

Fanny Lechevalier Lafon's
Untitled work

art selection and comment by [Lil Copan](#) in the [February 2023](#) issue



(Used by permission of the artist)

(digital collage incorporating photograph by Arsen Petrov and painting by William-Adolphe Bouguereau)

When Russia invaded Ukraine last year, French artist Fanny Lechevalier Lafon saw an ever-growing, ever-present roll of news photos—a barrage of horrifying images that record the war's toll and tragedy and continue to haunt so many of us. "I have been touched by these moving and terrifying images," she writes in her artist's statement, "feeling very frustrated and powerless as a witness of this tragedy."

Yet something familiar surfaced as she viewed the photographs: a depth of humanity, of evoked emotion, even of composition of forms. She began to see in them the paintings she studied in her fine arts education at École des Beaux-Arts: classical, historical works of art that shared elements of composition with the photographs or provided a lens to view them in ways that never removed the context of the wreckage, the lives lost, yet offered a way to sustain her gaze in a recognizable interaction. The far and the near may speak to each other and to

us—and in that meeting bring something new.

Working digitally and with collage, she says she can “express [her] feeling about the situation in Ukraine.” She also sees an opportunity to encourage “younger and more ‘sensitive’ people” to engage the reality of the devastation when news photos alone might cause them harm. “Somehow,” she says, “I try to give a second life to these important visual testimonies, because I think it’s important to not get used to this nightmare’s photos.” The resulting digital collage closes the distance between classical art (here, Bouguereau’s painting *Song of the Angels*), with its evocation of visual history in symbol, and the means to stay with the difficulty of a Ukraine war photo (this one by Arsen Petrov) perhaps longer and more deeply.

With many of her digital works on Facebook (@Fanny Lechevalier) and Instagram (@Fanny_Lechevalier_L), Lechevalier’s art is sold through galleries and through her social media, raising aid for Ukraine through donations to Ukraine-based organizations.