

Moffat Cultural Initiative

Two sharply opposing tendencies have come to the fore in the sphere of contemporary culture: on the one hand towards a globalised universal one, and on the other, the need to preserve the unique culture of various countries, localities, and religious communities.

The authors of the “Moffat Cultural Initiative” manifesto are convinced that any efforts to emphasise one tendency at the expense of the other will be unsustainable and non-productive.

The dynamic of European and world culture can only develop on the basis of careful attention, in their irreplaceable quiddities, to the varying traditions of different countries, regions and cultural areas.

That being the case, cultural dialogue is a prerequisite for mutual understanding and stability in today’s polarised world, the exchange of hundreds of years of experience and the current practice of people’s individual and social expression in the form of literature and art.

Talks about the times we live in and ourselves are worthwhile, if they help to remove obstacles and barriers and to diminish what is ‘lost in translation’ – whether politically, linguistically or in our outlooks on life.

Cultural events with a Russian theme have taken place in Moffat in the region of Dumfries and Galloway since 2012 under the aegis of registered Scottish charity Moffat Book Events, in partnership first with the State Library for Foreign Literature and in subsequent years with the Institute for Translation.

Cultural activities take place both in Moffat and in other towns and cities in Scotland where there are historical and cultural monuments, significant places, houses and institutes where the memory of the life and work of a great artist or writer is preserved – such as Robert Burns, Walter Scott and others.

Conferences take place within the scope of the annual week of Russian cultural events in Moffat, as well as public lectures by leading academics and exhibitions drawn from the collections of the great museums of Great Britain and Russia.

The main themes of each year's gathering reflect the most important and contemporary direction of the cultural co-operation between our countries. The first international conference on a Russian theme was 'Alexander Men: Lessons and Legacy' in 2012. In 2013, the conference was devoted to problems of literary translation. The following Moffat forum took place in the year of the 200th anniversary of the great Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov, whose forebears were Scottish. Discussions in Moffat the following year, 2015, took place under the banner of the legacy of the great Russian and world thinker and writer, Lev Tolstoy. In 2016, in 'Poets and Power', we celebrated the 125th anniversary of Osip Mandel'stam along with his contemporaries Anna Akhmatova, Boris Pasternak, Marina Tsvetaeva and Nikolai Gumilev.

In the past six years, many leading cultural figures have attended these events in Moffat, along with academics, translators, and journalists, as well as artists and representatives from leading museums in Russia, Great Britain and other countries including the USA, Sweden and Spain, such as E. Genieva and I Kirillova, A. Livergant and A Varlamov, Peter France, V. Bagno, O. Ready, and N. Ivanovna. P Basinsky and K. Lamont, E. Vodolazkin and P. Snow, Alan Riach, R. Demarco and others. Leading figures from the Scottish and UK government and other institutions have taken part in the Moffat conferences, including the Minister of Culture, the member of Parliament for Dumfries and Galloway, the chairman of Moffat Community Council and representatives of other local cultural associations.

The "Moffat Cultural Initiative" makes a significant contribution to cultural co-operation between our two countries. The successful work of the parties concerned, who share a common aim in our "Moffat Cultural Initiative", demonstrates the vital part that cultural dialogue can play in reinforcing and fostering international cooperation, the strengthening of peace and stability on the continent of Europe and throughout the world.

The authors of the MCI seek to unite the efforts of professionals and institutions and invite all those who share their values to join the Initiative in order to create a common information space and form a network of like-minded people for sharing experiences, developing plans for future, determining common interests and measures for their implementation, etc.