
OLENA KAYINSKA

PORTFOLIO

artist



About Me

I am Olena Kayinska, an artist based in Lviv, Ukraine. I work with naïve or pure art techniques, paired together with deep philosophical and psychological senses. My fields of research are finding of inner peace, post-trauma recovery, and psycho-somatic healing. My paintings-dreams take the observers inside, to the subconscious, to the core. Trying to find the inner self, the observer wanders through the imaginary world, fantastic forests, filled with symbolic images and archetypical symbols, inhabited with mysterious creatures, each of which provides a guide to the final destination – true self. My aim is to make people happier.

Blessed is who came, who left, and who stayed

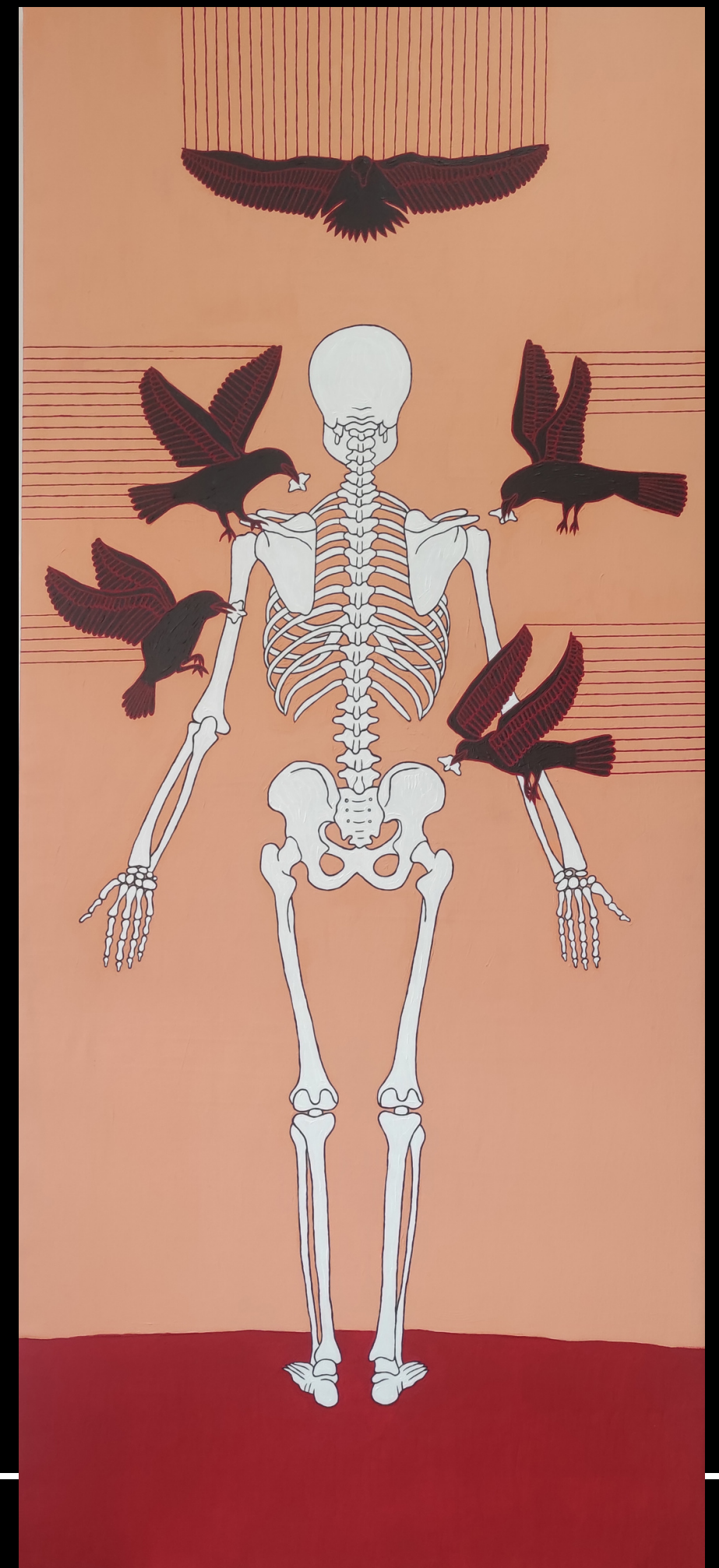
185x82, acrylic on canvas
2021

There are people, who come very close to us, touch the most painful places, and approach us with all their tenderness and love. You feel you can lean on them, show yourself as you are without any fear, and they are here. With you.

These people form our spine bone and stem, supporting us and giving their loving presence.

And then they go away, explaining nothing, or exploding with anger and frustration. As

if the black crows came flying and took the spondyls out of the spine bone. It's desperately hard to forget about these people even over time. Invisible strands continue pulling you to these people through time and space. But they are no longer over here. They're gone. It's time to grow new spine bone, your own, and become genuine support to yourself.





Children Bury the Beetle

100x140, acrylic on canvas

2020

When something terrible and irreversible happens in life, like death or trauma, it's desperately hard to outlive it. Big dolor gets easier when you can carefully translate it into restrained grief. The feeling of dolor eats and destroys a person from inside, and the feeling of grief consolidates and strengthens. Grief is an adult feeling.

The death of the beetle represents the manifestation of the fact, that something has happened, but it's not that scary as it may seem at first. Children, playing, buried the beetle in the pile of the fallen leaves, and then they forgot about it. The death of the beetle is not a terrible event, which evokes dolor. The death of the beetle is just a little bit sad. It can be outlived. And the spring is on its way. The seeds on the hills near the house, where the children live, have started to germinate.

Ganmushpia

175x135, acrylic on canvas

2021

Ganmushpia is a non-existent word, which came from the abyss of prolonged insomnia. When you undergo increasing fatigue, fear, and anxiety for many hard months, you just want to go to bed, get under your blanket, and fall asleep. You want a dream that would bring you into the waters of forgetfulness. But you cannot fall asleep. There is no sleep. Your control is so strong, that it doesn't let your body sleep. On these hard nights, the thought about something complicated and the memories about unresolved situations gather in masses in your head. A bunch of thoughts is illogical and unstructured, like the buildings of the castle, which pile one on another, which are ready to fall from the cranky rock every minute.

Two tremendous snakes try to get inside of the castle, destroy it, eat everything inside, bring darkness and fear. They are the two snakes of the panic attack – the fear of death and the fear to let the control go.





My wedding bouquet

95x75, acrylic on canvas
2021

How a woman who didn't get married, might feel herself in society? The reasons may be numerous: the relationship failed, she refused to give herself up to a man who could harm her, she was afraid of the weaker because she didn't want a knife in her back, she was living a full life. The reasons are unimportant but her feelings are immensely important, when people ask her one more time: "So what, you never got married? Are you with somebody? Such rotten luck, you, this incredible woman going to waste before my very eyes." The ribs symbolize the emptiness in the chest when you want to love, but you have no one to give your love to. And the flowers sprout to the sky right from that emptiness. The closed coffer represents this marriage and happiness, and the key to this chest also exists somewhere.

Hot sand

200x120, acrylic on canvas
2021

People are massive rocks, I am loose sand. They maintain their shape, I can become of any shape.

People are strong, I am weak. They stand as a monolith, I crumble into tiny particles of sand, which are impossible to get together.

People stand all together, I am alone. I ensphere them.

People are cold, I am warm. You can get warm with me, you can bury yourself in me and have a rest.

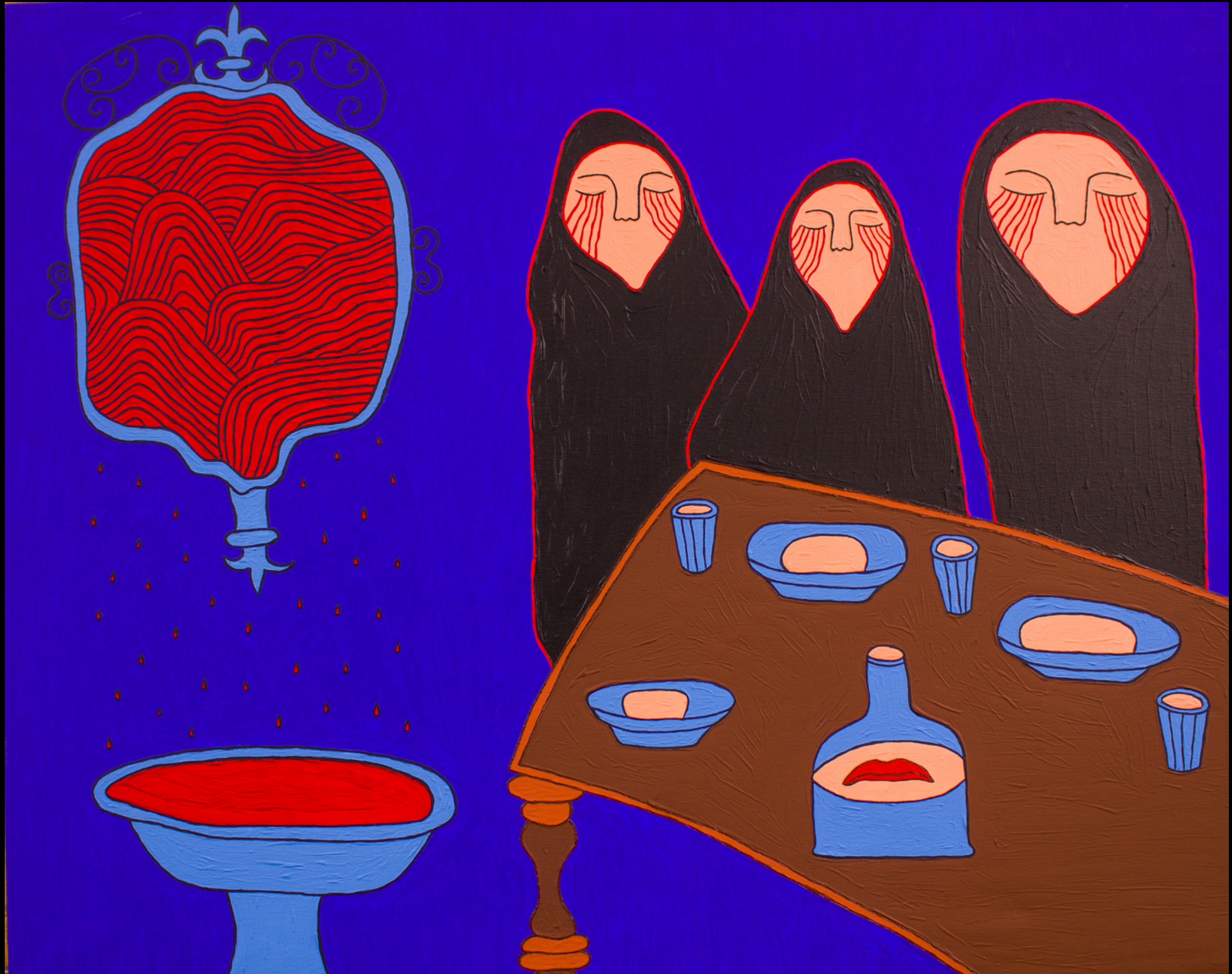
I've constantly wanted to become a rock, but I will never become. I am sand.

I want to be with rocks, but I will always be sidewise.

My structure is completely different.

Upon understanding this difference, I listen with my ear, how deeply inside of the thickness of my sand my heart is beating. In my warmth.



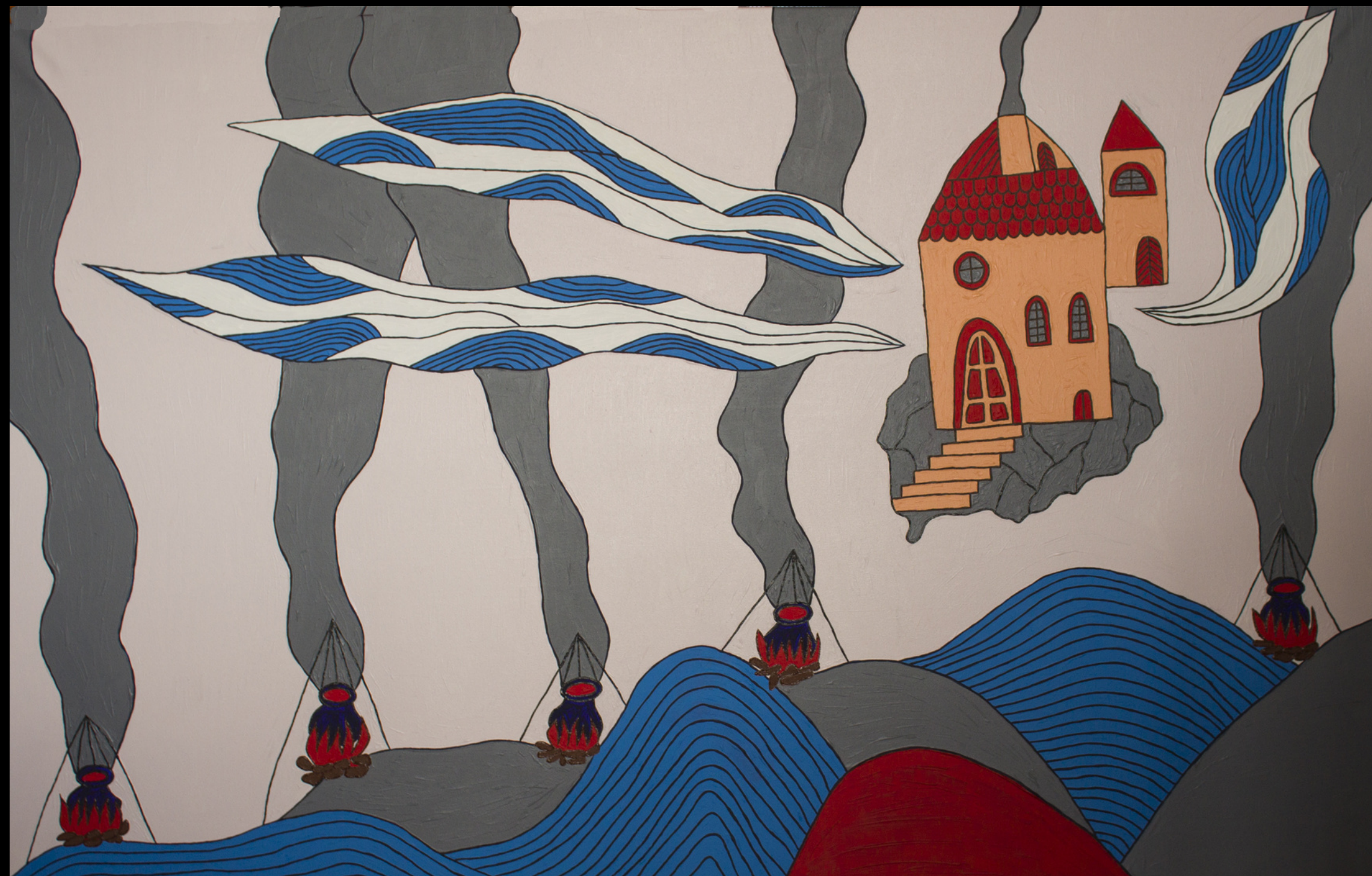


75x95, acrylic on canvas
2022

Silent people have got into an argument, and now they are sitting over empty plates in silence. They have a lot on their minds, and they feel sore, but they have nothing to say to each other. There is a lot of pain and mutual resentment inside, but silent people cannot speak it out. They cannot articulate what they feel, and their mouths are covered with growth. The pain is frozen down in their eyes, like ice. Only when they look into the mirror, do they see their reflections as the sea of blood. The mirror is overfilled with that blood, and it falls in drops into the dish.

Silent people

House of wind



85x135, acrylic on canvas
2022

The woman had a house, a husband, and two sons. House is a sacred place for a woman. There she lives, and her husband and their children. Every step, every shelf there breathes with the life of the family. Every thing tells the story of their days. Her husband and sons went off to war and died there. The house became empty, and only the wind goes between the walls, blows into the windows and doors. The wind fills in the emptiness of the house. And the woman gathered the blood of the killed enemies into the pots and started boiling it and crying to the sky to give her men back.

Forgetting room

185x82, acrylic on canvas, piece of old bed
2022

In the forgetting room there is a shelf with glass bottles that contain what we will need to relive and transform in ourselves after victory. In the first container, the snake that eats itself, destroys itself and dies - russia. Next is Ukraine, which protects its children with its wings, raises and nurtures them. Embroidered pillows that grandmothers in the villages put on their beds are a symbol of our disturbed sleep due to night air alarms. A fish that swims down and sinks deeper to the bottom is a symbol of lost hope and our fear that our future is being taken away from us. Legs from which blood drips into a bowl - raped and murdered women. A house where blood comes from the chimney instead of smoke - our destroyed homes. Candles are innocently killed peaceful people, a symbol of prayer for the souls of martyrs. A window from which blood drips and rays of light come out - the souls of Ukrainian soldiers who are already in the Kingdom of God. From above everything is watched by the Eye of God in a ring of wrathful fire, and from below - a burning transforming fire.



Simple life

100x160, acrylic on canvas
2021



The necessity to service everyday responsibilities, solve tasks and problems, routine for the maintenance of life, adhesiveness of the things-to-do state exhaust at last. Life is exposed to a frenetic pace, and we don't have time to simply stand and look at the sky, to breath, to move, to enjoy, to live. A massive quantity of tasks covers and dissolves you, making lists in your calendar, providing paranoid thoughts. You have to choose what you need, and not what you want. Over time we forget how to want. We live according to the list of tasks. And when there are too many tasks and they appear from everywhere, I will throw them all away, climb onto a cloud, turn my back on everything and take a nap. And let it all go down in flames, and I will lay on a soft cloud, which will cover everything with a tender and slow snow.

Cemetery of sleep



95x160, acrylic on canvas

2021

Silently whelming the grave in the garden with the fallen leaves, the woman buries something very important for her. Something, which she inherited from her mother, and her mother – from her mother. The woman is filled with sorrow and lonesome. Her house is also filled with sorrow because something very precious has been taken out. Something, which is placed in the center of a table, when the dearest guests arrive. Something beautiful, important, delicious, expensive, heavy, precious. While burying this, the woman doesn't realize that she is angry with the man who hurt her. With everybody who tore her apart. She doesn't know how to express and get along with her anger and is doing this the way she can – she is burying in the grave her sexuality and vitality, at the same time losing the possibility to have healthy sleep cycles.

Guilt

25x35, acrylic on canvas

2024

It is impossible to heal what you don't feel. And I haven't felt anything for a long time. I've unlearned myself to feel so as not to suffer, not to worry. I clamped down on all these feelings, wove them between the muscle fibers of my back, shoulders and neck. I remember the burial of my grandmother. I stood in the church and looked at her in the coffin and thought how badly the gravediggers had combed her hair and how small she looked, as if her soul weighed more than her body. I cried a lot from pity for my grandmother, and that pain wove threads between my muscles, fixed with pain, and stiffened.

And I carried that pain with me, and it was with me all the time. In order to continue to function and work. I taught myself not to feel it, to eliminate it, to level it, to deny it.

And one day God, the great and omnipotent, decided that he was tired of looking at that shame and decided to heal me. And in order for me to feel that old pain, it had to be hurt me even more, God thought. And he made it so that I tore the tendons in my shoulder. In the shoulder where all the guilt had accumulated.

Everything I was guilty of before my grandmother, before my parents, before my friends, before strangers on the trolley, before the woman at the cash register, before neighbors, before people on the other side of the globe who had never seen me and knew nothing about me.

And that pain began to bring me back to myself. I started listening to myself more, trying to hear that quiet story of my muscles. To record that song they sing very quietly. Record it and keep it, because it is important. I began to hear how much I hurt, that I had to live my injury all alone and had no one to lean on. I have no one to cry to, no one to listen and no one to help. I began to hear myself saying that I had completely stopped relying on others, and only on myself. I began to hear how I had loaded up all the things I had to do, both my own and everyone else's, because only I could do them, and no one else. I began to hear how I could hear others well, but I could not hear myself at all.



Silence

35x25, acrylic on canvas
2024

I have 13 egg yolks in my mouth. They have such thin and delicate shells that are very easy to cut through with your teeth. And it is very important for me to keep them intact. I carefully roll them around in my mouth so that they don't crack or cut or spill. I take great care of them. And at the same time, I need to speak, to say words to people without damaging those yolks. I carefully choose every word so that I don't accidentally offend, hurt, or touch some painful string in people's souls, or hurt them. I carefully select and slowly pronounce the words so that I don't inadvertently say something wrong, something offensive or unnecessary, or something that this person doesn't want to hear right now. I check and weigh every word before I say it. I carefully select each word, rolling it around in my mouth like a delicate egg yolk before releasing it from my mouth with a sound. And it's such a big effort, such a strain, such hard work that my jaws are already hurting. The pain from the jaw joint is transmitted to the temples, face, and ears. This tension is experienced as physical pain. And yet, no matter how hard I try, people are offended by me. I am always failing to please them in some way, failing to meet their needs, failing to say what they want. And I'm so clumsy in my communication that people turn away from me, shame me, discuss me behind my back, and ridicule me. It hurts me, but for a long time, for many, many years, I have not been able to cry. It's as if my jaw is crying with this pain. Those tears come out sideways. That pain and shame clench my jaw and crumble my teeth at night when I sleep. I wake up in pain and rub my jaw with my hands. I would really like to spit out all those egg yolks into an old bowl and give them to the yard dogs. I would like to scream out all the tension and pain and resentment and scream and scream and scream, curse very loudly, stomp my feet and push and shove and swear, and maybe even pound my fists on the table and on the walls so that the plaster falls from the ceiling and the chandelier rings and the birds fall from the roof. But I am silent. My trauma is inside my silence. My trauma is my egg yolk. And around it, there is still a white. And around it, there is still a shell. And around it is a whole chicken. And that chicken ran away long ago.



Shame

25x35, acrylic on canvas
2024

When you abandoned me and left, I felt so ashamed that my knees buckled. It was as if the tension that kept me upright had loosened or disappeared, and I might fall. Right into the mud, from which it would be oh so hard to get up. When you went away and left me all alone and said that you no longer love me, and maybe you never loved me, I felt so ashamed that I felt like I was burning with fire. And my legs started to hurt. I became heavy and faint, I stopped and lay down, sometimes I cried, and sometimes I couldn't cry at all. I was so ashamed that all that shame did not go into screaming and crying, but poured down my body like a heavy black resin, flowing down until it reached my knees. And in those knees it settled, making it impossible to move, to run, to jump, to be happy, to be light. It was as if I was shackled to one place, to an old unclean house, where I have to sit all the time. And I can't run away from there. I don't want people to see me by accident and offend their eyes with my appearance. I tried to cover up that shame so that others would not see it. With smiles, lace, red lipstick, cats and dogs, cheerfulness and fat, numerous problems that seem to keep me from leaving the house, a lot of work that makes me not have time to laugh. Hard eggs of that resin formed deep inside each of my knees. The resin of shame. Hardened old stinking shame - the anger that I did not release in time. I didn't break plates, didn't insult those who insulted me, didn't scream or fight, but endured everything quietly in the hope that they would take pity on me and let me live in a dog kennel near their rich house for a while.



Ovogenesis

24x24, acrylic on canvas

2023

The fortress of the old sea is a place where an infinite number of things come together. It is a sanctuary, a sacred place, the starting point and the point where everything returns. Where it is holy, both thin and thick. And deep. It is deep, inside. I don't let anyone in there. I guard that fortress closely and put up high walls. Inside I have a garden of candles that burn constantly, radiating warmth and soft light. I don't let anyone inside the fortress, lest they extinguish my candles, each of which burns in memory of what I want to remember. When the candles are burning, the light radiates even outward, through my eyes, illuminating the world and people. When the candles burn steadily, an egg is born as the fruit of my work. My result, my energy, my work, what I put into it every day, grows and increases.



End of war



60x120, acrylic on canvas
2023

In the middle of the Danube there is a magical island with sycamore trees. These trees form an alley, and walking along it, you find yourself in a moment in which the past, future, and present are equally visible. Entering this moment is felt as a gentle vibration through the body, a tremor, a rustle. It's as if all the trees are talking to you at the same time, the blades of grass are reaching for your feet. And in this moment, you can see a mirror that turns things around. It makes good out of bad. It turns fear into joy. It turns anxiety into a river of peace. In that mirror, you will not see your reflection, but you will see a shining eye looking at you. And in the way this eye looks at you, you will understand what you are now.

And I'm putting such a mirror in Ukraine so that all the Russian missiles and soldiers who came to my land to destroy and kill would die themselves, turn into ashes that will blow away in the wind, and no one will ever remember them. I want the loud vulgar jokes of Russian people to turn into a fire that burns them and kills them, just like they did to us. And that will be the end of the war. When we defeat them.

David the Psalm-writer



85x135, acrylic on canvas
2019

David the Psalm-writer rides on the boat through the night forest. Only the small candle illuminates his way. He doesn't know where he goes and how he'll get there. He knows his small candle will lead him in the right way. And, the massive fish swims underneath his boat, and this fish symbolizes the greatness of God's purpose of the person's life journey, and the person has no idea about this purpose.



I forgive myself

57x48, acrylic on board
2020

The person tries to hug the fish, and the fish is cold, eely, and slips through the hands. It's unpleasant to hug a fish. You wouldn't want to do this. Heaven knows, why it's necessary. The person needs to forgive themselves for the things, which happened to them. For the misfortunes, which followed one another. For the people, who abandoned them. Forgive themselves for everything. But forgiving yourself is similar to trying to hug a fish. And the fish slips through the hands.

Happy body. Victim. Diptych. 1 of 2

70x50, acrylic on canvas
2021

In today's society, women's victimhood and complete self-sacrifice are particularly valued. The woman who is dedicating herself wholeheartedly to others, who doesn't argue, who doesn't get angry, who doesn't change an established order, who accepts everything with the obedience of a sheep what the world tells her to do, is offered encouragement. White innocent sheep is eyeless because she doesn't see where she is, who is she, and what happens. She is carrying with pride the golden wings of victimhood, placed on her by people. She is proud of her achievement, as she went a long way of suffering, she stood a great deal of humiliation, she took care of a lot of people, she deserves the praises and glorification. And a crown.



Happy body. Fraud syndrome. Dptych. 2 of 2

70x50, acrylic on canvas
2021

All the beauties and pleasures of this world are around me. Everything is sparkling, glittering, and spouting with joy and delight. Everybody scoops from this source without looking back and a single ounce of remorse. They've secured the right for it. However, there is a hole with buried bones underneath me, and I have to sit motionless to cover the bones with myself. No matter how white I make my feathers, I can become only a hen, and never a swan. No matter how beautifully I fit myself into the interior of the palace, I cannot move out of my location, because everybody would immediately find out about my secret and kick me out with disgrace.



The time will take your hand and guide you to the easiest path

185x82, acrylic on canvas, piece of old bed, 2023

Time puts stitches in a wound, puts compresses on sore spots, puts the body in plaster. Time immobilizes and gives a possibility to recover after a loss. Time passes and takes away with it the traumatized part of life. Time goes away, and the new time comes after it.

Over time, the salmon comes to life. He feels how life flows in him, awakens him to action. Salmon swims upstream against the current to return home to spawn. The river curves through the mountains and the salmon stops to admire the landscape. He suddenly peeks out from behind a blueberry bush, just for a moment. And again returns to the path, the path to his home.



Put out the fire in the stoves

20x20, acrylic on canvas
2023

Turn off the gas and water, put out the fire in the stoves, and turn off the lights. Tell your neighbors about the information you have received. Take personal protective equipment, documents, food, and water with you and go outside. We are at home. The siren is screaming. Air raid alert. There is no electricity. We heard powerful explosions somewhere nearby. In the darkness of the house, I see your eyes. I can read your excitement and anxiety in them. But we are calm on the outside. We put on our jeans, leave the unfinished tea in the kitchen and on the table, take the cat, and leave the house.

I am scared, but when you are home, I am less scared. You are my personal peace of mind.

And here an important question has a chance to break through. Do I need a man to save me from death?



Raison d'être

20x20, acrylic on canvas
2023

Raison d'être means "reason to exist" or "reason to be." I tried to convey the subtlety and elusiveness of the very concept of being a living person on this earth with the image of a drop of blood in a bowl of milk. Two fundamental liquids from which life emerges and grows, nurtured, cultivated, soothed. And how it hurts. Milk is like love, and blood is like pain. The bowl symbolizes the very circle of human life from birth to death, a circle that closes and repeats again, passing through love and pain.

A woman breastfeeding a child. A woman carrying a child. A woman who is menstruating.

A woman in love. An old woman looking tenderly at her grandchildren. A woman spinning threads. A woman working in the field. A woman making beds. A woman drying herbs. A woman milking a cow. A woman sleeping. A woman screaming. It is she who brings life into this world, with love and pain.





60x80, acrylic on canvas
2021

The war made these people take out their roots and go on a journey. While getting away from disaster, the people abandoned their houses with property earned, barns, full of grain, yards with flowers, and betook themselves to new places, getting round numerous blockposts. The people carried their children, elderly parents, cats, and dogs, and the rest they left for the enemy looting. The people possessed houses and homes, and now they have nothing but what they can carry.

Floating population

Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night from the sound of somebody crying, and then I realize, that I'm crying myself

111x98, acrylic on canvas
2021

When a woman sleeps alone in a bed for a long time, the bed becomes colder. Waiting for somebody to share the bed with her, the woman is stockstill. She calms down, directs herself inwards, diminishes, and becomes shallow. As if her bed and all her world are slowly buried in snow.

It's so good to sleep under the lumps of snow. It's so warm and cozy there, only you wouldn't want to go out. But there is something, that can lay under the snow for the whole winter, sleep silently, and then upspring. These are walnuts. While the snow is sifting down on the solitary bed in the night forest, alive walnuts start to sprout out.



I'll bring you to the silent waters

35x35, acrylic on canvas

2020

I'll bring you to the silent waters when you feel embarrassed, not well-adjusted to this world, and forgotten.

I'll bring you to the silent waters when you feel as if not loved anymore.

I'll bring you to the silent waters when you listen to your process of aging rather than enjoying life.

I'll bring you to the silent waters when you haven't got the energy.

I'll bring you to the silent waters when you seek serenity inside of you and couldn't find it.

You will drink this water and wash in it, and you will turn into a child and will run to the field, or to the forest, or to the river. To where time is no longer in charge. You'll narrow your eyes, looking at the sun. You'll walk barefoot on the grass. You will speak to animals. You'll rest your sleepy head on the starched pillow. The most silent waters are at home. In the yard of grandmother's house, where she put buckets and basins to collect rainwater.





60x80, acrylic on canvas

2019

The very first word I paid attention to in Mariupol was “Shelter.” It’s written at the railway station, around the city, in the dormitory, where our art residency was located. While reflecting on the notions of the shelter, safety, and intimacy, I focused on the Mariupol sea, which seemed to me very defenseless and disfigured. Azovstal, massive cranes in the port, iron piers, dirty water with the pieces of anthracite, absence of fish and jellyfish. The water of this sea even smells differently. Not like the seawater in the ecologically clean area should smell.

I drew the underwater mosque in the form of a jellyfish, surrounded by the jellyfish, to show the underwater place of safety and protection. The place where we can hide from the dirty water and polluted air. The mosque on the painting peers out of the water, as if inviting to enter the state of calmness and grace. Also, there is a terricone mountain in the background. The rain on the painting symbolizes the tears of the sea, which is crying for its purity and integrity.

Underwater Mosque of Mariupol

Moving Home

75x85, acrylic on canvas
2019

Everyone uses the most precious gift to discover
their way.

The Castle moves to another place together with all
the buildings, towers, and gates. To make it through
to another side of the sea, the whole Castle is
loaded into the boat. Suddenly the storm came, and
the gigantic hand of God caught up the boat with
the Castle for the buildings not to sink.



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THANK YOU
