



**THE MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ICONS**

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**IN SUPPORT OF UKRAINE, THE MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ICONS REINSTALLS  
LESIA SOCHOR | PYSANKA: SYMBOL OF RENEWAL, MARCH 10 – JULY 24, 2022  
FEATURING THREE NEW WORKS IN RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS**

*“Ukraine is headlining the news with the unthinkable happening. This exhibit is poignant and timely in manifesting solidarity with an independent nation; one with its own beautiful culture, language and traditions. I am honored to share this ancient art form that connects me to my roots, the homeland of my ancestors.”* – Ukrainian-American artist Lesia Sochor



**CLINTON, MA** –In support of the Ukrainian people, The Museum of Russian Icons has announced the reinstallation of Maine-based contemporary artist Lesia Sochor's *Pysanka: Symbol of Renewal*, an exhibition inspired by the beautiful tradition of intricately decorated Ukrainian Easter egg painting, March 10 – July 31, 2022, Three new works created in response to the current crisis in Ukraine will be featured in the exhibition.

Sochor's paintings are narratives told in paint that are prompted by personal experiences. The Pysanka series evolved from Sochor's annual spring ritual of creating Ukrainian Easter eggs called Pysanky. Depicting the symbolic meanings and traditional motifs of this talismanic object in oils and watercolors spawned a new path of contemporary expression for this ancient art form. Sochor creates a direct link to her ancestral roots by continuing the tradition of Pysanky making passed down by her Ukrainian immigrant mother.

Decorated with traditional folk designs using a wax-resist method, Pysanky are miniature jewels that Ukrainians have been creating for countless generations. The word *pysanka* comes from the Ukrainian verb *pysaty*, meaning "to write" or "to inscribe," as the designs are not painted on, but written (inscribed) with beeswax.

## **ARTIST STATEMENT**

The egg, as the embodiment of the life force, has been associated with mythical and religious ceremonies from the earliest pagan times. Ancient people universally worshiped the sun, with eggs as ritual objects for these celebrations; the yolks representing the sun, the whites the moon.

Through time, the Pysanka, a decorated egg, became deeply important in spring rituals symbolizing nature's rebirth. It was common among all Slavic peoples, and various forms of the Pysanka were prevalent as far back as 5,000 years before Christ. The geographical location of Ukraine made it less accessible to new cultural influences, so the development of the design was able to flourish and grow.

With the coming of Christianity, much of the symbolism of nature's rebirth became equated with Christ's resurrection. It, therefore, became incorporated into Easter celebrations of the new religion. Today, during the holidays, there are Pysanky in every Ukrainian home. They are taken to church, blessed, and given as gifts to family and friends.

The technique used is a wax resist process. The designs are drawn on the egg with melted beeswax which flows from a tool called a *Kystka*. After being dipped in a series of dyes, the wax is removed, and the final pattern is revealed. Each egg involves a trinity of symbols: the egg itself, the design, and the color. This spring tradition is passed down from one generation to the next as it has been to me by my Ukrainian mother. I now continue the custom with my family.

Being first and foremost a painter, the annual ritual of Pysanka making was the conduit for a decade long exploration of paintings in the 1990's. Depicting this age-old art form, so rich in symbolism and lore, spawned a new path of expression. The traditional meanings and motifs of this sacred, talismanic object provoked new interpretations integrating ancient narratives with contemporary content and imagery, using both oils and watercolors.

Ukraine is headlining the news with the unthinkable happening. There has been an unjust and cruel invasion of a peaceful country. This exhibit is poignant in that it manifests solidarity with an independent nation; one with its own beautiful culture, language and traditions. Ukraine has endured historical hardships, but remains fortified in its beliefs and determination to steer its own path. I am honored to share this work which connects me to my roots, the homeland of my ancestors.

## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Born in Philadelphia PA, Lesia Sochor graduated from the Philadelphia College of Art with a degree in Fine Arts. She migrated to Maine in 1980 where she put her creative roots down and helped nurture a vital arts community which thrives to this day. She co-founded the first art gallery in Belfast, Maine, and started and directed an arts center. She has also taught publicly and privately through residencies and museum workshops for 25 years and illustrated two children's books.

In addition to flourishing as an artist, Lesia is a dedicated and enthusiastic teacher of art who has given instruction publicly and privately, in residencies and museum workshops for 25 years.

Her work has been exhibited in galleries, museums and universities and is in both public and private collections in the US and Canada. Sochor has exhibited extensively throughout the state of Maine and beyond in various venues, including Lesley University (MA), The Ukrainian Institute (NY), Prince St Gallery (NY), University of the Arts (PA), Boston State House (MA), The Farnsworth and Gilley Museums (ME), Freyburg Academy (ME), and the Center for Maine Contemporary Art.

## **ABOUT THE MUSEUM**

The Museum of Russian Icons preserves and exhibits one of the world's largest collections of Orthodox Christian icons, bronze crosses, and Russian folk arts. Spanning over six centuries, the collection showcases the development of the Russian icon from its Egyptian and Byzantine roots and explores the spread of Orthodoxy across cultures.

The Museum serves as a leading center for research and scholarship through the Center for Icon Studies and other institutional collaborations. It is the only Museum in the US dedicated to Russian icons, and the largest collection of icons outside of Russia.

## **MUSEUM HOURS**

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 10am-4pm. Closed Monday–Wednesday.

Admission: Adults \$12, seniors (59+) \$10, Students \$5, Children (13-17) \$5, Children under 13 Free.

Follow the Museum of Russian Icons on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Youtube](#).

Visit the website, [www.museumofrussianicons.org](http://www.museumofrussianicons.org), home of the Online Collection (including research papers on individual icons), a virtual tour of the Museum, the Journal of Icon Studies, and the British Museum's Catalogue of Byzantine and Greek Icons.