

Jay Senetchko
The Great Refusal
May 16 – June 17, 2022



The Great Refusal (In the Home – Interior), 2021; oil on cedar panel, 59x118" (The Rennie Collection)

The Great Refusal is a collection of four works in the format of traditional Christian altarpieces. They present scenes of social cohesion contrasted with imagery of violence and upheaval, considering how these conflicting forces impact both individuals and the societies they are part of. These paintings question the nature of social stability, expose its historical and contemporary consequences, and reveal how members of all societies are often unaware of their tacit engagement in such a system.

The series borrows its title from the socialist thinker Herbert Marcuse and his radical concept of a “protest against that which is.” While this body of work is not fundamentally a socialist take on history, Senetchko references this idea through a recognition of the underlying societal forces that, to be addressed, must first be acknowledged prior to any significant changes taking place within the society itself.

The paintings derive their imagery from five sources: the artist’s family photos, Alberta archival photographs of Canadian-Ukrainian immigration, Time Life magazines (circa 1950-1960), documentary photographs from the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, and paintings from life. These reference points are reflective of Senetchko’s ongoing interest in his personal history as a descendant of Ukrainian immigrants, the geo-political reality experienced by Ukraine, and the romantic nature of nostalgia as a disruptive force adversely affecting memory.

This exhibition hopes to be an opportunity to raise money for Ukrainian aid, with 50% of all sales will go to help Ukraine in their war with Russia. There will also be additional ways to contribute to the cause during the reception and throughout the exhibition.

Thank you to the prime sponsors of the Exhibition and related events : Ukrainian Canadian Congress | Ukrainian Community Society of Ivan Franko | Association of United Ukrainian Canadians | Kozak Ukrainian Restaurant |

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