

Arts

## By projecting news videos into teacups, this artist reveals just how fragile the world is



Tea, and empathy, for two. Cheryl Pagurek asks you to take a closer look at current events

[Leah Collins](#) · CBC Arts · Posted: Nov 28, 2016 3:49 PM ET | Last Updated: November 28, 2016

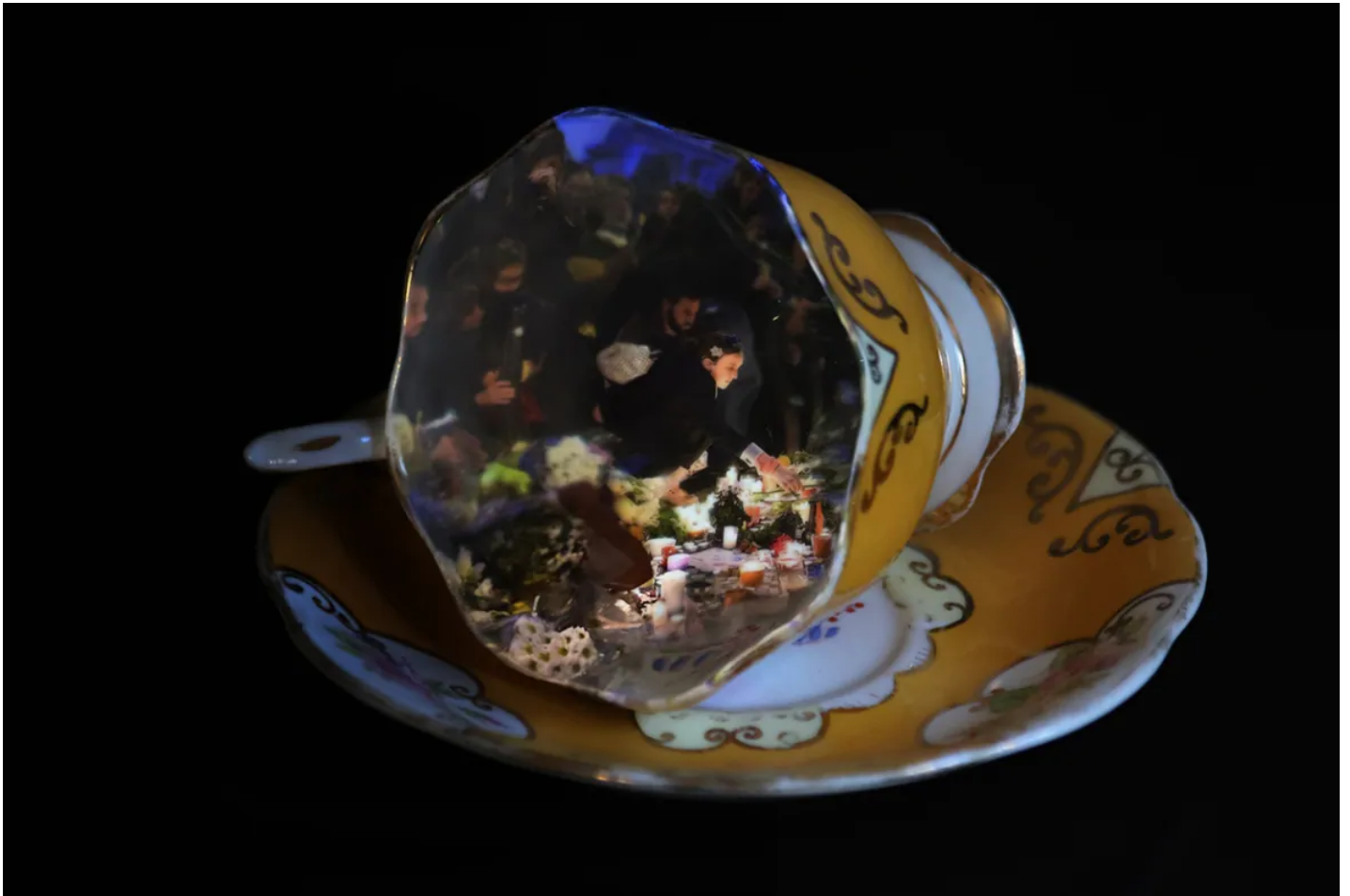


Cheryl Pagurek. Blue Tea Cup/Lesbos, 2016. (Courtesy of the artist and Patrick Mikhail Gallery)

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For [Fragile](#), an exhibition of new work at Montreal's [Patrick Mikhail Gallery](#), Ottawa artist [Cheryl Pagurek](#) projects news footage into delicate cups and saucers.

**Peek inside...**



Cheryl Pagurek. Yellow tea cup/Paris, 2016. (Courtesy of the artist and Patrick Mikhail Gallery)

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Cheryl Pagurek. Pastel tea cup/Bhaktapur, 2016. (Courtesy of the artist and Patrick Mikhail Gallery)

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Cheryl Pagurek. Navy tea cup/Crimea, 2016. (Courtesy of the artist and Patrick Mikhail Gallery)

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What you'll find could hardly be described as a tempest in a teapot — or a teacup, if you want to get literal about things.

You'll find scenes of Syrian refugees landing on Lesbos, the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, the Paris shootings. The suffering is all too real, and all too familiar.

"I think it can be very overwhelming, the way we see imagery and information about the world around us," Pagurek tells CBC Arts. "It's just so much chaos and indiscriminate turmoil."

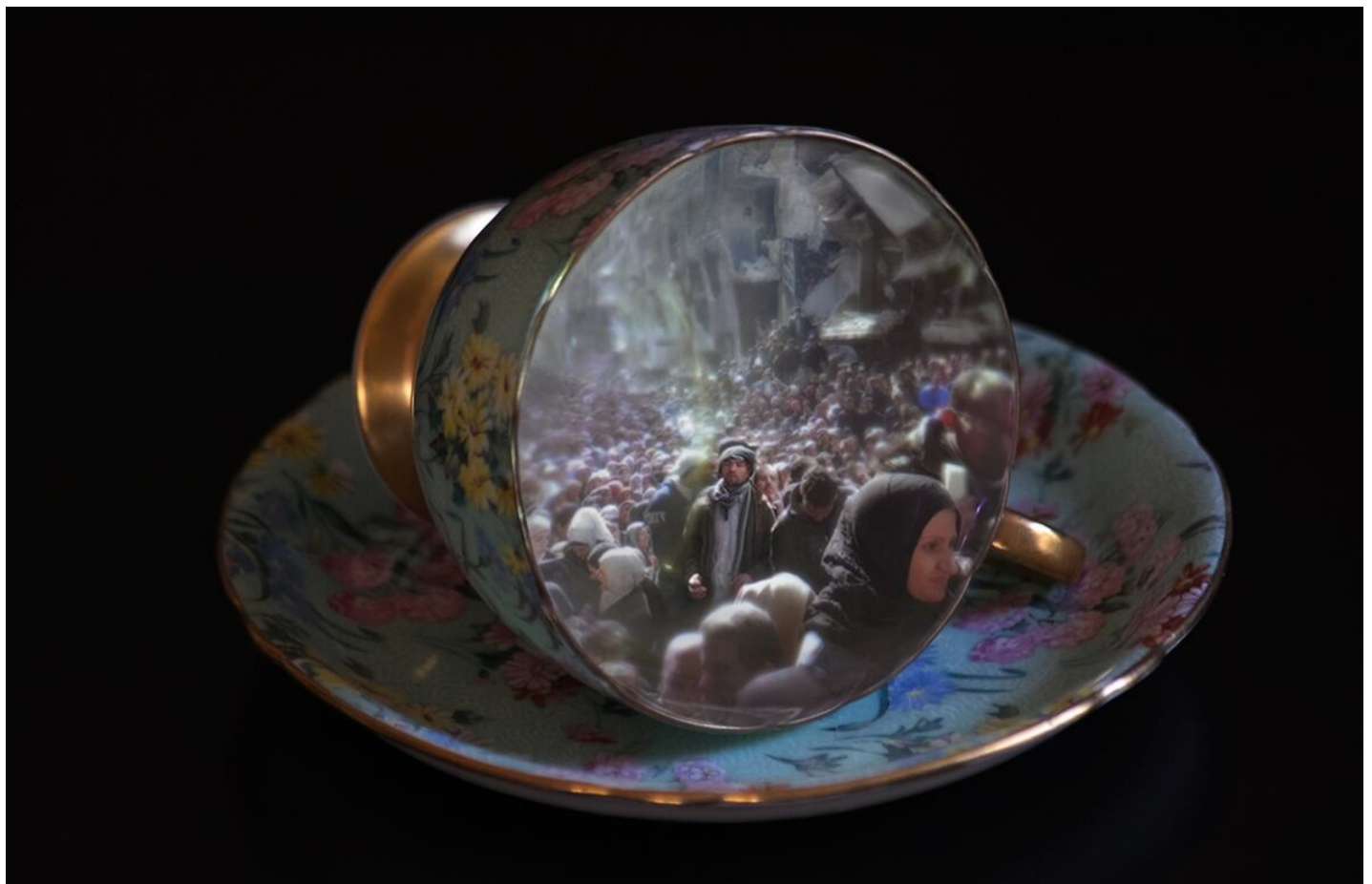
That's why she's asking you to take another look. This time, though, the photo and video artist wants you to slow down — to focus on the lives caught in these events.

“We see so many things happen over and over again in the world and we never learn.”

- Cheryl Pagurek , artist

When you peer inside a teacup, you might recognize Kathmandu or Crimea. They're "windows to the world," says Pagurek of the images, and to create the nine original photographs in the show, she projected news footage into China cups, later layering the pictures to create the final product. There's a shallow depth of field in each picture — a narrow focus on one or two people.

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Cheryl Pagurek. Green Tea Cup/Damascus, 2016. (Courtesy of the artist and Patrick Mikhail Gallery)

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Maybe it's an anguished face in a mob, or a man emerging from a life raft — the emotions as clear as a cup of Oolong. All around them, though, is blurry turmoil — a scene of chaos that threatens to spill over.

"Grieving is grieving, whether it's in Gaza City or somewhere else. It's human grief. A very universal experience. Wanting to keep your family safe, caring for the loss of a child — all these things are universal," says Pagurek.



Fragile, a new exhibition of photos and video by Ottawa Artist Cheryl Pagurek, is at Montreal's Patrick Mikhail Gallery to Jan. 13. (Courtesy of the artist and Patrick Mikhail Gallery)

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*Fragile* is a reminder of how we're all connected. All lives are fragile; the Earth itself is fragile. But the initial idea for the project was actually deeply personal.

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Every teacup in the series belonged to Pagurek's Jewish grandmother. "She was an immigrant," the artist explains. "She came to Canada with nothing." And like all of her grandparents, she fled Poland before the Second World War.

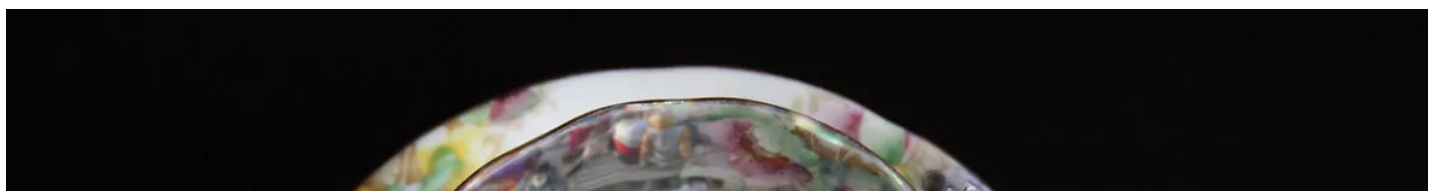
"It's a story we've heard before, but we don't learn in the world," says Pagurek. "It keeps happening and it keeps happening and it keeps happening."

"I've had [the teacups] for a long time and always wanted to incorporate them into an artwork in some way but didn't know exactly how. At a certain point, it just struck me," she says. Looking at the news — stories about the Syrian refugee crisis, for example — her grandmother's story took on "a lot of resonance."

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"This is something we're seeing again — mass migration. There's this upheaval in their lives. We see so many things happen over and over again in the world and it's like we never learn."

"There's this feeling that something we hoped in this century would be a given is more fragile than you thought."





Cheryl Pagurek. Floral tea cup/Kathmandu, 2016. (Courtesy of the artist and Patrick Mikhail Gallery)

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Cheryl Pagurek. Video still from Yellow tea cup: refugees at sea, 2016. (Courtesy of the artist and Patrick Mikhail Gallery)

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