaded by the Creative Industries Federation (CIF), more than 400 artists signed a **petition** asking for UK government intervention to prevent the UK becoming what they call a “cultural wasteland.” Among signees were artists Anish Kapoor, Grayson Perry, actor Jonathan Pryce, musicians PJ Harvey, and Johnny Marr. The open letter, which was sent to the UK's Chancellor and

Cultural Secretary, asked for the government to provide funding for creative organizations and professionals who have been hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic and are “falling through the gaps of existing government support measures.” The movement is part of the CIF’s #OurWorldWithout campaign that aims to highlight those in creative industries while underlining the need for financial support during these unprecedented times. The petition raises awareness of the severe rate at which creatives in the UK are losing income – a **similar study** was performed by **Artist Relief** in the US.

GHENT MUSEUM TO LOSE MILLIONS IN TICKETS AFTER CANCELLED VAN EYCK EXHIBITION

May could be the month when some countries reintroduce a small amount of normalcy as museums and galleries in places like Germany, Belgium, Italy, and France start getting the green light to reopen over the coming weeks. However, for one exhibition that was meant to be a once-in-a-lifetime moment, May is bringing the refunding of thousands of tickets. “Van Eyck: An Optical Revolution” debuted at the Museum of Fine Art in Ghent on February 1st and was expected to be a blockbuster event, until the pandemic set in. In early April, the Ghent museum, like many others, was forced to close its doors meaning that thousands of tickets for the Van Eyck exhibition, which would have run through yesterday, went unused. As a result, 129,000 visitors experienced the exhibition but a **further 144,000** who had already purchased tickets were unable to attend the show. The museum is now working with their insurance partners to reimburse those who purchased tickets prior to March 13th, meaning that the museum could be refunding as much as €3.6 million (£3.1 million). The show, which included 13 of the 20 autographed works by the Flemish Old Master, was the largest exhibition of works by Van Eyck to date and required the cooperation of more than 70 collections and took four years to pull together.



Installation view of “Van Eyck. An Optical Revolution”. © Museum of Fine Art Ghent | Photograph by David Levene.

THE SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE NOW EXPECTED TO REMAIN OPEN

Last month, the beloved San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) announced that after a planned merger fell through due to the COVID-19 outbreak, it would be closing permanently after this spring. Since those plans were announced, the school has received offers of financial partnership and support, which has led the SFAI to reconsider its future. Now, the institute plans to finish the spring semester but suspend degree programmes starting in the fall. While it will continue to offer on-site studio classes, public education programmes, as well as conservation projects and exhibitions (both of which are supported by grants), the SFAI will then begin to reassess its future as it aims to “reset and reinvent” its structure. In a statement, Pam Rorke Levy, board chair of the SFAI **said**:

“Our doors are open and we will continue to fulfill SFAI’s mission while functioning in a leaner, more focused manner. We’ll use the year ahead to pursue strategic partnerships with other schools and embark on an accelerated campaign to raise philanthropic funds. Our goal is to put SFAI on a firm financial footing, able to sustain itself moving forward.”



View of the San Francisco Art Institute. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

KIEV CREATIVE STUDIO NAILS COVID-19 CAMPAIGN POSTERS

Looma Creative, a studio based in Kiev, partnered up with the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine to create posters that would raise awareness of how to slow the spread of COVID-19 and the results were fantastic. Dubbed the “Art of Quarantine” series, the posters each feature a well-known artwork, with minor COVID-19 adjustments. A facemask here, some gloves there, the posters each spread awareness of how to best protect yourself and others during the ongoing pandemic in clever ways. “We can say that the ability to preserve the quarantine is a kind of art,” **said** Looma in a statement, “This is how we came up with the idea of the ‘Art of Quarantine’

campaign. Classic art pieces get a new look and teach us how to stop the spread of COVID-19 and stay safe. Now even more relatable than ever, see if you can name the altered artworks below.



USE HAND SANITIZER

Use sanitizers to keep your hands and personal accessories clean.

The Creation of Adam / by Michelangelo



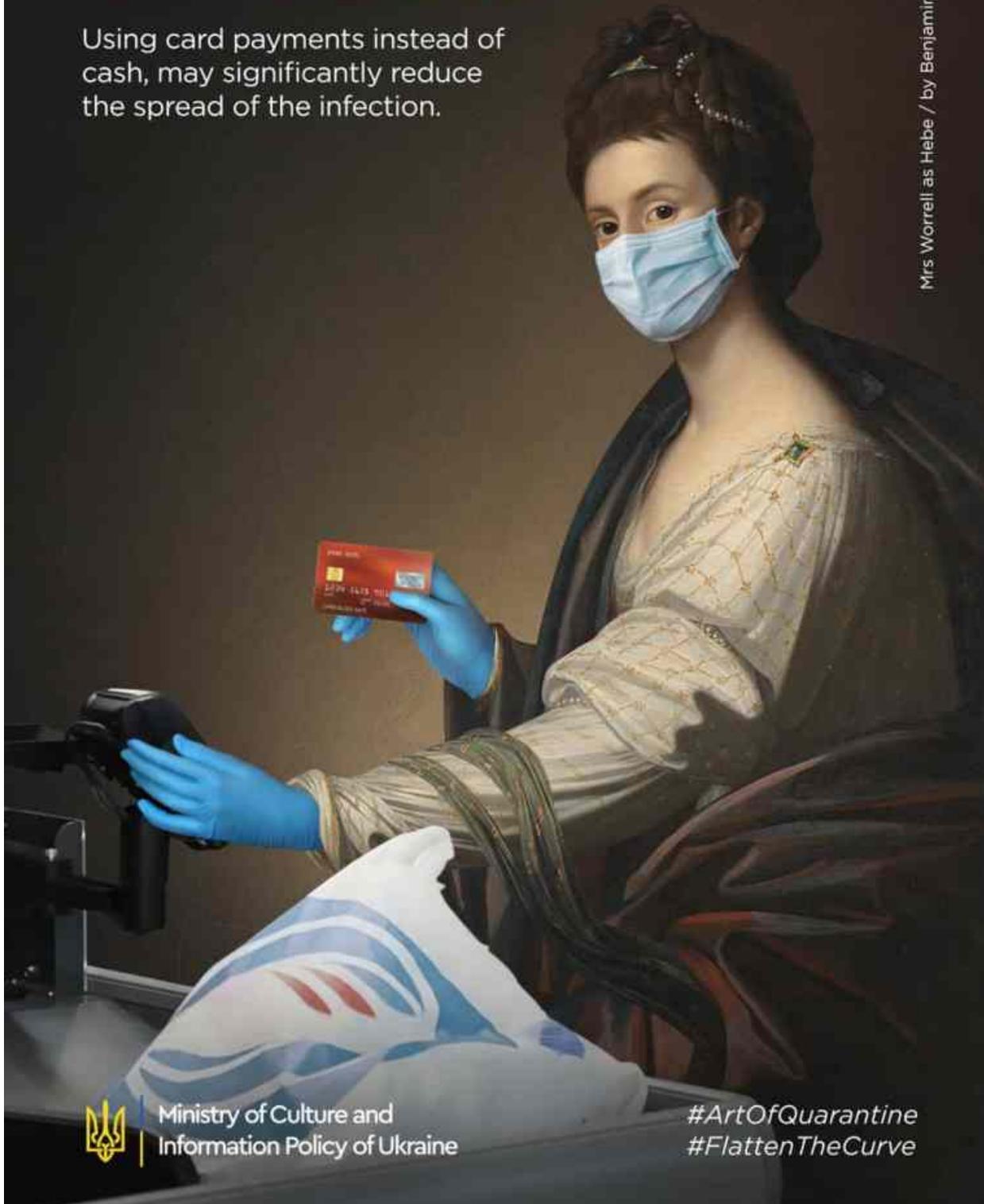
Ministry of Culture and
Information Policy of Ukraine

#ArtOfQuarantine
#FlattenTheCurve

PAY WITH CARD

Using card payments instead of cash, may significantly reduce the spread of the infection.

Mrs Worrell as Hebe / by Benjamin West



Ministry of Culture and
Information Policy of Ukraine

#ArtOfQuarantine
#FlattenTheCurve

LEONARDO **MAKE SUPPLIES**

Making supplies lets you remain home for a longer time and minimize the potential risks of infection.



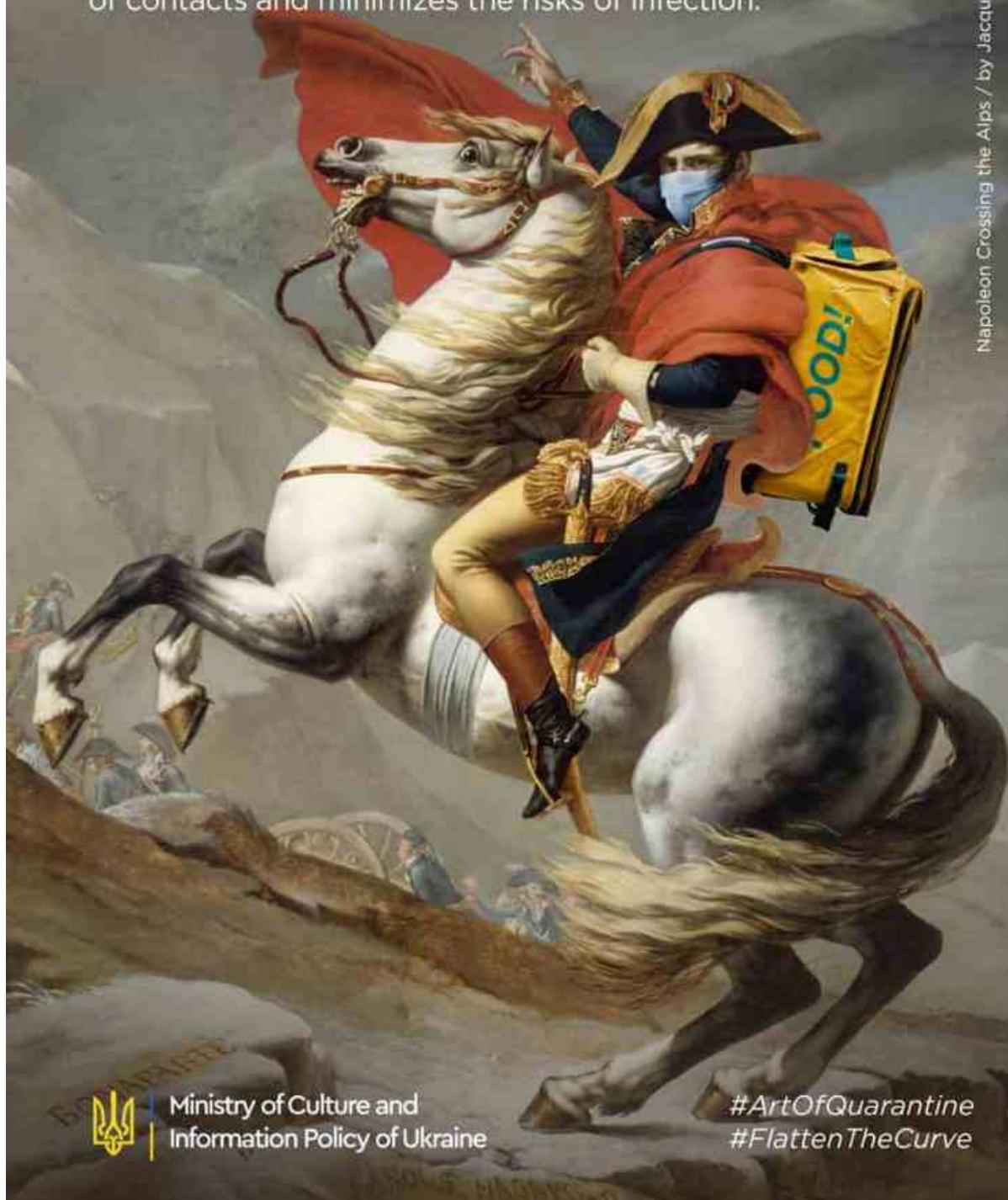
Lady with an Ermine / by Leonardo da Vinci

 Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine

#ArtOfQuarantine
#FlattenTheCurve

USE DELIVERY

Using delivery services reduces the number of contacts and minimizes the risks of infection.



Napoleon Crossing the Alps / by Jacques-Louis David



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KEEP THE *DISTANCE*

Being in public places, keep the distance
of *2 meters* to other people.



Orpheus And Eurydice / by Frederick Leighton



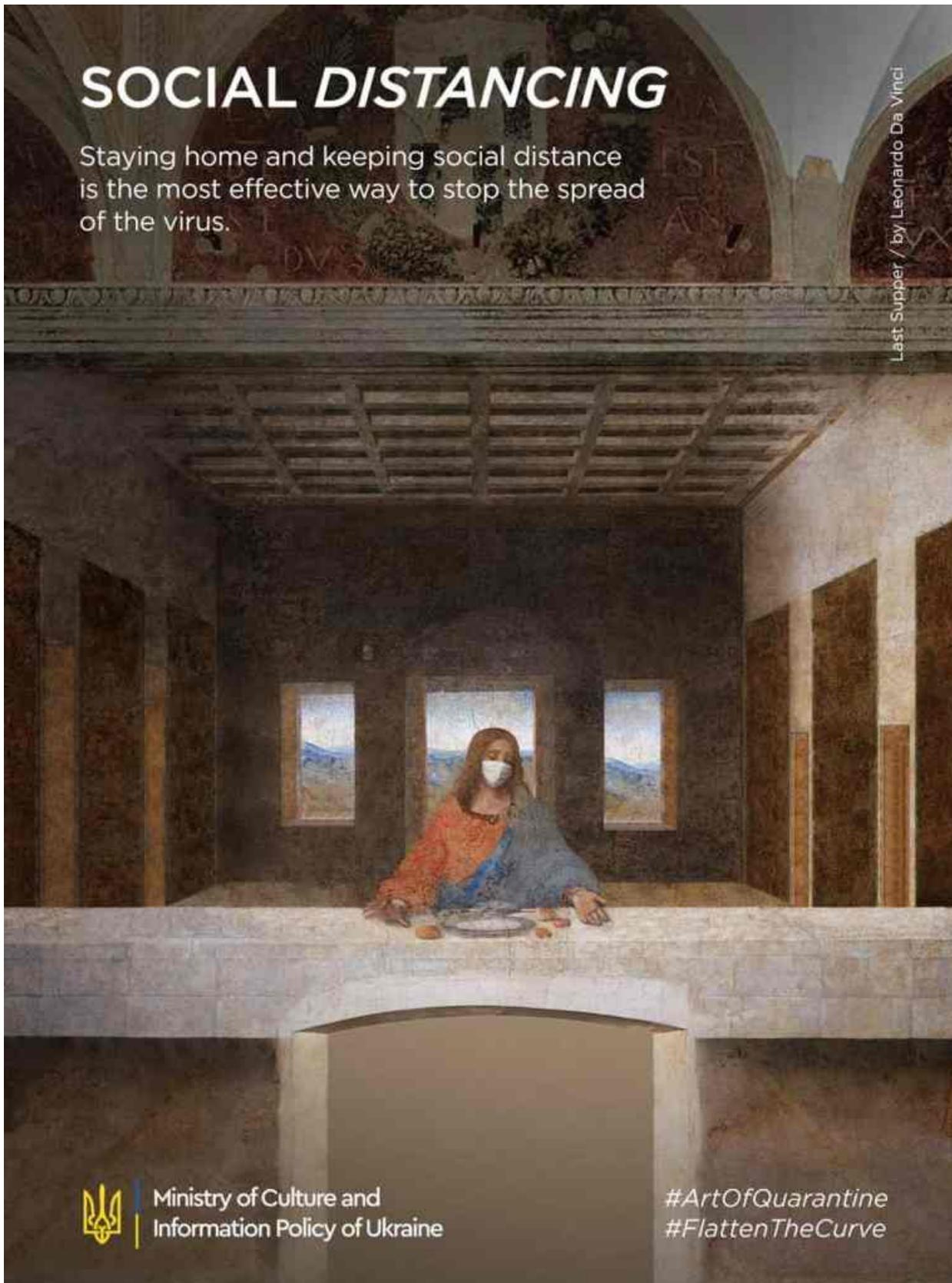
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SOCIAL *DISTANCING*

Staying home and keeping social distance is the most effective way to stop the spread of the virus.

Last Supper / by Leonardo Da Vinci



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USE GLOVES

Wear disposable gloves to avoid contact with potentially infected surfaces.

Praying Madonna / by Giovanni Battista Salvi



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#ArtOfQuarantine
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