

St John's Cathedral Exhibits 'Sailing to Byzantium' by Olga Bakhtina

Blending Early Renaissance and Byzantine art with themes from Yeats' poetry, the exhibition reflects on contemporary issues through timeless Biblical stories

BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA, July 28, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Saint John's Anglican Cathedral in Brisbane is currently showcasing '[Sailing to Byzantium](#),' an exhibition by renowned Australian artist Olga Bakhtina. Running from June 29th to August 13th, this exhibition blends Early Renaissance and Byzantine art with themes from William Butler Yeats' poetry whilst reflecting on contemporary issues through timeless Biblical stories.



Olga Bakhtina in front of several works from the 'Sailing to Byzantium' exhibition at St John's Anglican Cathedral. 28th June 2024.

Having grown up in Russia in the times of Glasnost and Perestroika, Australian artist Olga Bakhtina is deeply worried about future of Russia with the suppression of freedom and the horrible invasion of Ukraine. Reflecting on why she paints biblical scenes, Olga says: "People who've known me for a while, often ask me why I started painting biblical scenes. The answer is simple: it is a response to what is happening in the world around us – especially the last few years. Just the other day, there was a terrible attack on a children's hospital in Kiev. Children who were already fighting cancer, their families, as well as doctors and nurses were killed and injured. When you hear news like this, you think of the Massacre of the Innocent.

When we think of all the refugees in the different parts of the world who have to leave everything behind and flee with their children it reminds you of the story shown in Flight into Egypt. And St George and the Dragon? That is the Christian allegory of the battle between good and evil, that we see everywhere in the world.

I think if you look at the paintings, you will see that they are not just about the Bible. Or the past. I believe, art is not wallpaper. It's not decoration. It never was, and it should never become mere decoration. Art is about sharing stories. About human connection. As someone once said: Art is the highest form of hope. I like that. Because we need hope in this world. Like in Annunciation. We need love, like in Madonna and Child. We need kindness like in the Good Samaritan. So each of the works here, tells a story. A story that is still so relevant in our modern lives."

The exhibition title comes from W.B. Yeats' poem *Sailing to Byzantium*, which speaks of the quest for eternal beauty and spiritual transcendence. In the poem, Byzantium symbolizes an ideal world of artistic and intellectual perfection, a place where the soul finds peace beyond the physical. This idea connects deeply with the spiritual essence of Early Christian art, where every detail holds profound religious meaning.

Drawing from Yeats' exploration of eternal beauty and spiritual transcendence, Olga Bakhtina's *'Sailing to Byzantium'* delves into the depths of love, devotion, sacrifice, and human frailty. Each piece is a visual meditation, rich with symbolic detail and profound religious meaning, inviting viewers to reflect on their own spiritual journey. Olga's art transcends mere depiction of Biblical scenes, seeking to find answers and offer hope through powerful visual narratives.



Entry to Jerusalem, Olga Bakhtina, 2024, oil on canvas, 90cm x 90cm.



Baptism of Christ, Olga Bakhtina, 2024, oil on canvas, 90cm x 90cm.

"Through my art, I strive to bridge the ancient stories of Christianity and our modern society, reflecting on the timeless human experiences that connect us all," says Olga Bakhtina.

Archbishop Jeremy Greaves delivered a thoughtful, glowing review of Olga Bakhtina's work during the opening night on July 11th.

"In and through this exhibition Olga Bakhtina perhaps invites us to explore our own inner Byzantium where our souls might find peace and we might glimpse something of the transcendence to which the works point us to," Archbishop Greaves said. "I like the idea that when it comes to art, you are not merely a spectator; you are a participant in a sacred dialogue."

Olga Bakhtina, an award-winning Australian artist based in Brisbane, has been captivating audiences with her evocative oil and charcoal works for over 15 years. From her early studies in the Sultanate of Oman to her current scholarly pursuits in Art History at the University of Queensland, Olga's work reflects a deep passion for Early Renaissance art, infusing her pieces with serene beauty and profound inspiration.

Since her first solo exhibition in 2012, Olga has exhibited regularly across Australia. Her more recent solo exhibitions include 'Inner Garden, Secret Garden' at LEDA Gallery in Newcastle, 'Good Samaritan and other Biblical Stories' at Saint John's Anglican Cathedral in Brisbane, and 'Olive Branch' at the Cathedral of St Stephen in Brisbane as part of its 150th Anniversary celebration.

Olga's art has received national and international recognition, with features in prestigious publications including 'The Double: Identity and Difference in Art since 1900,' published by the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., '[Gospel Themes in Paint](#),' in-depth article on Olga's Christianity inspired works by Australian Catholic Liturgical Art, published by the National Liturgical Architecture and Art Council and in a video series '[Art Aficionados](#)' by the Brisbane Archdiocese which analysed Olga's work 'Good Samaritan' held in their private collection.

Olga has been the finalist and winner of multiple Australian Art awards, including COSSAG (Cathedral of Saint Stephen Art Group) Award in 2016 and 2018. Her works are held in prestigious collections such as the Archdiocese of Brisbane, the Australian Catholic University, and international private collections.

Exhibition Details:

Title: Sailing to Byzantium

Artist: Olga Bakhtina

Venue: Saint John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane

Dates: June 29th to August 13th

Entry: Free

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