

ZINAIDA

ZINAIDA (Ukraine) is one of the most Ukrainian important artists working today. Stemming from extensive ethnographic research and close collaboration with indigenous communities, ZINAIDA's practice revolves around the study of mythologies, national symbols, archaic imagery, and the role of women as carriers of sacred knowledge. Her research journeys in different regions in Ukraine aim to study and preserve cultural heritage. ZINAIDA leads volunteer initiatives and carries out philanthropic activities in Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. She additionally founded the ARTREHUB Volunteer Initiative and developed her Red Thread methodology for children with special needs and autism disorders.

Zinaida is a national cultural figure for Ukraine. Over the last fifteen years, she has summarized, documented and interpreted contemporary Ukrainian society through her work. Zinaida's works have become an important and seminal influence for all the contemporary Ukrainian artists.

— Dallas Contemporary Executive Director Peter Doroshenko

The artist has been featured in solo exhibitions at Pinchuk Art Centre (2015, Kyiv, Ukraine), Black Bride projects at the 56th Venice Biennale, and Dakini at the 58th Venice Biennale. ZINAIDA participated in the Art Lima Contemporary Art Fair (Lima, Peru), Art Kyiv Contemporary International Forum of Contemporary Art, and GOGOLFEST Interdisciplinary Festival. She received her BA from the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture in Fine Art and Art History, as well as a BA in Psychology from National University of Kyiv. She is a member of the Food of War International Community. In 2015, she was a project facilitator at Marina Abramovic - In Residence (Kaldor Public Art Project, Sydney, Australia).

Zinaida subtly balances her work at the juncture of historical symbolism and modernity. She uses traditional imagery, rituals and crafts to convey meanings that are relevant to a vibrant and fluid culture. ... Zinaida is a rebel. She was in many dangerous zones, (on

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Maidan during the Revolution of Dignity, Chornobyl, in the war zone in the Eastern Ukraine) ...To me she is like a Ukrainian "Guerilla Girl." — Marina Abramović



As part of the Venice Biennale Collateral Events, ZINAIDA presented the artwork - *Without Women* - about sheep-breeding, the purity in the nature, and the male energy transformation. You can see practical traditions in action with sheep-breeding mentality among the masses coming through the depth of the modern world attributes. From childhood until they are old enough and have the strength, men leave their dwellings and villages to go to the mountains for five months. Among the abundance of sheep and cows they process milk into butter and cheese. The project *Without Women* consisted of two exhibition sections: a space with video where three projections create a triptych of the living pictures and an installation *The Milk of Life*, which reminded visitors of the warm scents of women's skin.

In the video presentation, a toned body of a young man, who is immersed in milk to pick up cheese from the cauldron evokes a mythical deity who creates the world. His movements resemble sexual intercourse with a beloved woman, the gauze used for squeezing the whey mimics a veil, while a hazy curtain swayed by the wind appears like a bridal lace dress. In his solitary environment, a man expresses and renews his masculine nature fully and vividly. Balancing between discernable acts of sublimation

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and poetic portrayal of shepherds as solitary monks, the video narrative is complemented by tactile-olfactory elements within the exhibition space. The "leaking," milk scented screen skin once again bringing awareness to the notions of self-limitation and appealing sincerity.

"The timing could not have been better for Zinaida to present her work, *Without Women*. The seminal exhibition is an expansion of the 2022 Venice Biennale title theme *The Milk of Dreams* through distinctive interpretations of discoveries and rediscoveries within her artistic practice. The focus on women who made important contributions to art history and continue to do so today, fits well." Outlined, Peter Doroshenko, the exhibition's curator. "Zinaida works in many different ways and levels to make impactful art.

– *Peter Doroshenko, curator*

DAKINI

Art is one of the manifestations of mankind's reaction to reality and its coupled relation with ephemerality and spirituality. At the same time, art reveals the intricacies of human existence as a terrain of personas with egos, a critical step in broaching an understanding of the limits and characteristics of eras across time and cultures across space.

Nowadays, when parameters of the human world have expanded to the cosmic scale, a task of art is to document, absorb, and retool the individuality and origin of man and kin. Preservation of the spiritual microcosm of man has the potential to make possible a hyperrealistic, humanistic picture of the world. In so doing, this approach has the potential to encounter the priorities and challenges of our time.

The culturological approach in the study of the development of the inner world of man, his unique "I," is an organic component of understanding world-view doctrines throughout man's existence. In a general sense, the spiritual can be defined as a way to master reality — a quality of consciousness and activity of the individual that

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accumulates the ability of man to step beyond the necessary and extend the ideas of humanity on a higher plane.

In “DAKINI”, ZINAIDA leverages the possibilities of time and space, navigating the emotional states of women and the transformations of the spiritual in art. Expedition materials that the author collected across five years in Western Ukraine are the basis of the project. In the words of the artist, “this is a special land, where spiritual culture has always been not only a part of mystical experiences, but a basis of existence.”

The “DAKINI” project consists of two parts. The first part is an installation that combines the five elements: earth, fire, air, water and ether. The bearers of ancient traditions and rites revere them in daily life, but also use them as components during rituals. The fifth element — ether, is transcendent and has no form. In the installation, the artist brings each to the altar in closed, isolated spaces. A video, which addresses the transformation of a woman against the backdrop of mass change is the second part of the project. “Due to the ability to give life, the female energy is the basis of all things”, explains the artist ZINAIDA.

The project has been presented in a solo exhibition within Kyiv Art Week festival at the Taras Shevchenko National Museum (Kyiv, Ukraine, 2017), also within project SURFACES FESTIVAL (Venice, Italy, 2018) and Personal Structures at the 58th Venice Biennale.

Iryna Maksymova (Ukraine)

Iryna Maksymova (Ukraine) is a Ukrainian figurative artist. She was born and raised in Kolomyia, a small town in the western part of Ukraine, and now lives and works in Lviv. Maksymova's work features colorful domestic settings with exotic creatures imbued with a magical quality, whose facial features contort in displays of distress or agony, encouraging the viewer to question the relationship between humans and animals. The storyline, the color palette, text and characters in Maksymova's works blend street art vocabulary and techniques with Ukrainian Primitivism of the 20th century and the tradition of Ukrainian self-taught women artists. Maksymova's first solo exhibition of paintings took place in 2020 in Lviv. Since then she participated in various group shows in Ukraine and around the world including London (2022), Madrid (2022), Beijing (2022), Los Angeles (2021), Golden Coast (2021), and Berlin (2021).

"With my figurative and naive artworks I give an innocent and easy voice to the world problems that touch me personally. I am exploring woman's body as both feminine and masculine, empowering equality and interconnection as well as constantly seeking and developing the way to add traditional Ukrainian motifs in a fresh new visual forms and cultivating Ukrainian primitivism art."