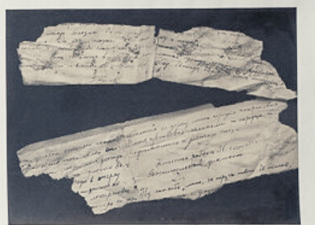


M A R I A : LESIA MARUSCHAK



MARIA: LESIA MARUSCHAK



ABOUT MARIA: LESIA MARUSCHAK

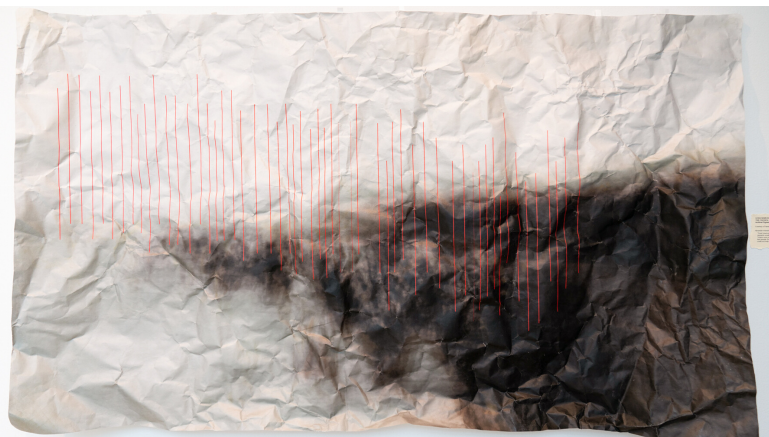
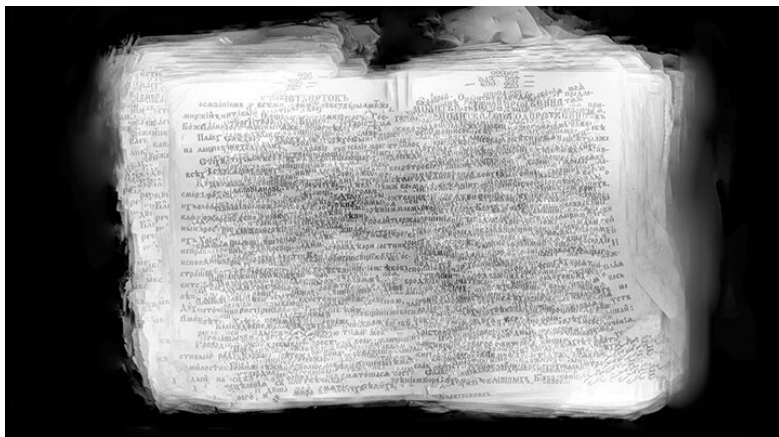
MARIA memorializes the victims of the Ukrainian famine of 1932-33 - Holodomor - an event widely thought to be genocidal. At its center is a single vernacular image of a young girl who survived and resides in Canada. More than four million others did not. The work, in book and exhibition forms, presents my intellectual and emotional response, informed by current research and the stories shared by survivors in the Ukrainian Canadian community I grew up in.

The project utilizes three kinds of images from series entitled RED, TRANSFIGURATION and COUNTING. A fictional album of Maria's life offers an illusionary sense of order while pointing to the impending horror. Lead-like images derived from a laborious process and the use of ash, pigments, parchment, wax and felt express the feeling of starvation - the body transformed into skin and bone - the spirit destroyed. An abstract representation of the ancient Salamis counting tool, explores my inability to grasp the conscious eradication of human life on such massive scales.

MARIA is more than a prosthetic memory of a modern-day atrocity or a memorial space - it is a cautionary tale to be heeded.

[CLICK HERE FOR A GALLERY WALKTHROUGH VIDEO](#)

ABOUT MARIA: LESIA MARUSCHAK CONT.



THE EXHIBITION:

Project Maria & OH CANADA: Where The Land Is Free continue Lesia Maruschak's work on The Memory Project. By manifesting representations of historical narratives brought forth from memories, personal and prosthetic, of almost forgotten or unknown historical events, she works like an archaeologist of history and humanity. Her focus is on archival photographs, diaries and intimate recollections, combined with her photographs of Canadian and other landscapes.

For her first exhibition at the Turchin Visual Arts Center Lesia Maruschak presents two installations from The MEMORY Project: Project Maria & OH CANADA: Where The Land Is Free. The installations present her response to historic events that have marked her identity as a Canadian of Ukrainian descent: the 1932-1933 famine-genocide in Soviet Ukraine, and Canada's first national internment ethno-cultural communities during 1914-1920.

Project MARIA:

Her sister Ksenya sleeping cold and dead in the bed beside her; her father imprisoned and beaten, returning home only to die; her mother falling asleep just before supper, never to wake. These are traumatic memories of Maria F., a survivor of the 1932-33 Holodomor (genocide-famine) in Soviet Ukraine, currently residing in Canada. Testimony of Maria F.

Project MARIA memorializes the more than 4 million victims of the 1932-33 famine in Soviet Ukraine - the Holodomor - an event widely thought to be genocidal. At its center is a single vernacular image of a young girl who survived and resides in Canada.

Maria's memories are now among those Maruschak also carries.

Produced across platforms including books, installations, textile sculptures, performance, lectures and film, the project manifests Maruschak's intellectual and emotional response, informed by current research and the stories shared by survivors. Reworking photographs taken from the internet, Maruschak's family collection, authenticated archival documents and digital photographs taken in Ukraine and on the Canadian prairies, Project MARIA reflects her emotional and intellectual manifestation of the Holodomor. The images encompass abstract portraiture, large scale scenes and small objects likened to Byzantine icons. Mediated digitally, overpainted with biological materials and pigments submersed in egg tempera, hand-worked and waxed, these artworks evoke not only the memory of their making but also the haunting, eternal qualities of individual, family and collective memories passed from generation to generation. Memory, history and trauma are transfigured, finding voice and place in our time.

ABOUT

ARTIST LESIA MARUSCHAK

LESIA MARUSCHAK is a photography-based artist with a unique lens on the creation of mobile memorial spaces. Born in 1961 in Saskatchewan she spent her childhood on the Canadian prairies, land settled by her ancestors in 1874. In the mid-1970s she first picked up a camera, to which she did not return until 2016 when a diagnosis of leukemia led her to change her life's direction and commit to making art. Maruschak's work - a complex exploration of memory and sensual expression - informs and expands what it means to create memorials in an age where the "what and why of museums" is in question. Her humanist approach and abstract sensual representation of modern-day atrocities set her apart from other photographers, at a time when photojournalism and documentary evidence continue to shape the truth-telling and proof-seeking roles of memorial museums. According to Monica Allende, "Maruschak's work reflects on the visual memory of history, and the role of the artist in the decolonization of narratives which are critical issues in photography debate." Using a narrative approach, her work comprises objects and installations encompassing photographs, paper works, textile figurative sculptures, and film. Dr. Sabina Tanovic notes that Maruschak's approach to memorial spaces, as exemplified by her most recent book *TRANSFIGURATION*, "...is a brilliant intervention in the vast field of memory studies." Maruschak's projects are produced across platforms such as installations, paper works, books, and films and in three years have been shown in the United States, Canada, the UK,



Spain, Holland, France, Mexico, Greece, Korea, Italy and Spain. Her works are held in private and rare and special collections, and museums such as the Phoenix Museum of Art, Stanford University, Athenaeum, Columbia University, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, and the Library of Congress. In 2019 Maruschak received the Director's Choice Award at Santa Fe Center, Grand Prix Award at Kyiv Arsenal Book Festival, Shortlisted Athens Photo Festival and featured at Rencontres Arles.

ABOUT ARTIST LESIA MARUSCHAK CONT.

Maruschak collaborates with recognized international memory museums, lectures at international conferences such as FORMAT 19 University of Derby (2019) and Why Remember? Sarajevo (2019). She makes special guest appearances at photo festivals including PhotoVenezia (2018) and Palm Springs Photo Festival (2017). In DATE, The Governor General of Canada presented Maruschak with the Caring Canadian and Silver Medal Award for her work. Maruschak holds a MA in Ethnography and an MBA in International Management. She spends her time between Alvena and Ottawa, Canada.



WHAT IS THE HOLODOMOR?

'Holodomor' is the word created to describe the 1932-33 famine-genocide in Soviet Ukraine. It is a combination of the Ukrainian words for hunger (holod) and extermination (mor), from the verb 'moryty' to kill by hunger or exhaustion. The Holodomor is a complex, highly debated historical event. There are many vested interests, and hence many diverging stories. Evidence of the Holodomor exists as eyewitness accounts and photographs. While drought and crop failure may have been contributing factors; and government mismanagement and Stalin's aggressive



collectivization policies created chaos – they were not the causal factors behind the event. Survivors describe the Holodomor as “an act of aggression” and archival records substantiate their claims. Pulitzer-prize winning historian Anne Applebaum, one of the world’s pre-eminent chroniclers of the crimes of the Soviet Union, in her new book RED FAMINE notes: “Starvation was the result, rather, of the forcible removal of food from people’s homes; roadblocks that prevented peasants from, seeking work or food; the harsh rules of the blacklists imposed on farms and villages; the restrictions on barter and trade; and the viscous propaganda campaigns designed to persuade Ukrainians to watch, unmoved, as their neighbors died of hunger.”

WHITE SHADOWS

Men, women and children, branded as “enemy aliens”, interned behind barbed wire under armed guard, their properties lost or confiscated, forced to heavy labor in Canada’s heavily forested wilderness. These are the traumatic memories of the ethnocultural communities affected by Canada’s 1914-1920 first national internment operations, of which I am a descendant. WHITE SHADOWS is an installation from OH CANADA, seen for the first time at the Turchin Visual Arts Center.

WHITE SHADOWS CONT.

Maruschak created these works to trace the presence of others. These almost life size, blurry and indiscernible photographs are like palimpsests of the early immigrants to Canada and those imprisoned at Canadian World War One internment camps. Maruschak introduces us to them using their faces, eyes, hands and the places they inhabited. They are unknown to us and as we discover them they move to inhabit our memories.

They hang from the atrium ceiling, floating silk panels, like echoes or vibrations. Installed so as to immerse visitors, they fray the boundary between the audience and the work, between the self and the other, between the past and now. They are white, as if white noise, easy to forget, ignore. With movement they enter and disappear from our reality as do memories. Maruschak invites the audience to sit among the panels and forge new relationships with the past and the world around us.

Maruschak is a grant recipient from the First World War Internment Recognition Fund and her work on OH CANADA is sponsored by the Fund.



THE MEMORY PROJECT

Lesia Maruschak presents two installations from The MEMORY Project: Project Maria & OH CANADA: Where the Land is Free. The installations are her response to historic events that have marked her identity as a Canadian of Ukrainian descent: the 1932-1933 famine-genocide in Soviet Ukraine and Canada's first national internment of ethno-cultural communities during 1914-1920. By manifesting representations of historical narratives brought

forth from memories, personal and prosthetic, of almost forgotten or unknown historical events, Maruschak positions herself as an archaeologist of history and humanity. Her focus is on archival photographs, diaries and intimate recollections, combined with her photographs of Canadian and other landscapes.

Project MARIA memorializes the more than 4 million victims of the 1932-33 famine in Soviet Ukraine - the Holodomor - an event widely thought to be genocidal. At its center is a single vernacular image of a young girl who survived and resides in Canada. Maria's memories are now among those Maruschak also carries.

Produced across platforms including books, installations, textile sculptures, performance, lectures and film, the project manifests Maruschak's intellectual and emotional response, informed by current research and the stories shared by survivors. Reworking photographs taken from the internet, Maruschak's family collection, authenticated archival documents and digital photographs taken in Ukraine and on the Canadian prairies, Project MARIA reflects the artist's emotional and intellectual manifestation of the Holodomor. The images encompass abstract portraiture, large scale scenes and small objects likened to Byzantine icons. Mediated digitally, overpainted with biological materials and pigments submersed in egg tempera, hand-worked and waxed, these artworks evoke not only the memory of their making but also the haunting, eternal qualities of individual, family and collective memories passed from generation to generation. Memory, history and trauma are transfigured, finding voice and place in our time.

CURATOR'S STATEMENT

© MARY ANNE REDDING

Ghostly shadows haunt the landscape of memory. Shades of the past rise from the hills; wisps of fog blur the distinction between present and past—obscuring the future humanity is doomed to repeat if the lessons of the past are lost to the ravishes of time and dementia. And yet, yet, there is no escape from these insistent hauntings. Clues are found in the images, the texts we stumble upon, the stories whispered slithering from limb to limb of our beloved but gnarled and twisted family trees, in forgotten archives, in flea markets, in antique stores, pressed into the pages of the Old Testament, slipped between the covers of the Talmud and Mishnah, the Koran, the Sutras, embedded in the stories we are told when we are young and learn to repeat over and over like the guarded messages in a broken telephone game. Maria was young once; now, she is ageless, a symbol, not unlike the more famous Anne Frank, of the inhumanity of man to children, those disappeared buried in mass graves or not at all; their fragile young bones left to whiten uninterred, picked clean by microbes under the dappled green forest canopy.

Maruschak, the artist, the chronicler of the past through found images and her familial archive, pays homage to the victims of Stalin's vicious reign in the Ukraine. Working in an image-based series that "underscores the theatre of political power and serves as a metaphor elucidating the creation, performance, and maintenance of societies of fear," she makes tangible the ghosts of her ancestors, our ancestors. There are few places around the globe that have escaped the scars of genocide, of repression, of fear. The artist creates to reclaim individual memory and, in claiming for herself a personal history, transcends the self to articulate our collective history; her tears become our universal tears causing the oceans to rise at first imperceptibly but now in a torrent of "inconvenient truths."

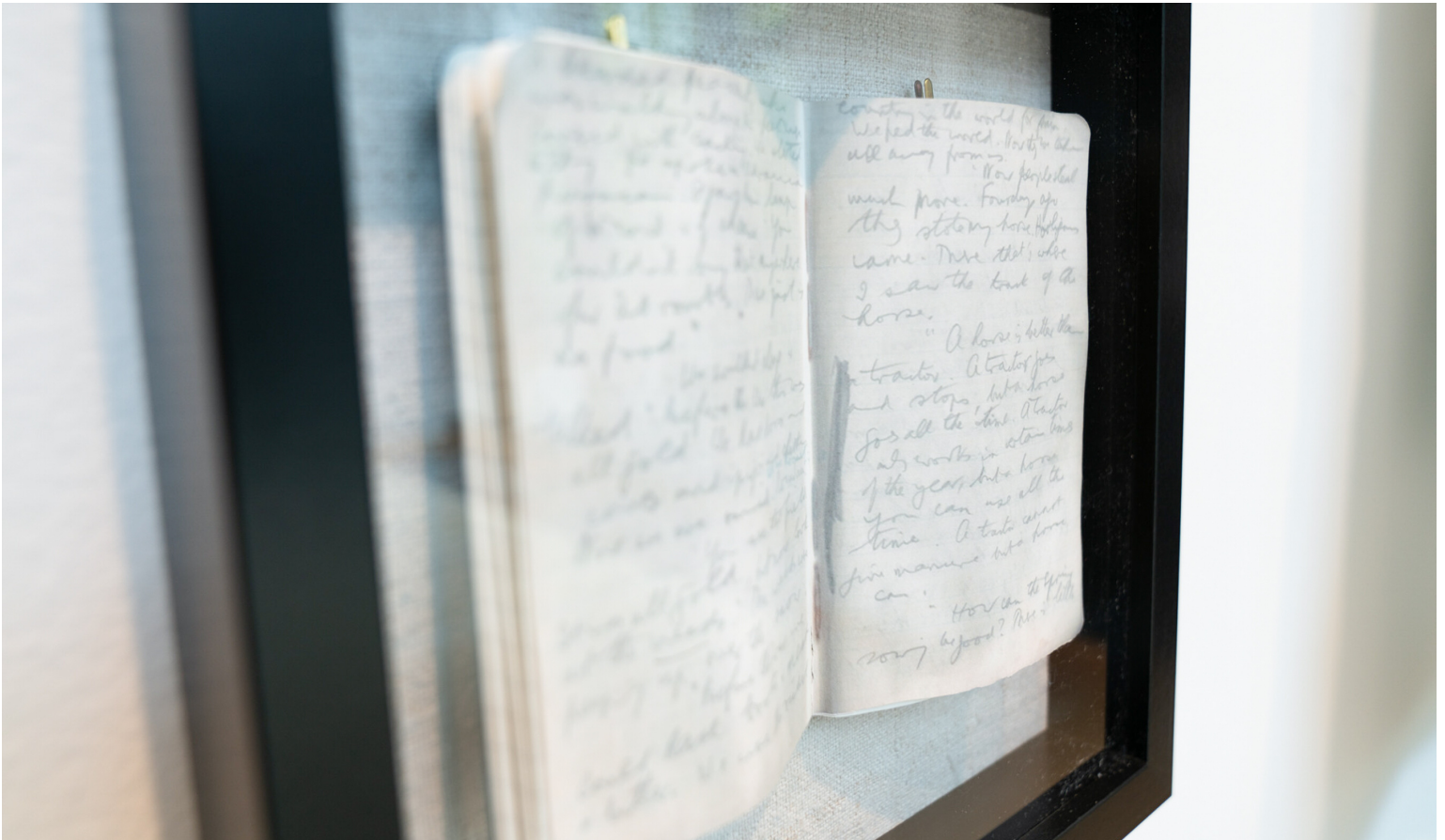


Why are we, and here I reference the global human species—the editorial we, why are we doomed to separate children from their parents at so many artificial borders including, now, the US/Mexico border where children are spirited off in the dark of night, their fates and whereabouts unknown? Maruschak's images of starving children directly link the Soviet Politburo's institutionalized policy of artificial starvation that resulted in the deaths of 5 million, let me repeat that staggering number, 5 million people in the Ukraine during the Second World War to what is happening now to millions of families fleeing starvation, violence, and injustice even in economically progressive "First World" countries. Inexcusably haunting.

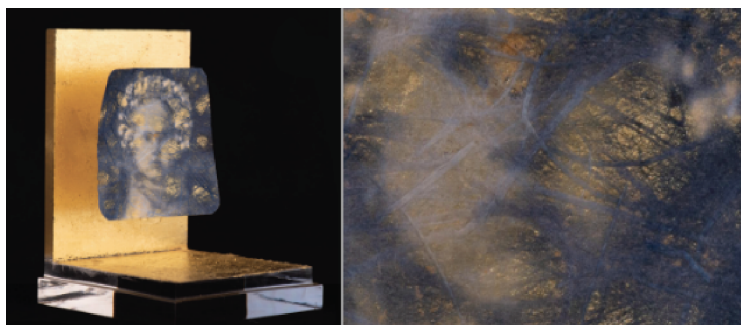
CURATOR'S STATEMENT CONT.

Maruschak moves quietly, uneasily, between countries, Canada, the Ukraine, the United States of America, working to create necessary monuments to the past. If we are silent, the monuments become a tribute to our own inability to act. The artist cautions her viewers about “the alarming tendencies to blend fact and fiction, and to sow doubt about established norms, (which) harken back to periods when demagogues spun new myths about past, present and future and combined them with spectacles.” We live in a world of globally televised spectacles where those in power hold on frantically at any cost to their fragile power waving mirrors to deflect the light from their own covert actions. We cannot let the mourning for human decency, for the loss of public morality, for simple human kindness to force us into another collective silence. What is our ethical responsibility to say what we know, to say something if we see something? All too often we incessantly frequent the theatres of a celluloid world of escapism when the theatres of mass suffering are common features of our cultural landscapes demanding the same attention. The politics of memory have always been manipulated by the image. We refuse to look deeply. The late sophisticated photographer of the powerful and famous, Richard Avedon, wrote: “Isn’t it trivializing and demeaning to make someone look wise, noble (which is easy to do), or even conventionally beautiful when the thing itself is so much more complicated, contradictory, and, therefore, fascinating?” Maruschak likewise knows exactly what she is doing when she manipulates the images she works with to create a memorial for Maria; the process of reworking the prints pays tribute to those who have come before as well as a talisman to our own survival—wreaths placed on the landscape of our hearts.

© Mary Anne Redding



WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION



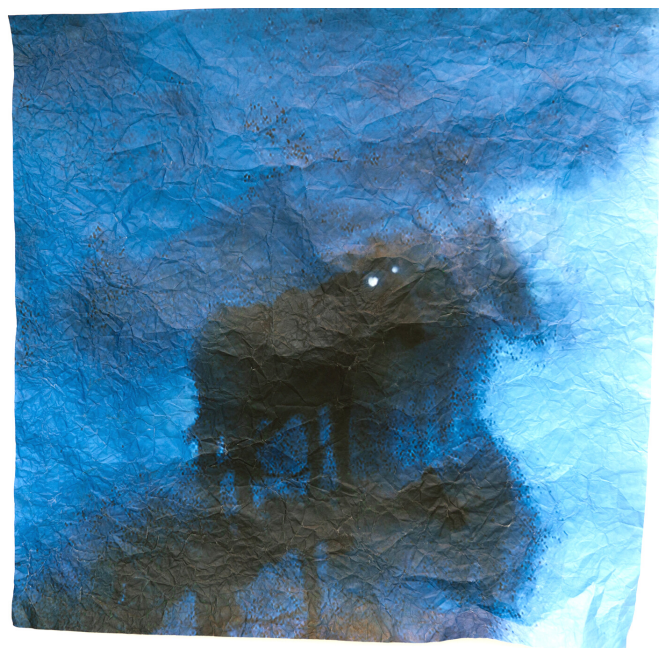
LA PETITE MARIA BLEUE, 2019

MARIA ICON, 2019

Prints: Pigments on incredibly fine Japanese hemp or hemp/kozo papers weighing only 27 gsm are hand-rubbed with wax and resin, and polished with an agate stone by the artist. Some prints maybe backed with 22kt gold leaf.

Board: Each icône board is made to the artist's specifications using Canadian basswood. Following a precise and ancient process the board is hand painted with layers of gesso made according to a traditional recipe, by a European Master gilder. The gesso consists of calcium carbonate, barium sulfate, rabbit skin glue and linseed oil. Finally, 1-2 layers of 22 Kt gold leaf are applied to the board. Depending on the artist's request the boards maybe burnished or finished according to the laborious water gilding process.

Stand: Each stand is made to the artist's specifications in a Canadian studio specializing in the production of custom plexiglass works. Following inspection, they are gilded with 22kt Italian gold leaf, in a process designed by the artist. By mediating the ancient practice the artist arrives at a contemporary presentation of these dynamic palimpsest like works.



THE HORSE DIED NEXT, 2019

Print: Pigments on a lovely ecru shade of mulberry paper weighing only 70 gsm, are over-painted with organic, biologic and inorganic pigments dispersed in egg yolk and wine. The artist hand-rubs each work with carbon, ash, wax and resin. They are next hand sculpted with a konnyaku emulsion and left to air-dry in the environment. Once sculpted they are hand-waxed once last time.

Presentation: Unframed

Certification: The work is signed and numbered by the artist on back

Specifications: 100 x 100 cm

Edition: 1 Unique work + 1 AP



RED ROSES ARE FOR BETRAYAL, 2019

Alexander Wienerberger Text:

“– It was September (1932–Ed). I was sitting in the sleeping car of the Moscow-Kharkiv express train that was taking me to my new job. [...] In the daytime, the bleak, suffering land looked even more frightening than at night. At each station, I saw countless wagons loaded with peasants and their families. They were guarded by sentinels and then herded into compartments to face the White Death further north. The fields were left uncultivated, the grain lay rotting under the autumn rain. [...] I saw neither cattle nor geese. Only some well-fed chicks huddled together near the abandoned homes. Despite myself, I recalled how, 17 years ago, I, a prisoner of war, had travelled through the same region, passing wheat fields, herds of cattle and enjoying tons of food offered at each station. Even in 1926, after the devastating world war and civil war, these lands flourished. How inhuman would that supreme authority have to be to turn such a flourishing, luxuriant country into such desolation and ruin. [...]”

Stalin bred a culture of terror. Family members betrayed one another. The Party and its leader, Stalin, where supreme. Red Roses Are For Betrayal takes what is normally a symbol of love and explores the nature of betrayal. There is also an inherent trauma in memory which impacts our identity. This image was

not born of analysis, rather it is an artistic and intuitive gesture. Possibly, an exploration of what it is like to be a Canadian of Ukrainian descent carrying this history, these stories and what that means for the role of photography in their telling and retelling.

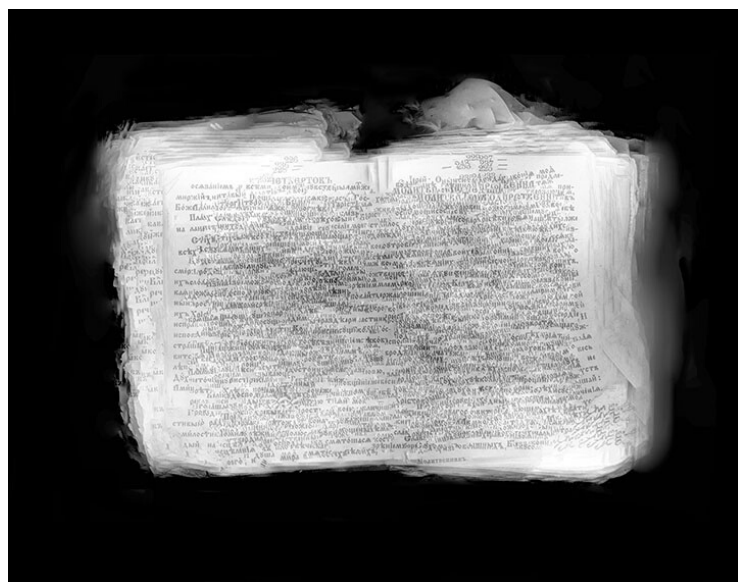
Print: Pigments on a lovely ecru shade of mulberry paper weighing only 70 gsm, are over-painted with organic, biologic and inorganic pigments dispersed in egg yolk and wine. The artist hand-rubs each work with carbon, ash, wax and resin. They are next hand sculpted with a konnyaku emulsion and left to air-dry in the environment. Once sculpted they are hand-waxed once last time.

Presentation: Unframed

Certification: The work is signed and numbered by the artist on back

Specifications: 100 x 100 cm

Edition: 1 Unique work + 1 AP



MOLYTVA NO.1: 4 MILLION PRAYERS AND COUNTING, 2019

This work presents 5000 layers of sacred text derived from an antique prayer book found in the markets of Ukraine, 2017. The image - a hallmark of the series - explores the tortuous process of a starving body

turning into skin and bone. It also recalls the victims and the human rights they were denied. While the work depicts an ancient Slavic language, Old Church Slavonic, that is considered 'dead', the work gives voice to the memories of millions.

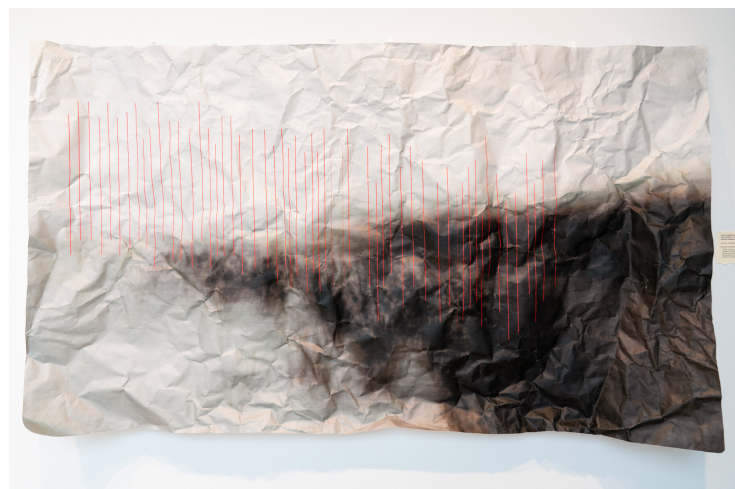
Print: Pigments on a lovely ecru shade of mulberry paper weighing only 70 gsm, are over-painted with organic, biologic and inorganic pigments dispersed in egg yolk and wine. The artist hand-rubs each work with carbon, ash, wax and resin. They are next hand sculpted with a konnyaku emulsion and left to air-dry in the environment. Once sculpted they are hand-waxed once last time.

Presentation: Unframed

Certification: The work is signed and numbered by the artist on back

Specifications: 100 x 160 cm

Edition: 1 Unique work + 1 AP



THE CHOSEN, 2019

Alexander Wienerberger Text:

"Food reserves were searched with bayonets. When the Soviet authorities realized that hungry peasants would flock to the cities in search of food, they stopped selling rail tickets for six months. Tickets were available only if you showed an official government card. The authorities also prohibited people from sending food products by rail or mail across the country so that city residents could not help their relatives in the villages."

Print: Pigments on a lovely ecru shade of mulberry paper weighing only 70 gsm, are over-painted with organic, biologic and inorganic pigments dispersed in egg yolk and wine. The artist hand-rubs each work with carbon, ash, wax and resin. They are next hand sculpted with a konnyaku emulsion and left to air-dry in the environment. Once sculpted they are hand-waxed once last time.

Presentation: Unframed

Certification: The work is signed and numbered by the artist on back

Specifications: 100 x 160 cm

Edition: 1 Unique work + 1 AP



THE DIGGERS: WE COULD NOT BURY OUR DEAD, 2019

Alexander Wienerberger Text:

"– The municipal authorities were noticeably perplexed by what to do with all the bodies lying everywhere. Moscow had ordered the cities not to help the hungry peasants, but they failed to explain what to do with the all the dead bodies, unfortunate victims of Stalin's death sentence. Initially, the bodies were buried on the spot, in gardens and in yards. But, more and more people were dying. Lorries drove through the streets twice a day, in the evening and at dawn, to collect the "rotting humans", as Katz called them, and deliver them to the mass graves on the outskirts of the city. There are seven cemeteries, with about 250 large pits in each one. 15 bodies are interred in one pit. Add persons that are buried somewhere outside the cemeteries and you will see that about 30,000 people – men, women and children – are buried in Kharkiv alone."

The Diggers is derived from IPHONE captures and is one of the best examples of Maruschak's practice. The work is a large-scale, heavily worked piece printed on kozo paper, treated with wax, ash and pigment.

Maruschak explains: "I am not interested in being bound by categories and so, while my work is photo-based, it draws from multiple arenas. It is unstable, dynamic, moving from one form to another; a type of translation, where no single practice dominates."

Print: Pigments on a lovely ecru shade of mulberry paper weighing only 70 gsm, are over-painted with organic, biologic and inorganic pigments dispersed in egg yolk and wine. The artist hand-rubs each work with carbon, ash, wax and resin. They are next hand sculpted with a konnyaku emulsion and left to air-dry in the environment. Once sculpted they are hand-waxed once last time.

Presentation: Unframed

Certification: The work is signed and numbered by the artist on back

Specifications: 100 x 400 cm

Edition: 1 Unique work + 1 AP

Source Image: Konstantin Huytan, 2019. Alvena, Canada



MY DOLL, 2019

Alexander Wienerberger Text:

"– A woman buried her dead child in a cemetery. The infant was hugging a small doll to her chest. They were buried together. Two weeks later, the woman saw the doll in the local market. She called the police, and everyone learned the horrible story. For months, the cemetery guard had been feeding his pigs with dead bodies. There was great demand for his pork meat. [...]"

Print: Pigments on a lovely ecru shade of mulberry paper weighing only 70 gsm, are over-painted with organic, biologic and inorganic pigments dispersed in egg yolk and wine. The artist hand-rubs each work with carbon, ash, wax and resin. They are next hand sculpted with a konnyaku emulsion and left to air-dry in the environment. Once sculpted they are hand-waxed once last time.

Presentation: Unframed

Certification: The work is signed and numbered by the artist on back

Specifications: 100 x 100 cm

Edition: 1 Unique work + 1 AP





"THE DIGGERS" PROCESS AND "TRANSFIGURATION"

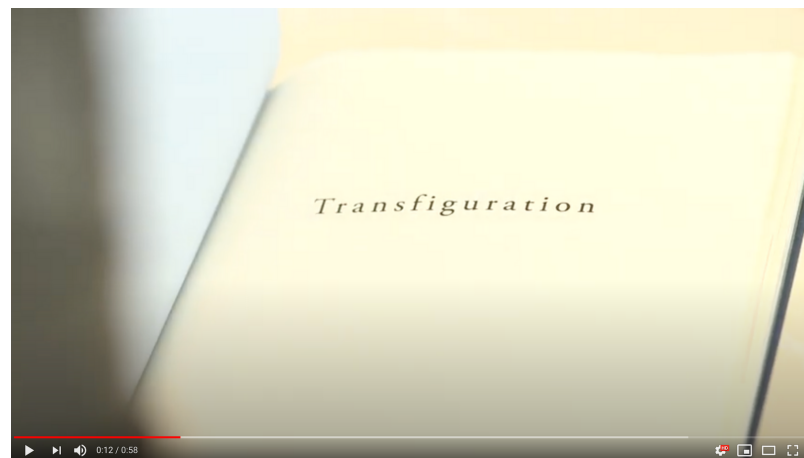
VIDEOS

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How does the use and manipulation of natural elements used to create *The Diggers* contribute to its meaning?
- What do you think of the performative nature of Lesia Maruschak's piece *The Diggers*?
- Why do you think Lesia Maruschak chose and sequenced the images the way she did in her work *Transfiguration*?



THE DIGGERS



TRANSFIGURATION



©Liz Albert, Sending A Message

MANIPULATING FOUND PHOTOS

TO CREATE NEW NARRATIVES

In Lesia Maruschak's exhibition, we see how her process to "rework photographs taken from the internet, family collection, authenticated archival documents and digital photographs taken in Ukraine and on the Canadian prairies," creates new facets of the work and enhances the stories we might find within it.

TRY IT OUT!

We're inspired by the artist Liz Albert who also puts otherwise unconnected images together to create her own stories. See a recently published piece about her work [here](#). How might you use old family photos or found photos to tell something new?



MAKE YOUR OWN EGG TEMPERA PAINT

In Lesia Maruschak's film, *The Diggers*, we witness her process of creating egg tempera paint to use on a large-scale print of an already digitally-manipulated image. Here we've gathered some resources to help you create your own tempera paint.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- eggs
- small bowls
- pigment (watercolors, food coloring, you could even use ingredients like turmeric or beetroot powder)
- paint brushes
- cardstock or other sturdy paper

HELPFUL VIDEOS

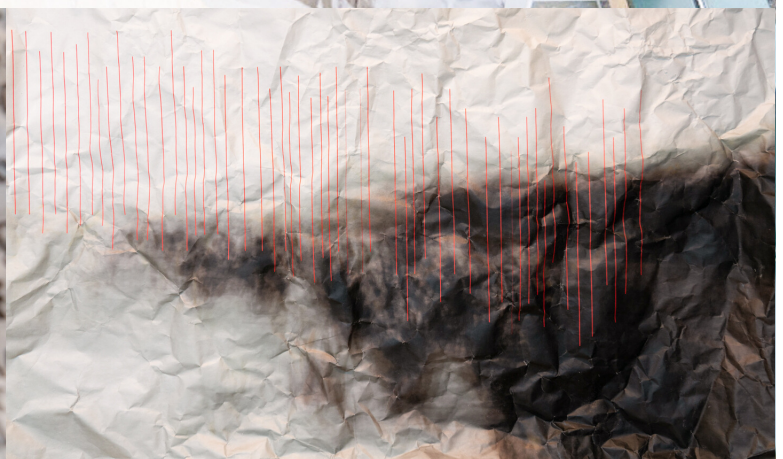
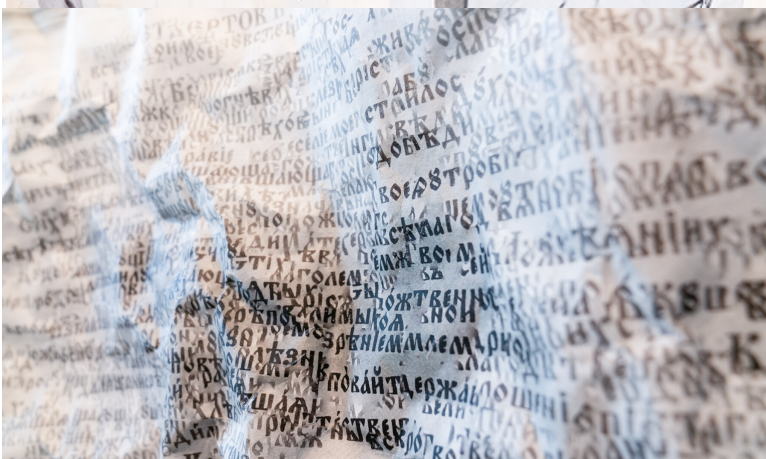
Click on the images below, and you will be redirected to videos which will walk you through the process of creating your own paints and share the history of the use of egg tempera paint.



HISTORY OF EGG TEMPERA PAINT



HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN





THANK
YOU

FROM THE TURCHIN CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS

The Turchin Center for the Visual Arts at Appalachian State University engages visitors from the university, community, nation and beyond in creating unique experiences through dynamic and accessible exhibition, education, outreach and collection programs. These programs inspire and support a lifelong engagement with the visual arts and create opportunities for participants to learn more about themselves and the world around them.

SHARE YOUR WORK WITH US AT #TCVAATHOME !

