



## LYDIA BODNAR-BALAHUTRAK

"Real artists arrive at destinations along their path of discovery and pause long enough to show the rest of us the evidence of their quest. We have come to call this pause in the artistic action an "exhibition" and the objects we find there "art."

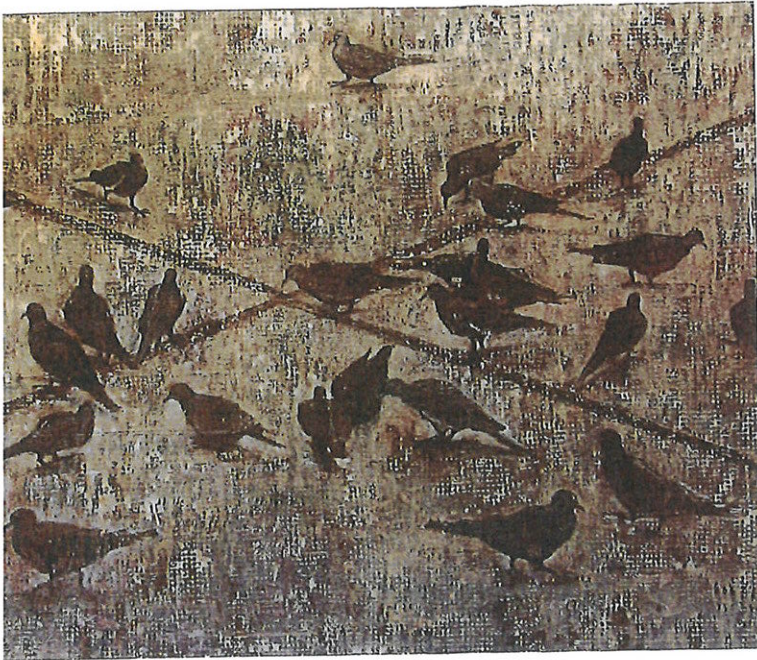
In Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak's latest body of evidence, Hide and Seek, we find ourselves standing in the proverbial woods, unable to see the forest for the trees and contemplating the madness in the news headlines, painted over in black and white and umber tones, with gray skies reflecting in the pools along the water's edge."



Houston artist Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak appreciates those words and the insight and care that Dan Mitchell Allison, owner and director of Nau-Haus Art Space, brings to her art work. The well-respected and popular Houston Heights venue for art collectors and patrons is currently showcasing her small and large-scale paintings and drawings that combine collage and text with figuration.

Why the title Hide and Seek? "I believe "hide and seek" is the heartbeat of life," the artist answers. "It's the pulse, the rhythm of lost and found, yes/no, inside/outside, positive/negative. I play "hide and seek" in order to understand the world and my place in it."

Early on, the human figure was her primary subject, in paintings and drawings that she called "subjective realist". (She continues to accept commissions for portraits.) But over time, her interest in collage and mixed media grew and took over. She clips and collects newspaper and maga-



zine photos and articles, sorts them, and eventually arranges them onto canvas, wood panel, or paper. The collages build up, thematically and physically, and become grounds upon which she works a variety of materials and processes. By layering, scraping, torching, veiling, and applying paint, charcoal and other media, she initiates the play of “hide and seek”. Some elements are concealed, others revealed, and the viewer is drawn in to “seek and find”.

Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak was born in Cleveland, Ohio. After completing her undergraduate art studies at Kent State University, and receiving her Master of Fine Arts from George Washington University in Washington, D.C., she moved to Houston with her husband Michael in 1977. Working together, they re-built a house near Rice University and turned it into a home filled with art and hidden secret spaces. They designed and built a garage/workshop and an upstairs studio in the backyard, and continue to cultivate the plants and trees in-between. They feel lucky to live and work in the heart of this vibrant city.

As a professional artist, Bodnar-Balahutrak has a list of catalogued national and international exhibitions and her work can be found in a number of museum and private collections. A monograph focusing on her art from 1979-2001 was published in 2005. Copies of the book are available at the Menil Museum Bookstore



in Houston. She has taught studio painting and drawing at the University of Houston at Clear Lake and HSPVA, and is currently on the faculty of the Glassell School of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

The artist likes to quote the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins: "Nature is never spent; there lives the dearest freshness deep down things."

Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak's vines and berries, flocks of birds, and tangles of trees and branches affirm that constant growth and renewal. Despite everything, humankind's instinct for clarity and beauty lives on and arises from deep down things.