
Unique mosaic in Donetsk, feared to be slated for destruction, is saved

ArtUkraine Information Service

KYIV - The unique monumental mosaic "Woman-Bird," designed and constructed by Alla Horska, H. Synitsia and Victor Zaretsky in 1965 in a jewelry store in Donetsk, will be saved - and not destroyed as originally reported by the UNIAN news service.

An October 17 UNIAN article had quoted a letter from Lyudmyla Ohneva, director of the Donetsk Oblast Union of Ukrainian Women, which noted that the new private owners of the building where the Horska mosaic was located in Donetsk had announced their intention to destroy the historic mosaic as part of a reconstruction of the area and the building of a new McDonald's restaurant.

The Donetsk Oblast Union of Ukrainian Women and the Donetsk Oblast National Union of Artists of Ukraine demanded in their letter to Yurii Bohutsky, Ukraine's minister of culture, that national interests be defended by preserving this unique monument of Ukrainian monumental art.

A spokesman for McDonald's Ukraine has confirmed to ArtUkraine Information Service that neither McDonald's nor the owners of the property in Donetsk, Firm YUG, ever had any intention to harm or destroy the mosaic. McDonald's said it and its partner have been working closely from the beginning to protect the mosaic and to incorporate the mosaic into their new building.

McDonald's Ukraine stated: "From the very beginning of the premises' reconstruction, McDonald's requested that the mosaic be saved. McDonald's had a firm commitment and agreement with the owners. The YUG company has sent to the Donetsk regional administration an official letter confirming that the mosaic will be kept safe."

The spokesman for McDonald's said, "We understand the contribution of Alla Horska to Ukrainian culture and place a high value on the artwork. The mosaic will be put in the central lobby of the restaurant and be open for everyone to see. Considering the art and historic value of the mosaic the board of directors of our company has officially asked our partners to stop all construction work in the area of the mosaic's location and not to take any steps for the mosaic's removal without permission from the Department of Culture of the Donetsk regional administration."

McDonald's further stated: "Since this mosaic has never been registered by the state authorities as 'memorable artwork,' we are working toward the possibility to include the mosaic into the state's registration list and to put a sign near it stating that this mosaic is officially registered, at its new location in the same reconstructed premises. We will provide assistance to the Department of Culture in Donetsk and we are right now discussing the kind of technology needed for the moving of the 10-ton mosaic."

Karen Bishop, managing director of McDonald's Ukraine, in a letter to Canadian Ambassador Andrew Robinson, underscored, "The position of McDonald's Restaurants is simple - the artwork must be preserved." Ambassador Robinson had contacted McDonald's after being contacted by Len Krawchuk, a Canadian collector and promoter of Ukrainian folk art, and Morgan Williams of the ArtUkraine.com Information Service.

Ms. Bishop also stated in her letter to Ambassador Robinson that, "In order to ensure the preservation,

McDonald's Restaurants is willing to hire restoration experts to complete the works involved in the relocation and we also would be willing to have a representative from the Department of Culture help in overseeing this work - at McDonald's cost."

Alla Horska, a young, brave, talented Ukrainian artist was a graduate of the Kyiv Art Institute. She was born on September 18, 1929, and was murdered on November 28, 1970, near Kyiv under mysterious circumstances. The crime remains officially unsolved.

She was a monumentalist painter and was married to another famous Ukrainian painter, Viktor Zaretsky. They had one son.

Mr. Horska was a founder and active member of the Club of Creative Youth (1962) in Kyiv, which played an important role in the cultural movement of the 1960s. She designed the stage sets for Mykola Kulish's "Otak Zahynuv Huska" (Thus Huska Died,) whose premiere at the Lviv Ukrainian Drama Theater was banned.

In 1964 she collaborated with Halyna Sevruck and Liudmyla Semykina on a stained-glass panel designed by Petro Zalyvakha for Kyiv University. The panel portrayed Taras Shevchenko as protecting an allegoric woman (Ukraine) and holding in his hand a book with the following quotation from his poem: "I will glorify those insignificant, mute serfs, and will place my word to guard them."

The authorities ordered the stained glass window destroyed because of what they perceived as the artwork's ideological inconsistency and its modern artistic approach. Ms. Horska was expelled from the Union of Artists of the Ukrainian SSR.

She continued to defy the authorities by protesting against their repressive measures. Ms. Horska was active as an artist as a fighter for the human rights of persecuted intellectuals and as a leader among younger artists.

There are many who feel Ms. Horska's murder was ordered by the authorities. A very large crowd of mourners attended her funeral held in Kyiv on December 7, 1970.

One writer said, "To her friends Alla remained a symbol of the Ukrainian woman who does not walk down life's journey along paths smoothed down by half-truths: a woman whose sole goal is absolute Truth, Love and Beauty. ..." Horska fathomed the tragic fate of the Ukrainian woman and found means to reflect this in her art."

Ms. Horska's main works are monumental internal and external paintings and mosaics, decorating schools, museums, restaurants, which were done in collaboration with other artists.

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| [Home Page](#) |
