

ACQUAVITAE

ALBERTA'S UKRAINIAN ARTS AND CULTURE MAGAZINE

Spring/Summer 2010 Volume 17, Number 1

a
bounty
of art
around us

The photography of
Robert Semeniuk

Trypillian Pysanky:
Bridging the Ancient
and the Modern

The jewelry design of
Maria Rypan and Luba Bilash



A PUBLICATION OF THE ALBERTA COUNCIL
FOR THE UKRAINIAN ARTS



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ACUAVITAE

Spring/Summer 2010



8



10



18



22

features

8 Trypillian Pysanky

Maria Lesiv shares the history of Trypillia and its impact on modern Ukrainian culture.

12 Robert Semeniuk

Spencer Forgo interviews photojournalist Robert Semeniuk.

18 Empowerment by Design

Liz Lepper brings us beauty and tradition through the art of Maria Rypan and Luba Bilash.

departments

- 4 From the Editor
- 5 Arts & Culture News
- 7 Profile: Viter Ukrainian Folk Choir
- 10 Art Around the Globe: Maria Priymachenko
- 15 Profile: Kobzar Literary Award
- 16 CD Review: Maryka's Treasures
- 17 Movie Review: Mamay
- 21 Dance Around Alberta: Troyanda
- 22 Lystivky: A Ukrainian Wedding Brazilian Style

on the cover

Ukrainian Cheese Vendor

Photograph by Robert Semeniuk



Альбертська Рада Українського Мистецтва

I am inspired by art. I am amazed by the talented people who create art. I am comforted by the constant opportunities that allow us to see and learn about art and artists. I am fortunate to belong to a community rich in art.

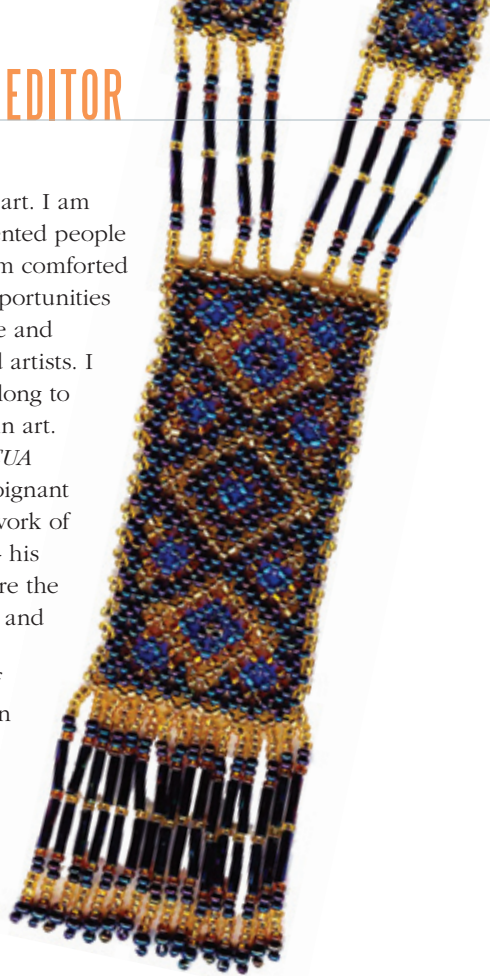
This issue of *ACUA Vitae* shares the poignant photographic life work of Robert Semeniuk – his photographs capture the truths of humanity and reveal both beauty and sorrow; a brief history of Trypillian culture and how it has manifested itself into our contemporary culture through *pysanky*; and the art of adornment – how jewelry has long been a part of our culture, and how that trend continues.

To celebrate the arts is to learn and engage in the many art forms that we come upon each and every day. Just to name a few of our daily encounters: Natalie Ozipko presents us with a glimpse into Viter choir, Tasha Diamant highlights the success and commitment of a community through its Ukrainian dancers, and Genia Boivin reviews the Ukrainian film, *Mamay*.

To celebrate the arts is to appreciate the extraordinary in what might be the most ordinary. I hope our stories give you a glimpse of some of the extraordinary in our Ukrainian arts. 🇺🇦

Andrea Kopylech

The Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts would like to thank the Shevchenko Foundation for its support of our five day workshop with Maria Rypan on the art of Gerdan.



ACUAVITAE

ALBERTA'S UKRAINIAN ARTS AND CULTURE MAGAZINE

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Correction: Fall/Winter 2009 issue - back page poem 'Ptakhy' was written by Liliya Pantelyuk.

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Ukrainian Artist Wins Cultural Diversity Award

The Cultural Diversity in the Arts Awards were presented on March 2, 2010 by City of Edmonton Councillor and Deputy Mayor Kim Krushell, and Edmonton Arts Council board member James De Felice. Among the recipients was visual artist and ACUA member Iryna Karpenko.

Born in Kyiv, Ukraine, Iryna graduated with honours from the Children's Fine Art School, then the Kyiv College of Industrial Arts, and the Ukrainian Academy of Fine Art & Architecture. Iryna moved to Edmonton in 2004 where she now makes her home. She is a talented visual artist and – amongst other projects – runs the Barvy Art Studio with Valeriy Semenko in Edmonton.

The Cultural Diversity in the Arts Awards Program, now in its second year, provides 12 awards of \$7,500 to encourage and support Edmonton artists from diverse cultural backgrounds. The recipients in this program come to Edmonton from countries around the world and demonstrate a strong dedication to continuing their artistic practice in their new home.

"Our main goal with this program is to connect artists who



Artist Iryna Karpenko. Photo supplied.


come here from other countries with Edmonton's thriving arts community. Edmonton continues to grow as a culturally diverse city and we want to ensure that Edmonton's audiences and artists have an opportunity to benefit from this diversity," said Laurie Stalker, Grants Director of the Edmonton Arts Council. 



photo: Vohon Ukrainian Dance Ensemble Society

Special Events 2010

Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village

May 24

Celebration of Dance

July 1

Canada Day (Ivana Kupala)

August 8

Ukrainian Day

August 29

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September 12

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Tryzub Ukrainian Dance Ensemble. Photo supplied.




Calgary's Inaugural Ukrainian Festival

On May 29 and 30, the first-ever Calgary Ukrainian Festival is serving up a dose of Ukrainian art, culture and hospitality. The celebration will feature Main Stage performances by Suzirya Ukrainian Dance Theatre, Tryzub Ukrainian Dance Ensemble, and the vocal stylings of the Korinnya Folk Ensemble. Local vendors will be on site with artwork and other wares and a children's craft area will be abuzz with activities for little ones.

Festival-goers are encouraged to bring their appetites as well. Locally-made *varenyky*, *bolubtsi* and *kobasa* will be available, as well as a variety of imported beers and vodkas for sampling. One of the festival highlights is a Saturday evening *Zabava* (party) with entertainment by Calgary's popular polka bands.

Ukrainians make up Calgary's sixth largest ethnic group, with more than 76 000 people claiming descent in the 2006 census. The festival's aim is to bring together the city's Ukrainian groups and organizations, to promote the city's rich Ukrainian heritage, and to put Calgary on the map as a centre of Ukrainian culture in Canada.

Festival Chairman Chris Gnyra says guests will find, "all the sights, sounds, tastes, and textiles that make up our colourful and vibrant culture, all under one roof for every Calgarian to experience and enjoy."


The Calgary Ukrainian Festival takes place at the Triwood Community Centre (2244 Chicoutimi Dr. NW). For festival hours and more information, visit www.calgaryukrainianfestival.ca. 

World FM Racks Up Back-to-Back Kudos

The anniversary-year momentum machine keeps on rolling for Edmonton's ethnic radio station, 101.7 World FM, which features the popular Ukrainian program. Celebrating its 30th year of service to Edmonton's many diverse communities, the station was awarded the title of Multicultural Radio Station of the Year in March of 2010 at the Canadian Music and Broadcast Industry Awards in Toronto. This was the second year in a row the station was honoured with this distinction.

World FM Program Director and Ukrainian program host Roman Brytan, who was on hand to receive the honours in person, remarked, "When we received this award last year, it was a huge boost to our efforts to move forward in new directions of excellence with ethnic radio. This year's honour will act as a major encouragement to all of our hard-working staff and producers/hosts as we continue to develop innovative, engaging radio for our loyal and ever-growing list of dedicated listeners."

World FM's Ukrainian program has promoted Ukrainian music of all genres and been a platform for up and coming Ukrainian artists for decades. In addition to this musical showcase, the station has been a strong supporter of Ukrainian artists and organizations through in-depth interviews, on-air promotions, and sponsorships of events and key milestones in the Ukrainian community.

It is time for the station to now celebrate its own milestones. Said Brytan, "keep your eyes (and ears) on 101.7 World FM, as the 30th anniversary year unrolls more major events and surprises." 





Viter Dancers and Choir. Photo by EPIC Photography.

Viter Ukrainian Folk Choir: A Mighty Wind

By Natalie Ozipko

It started with a simple invitation to sing and when our voices sounded the first chord, we were all hooked! The Viter Ukrainian Folk Choir was formed in 2009 and started with a group of people sharing their passion of Ukrainian folk music and performing. Under the direction of Lesia Pohoreski the repertoire is mainly made up of Ukrainian folk songs – themes range from seasons, love, and humour.

The choir was formed to accompany the Viter Ukrainian Dancers (under the artistic team of Les Sereda (Artistic

Director) and Tasha Orysiuk (Associate Director)) in their performances, which include song/dance ensemble pieces and solo choir pieces. When performing with the dance group, themes like *Malanka*, or fall harvest are brought to life with song and dance. The unique combination of live choir moving with dancers is effective, not to mention entertaining, and emulates performance styles made popular by ensembles from Ukraine such as the Volyn Folk Choir and Veryovka. The Viter Ukrainian Folk Choir strives to connect with the audience when performing and the singing involves animation, passion

and finding connections with them.

It's incredibly exciting to be a member of this newest Ukrainian folk choir in Edmonton and share our simplistic love of folk music with the community. Taking such a new ensemble on the road and embarking on a tour of Brazil and Argentina this summer is not only ambitious, it's mind-blowing! What began as a small group of singers has grown to over 30 members and the Viter Ukrainian Folk Choir is now a mighty wind! 🌪️

Natalie Ozipko is an Arts Marketing professional in Edmonton and member of the Viter Ukrainian Folk Choir.




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FEATURE

TRYPILLIAN PYSANKY

Bridging the Ancient
and the Modern

By Mariya Lesiv

PYSANKY BY NATALKA TALANCHUK (PAGES 8 & 9)

AND DAENA DIDUCK (PAGE 3)

There once was a civilization called Trypillia....Actually, we do not really know what it was called at the time it existed, between 5400-2700 BCE. It received its present-day name from Vikentii Khvoika, a Ukrainian archeologist of Czech background who initially discovered the ancient Neolithic ruins in the late 19th century. This discovery took place near the village of Trypillia situated on the Dnipro river about 40 km south of Kyiv. Khvoika named this archeological culture after the village of Trypillia.

Khvoika and his fellow archeologists were impressed by this finding. Further excavations revealed that Trypillian culture was richly represented by the remains of various material objects including settlement patterns, two-story dwellings and especially clay items such as ceramic pottery and figurines. These objects were often richly decorated by abstract, geometric, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic (animal) designs.

Since its initial discovery over one hundred years ago, scholars have been trying to reconstruct the world of the Trypillians. While some aspects of this culture are clear, others represent only academic hypotheses, and still others remain a mystery. This civilization fascinates not only scholars but also wider circles of Ukrainians. The hypothesis that Trypillians represent the oldest ethnic base of the contemporary Ukrainian people significantly contributes to the development of national pride and to the building of a distinct ethnic identity. Trypillian culture does not remain simply a matter of the past, reaching the contemporary public exclusively through museum exhibits of archeological artifacts. It attracts and inspires creative minds today finding its continuation in new intriguing art forms.


One of these forms is the Ukrainian *pysanka*. Originally, or at least when

this tradition was brought to Canada by the first Ukrainian settlers, the *pysanka* served predominantly as a ritual (religious and magical) object. It was blessed in church along with traditional Easter foods. At home, *pysanky* were believed to have magical powers to protect from lightning and fire (if hung under the icons), bring a good harvest (if buried in the garden), make one beautiful (if one's face was washed in a container of water with a *pysanka* in it), etc. These magical beliefs varied depending on the region from which a family emigrated.

The form and function of *pysanky* have changed markedly over time in Canada. In addition to playing an important religious role, the *pysanka* can now serve as a gift for any occasion: wedding, birthday, Mother's Day, etc. This change is largely connected with the *pysanka's* transformation from a ritual object to an art form and to a significant marker of Ukrainian identity in the multicultural context of Canada.

As an art form, it encourages dynamic change and

constant innovation. And it is as an art form that the *pysanka* has incorporated a new set of Trypillian designs. Although it is unknown whether the *pysanka* existed in ancient Trypillian times, "Trypillian" *pysanky* have become an important part of contemporary Ukrainian culture.

A variety of animal and geometric motifs inspired from Trypillian pottery are applied to *pysanky* in Canada as a matter of pride and as an aesthetic response. The majority of private and museum *pysanky* collections include at least a few "Trypillian" *pysanky*. This shows the great potential of this form of art, its ability to both maintain the tradition and adapt to new contexts, values and aesthetics; its ability to bridge the ancient and the modern. 

Mariya Lesiv is Assistant Director of the Kule Centre for Ukrainian and Canadian Folklore, University of Alberta.



Maria Priymachenko: Artistic Brilliance

Inspired by her dreams and the nature that surrounded her, Maria Priymachenko dedicated her life to creating joyful works of art.

*"Once I was pasturing geese on a flowery meadow near my house over the river. On the sand I was drawing all kinds of flowers that I could see. Then I noticed some bluish silt. I put some of it in the hem of my skirt and painted our house with it..."*¹

Born in 1909 in the Ukrainian village of Bolotnya, near Kyiv, Maria Priymachenko grew up in the artistic

household of a skilled carpenter and a remarkable embroiderer. Early in her childhood, Maria contracted polio which affected her entire life. Because she could not work out in the field together with everyone else, she suffered from enforced solitude which prompted the young village girl to express herself in painting, interpreting all of the details she saw around her.

In 1935 Maria was invited to Kyiv to work at the art studio of the Kyiv Museum of Ukrainian Folk Art. There she met other talented folk artists,

and began to exhibit her works across Ukraine, the former Soviet Union, Paris, Warsaw, Montreal and Prague. But the lure of urban life did not last, and Maria returned to her native village of Bolotnya where she in turn raised her son, and lived out her days painting for the love of it, until she passed away in 1997.


Her famous words, "let people live as flowers bloom", best describes the essence of her work. Her work links ancient cultural heritage to the present. Maria's paintings are magic. Brilliantly



bold colours and whimsical creatures portray the world of folk legends and fairy tales set in a very realistic background. Her work reflects great optimism and playfulness. To look at her works will put a smile on one's face. As one looks closer, her images give pause, and make one reflect on where and why these images were chosen. Her most famous images are those of majestic creatures with large eyes framed by distinct eyelashes.

Maria Priymachenko is noted as a founder of a great style of Ukrainian folk art and is renowned as a painter of Naïve art. Her name has been entered into the World Encyclopedia of Naïve Art (Belgrade, 1984), and holds a place of honour among such established masters of "naïve" art as Niko Pirosmanni and Henri Rousseau.² Picasso once said after visiting a Priymachenko exhibition in Paris, "I bow down before the artistic miracle of this brilliant Ukrainian."

Maria Priymachenko is an Honoured Artist of Ukraine and a Taras Shevchenko Prize Winner. In 2003 a monument was unveiled in Bolotnya, dedicated to Maria and to her artistry.

2009 marked the 100th birth anniversary of Maria Priymachenko and UNESCO named her Artist of the Year. 

^{1, 2} Embassy of Ukraine in Canada website (<http://www.ukremb.ca/canada/en/publication/content/25363.htm>).
Biographic information gathered from <http://1000years.uazone.net>.



Eneide/FolkArt.ltm



Facing page: Mythical figure Volyvakha from the collection of the State Museum of Decorative Art, Kyiv, Ukraine.

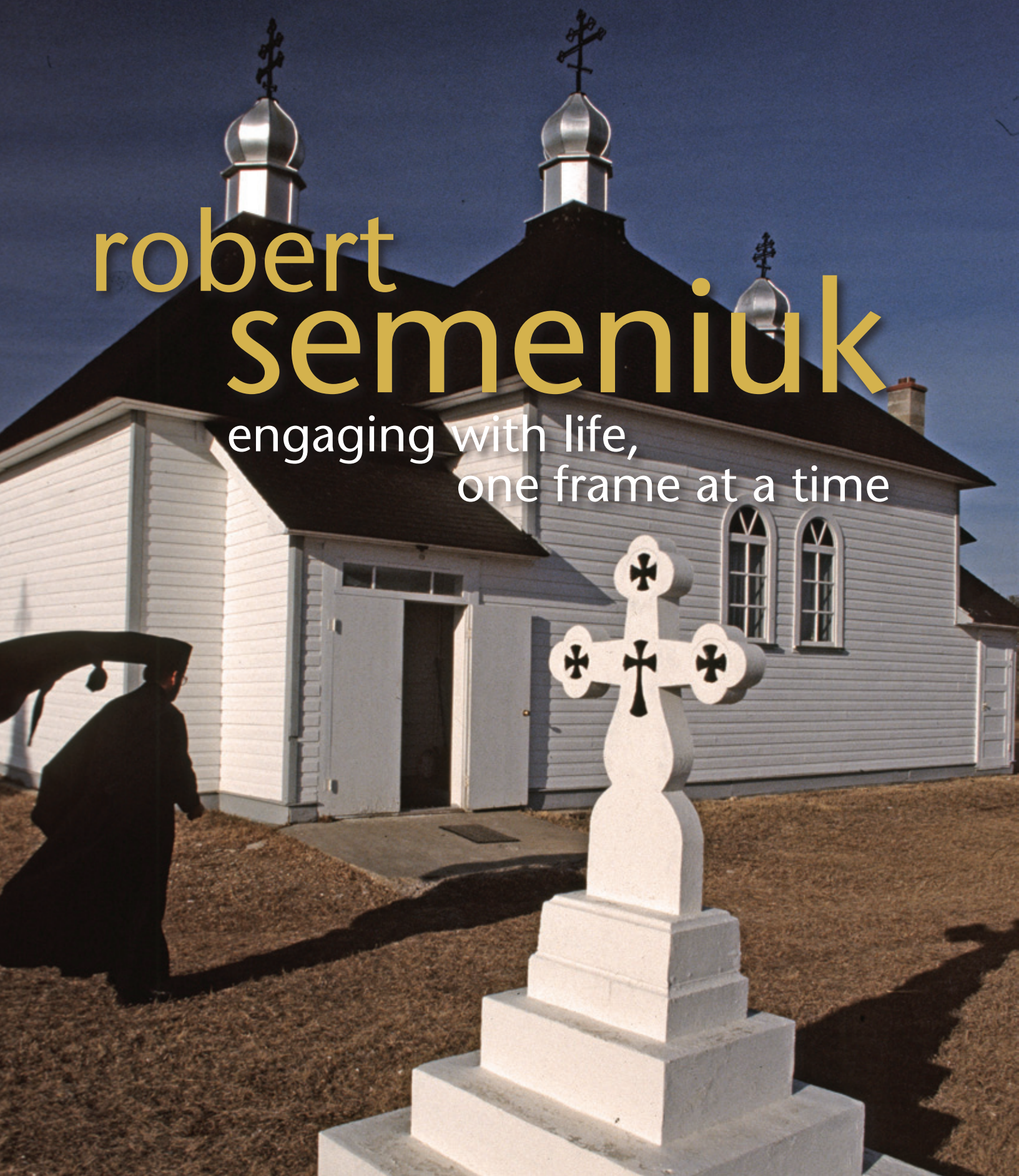
Top: Yellow beast from the collection of the State Decorative Art Museum, Kyiv, Ukraine.

Bottom: Long necks, from the private collection of Ihor Verba.

FEATURE

robert semeniuk

engaging with life,
one frame at a time





Facing page: Ukrainian Orthodox Church near Andrew, Alberta

Left: Building an igloo, N. Baffin Island

Below: Rainy/malaria season on the Thai/Burma border

Following page: Icon painter Skete of Xenophonos, Mount Athos

By Spencer Forgo

PHOTOS BY ROBERT SEMENIUK

Photography is a uniquely influential art. It has the ability to capture, with unmatched clarity, moments of sublime beauty or abject misery. No moment in time can be duplicated, nor will any two photos ever be exactly the same. When you take a moment to reflect on the nature of photography, it is no wonder that this once maligned medium has become so thoroughly entrenched in modern art.

If you aren't familiar with Robert Semeniuk, let me put it this way: the man is a renowned photographer, journalist, and human rights activist who has lived and worked in more war zones than I have fingers on both hands. He has seen people and places so far removed from our sheltered havens that it is difficult to imagine that they could exist at all.

Now residing in Bowen Island, B.C. with his wife and daughter, Semeniuk was born to Canadian Ukrainian parents and raised in the small farming community of Big Valley, Alberta. Since then he has seen thousands of miles pass beneath his well-worn boot heels. A full-time photojournalist and freelance author for almost thirty years, Semeniuk has spent much of his life campaigning for human rights and



environmental issues across the world. His focus is on the global community, and the images he captures tell fascinating stories -- tales that transcend the carefully plotted borders and boundaries that divide us.

Semeniuk has worked in over 80 countries and spent months at a time photographing some of the world's most dangerous conflicts. His photos provide a compelling visual history, both beautiful and terrifying, of circumstances and places beyond our wildest dreams and, at times, our worst nightmares. To put it simply: he's good, really good.

Ironically, for a man who has found such meteoric success as a photojournalist, Semeniuk's beginning wasn't in photography; he

began his career studying Cultural Ecology and Human Geography.

It was his college roommate's camera, a university darkroom and an otherwise unremarkable trip to Canada's east coast that kick-started an unheralded life's work for Semeniuk.

"I was walking along the beach and saw this pile of rocks, all worn smooth and bleached by the sun. In this pile of stones was the skull of a dog which had also been bleached."

So he made the photograph -- one of the more than 350,000 now contained in his library.

"At first, nobody noticed the skull when they looked at the image but when they finally saw it they couldn't stop looking."

An entertaining little anecdote on its own, but the story of this photograph seems to have foreshadowed Semeniuk's entire career – people still just can't stop looking.

Don't mistake Semeniuk for your standard studio-bound artist or headline-driven journalist however, as he considers himself neither. The idea of photographing shadows on a brick wall or a chair in an empty room doesn't cut it; neither does chasing a newsworthy cover shot for the sake of his next paycheck. The intent of his photography is simple: to tell it like it is.

"For me, photography has always been a way to tell a story about something," explains Semeniuk. "I look at the photographs that some people consider art, and I'm a big fan of the arts, but for me a photograph has got to say something as opposed to ask a question."

If making a statement is his goal then mission accomplished. Throughout his career, Semeniuk has shone a spotlight on some of the most pressing human rights crises of our time.

He spent more than two years in Burma, Mozambique and Afghanistan working exclusively on the global landmine crisis. His riveting photography documented an unfathomable catastrophe which wouldn't be globally recognized for years to come.

"I spent many months trying to get a magazine to pick up my work on

landmines," says Semeniuk. "Nobody cared about landmines because there are none here. But if there were even two landmines here on Bowen Island it would be a different story."

Valid point, and when the International Campaign to Ban Landmines won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997, Semeniuk's groundbreaking work was all of a sudden extremely relevant. (In fact, he contributed to the work of the ICBL long before they were recognized by the Nobel people.)

And while being situated at ground zero to some of the world's deadliest warzones might sound nightmarish, Semeniuk insists that he often has a hard time leaving; to hear him say it, he is, "condemned to freedom."

"...you see the worst things people can do to one another and then the very best," he reflects. "Often, they happen close together and within minutes of each other."

"In those places you see the worst things people can do to one another and then the very best," he reflects. "Often, they happen close together and within minutes of each other."


This open-minded philosophy has prompted Semeniuk to pursue a variety of human rights and environmental issues over his career. Among the many projects keeping him busy these days is On The Ground, a tax exempt organization dedicated to helping photographers document and present important work. Today, On The Ground is working on a photo-documentary project titled *Bringing in the Light*, which is aimed at confronting and reducing discrimination against people living with mental issues.

"We don't call people with cancer 'cancerous' and yet we call people with mental issues 'mentally ill,'" he explains avidly. Even in our brief discussion, it was obvious that this issue means a great deal to the renowned human rights champion.

The longer we spoke about Semeniuk's storied career, the more I found myself wondering about what his legacy will be. When I finally asked him about the "footprint" he hoped to leave through his work he was cautious, but deliberate, about his response.

"I think my work means something different for everyone. How much they know coming into it will affect how much they take away from the images."

"I'm not so concerned about what Joe Public thinks – I'm more concerned with what my daughter thinks," he says simply. "I want to leave a legacy of consciousness. It's not about collecting material things, it's about how engaged and truthful you are with life. All that any of us really have are our values."

AV note: Semeniuk first worked with ACUA in 1991 when, collaborating with the Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre at Grant MacEwan Community College we published a perpetual daytimer engaging six professional photographers to share their photographic documentaries of Ukrainians at work and play for the publication, *Mosaica: Photographic Explorations*. 

Spencer Forgo is an arts writer and communications fanatic in Calgary.



Recognizing Great Canadian Literature

By Andrea Kopylech

For the third time, the Kobzar Literary Awards have recognized an outstanding Canadian author whose work was of a Ukrainian Canadian theme. Randall Maggs received the honour of his peers and a \$25 000 award from the Shevchenko Foundation for Night Work: The Sawchuk poems on March 4, 2010 at the awards gala in Toronto. Maggs is a renowned poet, editor, artistic director of Newfoundland's March Hare festival, and a professor of literature at Memorial University.

The Kobzar Literary Awards have been recognizing Canadian authors and excellence in Ukrainian Canadian themed writing since 2006. Maggs is one of four Canadian authors to have been reviewed by his peers, and awarded the Kobzar Award. As a biannual award, the Shevchenko Foundation awards \$25 000 to the winning author and \$5 000 to the publisher.

Literary awards have been supporting and promoting authors for decades. The Kobzar Literary Awards, and other Canadian Literary awards, such as the Canada Council for the Arts' Governor General Awards, are substantial as they give not only financial support to the writer and publisher, but they


also help to promote the work and raise public awareness of excellence in Canadian literature. "Canadian culture is always competing with what we get from across the border so reminding Canadians about what we are creating here at home, and how great it is, is important," says Ruth Linka of Brindle & Glass Publishing.

With the growth of literary awards financially, and with new awards such as the Kobzar Awards, Canadian talent gains accolades at home and abroad, and great Canadian books flourish.

"What I look for in a book basically would be something that speaks to me. Not necessarily personally, but in some way, where I can see a need for this book, a market for it, where I believe it should be made available to readers. I have to believe in it in order to invest the energy, time and money to publish and promote a book. It's such a competitive market out there that the authors' and publishers' passion is key to a book's success," confirms Linka.

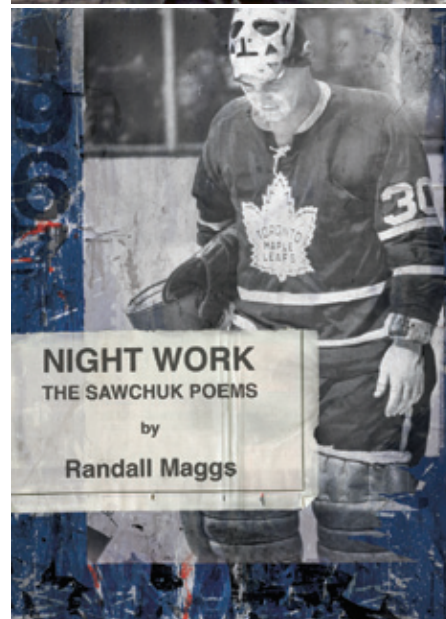
The Kobzar Literary Awards are aimed specifically for Ukrainian themed stories. What makes this award interesting is that the stories can be written in English, Ukrainian, or French, by any Canadian writer. The Ukrainian Canadian experience is an important part of our Canadian identity. Dr. Christine Turkewych, Program Director for the Kobzar Literary Award & Writer's Scholarship notes, "The more non-Ukrainian writers explore Ukrainian Canadian themes, the greater the impact these stories will have, the greater the value of the award in the literary world."

A good book is a great story with memorable characters. It stays in the reader's consciousness overtime. When readers keep reading the book over generations, it has staying power and can be viewed as a classic," says Turkewych.

There are so many stories to be told. There are so many books to be read. Celebrate literary arts. Read a good book. Make it Canadian. 

Andrea Kopylech is a freelance writer and editor. She lives in Edmonton with her husband and 3 children.

Author Randall Maggs. Photo Supplied.





Calgary Ukrainian Festival

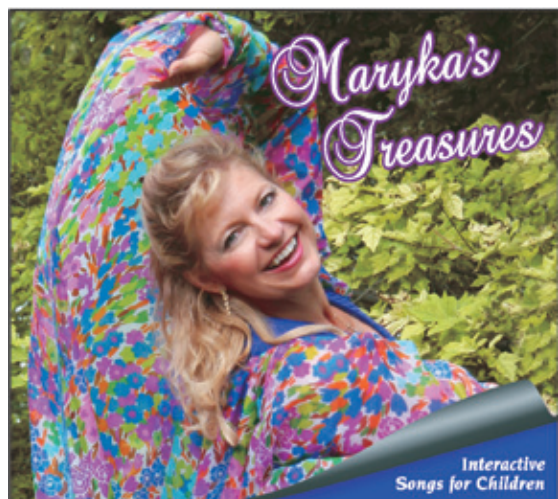
Saturday, May 29th, 2010: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
8 p.m. Zabava

Sunday, May 30th, 2010: 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

**Triwood Community Centre,
2244 Chicoutimi Dr. N.W.**

www.calgaryukrainianfestival.ca

**Mainstage entertainment, home-cooked food, imported beverages,
local vendors & artwork, and children's craft area**



Maryka's Treasures

By Nadija Szram

Jump like a frog, dance like butterflies, leap like a Ukrainian dancer to the compelling tunes of *Maryka's Treasures*!

This delightful interactive children's CD really does have it all. Fun, educational, and engaging, the songs will appeal to children and adults alike as they beckon to get up to dance and sing along. Maryka Gulka-Chabluk skillfully blends English and Ukrainian as her passion and love of working with children clearly comes through the many and varied rhythms. Children will not realize they are learning as they are entertained by the many themed tunes; princesses and princes, dancers, folk stories, marching in

parades, borscht, and musical instruments. Christian values are also represented as the songs teach the golden rule, and encourage the children to love each other and get along. Learning concepts are demonstrated through tangible examples as in the song "*Instruments Ring*," a rhythm stick becomes a musical instrument.

The song "*Wise John*" from the CD is indicative of Maryka's compelling lyrics

that combine storytelling, entertainment and education. It is hard to resist tapping your foot to the beat and a smile forming on your face. *Maryka's Treasures* CD was released at the St. Anne 50th anniversary concert in Winnipeg where Maryka co-ordinated and sang with 200 children. After listening to this CD, it is not hard to conjure the image of Maryka, a modern day pied-piper inspiring and leading a huge line of children happily singing and dancing along. The songs are infectious.

What is most appealing is that you don't have to be Ukrainian to appreciate this music. Ukrainian is woven throughout into the original English songs and before you know it, you are singing and understanding Ukrainian. All the lyrics are online at www.marykastreasures.com as well as the 50th Anniversary Children's concert DVD that can be watched with the whole family, including Baba. 🎵

Nadija Szram is the Community Project Coordinator of ACUA and an avid arts enthusiast.

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Mamay: When Folklore Hides Politics

By Genia Boivin

In 2003, Ukraine presented Oles Sanin's film, *Mamay* to the Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film where it won international recognition.

Mamay is a love story in a familiar Romeo and Juliet style; a love between fugitive Cossack Mamay and the Tatar beauty Omai, which defies ethnic and religious taboos. The director presents their worlds as divided yet sharing the same natural elements and legends; the movie is based on two of these legends.

Sanin's movie starts with a Ukrainian *duma*, which is an ancient 16th century epic genre. *The Escape of Three Brothers from Azov* tells a story of three brothers who escape from Tartar captivity. The youngest brother is left behind in the escape and dies. The other two brothers perish under the enemy's sword.


The Tartar epic poem used in the movie *The Song of a Dervish about Two Mamlyuks* also tells a story of two Christians who escape from Tartar captivity. Both epics, the *duma* and the poem, present the moral issue of killing those who cannot defend themselves.

The title, *Mamay*, holds a variety of meanings taken from different cultures: "no one" in Turkish, "the spirit of the steppes" in Persian legends, etc. It is also the name of a Mongol conqueror. In Ukrainian culture, Cossack-Mamay is a character that appears in traditional folk paintings. The character personifies the Cossack era and is almost always represented playing the *kobza*, the

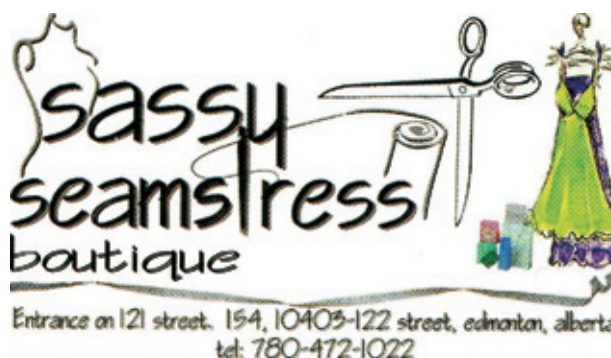
instrument from which today's *bandura* derives. Furthermore, Cossack-Mamay is also a trickster figure in Ukrainian folk tales and *Vertep*, which is a form of folk puppet theatre. In both genres, the folk tale and the *Vertep*, Cossack-Mamay plays tricks to fool his enemies.

Oles Sanin's film *Mamay* is based on Ukrainian poetic cinema with an emphasis placed on the visual image enabling a verbal economy: the movie presents almost no dialogue. Instead of language, Sanin uses pose, gesture, landscape and colours that create symbolic imagery in the tradition of great Ukrainian movie classics such as Dovzhenko's *Earth* or Parajanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*. *Mamay* offers an open ending to the viewer because most of the motion picture is based on personal interpretation of the image.

While Oles Sanin never clearly states his political position, one can see in *Mamay* an attempt to create a dialogue between Tatars and Ukrainians in a conflicted land. Sanin's movie offers another view of the problem of land ownership by introducing the Tatars' legacy and the right to the region as well as encouraging a nationalism based on shared land.

The movie presents breath-taking shots, painting-like images, beautifully saturated colors and ingeniously proposes a rather simplistic storyline that examines complicated historical events. *Mamay* is a treat for any art or film amateur. 

Genia Boivin is a student at the Kule Centre for Ukrainian Folklore at the University of Alberta. She offers this review as part of her course-work at the UofA and for readers of ACUA Vitae.



empowerment by design

Rypan and Bilash's
adornments give women
the tools to unleash their
creative spirit

By Liz Lepper

Speaking on the phone from her father's home in Detroit, Maria Rypan sorts through and assembles what I imagine to be a rainbow-coloured mountain of seed beads in preparation for a sequence of workshops in Ohio. Her expertise in Ukrainian-style beadwork sees her travel across Canada and the US, hosting courses on all-things bead-related, from hands-on bead-weaving, loomwork and netting techniques, to presentations outlining the history of Ukrainian beadwork.

For the bead enthusiast who had the misfortune to miss her February ACUA workshops in Edmonton, take heart: Maria has also authored several

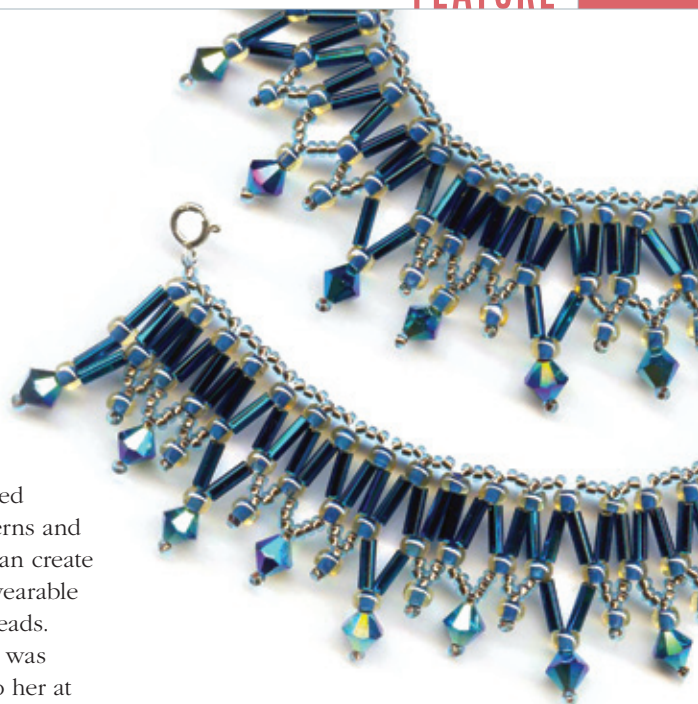
instructional books and developed dozens, if not hundreds, of patterns and all-inclusive kits so enthusiasts can create their own "miniature works of wearable art" using glittering glass seed beads.

Maria's zeal for bead weaving was first piqued by a *gerdan* given to her at Christmas in the early 90's. She had no idea how it was made, and her curiosity about the necklace's construction opened the door on a new career. Working as the cultural program director at Toronto's St. Vladimir Institute at the time, Maria had the opportunity to learn a netting technique from Oksana Ivanochko, a visiting bead artist from Ukraine. As Rypan learned new methods of creating jewelry, many of them virtually unknown at the time, her enthusiasm and desire to share her skills grew and she began teaching.

Although she's been working with beads for two decades and full-time since 2001, Maria admits she hasn't actually made very many necklaces. But, she estimates the ideas, samples and styles she's bred to be around a "zillion."

Maria has also been travelling to Ukraine every two years talking with beaders, picking up samples and exploring museum collections to learn more about her craft. Her designs are inspired by what she finds on her travels and adapted for students to make on their own. "I've made it very accessible to learn and do," she says, and the photo gallery on the Rypan Designs website is a testament to this. The site contains nearly 100 photos of stunning, intricate collars and necklaces inspired by her own designs, but created by her students.

"The *gerdan* I received was the key that opened the door for me," says



Rypan. "I want to do the same for other people because it's so cool!"

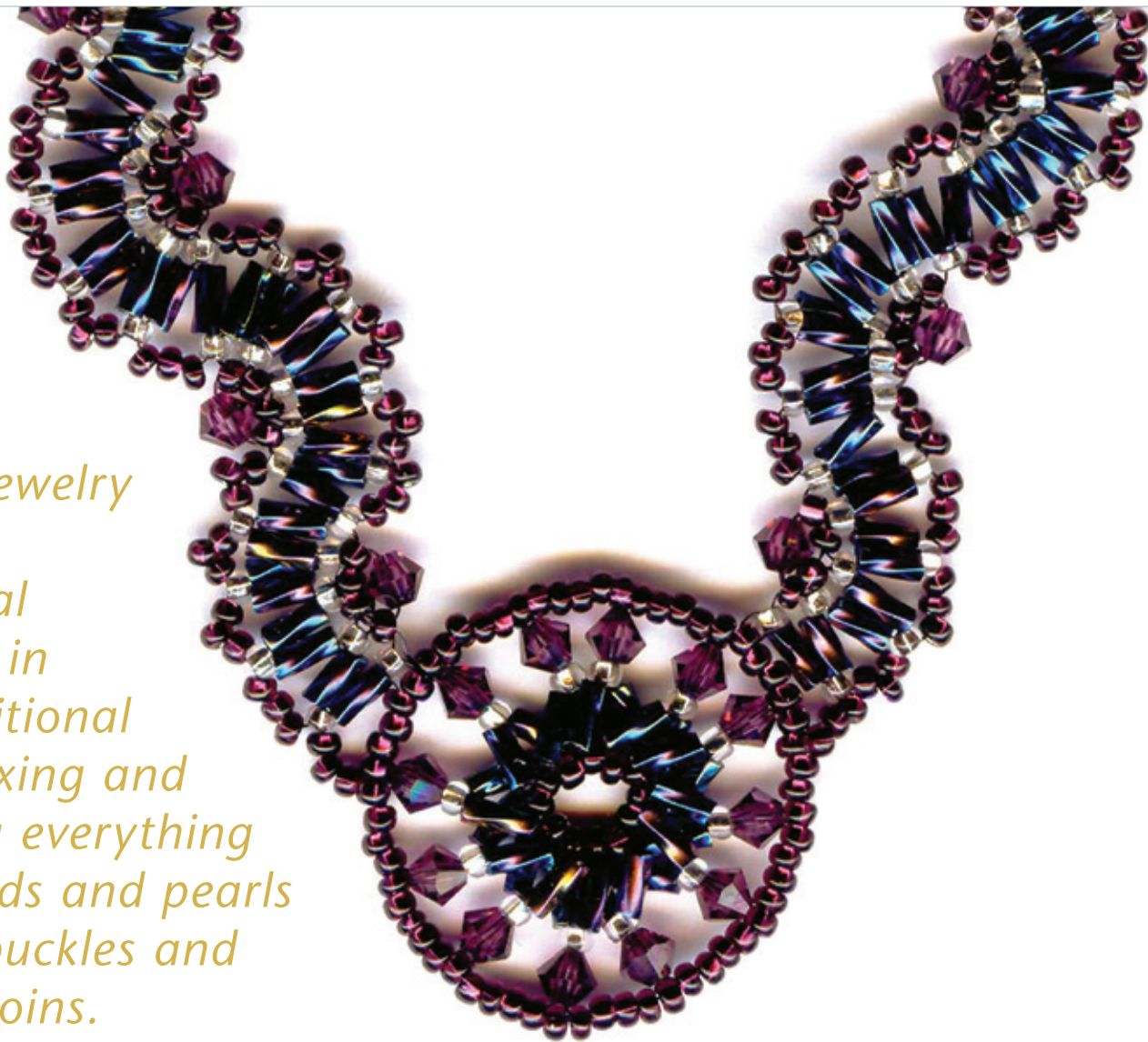
Edmonton jewelry designer and maker Luba Bilash also has a passion for adornment she cannot help but share. Creating modern jewelry inspired by ancient themes, Bilash harnesses the power of a myriad of materials to design one-of-a-kind pieces. Her collection includes rings, brooches and bracelets but she focuses on creating bold statement necklaces, with earrings to match using everything from copper enamel and freshwater pearls to semi-precious stones, crystal, bone and amber.

Bilash's jewelry combines traditional elements in non-traditional ways, mixing and matching everything from beads and pearls to shoe-buckles and ancient coins. Because of this, she finds materials everywhere, at home and abroad: fabric shops, second-hand stores, garage sales, street vendors, and museums.

An interest in ancient cultures pushed Bilash to research all types of symbolism, including Sanskrit, Celt, Ukrainian, North American Aboriginal and African, and she noticed similarities, both in design and meaning spread throughout each. Inspired by her research, she began drawing and painting symbols on silk scarves and then leather which led her to create Great Goddess brooches. From her silk and leather work,



Bilash's jewelry combines traditional elements in non-traditional ways, mixing and matching everything from beads and pearls to shoe-buckles and ancient coins.




she began working with stones.

A few years into her jewelry making, Ukrainian artist Oleksandr Borodai brought an exhibit featuring his work with copper enamel to Edmonton, and Bilash introduced herself. She was surprised to learn Borodai knew about her work in the music industry. (Bilash is also a local recording artist.) During their conversation, she mentioned that she made jewelry, and he began sending her his enameled copper.

When Bilash started making necklaces incorporating Borodai's art, she had people offering to buy them off her neck. Her passion for creating jewelry flared and she began making

collections of one-of-a-kind necklaces and selling them out of her home. As always, every design is unique, just like the people who wear her creations.

Both Rypan and Bilash have enjoyed success by tapping into their love of adornment and the creative process. Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of their respective careers is the sense of power and beauty women feel when wearing a favourite piece of jewelry.

"A piece has to speak to you, and it has to speak of you," says Bilash. "If it speaks to you, it's *your* piece." 

Liz Lepper is a freelance writer and publicist living in Edmonton.



Maria Rypan. Photo supplied.



(l to r): Ukrainian dancing is a family affair for the Lysyk family: Theo, dad Tim, and Stasha; Longtime dancer and dance mom, Kathy Van Dellen gets her hair braided by Patt Williams and Nicole Stewart; Anastasia Sereda tutors this year's crop of Little Stars: Sophia Howell Diamant, Aliya Koliaska, Oscar Babits and Riley Vanderburgh.

Troyanda: Lethbridge's Rose

By Tasba Diamant

Some of the tiny dancers who charmed Lethbridge with their steps in the 1990s are still with the Troyanda Ukrainian Dance club, which is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year—but they show off far fancier footwork these days. Anastasia Sereda, 22, has been with the club since its very first class. She is now one of the club's instructor-choreographers and an accomplished all-round dancer. Tamara Sudar, 23, was a 12 year-old from the troubled former Yugoslavia. The club offered her a transition into a new land and culture. Tamara has been a fiery performer in the Troyanda Ensemble for seven years. For these women and for hundreds of others, the club has been a home away from home, a community within a community.

The volunteer club was founded in 1994 by former Lethbridge resident Laura Korbett. When Korbett left town, Bev Mikalson took over instruction. Eventually Les Dutchak, a veteran Ukrainian dancer and teacher from Calgary, became dance director. He commuted to Lethbridge every Sunday from September to May for eight years. Today, Dean Mackedenski, one of many Troyanda alumni who have gone far with their dancing, makes the weekend trip as dance

director. Dean's weekday job is teaching Ukrainian dance in Calgary.


Cal Koskovich, a Troyanda dance dad, senior dancer and longtime club member says, "We've been very fortunate with our teachers over the years. The calibre of instruction has helped keep the club as vibrant as it is."

Indeed, the club is a Lethbridge institution. The annual *Malanka* performance, dinner and dance is one of the highlights of the early social calendar in Lethbridge. Founding member Cheryl Oakes, says she misses the days when the club, with the help of the church ladies from Holy Trinity Church, actually made the Malanka supper, a tradition that endured until 2002. This year's 15th anniversary Malanka did not disappoint anyone. The 400-seat house at Lethbridge's senior centre was sold out early on and many observers called it the best Malanka ever. The group's spring festival - *Vesna* - in early May, along with May performances for all the grade three kids who are learning about Ukraine in school, are also must-see events that are regularly sold-out.

David Howell, the father of two young Troyanda dancers says he couldn't believe the first performance he attended, "The level of choreography and the quality of the costumes is incredible in a club of all volunteers. The commitment

is amazing." Troyanda owns \$85,000 worth of costumes representing the different regions of Ukraine, mostly handmade by club members along with some imported from Ukraine.

Troyanda members regularly perform at cultural events in the southern Alberta region. From Lethbridge's Whoop-Up Days to Taber's Cornfest and Fort Macleod's Santa Claus Parade, the club performs dozens of times in a year. Club members also teach *pysanka* decorating and go door-to-door caroling for Ukrainian Christmas, complete with "Ukr-English" songbooks.

Tamara Sudar is one of many dancers in the club who has no actual Ukrainian heritage. "It's not the point what your genes are," says Tamara. "This has been a welcoming part of mine and my family's lives since we moved here. I have grown in so many ways in this club and made so many friendships. The point is community and carrying on some beautiful traditions. I feel very lucky to have been part of it for so long." And for those with Ukrainian backgrounds, adds Cheryl Oakes, "The experiences with the club do give the young dancers and families connections to their cultural heritage which may be very distant." 

Tasba Diamant is an artist, college instructor, and writer living in Lethbridge.



Korovai and wedding cake (bolo) surrounded by sweet gifts for each guest;

Talita dos Santos Fonseca and Cleberson Carlos Vetorazzi wedding, buying a chunk of the groom's tie is a widespread Brazilian tradition;

Talita Burack and Rafael Moriya, Sao Josafat Ukr Catholic church.

A Ukrainian Wedding...Brazilian Style

By Dr. Andriy Nabachewsky

ALL PHOTOS BY DR. ANDRIY NAHACHEWSKY

When I arrived in Prudentopolis in November of 2009, Mrs. Burack at the hotel greeted me warmly with a hello and an invitation to her daughter's wedding. She put me in room 14, the same one I stayed in during my first Brazil trip in May. The Burack Hotel, my home for most of the next six months, is on the main drag in downtown Prudentopolis. The Burack Hotel is also home to the bride's family.

The bride and groom - Telita and Rafael-were married in the town's main church, the Ukrainian Catholic church of St. Josaphat, at 8:30 on a Saturday night. The church service was mostly sung in Ukrainian with the priest's commentary in Portuguese. Dinner and celebrating to 3:00a.m. followed.

Rafael's family are Japanese Brazilians from the city of Curitiba, and there was lots of joking about how this was a big Ukrainian culture shock for them. Some were expecting them to be quite proper and formal as is the stereotype, but they came quite ready to party. Must have been "Brazilianized"! You could hear whispers of awe as the guests entered the huge and beautiful church. They were also quite engaged in culture shock throughout the evening's traditions; me too, and that's why I've come.

These traditions included the bride and groom passing little gifts and big


hugs to every guest at the wedding, cutting the wedding cake (bolo) and throwing the bride's bouquet. The bride and her bridesmaids spent half an hour noisily selling raffle tickets for the "bride's shoe." The groom and his gang, meanwhile, go around to each male guest and sell pieces of his necktie.

My favourite part of the night, however, is dancing with the *korovai*. It seems the story of the *korovai* here is quite a bit like in Canada, where the immigrant generation and children kept this tradition, then it mostly died out around the middle of the 20th century, then recently revived in popularity. The revival came out different than in Canada however, and I'd never heard about dancing with it on the other two continents. I've seen it in May with the bridal party leading the dancing, and I understand that's the normal way it is performed at hundreds of weddings each year in the local farming communities. Indeed, many have told me that dancing the *korovai* is the most important difference between a Ukrainian wedding and a regular Brazilian one.

Telita was a member of the local Ukrainian dance group here, Vesselka (sic). Many current and former dancers attended the wedding, and six of them put on their costumes to dance for her and Rafael around midnight. They started with their small *hopak*, then the band started up a *kolomyika* and they danced with the *korovai*. One

of the dancers took the *korovai* and started dancing a polka with it in front of the head table. The other costumed dancers joined the polka with each other. As each took turns with the *korovai*, they may have done *prysiadky* or *povzunets*, more polkas, etc. After a few minutes, they pulled in the bride and groom from behind the table, as well as their parents; sometimes one sometimes two or more people hefting the large bread and keeping it moving. Meanwhile the dancers kept on improvising a bunch of solos wherever there was room. It felt quite like a Canadian *kolomyika*. The groom and his family were thrilled to join in as well, in their own way. Cameras and videos were buzzing, mine included.

After the dancing died down, the bride and groom carried the *korovai* around to each guest at the wedding, starting with their parents, and we were each expected to rip a chunk out of it and eat it. Communion. It was sweet and yellow with egg yokes; tasted great.

Posted by Dr. Andriy Nahachewsky at 11/29/2009; <http://andriybrazil.blogspot.com>. 

Dr. Andriy Nabachewsky is doing fieldwork and research on Ukrainian folklore and ways in Brazil funded by the Kule Folklore Centre at the UofA. ACUA has recently partnered with the Kule Centre on three ethnographic workshops dealing with storytelling, regional paska decorating and gerdan necklaces.

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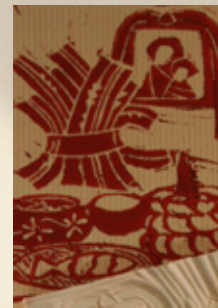
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