

***Thresholds* – solo exhibition of artwork by Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak**

Thresholds, a selection of mixed media art works by Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak was featured at the Pearl Fincher Museum of Fine Arts in Spring, Texas in a four-month solo exhibition. The installation of paintings, drawings, and assemblages comprised a mini-retrospective of the Houston-based artist's explorations of Ukraine's history and cultural identity. The show's opening in late August was timely, as it closely coincided with Ukraine's Independence Day and the 20-year anniversary of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, events that inspired a number of the artworks on display.

A special feature of the Pearl Fincher Museum is a partnership with its next-door Public Library's Pen and Paintbrush Book Discussion Group. The book club selects written works that relate to the current exhibitions on view at the museum. For this exhibition cycle, the novel *The Sky Unwashed* by Irene Zabytko - a story exploring the aftermath of the Chornobyl nuclear explosion - was paired with Bodnar-Balahutrak's exhibition. The December book club meeting included a discussion of the book and a tour of the *Thresholds* exhibition.

Bodnar-Balahutrak first visited Ukraine in the spring of 1991. Later that year, with the unraveling of the Soviet Union, she shared in the hopeful elation of Ukraine's shift from a totalitarian dictatorship to sovereignty and independence. Two years later, she travelled through the area of Ukraine that was once ancient Scythia, and toured historic archeological sites on the Black Sea. In 1996 she visited the Chornobyl Zone, site of the 1986 nuclear accident. Each experience deeply influenced her and launched new approaches in her work.

Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak received her Master of Fine Arts degree in 1977 from George Washington University, Washington, D.C. She is on the Studio Faculty of the Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Her artwork has been featured in numerous exhibitions and is included in private and public collections in the U.S.A., Canada, and Europe.

A book about her work was published in 2005 and is available at the Pearl Fincher Museum of Fine Arts www.pearlmfa.org and excerpted on the artist's web-site www.LydiaBodnarBalahutrak.com