atelienormalno

from 2018

atelienormalno – a workshop in Kyiv, co-founded by Stas Turin, Olexandr Steshenko, Evgen Golubentsev and me, where artists with and without Down syndrome work together and alongside each other.

We engage in projects, texts and publications, exhibitions, performances, and video works. Our practice is both a responsible process and a result.

Together, without censorship, we explore this world and the pressing questions of our time.

our studio

PERFORMANCE "ACTING MASTERCLASS"
by Oleksandr Steshenko and Katya Libkind
Les Kurbas Center, Kyiv, 2024

The way in which it was possible to view the paintings in the exhibition.

"Better If It Never Was"

solo exhibition in the Stain studio 2024

I take full responsibility—and I fuck it all up. In the place this exhibition comes from, nothing can be saved or fully die.
Before making a proper portfolio, where I'd have to sort, select, write brilliant, mistake-free justifications, and shape this pile of past into some clear form that suits my delicate personality—but with you in mind—I wanted to face this heap as unbearable as it is to me. The way I constantly want to erase it and start over in the morning. Now, with witnesses.
I hate everything I've done and everything I ever will. I hate this world. Better if none of this existed—but here it is.

the project consists of parts of my previous and future projects

fountain of my blood

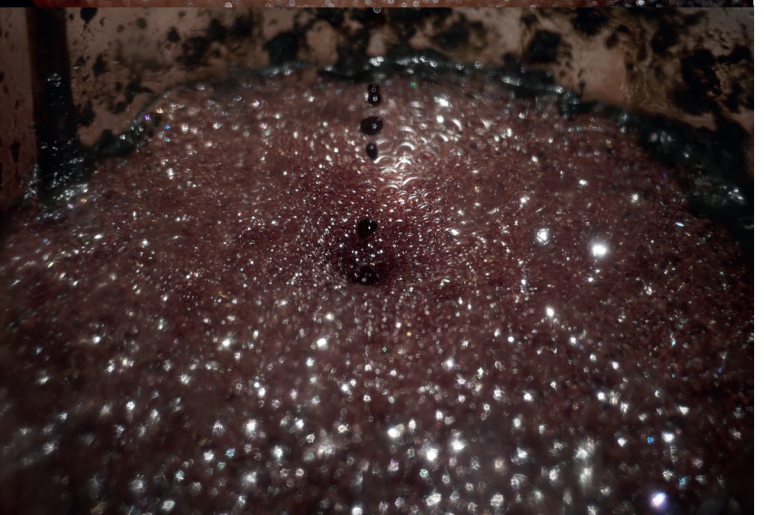
four terabytes of my digital archive over 15 years

a list of all living artists who have influenced me

ritual footwear
fragment from landartproject

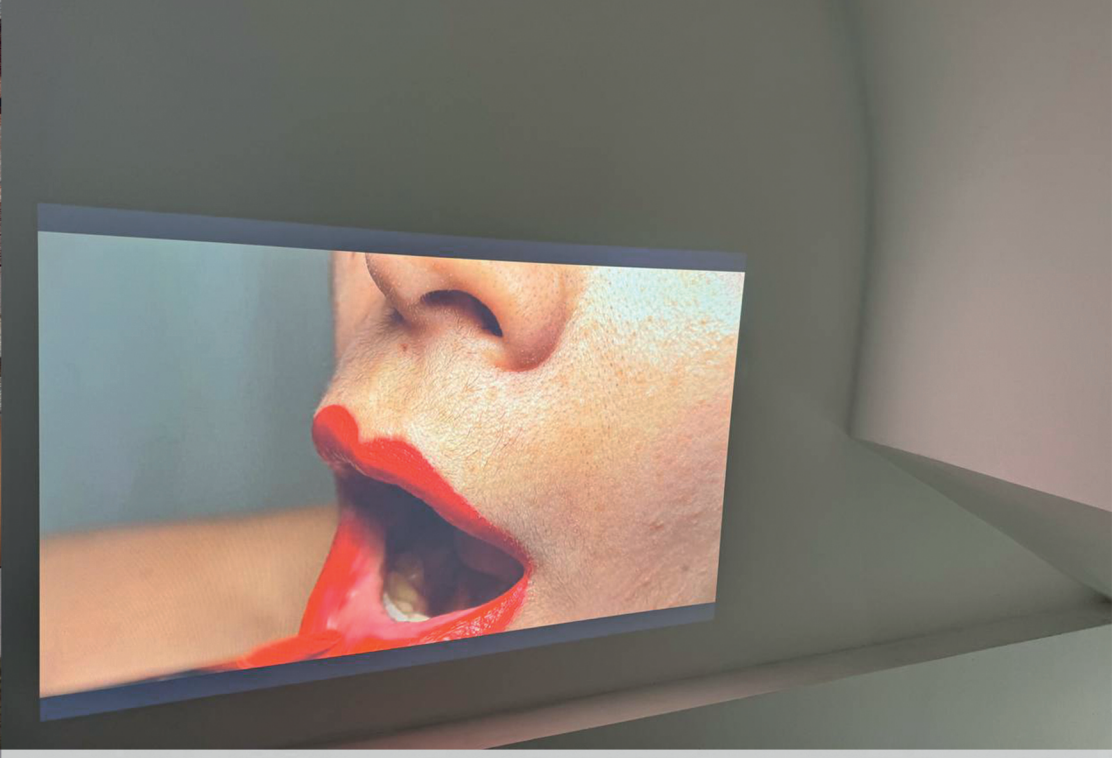
second day

third day



fourth day

A fountain of my venous blood, collected over six months.



"A Dream in Curfew Hours"

“Observe this moment - how it convulses” group exhibition, curated by Anna Lazar, Galleria Arsenal, Bialystok, Poland 2024

Kateryna Libkind’s installation is the result of her search for answers to how war—specifically, the war framing her life in Kyiv, waged by Russia against Ukraine—affects people. The artist operates within a society where many are forced to deal with constant danger, violent death, and mutilation. War reshapes the collective, the collective body. People lose limbs, and this loss affects not only them but also their loved ones and sexual partners.

How does the nervous system respond to war and collective stress? What kind of narrative, born during war, emerges from desire and the death drive? How does war alter the pleasure principle, which directs one toward the immediate satisfaction of hunger, thirst, and sex? How does the drive to minimize suffering transform under conditions of external catastrophe? Where is pleasure deferred?

A crucial reference point for Kateryna Libkind is her practice at AtelierNormalno—a studio where she and Stas Turina work with neurodivergent individuals. Their sensitivity, their way of perceiving the world, and their art are understood as an independent, complex system of representation, one that exposes the cognitive templates of neurotypical people. In her installation, the artist engages in dialogue with a poem by Valentyn Radchenko, a participant of AtelierNormalno, who constructs his associations through a unique form of synesthesia, where colors are assigned to body parts.

"A Dream in Curfew Hours" is also a video documentation of a performance. Over an extended period, the artist collects her own venous blood, which she then freezes. From her own blood, she creates an ice sculpture of a penis, which she melts with her breath. The artist’s radical gesture—performing operations on her own body, reclaiming subjectivity through self-mutilation—is also a story about her relationship with art.

The paintings, drawings, and sculptures present naked bodies. In a self-portrait, the artist’s body is depicted within a hollow space—a grave, a blast crater—into which liquid flows: blood, oil, bodily fluids. The images of people without limbs raise questions about the functioning of representational systems: will they expand to better reflect the realities of war? Closely linked to this is a sculpture that begins with the depiction of clouds/dust rising after explosions and a woman’s body without limbs.

THE LEG GOES RIGHT
YELLOW GOES LEG
AND THEN GOES RIGHT
STRAIGHT SIDE
NOSE NEXT TO LIGHT
LEG GOES RIGHT AGAIN
AND THEN ALL
THEN LEFT LEG TO LEFT
NOW GOES NOSE STRAIGHT THERE
THIS IS PAIN
ALL

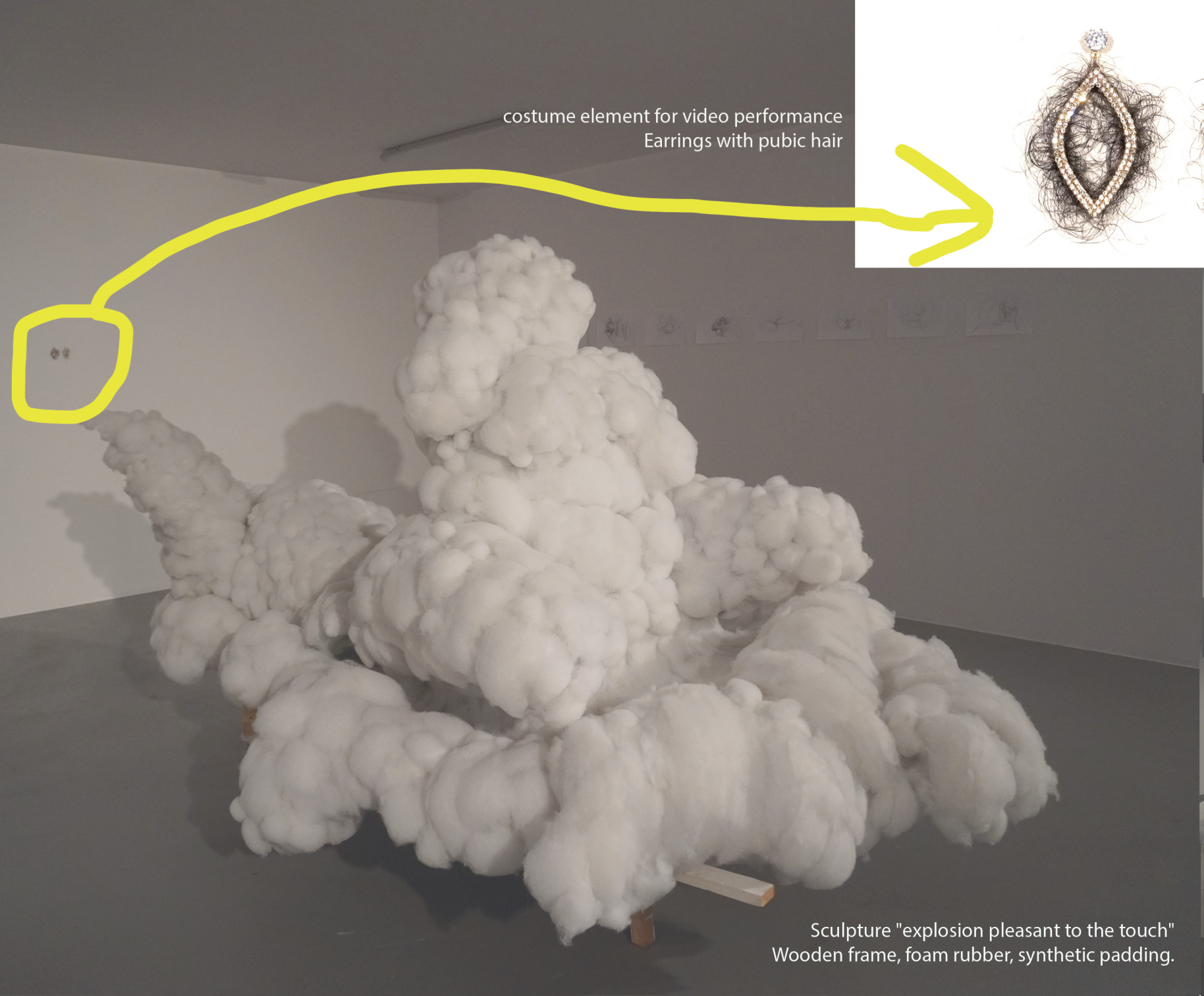
IN MY HEEL THERE WAS
THIS LITTLE THING CARRIES LEG
TO THE LEFT WOMAN
IT IS
I FELT PAIN
AND THEN HIGHER
ALL THE WATER BEHIND

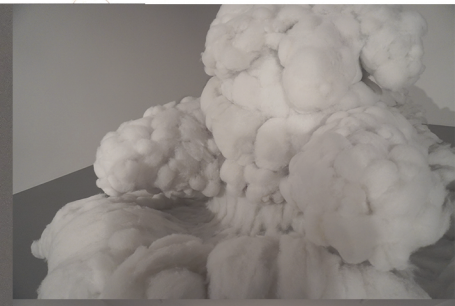
Verse by Valentin Radchenko

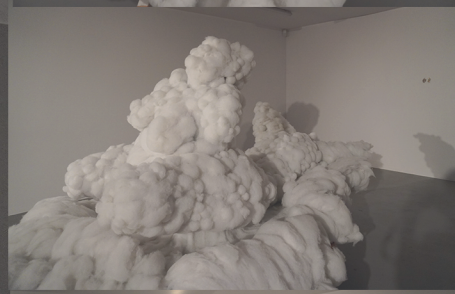
graphics 30x20 paper, charcoal, pencil

frames from video
duration 01:43:39

costume element for video performance
Earrings with pubic hair







Sculpture "explosion pleasant to the touch"
Wooden frame, foam rubber, synthetic padding.

“My-Musical” by the Musical Collective (Lviv, 2022)

“My-Musical” (We-Musical) is a vocal-participatory action based at the Kukhnia-Lviv volunteer initiative and Pidsoma shelter. With the beginning of the full-scale aggression of Russia, the @Soma.majsternia dance floor turned into a refugee shelter and an emergency kitchen. A year later, refugees of various ages continue to live in Lviv within the walls of an old book factory. Gradually, the arrangement of the common space by the efforts of internally displaced people and activists took an artistic turn. This culminated in the “musical-residency” supported by the European institutions (Baltic Art Center, Milvus Artistic Research Center, Swedish Institute). The "List of Improvements" sung by the participants of the musical calls into question wartime necessities, the superficiality of culture and the very dynamics of international solidarity. Another story, where self-defense skills are taught by the refugee Volodymyr, collates the narratives of pacifism and productive aggression. IDPs and artists exchange dreams and memories, make wishes, cook food in the midst of constant uncertainty. Ultimately, the musical takes the form of a concert of greetings: a series of empathetic messages between different contexts, generations, and types of experience.

Participants of the musical: Dmytro Tkalenko, Tamara Tkalenko, Oleksandr Pylypenko, Olena Mordyk, Olha Marusyn (curator), Katya Libkind, Dymetrii Starkgard-Venier, Volodymyr Pylyprenko, Myro Klochko (director of photography and editor), Oleksiy Min'ko, Ira Loskot, Tomash Hazslinszky, Larion Lozovyi, Tonya Zelenina (Lviv, 2022)

My-Musical (We-Musical) was realized as part of the Kindling project and supported by the Swedish Institute. Kindling is jointly organized by Baltic Art Center, Milvus Artistic Research Center, soma.majsternia and Sorry No Rooms Available.

FRAGMENTS OF PERFORMANCE AND BORSCHT FOR 100 PEOPLE

MEANWHILE, IN THE KHANENKO HOUSE 2023

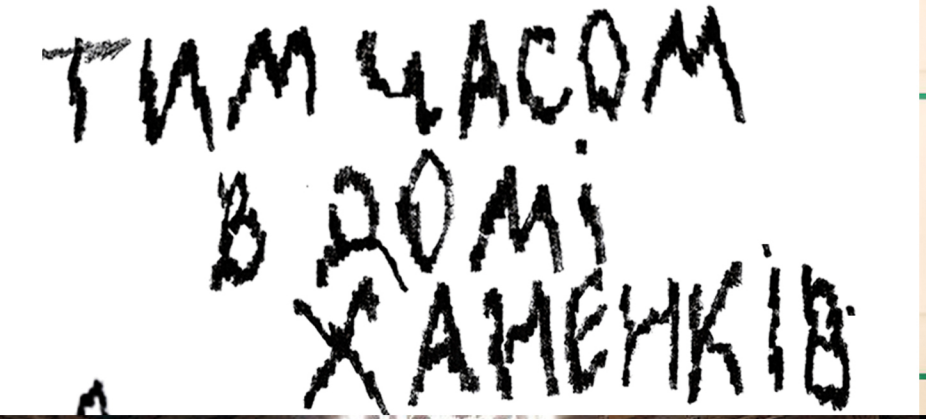
group exhibition in Khanenko museum, Kyiv
curated by Katya Libkind

Participants: Andriy Boiko, Sasha Dolhyi, Andriy Sydorkin, Oleksii Romanenko, Bohdan Bunchak, Roman Mykhailov, Ihor Makedon, Dobrynia Ivanov, Taras Kovach, Dima Kazakova, Stanislava Turina, Oleksii Shmurak, Maksym Poberezhskyi, Viktor Borovyk, Valentyn Radchenko.

Meanwhile, in the Khanenko house-one of the first exhibitions at the Khanenko Museum after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine was a laboratory-style exhibition based on the results of a residency. This residency emerged from the initiative of a group of artists who came to assist museum staff in evacuating the museum's collection. The exhibition did not feature direct works about the war; instead, we attempted to explore the possibility of art without justifications of war and necessity.

Andriy Boyko's project "Unpacking" in a medieval living room

project "Visions in Geography"
by Stanislav Turina collection
of repaired personal
belongings in the living room
where the collection of
Japanese art was
exhibited

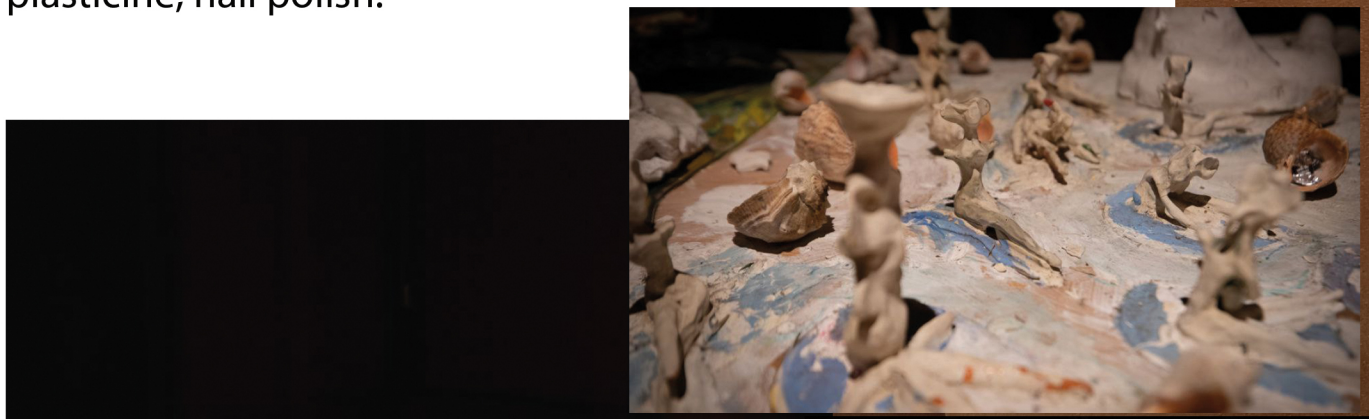


Roman Mikhailov

Bogdan Bunchak

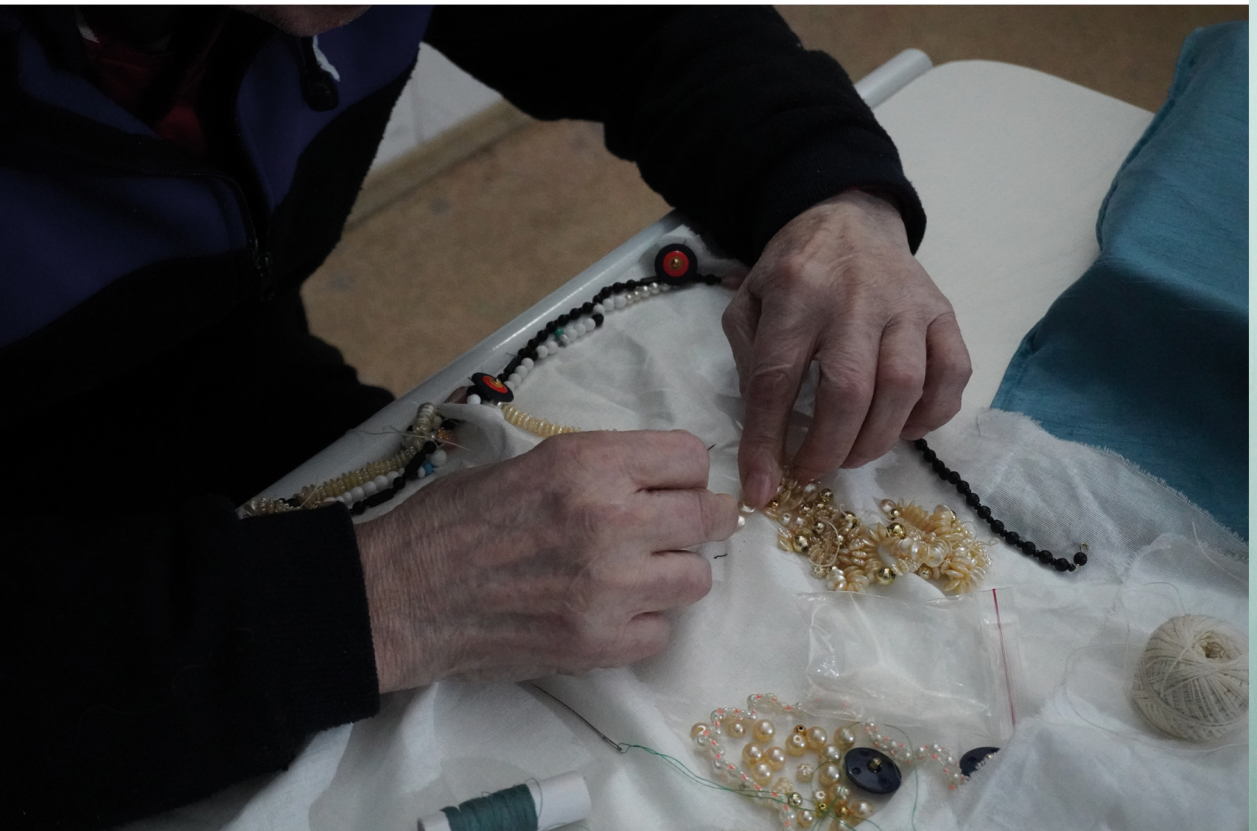
Taras Kovach

Sculptural composition "Kamasutra" by Viktor Borovyk, a patient of the Pavlov Psychiatric Hospital in Kyiv. "Kamasutra" was exhibited in the living room, where before the invasion there were exhibits related to the history and culture of Buddhism.
2019-2023
Materials: clay, gypsum, animal bones, shells, branches, plasticine, nail polish.



VOLUNTEERING IN PAVLIVKA 2022

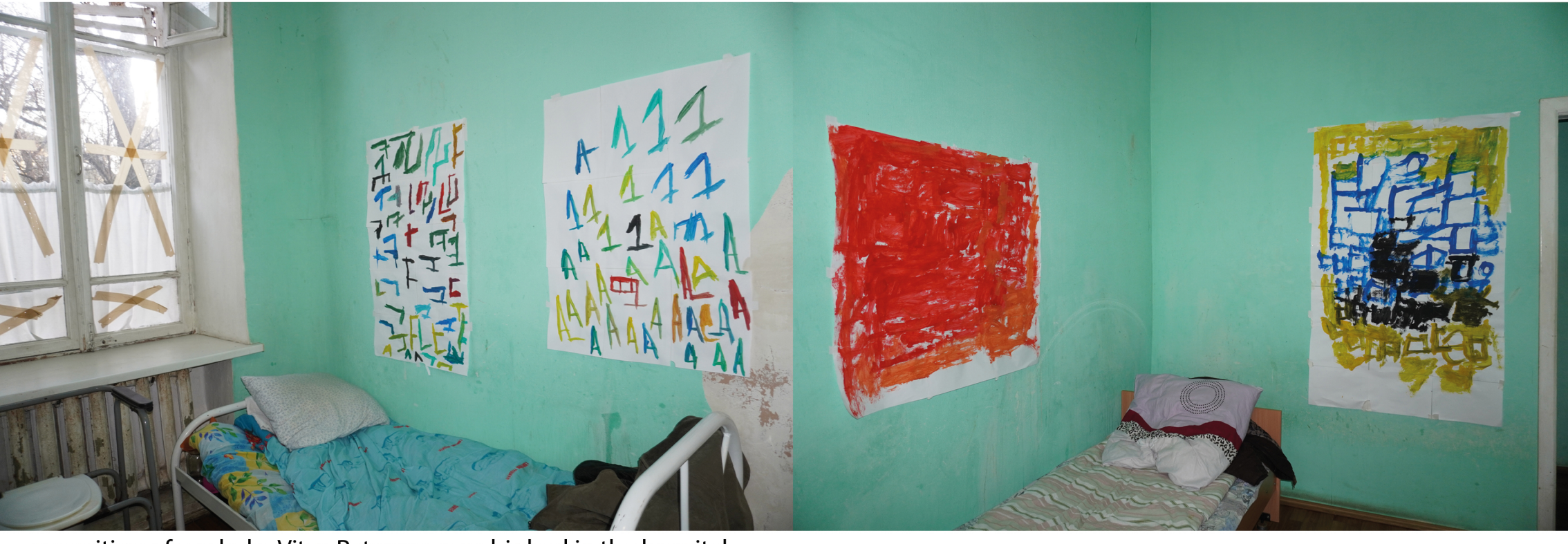
At the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion, atelienormalno began volunteering at the Pavlivka Psychiatric Hospital, where 150 men were evacuated in March 2022 from Boarding School No. 2 in Pushcha Voditsa, hit by a shell. After addressing humanitarian needs, atelienormalno set up a creative workshop. Over a year and a half, the artists created a body of work, some of which was exhibited in Kyiv, with a few pieces now in the UMCA collection.



Work in an field workshop at the Pavlov Pscychiatric Hospital in March 2022

the vest by Mykolay Babinets

exposition of works by Vitya Pashin over his bed in the hospital



exposition of works by Vitya Petrunya over his bed in the hospital

Pain. This is not mine

exhibition of projects by Valentin Radchenko and Stanislav Turina curated by Katya Libkind

The Naked Room, Kyiv 2022

There is too much in common in the practices of these authors. One can simply recognize an object or stumble upon it in thought. Both authors have lived for a long time in spaces filled with very similar things. The quantity and rhythm of these objects influence the texture of thought. In their practices, objects acquire real and magical weight; they are channels for various types of connections.

Now, I will try to abandon the description of the authors' shared traits to chance. Or trust this space and the viewers' attention. I will speak about each author as if the other did not exist. I will try to no longer manipulate the connections within the text. My narrative may be overly literal and attempt to explain something to itself. So, if you do not want explanations, I recommend switching immediately to the texts of the authors themselves.

"Pain" by Valentyn, or The Great Encyclopedia of Order.

All of Valentyn's works during his conscious artistic practice (approximately the last two years) can be divided into two categories: pain and not pain. Not pain appeared because not everything fits into pain, but almost everything does. When Valentyn explained to me why something was pain, I was captivated by the variety of reasons and points of this pain: a car is pain, zero is pain, minus is pain, grandfather and grandmother are pain, I am pain, a woman is pain, Donbas is pain, to my right is pain, forbidden is pain, Titanic is pain, a scorpion is pain...

My wife-mother is not pain, we are not pain, love is not pain, Titanic is not pain, the second is not pain, plus is not pain, a train is not pain, Malyutyanka is not pain.

Valentyn builds a scheme where everything has meaning. It is not meant to be beautiful because that is not its task. It functions as an explanation of the laws of Valentyn's environment over a certain period. Objects, their forms, and colors are arranged according to relationships between people and phenomena. Thus, objects are never just objects. They are also pain, mostly pain. In these lists, there is always a hierarchy, something primary. The laws are very strict for each subsequent moment. It is important to say that Valentyn has no doubts; for his orderliness, there is almost never another option.

One of the main characters in his works, besides Valentyn himself, is the scorpion. A creature that exists as a feeling. Sometimes it has its own form. But sometimes, the author merely implies it, existing between these forms as an emotional background. I cannot precisely grasp the definition of this feeling because it migrates. But from my conversations with Valentyn about the scorpion, I have formulated this: it is sexual anxiety. Something related to aggressive flirting or jealousy. Also, the scorpion is a fear that lingers in peripheral vision.

The Endless Still Life of Stas Turina — a practice of 11 years.
It arose as a drawing exercise from a feeling of insufficient professionalism. Stas created his own method and fund (as some art schools call a set of objects for training in still life drawing) to keep himself at the learning stage. As is often the case in learning, the impulse came from dialogue with a number of authors and, to some extent, the influence of Pikuly's potatoes in the space of Makov.
Such a careful and prolonged practice obviously cannot remain at one stage, as it inevitably finds success. So, over time, the function transformed into the pleasure of control over the volume. Eventually, fatigue from this pleasure reached a dead end, that is, it formed into a project.
It is known how to deal with projects in order to see them differently or to end them forever — show them.
In 2013, at the exhibition "89 Days of Winter" in Lviv (a curated project by Anton Varga and Anatoly Tatarenko, lasting 90 days in an apartment on Dzherelna Street), Stas first showed a part of the still life and called it "Appearance." In 2015, at the "Nothing Special" exhibition in Uzhhorod, Stas showed a part of the still life for the second time. Then Ivan Nebesnyk commented on it as "graphics for introverts."

This comment prompted me to seek an internal conversation with these works. I will try to briefly retell the essence of this conversation.
This is not mine, that is, it's not my own thought; it just stumbled here, fell, and accidentally took shape, but only for a while. A still life of thought bookmarks, nervously wriggling in search of expression. Usually, for a long time, an unformed thought tries to translate everything into feelings of guilt, but suddenly it grabs onto a crumb on the sheet, maybe even onto my own body.
The saving black crumb came to confuse us and become the main thing now. It turns out that someone put it there. And that's enough to completely distract me from the anxiety, which hasn't yet gained strength and drowned me. It's very soothing when all attention is focused on one point, and there's no need to worry about what I might have missed. The gaze licks the crumb, making it smooth and an attractive form for my thought, I submit, it's like the first joy of drawing volume.
The method of the cupboard in the sideboard — just as it stood for many years in the village of Pavshyn, where it was created. Graphics in stacks, because its quantity allows one to see everything, but only in time (each work here lasts a few seconds).

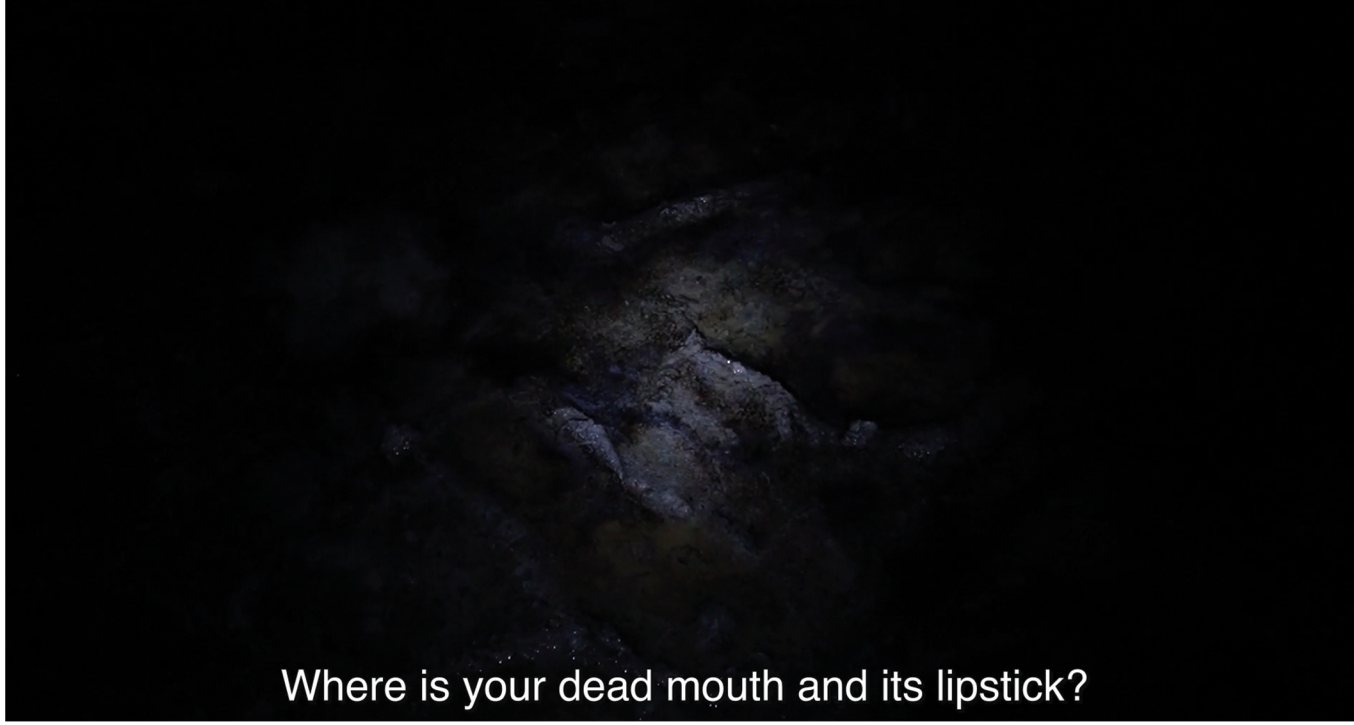
GRENNY DEAR
video 00:11:51
Filmed in Dzharylgach, Kyiv, Mogritsa village
2021-2022

WHERE ARE YOUR BIG EARS DEAR DEAD GRANDMA
Chapter One

I make a long toast in honor of my dead grandmother's birthday—she choked on water.

Stereotypes ooze like secretions, everything sinks into the prolonged toast and ferments in the celebration of my ego. The thought leads me to this: our relatives do not live within us—they die within us, from the moment we exist.
I look at my hands and see my grandmother's hands. It fascinates and unsettles me, but I will never be able to extract her from myself or stop resembling her.

The same happens with artistic environments as with genes.
I look at my work and see someone's influence. I see that I resemble.
Everything I have seen decomposes within me, along with my grandmother.
And yet, I only look at what I can recognize.



THE DEVIL'S FINGER

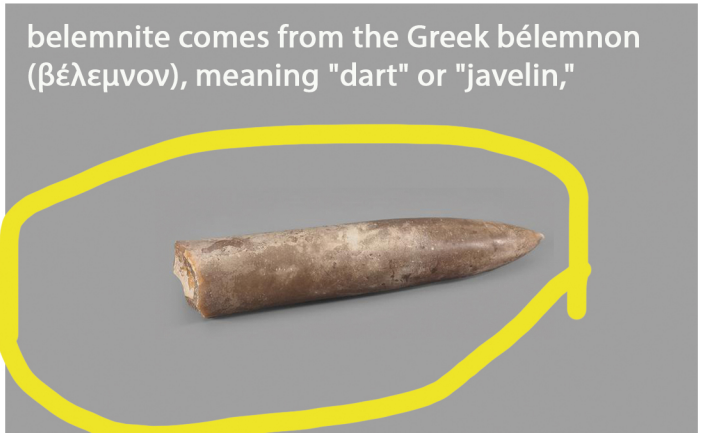
Chapter Two

I document a gesture in which I literally return my grandmother, separate from her.

I walk through a chalk quarry in Mogrytsia, carrying a belemnite inside my vagina.
Then, I remove the fossil from myself and return it to the chalk plate.
It is a ritual inspired by a dream in which my grandmother, in the form of a Tiktaalik, moves backward through evolution, as if trying to reach the first DNA—one with no past

During Russia's war against Ukraine, Mogrytsia was occupied several times, and now this area is heavily mined by Russian forces.

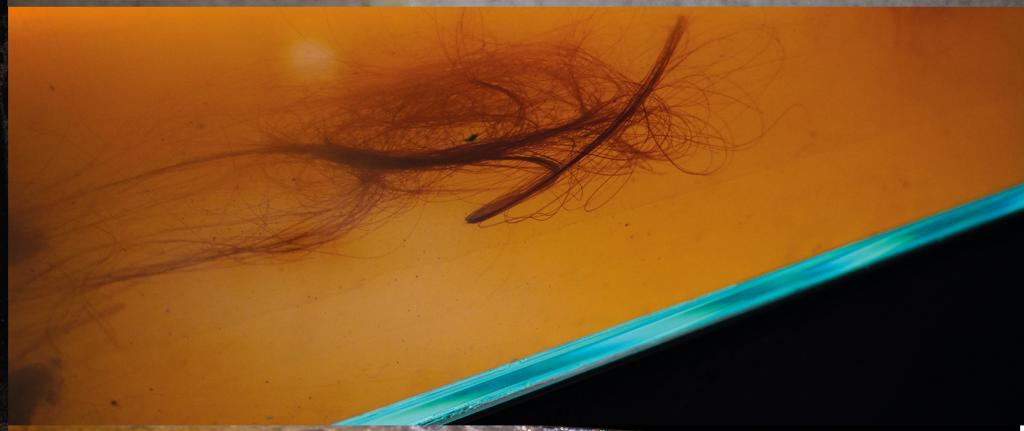
Now, this video—this conversation with my dead grandmother—seems like a questionably successful attempt to separate myself from my Soviet past.

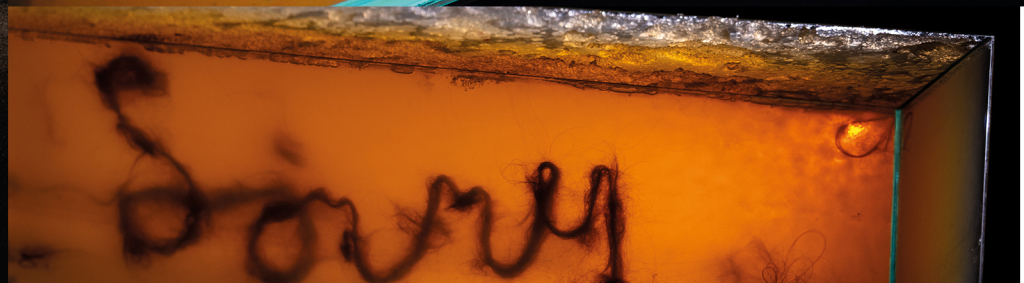


USEFUL MINERALS / EXHIBITION OF OPERAS NIN THE PAVILION OF MEMORIES
KYIV 2021

In 2016-2018, the "UKHO" Agency showcased three performances on the National Opera stage. The idea was to demonstrate how modern Italian opera sounds, what it speaks about, and what it can look like in a theatre grounded in the classical Italian operatic tradition.
This exhibition is a search for spatial solutions for opera beyond the theatrical box. The search begins with the assumption that opera is not only a musical genre but also a special type of observation: it is desirable for the audience to notice as much as possible, but avoid immediate interpretation. How can opera be listened to outside of the theatre hall, so that all its symbolic systems—word, sound, plasticity, imagery, light—work simultaneously? Is this even possible?
"USEFUL MINERALS" is built on the imagery system of three operas, but does not recreate the documentation or scenography directly.
First and foremost, this is an operatic necropolis. When you look at Carl Linnaeus's tombstone with his sexual classification of plants or feel the dead horse of Duke Malaspina through the collective testimonies of the viewers he went out to, you are moving in the space of memory and death. Literally, you are walking from and to monuments—objects, operas, memories.
The exhibition "LIMB" is placed in the basement. It is too direct to show the underworld, but the story of the Lavra Caves here is no less important than the history of Ruhr theatres, which hid decorations in mines during World War II. It is a layered limb: the vaults of the heroes are scattered through corridors, the light score at one end, the libretto at another, and music even further. An egg in a chest: a diorama of a stage model in the National Opera, placed in a mine model. In the LIMB, it is quiet, as in a waiting room—or like in an opera that is staged deafeningly. There were no recordings, and only the conductor could imagine the sound of a work written for sixty percussion instruments.

installation and light score "dedicated to the first meeting with a big project"

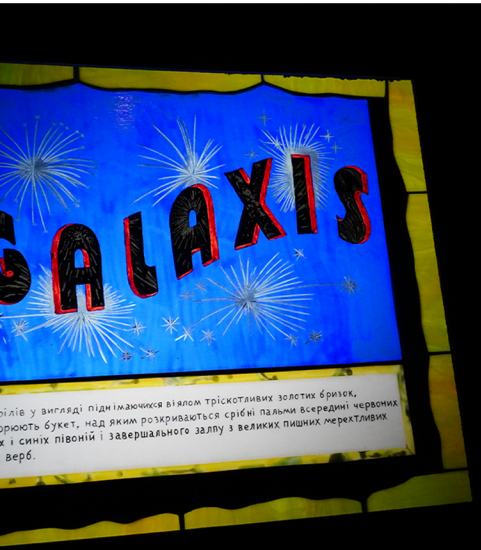




Tombstone "To That Woman, Resembling"
Materials: Gelatin, human hair, glass aquarium, glass, champagne, artificial teeth, compressor, concrete blocks.

"Dedicated to the Subconscious of Carl Linnaeus"
Materials: granite slab, engraved classification system of sexes, moving silicone pistil

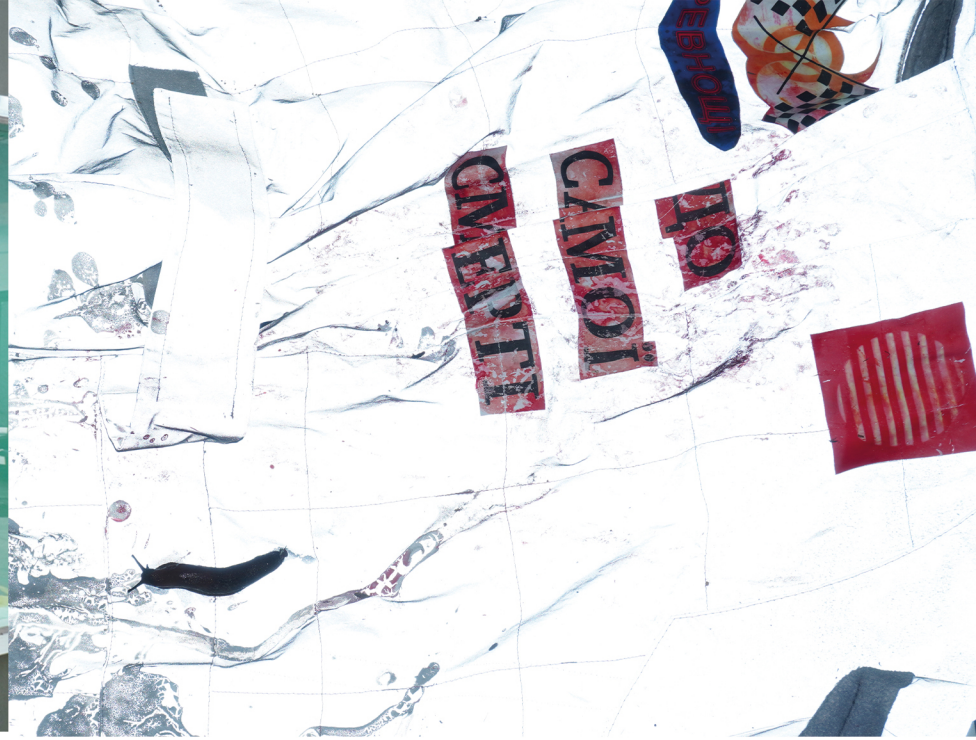
"Dedicated to the Crackling of Giordano Bruno's Bonfire"



"Dedicated to the Yawn of a Spectator at the Premiere of the Opera LIMB"

The narrative in the mining "LIMB" is led by the directors, based on the main characters of the opera, while "Bread. Salt. Sand" is retold by a person who was not at the premiere, through secondary characters. The exhibition was documented by the artist Yuriy Yefanov:
"Viewing an opera through filmed material radically differs from the experience in the audience hall. The starting point for the six films of the exhibition was another film, projected on the screen in the depths of the opera stage. That film was the backdrop for the crowd, then further backdrop for the main characters, and a flickering stain for a person at the back of the auditorium. It reminded me of a dream—a dream of a person who just read the libretto and sank into the unconscious of opera. I decided to bring the background to the foreground, make it the central event, that is, turn the stage in the opposite direction and see how the characters would look in these new circumstances."
In addition to Yefanov's films, the materiality of "Bread. Salt. Sand" is placed in several fragile stones. These are four—matching the number of main characters—fulgurites from the Valley of Death, formed where lightning struck the sand.

The materiality of "My Treacherous Light" is the culmination of the exhibition, created not only to speak about death but to show what life grows from the dead body. According to the main artist Katya Libkind's concept, the opera's scenography was supposed to sprout—literally. Agar-agar, manure from the VDNH stables, moss, seeds, and phytolamps: to witness the miracle of transforming a dead horse into a living fly or mushroom, we used quite a lot. Death, however, was overcome by death. Due to a tragic mistake during repairs in the pavilion, all the scenography was taken to the landfill, and permission for excavation was obtained three days later. Workers' kindness and the excavator's long hours turned into frames, interrupted by the film about witnesses of the opera—but only scraps were dug up. We continue to prophecy scraps, but we don't create anything else from them. This story (especially through the project's name) may seem like a pun, and yes, we could say it's a pun. However, the loss is irreparable. Two alcove shafts, the remnants of arches, the hoof of a dead horse, and a few flowers from Malaspina's garden—these turned out to be the witnesses of things for "My Treacherous Light."
What remains for the listeners when the opera ends? In our staging of "Sharrino," the stage space was divided into two parts by cinema rails. During intermissions, a cart moving through them brought signs of death, mass characters, or the Duke-killer to the microphone on the proscenium. People, signs, things were silently spoken into this microphone. In the apple orchard behind pavilion 13, they began to speak.



"Testimonies" of the sprouted remnants of the scenography from the opera "My Treacherous Light," which were uncovered after they were mistakenly taken to the landfill.

"Witnesses" – a film in which people who saw this production recall everything they remember, while the excavation of these memories correlates with scenes of unearthing the remnants of the set design.

PROTEST AGAINST THE CURRENT
MOGRITSA 2021

Protest: A Gathering Around the Word "Nature,"
Using Which I Separate Myself from Nature, from What Seems to Me Not to Be Nature.

Participants: Yuriy Yefanov, Natalia Matsenko, Liza Biletska, Alexander Yeltsin, Kateryna Libkind, Stanislav Turina, Kateryna Buchatska, Borys Filonenko

HYPERREALISM ETUDES
IN INTERNATIONAL LAND-ART SYMPOSIUM «SPACE OF BORDER»
MOGRITSA VIGE 2018

FOUND SOMETHING RANDOM AND MADE A COPY NEARBY. BOTH OBJECTS BECAME A COPY, AND BOTH OBJECTS CEASED TO BE RANDOM.

STILL LIFE
IN INTERNATIONAL LAND-ART SYMPOSIUM
MOGRITSA VIGE
2017

STILL LIFE MIMICS THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH MOTION, COMPOSITION, MATERIAL. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE EXACTLY WHERE THE STILL LIFE ENDS.