

OLHA PRYYMAK
PORTFOLIO

olyaaa@gmail.com website:opryymak.com instagram:olhapryymak

STATEMENT

About: When her parents moved from rural Ukraine to the UK as refugees in 2022, with their help Olha dived deep into her cultural history. Her family gatherings evolved into a loose network of recently arrived mostly young female Ukrainians for celebrations steeped in an agrarian tradition of honouring nature with communal making of offerings: baked bread in the shape of larks, painted eggs, spirit host ritual trees, and floral wreaths. Painting helps her contemplate how these experiences help shape one's identity, spirituality, feeling at home and their relationship with nature.

Concept: At a time of huge political and personal change, Olha felt the need to reframe the story of herself and her people, to respond to these changes with her work, guided by the principle "When you know the old stories, you are able to create the new ones. " Contemporary remix culture rising from this perspective makes sense, retelling old stories has existed for centuries and reflects the continual recycling of narratives. This is what she is attempting to do with her work, combining elements of Dutch still life and syncretic mythological imagery to make sense of the present. Telling stories often comes with the food, and Olha's painting titles amplify this connection.

Visual language: In her painting she draws on the painterly traditions of the late Baroque and Surrealism. To represent the widest spectrum of emotions, from surreal terror to the quiet joy of being alive, Olha draws on the Baroque aesthetic for its distinct tonal, compositional contrasts, and dynamism. Academic oil on canvas naturalism keeps the compositions within the realm of the possible, but the surprising combinations of plants and food tip them into the surreal. Her still life objects contain the possibility of being alive.

Context: Olha spent this past February at Xenia artist residency - surrounded by wilderness. She played with bird-like maquettes made with dough for her painting, referencing slavic tradition of baking bird-shaped buns at midwinter to supplicate the sun's return. Local diversity of resident species around Xenia influenced her compositions to take on more pheasant- and kite-like shapes and acquired "feathers" made with holm oak and ivy leaves - a form of verdant camouflage or armour - of the few leaves that remained green in winter. The paintings she produced there were titled Vital'na. The word has Latin root for vita - life. In Ukrainian, it signifies: "the ability to remain alive; movement, action or force powered by commitment, urgency and an existence beyond the self." It felt important to render this idea in painting—the most enduring archival form of meaning-making—at a moment when rational systems falter.

Bio: Her most recent shows include: 'Keystone Species' Propositions Studios 2026, 'The Omnipotence of Dream' Salford Museum and Art Gallery 2024, 'Field Works' Trellis UCL 2024, 'Bread' OHSH Projects 2024, 'Making Kin' Studio West Gallery, 2024, 'Positions, part one' Alma Pearl Gallery 2023, Friends and Family, Hong Kong Art Basel OVR, Pi Artworks 2022, Stand with Ukraine, Hales Gallery, London 2022.



Rivers of birds milk, 2026, 20x30 cm, oil on canvas





The last summer time machine, 2026, oil on canvas, 100x140cm, detail



Ritual loaf, 2026, 30x40 cm, oil on canvas



Grape hyacinth swirl, 2026, oil on canvas, 20x30cm



August buns (Tree of Essey), oil on canvas, 20x30 cm



The herbal time machine, 2026, 20x30 cm, oil on canvas



Why Some Girls Love Horses, 2026, 50x40 cm, oil on canvas



September loaves, 2026, oil on canvas, 50x40 cm



They lived in trees they spoke through horses, and they savored the smell of freshly baked bread, 2026, oil on canvas, 200x140 cm



Purification baking, 2026, oil on canvas, 59.6x84 cm



Reliquia, 2026, 20x30 cm, oil on canvas



Vasari’s Tree of good and evil, 2026, 75x102, oil on canvas



Another botanical icon with Anemones and Starlings, 2026, oil on canvas, 15x21 cm



March bread (Anemones, Crocus, Grape Hyacinths), 2026, , 40x30 cm, oil on canvas



St.Emerentia III, 2026, 24x30x1.4cm**,** oil on canvas

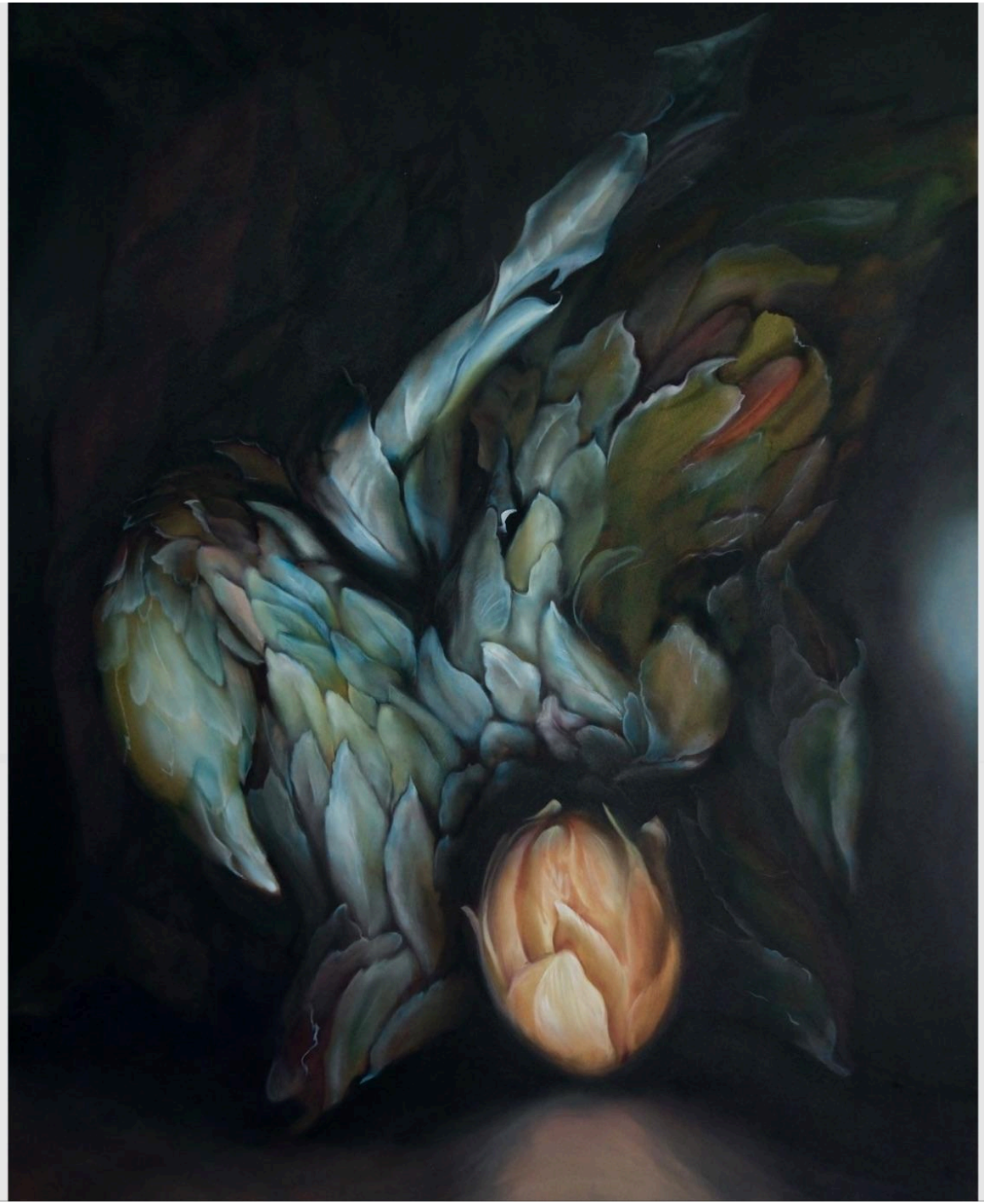


Emerentia I, 2026, 20x30x2 cm, oil on canvas





Vital'na II, 2026, 108x195cm, oil on canvas, detail



Delicacy, 2026, 109x140 cm, oil on canvas



Too many roses too many feelings, 2025, 200x140cm, oil on linen



You have to respect a good hustle 3, 2025, 90x130x3.5 cm, oil on canvas



Shall Leave No Trace, curated by Hesi Glowacki and Karolina Lebek, RCA, London, 2025, installation view

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2026 Keystone Species, Proposition Studios, London
2025 Shall Leave No Trace, curated by Hesi Glowacki and Karolina Lebek, RCA, London
2024 The Omnipotence of Dream, Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Salford
2024 Field Works, UCL Trellis exhibition, Hoxton Hall, London
2024 BREAD, OHSH Projects, London
2023 At the Heart of War, London School of Economics, London
2023 Angel in the House, STUDIO WEST gallery, London
2023 Positions, Alma Pearl, London, curated by John Slyce
2022 Stand with Ukraine, Hales Gallery, London, fundraising exhibition
2022 RAW: An RCA WIP Show, Soho Review, London
2021 Turps Off-Site Programme Leavers Show, Thames-Side, London
2021 Steps & Steeps, Out of Touch, Festival of Intimacy, UCL, London
2020 Life on Venus, The Tub, Hackney, London
2019 Herbal Tea Labo, AIRY, Kofu, Yamanashi, Japan
2018 London Creative Network #4, SPACE, London
2017 Kupala, Phytology, London
2016 Summer Show, Florence Trust, London

GRANTS, AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

2026 Xenia artist retreat, Hampshire, UK
2025 Kupala festival, Abundant Futures edition, ArtHouse Jersey, Jersey
2023-2024 Trellis public art commission with Sophie Page, University College London
2020 Train and Engage collaboration with Jennifer Ray, University College London
2019 AIRY residency, Kofu, Yamanashi prefecture, Japan
2018 Ennismore Sessions House residency, London
2017 London Creative Network/SPACE program
2015-2016 Florence Trust residency, London
2015 SERDE, interdisciplinary art group residency, Aizpute, Latvia
2014 Dumfries House residency, Prince’s Trust with the Royal Drawing School, Scotland

EDUCATION

2023 MA Painting, Royal College of Art, London
2021 Off Site Programme, Turps Banana, London

CONTACT

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