

## Capsule Art Reviews: February 26, 2015

Susie Tommaney

"**Nature Studies**" – work by Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak

Propaganda can kill, and one famous example is the story of New York Times reporter Walter Duranty, who, in 1931, regurgitated Communist propaganda about Joseph Stalin's rule over the Soviet Union. While a misinformed America slept, Stalin forced individual farmers to work on collective farms and fulfill impossible government quotas. Unable to consume their own grain, almost seven million persons starved and died as the result of a 1932-33 famine in Ukraine.

This is a very personal story for artist **Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak**, whose parents escaped the famine. Her paintings, drawings and collages, interspersed with newspaper clippings and photographs, are a graphic cry for help. On display now at Hunter Gather Project, her work draws attention to the current crisis in Ukraine. During a visit to Chornobyl, Bodnar-Balahutrak became fascinated with the idea that, over time, nature will reclaim the evidence of horrific acts, and people will begin to forget.

*Will the Grass Grow Over It?* is a beautifully layered collage, with the base consisting of photographs of hungry people, sometimes lying dead in the street, and news clippings about the hunger-extermination. She has painted blades of grass, some dead but newer growth as well, interspersed with the words of Soviet writer and journalist Vasily Grossman. "And what has become of all that awful torment and torture? That all will be forgotten...? That the grass will grow over it?"

The exhibit includes several important pieces, cleverly incorporating Soviet coins, rubles, maps and animals. *What Balls!* gets to the heart of the fact that Ukraine should stop waiting for leaders to emerge in the West and that the country can only depend on itself.

Through March 7. Hunter Gather Project, 5320 Gulfton, Suite 15, 713-664-3302, [huntergatherproject.com](http://huntergatherproject.com).ST [huntergatherproject.com](http://huntergatherproject.com).

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