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PHOTO ART PROJECT "THE IMAGE OF FREE UKRAINE 'THE WAY OF REVIVAL'"

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ФОТОМИСТЕЦЬКИЙ ПРОЄКТ «ОБРАЗ ВІЛЬНОЇ УКРАЇНИ «"ШЛЯХ ВІДРОДЖЕННЯ"»

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The author's idea of the photographic art project. This series tells the story of Ukraine's path to revival. It runs from the terrible destruction, the pain that the country is experiencing now because of the war and the suffering caused by Russia, to the blooming spring forest – an image of the future. The photographic art project, which illustrates Ukraine's path from devastation to prosperity, was created on March 25, the 31st day of the Ukrainian people's heroic resistance to Russia's full-scale invasion. Its idea was already nurtured during the war and was born thanks to wonderful people who are ready to live through this difficult time through creativity and mint it into art. Ukraine will definitely go through a thorny path, which in this film is symbolically called "The Path of Revival" and will flourish as never before.

The idea is based on opposition and change. The suffering and painful look changes to a lively and inspired one. The location turns from the destroyed "bank of hopes" into a forest, a spring meadow covered with snowdrops and snowdrops. As a symbol of the rebirth of nature, soul and life, spring is meant to give hope and inspiration. It is essential that the first location is illustrative and was destroyed in peacetime and needs to be restored. In the place where the suffering part of the series was filmed, namely in Khmelnytskyi, on the bank of the Southern Buh on the left side of Zakhidno-Okruzhna Street, there used to be beautiful willows. They were barbarically cut down by unknown people and stolen. Thus, symbolically, these criminal acts are superimposed on the situation in the country. After all, to some extent, such seemingly minor offences against the backdrop of the war have contributed to all the evil happening on our land.

In contrast to the dark image, we created an image of a free Ukraine that blossoms every day with every spring flower. The whole picture is made up of individual elements such as an ancient shirt of Podillia region embroidered by the author's great-great-grandmother, a wreath and corset decorated with fresh flowers, jewellery, a bouquet of ripe ears and Crimean dried flowers, and a wooden lighthouse. Each individual item carries a certain symbolism through its colour, shape, and manner of use. A shirt with embroidered ornaments has always been considered a talisman for Ukrainians. The amulet function of Ukrainian clothing is emphasized by H. Stelmashchuk (2019) in her book *Ukrainian Folk Dress* (p.7). The researcher emphasizes the extreme importance of certain symbols applied to clothing to protect a person (Stelmashchuk, 2019, p.7). Professor Kh. Vovk (1995) in his *Studies in Ukrainian Ethnography and Anthropology* speaks about the existence of the shirt as a part of Ukrainian clothing already at the beginning of historical times (p.146). In addition, the scientist notes the similarity of the shirts' cut of Cossack times, at least of the Left Bank, which is recorded in the drawings of O. Rigelman and several found specimens with modern ones, at the time of the author's research, which is the second half of the nineteenth century – the beginning of the twentieth century (Vovk, 1995, p.146). It is also important to note the ornamentation's peculiarity and the coded symbols' meaning. This issue was also studied by Kh. Vovk. His book *Studies in Ukrainian Ethnography and Anthropology* describes geometric ornaments as the oldest (Vovk, 1995, p.149). In her article *The Symbolism of Certain Geometric Ornaments of Ukrainian Embroidery*, cultural scholar Yu. Nikishenko (2002), considering different points of view, writes that all researchers "agree on only one thing: ornamentation has a very long history and dates

back to the primitive era" (p.76). The geometric shapes depicted on the shirt used in the filming, its material – home-woven hemp cloth – as well as the embroidery methods, such as cutting, lace, overlaying, and information from the owners, indicate that this shirt may be more than two hundred years old. In fact, the embroidered shirt has absorbed a huge amount of information about the individual and the nation's past in general. That is why it was decided to shoot during this difficult time. Moreover, it has already survived two wars and the Holodomor and is almost perfectly preserved. So, its energy is a symbol of the power and strength of the Ukrainian people. The corset was added as an element of support, the support that Ukraine receives from all over the world and the support that it has given to itself. The corset is also decorated with fresh flowers, as a personification of the blooming imperishable soul and life that continues despite everything. It is a unifying element of the past, illustrated by the ancient shirt and the present, through a modern designer corset in white. According to Yu. Nikishenko (2004), white is a part of the archaic "triad" of colours that could be used as a sign in horizontal geosymbolism and in defining the vertical structure of the universe. Y. Nikishenko, referring to the researcher A. Golan, notes that the white colour dates back to the Neolithic period (p.93). Also, the white colour finds its place in the symbolism of medieval Christian art, where it means purity, as opposed to black, sinful (Nikishenko, 2004, p.94). Today, based on the study of the history of the colour's meaning in the culture and life of peoples, including Ukrainians, Y. Nikishenko (2004) concludes that in modern Ukrainian culture, in general, white colour means chastity, purity, and high thoughts (p.96). In fact, the high thoughts and purity of the intention of support from the world and one's own support were encoded in the symbolism of the flowered corset. The flowers that decorate the corset represent the diversity of nations that support Ukraine. For example, the chrysanthemum is one of the national symbols of Japan. Gypsophila is a plant that grows in the mountains, on steppes, and rocky slopes, with a combination of tenderness and strength, endurance. It is present in the culture of Britain, Germany, and the Mediterranean countries where it comes from (Tanets bilykh metelykiv, n.d.). Eustoma is loved and respected in England, although its homeland is Central America (Eustoma - "troianda kokhannia", 2017). It is known that images of the iris flower were found in Crete among the paintings of the Knossos Castle, built at the end of the third millennium B.C. Their name is associated with the name of the Greek goddess of the rainbow Iris, and there are beliefs and legends dedicated to this flower. Irises are also popular in Italy and Japan, where the name of this flower is translated as "warrior spirit" and in Europe, where their homeland is Holland (Irys, 2020). Christianity also uses the iris as a symbol of purity and protection. In addition, the iris is also a symbol of sorrow and pain. Its wedge-shaped, sharp leaves are the embodiment of the suffering and sadness of the heart of the Mother of God from the torment of Christ. That is why the iris can often be found in images of the Virgin Mary (Irys, 2020). The wreath of fresh flowers is also varied, with colourful ribbons that also have a protective function, including plant symbols inherent in Ukrainian culture. For example, the viburnum has long been a significant symbol of Ukraine. Scholar S. Formanova (1999) in her article *Red Viburnum as a Symbol of the Ukrainian People* mentions the image of the viburnum bridge, which in Ukrainian folk art symbolizes the blood unity of people from generation to generation, the im-

mortality of the nation, and the continuity of the family (p.148). Thus, the viburnum in the wreath enhances its amulet function.

The model's hairstyle, in the form of wavy loose hair framed by a braided weave, reflects a state of mind of freedom with a clear vision of the future. The makeup was done in spring colours, which echo the colours of flowers, nature and embroidery on the shirt. The neck ornament used was a sylianka, another name for "hyrdan," which was widespread in Ukraine, in particular in the Podillia and Galicia regions (Vovk, 1995, p.130). The decoration is a modern interpretation and is made in a combination of gold, a symbol of the divine, and black, an earthly colour, with a pink flower in the centre, which represents life. Earrings in the form of a white orchid with a pearl enhance the floral symbolism with a mood of light power. In Ukraine, the orchid grows in the wild, and a meeting with it is believed to bring good luck. A bouquet of ripe ears of wheat and Crimean dried flowers, which appears in some of the photographs, is a symbol of connection with the native land and its fruits which cannot be taken away. Metaphorically, Ukrainians are the grain of their country, which will surely continue to grow.

This photo story also reflects the duality of the world. A duality that has always been there, which we feel especially vividly now because of the war. Ukraine has become a place where we can clearly see where evil is and where good is. Ukrainians have become the force that stands guard over the bright side of life and tries to preserve it against all odds. Nowadays, the struggle is for the whole world, for what it will be like. Everyone must choose which force to serve. Ukraine has made its painful but victorious choice to fight for freedom and liberty. Everyone has the freedom to choose, and everyone will reap the benefits. War seems to be all darkness, but our world is never all black. Despite the war taking lives, children are born in Ukraine, people fall in love, flowers bloom, and cranes return home. This will always be the case, but how much good there is in the world depends on everyone's choice. To avoid getting lost in the darkness, we have an inner sense, a "navigator" – the heart. The cohesion and strength of our people demonstrate that we can hear it. So, we will win, because light always conquers darkness. The lighthouse in the frame is a miniature of the Kheron Khablivskiy Rear Lighthouse (Zelenovska, 2020). It is a symbol of a roadmap to a brighter future for our temporarily occupied southeastern territories and Ukraine as a whole. At the time of the shooting, the territory where this lighthouse is located was occupied. However, on 10.11.2022, the Armed Forces of Ukraine liberated this part of the Kherson region. We are on the path of revival because we have made our choice towards light and goodness, despite the indescribable pain, loss and destruction – towards peace and prosperity.

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Videographer – Illia Sopilchar, Instagram @sopilchar_video

Photo No. 1



123

**"Among the pain" of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine 'The Way of Revival'"**

Camera / Lens

Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:

50 mm | F1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/500 s

Image No. 1 editing with

Adobe Photoshop

Lightroom Classic 6,5:

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- Colour correction

Light scheme

Light source: natural light at sunset.

Photo No. 2



124

"Feeling" of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine 'The Way of Revival'"

Camera / Lens
Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:
50 mm | F1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1250 s

**Images No. 2 editing with
Adobe Photoshop
Lightroom Classic 6,5:**
• Brightness and shadow areas editing
• Colour correction

Light scheme
Light source: natural light at sunset.

Photo No. 3



**"Around" of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine 'The Way of Revival'"**

Camera / Lens
Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:
50 mm | F1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1500 s

**Images No. 3 editing with
Adobe Photoshop
Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction
- Exposure, contrast and saturation editing

Light scheme
Light source: natural light at sunset.

Photo No. 4



"Forever mine"
of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine
'The Way of Revival'"

Camera / Lens
Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:
50 mm | F1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1500 s

**Image No. 4 editing with
Adobe Photoshop
Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction

Light scheme
Light source: natural light at sunset.

Photo No. 5



**"A glance through dismemberment" of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine 'The Way of Revival'"**

127

Camera / Lens

Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:

50 mm | F1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1800 s

**Image No. 5 editing with
Adobe Photoshop
Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction

Light scheme

Light source: natural light at sunset.

Photo No. 6



"Sunset before dawn"
of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine
'The Way of Revival'"

Camera / Lens
Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:
50 mm | F1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1250 s

**Image No. 6 editing with
Adobe Photoshop
Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction
- Exposure, contrast and saturation editing

Light scheme
Light source: natural light at sunset.

Photo No. 7



**"The light of the sun with the imprint of war"
of the Photo Art Project "The Image of Free Ukraine 'The Way of Revival'"**

Camera / Lens
Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:
50 mm | F 1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1200, 1/1600 s

**Images No. 7 editing with
Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction
- Exposure, contrast and saturation editing

Light scheme
Light source: natural light
an hour before sunset.

Photo No. 8



“Dance of life”
of the Photo Art Project
“The Image of Free Ukraine
‘The Way of Revival’”

Camera / Lens
Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

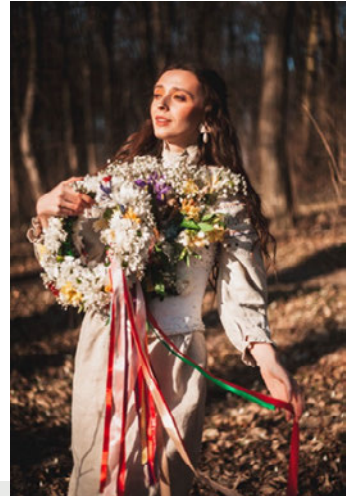
Settings:
50 mm | F1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/3200 s

**Image No. 8 editing with
Adobe Photoshop
Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction

Light scheme
Light source: natural light
an hour before sunset.

Photo No. 9



"Breath of spring" of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine 'The Way of Revival'"

Camera / Lens

Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:

50 mm | F1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/3200 s

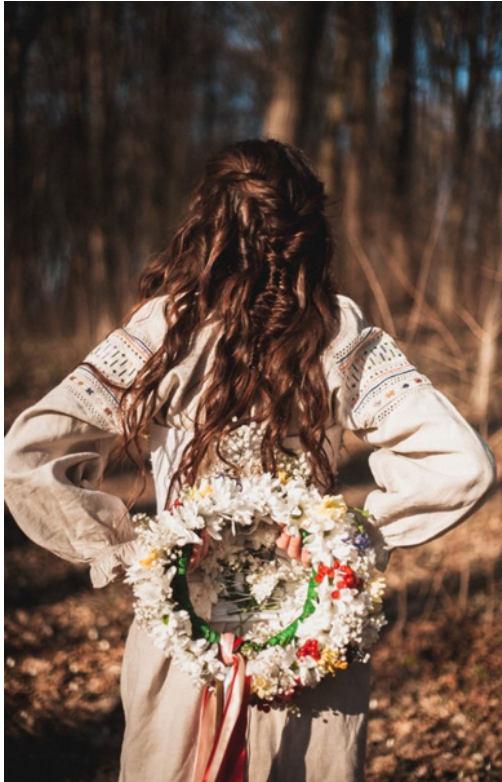
Images No. 9 editing with**Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction
- Exposure, contrast and saturation editing

Light scheme

Light source: natural light
an hour before sunset.

Photo No. 10



"Free" of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine 'The Way of Revival'"

Camera / Lens
Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:
50 mm | F 1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1250 s

**Images No. 10 editing with
Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction

Light scheme
Light source: natural light
an hour before sunset.

Photo No. 11



133

"Return to the whole"
of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine
'The Way of Revival'"

Camera / Lens

Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:

50 mm | F1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/4000 s

**Image No. 11 editing with
Adobe Photoshop****Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction

Light scheme

Light source: natural light
an hour before sunset.

Photo No. 12



"Moment of integrity"
of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine
'The Way of Revival'"

Camera / Lens
Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:
50 mm | F1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/2000 s

**Image No. 12 editing with
Adobe Photoshop
Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction

Light scheme
Light source: natural light
an hour before sunset.

Photo No. 13



135

**"Portrait Of Peace Victory"
of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine
'The Way of Revival'"**

Camera / Lens

Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:

50 mm | F1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1250 s

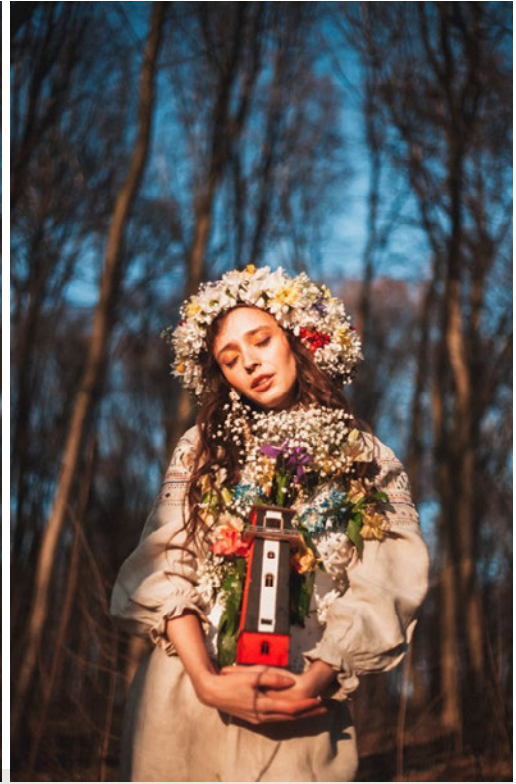
**Image No. 13 editing with
Adobe Photoshop
Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction

Light scheme

Light source: natural light
an hour before sunset.

Photo No. 14



"Healing" of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine 'The Way of Revival'"

Camera / Lens
Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:
50 mm | F 1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1250 s

**Images No. 14 editing with
Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction

Light scheme
Light source: natural light
an hour before sunset.

Photo No. 15



**"Feel life" of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine 'The Way of Revival'"**

Camera / Lens

Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:

50 mm | F 1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1600 s
50 mm | F 1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1600 s

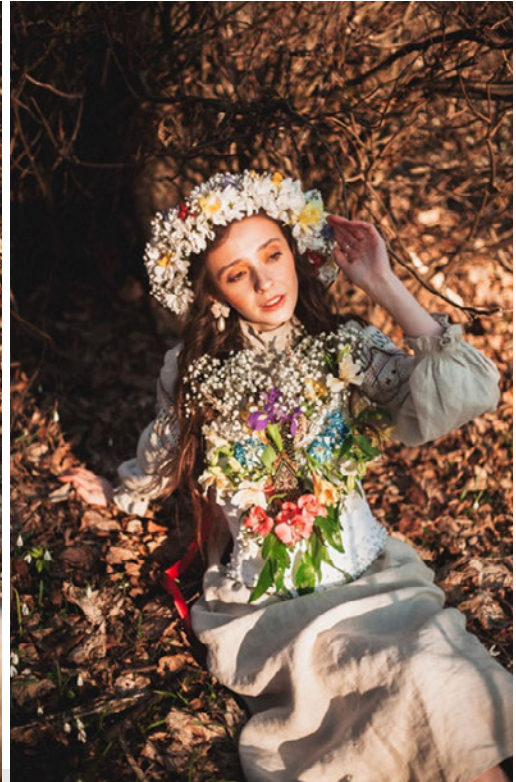
**Images No. 15 editing with
Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction

Light scheme

Light source: natural light
an hour before sunset.

Photo No. 16



"Renaissance" of the Photo Art Project
"The Image of Free Ukraine 'The Way of Revival'"

Camera / Lens
Canon EOS 5D /
Canon 50 mm f/1.8

Settings:
50 mm | F 1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1000 s
50 mm | F 1.83 | ISO 100 | 1/1600 s

**Images No. 16 editing with
Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Classic 6,5:**

- Brightness and shadow areas editing
- White balance editing
- Colour correction

Light scheme
Light source: natural light
an hour before sunset.

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