

## Belkis Ayón Work Traveling from Russia Won't Make It to Venice Biennale Main Show Due to War in Ukraine

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*A print of Belkis Ayón's La consagración (1991) appeared in place of the actual painting.* ALEX GREENBERGER/ARTNEWS

Much has been made at the Venice Biennale of artist Pavlo Makov's Ukrainian Pavilion and of the last-minute addition of a Palazzo Ucraina for protest-minded art. But signs that the war had deep effects on the Biennale this year are also evident in other ways in the festival's main exhibition.

In the Arsenale section, a work by Belkis Ayón that belongs to a Russian museum isn't on view because it couldn't travel to Italy. And in the Giardini section, there is a newly added work by the Ukrainian artist Maria Prymachenko.

The Ayón work, her three-part 1991 painting *La consagración*, belongs to the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, and was included in the 2018 Berlin Biennale. It was to be one of the first works viewers saw upon entering the Arsenale, as part of a grouping of paintings by Ayón that are paired with a large sculpture by Simone Leigh.

"Because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, it was impossible to show the original work here," wall text for the Ayón painting reads. The painting now appears as a large-scale print that is pasted to the wall.

The Prymachenko work, a 1967 gouache called *Scarecrow*, appears to have joined Cecilia Alemani's main show relatively late in the game, since Prymachenko did not appear on the artist list when it was announced earlier this year. The painting portrays a fancifully colored being whose tongue sprouts a flower.

Prymachenko's art made international headlines earlier this year because some of her paintings were destroyed when Russian forces reportedly destroyed a history museum in Ivankiv that housed them. Within Ukraine, her art is relatively well known.

In its wall text for *Scarecrow*, the Biennale notes that the "real threat to Prymachenko's art memory dates to last February when, during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many of her works risked being lost forever in the bombing of the Ivankiv Museum, in which they were stored. Among these works could have been *Scarecrow* (1967)."

It's not clear where *Scarecrow* came from, since, unlike most works in the main show, there is no credit line explaining its provenance.