

## Mishael Coggeshall-Burr Ukraine: Courage has two colors

Solo Exhibition

October 19 - 30, 2022

Opening Reception with Artist: Saturday, October 22nd from 2:00 - 6:00 PM

Artwork Release Date: October 1, 2022

Half of any proceeds will be donated towards displaced Ukrainians within Ukraine via the nonprofit [Project Nadiya](#).

Earlier this year in May, [Mishael Coggeshall-Burr](#) and his wife Nadya Tkachenko traveled to Ukraine, Poland and Slovakia in order to contribute to refugee aid following the Russian invasion a few months prior. Coggeshall-Burr, an artist based in Montague, MA, has an important connection with Ukraine and felt an overwhelming sense of urgency to travel to the country and help. While Nadya grew up in the former soviet republic of Kazakhstan, her father was Ukrainian, born in the countryside North of Kyiv, geographically in the line of the first Russian advance. When she and Mishael first met, they



Mishael Coggeshall-Burr packing summer uniforms, medical supplies, radios and tactical supplies that he and his wife, Nadya Tkachenko, would deliver to contacts in Western Ukraine.

spent time traveling throughout Eurasia, mostly in Ukraine, visiting with friends and relatives in 2002. This travel left a strong impression on Mishael: two of their four children bear Ukrainian names, and he works the memory of these travels into his artistic practice. The recent trip led to a new series of paintings focused on Ukrainian relief efforts.

The May trip was the second war effort their family had participated in: In March, while Mishael stayed with their children, Nadya spent two weeks in Przemyśl, a town on the border of Poland and Ukraine, helping translate urgent needs in Ukrainian and Russian at the border crossing, making food at the World Central Kitchen, and finding housing for refugee families. Just before leaving, she set up a crowd-funded campaign that was met with overwhelming support. She used that funding to directly support families both in Poland and Ukraine, and efforts to ferry families to the border from the East through the purchase of a minibus, as well as arranging shipment of a recon drone, medical supplies, body armor, and more. It



Nadya Tkachenko at the Ukraine-Poland border in March, helping ferry families to shelters in the *Slava Ukraini* (Glory to Ukraine) Bus.

all finds its way into the paintings. It was then she thought of the idea to start a nonprofit to rebuild housing for Ukrainians in the West of the country, investing in Ukraine itself and providing homes for the millions of internally displaced people. (At last estimate, UNHCR says 7-8 million).

Nadya's first trip resulted in source photographs of the border crossing and pro-Ukraine rallies in Krakow, as well as plans for a second trip for the couple in May. In his artistic practice, Mishael's paintings ultimately begin as photographs: this

was the first time his source material had come from someone other than himself, and his and Nadya's journeys inspired this new series focused exclusively on Ukraine.

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Reflecting on a Ukrainian sense of place, its rupturing with the loss of peace, and the story of uncounted refugees at an unprecedented historical moment, Mishael's images traverse a country at a crossroads of great devastation, sadness and brutality, but also filled with the incredible strength, resilience, compassion and humanity that Nadya and Mishael witnessed firsthand. On a deeper level, this series also explores our ability to unite in circumstances of turmoil, how a shared fate has brought out the good in so many people, and the importance of hope. Amazingly, Nadya's name in Ukrainian--Nadiya--means "hope."

Since her return, Nadya has set up the nonprofit [Project NADIYA for rebuilding and renewal of Ukraine](#), and has so far raised over \$150K towards housing in Ukraine.

In May, the couple canceled a long-awaited trip to the South of France and reconfigured flights to head to Ukraine together, bringing with them around 300 lbs of supplies in huge duffel bags, which the airlines checked for free. They spent time in Krakow and Przemyśl, Poland meeting and supporting recent refugees, a day in Lviv, Ukraine photographing and meeting with architects about the designs for housing – capturing around a thousand photographs and making additional drawings. Mishael describes historic monuments covered in sandbags, and stained glass windows hidden by sheet metal in an effort to save them from shrapnel, huge placards and posters everywhere urging *смилість* (*smilist*): courage.



Mishael and Nadya dropping off the supplies they hand-carried with a contact in Lviv, Ukraine in May. These supplies were then ferried to the front by early June.

In the southwestern city of Uzhhorod, Nadya met with government officials to discuss refurbishing older buildings into housing, while Mishael drew and photographed the city and its people. The artist also noted that the emotion of the situation was difficult to capture visually alone – trying to find the delicate balance between documenting the situation through photography and respecting the emotional impact of the war on Ukrainians was not easy.



This series of paintings differs from past artworks – instead of recalling pleasant memories of travel, these paintings aim to highlight the war from a perspective many Americans may not have seen yet, and in doing so, Coggeshall-Burr hopes to raise both awareness and funds necessary to aid Ukrainians directly impacted by the war. In a time where we are inundated by news from television and social streams, the purpose of the painting is to allow us to focus on the issue at hand in a slower way, take time to think about it, and contribute to the relief efforts. They aim to more deeply resonate with the viewer in a unique way.



Mishael Coggeshall-Burr, *Close the Sky*, 2022, Oil on canvas, 10 x 8 in., \$950

The series will debut at his home gallery in Montague, MA in October 2022 and then the show will travel to Abigail Ogilvy Gallery (Boston, MA) where the artist is represented. In addition to the paintings and drawings on view, Coggeshall-Burr recorded sounds of cities: peace protests in Krakow, people going about their days in Uzhhorod – bringing a further sense of memory and reflection to the body of work.



Ukrainian refugees from all walks of life gather for a peace rally every day in Krakow, Poland, They march to the US embassy, chanting that NATO "close the sky, save Ukraine, save the world."