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Press Release

Yelena Yemchuk *Malanka*



Malanka is Ukrainian American visual artist, Yelena Yemchuk's sixth photobook. Like all bodies of work by Yemchuk, *Malanka* is personal, feminine, surrealist, and touched by a spell. The eponymous tradition is a pre-Christian, heavily incantatory folklore ritual that takes place on January 14, the Old New Year in the Julian calendar. It is celebrated by ethnic Romanians in western Ukraine, and its origins are largely unknown. Yemchuk traveled to Crasna (Krasnoilsk in Ukrainian) in 2019 and 2020 to document the night-long festival. In essence, *Malanka* is about driving out winter and stimulating spring into existence, an ancient custom reminiscent of Persephone's return in Greek mythology.

While photographing in Crasna, Yemchuk also made a companion short film, which premiered during her solo exhibition at the Ukrainian Museum in New York, in 2023. The film stars Ukrainian artist Anya Domashyna and the American actor Ebon Moss-Bachrach. Yemchuk, who was born in Kyiv and emigrated to the US when she was eleven years old, always invigorates her works with a particular notion of the in-between fiction and reality; between the grand beauty of 1960s cinema and the social and built environments of post-soviet realms; between her Eastern European heritage and her daily life in New York. Through Yemchuk's gaze, places and spaces organically and dramatically blur, creating dreamscapes in which her subjects experience some form of metamorphosis. *Malanka* includes a poetic essay by Romanian cultural journalist Ioana Pelehatăi.

Yelena Yemchuk (b. 1970 in Kyiv, Ukraine) is a New York-based visual artist.

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Pressemitteilung

Yelena Yemchuk
Malanka

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With a text by Ioana Pelehatăi

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