

UKRAINE: SHORT STORIES

Contemporary artists from Ukraine

Works from the Imago Mundi Collection

10 – 20 March 2022

MAXXI Spazio Corner

Admission €5 | all proceeds will be donated to the fund for the humanitarian emergency in Ukraine set up by UNHCR, UNICEF and the Red Cross

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Rome, 9th March 2022. "Art and culture speak a universal language that unites peoples in the name of dialogue and rejects all forms of violence. This is why MAXXI, the National Museum of XXI Century Arts, has decided to collaborate with Fondazione Imago Mundi in order to open the 2022 exhibition season on 10 March with the exhibition **UKRAINE: SHORT STORIES. Contemporary artists from Ukraine**, which bears witness to our closeness with the people and the artistic community of the war-torn country".

These are the words whereby **Giovanna Melandri**, President of Fondazione MAXXI, announced the new addition to the Museum's 2022 exhibition season, namely the *Ukraine. Short Stories* exhibition, which provides a survey of the contemporary Ukrainian art scene through the works created specifically for the Imago Mundi Collection by 140 artists in the typical format that characterises it – 12 by 10 centimetres.

The exhibition will be hosted at the MAXXI Corner from 10 to 20 March 2022.

admission will cost a symbolic €5.

The proceeds will be donated to fund for the humanitarian emergency in Ukraine set up by UNHCR, UNICEF and the Red Cross, as will the proceeds of Sunday 27 February and Sunday 6 March (more than 34,600 euros).

The Imago Mundi Collection, which was created 10 years ago from an idea of Luciano Benetton, is a set of thematic collections that currently features the works of over 26,000 artists, both established and emerging, from 163 countries and native communities, with the aim of mapping the widest possible range of contemporary artistic experiences in our world. Each single country is represented by the creations of established artists and new talents commissioned under the banner of the utmost expressive freedom, the sole constraint being the mandatory 10 by 12 cm format.

Ukraine: Short Stories - curated by **Solomia Savchuk**, Head of Contemporary Art at Mystetskyi Arsenal, Kiev - is a thematic collection that, in keeping with the sensitivity to urgent contemporary issues that guides the choices of the Foundation and the Imago Mundi Collection, has come to life at a particular historical moment in the country's history. The works are strongly linked to the events that Ukraine was forced to confront in 2014, and to the profound changes that this country – a delicate crossroads between the Baltic and Black Seas – has undergone in recent years.

The exhibition features 140 works by young and emerging artists as well as established authors already present in the most important international museums and galleries; said works strongly reflect a society that is still reinventing itself through disruptions, ideological and social changes, and violent conflicts, all while constantly searching for new ways to confront history and assert new artistic freedom. With a range of styles and techniques ranging from optical effects to sculptural landscapes and the magic of 3D technology, the artists' individual stories become the creative components of a grand narrative of present-day Ukraine. The collection gives an account of Ukraine's artistic and cultural complexity, thereby offering an interesting, representative and symptomatic cross-section of Ukraine that is still relevant today.

In the words of **Enrico Bossan**, Artistic Director of **Fondazione Imago Mundi**: *"In these terrible days, Fondazione Imago Mundi would like to express its solidarity with the Ukrainian people, its artists, the artistic community and the world of culture in general. As is well-known, the very name of Ukraine expresses its being a borderland, an 'in-between' country containing several cultures; now more than ever, it is precisely culture that must provide a space for dialogue and inclusion, as well as freedom of expression and creation. Our wish is to contribute to the expansion of this space by giving voice to Ukrainian artists and their short stories collected in this collection. Fondazione Imago Mundi has accepted with great pleasure the call to responsibility and MAXXI's invitation to build this project in order to bear witness to the closeness we all feel towards Ukrainians"*.

From the collection catalogue

"The project dedicated to Ukrainian artists have involved many famous artists. **Alevtina Kakhidze** has translated her story and the events experienced by her family into works of art, thereby enabling us to learn the story of her mother, who lives in the occupied city of Ždanivka, Donetsk region, through the work created for Imago Mundi. Alevtina talks to her mother on the phone every day and writes down everything she tells her: everyday problems, women selling things at the Ždanivka market, neighbours becoming separatists, grenades wiping out lives. The artist believes that these conversations give her the opportunity to experience the war together with her mother and to reflect it in her work.

Problems related to the definition of the individual in contemporary post-Soviet society are the main topic of the 'Levitation' project, as well as of **Victor Sydorenko's** work in general. The artist explores the existence of a separate identity in society through a unified image: enter optical effects, dense red, human figures that have lost all support and coordination and are weightlessly flying in space in search of their roots. The landscape in 'Untitled', as taken from **Vlada Ralko's** "Harborage of a poet" project, is characterised by a state of struggle linked to a continuous and dramatic cycle of births and deaths. The landscape, which is a fluid poetic representation of reality, prompts a search for an answer to the following questions: what are artistic expressions and statements today? Do they still have a place in modern life? Are they capable of going beyond the everyday manifestations of cruelty?

Illya Chichkan has created a work in the wake of the 'Monkey Business/Dough' project, that is, a series of graphic works made with banknotes from different countries around the world. In previous works, the portraits on the banknotes represented monkeys; in this case, the banknote is folded in such a way as to make it unclear whether the image is that of a monkey or a human being. The artist thus represents the double standards of political power.

Taya Galagan (Tatiana Gershuni) continues to experiment with 3D images in her portrait 'Andrella'. The portrait depicts a transvestite diva and is made using the painting technique, but it consists of two images, one hidden under the other. Looking at it with 3D glasses – and thus using red and blue filters – we see two different images: a dominant female portrait and the hidden image of a man. The use of stereo images enables the author not only to expand the traditional boundaries of painting without violating its basic rules and principles, but also to study portraiture as a genre, thereby exploring its value and meaning in contemporary art and using it to interpret the dualism of human nature, including gender identity.

The young artist **Taras Kovach** has presented a work from his previously exhibited project 'Soil Test'. His work is a sculptural landscape created using a magnet and fragments of metal objects. The fragments were collected by the artist along the road leading from the Art Arsenal museum complex and art centre to the Arsenalna metro station in Kiev. The author explores and represents the characteristics of the area of the city he has chosen and the results of human activities in it. He also raises the issue of environmental pollution. Thanks to the power of the magnetic base of the composition, its elements form different volumes. The landscape-sculpture thus assumes an arbitrary shape and captivates viewers with its interactive nature.

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Fondazione Imago Mundi is a non-profit institution that was established in 2018 as an evolution of the Imago Mundi Collection and aims at being a new catalyst for artistic expressions and cultural ferments in a highly interconnected world. The **Imago Mundi Collection**, which was born more than 10 years ago from an idea of Luciano Benetton, has brought together over time more than 26,000 works in the 10 by 12 cm format, as created by artists from 160 countries and native communities and collected in as many catalogues, thereby creating a global mapping that recounts the expressive diversity of human cultures through art to form an inclusive, democratic creative community. In 2018, the opening of the **Gallerie delle Prigioni**, the former Habsburg prisons in the centre of Treviso restored by architect Tobia Scarpa, marked a further step towards what Fondazione Imago Mundi represents today, thus creating an experimental platform that hosts exhibitions, talks, international events and educational workshops.

Fondazione Imago Mundi pursues a dual purpose: on the one hand, it is dedicated to developing the exhibition aspect by promoting the Imago Mundi Collection through exhibitions, public programmes, publications and artistic commissions, also in collaboration with other institutions. On the other hand, it is committed to the spreading and dissemination of contemporary visual art and its languages within an experimental and international context.

Fondazione Imago Mundi addresses all generations through diverse registers and interdisciplinary free proposals. It presents itself as an inclusive agora for both emerging and established artists and an institution that is participatory for the public and discursive for the critics. Fondazione Imago Mundi wants to convey an image of what the world is, but also to imagine what it could be. From the eyes of the artists to those of us all.