

THREADS exhibition of textile art inspired by poetry at Bliss Art Projects, Flux Factory, and Topaz Arts, in Queens, NY, Maleza Proyectos, in Bogota, Drawing Room, in Manila and Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art co-curated by Adrienne Kochman, Virlana Tkacz, Ged Merino



Photo by Christina Wyshnytzky

The THREADS project, on view at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art (UIMA) in Chicago through October 22, 2023, began in New York with an idea developed by Virlana Tkacz of Yara Arts Group and Olena Jennings.

While art often inspires poetry, poetry doesn't often inspire art. The two women thought they could create an exhibition in which poetry inspired art and featured textile art, which interested both women. Ms Jennings had been creating textile pieces and Ms. Tkacz was interested in the versatility of the medium. At the exhibition the poems hang alongside the art that they inspired.

Ged Merino joined the curators and organized the first exhibition in New York at Bliss on Bliss Art Projects, Flux Factory, and Topaz Arts, as well as at Maleza Proyectos in Bogota, Colombia where it was curated by Alejandra Fonseca.

Mr. Merino introduced the project to the Drawing Room in Manila, Philippines where it was curated by Carlos Quijon, Jr. At UIMA, THREADS is co-curated by Adrienne Kochman, director of UIMA, Ms. Tkacz, and Mr. Merino.

The exhibition is diverse. It includes work by artists who are not only from Chicago but from around the world including, Colombia and the Philippines. The artists include Magdalena Arguelles, Julianna Canal, Isabella Kiser, Waldemart Klyuzko, Jaroslava Kuchma, Isabella Lopez, Mr. Merino, Katherine Nuñez, Bob Nuestro, Aze Ong and Miguel Puyat.

The exhibition features two Ukrainian artists. Jaroslava Kuchma is a resident of Chicago. Her piece is a large tapestry with a blue shape of the crane, symbolic in Ukrainian culture, at the center. It is defined in its boldness of shape over a heavily textured yellow field.

The second Ukrainian artist, Waldemart Klyuzko, is a resident of Kyiv and his works were created from red and white caution tape. In Ukraine, this tape is used to block off dangerous places, or mark the scenes of accidents or crimes. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, this tape is used to mark land that has been mined. Mr. Klyuzko reconsiders red and white caution tape as material that can be woven to create a coat, or a kylym (carpet), with ornaments signifying a Crimean home. Both artists were inspired by Ukrainian poet Serhiy Zhadan's "How Did We Build Our Homes," written for a show about Crimean Tatars.

The THREADS exhibit opened with a performance on August 26, 2023, which included music by bandurist Julian Kytasty, a video by Mr. Klyuzko in which a fish puppet swims through Kyiv on today's Khreshchatyk, past the burned-out Russian tanks and a street exhibit of weapons seized from the invaders.

The exhibition opening also included readings by Ms. Tkacz, Oksana Maksymchuk, and Ms. Jennings, as well as a performance art piece by Isabella Kiser who was accompanied by poet Ananda Lima.

Ms. Jennings read from a book created for the exhibition titled "Threads: Poetry to Inspire Art." It showcases the work of the participating poets beyond what is in the exhibition. The book was launched in Chicago on August 24th to celebrate Ukrainian Independence Day. In this way, a piece of THREADS can also be experienced by those who don't live in the Chicago area.

THREADS is about exchanging ideas and bringing together a diverse group of artists, poets and community members fascinated with poetry and images that can inspire textile arts.

Ukrainian Weekly, September 17, 2023, by Olena Jennings