

O'Kane Gallery - University of Houston-Downtown



Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak, *Thorns and Falling Idols*, 2016, Charcoal on collaged canvas, 96 x 152 inches

# Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak

## *The Ties that Bind*

October 21 – December 9, 2021

Reception: Thursday, October 21, 6 to 8 pm



In the exhibition, *The Ties that Bind*, Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak considers how the memory of ancestors, who persevered despite political fracture, disasters of war, as well as nature's marvelous resilience, offers solace from recent crises. Bodnar-Balahutrak's artwork is influenced by her Ukrainian heritage - her parents were World War II refugees from Ukraine. Her large, predominantly two-dimensional works, reflect on the complex socio-political nature of nations with special emphasis on her Ukrainian ancestral home and the effects of its history as a Soviet-occupied country. Her smaller, more intimate works of individual animals, act out very human or political dramas, forming parables whose titles are clues to their meanings. In her more recent *Pandemic Lamentations*, the artist addresses societal, governmental and individual responses to a health crisis of staggering reach that has caused the deaths of millions.

Common threads of both frustration and empathy percolate through much of her work as truth is masked or facts are missing, or anything substantive is lost through the passage of time. In contrast, precious cultural artifacts and treasured mementos return the viewer to more solid foundations. Furthermore, nature acts to quiet the screams risen from catastrophic events such as the Chornobyl nuclear disaster of 1986, or now, U.S. political and economic divides and COVID-19. Much the way that nature endures, honoring familial ties provides some comfort and helps to secure self-identity and hope.

Bodnar-Balahutrak was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in art education from Kent State in 1973. She earned her Master of Fine Arts from George Washington University, Corcoran School of Art in 1977. The artist has had one-person shows throughout Texas and in New York City. A solo show of her work will travel to five art venues in Ukraine in 2022-23. Bodnar-Balahutrak is the recipient of the International Research and Exchanges Board Grant (1991), and an Artist Residency at the Kyiv Academy of Art, Ukraine (1996). A bilingual monograph of her art was published in 2005. Examples of her art are included in the collections of the Ukrainian Museum in New York City, Oxford University, The Hoyt Institute of Fine Arts in Pennsylvania, as well as in numerous Texas institutions. Most recently, her artwork was acquired for the City of Houston Civic Art Collection for permanent display at Hobby Airport.

Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak, *Will the Grass Grow Over It*, 2013, Oil and mixed media on canvas, 48 x 96 inches