

Holodomor: A Remembrance

87th Anniversary
of the Holodomor Genocide
in Ukraine

Art by Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak

November 2020

About the Holodomor and Exhibition

The month of November is a somber time for Ukrainians around the world as they commemorate the 1932-33 famine-genocide – Holodomor. Murder by starvation is the literal translation from Ukrainian and depicts the horror inflicted by Stalin and his government officials on men, women and children in a deliberate political policy of extermination.

This was not a famine caused by natural factors – food was available. Yet Stalin ordered that all foodstuff and grain be expropriated in order to carry out rapid industrialization and to destroy the will of a nationally conscious Ukrainian peasantry. Millions of Ukrainians died of starvation while millions more were victims of Stalin's bloody years of purges and repressions.

This year marks the 87th anniversary of this tragedy, occurring at a time when people worldwide are suffering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, with thousands dying and falling ill. Even in the midst of these very difficult times, the horrors of the past cannot be forgotten. To honor the victims of the Holodomor, a virtual slideshow depicting 26 mixed-media artworks of Houston-based Ukrainian-American artist Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak, replaces an on-site exhibit.

The artworks featured are striking, compelling and filled with an anguish that roots viewers even if one wishes to avert their eyes. This is precisely the artist's intent – we must look in order to honor the victims and to acknowledge the past so that we can move on. Throughout, titles provide clues to the meanings and symbolism of her work.

About the Artwork

The exhibit opens with *Death: A Common Sight in Ukraine* and captures the situation where villagers were starved by the millions while the Soviet government sold tons of confiscated grain to the West. Passports were not issued, and no one was allowed to leave. Photocopied and collaged into the lower right-hand corner of the artwork is a photo image of a corpse lying unburied in a farming field.

Another Crucifixion depicts a Holodomor child upon an iconographic Christian cross. The child's image is copied from a historical archival photograph. Throughout, the artist's use of varied materials adds even more layers of meaning as three concerns remain constant in her artwork: the use of collage or assemblage (three-dimensional pieces), using text and narratives, and images of nature which are usually superimposed over the collage.

When Ms. Bodnar-Balahutrak first visited her ancestral homeland in 1991, she stated that her eyes and soul were opened to a land that was beautiful but ravaged by the Soviet regime. The people were long-suffering yet hopeful – the culture was rich but sabotaged. Years of Soviet oppression had left their mark and were visible everywhere. Mass graves were being uncovered, revealing horrific historical events long denied by the Soviet government. This new knowledge of so many innocent victims did not pull her down into despair but rather created an urgent need to tell their stories – which was also her story. Not only did this travel experience change her world view, it also changed her approach to art making. She states:

“My art of loss and remembrance responds to the genocide waged by the Soviet regime against the Ukrainian nation and reflects my ancestral roots. Millions perished in Stalin's orchestrated 1932-33 famine in Ukraine. Merging Holodomor victims' images with icon conceits, I honor them.”

Death: A Common Sight in Ukraine

1992

19 x 16 in.

Gouache, ink, photo transfer,
paper

*Private Collection,
San Francisco, California*



Opened Wounds May Heal

1992

20 x 20 in.

Dried plants, seeds, oil, mixed
media, paper

*Private Collection,
Seattle, Washington*



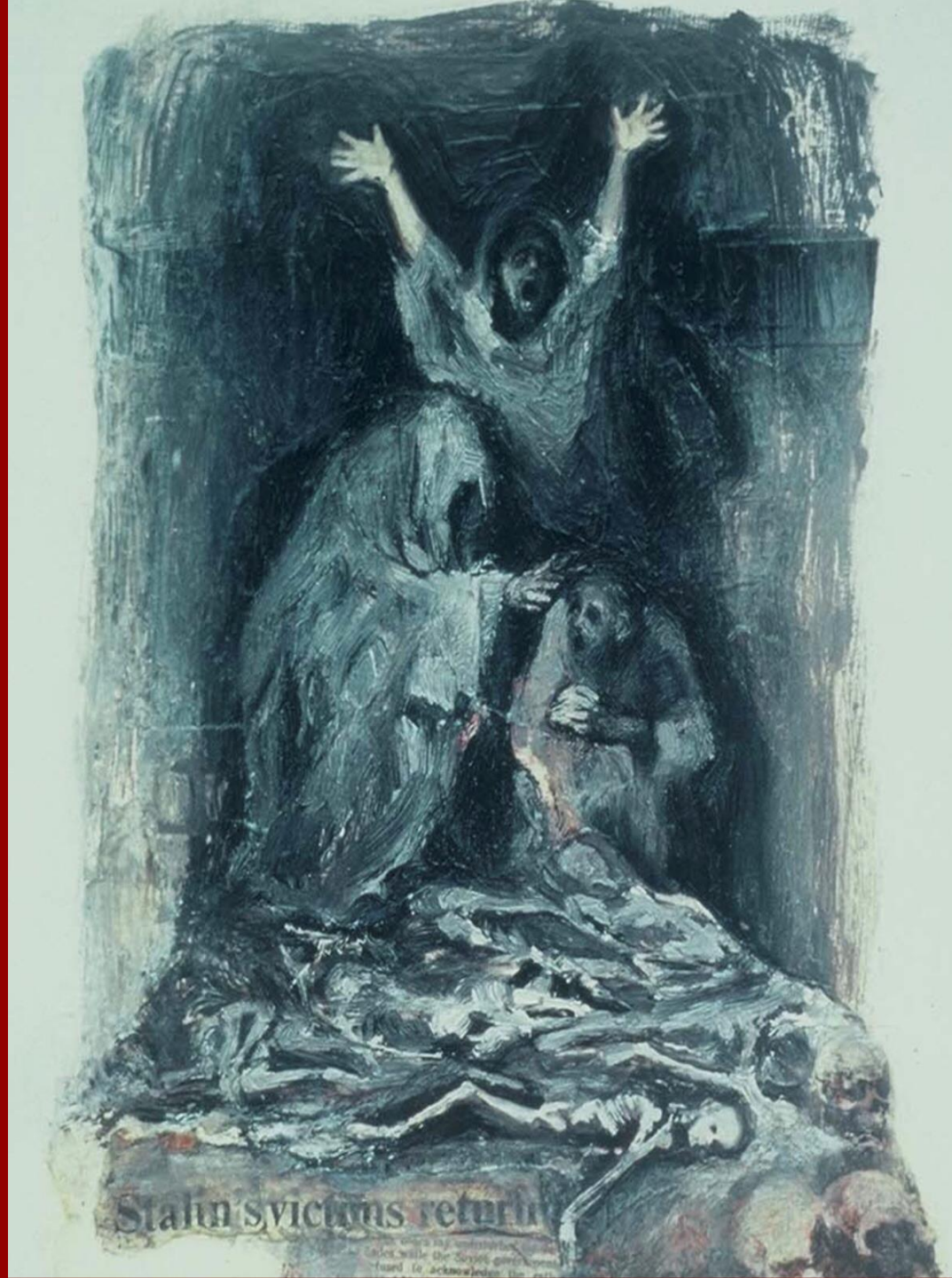
Stalin's Victims Return

1991

20 x 16 in.

Oil, photocopy, mixed
media, paper

*Kienholz Collection,
Hope, Idaho*



Earth

1992

21 x 15.5 x 5 in.

Paints, gold leaf, plants, soil,
wood

*Private Collection
Belmont, North Carolina*



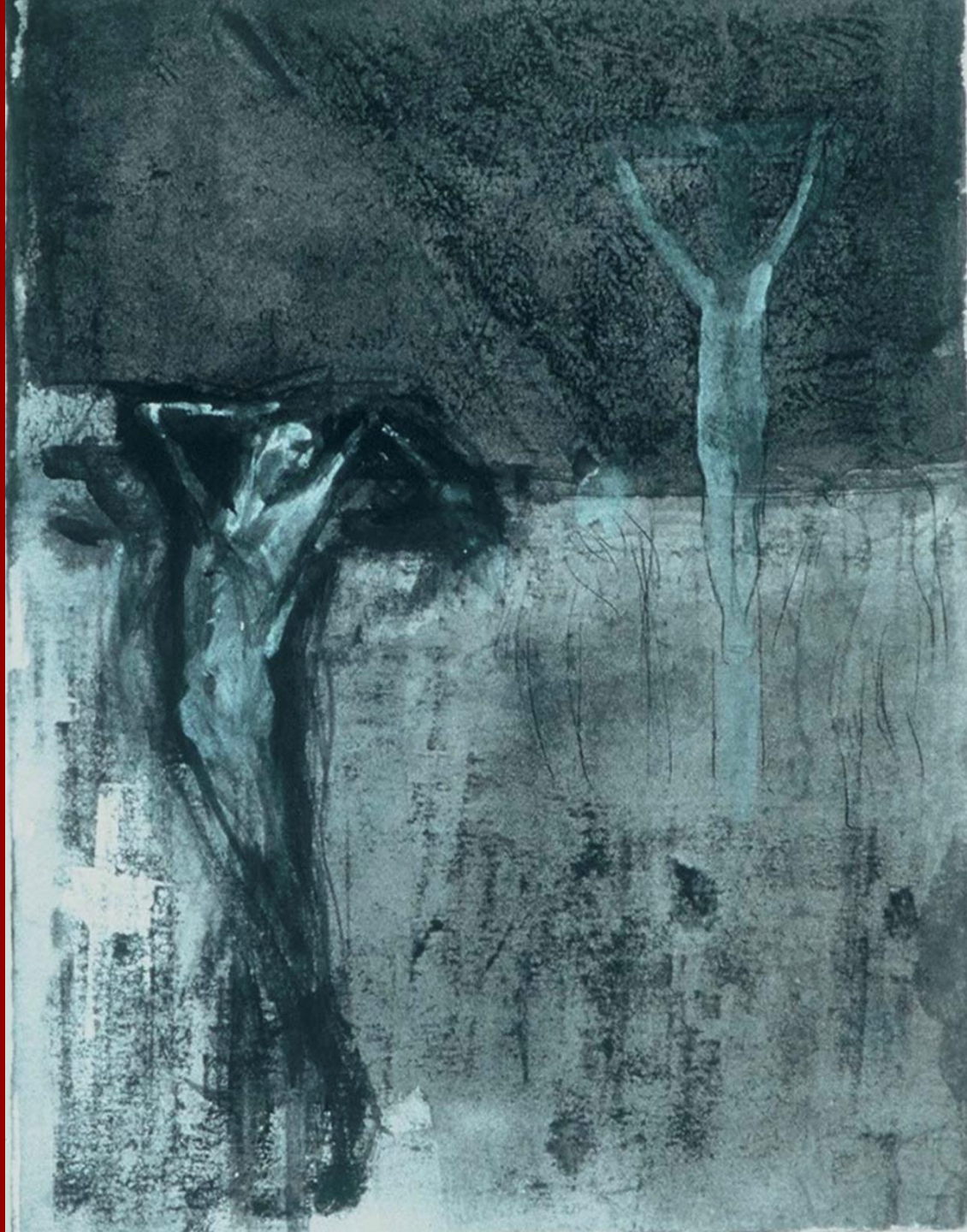
Crosses to Bear

1992

18 x 15 in.

Gouache, ink, photo
transfer, paper

Private Collection



What Price, Paradise?

1991

19 x 16 in.

Oil, ruble notes, netting, paper

*Private Collection,
Houston, Texas*



A Despot's Commandments

1991

20 x 16 in.

Oil, wood, mixed media,
paper

*The Barrett Collection,
Dallas, Texas*



Satan All Around Us – Dancing

1991

20 x 16 in.

Oil, mixed media, paper

*The Barrett Collection,
Dallas, Texas*



Another Kind of Icon

1997

13 x 10 in.

Wax, oil, photocopy, charred wood

Private Collection



Another Kind of Icon #10

1995

13 x 10 in.

Gold leaf, photocopy, carved
painted wood

*Collection of The Ukrainian Catholic
National Shrine of the Holy Family,
Washington, D.C.*



Another Kind of Icon #5

1995

13 x 10 in.

Wax, oil, photocopy, wooden
toy houses

*Private Collection,
Toronto, Canada*



Another Kind of Icon #1

1995

13 x 10 in.

Embroidery, photocopy, wood

*Collection of The Ukrainian Catholic
National Shrine of the Holy Family,
Washington, D.C.*



Another Kind of Icon #11

1997

13 ½ x 10 ½ in.

Gold leaf, photocopy, ruble
coin, metal pins, torched wood

*Private Collection,
Auburn, Washington*



Another Crucifixion

1993

17 x 13 in.

Gold leaf, photocopy,
mixed media, paper



Another Kind of Icon #3

1995

13 x 10 in.

Wax, oil, photocopy, wooden
chalices

*Private Collection,
Houston, Texas*



Another Kind of Icon #15

1996

13 x 10 in.

Gold leaf, photocopy, gesso,
wood

*Private Collection,
Columbus, Ohio*



Another Kind of Icon #2

1995

13 x 10 in.

Oil, ruble coins, coins,
photocopy, wood

*Collection of Concordia University,
Austin, Texas*



Another Kind of Icon #18

1996

13 ½ x 10 ½ in.

Charms, rosaries, photocopy,
wood

*Private Collection,
Aylmer, Canada*



Shrouded Child

2011

14 x 11 in.

Inks on handmade paper over
canvas

*Private Collection,
Athens, Greece*



The Hiding and Seeking Portrait

2009

16 x 22 in.

Oil, resins on charred wood

*Private Collection,
New York, New York*



Orphan Girl

2010

14 x 11 in.

Inks on handmade paper over
canvas

*Private Collection,
Houston, Texas*



Winged

2001

22 x 22 x 5 in.

Clay, gesso, plaster, paper,
wood

*Private Collection,
Houston, Texas*



Veiled

1998-2001

22 x 22 x 4 in.

Clay, wax, wood



The Guardian

1993-1998

22 x 42 x 6 in.

Clay, embroidery, braided hair,
letters, wood



What Sits in My Guts

2008-2009

40 x 32 x 7 in.

Embroidered sewn linen, letters,
molded tubing, metal rod, wood

*Collection of Ukrainian Institute of
Modern Art, Chicago, Illinois*



Will the Grass Grow over It?

(Detail)

2013

48 x 96 in.

Oil, pigmented wax, print
media collage on linen



About the Artist



Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak completed her undergraduate art studies at Kent State University, studied at the Corcoran School of Art and received her Master of Fine Arts degree in painting from George Washington University, Washington, D.C. Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, she moved to Houston in 1977, where she continues to live and work.

An IREX grant enabled her to travel to Ukraine for the first time in 1991. Five years later she visited the Chernobyl Zone. These trips marked turning points in her creative work and world view. A concern with the human condition – always at the heart of her art – took new form and urgency. Her current work continues to explore narrative and cultural metaphor by combining collage, text and figuration.

Since 1991, the artist has participated in several national and international exhibitions and has been awarded artist residencies in France, Ukraine and U.S. venues. Her work can be found in museum and private collections in the USA and Europe, including The Museum of South Texas and Oxford University. A monograph focusing on her art from 1979-2001 was published in 2005. Planned for 2021-22, a year-long traveling solo exhibition of her work opens at the National Museum in Lviv, Ukraine, and continues to art venues in Chernivtsi, Lutsk, Kyiv and Kharkiv.

Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak is on the Studio School Faculty of the Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

For more information about her work, visit:

www.LydiaBodnarBalahutrak.com

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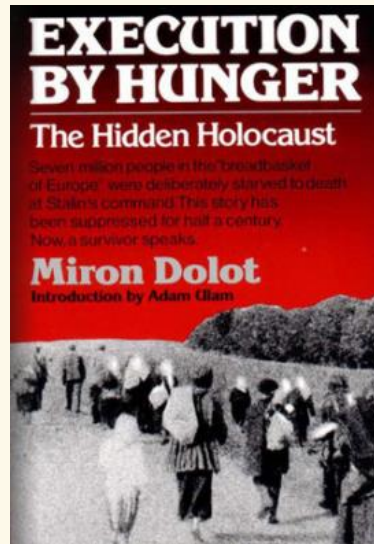
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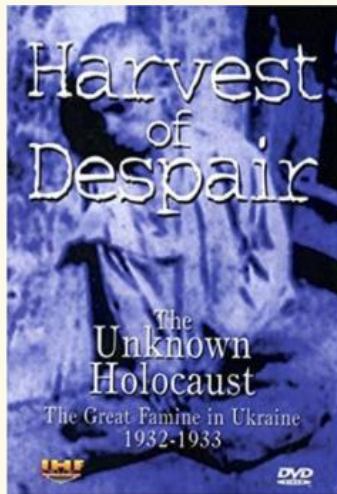
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Acknowledgments

The exhibition *Holodomor: A Remembrance* originated in Texas where the artist Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak resides. It was conceived by members of the Ukrainian-American community in Texas.

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Sincere thanks to the venues within and outside of Texas that are graciously hosting and sharing this virtual presentation in November 2020 for the 87th anniversary of the Holodomor Genocide in Ukraine.

The exhibition *Holodomor: A Remembrance*© was developed by Roksolana Karmazyn, Chrystia Bryndzia, Ksenia Rychtycka, Anizia Karmazyn and Olya Czerkas.

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