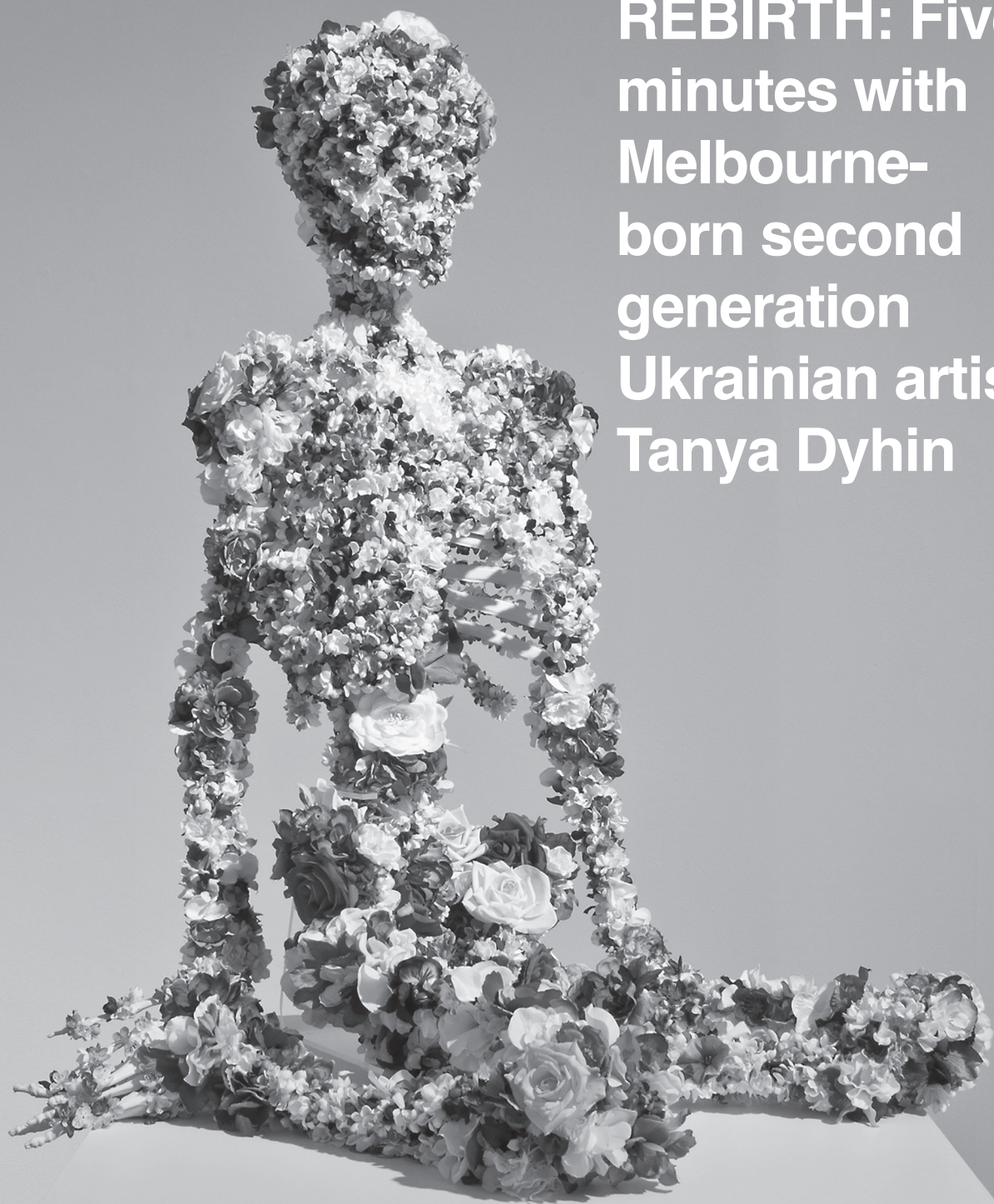


# Community news



## REBIRTH: Five minutes with Melbourne-born second generation Ukrainian artist Tanya Dyhin

**Tanya Dyhin talks about life as an artist and her exciting new project *Rebirth* showing at the 2015 Redlands Konica Minolta Art Prize in Sydney with Tetyana Lawriwsky.**

thread that emerges through my work is a search for an understanding of the world: whether that be in the physical world, mental world or spiritual world. This theme has played out in the creation of works that generate a perceptual or sensorial experience for the audience.

**Tetyana: Congratulations on your new installation *Rebirth* at the 2015 Redlands Konica Minolta Art Prize. It looks gorgeous. What was the inspiration behind your work?**

**Tanya:** Thank you, it was a great honour to have been nominated for the Redlands Prize and such a fantastic opportunity to exhibit my new work. Since the EuroMaidan protests in late 2013 I have drawn my focus to exploring elements of my cultural identity (I am second generation Australian Ukrainian) in my work, inspired by the popular protests that saw so many people come together, united in a progressive social movement. These protests sparked a desire to explore different elements of my heritage and I began to focus on symbols and objects from my childhood. I started to work with the vinok, the headdress I wore as a child, and that I see worn today in formal ceremonies, in feminist protests such as

those organised by the activist group FEMEN, and as an enduring symbol of Ukraine. In the work *Rebirth* I have deconstructed the elements of the vinok, and transformed a life-size female skeleton model using synthetic flowers. While the symbol of the skeleton brings forward so strongly the image of death, she also appears to blossom, grow and transform. In light of recent events in Ukraine, this work maintains an optimistic vision of the future, and suggests the possibility for positive transformation.

**Tetyana: What themes do you explore? How does this work extend your exploration of the traditional Ukrainian vinok which you began last year?**

**Tanya:** The first work that I made featuring the vinok was *Adorning Peace* (2014), which consists of seven wreaths, one in each colour of the spectrum, that appear to float when they are installed in the gallery space. I chose these particular colours in direct response to the violence occurring in Ukraine at the time, and together the colours create the peace flag. There was also something poignant about the unity that the seven colours created when placed together. I wanted to continue working with the elements

of the vinok (flowers, ribbon, thread), but speak more directly about mortality and infinitude, and by deconstructing these elements I have been able to do this in *Rebirth*.

**Tetyana: What role do artists have in society? Do you think identity is something artists and all people are bound to question and explore? How has this work helped you understand identity?**

**Tanya:** I think artists are in a unique position to be able to contribute to society in both very bold ways and also very subtle ways. We saw activist art play an important role during the EuroMaidan protests, both as a way for people to express themselves creatively and also as a way to protest. I believe creativity is such an integral part of being human, and in turn activist art can be incredibly potent and powerful – as it is embedded with the struggle and passion of those who create it. I think that in some way as an artist there is always that element of self-exploration that becomes evident in the work that is created. It would be impossible to sever the two. I think creating this work has made me realise how much my older work was about other elements of my identity and helped me redefine what it is that I want to do with my work, and what I want it to say.

**Tetyana: What do you enjoy the most about being an artist? Which medium do you prefer the most?**

**Tanya:** The most enjoyable thing about being an artist is that there really are no limits. The only limit I can put on myself is simply a thought, which can be changed. It's a very exciting prospect!

I will always have a love of photography, perhaps because it was my first medium. In most cases however I work with the materials that best suit my project and I find it exciting (and sometimes very challenging!) when I have to learn a new skill or approach.

**Tetyana: Have you always wanted to be an artist? What is your advice for people wanting to explore their creativity?**

**Tanya:** I spent most of my childhood playing piano and violin and only after high school discovered my passion for visual art. It is a necessary part of my every day to be creative – and that's not just limited to my studio as I love to cook and garden. I also have a flare for cutting hair. My advice for people wanting to explore their creativity is to just start – however small, and no matter what anyone else thinks. We all have so much incredible potential to be creative, it's just about tapping into the source.

**If you could invite any 3 people to dinner, alive or dead, who would they be?**

**Tanya:** Brené Brown, Elizabeth

**Tetyana: Firstly, can you tell our readers who are you and what do you do? Can you explain in 100 words?**

**Tanya:** I am Tanya Maria Dyhin, a multi-disciplinary artist and a current Master of Fine Arts (Research) candidate at UNSW Art & Design. I started my career working predominantly in photography and more recently I have explored electronic installation art using programmable LEDs, textile installations and also sculpture. The common



# Community News

**Tanya:** Brené Brown, Elizabeth Gilbert and Louise Hay.

**Tetyana:** *What do you dislike about the art world?*

**Tanya:** That the gender pay gap exists meaning that women artists are paid less than their male counterparts of similar abilities.

**Tetyana:** *What is your favourite artwork ever?*

**Tanya:** A work by Tomàs Saraceno called *On Space Time Foam* that I saw at the HangarBicocca in Milan in 2012. The work was constructed from transparent PVC and was hung 20 metres above the ground. It was inflated so that the movement of other people on the structure would influence your own spatial coordinates. We went out on to the work in groups of about 10 and moved around for a few minutes. It was an amazing experience seemingly 'floating' above the ground.

**Tetyana:** *What's your dream project?*

**Tanya:** Every time I fly in a plane I am absolutely overwhelmed by the beauty of the sky, especially the cloud formations and sky colouration. I would love to spend a lot of time experimenting with images made from up high. This work requires an infinite amount of time and patience.

**Tetyana:** *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

**Tanya:** If you are in Sydney before May 23 make sure you check out the Redlands Prize on at the National Art School Gallery in Darlinghurst. The exhibition is not to be missed!

*Tanya Dyhin interviewed by Tetyana Lawriwsky 3 April 2015.*

**Rebirth (2015), Synthetic flowers & PVC, 80 x 60 x 60cm 2015 Redlands Konica Minolta Art Prize**

**March 26 - May 23 Opening March 25, 6-8pm**

**National Art School Gallery, Forbes Street, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010**

## Egg-stravaganza: Pysanky painting at Ss. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in North Melbourne

### Ukrainian Cymivtsi continue ancient tradition in 2015

According to Hutsul pagan legend, if too few pysanky are made somewhere in the Carpathian mountains, an evil serpent's chain will be loosened and the serpent will come closer to destroying the joys of life. Not this year, though.

Continuing the ancient tradition of decorating chicken and duck eggs with symbols of nature and Christianity, Ukrainian Cymivtsi and their guests gathered at Café Trembita at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in North Melbourne on Tuesday 31 March to have fun, try out their artistic talents and keep the world a fulfilling and happy place.

Old techniques mingled with the new as young people brought out their laptops and smart phones to find Christian symbols and folk designs from pre-Christian times. The custom of using a wax resistant (batik) method and colourful dyes to decorate eggs dates back to several thousand years before Christianity when Ukrainians celebrated the coming of Spring by exchanging the beautiful pysanky as gifts.

With the coming of Christianity to Ukraine in 988AD, the agricultural ritual merged with the Christian celebration of Easter and the Resurrection of Christ. People place the beautiful Pysanky in the traditional Ukrainian Easter basket to be blessed on Easter Saturday.

The word pysanka comes from the verb 'pysaty' meaning to write. Patience, a steady hand and an even-flow of wax are required to prevent the dreaded 'blob'. Artists use a stylus filled with melted bees-wax to draw their patterns on the egg. While traditional wooden styluses



are still widely used, Nadia Herczaniwska may have been grateful for her modern stylus with its plastic handle and metal cone - the metal reservoir keeps the melted beeswax at a constant temperature.

Whereas once the dyes might have been derived from plants and their make-up a closely guarded secret passed on from mother to daughter, today candy-coloured bright aniline dyes have largely replaced them. Bulava Katherine Soloczynskyj and a bevy of helpers organised the event.

Pysanky have birthed many legends and

superstitions over the years. A girl would never give her boyfriend a pysanka without a design on the top or bottom for fear that he would soon grow bald. A Christian legend tells of Simon the peddler, who helped Jesus carry his cross on the way to Calvary. He had left his goods at the side of the road, and, when he returned, the eggs had all turned into intricately decorated pysanky. Blessed pysanky protected against evil spirits in the home.

Today pysanky are universally admired for their spiritual symbolism and extraordinary decorative qualities.

Superstitions aside, thanks to a new generation of Cymivtsi learning the ancient craft, this year there will be plenty of prized eggs to fill Easter baskets at our Church.

*Tetyana Lawriwsky,  
April 5 2015.*



*Adorning Peace (2014), Synthetic flowers, ribbon, thread, dimensions variable.*

