

## **FOLKTALES AND FAIRY TALES: Textile art by Sonia Jacyk-Bukata**

*By using fragments and remnants from a variety of objects and artefacts, viewers are invited into an evocative world where narrative threads tie together stories of emotional depth and resonance*

By Ayah Victoria McKhail



On March 22, 2026, just days into the start of spring following a seemingly interminable winter, a new exhibition, *Folktales and Fairy Tales: Textile art by Sonia Jacyk-Bukata*, an award-winning fiber artist based in Guelph, Ontario, opened at the Taras Shevchenko Museum. Held on a damp and overcast afternoon, art aficionados gathered to gain a glimpse into the seasons of Jacyk-Bukata's life, as alluded to by her awe-inspiring artistic works on display. "I didn't plan these pieces; I operate by intuition alone. Every piece was a spontaneous expression of something I was experiencing at the time," she admitted.

One of the most distinct aspects of the exhibition, is how *Boro* figures prominently into Jacyk-Bukata's artistic works. A Japanese term meaning "tattered" or "repaired," it's recognized as a sustainable art form, embodying the Japanese philosophy of *wabi-sabi*, which refers to finding beauty in imperfection, impermanence and simplicity.

As Jacyk-Bukata illuminated in the description accompanying a kimono she made, entitled, *Beyond Boro*, "The concept of *Boro* captured my heart and imagination, as it represented my life as a metaphor: making a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Life had thrown me lemons and I found a way to make lemonade through my love of textiles."



***Beyond Boro***



***Hanging by a Thread***

That love was palpable as an air of mystique fell over the museum. "I've always loved the look of unpolished, old, distressed, unfinished, raggedy pieces of fabric. I love dried weeds and flowers; and rusted, ripped, discarded and found objects; and mixed-media art," she added.

Throughout the exhibition, Jacyk-Bukata's design sensibilities are on full display. Showcased, is a striking multi-dimensional sculptural installation of textiles. According to Larissa Stavroff (Krawchuk), a textile artist, archivist at the museum, and the keynote speaker at the reception, layer upon layer of intrigue is interwoven through Jacyk-Bukata's artistic works.

“With hand-dyed fabrics, frayed remnants, unfinished pieces, found objects, and natural elements, the artist collages, quilts, appliqués, and hand-stitches her highly-symbolic creations and imbues them with the power of recollection; both personal and historical.”



***Give Me Shelter from the Slings and Arrows of Outrageous Fortune***

Taking centre stage is a teepee, entitled, ***Give Me Shelter from the Slings and Arrows of Outrageous Fortune***. As Lyudmyla Pogoryelova, director of the Shevchenko Museum emphasized in a speech she delivered during the opening exhibition, in light of the tragedy that continues to unravel in Ukraine, with scores of people displaced from their homes and many forced into exile, the teepee is a solemn reminder of the trauma of loss, which ripples through generations of Ukrainians.

The eldest of three daughters, Sonia Jacyk-Bukata was born and raised in Toronto to parents from the Lviv oblast, in western Ukraine. Although she had a keen interest in women’s fashion and textiles for as long as she can remember, her path to becoming an artist was anything but linear. Throughout the course of her evolution, she transitioned through academic studies, business ownership, a management career in women’s fashion, to designing, making and exhibiting her wearable art, which includes everything from vests to boleros and jackets.

And just as she reimagines, repurposes and refurbishes a variety of objects and artefacts, by 2005, she had also reinvented herself by becoming a fine artist. “I just love natural fabrics. Colours excite me; I enjoy mixing them together,” she shared.



***A Thousand Questions***, interpretive sculpture



***A Thousand Tears***, interpretive sculpture

As Stavroff (Krawchuk) pointed out during her keynote address, “A highly-intuitive artist, with a particular affinity with the natural world, Sonia draws inspiration and stimulation from its infinite patterns, as well as from many unusual and unexpected sources.”

Stavroff (Krawchuk) also mentioned how greatly influenced Jacyk-Bukata has been by her Ukrainian heritage. She quoted her saying, “I have to tell stories. Sometimes veiled, sometimes subtle and ambivalent; other times, I want to scream. As a Ukrainian-Canadian, I was impacted by Ukraine’s history. I came by it honestly, as the child of post-WWII immigrants.” Jacyk-Bukata’s interpretive sculpture, ***A Thousand Questions***, speaks to this. In the description accompanying the piece, she wrote, “This little body was created searching for information about my parents’ whereabouts during WWII.”

Stavroff (Krawchuk) further pointed out that in some areas of Jacyk-Bukata’s artistic works, she blends her own personal history with the history of Ukraine: Stalinism,

Collectivization and the Ukrainian famine of the 1930s, known as the *Holodomor*.

As art aficionados gathered at the opening reception, melodious sounds emanating from the compositions played by Vlad Tomilin, a flutist, ushered in a sense of serenity. Delighted by the ambiance, and perusing Jacyk-Bukata's artistic works, was Lana Matskiv, an artist.



***Complicated History***

Standing near ***Complicated History***, a predominately white kimono, which is crowned by sheaves of wheat, it was created as a homage to Ukrainian history, as a centuries' old victim of oppressive neighbours.

Despite all the pain and trauma, which is still felt by Ukrainians throughout the world, particularly as the war with Russia rages on, in the description, Jacyk-Bukata also makes note of her love for everything ethnographic that's Ukrainian, such as ceramics, embroideries, and tapestries; an appreciation, which is evident throughout the exhibition.

To Matskiv, there's a strong element of femininity that runs through Jacyk-Bukata's chosen artistic medium. "Throughout the ages, there has been an innate desire for women to have their hands on cloth. Everything's uniquely made, and the artist's multi-faceted approach to storytelling allows for significant emotional expression."

Matskiv's sentiments resonated with Oksana Smilka, an actress. She found herself struck by Jacyk-Bukata's ability to literally stitch together chapters from her own life; marking them methodically and ceremonially. Referring to the kimono, *Forgiveness*, which is predominately brown, photographs peek out.

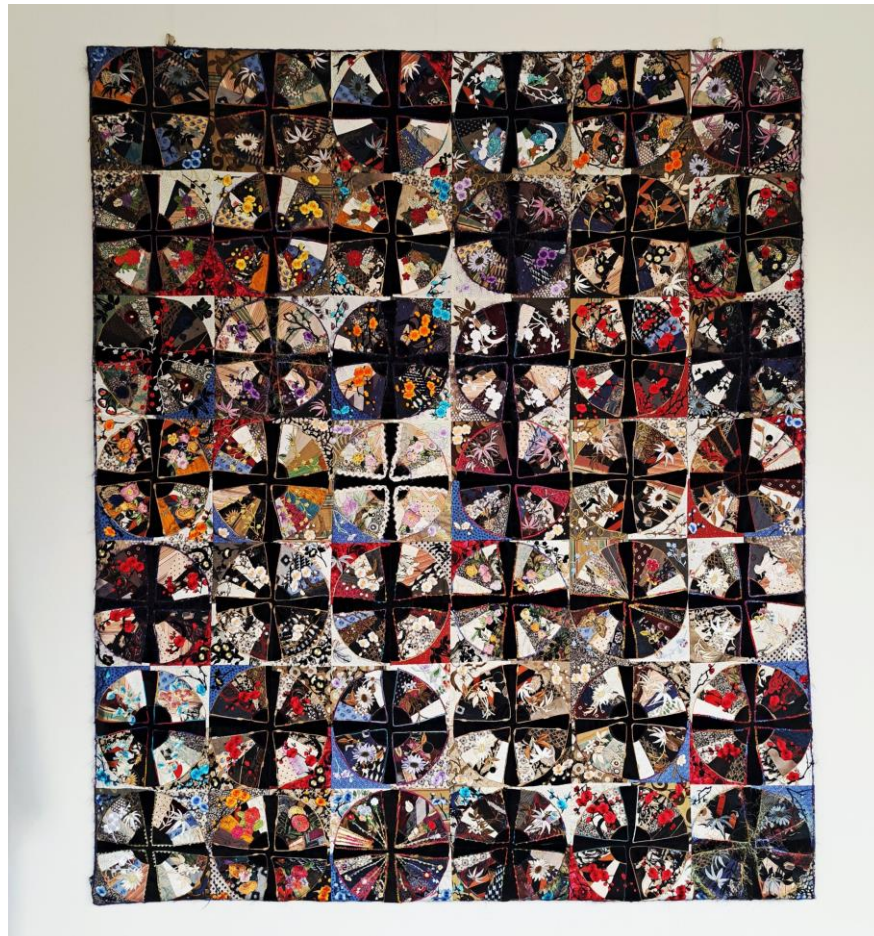


*Forgiveness*

The kimono was made by using her journal entries, which are concealed with cheesecloth. Referring to an excerpt from the description, which accompanies the kimono and reads, "...The quietest of all the pieces, as I think forgiveness lights on your shoulder like a white dove. No cacophony. No noise. No expectation. One day, it's just there," Smilka remarked, "This is a poignant glimpse into the artist's soul and the personal journey she has embarked on and undergone throughout her life. It appears to touch upon pain, grief, and

ultimately, deliverance. This piece, and her entire collection of artistic works offer pause for reflection and contemplation.”

Bernardine Dobrowolsky, president of the Shevchenko Museum’s executive committee, also felt the push and pull of memory converging in Jacyk-Bukata’s artistic works. She found herself especially intrigued by *A Shroud for Vera*, due to its overall aesthetic quality; particularly, the mixing of colour, texture and pattern. A quilt, it was lovingly, albeit painstakingly made to honour Jacyk-Bukata’s sister, a talented artist, who passed away in 2012.



*A Shroud for Vera*

As Dobrowolsky examined each article of fabric meticulously, it became clear to her that there was a story stitched into each piece, with a specific part of the story represented in each of the patchwork squares. “I felt that maybe the layers of overlapping material were expressing a subtle symbolism of emotion, especially when embedded words and photographs could be seen in some squares, protected by a lace or mesh-like material...perhaps as clues.”

Seeking to decipher the meaning behind every literal window, Dobrowolsky felt an element of sadness and hardship may be part of the overall story within the fabric, and the layers of material may symbolize the need to peel back a sense of vulnerability. In that moment, a shift took place: Dobrowolsky started to view the exhibition beyond her own eyes. Instead, she began to feel it with every fiber of her being. “Through the artist’s eventual talk, it became evident that there was indeed a thread of struggle, pain and estrangement being told through the textile art. So, I went back for a second tour, and sure enough, I was able to see and feel more deeply.”

The “Folktales and Fairy Tales” exhibition and sale, which includes wearable art, can be viewed at the Taras Shevchenko Museum until **May 22, 2026.**

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Gallery hours: Mon, Tues, Weds, Fri: 10 a.m.- 4 p.m., Thurs: 12-7 p.m.,  
and weekends by appointment.



#### About Ayah Victoria McKhail

Ayah Victoria McKhail is the Shevchenko Museum’s visual arts reporter. She’s passionate about capturing stories about the artists who enrich the museum with their art exhibitions. In 2012, she travelled to Kyiv, Ukraine. Highlights include visiting the National Art Museum of Ukraine, Independence Square, and the Kyiv Monastery of the Caves.