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**PAINTING THE ZONE:  
CHERNOBYL AND THE “ART OF WITNESS”**

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Painting the Zone:**

#### **Chernobyl and the “Art of Witness”**

Often paired together as a result of their common heritage/background, the works of the artists addressed within this thesis, Nataalka Husar and Taras Polataiko, share little on the surface. While Husar works solely within the realm of painting, Polataiko's works distinguish themselves as being not of one medium, often combining elements of painting, installation and performance within one piece. However, it is beyond this formal superficiality that the similarities reside. Choosing to address the events at Chernobyl, whether directly or indirectly, both artists embark on a quasi-political trajectory, using and manipulating elements of abjection, the narrative, virus, masochism and art history in order to produce “countervisions.” These countervisions exist as one facet of the “art of witness”, a method by which particular events, such as that of Chernobyl, are visually addressed. Through a dismantling of borders and by providing openings within an otherwise closed discussion, these artists, through their often unacknowledged roles as witnesses, present the viewer with new methods of looking.

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## Chapter 1

### Chernobyl: Disaster and Despondency

On April 26<sup>th</sup> 1986 there was a series of explosions in Block 4 of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station. Not since the bomb was dropped on Nagasaki August 6<sup>th</sup> 1945, had there been a nuclear disaster of this magnitude. Debates surrounding the probable causes of the disaster continue both within and beyond the countries of the former USSR, with blame pointing to the faulty actions of the maintenance crew, the ineptitude of government-appointed officials and/or the inadequacies of design of the reactor.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the clean-up efforts have been negligible.

The immediate results of the disaster were devastating; however it is the prolonged effects that continue to take their toll on the health, politics and economy of Ukraine, a sovereign state, finally independent of Soviet rule in 1991. As crops continue to be raised on this land, there has been an immense increase of mouth cancer, blood disorders, neoplastic growths and diseases of the nervous system among individuals living within the contaminated zones of Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> Not only are present health institutions incapable of dealing with the aftermath, but there is also the ominous possibility, with nuclear power

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<sup>1</sup> Author L. Ray Silver states in his text Fallout from Chernobyl (Toronto: Deneau Publishers, 1987) that the accident occurred because of negligence on the part of the maintenance workers (p.7), while Grigori Medvedev, author of The Truth About Chernobyl (New York: BasicBooks, 1991), states that the accident was a result of several government-appointed officials who were incapable of overseeing the operations of a nuclear power plant. In an unpublished report, Nuclear Safety Inspection Engineer of the USSR State Atomic Energy Survey Commission A.A. Yadrikhinskii noted that "It was the secrecy and lack of accountability of our nuclear science and its refusal to open itself up to discussion and criticism which made it possible for dangerous design faults to lead finally to a nuclear accident of this scale" (February 1988), as reproduced in: V.M Chernousenko, Insight from the Inside (London: Springer-Verlag, 1991) 10.

stations in disrepair and Soviet know-how unavailable, that this accident could occur again. The prevailing threatening and insidious effects of this disaster continue to plague the Ukrainian people in what is often referred to as a slow genocide.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Geography of Devastation**

The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station is located in the eastern part of a forested region, known as the Byelorussian-Ukrainian woodlands, on the banks of the Pripyat River. Because of this proximity, the radioactivity entered the subsoil and was then washed into the river by rain and melting snow - this is in addition to the radioactivity already airborne, released immediately after the explosions. Traveling via principal waterways, the contamination spread far beyond the immediate areas, increasing the risk of disease and contamination. At the time of the accident 110,000 people were living within a thirty-kilometre radius of the power station.<sup>4</sup>

Residents living within the affected areas were not informed of the accident and possible danger until days after the explosion, at which point an evacuation was underway. The Soviet government remained silent about the explosion until radiation was detected in the air in Scandinavia. At this point serious questions were raised and a public announcement was made regarding the actual time and date of the explosion. This negligence regarding the dissemination of information was not limited to the countries beyond the USSR; the availability of information was restricted even within the country. Five years after the fall

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<sup>2</sup> Chernousenko, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>4</sup> Medvedev, 31.

of the Soviet Union, former Soviet nuclear physicist Grigori Medvedev spoke out about Chernobyl, revealing the extent of the devastation. The radioactive release he said, was akin to “ten Hiroshima bombs (without the initial blast and firestorm effects) plus almost 70 tons of fuel and some 700 tons of radioactive reactor graphite, which settled in the vicinity of the damaged unit.”<sup>5</sup>

The accident itself was a result of two steam explosions within the reactor core of Block 4. Within the last twenty seconds preceding the explosions, a steam-zirconium reaction occurred, as well as other exothermic chemical reactions. The result of these reactions was the production of hydrogen and oxygen, a highly explosive combination, which in turn led to the thermal explosions.<sup>6</sup> Several days after the explosions, the army along with the aid of local fire fighting units and other relief workers, began to construct a sarcophagus to contain the radiation. Immediately following the explosions, a temporary sarcophagus was constructed out of sandbags and dolomite. The permanent sarcophagus, designed as a pyramid, is made primarily out of copious amounts of concrete and metal. On hand to combat the fires and commence the cleanup of Block 4 were firefighters, volunteers and other emergency aid workers. Over one hundred of those individuals involved in the relief effort (the majority being firefighters) died shortly thereafter of radiation sickness, commonly described as consisting of nausea and fever. A number of firefighters managed to survive the ordeal, but continue to suffer from radiation sickness and remain within, or affiliated with, health institutions incapable of treating them. The

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 29

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 76.

same is true of the rectifiers,<sup>7</sup> however, their numbers are greatly increased. Chernousenko states that “On a television program linking the USSR and the USA the American experts estimated our country’s possible losses following the Chernobyl accident as 68 000 people.”<sup>8</sup> Questions regarding the efficacy of the sarcophagus remain largely unanswered. How long can the sarcophagus hold up? Has it been successful in containing all of the fallout? Within weeks of the accident, the other reactors of the Chernobyl nuclear power station were back in operation. While seven hundred residents have returned to the contaminated city of Pripyat, many continuing their work at the nuclear power station, the buildings and factories remain largely abandoned.

The accident at Chernobyl has long since been considered as one of several events leading up to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Regarded as both a political and social blunder, the accident at Chernobyl demonstrated the tenuous state of the Soviet regime. While the government blamed the technical contingency for the accident, it was the technical support that blamed the government, demonstrating the rift that was occurring between the state and the public.

To date, photography has been the most common denominator for representing the Chernobyl disaster however, the artists and artworks addressed within this thesis differentiate themselves from other recorders of trauma by providing a new aesthetic of witnessing, one that appears beyond the photographic document. The works of Nataalka

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<sup>7</sup> Also referred to as “liquidators”, these individuals often worked in those areas the most highly contaminated, and did so without proper protection. Many of them suffer from unknown diseases, most likely as a result of heavy doses of radiation, however, their illnesses are often going untreated and are diagnosed as not being radiation related.

Husar and Taras Polataiko, on which this thesis will be centered, share certain elements with documentary photography and popular media representation however, their work differs in that each artist is attempting to present the “unrepresentable”, giving form to the imaginary and the invisible. Unlike much documentary photography, both Husar and Polataiko use metaphor, as well as a recourse to art’s past, as a means of accessing memory and sentiment. In addition, each artist augments his/her level of involvement through acts of participation within the artworks thus creating a new space for the invisible. By examining the ways in which the artists blur the boundaries that exist between the personal and the political, between the visible and the invisible, this thesis will demonstrate how each artist, through his/her investigation of Chernobyl, breaks down established borders and works within and against various paradoxes, providing for a new aesthetics of witnessing.

### **The Aesthetics of Witnessing**

With the dropping of “Little Boy” on Hiroshima in 1946, predictions regarding worldwide destruction as a result of nuclear warfare became more than grandiose forecasts; they became a potentiality. For many artists dealing with trauma and nuclear disaster, specifically that of Nagasaki-Hiroshima, there arose some universal concerns regarding approach. One of the primary concerns for artists dealing with such subject matter was that of treatment. How does one explore an event that goes beyond human understanding of suffering and of trauma? For many, it becomes a question of witnessing. In the case of Nataalka Husar and Taras Polataiko and their visual explorations of the

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<sup>8</sup> Chernousenko, 158.

disaster at Chernobyl, certain problems arise when attempting to depict and express a traumatic event. It is the expression of such concerns that Canadian theorist Kyo Maclear refers to as “the art of witness.”

“There can be no poetry after the Holocaust.” Penned by German theorist Theodor Adorno in 1949, this quote illustrates art’s inability to deal with and explore trauma and suffering. While art has been used for this type of expression, with regard to much post-Holocaust artwork, there have been instances in the past in which it has been used for idealistic purposes, i.e. propaganda. What is needed is an art that recognizes its limitations, but nevertheless attempts to create a “voice for suffering.”<sup>9</sup> This need can be characterized not so much by its lack of voice, but rather its need for a voice that will be heard. This search for a voice for suffering is a notion that has marked much contemporary trauma literature. While immediate post-World War II literature recognized and emphasized the impossibility of knowing and understanding this suffering, such as the writings of Adorno, more current literature emphasizes the need for this type of scholarship, one that attempts to discuss that which was otherwise “unmentionable”.

Author Kyo Maclear offers up such an aesthetic of witnessing. As a departure point from which to examine the works of Nataalka Husar and Taras Polataiko, Maclear’s theory provides a framework for the discussion of the often paradoxical issues raised by each artist. Attempting to blur the boundaries between the visible and the invisible, and the

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<sup>9</sup> Theodor Adorno, “Commitment”, The Essential Frankfurt School Reader (New York: Continuum, 1982) 312.

personal and the public, both artists succeed in what Maclear refers to as “presenting the unrepresentable.” Although creating a structure from Maclear’s concept of the aesthetics of witnessing, this thesis will also react against certain elements, as “the art of witness” tends to concentrate on events that have been safely shelved within a historical discourse. The events of Chernobyl differ in that they are ongoing; both Husar and Polataiko are “witnesses” to a continuing disaster.

According to Kyo Maclear, author of Beclouded Visions-Hiroshima-Nagasaki and the Art of Witness, we have come to a crisis in witnessing. We need to extend beyond Adorno’s notion of what it is to be the recorder of suffering. As observers, we are often ill-equipped to comprehend beyond the visual; “Again and again, the atomic bombings force an encounter with the limits of vision as a paradigm of knowledge and ethic.... At the deepest level, images of nuclear disaster turn upon themselves to question the very notion of imaging itself.”<sup>10</sup> With images of war appearing more and more frequently on our television sets and in magazines, the Gulf War being dubbed the “virtual war,” it becomes difficult to comprehend, in fact *believe* anything that occurs beyond these parameters. To rectify such a crisis, we need to establish new ways of *seeing*<sup>11</sup>, a broader sense of seeing, one that extends beyond the act of “looking”; “The demands of trauma witnessing...surpass descriptive commentary and the documentary impulse.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Kyo Maclear, Beclouded Visions- Hiroshima- Nagasaki and the Art of Witness (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 10.



Art can offer this new way of seeing. As works of art often exist beyond physical description, the arena of art practice becomes well-suited to investigating such events as those discussed by Maclear. Witness art becomes important then, not just in the realm of commemoration, but as a means of creating dialogue around events that are difficult to talk about, events that often extend beyond the limits of language. Witness art consists of more than the image on the canvas or the installation in the gallery; it is about meaning, discussion and understanding.<sup>13</sup> In the case of Chernobyl, it is difficult to *see* the effects of the disaster: radiation disease is often difficult to detect and to diagnose. It is also difficult to observe the effects of fallout on crops, livestock and flora. In addition it becomes difficult for outsiders to comprehend the effect the disaster has had on the dissolution of the Soviet Union as well as the problems currently encountered by Ukraine.

In order to communicate the thoughts and ideas related to visual representations of trauma, artists often utilize metaphor as a means of translating specific notions that seem to exist beyond the symbolic order.<sup>14</sup> Artists will also refer to other artworks in order to translate abstract sentiments. Witness art asks that the active viewer surpass discrepancies and gaps in geography, generation, and cultural experience. With an investigation of events of the past, there is a tendency to see the events as already compartmentalized and shelved within mediated history; there seems to be no need for further discussion. However, witness art posits that this is not the case: further investigation and constant rumination are necessary to prevent repetition.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 55.

“Witness art appears as a consequence of a need and of a caring. It arises from a desire to communicate.”<sup>15</sup> It requires imagination; it requires that both the spectator and the artist push the boundaries of sight and of visual understanding; it is about provocation. Witness art is more than documentation and is more powerful in that it surpasses documentation. As such, witness art does not merely record, as do traditional documentary styles, but also analyses and in turn criticizes the subject and object of witnessing. Implied within this function of analysis is an element of deconstruction, a positive procedure in which there is a deconstruction and consequent manipulation of the gaps and chasms left within memory and experience.<sup>16</sup> For the witness it is vitally important not to dismiss these gaps but to *deconstruct* them, enabling an “opening up (of) fields of historical and ethical inquiry.”<sup>17</sup>

The exploration of memory plays an important role in witness art. As most of the events that are visually explored through this method have occurred in the past, are historic, both personal and collective memories are important components of its constitution. While I shall be using theories of witness art to contextualize the work of Husar and Polataiko, their works differ from other works of witness art in that they are both investigating an event that exists simultaneously as an incident in history as well as a current phenomenon. Husar and Polataiko are not working solely within the confines of memory: both work from recent trips made to Ukraine during which they observed the current situation: both were/are “witness” to an ongoing tragedy.

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<sup>14</sup> While a case can be made in which all events exist beyond the symbolic order, these artists are using metaphor as a means of addressing those issues that do not lend themselves to simple, literal description.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 142-43.

## Recording the Social Landscape

Remaining a popular item within international news for little over a month, the accident at Chernobyl rapidly ran its course in the media. French theorist Jean Baudrillard points out that events such as Chernobyl become over-perfected in the media - eventually becoming “realer” than real, something other than what they actually were. The actual event is propelled into this interminable void, the incident disappearing, vanishing from universal consciousness. All that is left is a simulated event, a “historicized” incident that exists beyond actuality.<sup>18</sup> While perhaps considered altered or non-existent within the sphere of contemporary media, the Chernobyl disaster nevertheless retains a space in the collective conscious. Like the art of the 1960’s and 70’s concerned with the effects of nuclear war<sup>19</sup> and the threat of further nuclear disaster, Chernobyl remains the subject of much social concern, with art functioning as a tool of criticism and contention.

As previously mentioned, photography has been the most common approach to “capturing” both the physical and social impacts of the Chernobyl disaster. However, it is often through the use of photography as a means of capturing these geographic and human remnants that simulation can occur. Visually recorded by the photographic lens, images are manipulated and reduced, complications are rectified and the end product often becomes something other, something more perfected than the actual event or situation. Within photography, a form of visual recording that is said to capture “reality,”

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>18</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) 5.

<sup>19</sup> Artists such as Robert Morris and Nancy Spero created a number of series and artworks surrounding the threat of nuclear war and nuclear disaster. Several of these artworks were exhibited as part of a show entitled *The Shadow of the Bomb* (Spring 1984, Amhurst, University Gallery, University of Massachusetts).

there is the danger of images becoming “realer than real.” Before commencing a discussion of the various themes to be addressed within this thesis, I would like to briefly discuss the work of several artists who explore the accident at Chernobyl through photographic means. Three artists, David McMillan, Pam Skelton and Stefan Gec, have recorded the events through their aftermath: the disquieting landscape, the empty fields and remaining residents, and people since deceased.

Canadian photographer David McMillan spent time photographing the abandoned areas surrounding the nuclear power station: “After my first visit, in October of 1994, I knew I had found a subject with sufficient complexity to be virtually inexhaustible.”<sup>20</sup> Using his camera as a means of capturing a frozen environmental catastrophe, McMillan negotiates the divisions between civilization and nature. Working with large-scale colour photographs, he documents the desolation and isolation of the ravaged landscape contaminated with unseen radiation and the echoes of former human activity. The outlying areas, he posits, exist as a “time capsule”<sup>21</sup> with the empty apartment buildings and abandoned schoolrooms attesting to past Soviet presence. Attempting to explore and understand by means of visual recognition what is and remains invisible, McMillan documents the physical traces of an imperceptible threat.

Interested in the beauty inherent in the abandoned landscape, McMillan chose Chernobyl as subject matter primarily for its utter emptiness and desertion. Upon his return from Ukraine, McMillan composed a photo essay, entitled The Zone, that was published in the

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<sup>20</sup> David McMillan, “The Zone”, Border Crossings Vol. 17 No. 4 (Oct. 1998) 42.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

Canadian arts magazine Border Crossings in 1998 (see figures 1,2 and 3). Accompanied by a paragraph of text describing his reactions to and experiences within “the zone”, the essay follows McMillan from an abandoned schoolroom, to an apartment complex, to an overgrown playground and deserted field. In addition to commenting upon the physical desertion following the Chernobyl disaster, McMillan is also remarking upon the desertion of the Soviet regime and the dissolution of the Soviet/Communist empire. The photographs themselves are provocative, both in content and rendering: each photograph is lit by the transparent light of a nearby window, shadows move across peeling walls as proximate vegetation encroaches upon the once inhabited spaces. Those photographs taken out of doors focus on discarded objects, such as farm equipment, that litter overgrown fields. It is this complete abandonment, this frozen element that McMillan finds most beautiful and consequently documents.

Emphasizing the lasting effects of Chernobyl, the exhibition **The Unthinkable is the Unknowable: Ten Years after Chernobyl**,<sup>22</sup> strove to examine the persisting presence of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Including predominantly photographic works, the exhibition reacted to the impossibility of knowing and the difficulty of understanding, blurring the boundaries between the seen and the invisible. By providing physical evidence and a material response the exhibition wanted to provide documentation of a lived history. Participating within this exhibition was British installation artist Pam Skelton who documented the living, and since deceased, reminders of the devastation brought about by the Chernobyl accident. In concert with her explorations of the

Holocaust and genocide, Skelton approaches her work on Chernobyl through constructed memory and evident materiality. Interested in history and its impact on the living, Skelton investigates memory, the formation of identity and its influence on the living. With the works contained within **The Unthinkable is the Unknowable: Ten Years After Chernobyl**, Skelton documents and then displays images of those who witnessed the devastation first-hand, speaking for those without voices.

Through a series of photographs as well as a video component, silent visuals accompanied by active audio, Skelton shares the stories of the “liquidators”, the term “liquidators” referring to those “volunteers” employed by the Soviet government to clean up after the Chernobyl explosion. Upon entering the gallery space one is immediately struck with the disparity of the displayed images (see figure 4). The photographic stills along the walls depict the weathered faces of the liquidators, concentrating on every crease and wrinkle. Reading the human face as landscape, they visually record the topological social evidence of disaster. The video also presents the faces of the liquidators; however, the videographic stills are accompanied by an audio narrative, the voice of a non-participatory third party providing the piece with the qualities of a performance. Part installation piece, part documentary, these large-scale photographs and accompanying video presented the stories of the human element of the Chernobyl disaster, placing the observer as participant within Chernobyl’s past, present and future.

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<sup>22</sup> Exhibition was entitled: “The Unthinkable is the Unknowable: Ten Years After Chernobyl” and was exhibited at Camerawork, London, England from April 26<sup>th</sup> to June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1996. Other artists included Stefan Gec, Vladimir Kuznetsov and Simon Schofield.

While striving to emphasize both the possibility and impossibility of knowing, the exhibition also sought to give shape to the intangible. As with Pam Skelton, fellow British artist Stefan Gec uses photography to document the human involvement and subsequent human loss of the disaster at Chernobyl. Having produced several works investigating the disaster at Chernobyl, it is his mural project which best captures the human devastation and social impact of the incident.<sup>23</sup> Interested in notions of the heroic in the everyday, Gec's project also originates in personal history and collective involvement.<sup>24</sup> His father, having left Ukraine in 1946 and settled in England, educated and surrounded the family with Eastern European politics, keeping abreast of the developments of a removed Cold War. With family still living in Ukraine, Gec was to later learn that one of his cousins, living within the vicinity of Chernobyl, had become sick as a result of the explosions. Gec grew up conscious of these situations and chose to use them as fodder for politically charged art works.

Occupying the length of a city billboard and displayed as such, Gec's work **Natural History**, exhibited in Newcastle in 1995 and Winnipeg in 1998, features the enlarged photographs of six of the firefighters lost to the Chernobyl clean-up (see figure 5). Quietly staring out at the passers-by, **Natural History** is not a complicated piece; rather it elicits investigations of memory, remembrance and commemoration. In a climate that reduces disasters of such magnitude to dire clinical statistics, Gec, like Skelton strives to introduce the human impact, giving a face and a name to amassed numbers. As such, the

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<sup>23</sup> The mural **Natural History** was not part of the aforementioned exhibition. Produced one year prior, this particular piece was created as a collaboration with the Gallery Oseredok (Winnipeg), the Winnipeg Art Gallery and Locus+ of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

piece acts as both monument and testimonial, reminding us of and recognizing the work of forgotten heroes.

While McMillan chose to record the scars left on the land, investigating those traces left by the “invisible”, both Skelton and Gec chose to record the marks left on its inhabitants. In producing large-scale photo/human documentation, Skelton and Gec attempted to give a voice to those living and dead, creating a link with history, while McMillan exposed and exploited the sound of silence and emptiness. Rather than attempting to give a voice to those who were robbed of them, as was done by Skelton and Gec, McMillan manipulates this silence as a means of giving shape to the invisible. What binds these three artists is this need to document, a need to communicate what they have witnessed as a result of both transplanted stories and personal experience. All three artists are attempting to demonstrate, through photography, that the “unthinkable”, can perhaps become the “knowable”.

With the advent of photography, many thought that the public was gaining intimate access into warfare and suffering. With the photograph, one was able to get a glimpse of “how things really were”. The individual, separated from the event through geography and/or epoch, was now able to *see* and *understand* what was going on in the world around him/her. However, as the media has demonstrated, this isn’t always the case: seeing should not equate believing. With Chernobyl, many of the residual effects are not easily documented; one cannot see radiation - merely its effects. In addition, how does

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Enright, “The Poetics of Alchemy: Sea Changes in the Art of Stefan Gec”, Border Crossings Vol. 17 No. 2 (May 1998) 6.



one recognize radiation sickness within the photograph? Accompanying this is also the threat of over-perfection. As previously mentioned, often times these “documentary” photographs are altered and manipulated to heighten effects, or correct imperfections; in this case, the images become hyperreal. Within all personal expression there exist the limits imposed by subjectivity and photography is not exempt from such limitations.

In addition to having a common medium, that of photography, these artists deal, in some form or another, with manipulations of history. As an event that occurred over ten years ago, the accident at Chernobyl lends itself to a discussion of historical disaster and yet it persists as a current phenomenon. Both Natalka Husar and Taras Polataiko, as well as the artists discussed hitherto, deal with a fluid definition of history, one that incorporates the past as well as the present.

### **The Transplanted Witness**

Born and raised in the United States within a Ukrainian community and currently living in Toronto, Natalka Husar has made her hyphenated identity, Canadian-American-Ukrainian, the focal point of her paintings. Beginning with investigations into the familial scenes of her childhood, Husar’s paintings have progressed from the most personal of explorations of Ukrainian identity to the most collective. Beginning with a number of works created in 1986, her exploration of Chernobyl has followed a similar progression.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will concentrate on four paintings from a series entitled **Black Sea Blue** 1992-1995 (figures 8, 9, 14 and 15) as well as two more recent works

that act as a continuation of this narrative, in order to demonstrate Husar's participation in the aesthetics of witnessing. Completed as a result of a recent trip to Ukraine, the works in **Black Sea Blue** explore the clashes between capitalism and communism, the East and the West, and the ever-shifting notion of Ukrainian identity both within and outside Ukraine. Implicit in her work, in stages that represent a progressive, activated response, is an exploration of the disaster at Chernobyl. Combining her own expectations with narratives carried on by family members and the reality of her own experiences in Ukraine, Husar composed several large-scale paintings on linen, presenting these and other elements. Within her paintings, the events of Chernobyl often manifest themselves in the forms of "Chernobyl Children".<sup>25</sup> Her most recent paintings chronicle the imaginative life and experiences of these now fully-grown children.

Exploring similar events in quite a different manner, Ukrainian-born artist Taras Polataiko combines elements of performance, installation art and painting to challenge and invert universal presumptions regarding identity. Immigrating to Canada in 1991, Polataiko entered onto the Canadian art scene with a performance entitled **Artist as Politician: In the Shadow of the Monument**, in which he challenged the unacknowledged experiences of the first Ukrainian settlers within Canada.

More recently, in 1995, Polataiko has focused on Chernobyl. His installation **Cradle** (1995), on which this analysis will be centered, consists of a silver nickel-plated bathtub

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<sup>25</sup> The term *Chernobyl Children* is used in much of the literature, both fiction and non-fiction, surrounding the disaster at Chernobyl. It refers to those children suffering from the effects of prolonged exposure to radiation. These children are often going untreated. In affected areas, several of the townswomen have organized themselves into aid groups, dubbing themselves "The Children of Chernobyl".

hung by silver chains from the gallery ceiling surrounded by several oval “paintings” of Soviet-like wallpaper. Deliberately exposing himself to the radiation at Chernobyl, Polataiko filled a bathtub with five litres of his own contaminated blood, extracted over a fourteen-month period. Exploring issues of mutation, contamination, identity and aestheticism, Polataiko uses the events of Chernobyl as a means of challenging established modes of representation and aesthetics through virus.

### **Painting the Zone**

Exploring issues of charity and condescension, theories of abjection, art history and notions of power and victimization, the following chapter will consist of a discussion of several of Husar’s works with regard to various aesthetics of witnessing. Likewise, the chapter will examine the ways in which she has blurred the boundaries between established binaries. In addition to a discussion of abjection, I will also introduce masochism as another method of contextualizing Husar’s works, another method of dismantling both boundary and paradox. More specifically, this section will examine the manners in which manipulations of the masochistic individual correlate with national relations. In several of the works within **Black Sea Blue** Husar examines the dominating role of the West in relation to the dependent role of Ukraine, a relationship of *haves* to the *have-nots*.

In Chapter Three I will examine the work of Taras Polataiko, concentrating primarily on the installation piece **Cradle** produced in 1994. Having traveled to the “zone” for the sole purpose of physical exposure, the ensuing work of art explores notions of virus,

contamination, infection and self-reflection. An examination into his earlier works suggests a prior interest in ideas relating to self-reflection, witnessing and the effects of *trompe l'oeil*, an element also used and manipulated throughout *Cradle*.

While Polataiko's exploration of the events at Chernobyl will include an examination of abjection, the primary focus will be on the concept of infection. Like French theorist Jean Baudrillard, Polataiko explores the notion of the virus. Baudrillard writes, "(Chernobyl) is the accident, the accidental virus, the virus of its own decomposition..."<sup>26</sup> Baudrillard and Polataiko are investigating similar issues surrounding Eastern Europe, the fall of the Soviet Union and the role Chernobyl played in that dissolution. In analysing the work of Polataiko I will explain how Baudrillard, mainly in *The Illusion of the End*, provides a means of understanding and contextualizing Polataiko's work, in investigating history, its revision and reversal, as events integral to the current history of Ukraine. In addition to an interest in virus and infection, Polataiko is also concerned with the activity that metastasis represents, metastasis as a confusion of categories, the bleeding of one category into another. This perception will be discussed with regard to Baudrillard's writings on the subject, wherein he explores this confusion of categories, this contamination of the artistic, social, economic and political spheres wherein everything has been transcended.

Incorporated within these chapters is an examination of several over-riding themes, one of which is the blurring of boundaries. By pushing and manipulating the limits of vision,

as well as the various definitions of history, each artist succeeds in transgressing borders. This transgression begins with the artists' abilities to transform an act of witnessing into that of participating.

The final chapter will compare the works of Husar with those of Polataiko. In this presentation I will demonstrate that as opposed to the passive observer or the latent onlooker, both Husar and Polataiko differ in that their "witnessing" is active. They are providing what Maclear refers to as "countervisions," approaches to art-making which counteract the removed aspect of so much photo-documentation.<sup>27</sup> From this discussion, similarities, as well as differences will manifest themselves, inverting a traditional discussion of two artists initially linked by marginal subject matter, but diverging quickly thereafter in their approaches and findings.

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<sup>26</sup> Baudrillard, The Illusion of the End 39.

<sup>27</sup> Maclear, 10.

## Chapter Two

### Stranger in a Strange Land

Natalka Husar paints stories. Her language is a visual language, a visual articulation, one that extends beyond written communication and as such is not limited by the literal; her paintings begin where the word leaves off. These pictorial admissions are at once deeply personal and yet collectively applicable; they speak of both the creation and the deconstruction of collective identity and experience. Husar examines that which is often left unsaid, those aspects of community and culture that lay dormant until otherwise disturbed. Described as revealing “the underbelly of any situation,” Husar’s paintings uncover, exploit and analyse issues of identity politics within North America and post-Soviet Ukraine.<sup>28</sup>

Investigating her use of both factual experience and the imagination, this chapter will examine the paintings included within Husar’s series **Black Sea Blue** 1992-1995 (figures 8, 9, 14 and 15), as well as two more recent works. Proceeding in a circular fashion, Husar’s series begins with the anxieties and imaginings of an anticipated voyage. These are followed by the realization of the actual experience and then the internalization of the knowledge gained through such an event. Two more recent works, not of the **Black Sea Blue** series, examine once again Husar’s anxieties and imaginings of a possible future. **Black Sea Blue** begins by examining the breakdown of borders between the East and the West and likewise ends with such an investigation. Husar proceeds from the personal, to

the collective and then back to the personal. To achieve this, Husar ties a common thread throughout her narrative, providing for four distinct yet connected explorations; whether exploring the “haves” and “have-nots”, notions of abjection, art’s past or power and victimization, Husar is dismantling a paradox, and attempting to give shape to that which is invisible. Implicit within this paradox is a blurring of boundaries, a theme explored throughout this thesis. Beginning with an investigation of the breakdown of boundaries between the East and the West and continuing with an exploration of the tenuous division between those who abuse power and those who fall victim to it, Husar uses **Black Sea Blue** as a means of transgressing barriers, of recognizing her place within these structures of power and of identifying a possible future.

Making personal experience the focal point of many of her canvases, Husar has made no effort to shield her background from the peering eyes and curious minds of the viewer. Born in New Jersey in 1951, Husar grew up within a Ukrainian community surrounded by families much like her own. Like many of the other parents within the community, Husar’s parents had arrived in the United States in 1949 as a result of the Displaced Person’s Act. They came to the United States with what Husar refers to as the “immigrant dream”: they came in the hope of finding that “grand land of opportunity,” a quest that translated into “a pursuit of the unattainable.”<sup>29</sup>

Having always been interested in the landmarks of memory, Husar made her first trip to Ukraine in 1969 at the age of 18. However, it was not until a more recent trip made with

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<sup>28</sup> Carol Podedworny, “Real Life Romance,” Natalka Husar- Black Sea Blue (Regina: Rosemont Art Gallery, 1995) 13.

her mother in 1992 that these experiences, of returning to a land of both personal and shared memory, became the subject(s) of her paintings. Making a “pilgrimage” to her mother’s birthplace, Husar mnemonically recorded and later painted her conflicting responses to a community caught in the midst of a post-Soviet, post-Chernobyl, post-independence tidal wave. Upon returning to Canada Husar attempted to make sense of the myriad of experiences and events she had witnessed and participated in. What ensued was a series of large-scale paintings, all oil on linen, collectively entitled **Black Sea Blue** (figures 8,9,14 & 15).

### **The Have and Have-Nots/ Fluctuating Boundaries**

Composed of six paintings completed between 1992 and 1995, four of which will be discussed within this thesis, **Black Sea Blue** functions as a method of working through Husar’s own paradoxical relationship with her experiences of Ukraine: for instance, how does one articulate pragmatically events and experiences that are not wholly one’s own? Without being didactic, how can these visual explorations put into question and challenge various social and political structures with which one is only associated through generation and ancestry? These and other issues of witnessing are addressed within **Black Sea Blue** and as such the series acts as a catalyst, allowing for a confrontation between event and spectator, producer and receiver. Like Maclear’s text, Husar’s paintings challenge the limits of looking and of visual understanding; they are about “witnessing the impossibility of witnessing.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Quote taken from an interview with the artist October 18<sup>th</sup> 1999, Toronto, Ontario.

<sup>30</sup> Maclear, 152.



Participating within this mutable act of witnessing, Husar speaks of her interest in investigating that “subtle damage”; “I am interested in that invisible scar...that which is covered and not so obvious.” She demonstrates a need to visually explore those hidden remnants.<sup>31</sup> This interest in latent damage led Husar to examine the post-Cold War situation in Ukraine and this in turn prompted an investigation into the damage, both physical and social, brought about by the Chernobyl disaster.

Consistent with this interest in damage and scarring is an investigation into the immigrant experience, more specifically that of the residents within her New Jersey community. Husar’s earlier works rely more heavily on this immigrant experience, exploring the “subtle disappointment” by which such experiences are frequently accompanied. Husar often discusses her privileged position; she is not an immigrant but feels that she maintains ties to this situation through shared experience. Again, Husar attempts to blur established boundaries - where does one draw the line between immigrant and first-generation American? Whose stories belong to whom? While she was born and lives within North America, the stories and memories passed along from grandmother and mother intensify her feelings of belonging to a country she has but only recently explored. Earlier works such as **Heritage Display** 1985 (see figure 6), explore various facets of the immigrant experience as viewed from the second generation. Scenes from the local Legion Hall are intruded upon by the presence of this second generation, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity. With **Heritage Display**, the daughter, dressed in traditional Ukrainian costume, is strung up as if on display, as the title would suggest, completing the triptych of past, present and future. As with the majority of

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<sup>31</sup> Husar, Toronto, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

Husar's earlier works, these paintings express Husar's preoccupation with issues of heritage, tradition, and the role of the feminine within ethnic identity.

In addition to dismantling the borders between immigrant and second-generation resident, Husar also manipulates and dismantles the borders between charity and condescension, help and hindrance; her paintings often ridicule the "patronizing do-gooder."<sup>32</sup> **Our Lady of Mississauga** of 1987 (see figure 7), also not part of the series, is an example of this blurring of boundaries, of the fluctuating distinction, or lack thereof, between the "haves" and "have-nots" and the various relationships that maintain this demarcation. The central figure within the painting is a composite of all of those "patronizing do-gooders." Surrounded by objects signifying the materiality and wealth of the West, in this case Canada, she stands swathed in fur and fine jewelry, cradling that which requires her immediate and condescending care. Within Husar's artwork this liquid division can often be spoken of in terms of the East and the West. She sees Ukraine as being in a unique position in that it acts as a border of sorts between the East and West. However, this border distinguishes itself as being penetrable, and as such there is an unusual mixture of communities, the haves occupying similar spaces to the have-nots.

## **Black Sea Blue**

While earlier works focused on Husar's personal experience with gender, ethnicity and identity, the works contained within **Black Sea Blue** centre on broader subject matter. The series challenges various facets of the Ukrainian meta-narrative, one of unity and of

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<sup>32</sup> Husar, Toronto, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

a connection to a specific set of rituals and traditions. The works explore with an eerie fantasy-like quality, reminiscent of the work of 19<sup>th</sup>-century painter James Ensor, the tensions that preoccupy a country caught between a long history of Soviet occupation, the consequences of Chernobyl and independence.

The first painting of the series, entitled **Guilt Quilt** 1992-1993, (see figure 8) was produced just prior to Husar's departure for Ukraine. The painting is an amalgamation of all of the artist's hopes, fears and anxieties regarding an impending voyage. Stereotypical Ukrainian objects and foods intermingle with images from Ukrainian and Russian film and television. Bombarded with these images and thoughts, the main figure tumbles backward from a window ledge, overcome with the guilt of being the more privileged Western cousin within this East/West relationship. These fantastical figures, military men and shady dignitaries monopolize the artist's dreams, foreshadowing an encounter with the unknowable.

The 1993 painting **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine** (see figure 9) is an example of such a disjointed act of witnessing as investigation and composition. Unlike **Guilt Quilt**, **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine** was completed upon the artist's return to Canada. The painting is composed of a series of dream-like narratives in which fact and fiction interlace, originating from the artist's own personal experience in Ukraine. The title of the painting, **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine**, refers to the care packages sent to Ukraine by more privileged Western relatives. These boxes often contained kitschy mementos, as in the right corner, a half-empty box of leftover Valentine chocolates. As with **Our Lady**

of Mississauga, Husar speaks of her interest in where one draws the line between charity and condescension, good will and self-righteousness - "it is a very delicate misbalance."<sup>33</sup> Begun as a painting of her mother's childhood home, all of Husar's shared memories as well as recent experience began to crowd and eventually overtook the painted house. In its place is the shadow of a bizarre banquet, with all of its grotesque attendees. Husar writes: "Though my mother's old house seemed romantic, with big fat peaches against the blue-washed walls, it wasn't in the Theme-Park Ukraine of my Canadian mind."<sup>34</sup> Husar's romantic and somewhat condescending views of an imagined history were replaced by the stark physicality of a visceral encounter.

Ghosts of a communist past as well as traces of a not-so perfect capitalist future grace the open spaces of Husar's painting. Through the over-painting one can see the blues of the flat boards of the house, the only other indication of the original subject matter being the canning jars drying on fence posts however, even the jars have taken on an ominous tone; the jars, as well as the buckets and stuffed scarecrow appear to be impaled on the sharpened fence posts. Occupying the centre of the painting is a figure indicative of the old regime, the head of a shoe factory, her garish make-up mimicking that of her puppet sidekicks. Surrounded by products of the Black Market indicative of an invasion of the capitalist West, the characters spilling from this "Pandora's Box" are grotesque ghosts of the past intermingled with the vulgar reality of the present. "As if you lifted the set tablecloth and all these images shook out - the people that echoed in my mind, the ghosts

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<sup>33</sup>Husar, Toronto, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

<sup>34</sup> Nataka Husar, "Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine", Nataka Husar- Black Sea Blue (Regina: Rosemont Art Gallery, 1995) 56.

I felt, the living scarecrows I saw.”<sup>35</sup> Husar’s jeering characters move about as though part of a fantastic nightmare, by-products of a retired Cold War. It is a flooding of the artist’s own unconscious by way of political consciousness.

### **Narrating Abjection**

With **Pandora’s Parcel to Ukraine** Husar has left the removed imaginings of **Guilt Quilt** and proceeded with the physicality of actual experience. More visceral than previous works, **Pandora’s Parcel** examines real physical experience. In analyzing those paintings within the series that deal with actual physical experience, I will refer to theories of abjection as a means of contextualization. For Husar, art acts as catharsis, likewise her paintings act as a means of addressing abjection; they are a kind of ritual through which there can be an expulsion of abjection. Her paintings examine those situations and areas in which there has been a breakdown of borders: what was once inside has become outside, what was once the East has now in a sense become the West. Those Chernobyl Children presented in **Pandora’s Parcel**, and later works, are themselves abject. They are those who have been expelled and yet remain part of the socio-economic body: they exist on the margins. They exist simultaneously within both the symbolic and physical order.

As a means of approaching abjection, art, as postulated by Julia Kristeva, is an agent of catharsis; it becomes a way of coping with what is unnamable, what lacks a proper process of signification, in short, the abject. The abject is therefore a designated space

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<sup>35</sup> Husar, 54.

beyond structured boundaries where meaning collapses.<sup>36</sup> Within Husar's paintings there is an attempt to name this unnameable, an endeavour to absolve this abjection, this "otherness" which eliminates the boundaries between inside and outside: "There looms, within abjection, one of those violent dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable."<sup>37</sup>

With **Black Sea Blue**, Husar explores abjection, using her paintings as a method of exploring the suffering that exists beyond meaning, beyond limits and classification. For both Kristeva and Husar, the abject exists as something/nothing beyond one's scope of familiar understanding; it is that which upsets borders, boundaries and orders. It is exile.<sup>38</sup> Through the use of her imagination, inter-mingling fact and fantasy, truth and fiction, Husar succeeds in using art as a means of confronting this abjection: "(Writing) then implies an ability to imagine the abject, that is, to see oneself in its place and to thrust it aside only by means of the displacements of verbal plays."<sup>39</sup> As with literature, the visual arts are paramount in this displacement of abjection. With paintings such as **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine** these "Chernobyl Children" are representatives of this breakdown of boundaries, of this collapse of meaning. The painting itself is indicative of this blending of the outside and the inside as objects, events, experiences of past, present and future meld into a single swamping of images.

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<sup>36</sup> Kristeva., 2.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 16.

In order to further pursue these and other concerns, Husar has created a set of characters that recur in the majority of her paintings, both in and following **Black Sea Blue**. She refers to these individuals as “Chernobyl Children”. Also the name of a group of women in Ukraine organized to aid in the treatment of those children affected by the radiation of Chernobyl, Husar’s “Chernobyl Children” consist of an imaginary amalgamation of all of those unfortunate children left in the wake of a disaster not yet satisfactorily contained. These children are abject. They act as witnesses and as such are carriers; they communicate what they have seen in their physical presentation: “Within these children was a sense of hope and of fear and that feeling of clipped wings, this feeling that you can’t really fly away even though you are free. There is this constant sadness.”<sup>40</sup> Following the Chernobyl disaster, programs were established in Canada wherein “Chernobyl Children” were invited to spend the summer with more privileged Canadian families.<sup>41</sup> Averaging six weeks, these visits sought to allow the children a radiation-free “summer camp” in which they could strengthen their immune systems by lowering their levels of radiation. After six short weeks, the children were sent back to their respective homes within the former USSR. As abject, these children are constantly being passed off from family to family, from country to country. Existing on the margins, they are at once a product of society and yet expelled from it.

With bows in their hair to offset the baldness produced as a result of an exposure to radiation, the Chernobyl Children of **Pandora’s Parcel to Ukraine**, stare out into the

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<sup>40</sup> Husar, Toronto, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

<sup>41</sup> Initiated by the “Canadian Relief Fund for Chernobyl Victims of Bielorussia” these programs also placed Ukrainian victims within homes in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec. As the program grew, other provinces began to participate.

audience with looks of both blame and distrust. The patterns on their faces and heads, which are at once radiation rashes and Ukrainian embroidery, prove a stark counterpart to the children's Western (influenced) apparel. As individuals cast off as a result of their unwilling participation within a country's political and social blunder, these children find themselves strangers within their own country. "The presence of these "others", who have been left stranded on the borders of collective memory and power, entreat us to revisit traditions of recovery based on memory and power...."<sup>42</sup> Sent abroad to receive treatment and support, they exist as reminders, powerful corporeal memories and living examples of the abuses of power and the strength and weakness of its limits.

These children, these signifiers of abjection, reappear in several of Husar's paintings. Both **Lullaby** of 1996 (see figure 10) and **Chernobyl Barbie** of 1997 (see figure 11), produced immediately following **Black Sea Blue**, present the figure of the "Chernobyl Child" as imagined by Husar. With **Lullaby**, the figure is once again marred by this radiation rash and embroidery pattern; it is both repulsive and becoming. This time more prominent, the vines snake outward from behind the head, extending down the arm and culminating with berries at the crown of her head. The brightly coloured headband accentuates the child's baldness while attempting to contain the vines that thickly spread like virus. As with the children in **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine**, the child in **Lullaby** bears the emblem of that North American icon, Mickey Mouse, used to signify the growing relationship between the East and the West, Eastern Europe and Western Europe (and North America), budding capitalism versus retired communism. Cradling a doll, the child offers up the comfort and consolation of which she was most likely deprived,

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<sup>42</sup> Maclear, 120.



further emphasizing a failed in/dependence. She, like the other characters created throughout the series, is a composite character, one that has evolved since her introduction in **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine**. Like the other children in the series, she is abject; she is recognized as being a part of something and yet is ultimately excluded as a result of this recognition.

Painted one year after **Lullaby**, **Chernobyl Barbie** (1997) further employs the figure of the "Chernobyl child". Using garish and bright colours Husar presents the child as a Byzantine icon, the tilt and shape of the head as well as the facial expression indicative of this earlier iconic style.<sup>43</sup> As with **Lullaby**, Husar adorns the bald head, encircling the child's head with a bright ribbon emphasizing the child's loss of hair as a result of radiation exposure however, instead of cradling a baby doll, the child within **Chernobyl Barbie** is brushing the hair of a distinctly North American Barbie doll. Once again indicating the North American and capitalist presence within Ukraine, the insertion of this North American icon is juxtaposed to the traditional Byzantine style of the central figure. Like the majority of Byzantine icons, the child's head is tilted, her expression is benevolent and the skin exhibits the qualities of cool marble. In addition, the framing device is consistent with that iconic style, as well as the actual frame itself. The Barbie doll is then reproduced in the background of the canvas, becoming another manifestation of Western charity and condescension, a North American iconic symbol of the "haves"

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<sup>43</sup> The manipulation of iconic imagery is a reoccurring element within the work of many Ukrainian-North American artists. For example, American-Ukrainian mixed-media artist Lydia Bodnar-Balahutrak uses the Byzantine motif as a means of exploring her own hyphenated Ukrainian identity. As a result of several return trips to Ukraine, from which her parents and grandparents fled after World War II, Bodnar-Balahutrak's current work concentrates on the themes of humanity/inhumanity, birth/re-birth. Pre-occupied with the events of the 1932 famine as well as with the accident at Chernobyl, Bodnar-Balahutrak feels compelled to document the remnants of Soviet oppression.

versus the Byzantine symbol of the “have-nots.” Combining these elements of the East with those of the West, Husar uses these abject children as indications of such boundary subjectivity. Employing these children throughout her narrative, Husar positions herself on both sides of this crumbling border.

As with the majority of her characters, Husar’s Chernobyl Children tend to be exclusively female. Likewise, her paintings all concentrate on female experience. For Husar, it is the women within her narrative that are representative of abjection. In her exploration of writings of the abject, Kristeva remarks upon the role of the maternal within this projection. By giving birth, women, while retaining an element of life, nonetheless expel it; through this act women are able to bring the “inside” “outside.” Within Husar’s paintings the female characters are indicative of this disrupted order, both of the symbolic and physical scale. While the male figures only as caricature, as is the case with **Our Lady of Mississauga** and **Pandora’s Parcel to Ukraine**, it is the female character that carries the narrative. Perhaps it is due to this ability, this capacity to externalize the internal, that the female carries out Husar’s abject narrative. The “Chernobyl Children” located within **Pandora’s Parcel to Ukraine** as well as later works demonstrate this breakdown of boundaries, both between the East and the West and between childhood and adulthood. Later works to be discussed, such as **Lucky Bunny** and **Edelweiss/Paradise** explore the shifts between childhood and adulthood, the haves and the have-nots and the East and the West. As with the paintings of **Black Sea Blue**, it is once again the female character that carries this abject narrative.

“All of my work is like one long narrative, it began when I started doing work and every time a new painting appears it in some way relates back to an older painting. It is my one big story.”<sup>44</sup> As with the children of Chernobyl, there are other central themes that follow Husar throughout her oeuvre. In their entirety, these elements constitute Husar’s narrative: one that begins with her earliest works and continues with the most recent. For the artist, the use of narrative allows for a coherent presentation of progressive events, a clear linearity. Julia Kristeva also recognizes the expressive importance of the narrative. Kristeva writes, “...the most normal solution, commonplace and public at the same time, communicable, shareable, is and will be the narrative. Narrative as the recounting of suffering: fear, disgust, and abjection crying out, they quiet down, concatenated into a story.”<sup>45</sup> For Kristeva, suffering exists as a result of that chasm that is found between the inside and the outside, between self and other. Husar, through her use of narrative, attempts to assuage this suffering by bridging such gaps; Husar looks at the deconstruction of established boundaries, particularly those that exist between East and West. As her paintings are investigations of abjection, using narrative as a means of expunging this abjection, then horror and suffering must be byproducts: “(abjection) whose intimate side is suffering and horror its public feature.”<sup>46</sup> Kristeva further writes that “The narrative yields to a *crying-out theme* that when it tends to coincide with the incandescent states of a boundary-subjectivity that I have called abjection, is the crying-out theme of suffering and horror.”<sup>47</sup> This presence of suffering, as well as of horror within the majority of the paintings of **Black Sea Blue** is an indication of an expression

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<sup>44</sup> Husar, Toronto, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

<sup>45</sup> Kristeva, 145.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 141.

of abjection within the narrative. As a literary expression, Kristeva locates abjection where “apocalypse and carnival left off.”<sup>48</sup> It is beyond the grotesque and the catastrophic as it resides both within and outside the subject. As an expression of the visual arts, it retains this position.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to an interest in abjection, laughter, what Kristeva refers to as the “comedy of abjection,” plays an important role within Husar’s pictorial investigations. The paintings within *Black Sea Blue*, as well as previous works incorporate elements of humour and irony, an important constituent within disaster.<sup>50</sup> Kristeva speaks of laughter’s ability to be both horrific and fascinating.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, Husar’s laughter is both apocalyptic and carnivalesque; her humourous approach to her *abject* subject matter is located in the in-between. It is one that originates within the unconscious.

Although not a surrealist painter, a contradictory misnomer with which Husar’s paintings are often labeled, Husar’s paintings do retain that element of irony and mockery that is rife within surrealist paintings, “I use humour as a means of dealing with those experiences that I paint, they are situations that are at once funny and sad.”<sup>52</sup> Husar’s paintings provoke a “sublime laughter,” a comfortable approach to abjection: an acceptable approach that incorporates fear and horror, allowing for a reduction in sensory

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>49</sup> This ability to depict suffering is something also remarked upon by German theorist Theodor Adorno. Referring to his avowal, “the abundance of real suffering tolerates no forgetting” Adorno discusses the importance of art in relation to the expression and consequent understanding of suffering, “it is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it.” (Theodor Adorno, “Commitment”, *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1997) 312). While some art should not exist in the face of suffering, art also becomes one of the only vehicles through which suffering can be expressed.

<sup>50</sup> Kristeva, 204.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 204.

repulsion. Earlier works such as **Heritage Display** and **Our Lady of Mississauga** use humour and self-mockery as a means of approaching the immigrant experience, while the paintings within **Black Sea Blue**, such as **Odalisque-at-Heart**, project this irony and mockery outwards towards composite caricatures and a foreign experience.

### Quoting Art's Past

Within her investigation of the abject and its subversive effects, Husar often makes recourse to the history of art as an integral part of her shifting narrative: "you cannot *not* look at art history as an artist, it would be very ignorant to do so. I don't specifically aim to copy it in any way, but it is there to feed on."<sup>53</sup> Much of **Black Sea Blue** *feeds on* specific elements of traditional art, using these elements as a means of justifying an end; her use of fabric and its painstaking renderings (which will be discussed further) is one of such examples. Authors Mark Cheetham and Linda Hutcheon in Remembering Postmodernism explore art-historical referencing: "art historical recollections are in fact integral to a new concern for the status of history and the past in art."<sup>54</sup> By invoking references to art's past, Husar is not simply creating a one-dimensional, superficial pastiche of past art forms, but rather a re/construction of a system more readily comprehended than present circumstance: "for the postmodern mnemonist, there is no real history to retrieve and the present cannot therefore be a pastiche of the past."<sup>55</sup> By quoting art's past Husar is implicating it within the present and future, once again blurring the boundaries between what was and what is. As with Chernobyl, an event that

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<sup>52</sup> Husar, Toronto, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

<sup>53</sup> Husar, Toronto, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

<sup>54</sup> Mark A. Cheetham & Linda Hutcheon, Remembering Postmodernism- Trends in Recent Canadian Art (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991) 6.

exists both in the past and in the present, Husar's investigations of art's history dispel compartmentalized notions of time, melding past, present and future.

Among the art styles and artists alluded to within the paintings of **Black Sea Blue** one cannot but mention the works of Belgian painter James Ensor (1860-1949).<sup>56</sup> Remaining under self-imposed exile in the seaside town of Ostend, Belgium, Ensor's early works mirrored his removal from urbanity and his innate distrust of both modernization and urbanization. Growing up, surrounded by women in a somewhat insular town, Ensor's female family members also became the focus of many of his earliest works, such as **Portrait of the Artist's Sister Marie**, 1881. Employed as shopkeepers, the women kept young Ensor surrounded by souvenirs, Oriental curios and carnival masks, Ostend's carnival having an international reputation. These "souvenirs" were to later reappear and serve as fodder for many of Ensor's paintings.

Created in 1888, Ensor's most reproduced work **Entry of Christ into Brussels in 1889** (see figure 12), combines a multitude of such elements. Wishing to depict Christ's would be entry into Brussels on Palm Sunday of the following year, Ensor orchestrates a scene of anxious chaos as Christ rides into town on a donkey, following a marching band and hordes of masked parade participants. This painting incorporates a multitude of simultaneous stories as every inch of available canvas is used to create a narrative whole. Participating within a number of student political groups, Ensor made known his anti-establishment sentiments and distrust of the bourgeoisie. Art historians often speak of

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

Ensor's use of the mask as symbolic of the bourgeois society he often criticized.<sup>57</sup> **Entry of Christ into Brussels** incorporates Ensor's political views in both a veiled and overt attempt at criticizing the decadence and folly of an age. Among other issues, Ensor challenges elements of Christianity, capitalism (with a banner reading "Vive la Social"), as well as regional politics. As in Ensor's earlier works, the figures are at once grotesque and spectacular; the entire canvas becomes something of a carnival in and of itself, deriding all authoritative figures and institutions. The marching soldiers and political dignitaries pose as claustrophobic citizens as well as masked caricatures. However fantastic, implicating itself within the tradition of the carnivalesque, Ensor's paintings continue to retain an element of the real; "...his was an art capable of bold beauty, poetic nuance, and of a vividly accurate reflection of reality."<sup>58</sup> Maintaining the feel of a masquerade ball, Ensor's paintings examine that latent element of society, one that lurks beneath masks and facades.

With the use of masks and caricatures, Ensor employs elements of fantasy as a means of connecting with hidden truths, a means of accessing universal mysteries. Similarly, Husar uses fantastic images in order to communicate often poignant social criticisms. Paintings such as **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine**, while at once autobiographical (as with the majority of Ensor's works), use both puppets and caricatures to illustrate a specific archetype and/or social/political group. Husar's earlier works, like those of Ensor, centre on her more immediate environment and likewise concentrate on the female subject.

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<sup>56</sup>One of such references made by Robert Enright- Robert Enright, "The Garden of Earthly Disappointments", *Natalia Husar's True Confessions* (Edmonton: Woltjen/ Udell Gallery, 1991) 1.

<sup>57</sup>John David Farmer, *Ensor* (New York: George Braziller Inc., 1976) 11.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

While it is her jeering puppets and grotesque caricatures that perhaps most readily mimic Ensor's paintings, Husar's works also resemble those of Ensor with regard to their painterly and narrative space. With paintings such as **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine**, anxious crowds gather in reds and golds, with blues darting across the canvas. Every available space is occupied, each segment communicating a different story, a new family of figures and caricatures. Without recourse to explicit political and social commentary, both Ensor and Husar use a personal and at times ambiguous narrative to convey particular social concerns.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to referencing the works of James Ensor, Husar's paintings are reminiscent of the works of Francisco Goya. Surface appearances aside, it is through both thematics and process that the works relate. Known for his images and explorations of human suffering, Goya, through both realistic and fantastic means, manipulated understood notions of fear, relying on the realities of the Spanish Civil War as well as the tenuous anxieties of dreams. Perhaps the most fantastic of his paintings, the Black Paintings, painted between 1820 and 1824, were produced in stages. What began as benign landscape quickly became some of the most grotesque paintings completed during the nineteenth century, as initial idyllic scenes were quickly over-painted with horrific imaginings. **Saturn Devouring his Son** 1820-1823 (see figure 13) is an example of such a work. Like the paintings contained within **Black Sea Blue**, **Saturn Devouring his Son** examines the dissipating boundaries between reality and imagination: it explores the contingencies of limits. The painting also deals primarily with abjection; the act of devouring one's own

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child uproots the internal/external dichotomy, it is an anti-birth. It is about bringing the outside, inside.

As with Ensor and Goya, Husar uses fantasy as a means of accessing reality, her dream-like images provide an opening to the disaster and trauma of Chernobyl as well as the current situation within Ukraine. As indicated by Maclear, fantasy and the imagination become an important element within witnessing. They become a vehicle through which one can communicate: "We are surrounded by the vapor of the unseen, the outstanding claims of the dead, the ghosts of histories that have been excluded from contemporary society. Thus witnessing involves endless imagination."<sup>60</sup> Relying on her imagination, Husar's works are often non-linear, combining fact with fiction and present with past however, it is through the imagination that one gains greater access to reality.

Keeping to an interest in manipulating art's past, Husar often concentrates on those traditional aspects of art production that have long since been replaced with more digital concerns; an example of this is her interest in drapery. Traditionally one of the more important elements within both religious and secular painting and sculpture, the rendering of drapery became a means of distinguishing various styles and time periods within medieval art production.<sup>61</sup> Swaddling many of her characters in cloth, such as those in **Guilt Quilt** as well as **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine**, Husar mimics this preoccupation with drapery, paying great attention to the rendering of folds and creases.

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<sup>60</sup> Maclear, 75.

This over-abundance of fabric, a topos of excess and instability, recurs often in her paintings. While some drapery is comforting too much fabric is “oppressive.” Husar states, “I like (drapery’s) classical connotations, but I like to take those classical connotations and distort them - I like to take it over the top.”<sup>62</sup> For Husar, the rendering of fabric is a means of hiding scars - “like the damaged mattress that is stitched - you can cover it, but you can still feel that scar even though you can’t see it, fabric lends itself to this.”<sup>63</sup> With **Pandora’s Parcel to Ukraine**, the drapery, as with the characters, seems to spill from the box. What was once the fabric of the shoe mistress’s dress becomes the discarded tablecloth of an abandoned banquet. It is as if one could simply roll up the fabric and rid oneself of the images and experiences that seem to tumble out from the box. In this case while fabric may refer to the luxurious indulgences of a bygone era, it also covers up, hides, decades of Soviet oppression, swathing the present with bandages.

### **Taming the Object**

As with **Pandora’s Parcel to Ukraine**, **Tamed Tiger** 1995 (see figure 14) also revels in the folds of fabric. More humorous than previous paintings of the series, **Tamed Tiger** explores the tousled bedroom of a Ukrainian dominatrix. Seeming to tumble from the left-hand corner of the canvas, the white fabric of **Pandora’s Parcel to Ukraine** trails the woman, mingling with the embroidered pillows and drapes, faux Persian carpets and black velvet wall hangings of this Ukrainian boudoir. Using her own figure as part biography and part “everywoman,” Husar composes this generic figure as disguised self,

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<sup>61</sup> For example, the rendering of drapery became one way of distinguishing early Gothic from later Gothic paintings and sculpture, the latter being more realistic in depiction.

<sup>62</sup> Husar, Toronto, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

<sup>63</sup> Husar, Toronto, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

a figure that is both commanding and relenting, providing questions regarding power and knowledge.<sup>64</sup> Clutching the tasseled ties from the embroidered drapes and sporting a tattoo of a heart, a symbol found throughout the **Black Sea Blue** series, both the character and the objects littering the canvas are traditional symbols of Ukraine.

Acting as a sort of finale to the series, **Tamed Tiger** brings the images and experiences within **Black Sea Blues** full circle; the introductory paintings of the series, demonstrating an anxiety and trepidation towards an anticipated voyage are replaced by the knowledge and understanding of (a) lived experience. It is the internalization of this physical experience. The figure within **Tamed Tiger** is in control however, as with the dominating figures within masochism there is an innocent edge to this character, as if she is being upheld by the submissive, an inviting smile juxtaposed to the weathered interior. While commanding, gripping the tassels as one would a whip, she is also bound by the rope encircling her ankles. Presently, Ukraine maintains a similar position - recently independent, the country still retains dependent relationships; like the dominatrix, Ukraine appears to be in control of its own actions, however, this autonomy is bound. This is also true of the Chernobyl Children. Growing up in an independent environment, they lack the oppression of the Soviet regime, however, this dependence is replaced by another, a Western dependence. Investigating the relationships between power and victimization, Husar examines her own role within this dialectic, emphasizing the confusion that can exist between victim and oppressor. Likewise the events at Chernobyl lead to a questioning of established power structures: who suffers and who claims responsibility? As with the bound dominatrix of **Tamed Tiger**, those officials involved

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<sup>64</sup>Podedworny, 23.

with the Chernobyl disaster, while perhaps abusers of power, were also subjected to elevated authority. There exists a fine line between the victimized and victimizer.

As with the traditional masochistic relationship, **Tamed Tiger** is all about control and power; it is about a contract, one that exists between the dominant and submissive player. This idea of a contract can be extended to incorporate Husar's experience of the relationships that exist between the East and the West, the "haves" and the "have-nots": the West holds power over the East, and as a "Western" visitor within an "Eastern" country, Husar is an embodiment of this power structure. Also indicative of this masochistic relationship is Husar's role as dominatrix, a role always reserved for the female, one that emphasizes the role of mother as nurturer and provider and consequently one who administers punishment. Within his writings of Masoch, and subsequent exploration of masochism, theorist Gilles Deleuze speaks extensively of the role of the "mother." However, the woman's role as dominant figure within the works of Masoch as well as within **Tamed Tiger** is one of contradiction. She is not a sadist, but an almost unwilling participant. In **Tamed Tiger** she is a female who is both inviting and repellent, innocent and knowledgeable, gentle and controlling. "In all of Masoch's novels, the woman, although persuaded, is still basically doubting, as though she were afraid: she is forced to commit herself to a role to which she may prove inadequate, either by overplaying or by falling short of expectations."<sup>65</sup> Likewise, Husar's dominatrix is both the dominator and the dominated. Pushed to the edge of the canvas, the character is

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<sup>65</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty", Masochism trans. by Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1991) 21.

almost dwarfed by the excess of the room. The rope that she grips in her hand, a tool for control, also binds her, her ankle tied with rope.

Another masochistic element found within the majority of Husar's paintings, primarily those of **Black Sea Blue**, is the fetish object. An essential element of masochism, the fetish object surfaces within Masoch's writing as shoes, whips, furs... all of which present themselves within Husar's work. With **Tamed Tiger**, the figure is clad in one black high heel shoe and one black boot. The tasseled rope held within her hands takes on the guise of a whip, while the element of fur is present within earlier paintings such as **Our Lady of Mississauga** and newer works such as **Edelweiss/Paradise** and **Lucky Bunny**. This inclusion of fur will be discussed further. The discarded shoe also appears in works such as **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine** and **Edelweiss/Paradise**.

While other works of the series resemble James Ensor's, **Tamed Tiger** as well as **Odalisque-at-Heart** 1994 (see figure 15), another painting of the series, evokes the "exotic" beasts and bloody massacres of the Romantic paintings of Eugene Delacroix. This evocation, however, is one of critical exploration. Producing scenes of an "Orientalist" nature, Delacroix's paintings often explored colonial subjects, emphasizing the subordination of colonized countries, women and wild beasts (i.e. tigers, stallions) in the face of masculine rule. Described by Edward Said as being a study of European perspectives of the Orient, Orientalism combined the exotic and erotic nature of the

mysterious, the foreign, the colonized, with its *passive* cultural position, a position of submission and subordination.<sup>66</sup>

With the advent of the Romantic tradition in painting, the neoclassical scenes of victors shifted to the more visceral scenes of victims. Delacroix's paintings mirrored this shift and his works began concentrating on acts of domination and subordination. These scenes invariably took place within colonized settings, such as **Women of Algiers 1834** (see figure 16), which combined his interest in "exotic" locales with foreign "exotic" women. The Romantics were also fond of the depiction of wild "exotic" beasts, such as the tiger, the jaguar and the stallion. Romantic artists such as Delacroix and Henry Fuseli often employed such animals to connote irrational physical passion. Such animals were often paired with women for like reasons; within the Romantic tradition, women were seen as objects of Romantic paintings and not its producers.

Often spoken of within the parameters of Romanticism, Husar's works share certain elements with the tradition, such as her bright use of colour and the depth of feeling within her paintings however, her female position is sufficient to separate her from the tradition. Within **Black Sea Blue**, Husar manipulates these Romantic elements, reversing them so as to question and challenge their meaning. **Tamed Tiger** explores these notions of colonialism and Orientalism. Within the background of the painting, gracing the languid walls of this apartment room is a black velvet wall hanging depicting foreign and exotic animals such as the peacock and distinctly Near Eastern architecture painted in the bright colours of the Romantic tradition. Beneath the hanging is another piece of black

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<sup>66</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 3.

velvet carpet with the image of a tiger, spread out like a bear skin rug. Both images suggest something of the exotic and the mysterious, bringing forth imaginings of faraway places and colonized lands. These images are reminiscent of the artist's own romantic imaginings of an anticipated Ukrainian voyage as portrayed within **Guilt Quilt**.

With **Odalisque-at-Heart**, the central figure, a Ukrainian woman imitating a Hollywood starlet (also a disguised self-portrait), stands poised in front of another such wall hanging: a scene from The Arabian Nights as men with turbans flee on horseback from an Eastern city, the reddish mosques in the background contrasted against the blue night sky. As in Delacroix's paintings, one horse carries the frightened figure of a woman, dressed in foreign garb - another character requiring masculine protection. The poised *Odalisque* foregrounding the carpet samples the exoticism/eroticism of the East however, in this case, Ukraine becomes the mysterious and foreign land, whereupon all the artist's fears and anxieties are projected. As previously mentioned, Husar envisions Ukraine as a gateway of sorts between the East and the West. Depicting such images, Husar not only comments upon the subordination of women with the Romantic tradition, and the Romantic use of Orientalism, but also Ukraine's position as an in-between.

### **Paradise Lost**

Two recent works, **Edelweiss/Paradise** 1998-99 (see figure 17) and **Lucky Bunny** 1999 (see figure 18), both produced after the **Black Sea Blue** series, are located within this in-between. The paintings use irony as a means of deconstructing the cross-cultural dialectic, one placing the "have-nots" in the world of the "haves". Both

**Edelweiss/Paradise** and **Lucky Bunny** pick up where the **Black Sea Blue** series left off, continuing Husar's "grand narrative". Having come full circle, these works once again explore the melding of the East and of the West. Projected several years into the future, those "Chernobyl Children" of **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine** and **Lullaby** reappear in these two paintings as girls on the edge of adulthood, what Husar refers to as "Chernobyl juvenile delinquents" a meeting of diverging geographies and generations.

With **Edelweiss/Paradise** these archetypes, these "delinquents" are introduced into a Western atmosphere, producing a melding of the East and the West, the traditional versus the technological: "...the East is moving into the West and becoming the West in a way. That creates a fresh new mix and uncertain ground."<sup>67</sup> Continuing from her earliest works, the characters within **Edelweiss** are attempting to attain something that does not exist, a forgotten ideal, that "immigrant dream." By eliminating boundaries, these abject children of Chernobyl are moving in from the margins. Unpacking the boxes from **Pandora's Parcel to Ukraine**, the girls immerse themselves within what they interpret as Western "culture" against a backdrop of traditional Ukrainian embroidered fabric and kitschy tropical wallpaper. Dressed in track pants and furs, toting cellular phones and now defunct airline bags and drinking Soviet champagne, these girls take part in what they believe to be a utopic Western "paradise."

This paradise, however, is one filled with smoke screens and mirrors. As the radiation from Chernobyl passed quietly over disappearing borders, so has the false idea of Western freedom. Within The Illusion of the End Baudrillard also addresses the issue of



this false Western utopic paradise: an ideal freedom, ignorant of the vestiges of corrupt capitalism. With what Baudrillard refers to as the “thawing of the East”, in this case Ukraine’s release from Soviet rule, the “Easterners” are confronted with a false liberty, one that promises to be “free of ideology,” but at what expense? Baudrillard speaks of an “ardent desire to imitate the free-market countries, where all liberty has already been exchanged for technological ease of living.”<sup>68</sup> The characters within **Edelweiss/Paradise** seem to be participating in such an idyllic fantasy. Against a backdrop reminiscent of Soviet presence, the girls playfully adopt the “technological ease” of which Baudrillard speaks, seeming oblivious to the realities of so-called Western freedom.

Becoming the subjects of their own photo-shoot, the grown-up “Chernobyl Children” reprise their roles in **Lucky Bunny**. Posing as Eastern “Lolitas”, characters reminiscent of the dominatrix and odalisque of **Black Sea Blue**, these invented characters further support Husar’s narrative, previous looks of blame and distrust replaced with those of friendship and amusement. Once again manipulating the fetish object, the characters in both **Lucky Bunny**, and **Edelweiss** appear clad in furs. Exploring the “hierarchy” of furs, Husar juxtaposes the “pathetic” rabbit fur with that more aristocratic fur of the mink, the furs becoming allegorical combining notions of the “high” and “low” and the “hunter” and the “hunted.”<sup>69</sup>

Having long since been regarded as a symbol of both power and knowledge, fur also becomes a way of melding the past with the present; combining old-world nostalgia with

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<sup>67</sup> Husar, Toronto, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

<sup>68</sup> Baudrillard, The Illusion of the End, 29-30.

contemporary conflation, it becomes a means of traveling through memory while retaining wisdom and control. Masoch recognized and exploited the power attributed to fur: "Her head was magnificent in spite of the stony, lifeless eyes, but this was the only part of her that I was able to see, for the sublime creature had wrapped her marble body in a great fur beneath which she was huddled like a shivering cat."<sup>70</sup> When discussing Masoch's writings, Deleuze speaks of the use of fur as "being invested with an exclusively feminine significance"; it is significant of the hunt, usually carried out by the women within Masoch's writings.<sup>71</sup> With Masoch's most revealing novel, *Venus in Furs*, as the title would suggest, the female protagonist rarely appears without her ermine coat, brandishing it as a symbol of her power and control before the submissive. Fur then becomes emblematic of dominance. As with *Our Lady of Mississauga*, it is only the female characters within Husar's paintings that are clad in fur, looming large over the dwarfed male characters, once again reinstating the traditional masochistic relationship: dominant female and submissive male. As with Masoch's writings, the father figure does not function within Husar's canvas; they are arenas created only for the mother.

### **Limiting the Limitless**

Manipulating fantasy and the imagination, Husar's paintings incorporate a relinquishing of empirical sense which is replaced by a fractioned narrative, one that focuses on intuition and memory, tradition and story. The paintings within *Black Sea Blue*, as well as later works, rely on this non-linearity as a process of witnessing and in turn provide the viewer with a cerebral/sensual encounter, one that is both overwhelming and seemingly

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<sup>69</sup> Husar, Toronto, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

<sup>70</sup> Masoch, 143.

residual. Interested in that “subtle damage,” Husar explores both the physical and mental scarring that is left by a disaster such as Chernobyl. By investigating that which is otherwise hidden, those aspects of collective identity and experience that remain buried, Husar is unearthing this damage, that inevitable scarring that constitutes any shared/lived experience.

Establishing their own dialectic, Husar’s paintings are at once beautiful and repulsive, inviting the viewer to participate within a deconstruction of identity and experience, of the shared and of the private. Vacillating between anger and humour, accusation and guilt, they function as intermediaries. Her investigations of Chernobyl and the current situation in Ukraine continue from where the written word leaves off: as with abjection, it is an obscuring of limits, a breaking down of established boundaries.

For Husar, Chernobyl acts as a springboard for such an investigation. Not only has Chernobyl abetted in such a disintegration, it is also one of the main impetuses behind the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This investigation of disintegrating borders and existing paradoxes occurs throughout Husar’s oeuvre. As demonstrated within this chapter, there are four distinct sections in which this analysis takes place: 1) Husar’s exploration of the “haves” and “have-nots”, 2) her use of painting as a method of expelling abjection, 3) her exploration of art’s history as a means of melding the past with the present and 4) her investigation of power and victimization. An investigation into the accident at Chernobyl opens up an arena in which each of these analyses can be conducted. Husar’s earlier works, both before and at the beginning of the series **Black Sea Blue** concentrate on the

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<sup>71</sup> Deleuze, 61.

melding of the East and of the West, of the “haves” and the “have-nots”. Continuing with pieces such as **Pandora’s Parcel to Ukraine**, Husar’s investigations shift to those Chernobyl Children left as abject while exploring the collapsing demarcations between inside and outside, between belonging and expulsion. With these intermediate works there is also an exploration of art’s past, manipulating the past and employing it within the present, creating a convergence of the two. Those paintings acting as a finale to the series, such as **Tamed Tiger** and **Odalisque-at-Heart**, explore the often simultaneous positions of power and victimization, emphasizing the tenuous line between victim and oppressor and returning full circle to her previous exploration of the insubstantial borders between the East and the West, the haves and the have-nots. With her new works, such as **Edelweiss/Paradise** Husar explores various facets of these previously established themes. Proceeding in a circular fashion, **Black Sea Blue** begins with the personal, continues with the socio-physical and then returns once again to the personal.

## Chapter Three

### Epidemia

In 1995, Taras Polataiko created the installation work **Cradle** (see figure 19), first exhibited at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon (1996)<sup>72</sup> the piece was produced as a response to Polataiko's pilgrimage to 'the zone'. Traveling across the grounds surrounding Chernobyl's destroyed reactor, accompanied by a guide from the Canadian Embassy, Polataiko brought with him neither camera nor canvas as the sole purpose of the trip was physical exposure. When asked his reason for traveling to the zone, Polataiko simply replied, "I went there to breathe."<sup>73</sup> As a result of his pilgrimage and consequent visual and aesthetic reaction to Chernobyl, Polataiko deconstructs notions of what it is to be a witness. Like most illustrations of testimonial art, this deconstruction is both positive and informative rather than nihilistic.<sup>74</sup> In producing **Cradle** Polataiko has created an opening within an otherwise closed discussion; through his investigation of virus, mutation, masochism and ritual the artist is establishing an experimental space, an arena for the dismantling of the traditional "witness".

### Comforting the Uncomfortable

Deliberately exposing himself to the contaminated air surrounding the sarcophagus which now houses the reactor, Polataiko, upon his return to Canada, extracted over five litres of his own blood, an amount equal to that found in the human cardiovascular system. Contaminated with unseen radiation, Polataiko's blood, while not carrying a virus,

<sup>72</sup> **Cradle** was also exhibited at the Caelum Gallery, N.Y, N.Y 1996.

<sup>73</sup> Quote taken from an interview with the artist, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

likewise exists as a contaminant coursing through the body and affecting internal organs. For Polataiko, as his body is “infected” with radiation, this radiation is almost synonymous with virus. Laced with rat poison, an anti-coagulant, the blood was then placed within a cast iron bathtub, which had been recovered from the ruins of a local hospital. The bathtub was plated with nickel and suspended from the gallery ceiling with anchor chains made of a similar material creating a subtle motion. Covering the interior bathtub was a metallic reflective surface, much like that of a mirror, with a small round stopper located in the centre. The stopper acted as barrier between the contaminated blood and the visitor. Although hermetically sealed, the stopper could also be lifted to reveal the blood content within.

Surrounding the bathtub are what Polataiko refers to as “paintings” (see figure 20). These paintings are comprised of six ovals (138 x 80 cm each) constructed out of dry wall, wallpapered and framed with polished stainless steel strips. Intended to look like the Soviet wallpaper still peeling from the walls of the abandoned apartments of Chernobyl, the “paintings” also recall the Suprematist paintings of Kasimir Malevich.<sup>75</sup> In addition to this art historical referencing, Polataiko also produced these “paintings” as an exercise in *trompe l’oeil* painting. Intrigued by what lies beyond the senses, Polataiko talks of using “trompe l’oeil” as a method of deceiving the senses by creating illusionistic space. As such it challenges the viewer to step outside traditional boundaries of sight; it requires that the viewer displace reality and penetrate beneath superficial construction to uncover an altered meaning. To achieve this effect Polataiko punched a hole in the middle of each

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<sup>74</sup> Maclear, 142.

<sup>75</sup> Greg Beatty, “Taras Polataiko”, *Parachute*, #83 (September, 1996) 51.

oval painting and then meticulously patched and painted over the intrusion. The damage was only detectable at a certain angle and with a combination of lighting effects. Once the scar was seen it would disappear again; the viewer had to maneuver until the exact conditions were replicated. When observed, the “blemish” appeared as nothing more than a subtle glare.

Installed in one large room at the Mendel Art Gallery, the central space sought to elicit further correlation between the two compositional elements. Upon entering the unified space, gallery-goers would circle the bathtub (which was suspended six inches off the gallery floor and hanging by 64 feet of chain), contemplating whether or not to lift the plug. With an essay installed at the gallery entrance, viewers were informed as to the tub’s contents and possible interpretations; it was a personal decision whether or not to delve further. The highlighted paintings placed behind the bathtub, resembling hallway mirrors and hung as such, added to the austerity of the piece. Dimly lit, spotlights were cast upon the bathtub and the six oval paintings lining the back wall, bringing out the glare of both the nickel tub and the polished frames. Both responding to the effects of glare and reflection - displacing notions of the “I” and the “other”, the bathtub, as well as the “paintings” toyed with the idea of containment, emphasizing the deception of surface. As with contamination and radiation, both elements of the installation attempt to *contain* something not readily anticipated or perceived. Complementary rather than polemical, both in their clinicality and function/purpose, the tub and the paintings are at once abstract and precise: abstract in their superficiality, yet precise with regards to their connection to a particular situation of a specific geography and community. The illusion

of cleanliness and purity is also a superficial assumption however, it is through a kind of ritual of clinical purification and purging, evident in both elements, that this latent corruption becomes outwardly manifested. Traces of physical violence (paintings) and traces of contamination and virus (blood) are projected upon these complementary elements, pitching acts of physical intrusion against the superficial silence of the installation.

The title of this installation is significant in that it evokes various interpretations of the “cradle”. The bathtub acts as a sort of container, protecting a coveted substance - comforting the uncomfortable. Moreover, the subtle movement of the bathtub, the slow motion of back and forth, recalls the comforting sway of a cradle or rocker. The word cradle has also been used to connote a beginning, a structure from which everything/something stems and the fluid contents of the bathtub are indicative of this foundation, this support of life.<sup>76</sup> However, **Cradle** also functions as a parody of this support system for it also connotes death and contamination, virus being a life-killing substance; the bathtub also resembles a coffin. As with Polataiko’s use of illusion and reflection, the title of the installation is also deceptive; rather than signifying life, **Cradle** in fact implies its reverse.

Interested in issues of self-reflection and how one practices the act of looking, Polataiko has stated that the mirrored surface of **Cradle** is meant to create a reflected image of the viewer. By placing the stopper in the middle of the mirrored surface, the viewer’s gaze is

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<sup>76</sup> Ukraine has also been referred to as the cradle of the steppes, referring to the lush vegetation and ideal conditions for farming.



reflected back with the inclusion of a “third eye”, an altered/mutated self-portrait. Mythically located in the middle of the forehead, just above the eyebrows, the “third eye”, for those who have it, allows an individual “second sight.” Thought to be related to the pineal gland, this “ability” is used by seers to see into the spiritual world; within the practice of Yoga, this ability can be accessed through meditation. Through the inclusion of this “third eye”, Polataiko adds yet another dimension to the act of looking, a practice which now extends beyond the traditional senses invoking the presence of a sixth sense, one incorporated within the practice of prophecy and divination.

Evoking notions of the prophetic, this alteration of the reflective surface also challenges the ownership of the gaze. As with Polataiko’s previous performances (**Artist As Politician**, **Artist as Meal**, both of 1992) **Cradle** challenges the viewer to inquire as to who is doing the looking. Delineations are obscured as a result of this subject/object reversal/dispersal. At this point the viewer becomes inextricably woven within the work. Confronted with their own self-image within the mirrored surface of the tub, viewers are forced into an act of self-reflection. Where does one draw the line between self and other, self and artwork and more importantly, self *as* artwork? Reversing this binary and leading into a questioning of one’s own role within the installation and one’s own role as witness, Polataiko blurs the line between the private and the public. What was once considered private has been made public. The act of looking which can be considered a somewhat private practice has been turned on its head. Through the inclusion of a mirrored surface this private act of looking becomes an act of display; the personal becomes communicable.

Using the repeated mirror surfaces to engender discussions of looking, ownership of the gaze as well as self/other displacement, Polataiko manipulates elements of reflection within **Cradle** for both social and aesthetic purposes. Situating the viewer as producer and participant, the mirrored surfaces seek to disrupt the I/not I dichotomy; as with a virus, boundaries are transcended and the divisions between “myself” and “other” become blurred. Likewise, his use of illusionistic effects such as trompe l’oeil within the installation, also challenge, confuse and yet elucidate notions regarding surface and its ability/inability to contain that which cannot be contained. Such is the case with the wallpaper paintings. On the surface, the paintings appear to be flawless however, upon closer examination one notices the violent interruptions created by the artist’s fist.<sup>77</sup>

### **Artist as Reflection**

An interest in reflection and illusionary tactics manifests itself in the majority of Polataiko’s earliest Canadian works. Two performance pieces from 1992, **Artist as Politician: In the Shadow of a Monument** (see figure 21) and **Artist as a Meal: Monument à la Carte**, address issues of looking and self-reflection, while also similarly existing as visual deceptions. Both were “living” monuments also posing as inanimate statues. With **Artist as Politician**, Polataiko spent several days as a counter monument, a “twin” to the statue of Ray Hnatyshyn, the former Canadian Governor General whose monument in Saskatoon was erected to commemorate Ukrainian settlement within western Canada. Painted bronze and standing on a pedestal, Polataiko invited Ukrainian-

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<sup>77</sup>The reactions to **Cradle** were, for the most part, favourable. After the controversy surrounding **Artist as Politician**, there was little Polataiko could do to surprise the incoming audience. However, on the opening day of the exhibit one of Saskatoon’s newspapers, the Star Phoenix attempted to spark some controversy by questioning the merits of such a visceral display. Myrna Kostash, “Blood in the bathtub” The Globe and Mail January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1996, C1.

Canadians to add the names of relatives to a growing list of Ukrainian-Canadians who settled the West, but were not fortunate enough to have statues erected to commemorate their achievements. Eliciting much controversy, the performance caught the attention of a wider arts community and in 1995 Polataiko was named one of “ten artists to watch world-wide” by ARTnews.<sup>78</sup>

Likewise, in **Artist as Meal** performed for the University of Saskatchewan Faculty of Fine Arts luncheon, Polataiko painted himself bronze, this time posing as a Dionysian feast. Wheeled out on a food cart, complete with suited butler, and surrounded by fruit, Polataiko took his place among the offered desserts. Invited to create a piece for the faculty as a result of the success of **Artist as Politician**, Polataiko chose to parody his own public image, offering himself up as delectable centrepiece, an item to be used and devoured. With **Artist as Meal** the living feast invited the gaze of the lunch guests and yet contrary to traditional reclining nudes, the object returned their gaze. The performance was to be, in part, a commentary on the university’s reaction to the controversy surrounding **Artist as Politician**.

Both performances, **Artist as Politician** and **Artist as Meal**, demanded that the viewer step outside the constraints of sight and normative reality in order to participate within the simulacrum. The divisions between reality and non-reality were once again confused. As postulated by Jean Baudrillard, we live in a state of “hyperreality,” one where we are inundated with simulation: reality has all but disappeared and we are left with simulacra:

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<sup>78</sup> Konstantin Akinsha, “Ten Artists to Watch World-wide- Taras Polataiko”, ARTnews (January 1995) 140-141.

“At the conclusion of (this) process of reproduction, the real becomes not only that which can be reproduced, but that which is already reproduced: the hyperreal.”<sup>79</sup> Using his own body as *trompe l’oeil*, Polataiko was at once living organism and petrified monument. As with **Cradle**, both “monuments” brought the viewer face to face with issues of reflection. With **Artist as Politician**, Polataiko’s living statue acted as twin rather than copy; gazes were locked, but who was watching whom? Who was witness to what and to whom? This binary presupposes the formation of the self and problematizes the identification of the “I” with the “twin”- the duplicated self (image).

Another series dealing exclusively with elements of reflection and *trompe l’oeil* is **Glare** 1994 (see figure 22). Like the subtle oval “paintings” of **Cradle**, **Glare** sought to record the tricks of light played across glossy surfaces.<sup>80</sup> Photographing several black and white reproductions of Kasimir Malevich’s Suprematist paintings, Polataiko then went on to paint what he photographed. As with his interest in the effects of *trompe l’oeil*, Polataiko discusses Suprematism with regard to its attempt to “get rid of surface appearances.”<sup>81</sup> Capturing the “glare” that would reflect off the smooth page of the art book as a result of the photographer’s flash, Polataiko meticulously painted the effects of this slight alteration, creating a series of paintings that put into question the historical “blind spots” and “glares” that are often seen but not noticed within mediated information.<sup>82</sup> “...With

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<sup>79</sup> Jean Baudrillard, “The Hyper-Realism of Simulation”, *Art in Theory- 1900-1990* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992) 1049-1051.

<sup>80</sup> The connection between Polataiko’s work and that of Kasimir Malevich is also evident within **Cradle**, the oval paintings of **Cradle** have been described as being “Suprematist” in style: “By selecting white wallpaper with a multi-coloured “check” pattern, Polataiko alludes to Suprematism, a non-objective art movement founded by his fellow countryman Kasimir Malevich...” from Greg Beatty, “Taras Polataiko”, *Parachute* #83 (Sept. 1996) 51.

<sup>81</sup> Enright, “Truth or Glare”, 23.

<sup>82</sup> Greg Beatty, “Taras Polataiko”, *C Magazine* (Spring 1995), 60.

the **Glare** series the reflection on the pages of the art book is something so obvious, something so visible that we stop looking at it, we see through it because it is so much there.”<sup>83</sup>

## Epidemia

“The East’s great weapon is no longer the H-bomb, but Chernobyl. It is the accident, the accidental virus, the virus of its own decomposition - Chernobyl whose radioactive cloud, by crossing frontiers with far greater ease than armored divisions, prefigured the collapse of the Wall and the progressive contamination of the Western World.”

-Jean Baudrillard<sup>84</sup>

Consistently using terms such as contamination, infiltration and infection, Jean Baudrillard speaks of the dissolution of the East, the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as the Berlin Wall, in terms of a virulent contamination, one able to destroy as well as dismantle. This dismantling of history, one that fits within his ideas of a revisionist history, takes on an epidemic form, emphasizing its ability to pass undetected across borders.<sup>85</sup> For Baudrillard, as well as Polataiko, the accident at Chernobyl is a prime example of this virulent infection. While it was the radiation of Chernobyl that infected Western Europe, it is this Western ideology that begins to “infect” Ukraine upon the dissolution of the Soviet Empire. Chernobyl is what Baudrillard refers to as a “*bombe à dépression*”, one that “turns its own depression into a bomb.”<sup>86</sup> It is an implosion, a breaking apart from the inside, spreading ideology as virus. With **Cradle**, this “virus”,

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<sup>83</sup> Polataiko, Saskatoon, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

<sup>84</sup> Jean Baudrillard, The Illusion of the End 39.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 39.

this political and social contamination, is smuggled across borders, carried across a continent, housed within this “cradle” of flesh. Like the contamination of Chernobyl delineated by Baudrillard, Polataiko also traverses East to West, carrying with him the remnants of socio-political as well as environmental disaster.

For Baudrillard, Chernobyl, this paradigm of virus, as well as the eventual dissolution of USSR acted as a catalyst. Blurring the boundaries between Good and Evil ultimately leading to a transparency of the two, this dissolution is nothing but a new role for the East, a new strategy that emphasizes a society’s weakness and penchant for instability, in short a new strategy in the wake of the Cold War.<sup>87</sup> It is apostasy, a renunciation of one virus for another. The bacteria of the East has now been replaced by the “liberal virus” of the West, one that accentuates a need for consumerism and a love for the object.<sup>88</sup> Where it was once simple to separate the Evil from the Good, the East from the West, there has now been a transfusion between the two. As viruses cross-contaminate, there has been a melding of the East and the West. What was once contained by the rigidity of ideological borders has now infiltrated and in turn been infiltrated by the “other.”

Conversely, Baudrillard also indicates that while “evil” and destruction are carried as virus, as epidemic, so is freedom.<sup>89</sup> With this “thawing of the East”, is a “thawing of liberty.” It is also this sense of freedom that accompanies **Cradle**. While this act of bloodletting is a form of purgation, it is also a release from the binds of the body. Julie Kristeva discusses such a breakdown of boundaries with regards to abjection.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 38.

Distorting the boundaries between inside and outside and subject and object, *Cradle* works at challenging, in fact dismantling limits. Likewise, Kristeva speaks of abjection as being caused by that which “does not respect borders, positions, rules.”<sup>90</sup> With *Cradle*, Polataiko’s contaminated blood, by being exhibited within the bathtub, has already transcended the limits of skin and body. Through the process of extraction, the contaminated metaphoric body has been purified; the tainted substance has been expelled. “Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, life by death.”<sup>91</sup> As a product of defilement and contamination there has been a purging of Polataiko’s blood, that which is body-polluting, that which threatens identity and its constructs.

Within his discussion of limits and virus and the revisionist element of history, Baudrillard also makes mention of repentance: “Repentance is part of post-modernity - the recycling of past forms, the exalting of residues, rehabilitation by *bricolage*, eclectic sentimentality.”<sup>92</sup> This repentance, this desire to go back and alter aspects of history, or better yet, “recycle” past events and situations is related to aspects of *trompe l’oeil*. With this recycling of the past, the events are not actually themselves they are illusions, they are only simulations. Like the events transformed by the media, they have become hyper-real. They suffer from what Baudrillard refers to as the “stereophonic effect.”<sup>93</sup> As

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>90</sup> Kristeva, 4.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>92</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End* 35.

<sup>93</sup> Notion put forth in Jean Baudrillard’s *The Illusion of the End*, contending that as a result of this current need to “fine-tune”, objects/events are becoming altered and are becoming something more perfect, something other than what they were (p. 5).

previously mentioned, much of Polataiko's installation, as well as previous works, examine issues of simulation and reproduction, giving it an additional function, emphasizing society's dependence on simulacra and the hyper-real. Polataiko manipulates the effects of *trompe l'oeil* as a means of investigating the illusions of time and space.

The notion of the virus, a virology, infiltrates all aspects of *Cradle*, both from a formal and socio-political dimension.<sup>94</sup> Preoccupied with ideas of contamination, mutation and transformation, Polataiko uses the viral element as a means of expounding on that part of identity that traverses borders and generations. It is also an examination of infection, both physical and metaphorical, an examination of the virus as being a border between self and other. It is something that can be at once part of one individual and yet part of another; it is something to be passed along. As visitor to the contaminated site of Chernobyl, Polataiko carries with him the pathogens, the physical evidence of what he encountered.

While it was an interest in Suprematism, as both avant-garde movement and style, and a strong respect for Ukrainian artist Kasimir Malevich, that prompted Polataiko to create the *Glare* series, it is also through the influence of Malevich that Polataiko comes to discuss his interest in bacteria. Within his "Introduction to the Theory of the Additional Element in Painting" Suprematist painter Kasimir Malevich discusses "the additional

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<sup>94</sup> As with Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida also speaks of the damaging effects of the virus, both physical and metaphorical. For Derrida, the virus, also described as a parasite is something that, above all else, alters and eventually breaks down communication: "Even from the biological standpoint, this is what happens with a virus; it derails a mechanism of the communicational type, its coding and decoding," from Peter



element” which exists in painting. This element acts as a sort of bacteria that mutates and in turn infects and alters aspects of art as well as everyday life.<sup>95</sup> Before commencing his career as a professional artist Malevich practiced medicine; later as an art teacher he would use his skill as a diagnostician to explain movements and changes in the visual arts. This former career would influence his thoughts on art. Malevich would discuss creativity in terms of a bacteria or virus that would *infect* the artist. As Polataiko relates, this “bacteria” would enter the artist’s brain and consequently modify his/her aesthetic vision.<sup>96</sup> For the artist, the bacteria also acts an agent of collective memory.<sup>97</sup>

In addition to an interest in virus and contamination, Polataiko also cites his interest in latency, an interest in “things that aren’t visible, they are there, but they are not visible. A virus is very much like this, you can’t perceive it, you can’t get in touch with it without becoming a part of it. You don’t deal with a virus without it becoming part of you or you becoming part of it.”<sup>98</sup> This interest in latency is something that follows Polataiko throughout his work. With *Cradle*, the very essence of the work is concealed. The bathtub acts as a container of sorts, housing the contaminated blood, concealing that which is in essence the carrier. The inclusion of elements of trompe l’oeil also underlines Polataiko’s intention to hide, to conceal that which is to be discovered.

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Brunette and David Wills, “The Spatial Arts: An Interview with Jacques Derrida”, Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media and Architecture (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 12.

<sup>95</sup> Kasimir Malevich, “Introduction to the Theory of the Additional Element in Painting”, The Non-Objective World (Chicago: Paul Theobald and Co., 1959) 26.

<sup>96</sup> Enright, “Truth or Glare”, 23.

<sup>97</sup> Within *Cradle*, virus also acts as “an agent of collective memory”; it is something latent that can be found within all orderings of society (Enright, “Truth or Glare”, 26). As described by Camus in *The Plague*, the virus is something dormant, but ever existent, it infiltrates all aspects of day to day function, however concealed. This is how Polataiko uses the virus; it exists, as does memory within one’s own unconscious, on a level that is hidden, however, once awakened, this composite virus, bacteria and memory command control and override and mutate all operating systems, whether physical or emotional.

<sup>98</sup> Polataiko, Saskatoon, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

### **Transcending the Transpolitic (Absenting Metaphor)**

Keeping with this notion of contamination and contagion, Baudrillard also explores issues of metastasis with relation to virus, discussing what he refers to as a (gross) “confusion of categories” within contemporary society: “Thus every individual category is subject to contamination, substitution is possible between any sphere and any other: there is a total confusion of types.”<sup>99</sup> With regard to its medical significance, metastasis, as it relates to cancer, occurs when the cells from one tumour migrate and begin to create tumours elsewhere in the body. When tumours metastasize, they form secondary tumours, which invade new physical sites. This metastasis, this bleeding of one category into another is also something that interests Polataiko and this concern is evident in *Cradle*. With his work *Transparency of Evil*, Baudrillard explores this notion of metastasis and metonymy, metastasis being the melding of categories, the passing of one sphere into the next emphasizing the obliteration of specific categories, which have in turn been replaced by meta-categories. For example, nothing is sexual anymore, as everything has become sexual; we have achieved a state of transexuality. As for metonymy, Baudrillard speaks of the constant usage of umbrella terms, the name of one thing being replaced by the name of another. Thus the term itself has lost any meaning as it is being used to address multiple states of being. The same has happened in all spheres of social conduct. There is no notion of the political since everything has become political, “Politics is no longer restricted to the political sphere, but infects every sphere—economics, science, art, sport...”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil* (London: Verso, 1996) 8.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

This notion of *transpoliticism* is something Polataiko addresses when discussing **Cradle**. Polataiko asserts that all facets of life have become political, including aesthetics. While he says that he does not intend for his work to be political, it nevertheless achieves this status, as “anything is political now, with these post-modern discourses, anything can be traced to anything else.”<sup>101</sup> Like a virus, a contagion, these types have confounded. There is even difficulty in creating metaphor as metaphor occurs when there is a distinction of categories and thus an ability to compare. With this merging of types there is no need for comparison as all is simulacra: “This is an aspect of a general tendency towards transexuality which extends well beyond sex, affecting all disciplines as they lose their specificity and partake of a process of confusion and contagion - a viral loss of determinacy which is the prime event among all the new events that assail us.”<sup>102</sup> Polataiko continues, “Anything and nothing is political.”<sup>103</sup> With **Cradle**, the very choice of subject matter is a political expression, whether intended or not. As an event that played a major role in the dissolution of the Soviet Empire, the accident at Chernobyl evokes issues surrounding Ukraine’s political, social and economical instability. Moreover, Polataiko’s investigation into virus and contamination implies an activated social response to a number of external issues. Although Polataiko says it was not anticipated as such, his piece, whether through a process of metastasis or metonymy, nonetheless evokes the transcendence and transgression of such categories.

For Polataiko, finding an aesthetic that is at once political and formal, yet neither exclusionary nor polemical becomes an arduous task. Theodor Adorno, when discussing

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<sup>101</sup> Polataiko, Saskatoon, January 8<sup>th</sup> 2000.

<sup>102</sup> Baudrillard, Transparency of Evil, 7.

art's ability to act as a vehicle for suffering, cautions against this over-politicizing of aesthetics, instead lobbying for an aesthetic that while it recognizes art's social role nonetheless addresses it through a type of apoliticism: "This is not a time for political art, but politics has migrated into autonomous art, and nowhere more so than where it seems to be politically dead."<sup>104</sup> Adorno further postulates that works that sedulously tend towards commitment are in danger of becoming propaganda, whereas works that tend to exist as "art for art's sake" flounder in their autonomy. It is through an "apoliticism that is in fact deeply political"<sup>105</sup>, that **Cradle** functions. Caught up within this dialectic, **Cradle** is at once a testament to clinical formalism, and at the same time a nod in the direction of committed art, whether conscious or not.

## Of Ritual and Transformation

While not referring to any one specific religious activity, **Cradle** nevertheless retains an element of religious sacrifice. René Girard in Violence and the Sacred (1979) explains that society often chooses a surrogate victim, one that is sacrificed in order "to keep the peace." The victim is both good and evil and takes the place of rivalries (and violence) between individuals, thus allowing for a relatively peaceful existence. This is achieved by the provision of a common enemy who in turn serves to reunite the divided community. Without this surrogate victim, this so-called common enemy, violence would escalate as tensions would develop between individuals and their mimetic tendencies.

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<sup>103</sup> Polataiko, Saskatoon, January 8<sup>th</sup> 2000.

<sup>104</sup> Theodor Adorno, "Commitment", The Essential Frankfurt School Reader (New York: Continuum, 1997) 300-318.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

For Girard, mimesis is one of the major drives of the individual: we want what others want and this leads to conflict; however, this mimesis also functions within the victimage structure as it solidifies a common enemy in addition to a common desire. To further explicate this, Girard indicates that at the most basic level animals resort to violence in order to function. This recourse to violence is rare within the human species, as we have adopted the victimage mechanism, thus allowing for a reduction of violent action. Girard alludes to certain Aztec sacrifice rituals in order to further his argument. Within specific Aztec communities a sacrificial victim is chosen and for the days preceding his/her sacrifice the *victim* is treated like royalty, almost venerated however, this period of exaltation is terminated by often brutal killings.<sup>106</sup> It is this victimage mechanism that is the *sacred*.

With Cradle Polataiko seems to have chosen himself as surrogate victim, as scapegoat. By extracting the contaminated substance and purging it from his body, he is in a way sacrificing an element of himself for the purification of a larger whole. This metaphoric expulsion is achieved through a ritualistic process: the repeated and duplicated extraction of his own blood by a contracted third party. In this way, his body is site of both sacrifice and of ritual.

For centuries various cultures have gone to great pains to avoid contact with blood. Spilt blood denotes imperfection, impurities. It is tainted, acting as a carrier of infection. For Girard, the surrogate victim also acts as a carrier and as such becomes the site of disease, thus ridding the community of contamination; expelling the victim equates expelling the

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<sup>106</sup> René Girard, Violence and the Sacred (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1979) 301.

disease. With **Cradle** Polataiko's blood is the carrier of such an infection: "Does there exist some miraculous substance potent enough not only to resist infection but also to purify, if need be, the contaminated blood? Only blood itself, blood whose purity has been guaranteed by the performance of appropriate rites- the blood, in short, of sacrificial victims- can accomplish this feat."<sup>107</sup> Extracted in a ritualistic manner, Polataiko's own "sacrifice", his act of bloodletting contains something of the sacred. His blood acts as carrier, a vehicle for the radioactivity of Chernobyl.

Amidst a discussion of the victimage mechanism and the role of the victim and his/her sacrifice within the community, it is also important to note the element of reflection. The surrogate victim acts as a reflection, a reflection of the violence and desire expelled from any given community.<sup>108</sup> This victim serves as a two-way mirror exhibiting both the positive and negative aspects of a particular social sphere. This allows for the community member to both identify with and distance him/herself from the individual in exile. In order for a community to function, however, this reflection must be largely unacknowledged, as the victim is at once something to be desired and something to be purged: the victim is abject. Elements of reflection figure prominently in the work of Polataiko. This is especially true of **Cradle**. With the act of bloodletting as a type of sacrifice within **Cradle**, the mirrored surface of the bathtub reflects the viewer's gaze, substituting the body of the viewer for that of Polataiko. That which was contaminated/tainted and thus purged from the body of Polataiko is transposed upon the

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>108</sup> Andrew McKenna, Violence and Difference: Girard, Derrida and Deconstruction (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992) 198.

body of the viewer. The roles are reversed: the accusatory witness becomes the uncomfortable victim.

Within this sacrifice, there is an element of catharsis; through purification sacrifice retains its cathartic function.<sup>109</sup> Polataiko uses similar words when referring to the process of extracting blood: “It was almost like a cathartic moment: becoming purposefully poisoned and then curing yourself, bloodletting.”<sup>110</sup> As with Girard, Polataiko recognizes blood’s ability to symbolize both violence and purification. Through the act of bloodletting Polataiko is ridding the body of disease, infection, in short, violence.

Girard also remarks upon the role of metals within Violence and the Sacred. The metal worker, as such, is indicative of both the violent and the sacred for metal acts as a tool for both “good” and “evil”. Used to fabricate tools that facilitate the everyday activities of most communities, metal is also used in the fabrication of weapons, which while they protect the said community from outside forces, can also be used internally, much to the detriment of those who produced them.<sup>111</sup> This duality emphasizes the metal worker’s role as a figure to be at once revered and feared; his potential for both good and evil separate him from other active members of the community. When discussing the mythic age of iron, Ovid also remarks upon the evil essence of metal:

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>110</sup> Polataiko, Saskatoon, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

<sup>111</sup> Girard, 260.

"The soil, held in common before, like the light of the sun  
 or the air, was marked with a long boundary by a cautious surveyor.  
 And not only grain and due foods were demanded  
 of the rich soil, but a way was made into the bowels of the earth,  
 and riches, which it had concealed and moved to Stygian  
 shadows, were dug up to be an incitement to evils.  
 And now harmful iron, and gold more harmful than iron,  
 had emerged; there emerged war which fights with both  
 and shakes its clashing arms with bloody hand.

-Metamorphoses 135-143<sup>112</sup>

Likewise, as metal worker, Polataiko also participates within this duality; while his production evokes something of the sacred, there is also an element of violence. The nickel-plated bathtub within **Cradle** is both container and carrier. As such, Polataiko is at once inside and outside the community: he is savior and as producer/metalmaker he is contaminant.

Remaining within the confines of ritual and sacrifice, **Cradle** also refers back to the medieval process of visceral divination and extispicy. Practiced by many cultures, beginning with those of Babylonia and Mesopotamia, visceral divination involved the use of animal internal organs for the purpose of prophecy. Similarly extispicy consisted of an examination of the entrails of particular animals. Hepatoscopy, the examination of the liver, was the earliest form of this practice.<sup>113</sup> The choice of animal for sacrifice was dependent on the specific culture. Once an animal had been chosen for sacrifice, the oracle would be summoned and in consulting the internal organs of the slain animal the future would be foretold. The predictions often corresponded with the physical condition of the organ. This type of divination was favoured by the Royal Courts of Babylonia; they would often conduct these rituals to ascertain the thoughts of the divine before

<sup>112</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I-IV trans. by D.E Hill, (Warminster, Wiltshire: Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1985).

<sup>113</sup> Ivan Starr, *The Rituals of the Diviner* (Malibu: Undena Publishers, 1983) 5.



directing any important undertaking. "The Mesopotamian believed, in other words, that under certain conditions history repeats itself. This is the true rationale of divination."<sup>114</sup>

For Polataiko, this element of sacrifice, of bringing the "inside" "outside" for the purpose of prophecy, was also of relevance. Like the oracles, Polataiko conducts a "reading" of an organ, in this case, his own blood. While not the entrails of a sacred animal, blood is nevertheless prophetic as a carrier of virus and of disease. With diagnostic medicine, an examination of the blood is often the first indication of disease, of pathogens; it is in short, prophetic. As is the case with **Cradle**, blood is also a carrier of radioactivity. Exposed within a gallery setting, Polataiko's act of visceral extispicy allows for an investigation of the past, present and future.

"Religion is simply another term for the surrogate victim, who reconciles mimetic oppositions and assigns a sacrificial goal to the mimetic impulses."<sup>115</sup> As with Girard's Violence and the Sacred, **Cradle** addresses the issue of religion in the manner in which the surrogate victim is turned inside out or physically reversed. Christ's body, which was at once personal, became communal, like Polataiko's body, his blood on display, Christ's blood became a symbol of sacrifice and resurrection; the blood of Polataiko becomes symbolic in the realm of ritual and transformation. It is an act of transubstantiation; the blood within **Cradle** evolves into something other than itself; it becomes emblematic, a metaphor of sorts. The self-inflicted holes made by the syringe for the act of "bloodletting" can be spoken of in a similar regard to Christ's stigmata and the spilt

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>115</sup> Girard, 307.

blood of the crucifixion. It is similar to a purging of sins, an expulsion of all that is tainted, an absolution of trespasses.<sup>116</sup>

### **Cradle as Construct as Contract**

In concert with the body as site of ritual and sacrifice, **Cradle** can also be viewed in terms of masochism: the body as a site of pain. In an attempt to “turn the body inside out”, Polataiko created **Cradle** as a means of up-rooting established discourses regarding the role of body within (body) art.<sup>117</sup> Citing an interest in the writings of 19<sup>th</sup>-century writer Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, after which a particular “perversion” is named, while not overtly so, the process within the work lends itself to the dialectic of pleasure and pain. Polataiko speaks of the process of extracting blood as being somewhat “fun”.

“We are dealing instead with a victim in search of a torturer and who needs to educate, persuade and conclude an alliance with the torturer in order to realize the strangest of schemes.”<sup>118</sup> Throughout his analysis of Masoch’s pivotal text Venus in Furs, Gilles Deleuze discusses the importance of the contract. The role of the contract is one of integral importance, for it is through the mouth of the torturer that the victim speaks.<sup>119</sup> Without this contract the masochistic relationship loses all validity. As with the hero Severin within Masoch’s novel, Polataiko also enters willingly into such a relationship of

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<sup>116</sup> Also interested in the limits of the body, performance artist Chris Burden employs the body as both site of ritual and sacrifice. Performances such as **Doorway to Heaven** (1973) and **Trans-Fixed** (1974) blur the boundaries between the interior and exterior, combining acts of exhibitionism with that of (metaphorical and corporeal) sacrifice. With **Trans-Fixed**, Burden lay on the top of a Volkswagen while nails were driven through his palms, the performance lasted two minutes as the car was pushed out and then back in Burden’s garage. Referred to as a “modern crucifixion”, the project lends itself to a discussion of Christian masochism. The term Christian masochism taken from Amelia Jones, “Dis/Playing the Phallus: male artists perform their masculinities”, Art History Vol. 17 No. 4 (December 1994) 568.

<sup>117</sup> Polataiko, Saskatoon, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

<sup>118</sup> Deleuze, 20.

contractual importance, hence his relationship with both the dentist and the nurse, those “contracted” to extract Polataiko’s blood. While Polataiko is at the hands of the “torturer” he subjects himself willingly, while constantly maintaining his position of authority and control.

Described as a “supersensualist”, the hero of Venus of Furs finds himself extolling the virtue of the senses, in fact searching for an experience that goes beyond the senses. Likewise, Polataiko discusses his interest in that which is of and beyond, outside the senses. **Cradle** provokes that which is beyond the tangible, that which exists outside of sensual understanding. Employing elements of trompe l’oeil in order to fool the senses, **Cradle** also emphasizes the limits of the senses; pain and pleasure intermingle as the senses meld. With the absence of distinct boundaries, **Cradle** contributes to an overwhelming of the sensual through a disorientation of individualistic space (i.e., elements of trompe l’oeil and reflection) and an encounter with corporeal limiting.

Polataiko speaks of another project, prospectively titled **The Whip**, involving the work of Masoch, one that closely examines the boundaries of pleasure and pain, inviting the spectator to act as witness to the dialects of the masochistic relationship. To take place in Lviv, the childhood home of Masoch, Polataiko plans to place himself at the hands of the “torturer”, the wielder of the whip. Recorded through photograph, the camera is to capture the precise moment between pleasure and pain, the exact moment where one becomes the other, where both exist simultaneously, the few seconds before the whip sears the skin. Following the performance, both the nickel-plated whip and the

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 17.

photographs will be transported back to a gallery space. Displayed within the safe confines of the gallery walls, the spectator will bear witness to the already removed process of masochistic pleasure.<sup>120</sup>

### Processing Limits

It is precisely this preoccupation with process that fuels the majority of Polataiko's works. Keeping within an interest in physicality, masochism and the limits of the body, Polataiko speaks of the centrality of process. With **Cradle**, as with **The Whip** and previous performance pieces, the process is as, if not more, important than the product itself. Placing an importance on the act of making, "many artists become increasingly aware of how process connects the superficially independent aspects and objects of life to an interdependent, interconnected network of organic systems, cultural institutions, and human practices."<sup>121</sup>

Decidedly post-minimalist and an important element within conceptual art, process art becomes a logical reaction to the supporters of "art for art's sake." Often described as a reaction to and against formalism, process art results from an inability to concentrate on a purely self-referential type of art-making. For these individuals, there needed to be a visible reference to the act of "making."<sup>122</sup> Described by critics as both "formal" and "clinical", **Cradle** is a work that combines both formalism and process art. Self-described as a "formalist", Polataiko also makes numerous references to the importance of process

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<sup>120</sup> Polataiko, Saskatoon, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

<sup>121</sup> Kristine Stiles, "Process", Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) 587.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 577.

within his art, discussing the value of process even within his paintings - "...the process is both meaningful and important."<sup>123</sup>

## **Beyond the Sensual**

Incorporating aspects of process art, masochism, body art, sacrifice and traditional formalism, Polataiko's investigation of the events of Chernobyl is in essence an investigation of the body and of virus. As witness, Polataiko is interested in experimenting with that which can be transmitted and carried across borders: that which mutates and changes. His act of witnessing is one of physical recording, directly inserting himself within the object and event he bears witness to. As with the witness artist delineated by Maclear, Polataiko moves beyond the limits of language and of visual understanding, reaching for something that "goes beyond the senses". His use of elements of reflection and trompe l'oeil, not to mention the incorporation of blood lends itself to this elimination of boundaries.

This elimination of boundaries and super-sensual imaging functions through its ability to invoke images that are not familiar or desensitized, images that have not been rendered anesthetized through repetition. *Cradle* brings forth ideas, images and thoughts that have not been exploited through the media, as is the case with many other images used within testimonial art<sup>124</sup>; it succeeds in provoking continuous response in that its function and appearance are neither benign nor didactic, but activated. Polataiko's pilgrimage to Chernobyl for the sake of self-exposure to radiation is both a political and apolitical act.

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<sup>123</sup> Polataiko, Saskatoon, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

<sup>124</sup> Maclear, 90.

As notions of the political have infiltrated all aspects of social behaviour and societal structures, **Cradle** functions in both the realms of “commitment” and “autonomy”.

## Conclusion

### Beyond the Document

*"As an artist have you chosen the role of witness?"*

"This would take considerable presumption or a vocation I lack.  
Personally, I don't ask for any role and I have but one real vocation."

-Albert Camus (1954)<sup>125</sup>

Like Albert Camus, both Husar and Polataiko's roles as witness are not self-determined ones. As Camus writes, being confronted with tyranny, or any such situation, does not amount to "choosing the comfortable role of witness. It is merely accepting the time as it is, minding one's own business in short."<sup>126</sup> While neither Husar nor Polataiko actively sought to *bear witness* to the accident at Chernobyl, both artists are indirectly involved in the production of what Maclear refers to as "witness art".

Like other artists of a similar heritage and ethnic background, the works of Husar and Polataiko have often been spoken of in parallel regards however, cultural background aside, the works of the two artists rapidly diverge. While Husar works solely in the realm of painting, producing large-scale oil works on linen, Polataiko's work distinguishes itself as being not of one medium, incorporating elements of performance, painting, and installation within a single work. However aesthetically different, one being dubbed a surrealist and Romantic, the other being a self-proclaimed formalist, there do exist subtle yet complex thematic similarities. Both artists provide what Maclear refers to as

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<sup>125</sup> Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus (London: Penguin Books, 1955) 187.

“countervisions”, approaches toward an unknowable subject that extend beyond normative, literal and documentary depictions. Implicit in such countervisions is the act of participation.

### **Inserting the subject**

Employing her image as “everywoman” as well as self-reflection, Husar makes paintings that, as seen, exist within the realm of autobiography. Works such as **Tamed Tiger** and **Odalisque-at-Heart** function as disguised self-portraits allowing Husar to examine her own subjective position with regard to gender and identity politics within Ukraine. By manipulating elements of Romanticism and the fantastic, as well as masochism, Husar succeeds in creating a narrative whole, one that examines the divisions between what she refers to as the “haves” and the “have-nots”, and the specific ways in which this division plays out. In examining those abject aspects of society, as delineated by Kristeva, the paintings within **Black Sea Blue** serve as composites of Husar’s experience within Ukraine and the transplanted memories of her family.

Traversing the grounds and visiting the entombed sarcophagus, Polataiko, as artist, also becomes active witness and participant. By recording the effect of radiation upon the interiority of the human bystander, he no longer maintains a spectatorial distance; he is, in fact, the event. Through investigations of virus, mutation – as a by-product of radiation (the mutated self-portrait), and masochism, as well as that of ritual and sacrifice - Polataiko blurs the boundaries between subject and object, self and other, producer and

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 187.



spectator. Maclear writes, "One of the distinguishing features of testimonial art is the factoring of the spectator in the actual construction of the work."<sup>127</sup> Within *Cradle*, the viewer also acts as participant, the reflective surface of the tub allowing for an examination of self-reflection.

### **Beyond the document**

In addition to their roles as participants, Husar and Polataiko are also similar in that each artist chose to work *beyond* the realm of photography, the preferred medium when dealing with issues surrounding witnessing. Maclear notes the powerful impact of those works that do not attempt to document or objectively depict a particular event or memory: "by de-emphasizing the materiality of memory, we move away from visual approaches which conflate appearance with objectivity and essence, and turn out attention toward our own acts of looking."<sup>128</sup> With the works of Husar and Polataiko, the viewer is encouraged to question his/her own role as witness, and in turn begins to examine his/her own subjective position within this "act of looking".

To accomplish this, both artists make recourse to strategies outlined by Maclear as being characteristic of witness art. According to Maclear, witness artists will often use metaphor as a means of addressing a traumatic subject. Rather than using a straight forward documentary technique, witness artists will develop a more indirect route in order to present the "un(re)presentable", this type of work instigates dialogue rather than presenting the viewer with a desensitized image, one rendered benign through over-

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<sup>127</sup> Maclear, 22.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 54.

reproduction, “[g]rim technology and mass dying allow the unnatural, the unfamiliar, to attain a sense of quasi-normalcy through ubiquity.”<sup>129</sup> Through metaphor, the viewers are offered new openings into otherwise closed phenomena. With metaphor, however, there is the danger of taking something “unknowable” and translating it into something “knowable”, thus diminishing its meaning/impact, or altering its state.<sup>130</sup>

With metaphor assuming a large role within Polataiko’s **Cradle**, one might question its effectiveness and/or ability. Intending to signify many things and nothing at once, the bathtub within **Cradle** functions as metaphor. However, rather than attempting to give shape to that which is amorphous, Polataiko uses **Cradle** as a means of emphasizing this latency or invisibility. As a work of art, **Cradle** does not attempt to illustrate the appearance of radiation, disease, or contamination; in fact it does just the opposite. By using elements of trompe l’oeil as well as reflective space, Polataiko demonstrates that such elements are often undetectable and lay dormant beneath regulated surfaces.

Likewise Maclear outlines another strategy within testimonial art; this one being a recourse to art’s past. As with metaphor, the use of historical referencing can be problematic. While shared images can often broaden the scope of accessibility; they can also limit and reduce the initial intent by delineating that which is fluid/vague. Such references will also invoke their own history of images. With the majority of her paintings, Husar, as mentioned within the second chapter, uses art’s past in order to further elucidate, to accentuate, establishing thematics or modes of thought. As subtle

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 102.

evocations, Husar's art historical references do not over-power her work, rather, they allow for individualized expression.

### **Chernobyl and the Art of Witness**

The connections between Husar and Polataiko, although not immediately apparent, are provocative. Like Husar, Polataiko is also interested in scarring, that blemish that exists below the surface: that "subtle" damage. He focuses on what is removed and hidden, as indicated with his investigation of the nuclear reactor, a site otherwise off limits. The bathtub of **Cradle** acts like the impossible sarcophagus at Chernobyl. It contains something that cannot be contained. Like Husar's "Chernobyl Children", the blood housed within the tub bears no evidence of the radiation that tainted it. Without explanation, one cannot know that the Ukrainian embroidery patterns lining the faces of the children within Husar's paintings are also radiation rashes, nor can one know that the blood within Polataiko's **Cradle** is contaminated by radioactivity.

While both Husar and Polataiko concern themselves with issues of witnessing, their investigations extend beyond this need to understand and to communicate a shared horror. What began as an act of witnessing transgressed into an act of participation. While Husar's investigations relate to Maclear's attempt at creating a new paradigm for social understanding within historical and contemporary witnessing, Polataiko's investigations of the witness stem from an interest in the physical body and self-reflection, an investigation that incorporates the public within the private.

It is through such a blurring of boundaries that both Husar and Polataiko succeed in creating a new aesthetic of witnessing. While Husar explores the breakdown of borders between the East and the West and power and subordination, Polataiko examines the tenuous division between the internal and external and the visible and invisible. Within these explorations is an examination of the paradoxes for which this melding of binaries provides creating in turn a new paradigm for aesthetic engagement.

It is in this willingness to uncover and expose both physical and mental/emotional scars and the artists' abilities to dismantle established borders that one can find the most similarities between the works of these two artists. Interested in what one carries across borders, both geography and generation, each artist, through a visual exploration of the disaster at Chernobyl, puts forth and exposes that which has otherwise been hidden. By examining an event otherwise forgotten by contemporary media, both Husar and Polataiko translate situations and uncover events and identities that exist outside of literal normative descriptions. Through their actions as witnesses, manipulating both narrative and the body, Husar and Polataiko succeed in presenting the "unrepresentable" and in turn, engender within the viewer new ways of seeing.



Images #1, 2, & 3



Image #4



Image #5



Image #6





Image #7

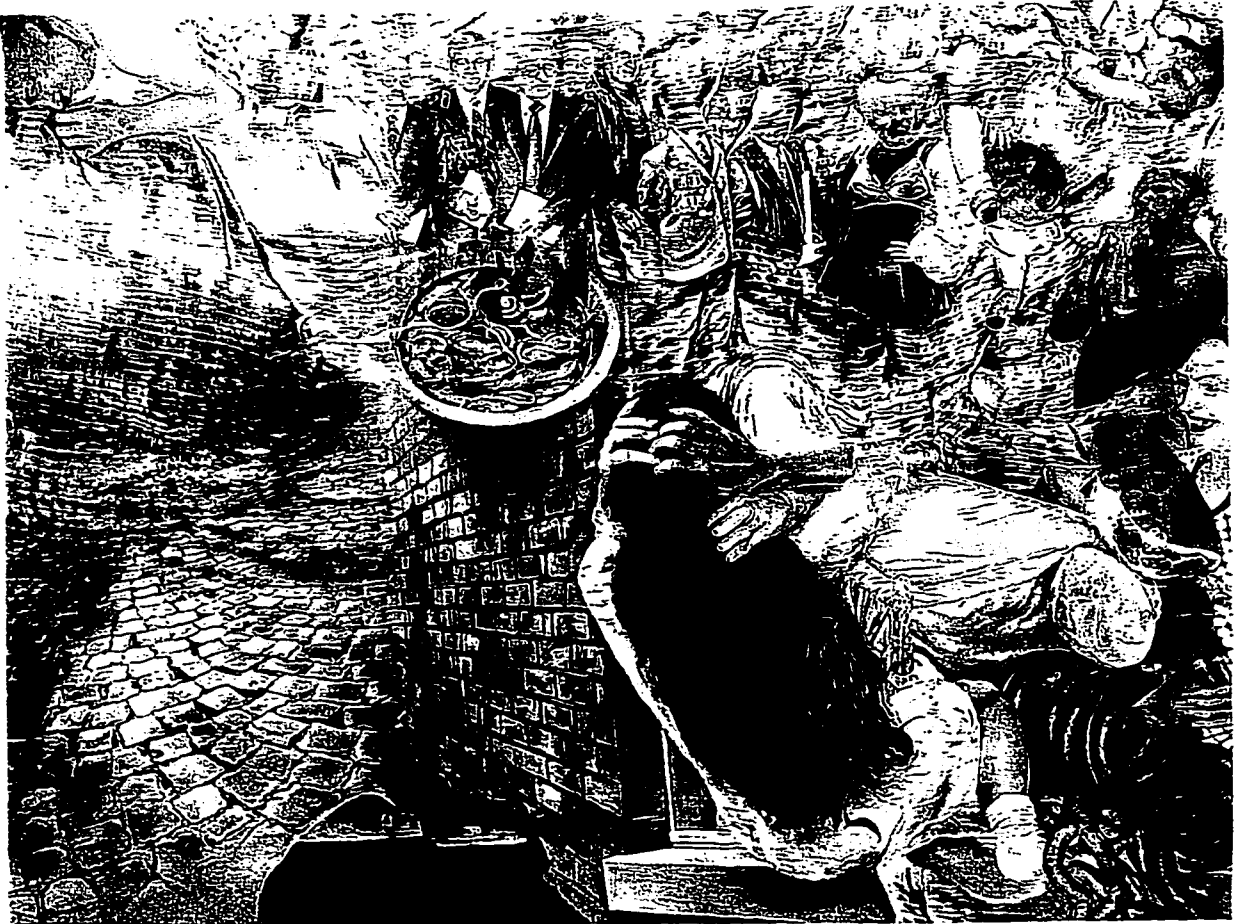


Image #8



Image #9



Image #10



Image #11



Image #12

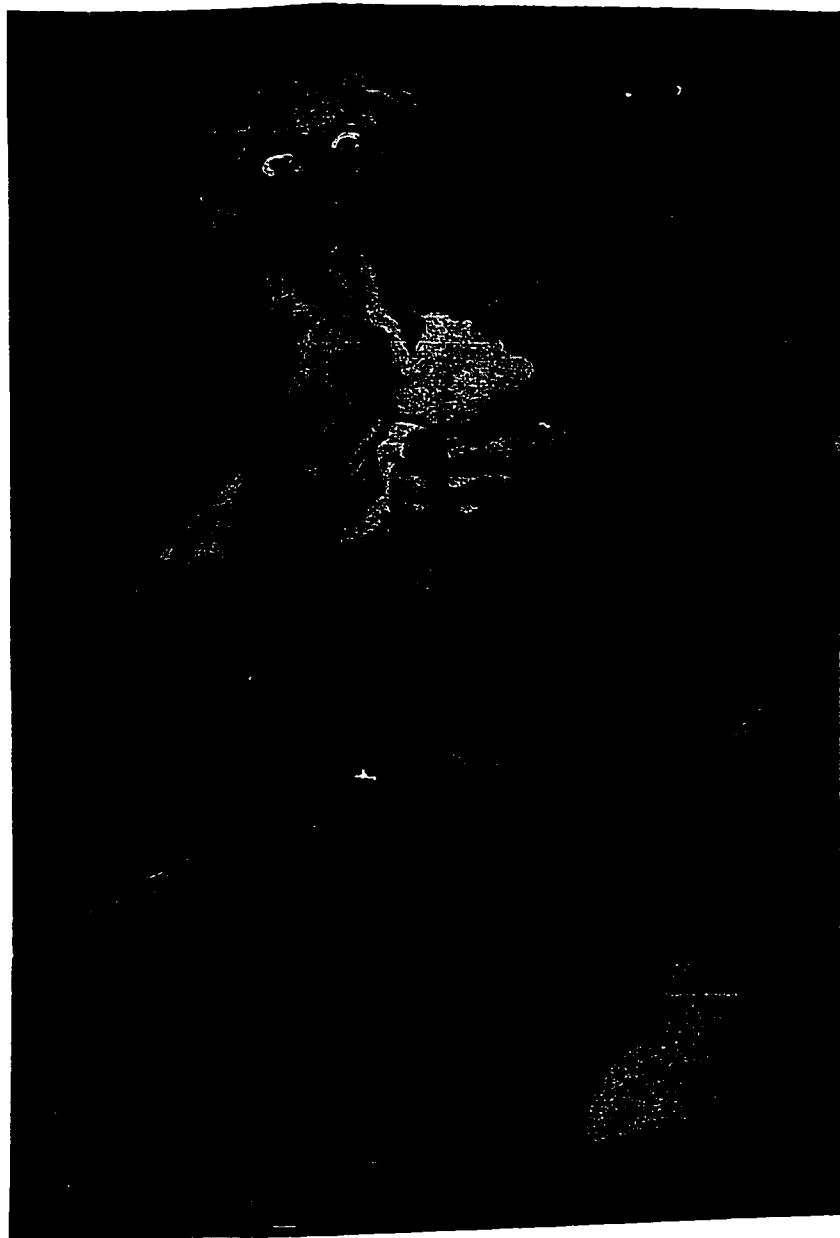


Image #13



Image #14





Image #15



Image #16



Image #17

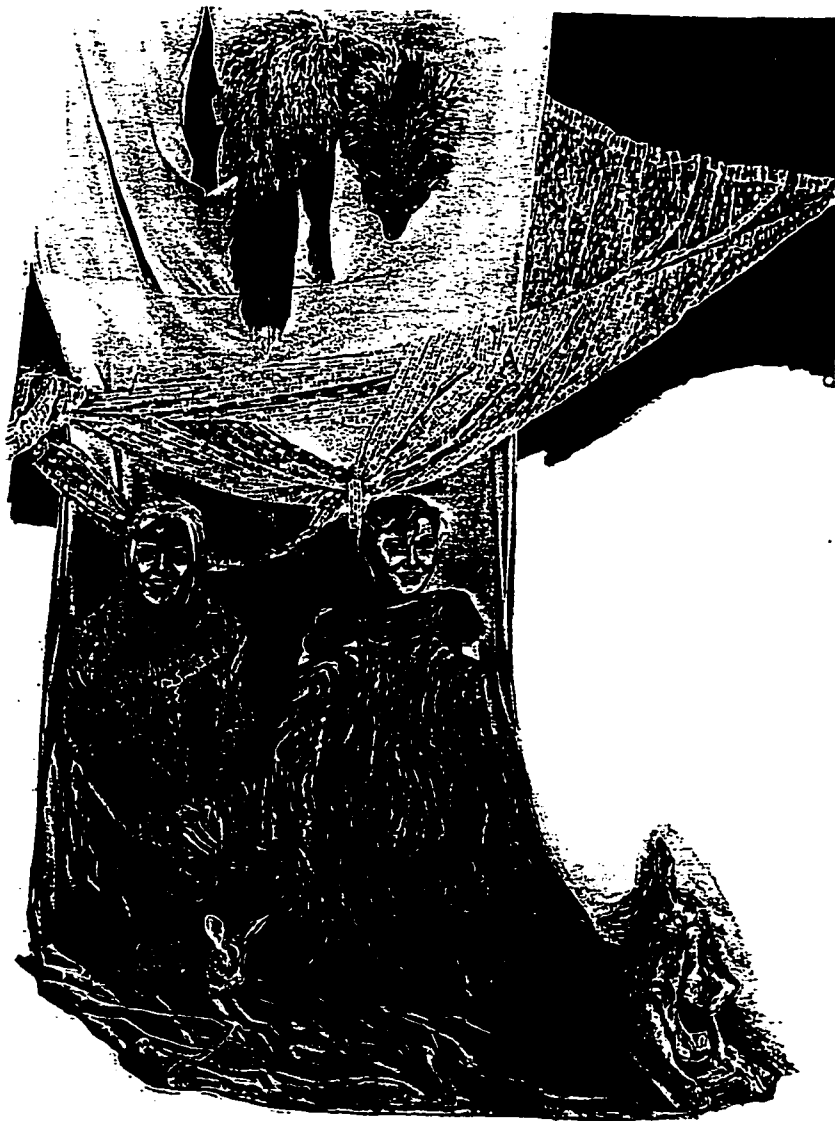


Image #18

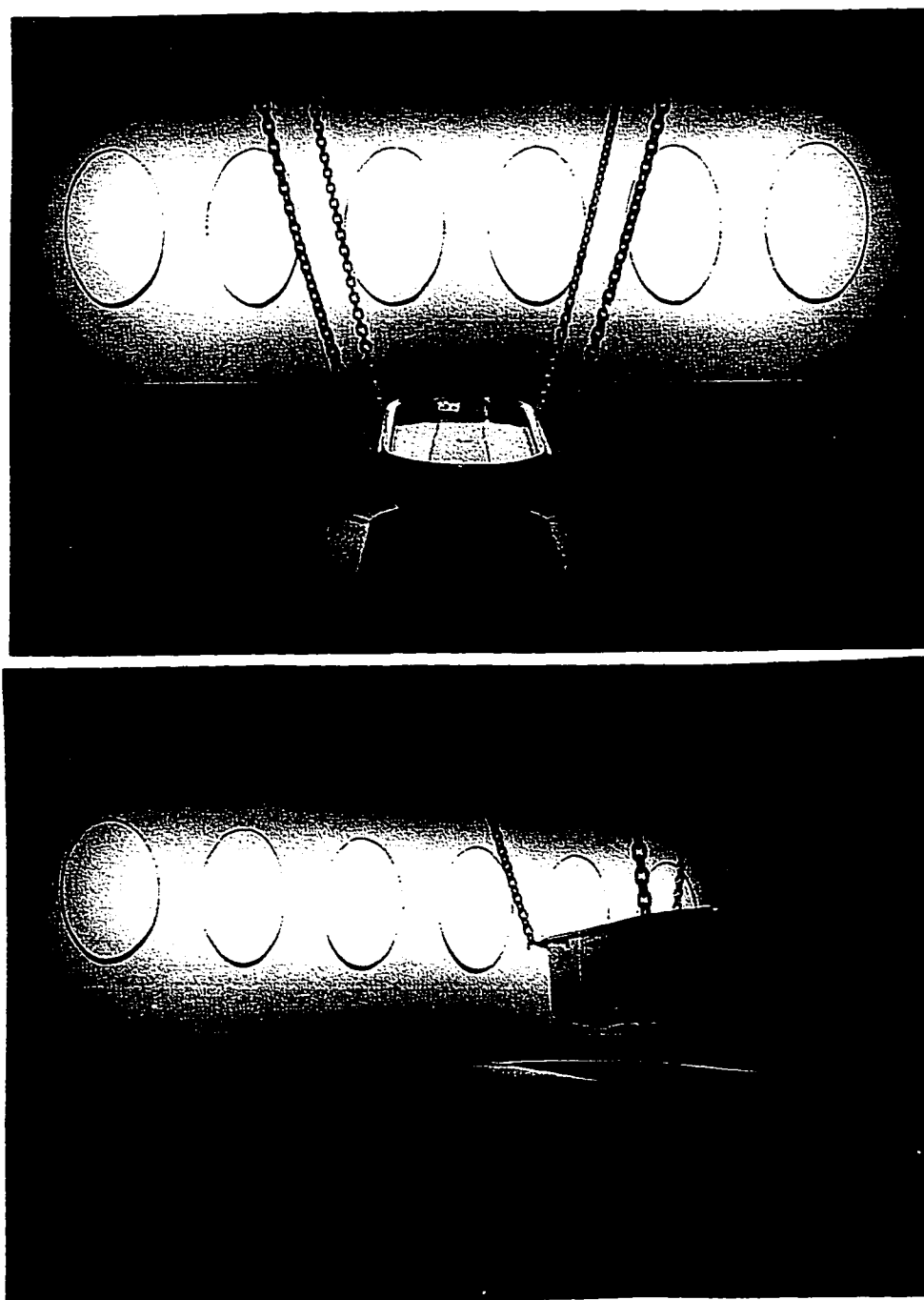


Image #19

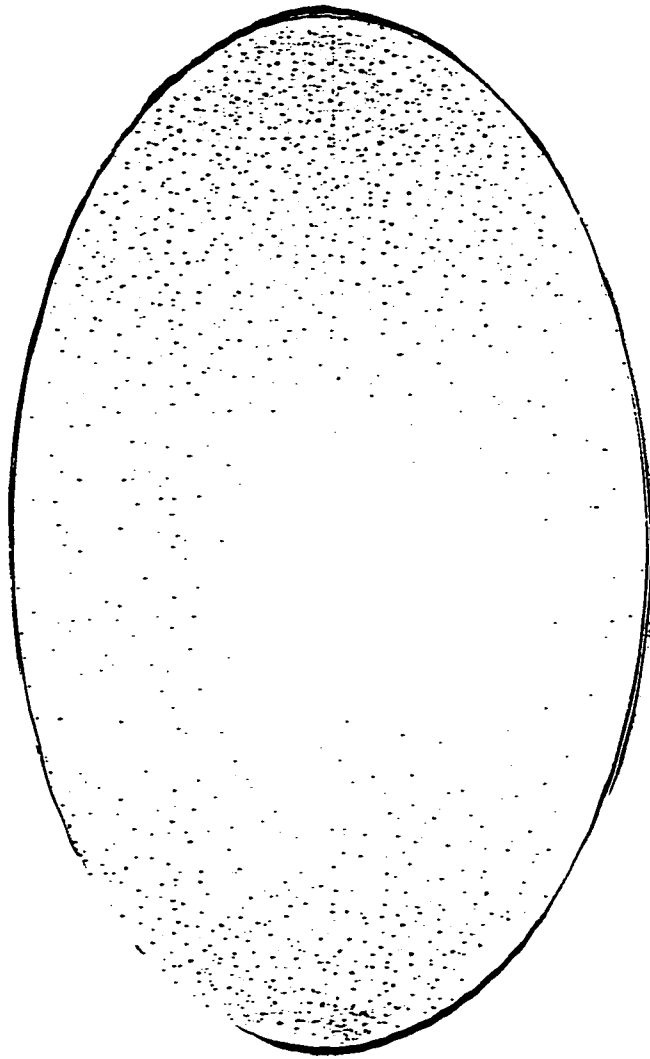


Image #20



Image #21

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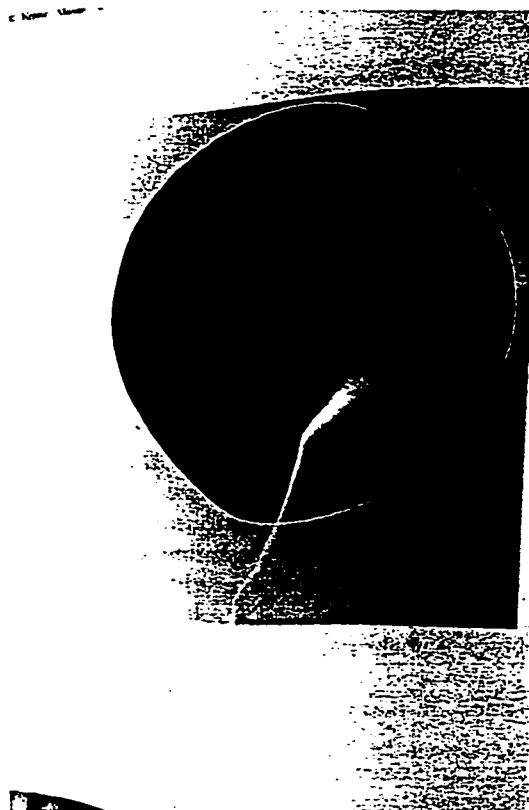


Image #22



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