

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: *Stolen Sun*
Artists from Ukraine
Nikita Kadan, Zhanna Kadyrova, Alexandra Kadzevich, Open Group

Organized by Lika Volk

Location: 36 Orchard Street, New York, NY 10002

Dates: September 15 – October 23, 2022

Miguel Abreu Gallery is pleased to announce the opening, on Thursday, September 15th, of *Stolen Sun*, a group exhibition organized by Lika Volk, featuring work by Ukrainian artists Nikita Kadan, Zhanna Kadyrova, Alexandra Kadzevich, and Open Group. The exhibition will be on view at our 36 Orchard Street space.

Dear Viewer,

You have no future. Everything that was envisioned, projected, speculated, sold, claimed, sent into space, came crashing down with war. Everything in this gallery is real, except for you. You have been compromised, exposed, radiated and excised.

War is not only a tragedy, it is also a duration, an inner state; a state in which all the wars ever fought are internalized. We want to attend to heavy objects as primordial and alchemical elements of the land hoping to escape the unimaginable disruption. One refers to nature to feel the other kind of continuity of the earth itself, while our own continuity is beyond grasp. We look for the agency of all elements (stone, metal, wood, sound) upon which we place signs (meanings), as a hope that the aggressor's ability to destroy is limited.

Patched onto the uniforms of some Russian soldiers, a declaration: "We have no ideology, we are here to do evil"—the most inclusive slogan thus far. Thinkers of all kinds can join in. The decaying empire invites, without discrimination, those who believe in the superiority and absolute power of man over all living things.

Ukraine is a country of anarchic sentimentalism, stubborn nonchalance, childish cunning and elusive collective memory. Ukraine is Trotsky's homeland, a land in a state of perpetual revolt, and the Free Territory of Ukrainian communist anarchist, Nestor Makhno. Its collective unconscious refuses to observe the linear continuity of its own history, to archive its cultural heritage, to uphold a hierarchy in order to establish a strong state. For some, Ukraine remains in the cradle of Malevich's avant-garde aspiration. For others it is a land of liberty with an open-ended future....

Lviv. Some artists joined the army, many accepted they may be drafted, and most became volunteers. You probably will not meet an artist who would say that the war will end with pushing Russians out of Ukraine.

At first glance, reality seems stable, but the probability of death from a bomb is high enough to make the future conditional, leaving you with only the present moment. It is not the desired "presence in the moment," but rather an absence in it. In a sense, you have already died, now you can join the front. Walking through the streets, moving from city to city, you hope to see soldiers. They are almost invisible. Those whom you saw on guard or at checkpoints were shy and reserved. It occurs to you that a soldier is the most unreal and amazing thing there is in the world, in the world where you ended up. You want to be the wall of the building on which they lean or the tree under which they stand, some kind of non-human observer, the sheltering sky.

The closer to the front line, the more comprehensible the fear and thus the calmer you feel. It seems to you that you can get closer to eventfulness, even if it is fatal, and therefore to the future, and so to life.

Kyiv. The first thing you do is go to the square to behold the broken enemy military equipment. If you have never seen a modern armored personnel carrier or tank, you do not know what is really happening on the earth. Not a single image conveys the true scale of these machines. They are colossal, assembled from a million strange parts, ridiculous and absurd. Charred, rusted and warped, made in perversely incongruous proportion to the unremarkable bodies of their operators, whose uniform scraps and rubbish remain.

You travel to small villages outside of the city. One is almost in the forest. You see the remnants of foundations close to one another and nearby a huge crater from a 500-kilo bomb. Then you notice that the trees are white, burnt, some parts still clinging to life. This village was razed by a single bomb. You feel that you are shaking strangely, but not from fear, rather from the inability to understand: Why? Later in the day back in Kyiv, you attend a rave in the city center—from 5 to 9 p.m., before curfew. It is sober and stylish, and it seemed you were about to grope for dark humor to help yourself breathe.

Odesa. Have you observed the way in which buildings inhabit the city? Fragile and defenseless, they stand side by side and look towards the sea, from where the rockets fly. In one of them, on the tenth floor is Dima's art studio. Usually when air raid warnings start he continues to work. But the day before you arrived, Russian bombs fell not far, with such force that the city staggered.

Dima, were you scared?

Yes, when I heard the bomb coming, for some reason, I grabbed the first object that came to hand and rushed down the stairs. A neighbor girl was running nearby, and screaming sounds of horror. On the sixth floor, I realized that I was carrying a thick book on contemporary painting, and dropped it.

You think about this story and smile. Perhaps there is nothing to it if one didn't know Dima, hadn't been in his workshop, or weren't born in Odesa, didn't run as a child to the seashore from where bombs are now flying. You think it's just bombs until you hear them coming. You have to dissociate. Do you remember how a photo of children in Syria playing football with someone's head flashed on the news? Do you remember the Syrian artist who showed photos of people killed by Russian forces on the streets of Aleppo? He didn't know he was presenting it to left wing American intellectuals who built careers defending Russia and the USSR. Do you remember that, since the beginning of the full scale invasion, over two million Ukrainians—among them more than two hundred thousand children—were abducted, that is forcefully relocated to Russia and placed in selection camps, with no documents or rights to return home? Some children are up for adoption, all other captives are up for abuse. By any measure this marks a new age of brute slavery. Yes, new-age slavery and gluten-free Africa, brought to you by The Russian World.

Angry—I am, and hopeless.

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On the beach of the Black Sea, we are just air, melting, warm, sunset orange, nuclear. We are sharing memories of the lost sun, while searching for an advanced weapon that can protect us from nuclear explosion, a new clear weapon that arms by means of exposure: laying bare perpetual aggression, killing, slavery, and material and intellectual marauding.

New is always clear.

— Lika Volk, July 2022

Nikita Kadan (b. Kyiv, 1982) lives and works in Kyiv. In 2007, he graduated from the National Academy of Fine Arts, Kyiv where he studied in the Department of Monumental Painting under Mykola Storozhenko. Kadan's practice spans from painting and graphics to sculpture and installation, often in collaboration with architects, sociologists and human rights activists. He is a member of the artist group REP (Revolutionary Experimental Space) and a founding member of Hudrada (Artistic Committee), a curatorial and activist collective. Recent solo shows include *The Wound Man*, National Art Gallery, Lviv, *Stone Hits Stone*, Pinchuk ArtCentre, Kyiv, and *Project of Ruins*, mumok, Vienna. His work was included in recent group exhibitions at Castello di Rivoli, Turin, M HKA, Antwerp, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, and as part of *This Is Ukraine: Defending Freedom*, a collateral event of the 59th Venice Biennale at the Scuola Grande della Misericordia.

Zhanna Kadyrova (b. Brovary, 1981) lives and works in Kyiv. She graduated from Taras Shevchenko State Art School and received the Kazimir Malevich Artist Award, the Sergey Kuryokhin Modern Art Award for Public Art, the Grand Prix of the Kyiv Sculpture Project (all 2012), as well as a PinchukArtCentre Special Prize, among other accolades. Her practice includes sculpture, photography, video and performance, with a focus on the development of site-specific projects. Often diverting the aesthetic canons of the socialist ideal still present in the heritage of contemporary Ukraine, Kadyrova's perspective is partially informed by the plastic and symbolic values of urban building materials: ceramics, glass, stone and concrete. Her work has been extensively exhibited worldwide, most recently at the M17 Contemporary Art Centre, Kyiv, the Shanghai International Sculpture Project JISP, and the Ukrainian Institute in New York; as well as the 55th, 56th and 58th Venice Biennale, Centre Pompidou and Palais de Tokyo, Paris, the Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, the National Art Museum of Ukraine, and the PinchukArtCentre, Kyiv, where her first major retrospective will be held in 2023. Kadyrova's work is held in numerous private and institutional collections, including Museum Voorlinden, The Netherlands, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and Mystetski Arsenal, Ukraine, among others.

Alexandra Kadzevich (b. Odesa, 1992) is currently based in Amsterdam and Berlin. She works at the intersection of object making and painting, which integrates the language of collage, drawing and installation. Kadzevich studied painting at the The Grekov Odesa Art School and also attended the Kyiv Academy of Media Arts. In 2021, she studied at Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts, Austria. She began a two-year residency in January 2022 at the De Ateliers program in Amsterdam. Recent solo exhibitions were held in Kyiv at The Naked Room Gallery and Dymchuk Gallery. In June 2018, she founded Noch, an artist-run studio and exhibition space in Odesa. She was nominated for the PinchukArtCentre 2020 Award, and was a finalist in the 2021 MUHI Eight Competition Of Young Ukrainian Artists.

Open Group was founded in August 2012 in Lviv by a group of Ukrainian artists, whose present members are Yuriy Biley, Pavlo Kovach and Anton Varga. Their work incorporates research focusing on the interaction and communication between people, artists, situations and spaces, and is based on the notion of "collective work." Open Group won the Special Distinction of the PinchukArtCentre Prize in 2013, and the Main Prize in 2015. Their works were featured in the Ukrainian Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale, and in the 57th Venice Biennale's Future Generation Art Prize. They curated *Dependence Degree, Collective Practices of Young Ukrainian Artists 2000–2016* in Wrocław, Poland, and the Ukrainian Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale. Group members have been operating independent art spaces in Lviv, such as Detenpyla Gallery and Efreмова26 Gallery.