

ACUA VITAE

ALBERTA'S UKRAINIAN ARTS AND CULTURE MAGAZINE

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Out of the Kiln

MORE THAN BABA'S DINNERWARE

A Brief History of Decaded Ukrainian-Style
Ceramics in Canada

OUT OF THE KILN

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ACUAVITAE



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PHOTO CREDIT CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: PROVIDED BY DEBRA CHERNIAWSKY,
PHOTO BY LARYSA LUCIW, PHOTO BY LARYSA LUCIW

ARTISTS CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: DEBRA CHERNIAWSKY, AUDREY UZWYSHYN,
IRENE PYZYK

NOT YOUR BABA'S VYSHYTIA

PHOTO BY STEVEN STEFANIUK

By Joyanne Rudiak

UKRAINIAN EMBROIDERY, OR VYSHYTIA, WAS THE FOCUS OF THE SOLD-OUT FASHION SHOW ALBERTA COUNCIL FOR THE UKRAINIAN ARTS (ACUA) HOSTED IN SEPTEMBER 2021.



PHOTO BY STEVEN STEFANIUK

The show marked the end of the year-long Threads That Connect 2021 project, which celebrated Ukrainian embroidery and textiles. Hosted by ACUA and the Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre (URDC) at MacEwan University, the fashion show was split into three sections. Historical pieces from Lyudmyla Shefel's carefully curated collection harkened back to days of old, where utility met pride in one's identity. Retro and contemporary stylings from members of the Ukrainian diaspora and fashion designer Olena Romanova, respectively, showcased how clothing could artfully reflect one's heritage. Though ACUA had to limit the number of tickets sold due to COVID protocols, the sold-out show had 185 attendees. It is clear fashion speaks volumes and is an excellent way to display a connection to one's heritage.

Textiles are not the only way to make a statement about one's heritage. Today one finds Ukrainian embroidery patterns on a variety of objects, even in mainstream culture. It isn't a new idea to use the patterns to decorate objects such as Christmas ornaments, *pyanky*, or the classic *Baba* and *Dido* (or *Gido*) mugs from Ceramic Cottage in Vegreville. What's new is the objects that feature these tried-and-true designs. Here are a few examples.



PHOTO PROVIDED



PHOTO BY LARYSA LUCIW

Bohemian-Style Blouses

These flowy, chiffon blouses are not that far-removed from the Ukrainian blouses of old. What may be surprising is how they find themselves in mainstream clothing outlets, such as American luxury department store Nordstrom or various shops on Etsy, labeled anything from boho and hippy, to ethnic and Mexican.

T-Shirts

Do you want something that shows off your Ukrainian pride in a casual way? Yes, the “Kiss me, I’m Ukrainian” t-shirt might be one way, but you might also opt for a Ukrainian embroidered t-shirt. The styles range from delicate designs around the collar and sleeve edges to statement patterns across the torso. They don’t even need to be actually embroidered; you can find just as many t-shirts and polo shirts that are silk-screened with Ukrainian embroidery motifs or sport sewn on Ukrainian-inspired trimmings.

Leggings

Did you know you can find leggings fully decked out in Ukrainian embroidery patterns? It’s true! Now you can head out to the gym or on that run confidently, knowing anyone who sees you will know your heritage. Or, if you’re like me, you’ll just be cozy in your house while reading a good book or watching Netflix.

Bookmarks

Speaking of books, a bookmark boasting Ukrainian embroidery designs would be an excellent gift for the bookworm in your life. You could even get several, representing the variety of embroidery designs from all regions of Ukraine. It would save you from using a receipt or tissue to mark your place!

Masks

When writing this article, the COVID-19 pandemic is still a reality we are living through, and face masks continue to be a much-needed accessory. Many independent shops, including at ACUA, have embroidered masks for sale, ensuring that, even if others can’t see your smile, they can still see your Ukrainian pride.



PHOTO BY STEVEN STEFANIUK



PHOTO BY STEVEN STEFANIUK



PHOTO BY STEVEN STEFANIUK



PHOTO BY STEVEN STEFANIUK



PHOTO BY STEVEN STEFANIUK

Phone Cases and Popsockets

There is another item most of us can’t live without: our cell phone. Just as with masks, there are ample ways to personalize one’s phone, such as with stickers and decals. The most common way, however, is through a phone case or popsocket (the little, circular grip you stick on the back of your phone). Phone cases and popsockets with Ukrainian embroidered designs come in a variety of colours and can once again be found readily on Etsy.

There is no shortage of ways to embrace and show off traditional Ukrainian embroidery designs, from clothing and mugs, to one’s cell phone.

There is only one question: how will you decide to show off your Ukrainian heritage? 



MORE THAN BABA'S DINNERWARE

A Brief History of
Decaled Ukrainian-Style
Ceramics in Canada



By Lyrissa Sheptak

Humans have always searched for explanations of self and surroundings; we naturally seek inclusion in something bigger than ourselves. Shared identity creates unity and loyalty amongst one another. Culture fosters this. The songs we sing, the stories we tell, the prayers we recite, the traditions we all follow fuel unity, camaraderie and help individuals conceptualize their world.

But there are other parts of culture that add to our sense of belonging, creating an emotive response within our hearts. These are outward or public manifestations of cultural practices: festivals, art, food, decorative items...the more tangible side of culture. Wearing my baba's *vyshyvanka* or sipping from a cup with my name written in Cyrillic are a couple of examples of ways I may choose to display my culture. Such are a few examples of the signs of identity politics, demonstrating who we are and ways that we can connect with and declare our loyalty to our culture.

Most people in the Ukrainian Canadian community are familiar with Ukrainian-style ceramics. Items like platters, mugs, borshch bowls, and *varenyky* casseroles, all strategically adorned with red/white/black decaled, simulated embroidery designs. The "embroidery" patterns on these ceramics look like typical, intricate Ukrainian cross-stitch patterns. Prior to the 1990s, only a few floral embroidery decals could be found adorning ceramic statues, candles, or busts of the Holy Mother or Christ Jesus. The decaled embroidered patterns generally found

on the ceramic items were the typical red/white/black geometric ones. Dr. Robert Klymasz, folklorist and retired curator from the Canadian Museum of Civilization, coined an appropriate slogan, calling them "Ukrainian logos." In North America (especially in the early years), they have become emblematic of Ukrainian identity.

These ceramics also have multi-generational appeal in fostering pride and identity. My baba and dido immigrated from Volyn region to Canada in 1930. When she was a child in Galicia, she was orphaned and too busy surviving rather than embroidering intricate designs on a *sorochka* or *rushnyk*. Emigrating, they didn't have much room in their trunk for the basics, let alone items of sentimentality. She didn't have a plethora of traditional items to remind her of home or who she once was. Years later, when these decaled ceramics began to surface, my baba slowly bought the dinnerware items because they spoke to her heart.

Owning and using these dishes was a small gesture, a way to pay homage to her ethnic culture.

They reminded her of a life that seemed far away but remained strongly within her. Owning and using these dishes was a small gesture, a way to pay homage to her ethnic culture. Even though the decals on the ceramics weren't representative of the embroidery of Volyn (red/blue/white), it didn't matter to her, because when partaking in a refreshment with her friends (who immigrated from different regions in Ukraine), those cups symbolized an unspoken sign of unity -- not only of culture but of their experiences in Ukraine and Canada.

Choosing this particular ceramic dishware over a more Anglo Saxon-style dinnerware from stores like The Bay, Eaton's, or Woodward's, represented not only their identity but also the survival of their culture in a new land, even if things did adapt or become modified.

I loved using and buying these decaled items because they made me feel part of my baba's club. Becoming conscious of my ethnicity, I felt like I, too, walked the soil of Volyn and inhaled its forest air. Having never been there, I felt I had at least had the right to feel connected to it. Most importantly, however, whenever I saw or used these decaled ceramics, they reminded me of my lovely baba. Years later, when my baba no longer with us, I become sentimental when glancing at one of these items.

Being born into a Ukrainian-Canadian family in the mid-1970s, I grew up in decalomania (the modern term) Ukrainian-style ceramics culture. They adorned shelves at festivals. Or when I shopped at the Ukrainian Bookstore in Edmonton, I ood-and-awed over my favourite figurines in the display case. As I got older, I noticed that these decaled embroidered patterns began to show up on silkscreened t-shirts, purses, *pyrohy* cutters, and even business cards. These embroidery decals on ceramics (and later on other items) are a North American innovation. Beginning in the 1960s, a small group of women who sold Ukrainian items at festivals purchased sheets of these decals, carefully cut out different lengths of these red/white/black patterns, adhered them to ceramic items, and fired them. But from whom did these ladies purchase the decals?

Just like our beloved floral fabric used for Ukrainian dance costumes and *khustky*, these decals were produced in Germany. Entrepreneurial North American women purchased these decals and created these items to sell -- they couldn't keep them on the shelves long enough. Demand was high, especially

during the 1960s-1980s when Ukrainian souvenir merchandise from Soviet Ukraine didn't exist. There was no tourist industry in Communist Ukraine because anything displaying pride in Ukrainian culture or identity was, for the most part, forbidden. Even if someone did visit Ukraine and managed to bring back pottery or other breakable items, those things didn't always make it home in one piece. As a result, immigrants to Canada from the first to third waves had to create their own identity. Not only were they citizens of a new country with new ways, but they also wanted to honour their past and heritage.

These decaled embroidery-style ceramics were perfect because Ukrainian Canadians didn't have a lot of time to set aside for embroidery. These items surfaced during a surge of a Ukrainian Canadian identity at a time when people wanted to defy the Soviet Union. Many Ukrainian Canadians wanted these ceramics so they could openly display their culture and show their solidarity with their repressed brethren across the world.

But how did the Germans know what were traditional Ukrainian embroidery patterns? Artist Larisa Sembaliuk Cheladyn explains that DMC Threads published books featuring embroidery patterns from different cultures. Ukraine was one of them. The red/white/black embroidery motifs were the easiest for mass production as two-colour, silkscreened designs. As a person

adds more colours, accuracy and colour-runs become problematic. Therefore, the red/white/black geometric pattern was preferred for mass production over florals and swirls. Not to be mistaken, as far back as the 1970s there were ceramics displaying Trypillian-style decals, as well as the odd attempt at producing decals that represented embroidery from particular regions within Ukraine. Because of the ease of manufacturing of the geometric shapes and red/white/black colours, producers didn't digress from their formula.

Perhaps because some people within our community (especially fine artists) considered these ceramics as 'kitschy' or old-fashioned, or perhaps peoples' taste changed, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, they began to fall out of favour. By the mid-1990s with the fall of the Soviet Union and Ukraine's independence, people worldwide could now obtain authentic Ukrainian items that could be shipped safely. This opened a world of Ukrainian and Ukrainian-style merchandise – more options and supply for Ukrainian Canadians.

Over the years, Canadians have gleaned much from their Ukrainian brethren, especially since Ukraine's independence. Thanks to fostered relationships and shared culture, Ukrainian Canadians have been able to develop their culture in deeper ways – discovering what it means to be both Ukrainian and Canadian.

Now, globalization and swift technological innovation have caused these decaled embroidered pieces of ceramics to be (re)discovered. They are considered 'retro' among Canadians becoming, once again, popular demonstrations of inclusivity, cultural identity and pride. In Ukraine, Ukrainian decalomania, especially embroidery, has exploded in popularity. Most likely a response to Vyshyvanka Day where embroidery is honoured, Ukrainians are now using embroidered



PHOTO BY ANDREW MASIUK

forms of decals on various items from dishware to t-shirts, ornaments, silkscreened edibles on cakes, even to manicured nails with Ukrainian styles. The possibilities are limitless, and with the world exploding in communication and technology, it is no surprise that decalomania of identity merchandise was the next step for Ukraine.

According to Larisa Sembaliuk Cheladyn, culture and technology are deeply intertwined, "Ukrainians from the diaspora have created their own folklore which has become part of our culture, as technology was created so quickly here in Canada." Speed of manufacturing and silk-screening provide countless ways that cultural symbols can be presented evoking powerful visuals and emotional responses. Despite other popular manufactured Ukrainian items, decaled Ukrainian-style ceramics have proven their staying power, and they are still the acting official "Ukrainian logo" of Ukrainians in Canada.


So, next time you are dining with friends and family, and a drink is poured in one of these iconic decaled glasses, lift it high as you proclaim "Dai Bozhe!" There are fancier and more sophisticated choices out there. But in its own humble way, this decaled glass is the only one that can make such a cultural experience complete. 



PHOTO BY BORYS TARASENKO

Special thanks to *Larisa Sembaliuk Cheladyn* for providing facts and some history of decalomania in Canada and Ukraine.

MEET THE STAFF

Borys Tarasenko

PHOTO PROVIDED BY BORYS TARASENKO

Borys Tarasenko has been with ACUA as Program Assistant since January 2018. Mostly, his work at ACUA consists of helping with operations, helping to plan and facilitate exhibitions, graphic design, social media and other communications. Borys is also a multidisciplinary artist based here in Edmonton. A BFA Art & Design graduate from the University of Alberta with a focus in Painting, Borys especially likes creating artwork and graphics for musicians, theatre artists, and non-profit organizations. [AV](#)

Ukrainian Vintage Sale

By Robin McHugh

Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts hosts the Ukrainian Vintage Sale annually from June to August. Consignments are taken through the month of May. ACUA collects pottery, ceramics, embroidery, textiles, woodwork, figurines, books, music, and costumes. The Ukrainian Vintage Sale is like the biggest Ukrainian thrift sale you'll ever attend. There are always hidden gems to find! [AV](#)



PHOTO BY ANDREW MASIUK



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Ceramics Find New Homes at ACUA's Vintage Sale

By Tamara Soltykevych

A beautiful thing about the world is that people are all unique; this applies to art as well. An item that someone's eyes skip over may be something that another person feels they must have. Such items are plentiful at ACUA's annual Ukrainian Vintage Sale.

The 2018 sale boasted over 1500 items from over 40 community consignors. This is quite a feat, and not only locals are interested in the items. At the last sale, ACUA even shipped to buyers from the United States. Among the Vintage Fair items, one finds pottery and ceramics, paintings, embroidery, wooden figurines, and trinkets. In particular, the decalcomania ceramics with embroidered motifs, red on white and green and gold on white, and painted pottery with various Ukrainian patterns are very popular. Often seen in Ukrainian households is the ubiquitous posing Kozak with a maiden or a tea set with an embroidery pattern. Pottery is often in the shape of a vase, jug, or something similar, and is brightly painted with flowers or other bold motifs such as black and white patterns on an orange background.

A particular type of item that catches someone's eye may be the start of their collection, which can quickly become not just a hobby but something they hold close to their hearts. This is certainly true for buyers Maxine Zakordonski and Christina Nahirniak, who were both happy to talk about their collections of ceramics and pottery.

30 years ago, Maxine Zakordonski attended a family fun night where her daughter won a ceramic ram made by Audrey Uzwysyn. 16-year-old Natasha was not interested in the piece at the time and gave it to her mother. Ever since then, Maxine has been hooked. She has now accumulated over 120 pieces and claims she will never stop. Maxine obtains her pieces from anywhere she can find them, such as thrift stores, small-town stores, ACUA's vintage sales, and the former Ukrainian Bookstore. She says that people would be surprised at what you can find at places like Value Village, where people drop off art pieces that may not mean anything to them but that collectors, like Maxine, find beautiful and fascinating. Many of Maxine's pieces are on display in her home but she also has some serving dishes and pitchers which she uses. Her favourite ceramics are the green and white patterned ones, and the black and red pieces. Maxine has also instilled the love of ceramics into the next generation; her daughter used Audrey Uzwysyn's work as a wedding registry, and her daughter-in-law does pottery with scribing.

Christina Nahirniak has been collecting pottery and ceramics for over 20 years. As a child, she would visit her family at the

lake where her aunt, Susan Ferbey, made pottery and would, "always have the most amazing huge salad bowls and platters." Christina's own collection started when she first learned how to make *nachynka* (cornmeal). Her parents had a casserole dish by Audrey Uzwysyn that was, "the perfect size in which to make *nachynka*." From then on Christina started going to Audrey's sales, and she would slowly purchase a couple of pieces each time. Most of her pieces are from Susan Ferbey, Audrey Uzwysyn, Kristen Young, and other local shops and thrift stores. Christina's collection consists primarily of serving bowls and casserole bowls, as well as, "mugs, many, many mugs; it's always great to have a new mug for your morning fix," she says. Christina's pieces are all functional. She has also given many items as gifts, as she believes it's a wonderful thing to get as a gift and that it is very important to support local artisans. Currently, Christina's collection is just over 20 pieces.


It is because of art lovers like Maxine and Christina that many of these intricately-made pieces will not end up in the bottom of a box but will live on, proudly displayed and appreciated by all those who lay eyes on them. 



PHOTO PROVIDED BY MAXINE ZAKORDONSKI



PHOTO PROVIDED BY MAXINE ZAKORDONSKI



PHOTO PROVIDED



PHOTO BY ANDREW MASIUK



PHOTO BY ANDREW MASIUK



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PHOTO PROVIDED BY MAXINE ZAKORDONSKI



PHOTO BY ANDREW MASIUK



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CHRISTINA NAHIRNIAK



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CHRISTINA NAHIRNIAK

Out of the Kiln

CELEBRATES
ARTISTRY ACROSS
CULTURES

By Lizzy Taylor

This coming Fall, ACUA will have you stepping into the world of pottery to embrace cultures past and present. Out of the Kiln: Sharing Traditions in Clay will open in October 2022 to celebrate the connections developed between artists across cultures and time.

Artist and curator Larisa Sembaliuk Cheladyn says, “the focus of the show is on sharing what has been created over the centuries by different cultures, and how that has led to an appreciation for different ways of doing things.” *Out of the Kiln* will bring together artists who explore various techniques, highlighting the connections developed through exchanging creative traditions.

Visiting the exhibit will take you on an exploration of clay art over centuries, showing off artists’ work with varied styles and forms. “My goal is to bring in many different pieces to feature our diverse community of individual artists and collectors,” says Larisa. Historic pieces used by the pioneers will exhibit next to eclectic decal ceramics. Works by established contemporary Ukrainian Canadian artists Ted Diakiw and Audrey Uzwyshyn will be displayed in contrast to pieces created by artists with Indigenous, Asian, and European heritages.

When Larisa and ACUA board member Irene Pyzyk were asked to develop an exhibit about pottery, they were excited to get started. “As long as we both could remember, even though ACUA has several members that work in clay, there really has never been a show devoted only to works out of the kiln,” says Larisa, “and definitely never one where ACUA has collaborated with other institutions that represent artists that work in clay.”

Pottery holds meaningful familial connections for Larisa – her father, Paul Sembaliuk, was a collector of historical and contemporary ceramics. Her aunt Sophia (Sembaliuk) Morrison was heavily involved in the ceramics community in the Medicine Hat area. “Our home was filled with earthenware that my parents brought back from their many trips to Ukraine, as well as pieces made by Ukrainian pioneers that Dad picked up at auctions in Alberta, and the works of contemporary artists



ARTIST: AUDREY UZWYSHYN
PHOTO PROVIDED



ARTIST: IRENE PYZYK
PHOTO BY LARYSA LUCIW



SCULPTURE COURTESY OF BILL & MICHELLE TRACY
PHOTO BY BORYS TARASENKO



ARTIST: IRENE PYZYK
PHOTO BY LARYSA LUCIW



ARTIST: AUDREY UZWYSHYN
PHOTO BY LARYSA LUCIW



ARTIST: AUDREY UZWYSHYN
PHOTO BY LARYSA LUCIW



INDIGENOUS SCULPTURE COURTESY OF BILL & MICHELLE TRACY
PHOTO BY BORYS TARASENKO



ARTIST: AUDREY UZWYSHYN
PHOTO BY LARYSA LUCIW



ARTIST: AUDREY UZWYSHYN
PHOTO BY LARYSA LUCIW



INDIGENOUS SCULPTURE COURTESY OF BILL & MICHELLE TRACY; PHOTO BY BORYS TARASENKO

from various backgrounds,” Larisa says. “So, I was always surrounded by pottery growing up and look forward to sharing some of these backstories to the Ukrainian Canadian ceramics community in Alberta.”

During the exhibit, contemporary artists have been invited to sell their works in the boutique. Irene Pyzyk, Susan Ferbey, and Audrey Uzwyshyn are a few among them. ACUA is thrilled to support contemporary potters whose work will be on sale throughout October, introducing them to our supporters and shining a light on the diversity of artists that form the ceramic community here in Alberta.

Out of the Kiln also explores the inspirations behind those who share,

the collectors and organizations with a passion for education and preservation. The Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village and Mundare Museum are among institutions across Alberta and Saskatchewan whose ceramic collections will be brought together

for the first time, showcasing the many years of dedicated preservation work across the prairies. These works will be on display alongside private collections, including artifacts gathered by Bill and Michelle Tracy,

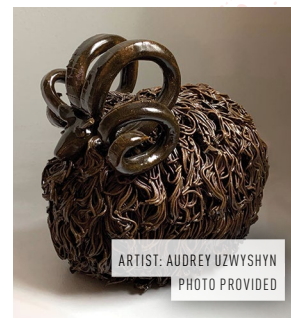
known for their expansive collection of Indigenous artifacts.

In partnership with the Alberta Crafts Council, programming for the exhibit will include workshops, lectures, and tours led by knowledgeable artists, scholars, and collectors. Participants will

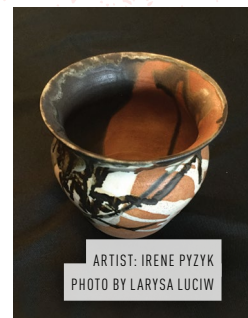
learn and discuss various topics, such as the differences between **appropriation**, defined as the inappropriate or unacknowledged adoption of an element of one culture by members of another culture, versus **appreciation** when creating works inspired or connected to another culture.

With *Out of the Kiln*, Larisa hopes participants come away with, “an appreciation for the variety of styles, forms, and techniques that are found in clay art.” ^{AV}

My goal is to bring in many different pieces to feature our diverse community of individual artists and collectors.



ARTIST: AUDREY UZWYSHYN
PHOTO PROVIDED



ARTIST: IRENE PYZYK
PHOTO BY LARYSA LUCIW



DEBRA CHERNIAWSKY

INTERVIEWS WITH MODERN POTTERS



PHOTO BY YVONNE GERELUK

Debra Cherniawsky has been a potter for over thirty years, with her love of the art showing itself in her use of bold colours and intricate linework. She continues to develop her work, she says, in the areas of "abstract landscape, graphic black and white, and traditional hand-painted compositions on earthenware."

What is the most important part of your creative process?

The most important part of my creative process is organizing a collection of thoughts from the past, present, and future. The next part of the process is simplifying those thoughts into a language that can become universal. The decorative arts are a cross-cultural language rich with symbolic meaning and often share a common purpose. The final part of that process is to strip down to the essential ingredients, and then the action begins; as I

am a product of the school of abstract expressionism, my ideas and brushstrokes are laid down rather quickly, which captures my present level of energy.

Where do you find your inspiration? Are there other artists whose work has inspired or influenced your own?

I deliberately do not look at other artists' work, rather I tend to see myself as a trendsetter, as I'm not concerned about colour, fashion, style trends. Rather, I've created my own vocabulary. However, in the early 1970s, my mom came home from a craft show in Hairy Hill, Alberta, with a piece of pottery that had a beautiful crystalline glaze, and I remember as a child sitting in the window spending hours looking at the beautiful colours and the depth in the glaze. As a child, I began sneaking into the Pottery club at the Vegreville studio where my mom was a member and children were not allowed, and that is where the wet clay process gripped my soul. I was completely fascinated and completely enthralled in the process by the time I began at Red Deer College in 1985.



NEST; PHOTO PROVIDED BY DEBRA CHERNIAWSKY



WILD WEST LANDSCAPE; PHOTO PROVIDED BY DEBRA CHERNIAWSKY

What advice would you give to new artists wanting to pursue pottery?

My advice to new artists is to practice the pottery process with a classical disciplinary approach where you focus on one aspect, and that would be form first. After you have established a repertoire of forms, then you can bring in your artistic influences from your own culture. You don't have to look externally for influence because, I believe each young artist has their own story to tell and the process of unravelling the knowledge that they already know and have already experienced in their family life. We all have rich cultures that our families brought to Canada, all unique with a very strong decorative sense.

What are the pieces you're most proud of?

Nest is from my pottery production with various sizes and is available across Canada at museum shops and boutiques.

Wild West Landscape is a one-off in a private collection.

The Heart Series is a one-off in a private collection. 

SO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT POTTERY IN ALBERTA?

By Izzy Sheptak

Take a class.

If you are interested in learning more about pottery in Alberta, consider taking a class and making some yourself! Workshop Studios, Mud Urban Potters, and Fairview studios offer classes for beginners in Calgary, and Viva Clayworks, Studio 72, and the Edmonton Potters Guild offer them in Edmonton.

Support local artists.

If you are looking to purchase beautiful ceramics made right here in Alberta, you need not look farther than the local farmers' market or a community organization such as the Alberta Craft Council. You can also see if local members of pottery guilds or studios have their work for sale or do a quick Facebook or Google search for independent artists who might not be part of these groups. Simply talking to local potters can be the best way to learn more about the art form, whether you want to buy, make, or expand your general knowledge.

Take a field trip.


If you really want to explore Alberta's rich ceramic roots, take a trip to Medicine Hat to visit Medalta in the Historic Clay District. Pottery production emerged alongside the city due to the abundance of cheap fuel in the form of natural gas and local deposits of clay. As a result, it quickly became a Canadian center for ceramics. Medalta not only houses a museum, but a contemporary ceramic arts facility and art gallery. 



PHOTO PROVIDED BY IRENE PYZYK

INTERVIEWS WITH MODERN POTTERS



PHOTO BY LARYSA LUCIW

Irene Pyzyk began potting in her teens and has been working with clay and other materials for decades. She has created countless pieces working both on the pottery wheel and off, most recently creating intricate patterns in clay using a reduction method. With her deep love for Ukrainian culture and art, she is also a valued member of ACUA as our Vice-President.

What is the most important part of your creative process?

I guess the most important part is, when you have an idea, to make that idea come alive the way you picture it in your mind. It doesn't always happen that way working with clay. You know how to manipulate it to do what you want, but it also has a mind of its own which you have no control over. It will do, at times, what it wants to do, so no matter what it is that you're picturing in your mind, it may come out to be something very different. But that's okay too! Because

sometimes you get exciting results that you never even thought of. The only problem then is to try and replicate it.

Where do you find your inspiration?

At times I find it anywhere. Certainly, looking at other people's work will give you ideas, then you tweak them to make it your own. Also, in nature, because you can't beat what nature does, you can come up with all kinds of interesting things by trying to replicate it. I do spend some time looking at other pottery, whether it's in the past or artists working now, just to see what has been done or attempted. Other times, I'm looking at what's around me, looking at other objects. You can get all kinds of ideas from not looking at things made of clay, whether it's plants or flowers in the garden, fabrics, all sorts of things will give you ideas of what you could try. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't, so I'm always experimenting. Even if it doesn't work the first time, it gets my mind thinking, what can I change to get the final result I want? Sometimes it is just experimentation, and sometimes it actually does work.



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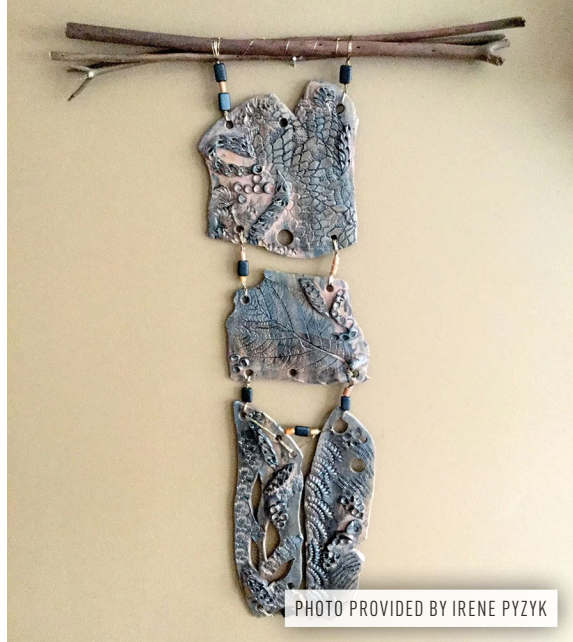


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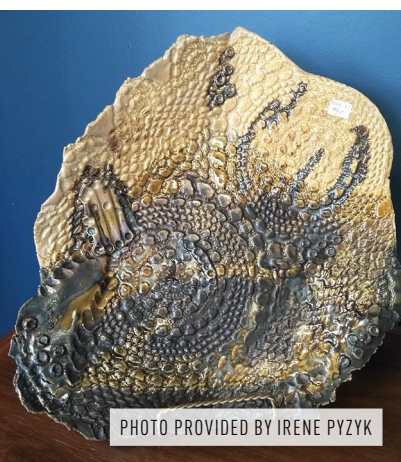


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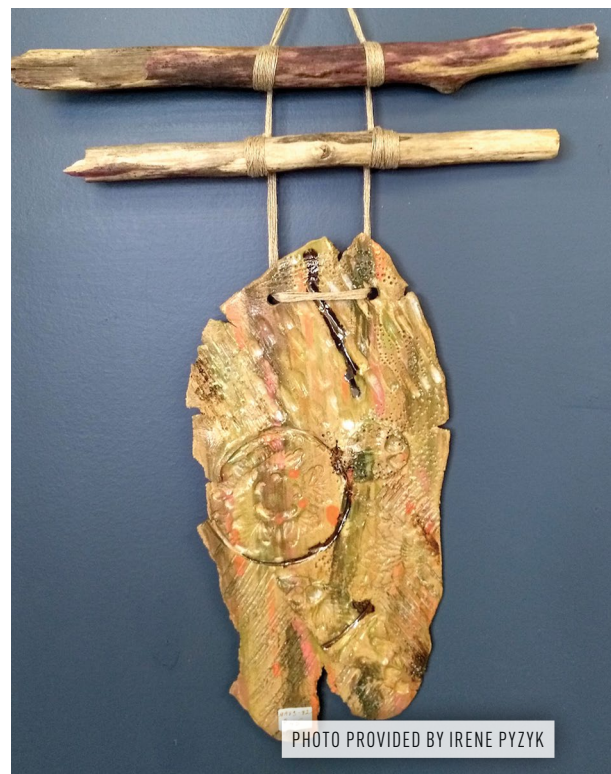


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What drew you to working with pottery over other mediums?

I think part of it was just the feel of clay. I remember my mom saying that I used to love playing with mud when I was a young kid. So, that might be part of it! For me, it was that you start out with a lump and then it turns out to be something quite nice by the time you're finished with it. I was always impressed with that. That may be the thing that keeps me coming back. I like the process that you go through from beginning to end.

In the last number of years, I've been doing a reduction process, where you make a piece, and then you start cutting out pieces. I've really enjoyed that because you're starting with a complete piece of pottery, and then the design comes with actually removing portions of the clay. I think I was looking at something crocheted, and I thought the design here is in what's missing. I thought I could do something like that with pottery. I like the final effect that comes with that.

Can you speak about the work you're most proud of?

I don't know if I can answer that! The ones where I'm cutting out designs are the ones that stand out to me as some of my

favourites. At one point I worked strictly on the wheel, but in the last number of years, I've spent more time hand-building. Creating shapes and forms, doing that by hand rather than using the wheel, I think I like it! I have enjoyed making shapes that aren't only round, such as six-sided or eight-sided figures. Things that are different than what you usually see, I've been doing more of that. I don't know that I could pick just one piece as my favourite.

What advice would you give to new artists wanting to pursue pottery?


If anybody is really interested, then they should for sure; if you're going to pursue it as a career, that's a different story; it very seldom works out that way. As a hobby, it's great but be prepared to have a house full of pottery as well! I've always just done it as a hobby, and I enjoy doing it. It's a nice outlet. I find it relaxing even if things aren't going right. You can use it as a learning experience to either never do that again or just change things up so that it turns out the way you want it to come out. But, if you have a talent for it, if it does something for you like relaxation, then that's a real bonus. So, go for it! 



PHOTO PROVIDED BY AUDREY UZWYSHYN

AUDREY UZWYSHYN

INTERVIEWS WITH MODERN POTTERS



PHOTO BY NICK HOWE

Audrey Uzwyshyn has been a potter for 50 years. When she moved to Edmonton, she joined the potter's guild, eventually converting her garage into a workshop, buying her own wheel, and building a high-fire gas kiln. For this interview, she was joined by her daughter Constance Uzwyshyn to talk about her creative process, inspirations, and mastery of the art.

What is the most important part of your creative process?

There is no most important part. Pottery has three major components: one is the form, the second is the glaze, and the third is the firing. It takes years to perfect your form, and I would say that I have perfected the form of the bowl. I've spent years experimenting with glazes, to know what kind of glaze I feel is good on my product. I've found that less is more, I don't over glut my glazes or use a lot of different ones and whatnot.

I try and have the glaze enhance the form. Third, if you don't fire it properly, it doesn't matter what form you make or how you glaze it, it just doesn't work. Firing for me is different because I do reduction firing, which is much different than the electric kiln. So, I think that the creative process is three different things, not one.

Constance, visiting from the U.K., adds, "there are very famous artists like Lucy Rie and Edmund du Waal, I would say that these artists are quite profound. One thing I've learned about [Audrey's] artwork that should be recognized is how formidable she is as a potter. Her talents are on par with some of the greats because of her ability to perfect the bowl, as well as the fact that she does high-fire reduction, which is very costly and very skillful. I think that Canada should really do a lot more to support the talents because here, you never see the greatness of some of these artists."

Where do you find your inspiration?

This may sound silly, but my inspiration is having people be able to touch, lift, and handle my work. Pottery is the only art that a person can be a part of your work. You can be holding my bowl; you can't hold a painting and walk around with it. I'm



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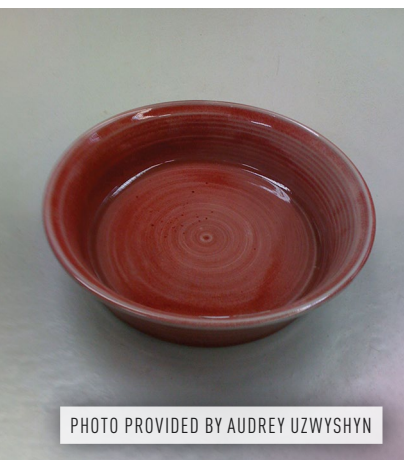


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delighted that a part of me is with so many people, and that they can hold it, touch it, and feel it. Just think of all the people in the world that have a little bit of me with them. A little of me is in many, many households.

For Constance, “it’s quite a personal interaction, and I think that’s another really important aspect of pottery is the sensuality to it, it’s the touch and feel. You encourage people to hold your artwork, and then it’s passed from one person to another.”

Can you speak about the work you’re most proud of?

I would say the *barany* (rams). The *baran* had a lot to do with my heritage, so I feel that the *baran* is my signature piece. It envelopes so many aspects of Ukrainians, representing strength, virility, and wealth. It’s a wonderful symbol to have in any home. I worked really hard in developing the *baran*, and I’m very proud that the last thing I did, my last hurrah, was a series of a hundred stylized *barany*. That would be my signature piece, I would say.

What advice would you give to new artists wanting to pursue pottery?

Never give up! Always try to create. Look at every facet of the pottery. Remember it won’t happen overnight, it’ll take years. It’s a process, and it’ll never be over – it keeps on going. But don’t be discouraged. 

CANVAS CANADA

Exhibit “i”

By *Khrystia Kohut*

Canvas Canada Exhibit “i” was an inaugural project spearheaded by ACUA, which approached the Ukrainian Canadian Art Foundation (UCAF) KUMF Gallery and invited them to partner with us for this unique initiative. This auction was a fundraising event to help celebrate the 35th anniversary of ACUA and the 45th anniversary of UCAF-KUMF Gallery. Proceeds from this event were divided evenly between the two organizations.


Waddington’s Auctioneers were invited to manage the auction. The auction went live on Thursday, 7 October 2021, with viewing and bidding throughout October. The starting bid for all canvases was \$100. The bidding process was quite vigorous. In the end, many bids were received and the last items auctioned off went late in the evening.

The committee was chaired by Khrystyna Kohut and included Irene Pyzyk from ACUA and Uliana Hlynchak, Roxolana Martin and Marie Nazar from UCAF-KUMF Gallery. During the past year and a half, times have been difficult for artists and galleries. Our intention was to provide a broad audience to showcase our artists, particularly those who are up-and-coming and who may not have the advantage of the exposure available to more established artists. The committee decided to give this auction an added “twist” by having the canvases remain anonymous until the successful bidder purchased and received the canvas in the mail.

Initially, a letter of invitation was mailed to ACUA and UCAF-KUMF artists, followed by a general call through social media inviting artists to participate. Each artist was asked to provide a 10x10 canvas based on the theme “i” – the Ukrainian or English letter “i” – as their inspiration for their creations. Even though this was a fundraiser for ACUA and UCAF-KUMF Gallery, our organizations wanted to ensure the artists who sold canvases were given a commission from sales. When all the canvases were submitted, we had 86 artists who produced 157 canvases. It was gratifying and encouraging to see such an enthusiastic response and support from the artists.

Several 30-second “teasers” were produced with various artists representing both organizations. Jurij Klufas of Kontakt TV conducted more extensive interviews with artists from ACUA and UCAF-KUMF Gallery. The “teasers” and interviews were aired on Kontakt and Alberta Kontakt over a two-month period prior to the auction going live.

ACUA and UCAF-KUMF would like to thank Waddington’s Auctioneers for hosting the online event and for the generous hours of media support by Kontakt TV. We are also grateful for the enthusiasm of the participating artists and to all the bidders who supported our project.

We bid you adieu, until we BID again. 

Thank you to Waddington's for donating their time, expertise, and management of the online auction.



LARISA SEMBALIUK CHELADYN



IRENE MAZURENKO



ERIN HAUGEN



CHAR VANDERHORST



VALERIY SEMENKO



THEA YAROVENKO-SZEWCZUK



SONIA URQUHART



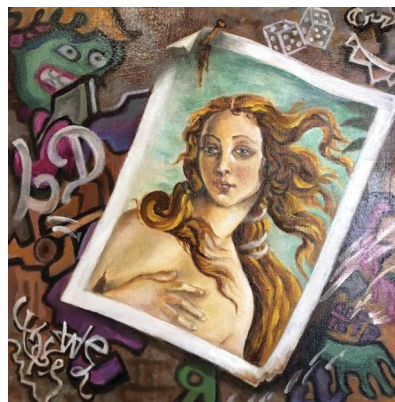
LIZ EKSTROM



MARIANNA SAVARYN



BOHDAN HOLOWACKI



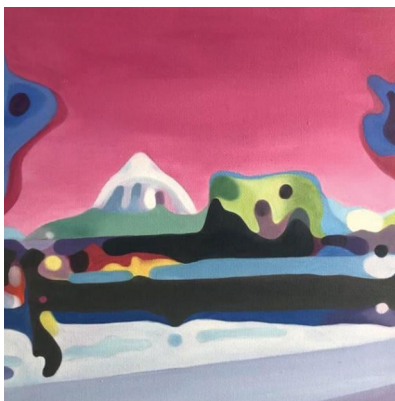
LANA MATSKIV



MARIA ANTONIV



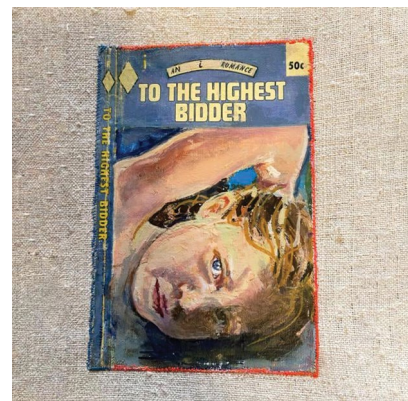
IRYNA KOVALEVYCH



CEM BASARIR



NATALIA VALENYUK



NATALKA HUSAR

Pottery Connections Across Alberta

By Lizzy Taylor

Established in 1968, the Alberta Potters' Association (APA) has supported an eclectic mix of potters, sculptors, performance artists, and mixed media artists for over 50 years. Based out of Calgary, they welcome hobbyists, amateurs, and professionals alike, brought together by their love of clay. The APA provides their members with workshops, lectures, exhibitions, and mentorship opportunities, helping to connect them to Alberta's arts community and provide space for artistic growth. The organization consists of thirteen pottery guilds – check out the full list! Visit their website at albertapottersassociation.org to learn more.

Athabasca

Athabasca Pottery Club
www.athabasca.ca

Calgary

Mount Pleasant Potters' Guild
www.calgarypottery.com

Devon

Devon Pottery Guild
www.devonpotteryguild.com

Edmonton

Edmonton Potters' Guild
www.edmontonpottersguild.wordpress.com

Fort McMurray

Fort McMurray Potters' Guild
www.fmpg.com

Fort Saskatchewan

Fort Saskatchewan Pottery Guild
www.fspg.ca

Lethbridge

Oldman River Potters' Guild
www.oldmanriverpottersguild.com

Lloydminster

Lloydminster Potters' Guild
www.facebook.com/lloydpottersguild.org

St. Albert

St. Albert Potters' Guild
www.stalbertpotters.ca

Stony Plain

Parkland Potters' Guild
www.parklandpotters.com


Red Deer

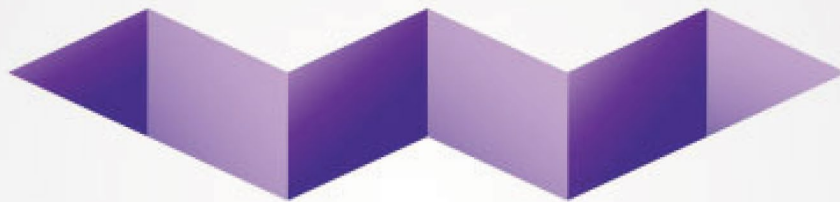
Red Deer Pottery Club
<https://www.facebook.com/RedDeerPotteryClub>

Ponoka

The Ponoka Potters' Guild
www.ponokapottery.weebly.com

Delburne

Delburne Pottery Club
403-749-2003 



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- Invitations to openings and events
- 10% discount on art education courses
- Access to artist workshops
- Discounts at supporting community businesses