



36th Levantine Heritage Foundation hybrid presentation in London with guest speaker Julian Evans, 17 June 2025 6 pm (UK time)

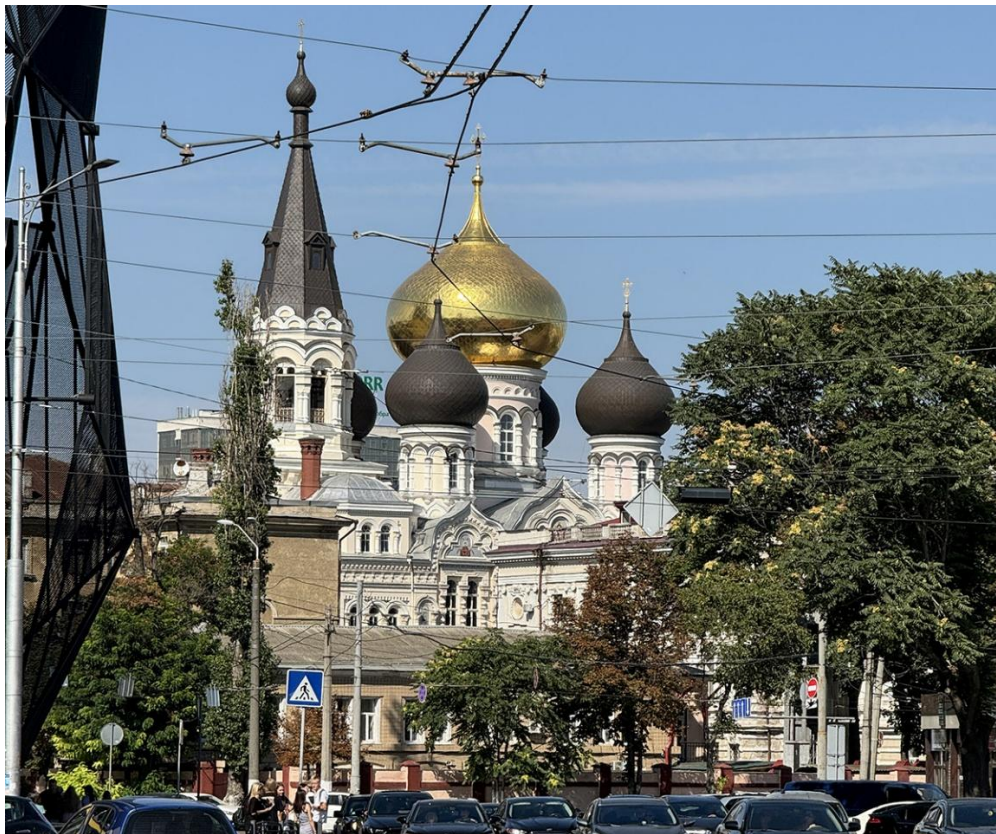
venue: Royal Anthropological Institute, 50 Fitzroy St, Fitzrovia, London W1T 5BT

Created By a Magic Wand: the city of Odesa, its myths, stories, and real importance

The Black Sea city of Odesa, founded in 1794, is a beautiful, piecrust-neoclassical boom town whose port has been a gateway for smugglers, immigrants, divas and poets for 200 years. Its fortunes were made in the worldwide explosion of demand for grain during the industrial revolution, but its character owes at least as much to the energy of its hugely diverse immigrant population and the genius of its early governors, planners and architects. A city of merchants, writers and musicians, the home of influential figures ranging from the author Isaac Babel and poet Anna Akhmatova to the three Greeks who formed the secret Filiki Etaireia that ignited Greece's struggle for independence. Odesa is an irrepressible, singularly human city whose streets and people live on stories and wit and their talent for freedom. It has also always been a strategically important city as Ukraine's biggest southern port and remains a pearl that Vladimir Putin particularly covets – the irony being that, despite once being Russian-speaking and Russia-leaning, the city now aligns itself entirely with Ukraine's heroic resistance against Putin's greed.

Julian Evans, author of the recently published *Undefeatable: Odesa in love and war*, has known the city for 30 years. He got married and started a family there and has lived in Odesa in peace and war, last returning from one of many visits to the city in wartime a few weeks ago. In this talk he tells some of the stories of Odesa's extraordinary and vital history and offers an intimate portrait of both its myths and its genuine importance to Ukraine's economy and national identity.

Booking is essential: <https://36th-lhf-gathering.eventbrite.co.uk>



Odesa



In 1994 Julian Evans discovered Odesa by accident. He fell in love with the city and, returning five years later, met Natasha, a painter from Odesa, married her in a monastery opposite the railway station, and started a family there.

He has been writing about Ukraine for nearly 30 years and has also reported on the war from the frontline. His recent book, *Undefeatable: Odesa in love and war*, is a personal memoir of one of the world's great cities and a tour de force of the personal and political, offering fresh insights into the history of Putin's murderous war against Ukraine and its cultural and human impacts. Luke Harding of the *Guardian* called it "a brilliant portrait of a country and a city under attack".

His other books include *Transit of Venus: Travels in the Pacific* and *Semi-Invisible Man*, an acclaimed biography of the writer Norman Lewis. He has presented radio and television documentaries including BBC Radio 3's 20-part series on the rise of the European novel, *The Romantic Road*, and the BBC Four film *José Saramago: a Life of Resistance*. He is a recipient of the Académie Française Prix du Rayonnement de la Langue Française.

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