

Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern

Legends and Parables

October 10 – November 4, 2019

Opening reception for the artist: Thursday, October 10, 6:00 to 8:00 PM

The Ukrainian Institute of America 2 East 79th Street New York, NY 10075

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NEW YORK — Art at the Institute is pleased to announce *Legends and Parables*, an exhibition of thirty-four paintings by Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, exploring and chronicling the embodiment of human celebration and drama founded on deceptively simple impressions of Jewish folk and religious life. The exhibition opens October 10 and will continue through November 4, 2019. Curated by Walter Hoydysh, PhD, director of Art at the Institute, this marks Petrovsky-Shtern's second solo showing with The Ukrainian Institute of America (UIA). An opening reception for the artist will take place on Thursday, October 10 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM.

Abandoning the limited color palette of his first exhibition with the UIA, in 2016, Petrovsky-Shtern now resorts to and embraces the full chromatic vibrancy and tension offered with acrylic paint application. *Legends and Parables* seeks to explore the ways in which the artist is able to transform even the most familiar lessons in human history into fantastically new visions, aphoristic tales re-imagined by his creative mind; renditions of the world inflected with shards of memory and illusion.

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Petrovsky-Shtern reflects heavily on his cultural roots in his art, imbuing his work with folkloric elements that hark back to his past. Ironically, the very act of his incorporating such throwbacks to shtetl life into his pictures set him apart from the more bold, stylistic experimentation of his peers. In its uniqueness, the retrograde nature of his seemingly naïve works make him paradoxically all the more progressive, finding in the foibles of animals and humans the moralistic lessons from which his viewers could learn.

His whimsical imagery is poetic and refers to his own psychic reality; it enfold a true emotional sense of human affections that come with being identified as Jewish, such as overwhelming familial and community love, celebration, sadness, displacement, and loss. Petrovsky-Shtern creates a kind of free visual association of thought, one idea prompting or propelling other associations in his paintings. Part fairy tale, part fact, his paintings enthrall particularly as their viewers identify with and accompany him on actual and imaginative journeys.

Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern is the Crown Family Professor of Jewish Studies and a Professor of Jewish History in History Department at Northwestern University. For his subject expertise, he has been appointed a Fulbright Specialist on Eastern Europe, a Fellow at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, a Visiting Professor at the Free Ukrainian University in Munich, and an honorary doctor of the National University Kyiv Mohyla Academy in Kyiv. He is the author of *The Golden Shtetl: A New History of Jewish Life in East Europe* (Princeton University Press, 2014), and *Jews and Ukrainians: A Millennium of Co-Existence*, co-authored with Paul Robert Magocsi (University of Toronto Press, 2016). Petrovsky-Shtern's paintings have been exhibited at The Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art (Chicago), Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership (Chicago), and The Ukrainian Museum (New York). This is his second solo exhibition with The Ukrainian Institute of America.

Exhibition hours: Tuesday to Sunday, 12:00 – 6:00 PM, or by appointment.

For further information: Please contact Olena Sidlovych, executive director, at (212) 288-8660 or mail@ukrainianinstitute.org.

Image: Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *Elephant in Berdichev*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 13 x 17 inches.

About Art at the Institute

Celebrating its sixty-fifth year of activity, Art at the Institute is the visual arts programming division of The Ukrainian Institute of America. Since its establishment in 1955, Art at the Institute organizes projects and exhibitions with the aim of providing postwar and contemporary Ukrainian artists a platform for their creative output, presenting it to the broader public on New York's Museum Mile. These heritage projects have included numerous exhibitions of traditional, modern and contemporary art, and topical stagings that have become well-received landmark events.

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