

1a -1b

Anti- Hero Monuments

This two part piece is based on my memory of an historical 1937 work, *Worker and Kolkhoz Woman*, by the famous Soviet sculptor, Vera Mukhina. My piece is a satirical homage to anti-heroes rooted in the images of the Soviet era.

As I reflected on Mukhina's sculpture, I brought it into my current perceptive field. I realized that if her sculpture were created today, it would look like these two barbarian figures, fully armed, laden with Soviet symbols, perverted, playing with human souls, ready to fight to destroy, to wreck the world, ashamed of themselves, conniving.

2a - b

Incisions of Time 1 & 2, 2015, mixed media

This work came about as I observed Earth, as if from above, and saw fragments of time, layered upon one another. As a Ukrainian artist, formerly based in Kyiv, I personally witnessed the accumulation of military equipment as well as the accumulation of misinformation starting in 2014. Thus, this work depicts the layers of both military machinery and mis-information. It is made to look like a satellite image, newspaper snapshot, or a story about an historic event from the past.

However, it turned out I was perceiving future events, those we are witnessing since February 24, 2022. So the insight I had was like an incision in time. I saw graves in the cities of Donbass and Luhansk. I saw them being dug out and people buried. You can see that some of the elements I use in these works come from flowers in typical wreaths used to decorate graves. I also incorporate military equipment, wound bandages and other items, all layered upon one another.

Further, I incorporated gruesome Soviet symbolism such as a serpent, hammer and sickle and other images from Soviet memorials still decorating our cities. These old memorials are still all over Russia and Ukraine, signifying that people are stuck in the past. Our children are still taught about these symbols!

I chose large goblets to symbolize drinking misinformation. Our goblets were constantly filled, over years, with misinformation. Each cup of misinformation was overflowing. It spills onto this work.

The past Soviet symbolism is married with the flow of misinformation that I was receiving, that our populations (across the former Soviet Union) were receiving. The symbols and misinformation goblets spilled in my images of our future cities that will be attacked and turned into graveyards, along with all the flowers on those graveyards and the bandages on the bodies. Each city is wrapped into a graveyard.

3a -3b

Dirty Dancing 1 & 2, 2015, oil on canvas

This is the dance of war, a duet. When I look and think of war, I see a playful dance, like in nature, in pairs, yet very abstract and forceful. The dancer's clothing is aggressive. There is a lot of movement and chaos around, depicted with splatters of paint. The dancers are not coordinated, holding toys in their hands. No image is clear. Nothing is precise. The dance is a fierce game of destruction. It is the natural movement of a chaotic barbarian, violent dance.

3a is the courtship, the preparation for dance. Prior to war, there is preparation for war. This dance begins with a courtship, where one bear is regally dressed. The bear is similar to so many images from Russian culture where a bear is dressed in beautiful, king-like clothes.

As I witnessed the build-up of the Russian military and Russian mis-information, it felt like a courtship, a preparation for the dance of the future. A dance is an act, something that you can't stop once it starts. It can be forceful, fast, and furious. Just like with war, prior to a dance people are full of anticipation. This Part 1 represents my premonition of the war that has now arrived in 2022.

The actual courtship leading up to this war was mostly in the form of years of misinformation. It was as though I was in a state of anticipation about a future war in Ukraine when I created these works. I also had this sense of a dance, that once it starts, it will be impossible to stop.

The image of a bear with exaggerated claws arose from Putin's speeches where he specifically references a bear with large teeth and claws. Putin's words are repeated on the television monitor in the installation, The Broadcast.

4

Battle for Ukraine, 2014-15, mixed media

A battle for Ukraine is a diptych and consists of many symbolic elements that I saw in the beginning of Euromaidan (Maidan Uprising), the wave of demonstrations and civil unrest which began on November 21st, 2013.

The main element in this piece is the newspaper headline, "Battle for Ukraine". This headline reminds me of Picasso's Guernica painting, his response to the 1937 Nazi bombing of Guernica, Spain. Guernica hangs in the United Nations to remind us of the atrocities and violence that happened there. That was the source of inspiration for this work. This is my Guernica.

On the left side of this diptych, I use the image of a warrior by depicting a fading image of the great Ukrainian poet, Taras Shevchenko (1814-61). Shevchenko's silhouette is broadly used as our symbol

of resistance, fight for independence and freedom. To me, Ukraine is represented by Shevchenko in this painting. Ukraine is breaking the system of evil, the structure of evil. It is an abstract, avant garde work with many elements. The work has structure at the beginning. Then it falls apart. In addition, I incorporate Shevchenko's poetry. Every word is relevant today in the battle for Ukraine. Fight and you will win and even God will help you.

5

Installation "The Broadcasting", 2015, object

This installation represents the digital war all of the mis-information coming from Russian mass media. I listened to the words of Putin and other Russian leadership and understood, even back in 2014, what kind of dirt was being fed into the Russian population. You can read the actual transcript of Putin's words traveling across the TV screen in this installation

The image that formed in my eyes was of a mass media surgeon, operating on the future state of the Russian people. It is a creature that will be armed to the teeth, no longer human, half bear, half human. The creature is dripping in trophies of babies, hanging from their arms on a belt. The creature is chained to the television set, to the dirt the government was feeding the Russian population since 2014. What I saw back then turned into our 2022 reality. In these visions I foreshadowed the precise events we are witnessing today.

The image of the toilet is important, signifying the value of misinformation - crap propaganda that belongs in a toilet. Everyone is glued to their screens facing toward the mass media toilet full of Russian TV channels (such as Channel 1, NTV, Russia Today, etc.) bought out by Putin so he could feed his own messages to the public:

6a-c

Bathing in Toys, 2014, photos (No. 1, 2, 3)

This triptych emerged as I was deeply affected by the tragedy of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 shot down over Ukraine in July 2014. I saw the Facebook images of Russian terrorists taking selfies in front of the pile of toys they had collected from the field where the plane had crashed. I couldn't understand. Why would they do that? How would anyone even think of it as an achievement or as a trophy? Images of perversion came to me.

I staged these photos to depict the sadistic nature of the Russians taking selfies, glorifying the death of innocent children. These images represent a deep sickness. A perversion existing in people who get satisfaction from celebrating death. These photos are intensified by the frame that I built for each image. These have extreme, sharp, dangerous objects jutting out, juxtaposed with fake flowers. I

created sadistic masks, belts, underwear and claws on the model in the photos to mirror the complete crazy and evil nature of the people who took selfies.

Further, this sadistic man is bathing with satisfaction in the soft fluffy fallen toys. These toys represent all the small, weaker countries of the former Soviet Union, surrounding Russia, like Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Armenia. These countries all like toys for Putin and his people. They have an innocence like toys, yet they are torn. Putin looks at them with the sadistic intention to conquer and then pose in front of his dead or wounded victims.

Bathing in Toys - symbolic elements

The symbolic elements on the model represent the criminal nature of the acts, i.e. killing, violence and thievery.

Multiple watches on the wrist signify thievery. The metal bear face mask and the exaggerated bear claws repeat the idea of Putin as a terrorist bear.

The other important symbol is the cross. This cross depicts the union of the Russian Orthodox Church with Putin's Russia, symbolized by old Soviet communist symbols - hammer and sickle. At the same time, this element of the cross looks like a sword, a weapon ready to kill.

Father Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, supported the war when it started in Donbass and Luhansk. Father Kirill also supports the 2022 war in Ukraine. Putin and the church are united as one. I had the creative impulse to create this unified cross-sword element back in 2014. This cross-sword has now become a real weapon. Further you can see the small star of Lenin hanging on the chain necklace, another hint that past evil is still with us.

6d

SOFT TOY - 2014, photo

This is a favorite toy dog of my son Mikhailo by the name of Tuzik. Sleeping or awake he liked to hold on to this toy for comfort from the onset of the war in 2014. My son and his favorite toy are now safe here in Canada. There are children out there in Ukraine that were unfortunate not to escape the war as is evidenced by their toys.

7a - C

War Carnival, 2014, photos, (No. 1, 2, 3)

In this War Carnival, I explore three ideas. The first is the idea of anti-heres. Their costumes determine actions in the war playbook. They wear the mask of the Russian bear, carry weapons and symbols of perversion. The little plush toys represent small governments that Russia conquers (Salties, Georgia, etc.). At the same time, these toys displayed as trophies represent the naivete of the soldiers.

The second idea plays on the image of ancient Greek Parthenon frescoes. This is my analogous fresco depicting anti-heroes of Russia. This is the social sculpture of war.

Third, the participants are on the backdrop of Ukraine, standing on a wall in downtown Kyiv, just outside my studio on Kreschatik Street. In 2014, although the war was far away in Donbass and Luhansk, and Crimea, it was already present in my home town of Kyiv.

Elements

The mask of a bear represents Russia in general. Also, these masks have sharp shapes, protruding out from them. Aggressive chains hanging off of the warriors reference medieval barbaric times.

Look at their weapons. You see the shape of the cross with four sharp ends. The cross is a weapon here and includes a hammer and sickle, referencing the fact that Russia has come from a communist past to form an authoritarian-orthodox state, sometimes using religion as a weapon for its political aims.

Kirill, the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, openly supports Russia in the 2022 war on Ukraine while other churches have rejected this violence and aggression. Putin uses the church as his personal puppet.

The costume of these anti-heres include a metallic female breast. This element draws your attention but is not focused on the idea of the breast as a male or female. Rather, the anti-hero is a dangerous creature. The idea is that strange creatures are a hybrid of many things. Here, anti-heroes are neither human nor animal either. It's a creature that we can't understand because its behavior is not human.

8

Bearish Wedding, 2015, photo

This surreal work of photography is staged as a theater of the absurd. I was inspired by the 19th century etching, "Wedding of Misha the Clubfoot Bear". There are three elements to this performance: separatists as wedding participants, the clubfoot bear, and the unnatural, forced marriage. There are already forced marriages in the form of fake states: Transnistria (Moldova), Abkhazia, Ossetia (Georgia) Donetsk, Luhansk, and Crimea (Ukraine).

The tragic events of 2014 in eastern Ukraine deeply affected me. As I was scrolling through Facebook I came across a photograph of Donbass separatists' wedding. The separatists were dressed in war uniforms and were armed. This made no sense to me. Why would anyone hold a weapon at their wedding?

I saw contradictory images in their wedding photos. On the one hand, they were celebrating a union, leading to the birth of a family. On the other hand, weapons causing death were part of the celebration. I saw the loud presence of death in that separatist wedding.

I realized that fake unions are common. Russia created them many times before. Fake unions are the result of politicians using the allegory of marriage as a way to force the creation of a third country. Weapons create fake unions in the form of break-away republics. Thus, this work represents a forced marriage, with weapons on the tables instead of food. I am illustrating that Russia is an aggressor who resolves its political will through violence, high-jacking the notion of natural weddings.

I chose only male models for this photo as it is mainly the men deciding to create fake unions, fake marriages through violence and aggression. At the same time, male and female roles are depicted via costumes, similar to medieval weddings.

9 a -c

Restoration of the Absurd, 2015, photo, No. 1-3

I found this star - lamp object inside one of the Stalin architecture apartment buildings that line Kreschatik Street in Kyiv. It is lined with light bulbs in the shape of a star with a circle inside.

It drew my attention because it is a non-functioning communist star-light that was used to celebrate communist events like Lenin's or Stalin's birthday. On communist holidays, the star would be lit on the top of the building.

When I found it, rusty wires were hanging from it, all tangled and messed up. It fascinated me so much so that I decided to preserve it for the work that was already brewing in my head.

In this series of three photos, I use this object to stage the bear-masked anti-heros who find the star. They want to restore communism. It's not working.

These bear-men are like shamans or magicians trying to connect the wires with their claws. The star lights up for a minute in one or two bulbs and then it stops working again. This is the act of trying to restart the old communist machine. It's just not working. They're wasting their time. They are wasting everybody's time. They're wasting people's lives, trying to relaunch something that never can work again.

10

Film

1. "A Way to Freedom." Documentary footage of Maidan*, 2014
2. Staging for the War Carnival photograph, 2014
3. Mykola Zhuravel in his Studio, creating Invasion Redux

1. Documentary footage of Maidan*, 2014

Here you witness me, Mykola, working in 2014, on the portrait of Shevchenko that I was creating to celebrate the 200 year anniversary of the great poet's birth. This work was delivered to a New York gallery where it still hangs today.

While I was working on that portrait the events of 2014 Euro-Maidan began.

I am showing elements of Maidan, the drums, the tension, the destruction, the war-like scene where the general population are the warriors, fighters. This is real documentary footage.

These fighters are chanting, "Give us a way, give us a way."

While I am creating images of multiple Shevchenko's, freedom fighters, I show photos of actual fighters, those that were slayed and those that are alive.

2. Staging for the War Carnival photograph. 2014

In Part 2, I am staging the invasion for the War Carnival photograph you have seen in this exhibition. It is like an infestation by a parasite. At that time, I was thinking that this infestation might lead to war. But I had no idea yet that I would be 100% correct fast forwarding to 2022.

3. Mykola Zhuravel in Studio, creating Invasion Redux

Part 3 is a separate film about my creative process to make this exhibition, Invasion Redux.

**Wikipedia: Euromaidan, or the Maidan Uprising, was a wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in Ukraine, which began on 21 November 2013 with large protests in Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kyiv. The protests were sparked by the Ukrainian government's sudden decision not to sign the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement, instead choosing closer ties to Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union. Date: November 21, 2013 - February 23, 2014 Location: Ukraine, primarily Kyiv (notably Maidan Nezalezhnosti)*

Text spoken by Mykola Zhuravel with spoken translation by Lyumilla-Bezpala Brown, transcribed and edited in English by Michelle N. Moore, April 2022, Toronto.

MYKOLA ZHURAVEL

Ukrainian artist Mykola Zhuravel breaks the boundaries between painting and sculpture, performance and installation art. Zhuravel turns to nature to create thriving monuments to man's links to the Earth itself. He searches for compatibility between Earth and mankind, while pointedly making reference to the obstacles that human beings have placed in the way of a harmonious existence. Zhuravel's ambitious style results in remarkable series of living images of a visionary utopia. By using levkas, a traditional primer employed by icon painters, Zhuravel unites the legacies of Byzantine and icon painting with his contemporary painterly technique. The result, richly vibrant and inventive contemporary works that emerge as modern-day icons.

Biography:

Mykola Zhuravel was born in 1960 in Magnitogorsk, (former USSR).

1979- Crimean art school of Samiksha, Simferopol, Ukraine

1989 - graduated from the prestigious Kyiv State Arts Academy, Kyiv, Ukraine

1995 - Member of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine

1996 - The artist is a member of the National Artists' Union of Ukraine & BG-ART

2009 - Academician of the Academy of Rome-modernist art

2011 - The nominee on the Shevchenkovskiy award. Included in the 30 of the best artists of Ukraine by version of the "100 names" publication

2016 - 1 Prize on the international Kunstpreis ART Worpswede 2016. Berlin

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS:

2022 National Museum "Kyiv Art Gallery", Kyiv, Ukraine

2022 Foundation for development "Enlightenment in the state of being", Andrew's Church, Kyiv, Ukraine

2019 XIIth Florence Biennale, «Art+ Design», ST•H Gallery, Florence, Italy

2019 Texas Contemporary, Texas, USA

2019 Modern Ukrainian Symbolism and M. Vrubel, National Museum "Kyiv Art Gallery», Kyiv, Ukraine

2019 International Fall Exhibition, MORA, NY, USA

2019 Modern Ukrainian Symbolism, Museum of Contemporary Ukrainian Art of Korsaks, Lutsk, Ukraine

2019 Cultural Complexity, Saphira & Ventura Gallery, New York, USA

2018 Retrospective personal exhibition, Painting/ Levkas, Museum of Contemporary Art of Korsakov, Lutsk, Ukraine.

2018 3D Public Art. Sculpture of the plain, National Suitor "Sofia Kievskaya", Kiev

2017 "Transformation of space", White World Gallery, Kyiv

2016 Gewalt | Macht | Herrscher ". Kunstverein ART-Project Worpswede. Berlin, Germany (First Prize)

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Dariya Tishchenko-Zhuravel - BIOGRAPHY

Dariya Tishchenko-Zhuravel is a professional Ukrainian art-photographer, who creates stylish and sophisticated photo projects and fashion portraits turning them into real art works.

Dariya is an incredible master in transmitting inner world, human emotions and energy through the prism of the camera lens. Images live another life in her photos; acquire new forms and expression, sometimes hidden under the surfaces of usual habits and masks. Behind each mask people wear, there's a deep personal story and particular individuality that Dariya manages to open up through their expressions, demeanor and movements and to underline them in her works. The strength and power of her photographs derives from her rigorous commitment to simplicity and the truth of the moment. Embracing the axiom that true beauty lies within, it is this inner beauty that Tishchenko-Zhuravel strives to reveal in her works. Somewhat paradoxically, she is able to enrich her images by keeping them deliberately simple and natural.

Dariya Tishchenko-Zhuravel was born in 1985 in Kyiv, Ukraine. The artist works in the field of photography, painting and video art. A member of numerous national and international exhibitions and ART Plein-air since 2008, her works are included in many private and corporate collections worldwide.