

# UNDERCURRENTS



## Foreword

In the depths of human conflict, beneath the visible currents that shape our perception of war, lie the powerful undercurrents – feminist stories, voices, and standpoints that often go unheard. Gazing from above the surface, one may not notice the undercurrents nor realize their potential and importance. It is only upon submersion that one encounters their profound power. When moving against the tide, one may be dragged into the intricate context by the undercurrents – an exhausting experience that offers as a reward a more critical and rounded perspective, taking into account the pulls of power relations. Embracing undercurrents poses no threat. The real danger is being persuaded by the rip tide of romanticization away from the shore, distracted from the truth, deprived of agency. Manipulating the stories of others, prioritizing aestheticization, and captivating plot twists are all part of the rip tide. The stories, voices and movements from below form the undercurrents.

*Undercurrents* submerges itself in the hidden realms of war, sensitively unveiling the experiences of women\* in the context of Russia's full-scale military aggression against Ukraine. The contributors of *Undercurrents* have all taken part in the *Her\* Gaze* program, a multifaceted two-part artistic residency and mentoring program coordinated by Goethe-Institut Ukraine and Feminist Workshop that took place in mid-2023. They have thereby undergone an intense collective process of deconstructing what it means to be feminist artists in a time of war and learning how to ethically engage with the traumatic stories of women\* impacted by war. This often overwhelming process of learning and unlearning is ongoing and extends beyond the framework of *Her\* Gaze* or even the timeline of the war itself. In this way, *Undercurrents* represents the seemingly impossible task of attempting to preserve what remains in fluid motion.

*Her\* Gaze* consisted of two interconnected yet paralleled programs – a summer residency for young Ukrainian feminist artists, as well as an online laboratory for artists from Ukraine, Poland, and Germany. In the online laboratory program, 10 artists met across 5 months to collectively interrogate documentation, interview material, and archival projects developing around Russia's war in Ukraine. Within the offline youth residency, participating artists convened for one week in a sanatorium in Truskavets in Western Ukraine in the summer of 2023, creating a space where they could exchange feminist perspectives on the war and collectively question how this period has given rise to new possibilities and obligations of solidarity. Both sides of *Her\* Gaze* have been united by the impulse to learn and implement ethical artistic methods of engaging with the stories of women\* impacted by Russia's war against Ukraine.

*Undercurrents* reflects on the position of feminist experiences and selves in relation to history and in the context of Ukraine. This process involves the identification of shared narratives and the consideration of their position within not only history but also the archives themselves. The undercurrents may lead us to ask: why are queer archives often inaccessible? What alternative spaces could we use to document herstories? Who writes these stories, and how will they be interpreted by those from different literary and visual backgrounds?

Inspired by the words of Chela Sandoval, we scrutinize the mediation of views, recognizing the power dynamics inherent in visual representation. How does one gain access to represented narratives and exist in light of the archive, thus becoming a part of history? To be described is to be immortalized. Or, if our consciousness, rooted in temporality, prevents us from conceiving a non-cyclic infinity of time, how do we secure a place in the memories of others?

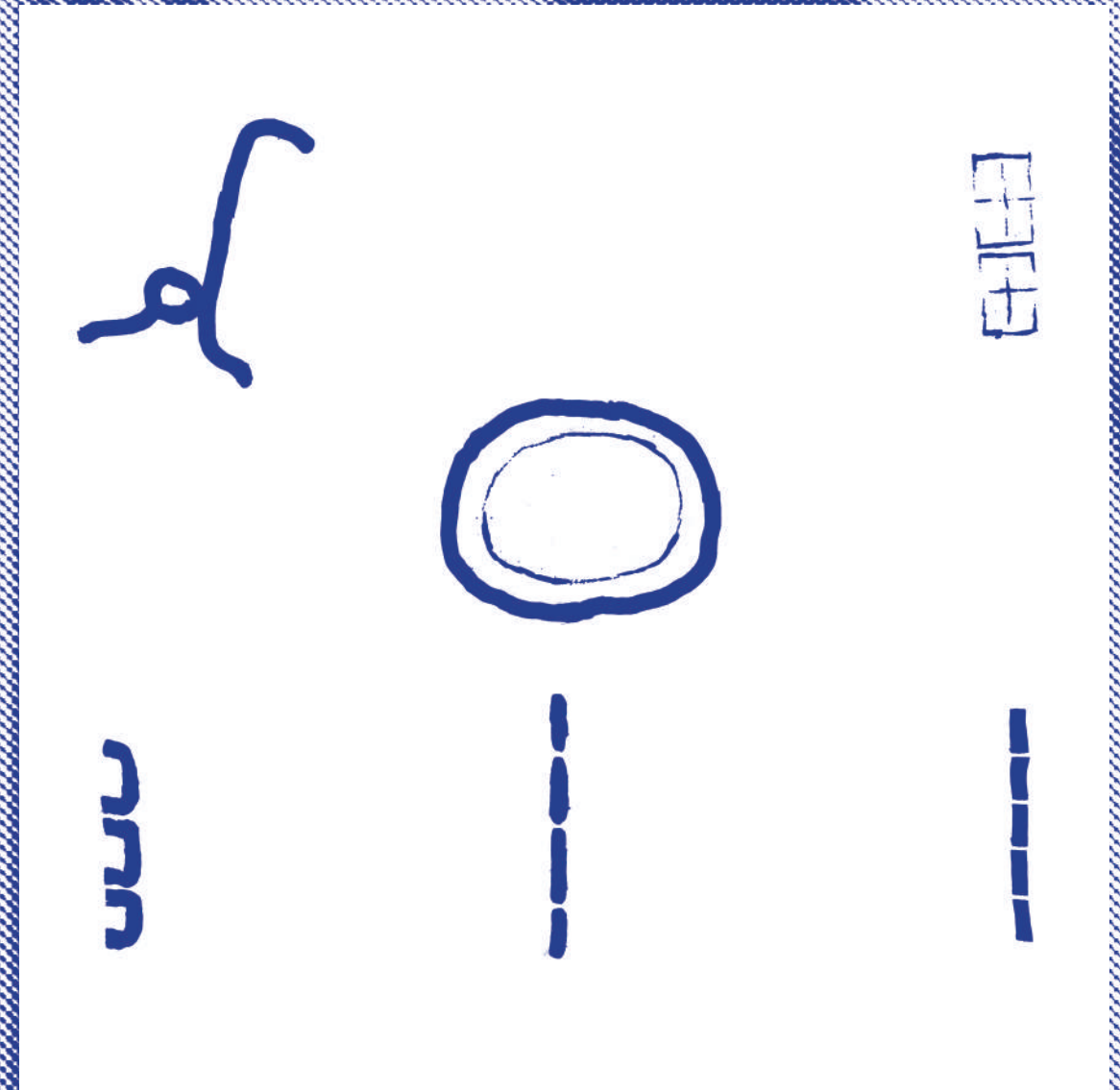
As a publication, *Undercurrents* itself serves as a place to collect notes from discussions and dialogues that arose during the *Her\* Gaze*

online laboratory, embracing a comprehensive approach to address distinct socio-political dynamics and histories of inequalities. Incorporating reflections on the attitude towards anger proposed by Audre Lorde and the notion of militarized feminism addressed by bell hooks, *Undercurrents* challenges not merely the idea of depicting violence, considering the multifaceted nature of oppression. Rather, it acknowledges and confronts violence as an element within the diverse web of inequalities, acting with caution, following Susan Sontag's warning to avoid 'tele intimacy with death and destruction'. What has emerged from the process of developing *Undercurrents* are sketches, fragments, and works in progress that intentionally leave space for further reflection to be built in dialogue with the reader. Beyond the dominant images, stories, and currents of war, *Undercurrents* signals the feminist social movements and processes of collectivization that develop from underneath.

In its paper format, this printed publication, much like its content, is delicate yet resilient. As an object, *Undercurrents* mirrors the intricate process of *Her\* Gaze*, where the nurturing of empathy and vulnerability in each artist has led ideas to sprout, fade, and resurface, evolving in non-linear ways. Paper can be torn, folded, crunched, and burnt. Vulnerable emotions make us easily destructible. Yet, with care, vulnerability is generative. Furthermore, when pages are bound together, they become stronger. Similarly, inner spaces of vulnerability, when drawn together and collectivized, foster movements. *Undercurrents* is more than just a collection of pages; it is a vessel carrying the weight of human vulnerability, resilience, and empathy. The zine hereby attempts another impossible task: capturing the complex relationships between non-linearity and vulnerability that have arisen in the process of developing *Her\* Gaze* online laboratory. The publication itself must not be seen as an ending, but rather part of the surging, growing undercurrents; larger feminist movements that resist patriarchal gazes and gazes that seek to essentialize Ukraine, Eastern Europe, or the war itself.

During these turbulent times of war, identities and representations have evolved into both shields and screens when confronted with adversity. Within the pages of *Undercurrents*, we explore the impact of war on developing new avenues of visual communication and resistance against the troubling trivialization of collective grief. We question how narratives are shaped and whose stories are told, understanding that the act of storytelling itself can be an act of resistance. This investigation invites us to see how the hidden currents of conflict shape our narratives, identity, and community.

Between these fragile pages are the feminist visions of a more empathic world in which the traumatic experiences of women\* impacted by war are recounted ethically in order to grieve in collective and transformative ways. As we turn the pages of *Undercurrents*, we become an essential part of the continuation of the stories that it contains. We enable the formation of stronger tides below the surface, and the endurance of the undercurrents as they live on, evolving into new shapes, echoes, waves, and kinships.



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**Anya Ivanenko (Ukraine) / Анна Іваненко (Україна):**      **Seri/graph**

In response to the ongoing full-scale invasion, Anya Ivanenko (she/her) documents a new stark reality. Through the medium of comics, in collaboration with partner Jenya Polosina, they preserve and present this shift. Their work delves into the struggles faced during the power outages resulting from Russian missile strikes in late 2022 and early 2023.

With a focus on feminist topics, Anya leverages her art to address societal disparities. Projects such as 'Stem is Fem,' celebrating Ukrainian scholars, and 'Entering Politics: Not Alone,' shedding light on women's underrepresentation and the challenges they confront, demonstrate their dedication to social change. The artist's work serves as a testament to documenting her community's history and navigating issues of gender and social equality during times of war.

Contributing to *Undercurrents* acts as an opportunity for Anya to engage in dialogues and share her insecurities, as well as learn insights from colleagues from abroad. Therefore, these conversations played a crucial role in shaping the narrative that Anya and Jenya wanted to convey to the audience.

Anya, together with *Seri/graph* partner Jenya Polosina, created a short graphic story that reflects their joint work on the representation of military women.

**Jenya Polosina (Ukraine) / Жєня Полосіна (Україна):**

Prior to the full-scale war, Jenya Polosina (she/her) was immersed in social issues, and actively participated in events such as Kyiv Pride, the pro-choice march, and women's rights demonstrations in Ukraine. She chronicled these events through graphic reporting. Now, her focus has primarily shifted towards projects related to the war.

From the onset of the full-scale invasion, she has been creating posters and illustrations in order to document the events unfolding around her. One standout work is the zine 'IDP (Internally Displaced Person) — Again.' This publication compiles graphic interviews that delve into the life stories of individuals forced to flee their homes, livelihoods, and lives a second time due to the war.

During the program, Jenya shifts her attention inward, self-analyzing her experiences of inadequacy and shame for not doing enough. Her interest in representation focuses on the comments that often permeate discussions about the war for freedom and against occupation.

In collaboration with her partner Anya Ivanenko (*Seri/graph*), Jenya co-created a graphic narrative that mirrors their collective efforts in representing women in the military.

OH FUCK, WHAT A QUESTION.

WHY DON'T YOU ENLIST?

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THIS,  
EVERY ANSWER SEEMS INSINCERE.

I GUESS I'M USING MY SUDDEN FEMALE PRIVILEGE.  
I HAVE THE CHOICE NOT TO JOIN THE ARMY.

NOT TO RISK YOUR LIFE IS A PRIVILEGE?



THERE ARE MANY PROFESSIONS IN THE ARMY,  
INCLUDING THOSE NOT ON THE FRONT LINE.

I KNOW. FOR NOW, I CAN CHOOSE  
TO CONTINUE WITH MY CAREER,  
I CAN LEAVE THE COUNTRY WHENEVER I WANT  
AND I HAVE THE PRIVILEGE  
NOT TO WORRY ABOUT MY PARTNER.  
JUST LIKE YOU.

WHY DON'T YOU ENLIST?

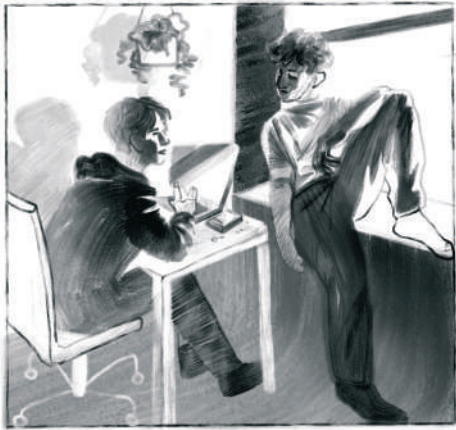
I'M AFRAID.



WHAT KIND OF SAYING IS THIS, "WAR IS A MAN'S GAME"? WHAT DOES IT EVEN MEAN?

I THINK IT COMES FROM STORIES WHERE MEN WENT TO INVADE FOREIGN LANDS (OR TO REALIZE THEIR GOVERNMENT'S AMBITIONS TO STEAL RESOURCES FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY), AND WOMEN WAITED AT HOME FOR THEM TO RETURN ALIVE. IT COMES FROM THE IDEA THAT MALE VALUES ARE ABOUT POWER AND STRENGTH WHILE FEMALE VALUES ARE ABOUT FAMILY AND CHILDREN.

IF WE KEEP WAITING AT HOME DOING NOTHING, WE'LL END UP IN OCCUPATION. WHERE'S THE WAR OF LIBERATION IN THIS STORY? AND WHY DO WOMEN HAVE NO AGENCY IN IT? SHOULD I NOT CARE WHETHER MY COUNTRY IS A DEMOCRACY OR A TYRANNY AS LONG AS I'M RAISING CHILDREN?



IT'S THE SAME THING AS "NO WEAPONS — NO WAR". WE'VE SEEN ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THAT IF UKRAINE GETS NO WEAPONS, THERE WILL BE NO UKRAINE."

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS TO ME IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR MANY PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS IF WE ALL SIMPLY DIED ALREADY THAT WAY, THEY WOULD NOT BE TORMENTED BY THE QUESTION OF RECONCILING THE CONCEPTS OF PEACE AND WEAPONS AND REMAIN "THE ONES WHO ADVOCATED PEACE" IN THEIR OWN IMAGINATION

PEACE AT ANY PRICE, WHERE THE PRICE IS US. EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES AFTERWARD IS EMOTIONALLY EASIER THAN SUPPORTING AN ONGOING FIGHT.



MEN'S GAMES... MAYBE IT ALL STEMS FROM THE IDEA THAT MEN, HAVING PLAYED WITH TOY GUNS AS CHILDREN, WILL FEEL ABSOLUTELY NATURAL IN THE TRENCH? WHILE WOMEN, GENTLE CREATURES THEY ARE, WILL NOT UNDERSTAND HOW TO DISENGAGE THE SAFETY? I DON'T THINK ANY OF MY MALE FRIENDS ARE MORE COMFORTABLE IN THE TRENCHES THAN I WOULD BE.

THERE ARE 60,000 THOUSAND FEMALE MILITARY PERSONNEL IN UKRAINE! THE ARMY IS NOT HOMOGENEOUS, THEY SERVE EVERYWHERE, BOTH IN HEADQUARTERS AND IN COMBAT POSITIONS, ON A PAR WITH MEN.

WOMEN FILL SO MANY ROLES NOW.



WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

NOT DOING ENOUGH





UNTIL FEBRUARY 24,  
I CONSIDERED MYSELF A PACIFIST

I STILL CONSIDER MYSELF A PACIFIST.

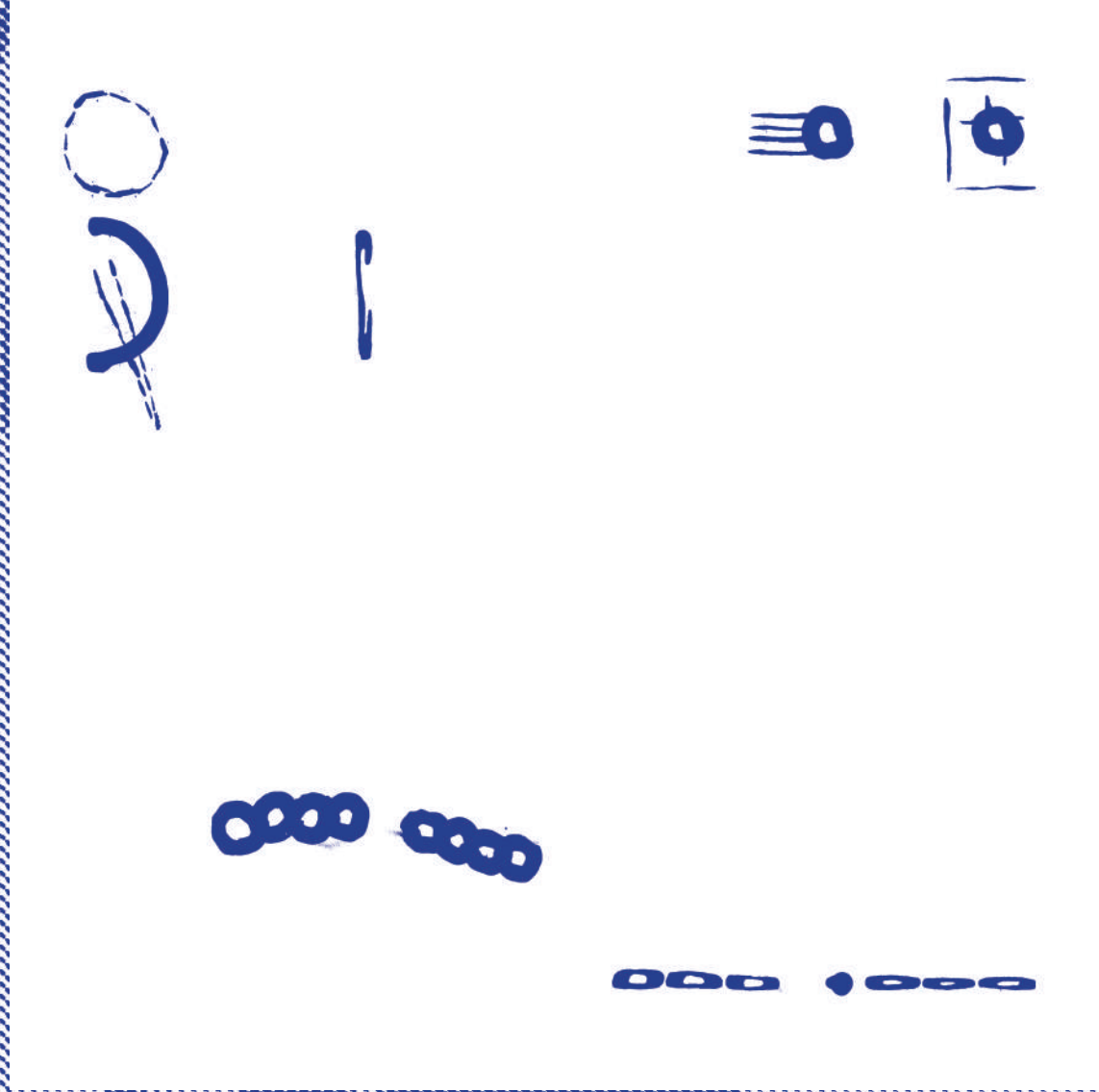
WHO SAYS: "WE NEED MORE TANKS" :)



I THINK THE FURTHER AWAY FROM THE BATTLEFIELD  
YOU ARE, THE MORE ABSTRACT THE CONCEPTS  
OF "PEACE" AND "WAR" BECOME.  
IT'S EASY TO BE A PACIFIST WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE  
TO CONSIDER THE PROBABILITY OF BEING SENT  
TO THE FRONTLINE IN A MONTH, A YEAR, OR FIVE  
OR WHEN THERE ARE NO ENEMY TROOPS  
A FEW KILOMETERS FROM YOUR HOME.

THOSE "YES TO PEACE, YES TO DISARMAMENT  
SLOGANS ARE COMING FROM PEOPLE  
WHO NEVER HAD TO CALL THEIR RELATIVES  
IN AN OCCUPIED VILLAGE.





Because I am an artist,  
I know that to see is to misunderstand.

The first thing they teach you in life drawing class at art school is to draw what you **really** see, not what you **think** you see. What they mean is this: that in order to render an image 'realistically', you must practice (**repetition, repetition, repetition**) overriding the lifetime of shortcuts you have learned which fill in both your sensory gaps and what your eyes might tell you with information that you logically 'know' to be true. For example: that all legs of a table are the same length, or that darkness is just the addition of black, or that drawing, it is the explicit manipulation of such shared misperceptions which create the desired realism. In life



Only when you have learned these rules,  
are you allowed to break them.

Amanda Priebe (Germany, Canada) / Аманда Прібе (Німеччина / Канада):

Amanda Priebe (she/her) believes that art and design are integral aspects of promoting radical social change. An illustrator, printmaker, and writer, Priebe has harnessed her skills for both explicitly feminist publications and for activist campaigns. For example, she worked as an art editor and cover designer for the two-volume collection *Abolition Feminisms*, published in 2022 by Haymarket Books. She also contributed directly to intersectional feminist movements by developing campaigns and illustrations for groups such as 8. Marz Bundnis, Berlin Women's March, and St. James Infirmary (a health and safety clinic for current and former sex workers in San Francisco, USA), and showed work at the Chouftouhonna Feminist Art Festival in Tunis, Tunisia (2018). Her work tends to be grounded in an intersectional feminist perspective, even if it is less explicitly articulated.

Priebe's contribution to *Undercurrents* offers a critical reflection on her own positionality in relation to feminist movements in Ukraine, the gazes that she resists and those that she inevitably reproduces. She sets herself in dialogue with revolutionary thinkers who have questioned the significance of the gaze and its relation to solidarity. Priebe intends to develop this contribution into a riso-printed postcard series that will allow for further exchange dialogue with viewers.

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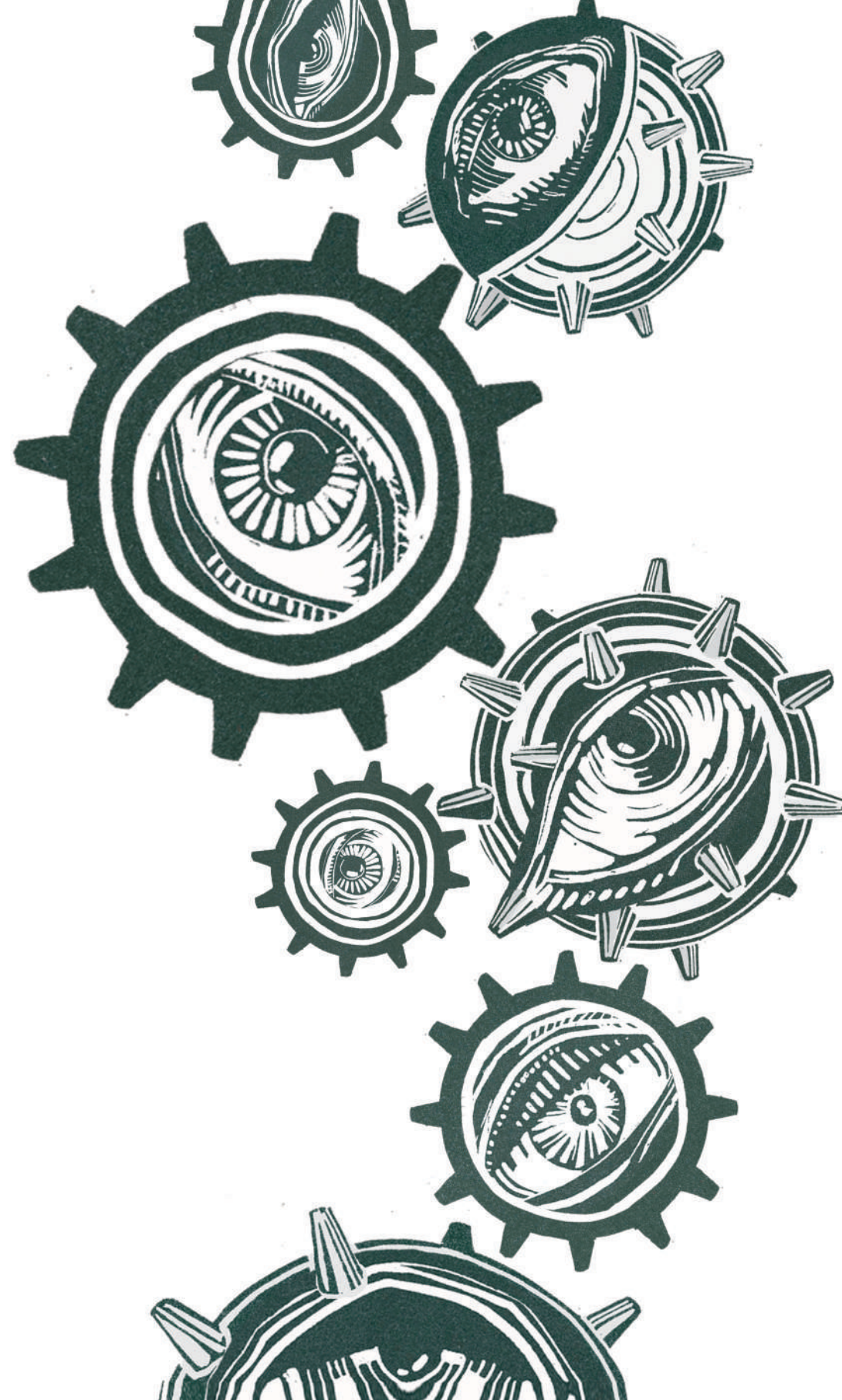
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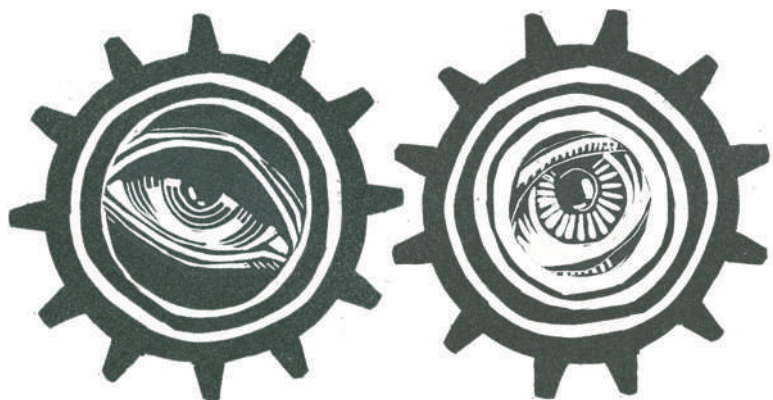
Because I exist as a female coded body (only one target among so many possible others), I know that the gaze is never neutral, but can mean validation or violence, depending on where we both are standing.

A gaze can be a  
a weapon,  
a tactic,  
a tool;  
interlocking threat,  
empathy,  
confrontation,  
(mis)understanding,  
recognition,  
solidarity.

Where does my gaze fit into this project?



I am trying to listen more than I speak, and more than I look.

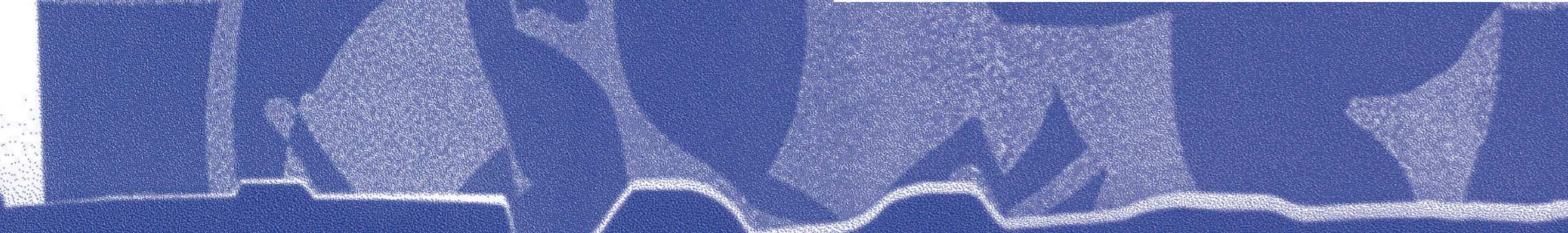
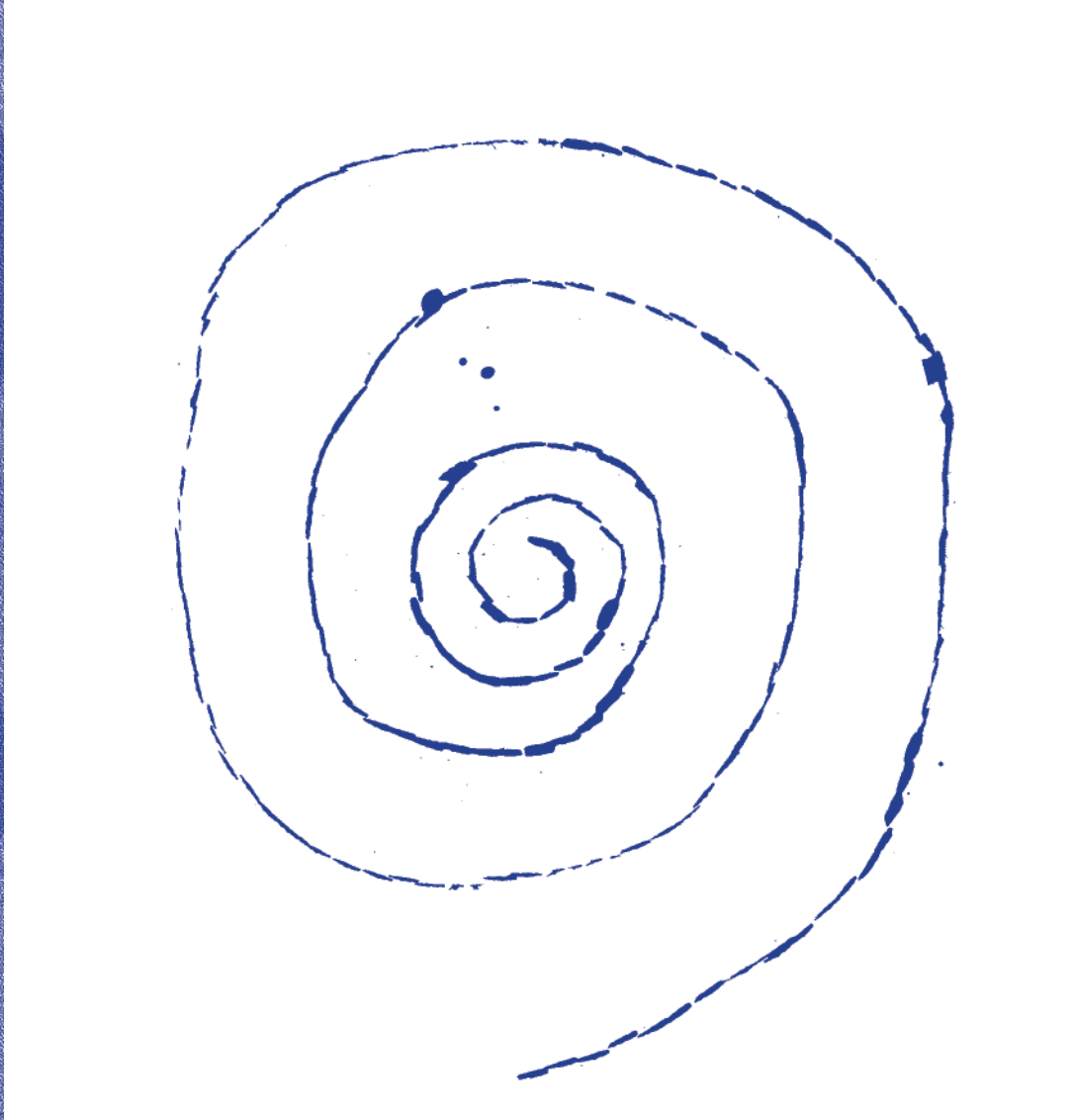
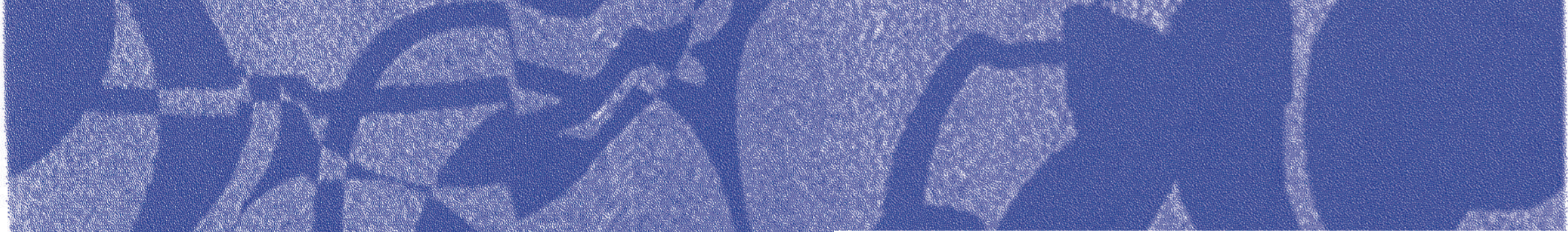


I am reaching for the words (and gazes) of others, learning and unlearning; trying and failing and trying again at what it means to be in solidarity and struggle together across our vast differences in experience.

In *To See in the Dark: The Nakba and the Landswept Way of Seeing*, visual theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff writes:

*"To adapt Ruth Wilson Gilmore's aphorism that "freedom is a place," solidarity is also a place. To be in solidarity, I need to know where I am from...the goal is and was not simply to replace one gaze with another but to open segregated spaces to visible relation. It is one practice of freedom among others, not a rule—the law of the gaze long theorized in visual culture should be abolished, not reworded."*

The solidarity I hope for is not a scarce resource to be fought over in a zero-sum struggle, but a connection of struggles. It does not mistake seeing (or being seen) with understanding, and has as much room for the necessity of opacity as desire for visibility. It is a place in the way relation is a place — somewhere we meet to offer what we have.





Joanna Skupinska (Germany / Poland) / Йоанна Скупінська / (Німеччина / Польща):

The practice of Berlin-based Polish multidisciplinary artist Joanna Skupinska (they/them) spans installation, performance, sound and multimedia. Motivated by the desire to uncover histories that have intentionally been erased, Skupinska's practice is directly influenced by feminist and queer theory, using their own artistic voice to articulate nuance and complexities. Coming from a country whose history has always been intertwined with that of Ukraine, Skupinska has found it especially necessary not to ignore Russia's invasion of Ukraine in their work. This has led them to collaborate with Ukrainian artists such as Marichka Lukianchuk, contributing to the cinematography of her 2022 film *Between Before and After*, which tells the story of someone fleeing war in a dream-like manner.

In the context of *Her\* Gaze*, Skupinska has been interviewing female Ukrainian refugees from their surroundings, with particular sensitivity towards the themes of place, movement and a sense of belonging. Their contribution to *Undercurrents* is titled *Liza, Lyubov, Marichka* and includes fragments of these interviews, and a reflection on an exchange with their classmate in their German language "integration course".



2 July 2023, Plymouth, UK - a photo Liza sent me after the conversation.

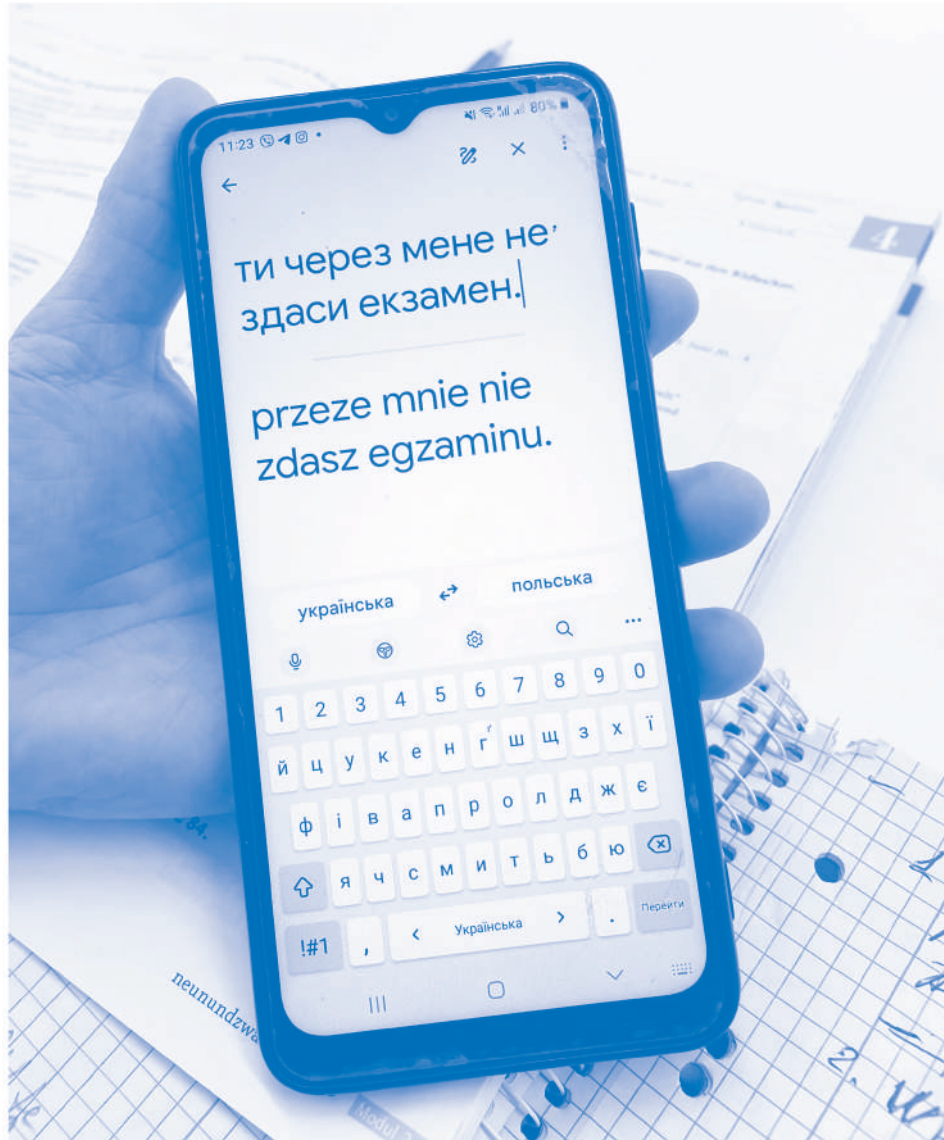
It's a hot, summer day. Liza proposed that we sit in the Luisenstadt cemetery. While walking there she tells me that graveyards are her favourite parks in Berlin. We stop next to a tree where a squirrel plays, we take pictures and giggle. We are acquaintances, friends of friends. She is quite exuberant and I am more introverted, to make use of the words she described me with, a mismatch of temperaments. But from the few meetings we've had, I know things haven't always been easy for her. In the course of our conversation today, I ask if she feels connected to the word: refugee".

*I don't know if I'm representing myself as a refugee because like, I feel that I'm so lucky, first that I'm alive still, after all these things. The second - I still have my family alive, even [though] we are not in touch, or in touch... still, it's a huge luck... I can live and be happy because of [the] hugest support of people nearby. I still have my choice, a lot of visas everywhere, like all this ability not to be in a floating prison, or not to be imprisoned in Russia, or I don't know... Yeah, so maybe I am like I think, a part of me for sure is a refugee, because like, I moved so many times, not because I wanted to; but maybe a lucky one.*

And would you have like a definition... of what a refugee could mean to you or not?

*Maybe a person who went through "the depth"... that they are able to go that high with their emotions, because they were so like... they were traumatised so much, that they [are], literally, able to feel more happy for a simple thing. [in comparison to] everyone else who [is] just like on a plateau with emotions. Yeah... this is for sure.*





the sentence reads: *you won't pass the exam because of me*

Lyubov (Любов) means love in Ukrainian. She showed me **this** on her phone one day when we were practicing the oral exam, which marks the culmination of the integration course. Lyubov is almost twice my age and we are often sitting next to each other during the language class. I don't know much more about her. Some pictures of her daughter, grandchild, balcony. Even though some say that our mother tongues have 70% words in common, we don't speak one that we both feel comfortable in. I feel like, somehow even after years have passed, in this situation, we have returned to exercising the fears and quirks that we've been accustomed to as school kids. Lyubov tends to check her answers with a classmate before we check them with a teacher. Sometimes she has a correct answer, but looks into my textbook and my answer leads her astray. Then she's annoyed, saying she had the correct answer. However, it seems like this experience does not reassure her of her skills.

*Here's the sun for you, said the man with the cockade on his cap  
and pulled out a nickel that looked like a tiny sun.  
And here's the road for you: he made a few steps to the right  
and drew the edge of it with the toe of his boot.  
To help you feel cheerful—turn on these tape-players and radios,  
pick up these rattles  
and bang them, bang them against your heads.  
To avoid getting thirsty or hungry—  
listen to the lectures and watch these popular films  
about how happily you will all live  
once you make it to the hereafter.  
To avoid the rain dripping  
down your necks—  
remember:  
every downpour  
eventually ends  
even the flood  
from the windows  
of heaven.  
When you are cold—start singing these songs.  
He handed out a sheaf of stamped lyrics  
(approved by the censors for singing  
in groups of two, three,  
and even more voices).  
When you feel that you need to rest,  
learn to play this exciting game about war:  
imagine the enemy all around you,  
they have come to rob you of your blissful existence.  
In a word, shoot at them, throw yourselves  
onto machine gun nests  
and fall under tanks.  
Just don't start running, he added.  
Our kind benefactor!  
Who would want to run from this paradise?  
we cried in unison  
as we struggled to see into the eyes  
under the beak of the cap:  
they looked like two drops of quicksilver.*  
Vasyl Stus

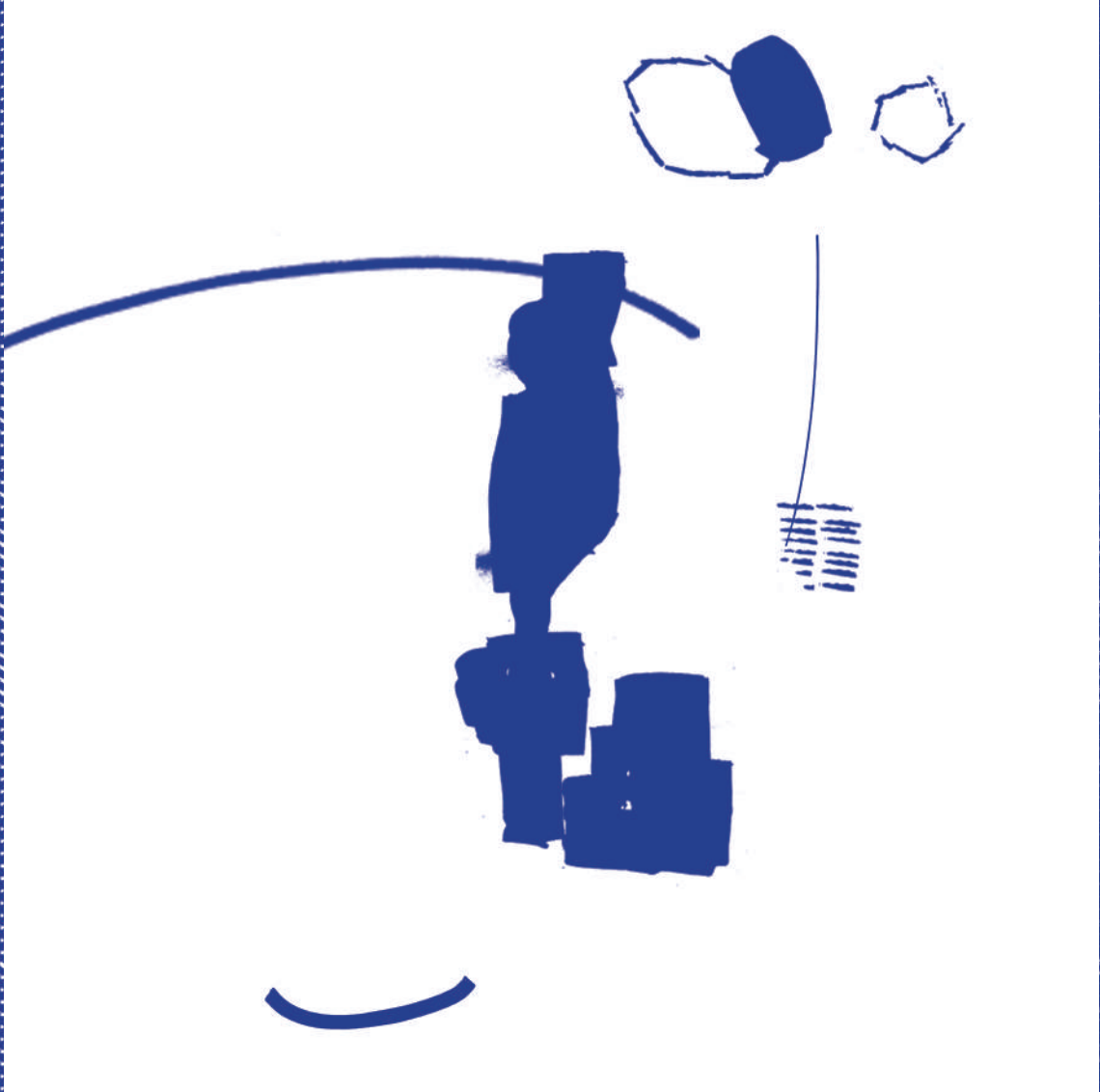
Translated by Bohdan Tokarsky and Nina Murray

I ask Marichka about the beginning of the Russian Invasion in Ukraine in 2014. I wonder if the war in the east of her country produced a lot of anxiety in her, she says:

*somehow, like, I was always quite resistant to it... in a sense that, like, when you maybe learn the history of Ukraine and hear from your... like from other people around who are older than you, all about, like, Chernobyl or the, like... the first years after the USSR, or, like, the whole, whole like traumas - I think, and killings, and, like, what it was in USSR. You kind of become resistant... in a sense that: it's not like your world is a paradise, and then this happens... And so, I think when I wanted to move abroad, I wanted to move abroad, like, for my studies, for personal reasons, it was not on my mind that my country is in war, so that's why I need to do it.  
It was like... a part of reality.*

Marichka invites me to see the film *Swan Lake: The Zone* by Yuri Ilyenko. The film opens with a scene of a man running away from a forced labour camp. He hides in a tin statue shaped in the form of the hammer and sickle. From a refuge, it turns into another prison of his. We follow his journey from one captivity to another. The narrative seems to spiral claustrophobically.

Marichka tells me: *I think Europe in general is still very influenced by Russian propaganda, that was built up by centuries... And it took [from] us — and is taking [from] us — a lot of blood... literally and metaphorically... to decolonise ourselves from that perspective, and to uncover our history and our narratives. And people from abroad realise that less sometimes. Or like... for example, my friend from Ukraine - who lived in France - she moved back to Ukraine, because she also just didn't manage to be in that surrounding... She is an artist and, like, the exhibition opportunities (...) that she was proposed were actually all in this relation of: "let's unite the brothers that had a fight". Why not? "Let's unite the Eastern" like, you know this thing?... and that is the most like, offensive thing you can do.*



**Ola Wasilewska (Poland) / Ола Васілевська (Польща):**

Ola Wasilewska (she/her) is a versatile artist who transitioned from illustrating feminist poetry books and layout design to animation and digital storytelling. She has created rebellious videos that accompany the poems of prominent young Polish writers, often incorporating archival footage. In addition, she has produced videos for Polish translations of Ukrainian and German poems.

As an active member of the feminist eco-community in the Jazdów settlement of Warsaw, Ola collaborates with various non-governmental organizations. She uses the female experience as raw material for her artworks, tracking it through poetry, literature, photography, and graphic novels. When there's a gap in the representation of these experiences, Ola and her fellow independent artists work collectively to fill it with their own art.

Currently, Ola is working on her debut graphic novel, which explores childbirth experiences abroad as a coming-of-age story. It touches upon women's health, reproductive rights, and foreign languages.

In her work, Ola addresses the reproduction of images of war, the expression of the inexpressible, and the communication of experience. She often explores the subject of motherhood, particularly in times of war, to connect with her personal experiences.

*Her\* Gaze* provided an invaluable space for reflection. Ola was particularly inspired by the ideas discussed with Lesya Kuchynska on the ethical questions of representing the violence of war and the readings she shared.

Wednesday 11:29 am

**Ola Wasilewska**

Hello Lera! I am glad to finally say hi to you! I got to know you quite a bit through your amazing work which inspired me a lot and gave me an insight into the topic of motherhood in times of war.

I am working on two projects: a font and a series of illustrations with text. I based the shapes of the font on your Instagram pictures and reels depicting your experience of pregnancy and motherhood. From beautiful dancing while pregnant to breastfeeding your baby boy in the shelter. The letterforms are purposefully combining the bodily beauty of this experience and of the bonding with the destruction of the home and landscape. I will send you my sketches soon. They depict my process along with some of the final letter shapes.

11:35 am

The second project is illustrations of some of the stories you collected for your podcast. These contributions are very powerful. I chose 2 stories and am still deciding on the third. I want to illustrate some excerpts from them. Each story will be two pages (a spread), just one frame. POV a new mum distracting herself from the war through a new hobby. One is stockpiling and making pickles for the winter. Her story is fragmented and scattered among piles of shredded cabbage. The other took up sewing. We can see her hands busy among sewing scraps. I am still working on sketches and composition of those. Also, I need to choose a third story. Once I do that, I would love to hear your thoughts on this and also ask you if you could reach out to your anonymous contributors and ask them for their consent. I would really want to make them feel comfortable with me using their stories.

11:36 am

Once I send you my work on the font based on your curated choice of Instagram uploads, I would love to hear your thoughts on that!

All the best from Budapest!  
Ola Wasilewska



12:45 pm

**Lera Shyrokova**

I'm so excited about all your art and stories!

Sure, it would be great to see it!

Share please :)

I was trying to share in my Instagram photos only that which is not connected to war, so I'm surprised you found them!)) probably war is everywhere in my social media)

Anyway, everything you're saying is interesting. Let's see!

Saturday 11:11 am

**Ola**

Hello Lera, let me share with you my work. It is still work in progress but I want you to be updated about it

11:24 am

**Lera**  
Yup, hi. I'm waiting)

11:36 am

**Ola**

Idea: to create a typeface inspired by the topic of motherhood in times of the war.

Resources: Ukrainian mother and podcaster Lera Shyrokova's Instagram visual material (as a self-curated archive of her experience as a young mother in Kyiv) and one episode of her podcast where she collected stories of other Ukrainian mothers

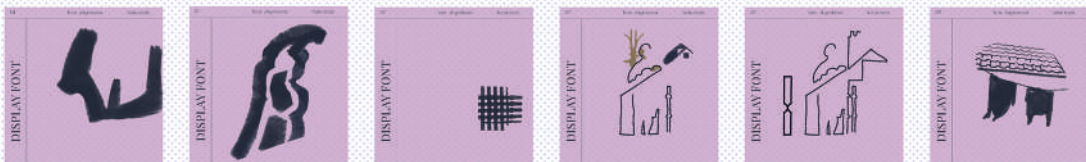
The name of the font, NeRomantyka, is a quote from one of the mothers:

«Це наша неромантика війни» (EN: This is our own non-romance of war/ PL: To jest taka nasza nieromantyka wojny).

The process: after gathering the material from Lera's Insta, I simplified her pictures into general shapes and drew along lines and curves to convey the sense of bodily transformations during pregnancy, the physical bond with the baby, the broken and limited landscape of shelters, the loss of home and safety when breastfeeding in the basement during air raids. Respecting her as a person, I wanted to treat her material with kindness and not expose any details about her experience. Faces and locations are not visible in my work. My hand was guided by the abstract play of light and contrast in her selfies combining both the joy of motherhood, exhaustion and terror of war. I was especially fascinated by the transition from the time of peace – with the threat of the attack always imminent but somehow too far to overshadow everyday life – when heavily pregnant Lera dances sensually in a liberating act of setting her body free from the cares of last weeks of pregnancy, to the times of full-scale invasion while she takes care of the most vulnerable creature, her baby son.

The historical moment, both in her personal biography and in the history of Ukraine, called for another context. Some characters of the typeface are inspired by the letters found in the Open Society Archives clip from the 16th of July 1990 Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine. Their accidental presence in the video is given a spotlight in my project that tries to find a link between the State and the Individual.

uploaded 34+ images...



11:47 am

Lera

Wow! I need time 2 put enough attention 2 this, i will check everything with my full attention when i put dada 2 sleep

Monday 7:58 am

Lera

it is incredibly interesting to see the results of your research.

I often think about the topic "state and personality", because I was born 2 months before the independence of Ukraine. and I often see parallels.

to me, the font is like tenderness, chaos and aggression:) just like my life.

surely I would like to add something that seems important to me.

if you listened to the podcast - you touched the real experience of motherhood during the war. that episode is very sincere.

instead, Instagram for me is a space of triple censorship.

the first censorship is obvious - Instagram regularly blocks my profile for hate speech. that is, every time I write the truth about my experience. A bunch of posts are lost forever.

So, I turned the page into an accompanying podcast with experts.

I also didn't share happy moments on Insta, because morally I don't think it's right to be happy when there's so much death around.

my fear is that you have not seen the full experience of wartime motherhood.

I also have a personal Instagram, to which only the closest people have access.

This is a kind of daily, where there are much more personal experiences — hatred, death, love and joy. I can give you access to this page so that you can make a more complete picture for yourself. Anyway, I was interested to see your project and be a part of it

8:10 am

Ola

Dear Lera, I would love to see that personal account.

Your feedback is very interesting and I think it will affect the direction this project will take. The font has only 50% of the letters, and even the ones that are there are not ready. So there is so much room for other input.

I must say that 'tenderness, chaos and aggression, just like my life' is such a powerful sentence, it really moved me.

I wonder how I could incorporate into this project the triple censorship of Instagram, its filters that delete your real strong words and emotions but also your own ethical choices when you curate your pictures on an everyday basis. I think this topic should be definitely incorporated.

Time for thinking for me!

8:33 am

Lera

I'll text back in daynap of dada!

11:15 am

uploaded a screenshot...



o, this is a screenshot of my page. join :)

I re-read some of the posts, interesting that they encapsulated moments of very intense experiences. I don't know if I feel the same now, but the emotion I felt at that moment was conveyed quite accurately and strongly. The war for a baby's mother is to choose between sleeping with an open window and fresh air, but knowing that the child will wake up at three in the morning from a siren, or sleeping all night without air, but also without a siren. These are the dilemmas that confuse the baby's mother during the war. If you look only at the picture, it seems to be a typical mother's page. If on the text - then no.

I had nowhere to post little joys, especially moments with my husband. I felt guilty posting this on a public instagram. Many of my subscribers gave birth to a child and at the same time, their husbands went to the front. They do not have the opportunity to post a photo of the child with the father, although they have responsible partners and under no circumstances should they have raised their children on their own. Once I posted a laughing son on Instagram, and the mother of my friend who was killed by Russian citizens wrote to me "never let him go."

What a pity that there is no future left in my life – only the past and death“. Then I stopped posting my son's pics. And now I only post life hacks that can be useful to others. Because Instagram is my way of reflecting. The first day after the evacuation, I lost the ability to speak – I opened my mouth and screamed. But that day I constantly posted stories about the evacuation, because it helped me to reflect stress. I write all this so that you understand that this Instagram is an important part of reflecting on everything that I feel here and now.

I started this page when I was pregnant. I wanted to record my conditions in order to remember that pregnancy is not only cute, but also difficult. When the war started, I had no place to share my anger and joy, so I continued to write there.

Tuesday 4:45 pm

Ola

Lera, you gave me so much to think about, thank you!  
Sorry for delay with replying, my Bubu girl is 9 months old and just learned how to crawl...

4:46 pm

Lera

congratulations and my condolences :)

IMAGE IMAGE

4:47 pm

Ola  
Exactly! :)

6:09 pm

Ola

Lera, I wanted to ask you.

The font will be exhibited in gallery spaces in Berlin and Lviv and I am still very much working on it. But the other way of exhibiting our work is an art zine, a printed paper booklet. Today we must submit our artwork for it. So most of us have only half finished stuff, some documentation of the work in progress.

I have an idea, if you are okay with it, but... I found your thoughts and comments very impactful and they will very much influence the next stage of my work, a big turn in it.

I was thinking of maybe including our conversation in the zine. Showcase these Whatsapp messages. Because they show the process and it is also, in a way, an archive, archive of a chat. A document. Much like interviews that some artists convey with Ukrainian women. Also an interesting method of storytelling.

What do you think?

6:39 pm

Lera

Oh i would said more hate speech about citizen of russia, if i knew it before :)

## Ola Wasilewska Rejected Ideas for the Typeface

1

Typeface where the letterforms are obscured by pop up windows. Negative space of constant updates, of more and more and more images. Cut out rectangles of blanks.

Window on the window on the window. Reproducing the images of war, updating, updating, updating. Media are insatiable, unfazed. Always fresh and ready to deliver.

They never reach the breaking point. They always start afresh.

2

Typeface sketched by hand from an extremely long distance.

The workspace zoomed out to maximum. Very rough lines of the letterforms. Perspective of the far 'West.' This font has only Latin characters.

3

Typeface entirely generated by an AI engine.

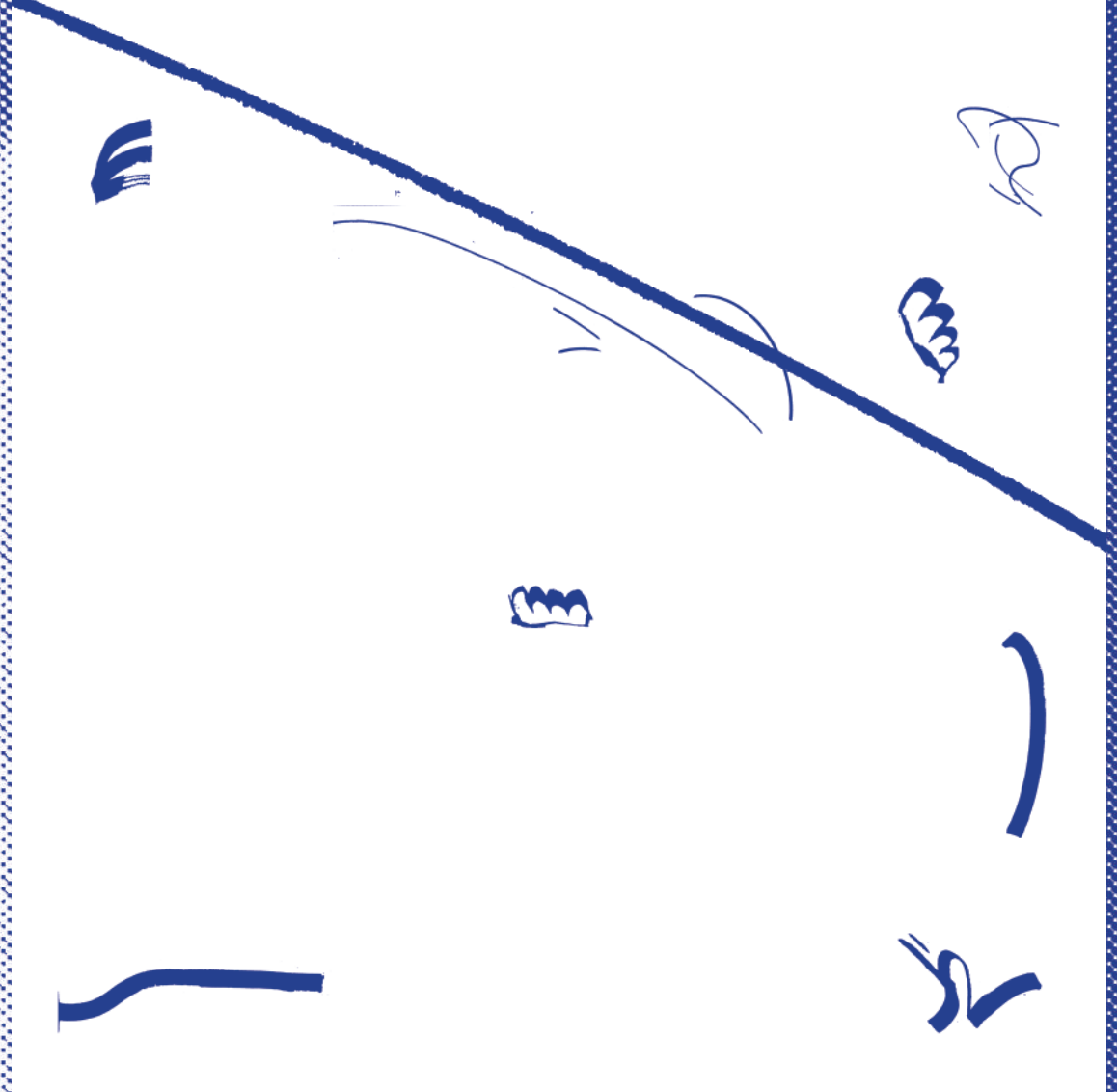
Prompts: this letter sums up the Ukrainian invasion.

Possibly full of imaginary characters. Cirylicsoids.

Think: Hollywood set designers want to evoke a general air of Eastern bloc.

4

Typeface called a feminist font. Looks exactly like a 'regular' one. It is the regular one. Users left to endless debates on tiniest differences. Called out for their essentialist approach.





**Olga Lisovska (Ukraine) / Ольга Лісовська (Україна):**

Olga Lisovska (she/her) channels personal and feminist perspectives into her non-commercial projects. She defies traditional objectification in her work, even within nude drawings, by granting her heroines narratives and agency.

The recent full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia has reshaped Olga's focus. She now views art as a privilege of peacetime and believes in a civic duty to raise awareness about the ongoing war. Olga's notable projects include impactful poster series such as "War Posters," "Black Spring," and "Look, Everything is Burning," exhibited internationally, reflecting her emotional response to the war.

Olga's latest creation, a self-published illustrated book titled "The Wolf Pack," explores the life of a girl dealing with depression. This project draws inspiration from her observations of people's mental states during the war and her experiences living in a conflict zone.

'Murk' is her new project, an exploration of the fears that have infiltrated her life due to the full-scale war. She perceives this endeavor as a form of therapeutic release, offering viewers the opportunity to examine their own fears through her works, thereby diminishing the magnitude of what is articulated aloud.











**Magdalena Kaszuba (Germany) / Магдалена Кашуба (Німеччина):**

Magdalena Kaszuba (no pronouns/she/her) focuses on socially and politically significant topics, with a particular emphasis on marginalized individuals, both in Germany and abroad. Her work includes biographical narratives on 'Gastarbeiter\*innen' or guest workers and a collaboration with the National Library in Frankfurt to chronicle the life of Dr. Ruth, who, as a Jewish child, had to flee the Nazi regime.

Additionally, the artist provided illustrations for the animated story of Branko, a Romani survivor of fascism and genocide in Serbia. Her dedication to portraying these themes with sensitivity and offering nuanced perspectives is evident throughout their work. As a child of migrants, their personal mission is to use graphic novels as a medium for bridging divides, fostering understanding, and promoting empathy.

As an observer of the war, Magdalena decided to provide space for other points of view in her research. By conducting interviews with three

people from Ukraine who currently live in Germany, some of whom have lived there for several years and others who arrived during the full-scale Russian invasion, she explored their experiences, feelings, and the relative invisibility of Russian imperialism in Germany. Her goal was to approach these interviews with the utmost empathy, giving voice to the narratives of others.

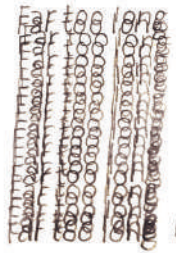
The online lab became a source of inspiration and allowed Magdalena to reflect on how a German resident could contribute to the creation of a comic book for the project. Eventually, after a discussion with filmmaker Anzhelika Ustymenko, she decided to conduct interviews herself, which was her first experience in this field. Subsequently, the discussion with artist Clemens Poole prompted her to further reflect on her perspective and the privileges she has, aspects she intends to reflect in her comic.

# Prolog



Summer is over again.

This war is long



Far too long

what is my perspective from more than 1000 km distance ?



through which lens  
am I looking?



# Interview 1

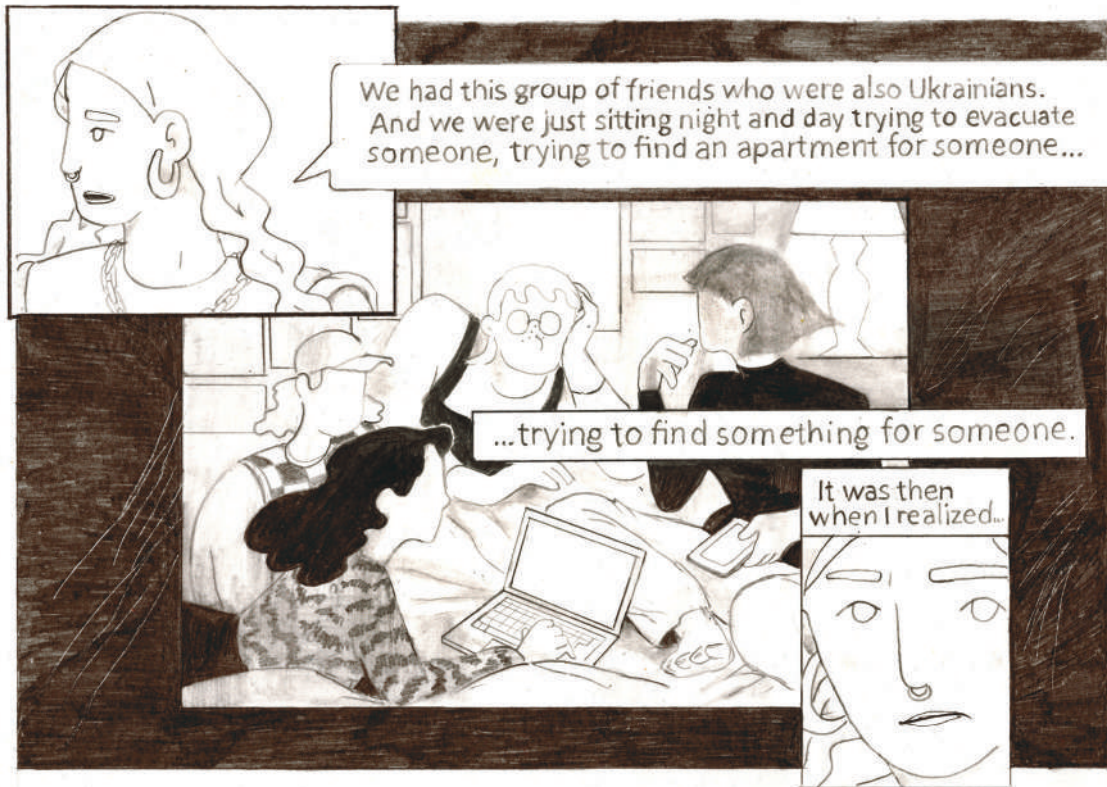
You know in the  
beginning

I didn't care  
about  
anything.



I couldn't work at all,  
I couldn't see peaceful situations.

The only important  
thing to me was,  
how to provide  
practical help.



We had this group of friends who were also Ukrainians.  
And we were just sitting night and day trying to evacuate  
someone, trying to find an apartment for someone...

...trying to find something for someone.

It was then  
when I realized...



... in the german bubble I was in it was not sensitive  
at all to the context of the full-scale war.

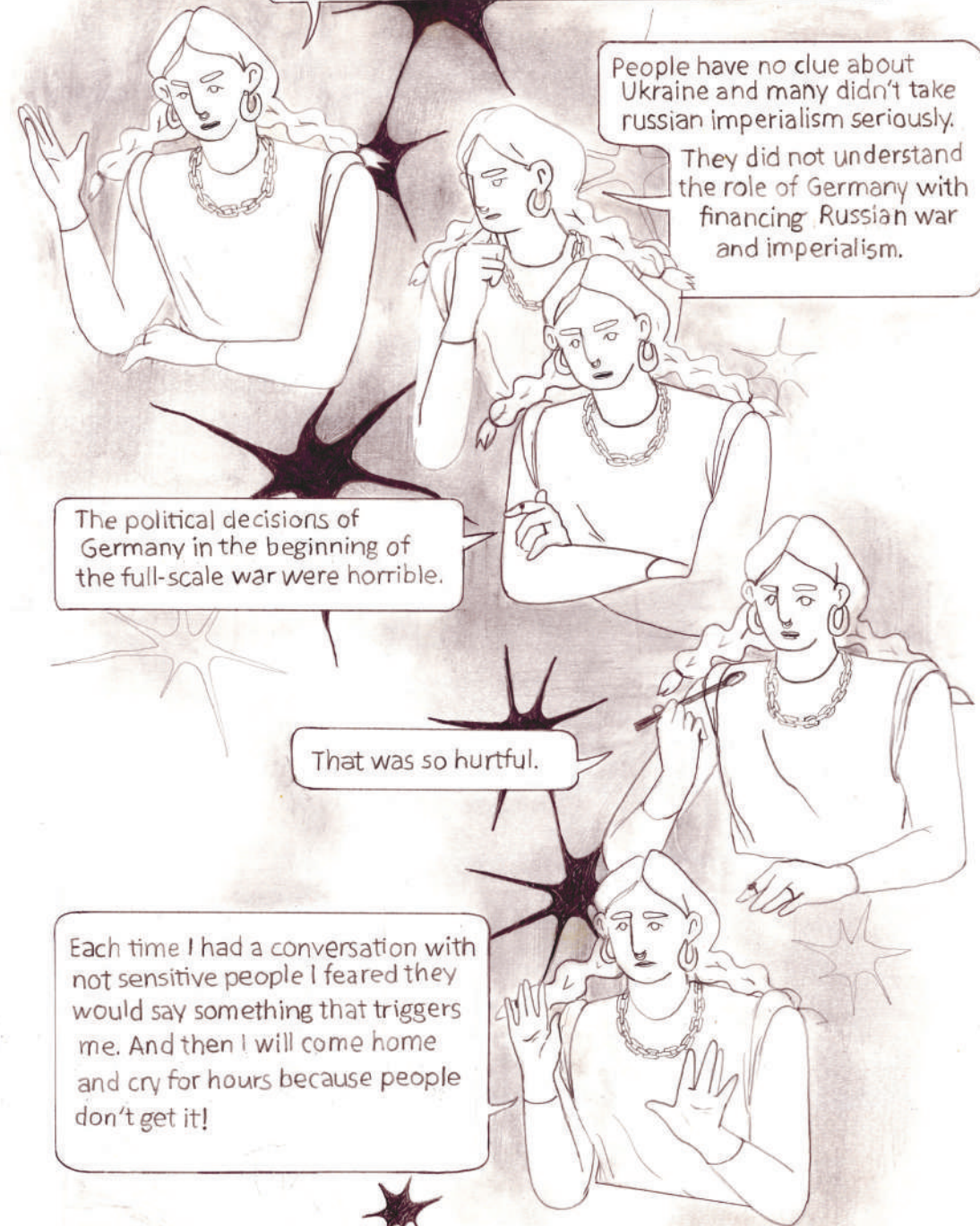
People have no clue about  
Ukraine and many didn't take  
russian imperialism seriously.

They did not understand  
the role of Germany with  
financing Russian war  
and imperialism.

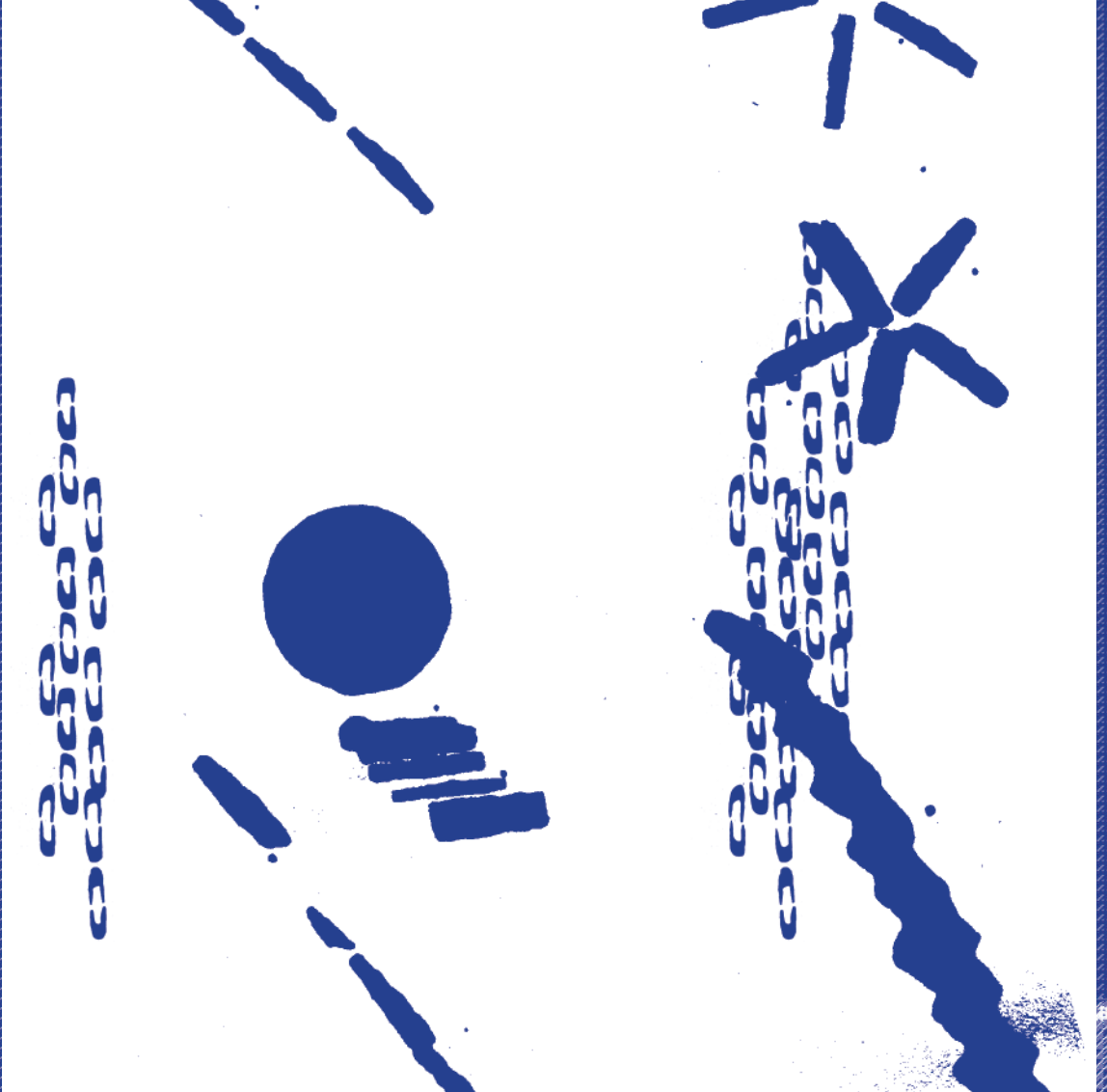
The political decisions of  
Germany in the beginning of  
the full-scale war were horrible.

That was so hurtful.

Each time I had a conversation with  
not sensitive people I feared they  
would say something that triggers  
me. And then I will come home  
and cry for hours because people  
don't get it!







### Helena Kurzel (Ukraine) / Олена Курзель (Україна):

Helena Kurzel (she/her) persistently delves into the intricacies of gender, avoiding a strict adherence to traditional gender categories. Throughout her work, she has addressed the pervasive influence of gender stereotypes and societal norms.

One significant topic which emerges from Helena's work is the transformation of individuals who acquire physical power, a transformation often linked to inherent biological traits. In times of war, the traditional categorizations of 'men' and 'women' can shift, casting individuals into roles of either 'perpetrators' or 'victims.' Through her artistic expressions, Helena actively promotes gender inclusivity and works towards reducing violence across the entire gender spectrum.

Helena's work in *Undercurrents* delves into topics such as human attachment to place, the experience of migration, the potential of the geography of violence in a world marked by frequent conflict, and the question of whether powerlessness in time of war should be seen as a weakness or a natural state. Helena adds a textual component that complements her current project and reflects on the various texts she has encountered in the context of *Her\* Gaze*. She also explores the idea that everyone has the right to work and self-identification in times of war.

## Roots



A person develops like a seedling sprouting from the ground. When a tree grows and exists, it sends its roots into the earth. It is into the earth, not into a state or national identity. For a tree, the country in which it sends its roots has no significance. It simply extends them wherever it was planted, wherever it was born. Trees send down their roots without considering circumstances or future prospects.

A tree cannot move from its place of birth; it simply grows where it first appeared. A human cannot do the same. They tend to flee from danger and cannot put down roots without certainty in their future. What will remain in the land after the war? Will the land retain the memory of those who lived on it and those who remained in it?

Is utopia possible? Geography of violence.



Can people exist in a world without violence? Can totalitarian states stop trying to absorb neighboring countries? Can utopia exist?  
Does a geography of violence exist? Can certain territories be potential targets for aggressors, and what factors influence this?  
Can there be geography without violence?  
Can certain territories be protected from potential military invasion? Why does violence still occur if it can be avoided?

Is powerlessness weakness or a natural factor?

How many diverse lives have been lost during the invasion of Ukraine, and how many more will be lost? No one chooses the calling of a soldier, but many are called upon during times of war.



## Struggle, the right to work, and self-identification.

When a state enters into a war, the roles of men and women in it are often defined based on certain stereotypes. Men are seen as warriors, soldiers who are expected to go to war, while women are often seen as victims who need protection. However, in reality, the hardships of war are felt equally by all.

Why then should men go to the front lines while women stay behind? In the event of defeat in war, it will be bad for both men and women alike. When a missile hits a home, it kills everyone – both men and women. Anyone can become a victim, and in the face of the possibility of death, all are equal.

Why are these roles constructed in such a way? Why are people assigned roles based on their gender rather than their actual capabilities? Who assigns these roles, and does anyone have the right to do so? Will the objectification of women stop? Will women be able to stop being associated with victimhood? Will women cease to be objects of violence?



## Notes on Generated Images

Here I am reproducing countless images of war. Image after image after image.

This is an image of Vika from Vinnyitsia.

This is an image of Lera, 35 weeks pregnant, dancing.

This is an image of Lera breastfeeding her baby son in the shelter.

This is an image generated by the AI.

The Artificial Intelligence engines are trained on billions of images.

They feed on your trauma. Absorb indifferently. Do not focus on details.

They spit out imaginary humanoids with necks attached to their backs, seven fingers and impossible joints. How could they empathize if they cannot even tell a person from a pile of military equipment?

Their response is to generate more images. My response is to look for the blank spaces.

Prompt: This image sums up the Ukrainian invasion.

This image pops up on my phone in a carousel.

This image is from the slideshow from The Guardian online edition that is endlessly updating me on the Ukraine invasion.

This image contains graphic content click to enlarge.

This image is the cover of What We Know On Day 578 of the Invasion.

Media are insatiable, unfazed. Always fresh and ready to deliver. They never reach the breaking point.

I...

Here's my emotions, now generate some images for me.

*Ola Wasilewska*



PROMPTS: THIS IMAGE SUMS UP THE UKRAINE  
INVASION | A LECTURER ON ZOOM PHASES OUT  
WHEN HER TRAUMA IS TRIGGERED | I FEEL FEAR  
WHEN MY CURATORS TELL ME THEY ARE GOING TO  
KYIV TO VISIT | CUSTOM DISPLAY FONT DERIVED  
FROM THE VISUAL MATERIAL OF THIS WAR | THE  
FILMMAKER CANNOT FORCE THEMSELVES TO REWATCH  
THEIR DOCUMENTARY | THE GUNPOWDER TOWER  
IN LVIV AS AN ART GALLERY IS A GOOD METAPHOR  
| ENERGY CRISIS WHEN YOU 28 WEEKS PREGNANT |  
ONE PARTICIPANT FROM KYIV IS LATE FOR THE  
ONLINE LAB BECAUSE SHE IS TRAVELLING FROM  
THE SHELTER

AI RUNWAY  
IMAGE  
GENERATOR



GENERATIVE  
ARTS  
SACRIFICES



GENERATION  
RACISM  
DIVERSITY

This image sur

p the Ukraine i  
sion

A lec  
when her trauma is trigges  
per

The gunpowder  
Lviv as an art  
gallery is a good metapho

Energy crisis when you 28 weeks pregnant in Budapest

One partic  
from Kyiv is late for the online  
a traveli  
from the shelter

I feel fear when my cura

Custom Displa  
ved from the  
visual material

The filmmaker  
documentary  
Going to Kyiv  
-tors tell





**Marlene Krause (Germany) / Марлене Краузе (Німеччина):**

For several years, Marlene Krause (she/her) has been actively engaged in addressing social justice issues, focusing on the struggles of indigenous communities, laborers, and women from an intersectional feminist perspective. Her work also reflects the impact of her role as a mother of two daughters.

Marlene has conducted educational workshops for youth at various institutions, including the Cervantes Institute in Brussels and the Goethe Institute in Riga and Kyiv. She collaborated with the House of Europe Ukraine in 2021, working on a project related to the legacy of Ukrainian artist Polina Raiko, offering guidance to participants in creating graphic narratives inspired by her work.

*Her\* Gaze's* online laboratory has significantly influenced Marlene's work, providing unique perspectives and insights that have shaped her approach to the subject matter and its various facets. Her contribution to the zine primarily features excerpts from her ongoing work, focusing on her methodology for understanding the narrator's world and effectively conveying her story.

und so kamen wir nie wieder nach hause

and so, we never came home again

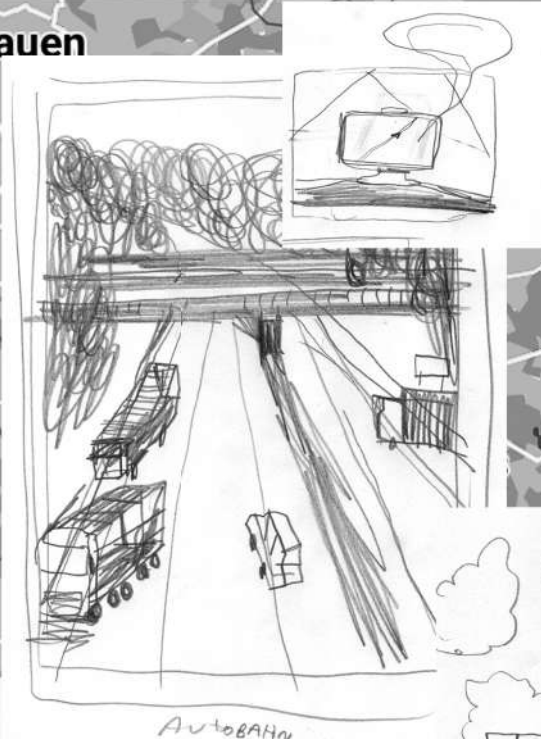
Do we have weapons?  
We need some weapons,  
to defend ourselves,  
it is war time.

destroyed gas station

Warschau

the GPS shouted: Turn around, turn around!!

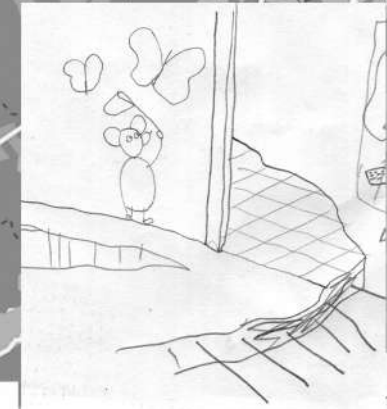
Litauen



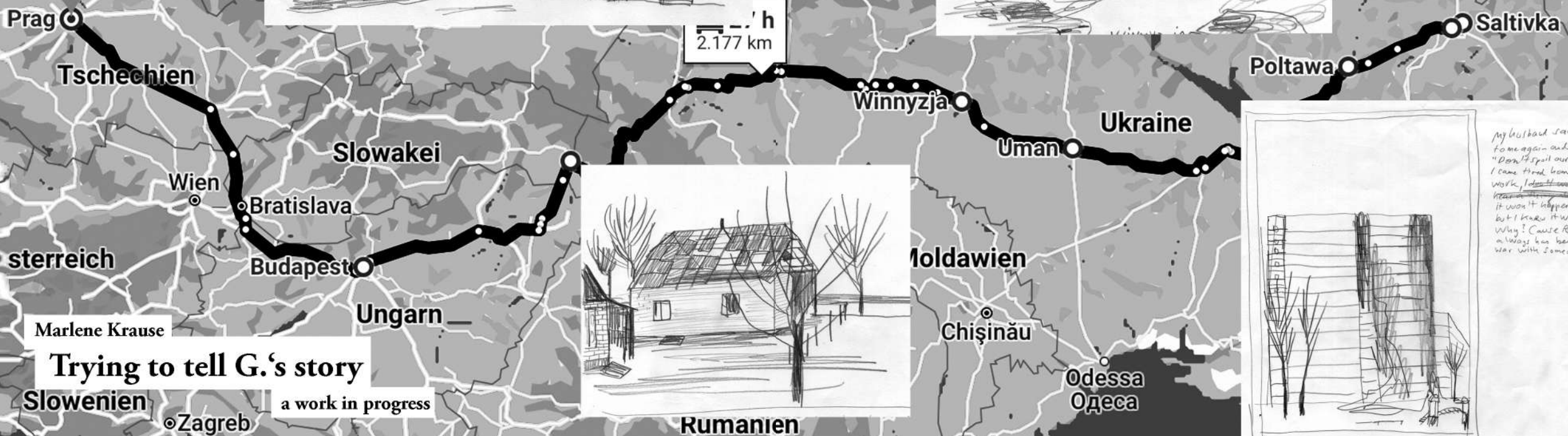
Autobahn



i never had any illusions,  
I knew it would happen. **Moskau**  
Russia always has been at war **CKBa**  
with someone.



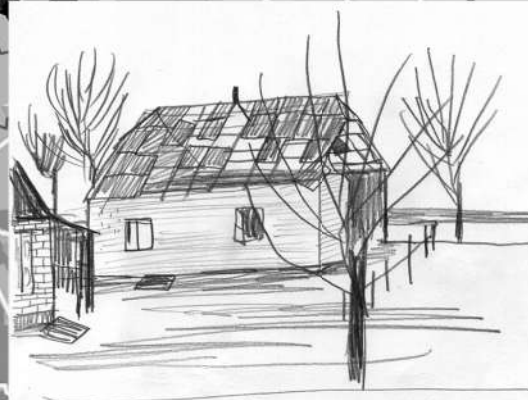
we live on the 9th floor.  
you can see the border from our window



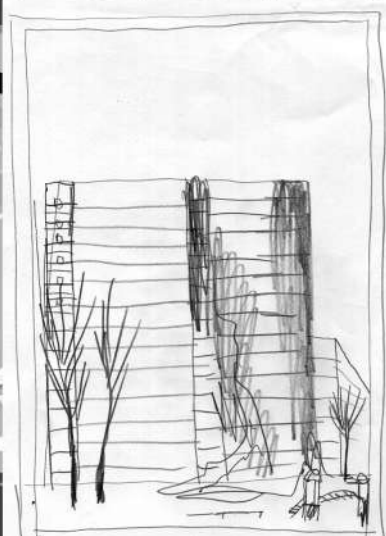
Marlene Krause

Trying to tell G.'s story

Slowenien a work in progress



Rumanien



my husband said  
to me again and again:  
"Don't spoil our evening,  
I came tired home from  
work, I don't want to  
hear it!"  
it won't happen!  
but I knew it would.  
Why? Cause Russia  
always has been in  
war with someone.

1 AND THEN, WAR STARTED. JUST LIKE THIS, OUT OF THE BLUE, EARLY IN THE MORNING.

THE EVENING BEFORE MY FRIEND SAID, DID YOU SEE PUTIN'S SPEECH? IT IS NOT IN VAIN. I HAVEN'T SEEN IT, BECAUSE MY HUSBAND BECOMES ANGRY WHEN I SPEAK ABOUT THESE THINGS, HE SAID ONCE AND AGAIN: DON'T SPOIL OUR EVENING, IF I <sup>AND HAVE</sup> FINISHED FROM WORK, I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT, NOTHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN! BUT I NEVER HAD ANY ILLUSIONS, I KNEW IT WOULD HAPPEN.

2 WE LIVED ON THE 9TH FLOOR. <sup>YOU CAN SEE THE BIRCHES FROM OUR WINDOW</sup> WE REALIZED, WE ONLY HAVE TIME TO PACK ANYTHING, TO EVEN THINK WE JUST GRABBED A BLANKET BECAUSE IT WAS COLD, DOCUMENTS, MONEY, AND RAN OUT (OF THE APARTMENT).

3 AND SO, WE NEVER CAME HOME AGAIN. WE DROVE TO A GAS STATION AND SAT THERE FOR 3 HOURS. I SHOULD DRIVE HOME AND PACK OUR THINGS? JUST WHAT WE WANTED TO DRIVE BACK, IT STARTED AGAIN. SO THERE WE ARE, WITH THIS BLANKET, KIDS IN THEIR PYJAMAS. OUR RELATIVES TOLD ~~US~~ TO COME TO KHOLODNA HOBT IT IS QUIET THERE, AND SO WE WENT.

WHEN WE DROVE, THE KIDS ASKED "DO WE HAVE WEAPONS WITH US? - I AIK: WHAT WEAPONS SHOULD WE TAKE WITH US? AND THE 5 YEAR OLD BOY SAYS: "WE DIDN'T BRING WEAPONS, HOW WOULD WE DEFEND OURSELVES? IT IS WAR."

4 HERE WE STAYED FOR 3 DAYS. WE SLEPT ON THE FLOOR, I THOUGHT IT WAS SILLY, BECAUSE IF STH. FLEW INTO THE HOUSE, IT DIDN'T MATTER WHERE WE SLEPT, AND NO THREE WALLS WOULD HAVE SAVED YOU. I WAS SO AFRAID, THE BIRCHES OVER THE DNEPER, YOU EXPLODE THEM, AND THAT'S IT, NOBODY GOES ANYWHERE. BUT EVEN IF WE WANTED TO LEAVE, WE WERE SO AFRAID OF LEAVING.

Step 1: Deeply lost in translation.

Step 2: Find a voice that speaks to you. Listen to it.

Step 3: Mapping an escape, a person, a mood, a mind.

Step 4: Sketching a landscape of war. All available images are already influenced by the events.

Step 5: Synthesis of text, cut into little pieces.

Step 6: Drawing the things that are there, but are there nonetheless, all the time.

Step 7: Fusion of text and image.

6 WHEN WE <sup>CAME</sup> WERE CLOSE TO SOFIVUKA, THE GASIMAYS SHOUTED THAT WE SHOULD TAKE A DETOUR THROUGH THE FIELDS, BUT WE WENT ON ON THE ROAD, IT WILL BE FASTER, THERE HAS BEEN SHOOTINGS THE DAY BEFORE AND EVERYTHING IS BURNED, BLACKENED, CAFES, TRUCKS, STRANGLER EVERYWHERE. AND WE DROVE ON AND THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE ONLY THE NAVS SHOUTING "TURN AROUND" / MAKING HOUSES WE ARRIVED QUITE FAST HERE.

7 WE CAME TO TRANS-CARPATIA AND STAYED FOR 40 DAYS, THEN WE HEARD A RUMOUR THAT FIGHTING WOULD START THERE, TOO, CLOSE TO THE MOLDAVIAN BORDER. THAT NIGHT, WE DECIDE LEAVE WE DIDN'T FEEL WELCOME THERE ANY WE WENT TO PRAGUE, THERE I LEFT THE CAR, I TO GO TO CANADA.

8 WE LEFT EVERYTHING BEHIND, ONLY HANDBAG AND IT WAS FULL OF TOYS. THEY NEVER PLAYED THESE TOYS, BUT NOW THEY NEEDED THEM. I PRESSED THEM TO THEIR HEARTS, "THESE ARE FRIENDS", WE HAD A SUITCASE FULL OF FOOD.

NOBODY HELPED US IN THIS BEAUTIFUL CANADA. HERE ALONE, A MOTHER WITH TWO CHILDREN, FATHER STILL IN UKRAINE. WITH MY JOB I COULD PAY THE RENT, NO FOOD WHY ARE WE EVEN HERE WE CAN NOT LIVE HERE.

9 I FOUND OUT THAT I HAVE FAMILY IN LEIPZIG, I DECIDED WE'D GO THERE. WHEN WE ARRIVED IN BERLIN, AT THE STATION, VOLUNTEERS WELCOMED ME. AND THEY SAID "I WILL NEVER FORGET IT."

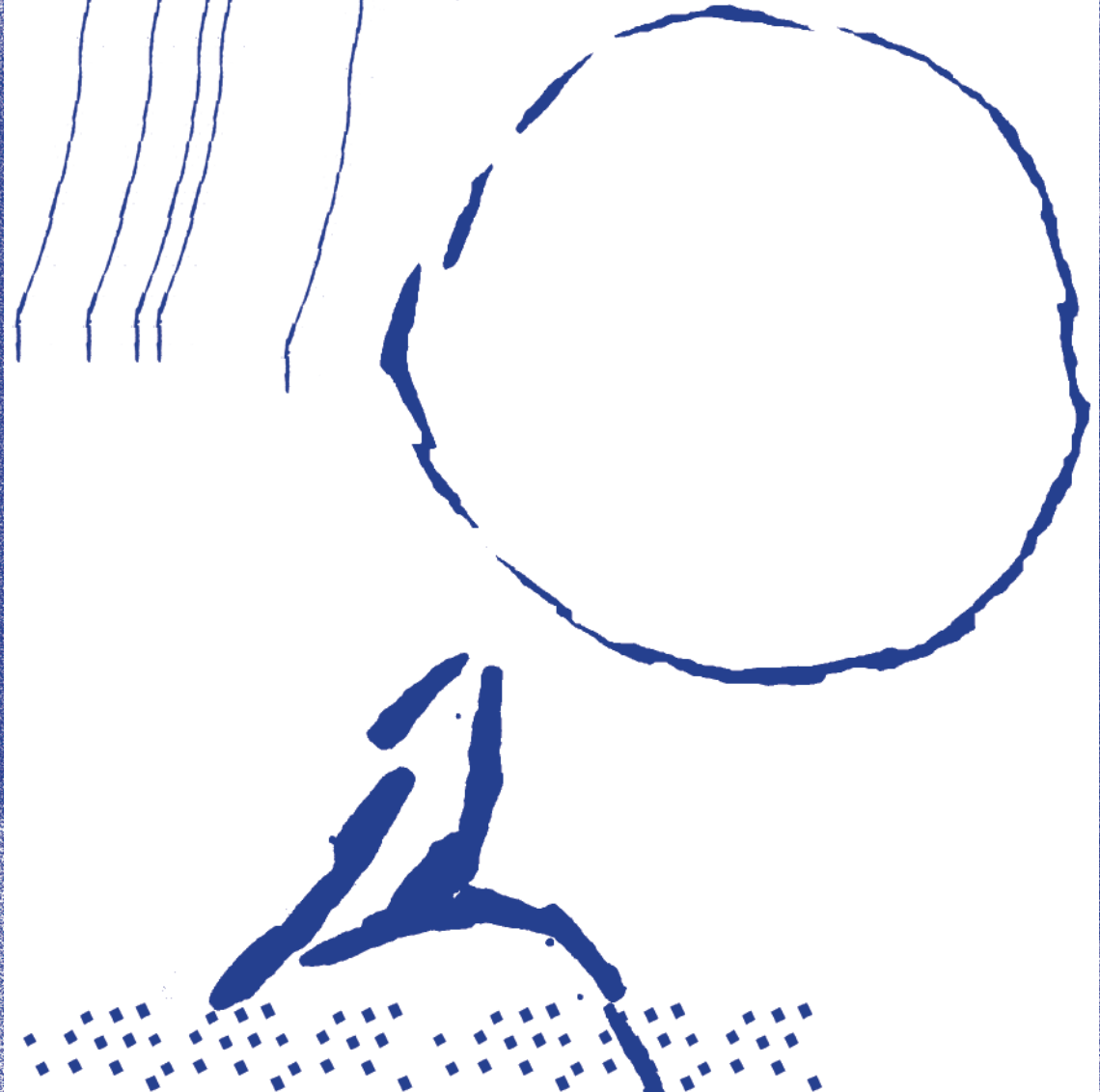
THEY SAID, YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO ON TO LEIPZIG RIGHT NOW, YOU CAN STAY A FEW DAYS AND SEE BERLIN. NO, I SAID. I HAVE SEEN TOO MUCH ALREADY. I DON'T WANT ANYTHING, JUST FEEL SOME GROUND UNDER MY FEET. FEEL THAT YOU CAN LIVE.

WHEN I CAME TO LEIPZIG I IMMEDIATELY FELL IN LOVE WITH THE CITY. "I AM NOT OLD, NOT YET!" LIFE GOES ON, AND IT GOES ON FOREVER.

10 WE HAD ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING. AT THE MOMENTS: ~~WE~~ WE HAVE NOT LIVED, REAL ABOUT NICE CURTAINS OR WALL (GOD), HOW WELL WE LIVED. IT WAS EVERYTHING, BUT ALWAYS WE WANTED MORE HUMAN.



Und dann begann der Krieg. Einfach so, aus heiterem Himmel Früh am Morgen.



**Mari Kinovych (Ukraine) / Марія Кінович (Україна):**

Mari Kinovych (she/her) is a Kyiv-based illustrator whose practice is particularly concerned with the topic of gender equality. She began her artistic focus on this topic by contributing to three publications by Ukrainian sociologist and gender studies researcher Tamara Martseniuk. She uses her art to approach this theme from various angles and develop her unique style.

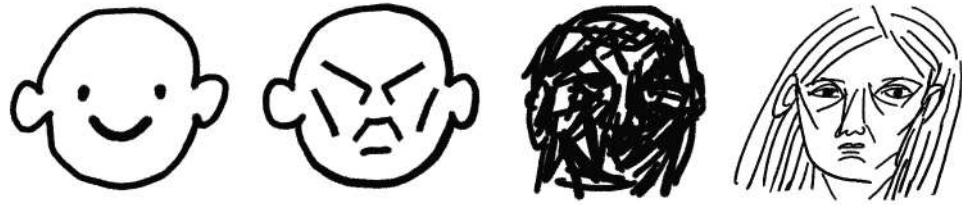
In the past year, the focus of Mari's artistic practice has shifted somewhat due to the prevailing war as she has felt a necessity to depict broader human rights abuses in a universal manner. Nevertheless, she has not abandoned her dedication to feminism and has sought to depict the intersection between women and conflict. By participating in *Her\* Gaze*, Mari has aimed to revisit discussions about gender equality and explore the impact of war on this issue in collaboration with fellow artists.

In her work for *Undercurrents*, Mari explores the concept of anger and its perception in the context of war, particularly when it makes you disadvantaged in the eyes of others. In addition, her work for *Her\* Gaze's* subsequent exhibitions in Lviv and Berlin delves into anger as a metaphorical fuel that drives people to act against perceived injustices.

ANGER COMPLICATES YOU.



IT GIVES YOU LINES AND LAYERS.



OVERALL, ANGER MAKES YOU  
INCONVENIENT.



WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY,  
YOU SCARE PEOPLE OFF,  
AND THEY WANT  
YOU TO STOP  
DISRUPTING THEIR  
WORLD AND I CAN  
UNDERSTAND THIS,

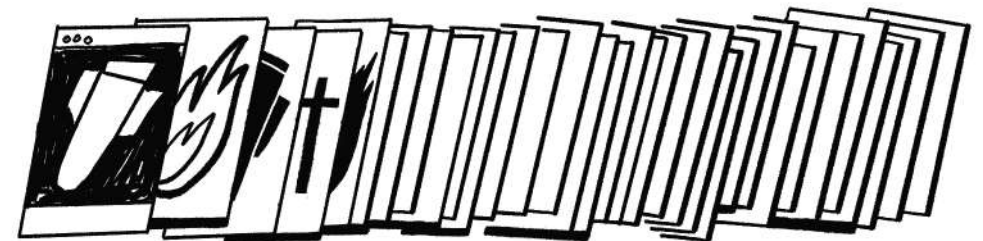
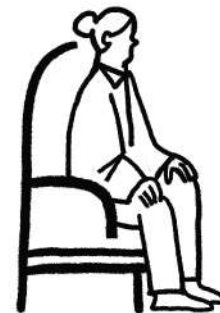


BUT

LIVING THROUGH WAR GIVES  
YOU PLENTY OF REASONS TO BE ANGRY  
AND YOU CAN'T JUST SWITCH IT OFF.



NEWS FOR SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT LIVE THROUGH WAR.



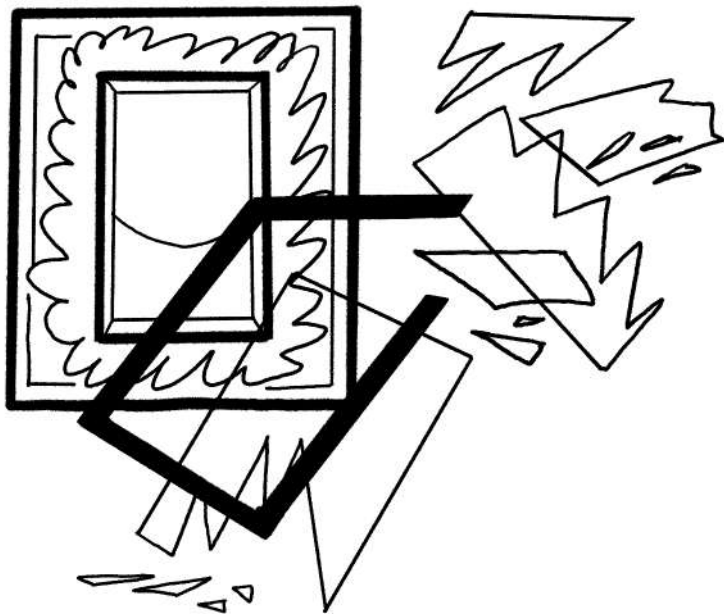
NEWS FOR ME.



A LOT OF THINGS ABOUT THE RUSSIAN INVASION MAKE ME ANGRY, BUT THERE ARE THREE THAT MAKE MY ANGER UNBEARABLE.

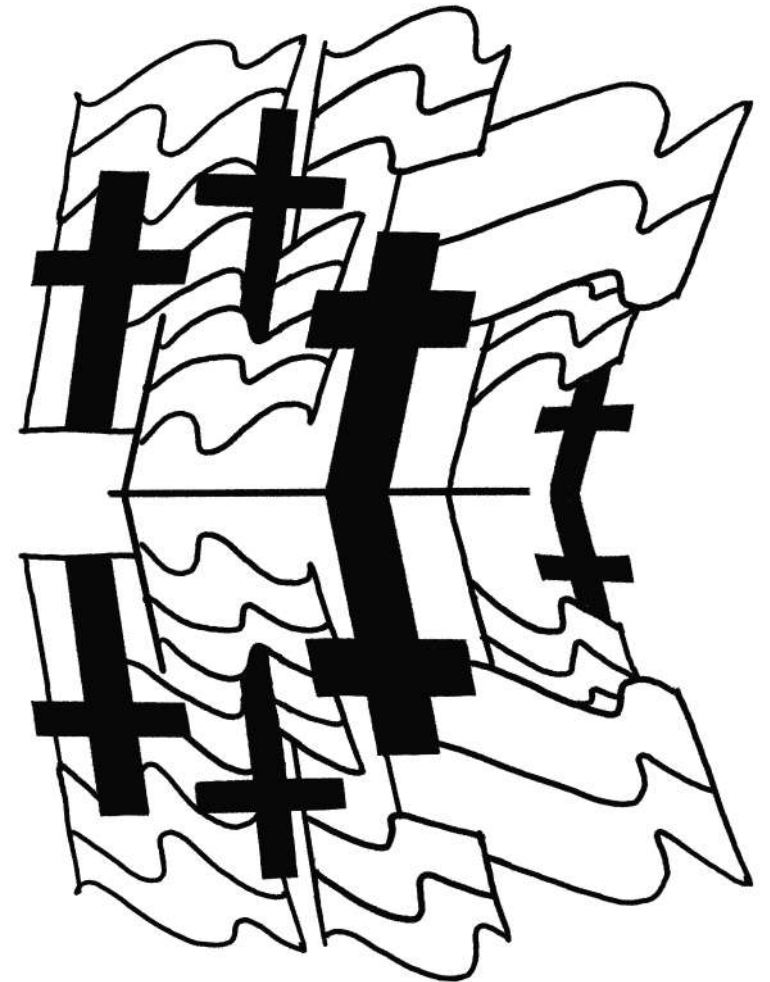
1. RUSSIANS LOOTED

EVERY ART MUSEUM ON OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE AND THE MOST PRECIOUS ART OBJECTS ARE SOMEWHERE IN THE TRETYAKOV GALLERY OR THE HERMITAGE MUSEUM.



2. RUSSIANS TOOK FROM ME SO MANY PLACES THAT I WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE AS THEY WERE BEFORE. THEY DESTROYED ECOSYSTEM OF THE KHERSON REGION AND BURNED TO THE GROUND ALMOST EVERY TOWN AND VILLAGE IN DONETSK AND LUHANSK REGIONS.

3. DEATH OF SO MANY BRILLIANT PEOPLE.



ANGER IS ONLY  
A SURFACE.  
MAYBE IF WE SAW THE  
WHOLE PICTURE WE WOULD  
UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER  
BETTER.



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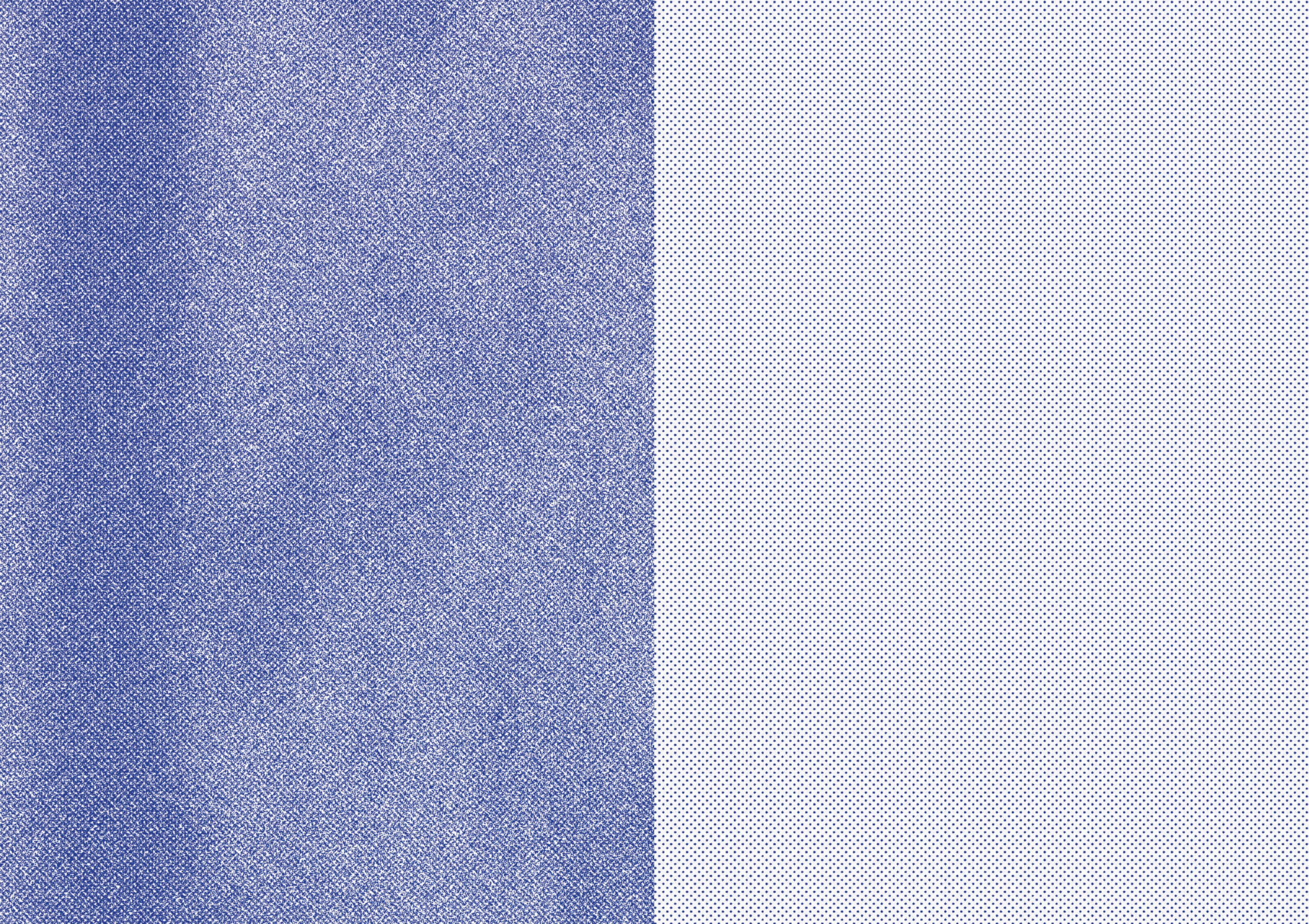
Contributors: Valeriia Zubatenko, Anya Ivanenko & Jenya Polosina (Seri/graph), Mari Kinovych, Olga Lisowska, Olena Kurzel, Magdalena Kaszuba, Amanda Priebe, Marlene Krause, Ola Wasilewska, Joanna Skupinska, Ruslana Kliuchko, Nadiia Sichko, Ana Franyk, Yevseviia Ziakina, Anastasiia Ion, Sasha Kokhan, Polina Smirnova, Elina Fedorenko, Valeriia Zineska, Yelyzaveta Ischenko, Sofia Tantsura and Solomiia Kulchynska.

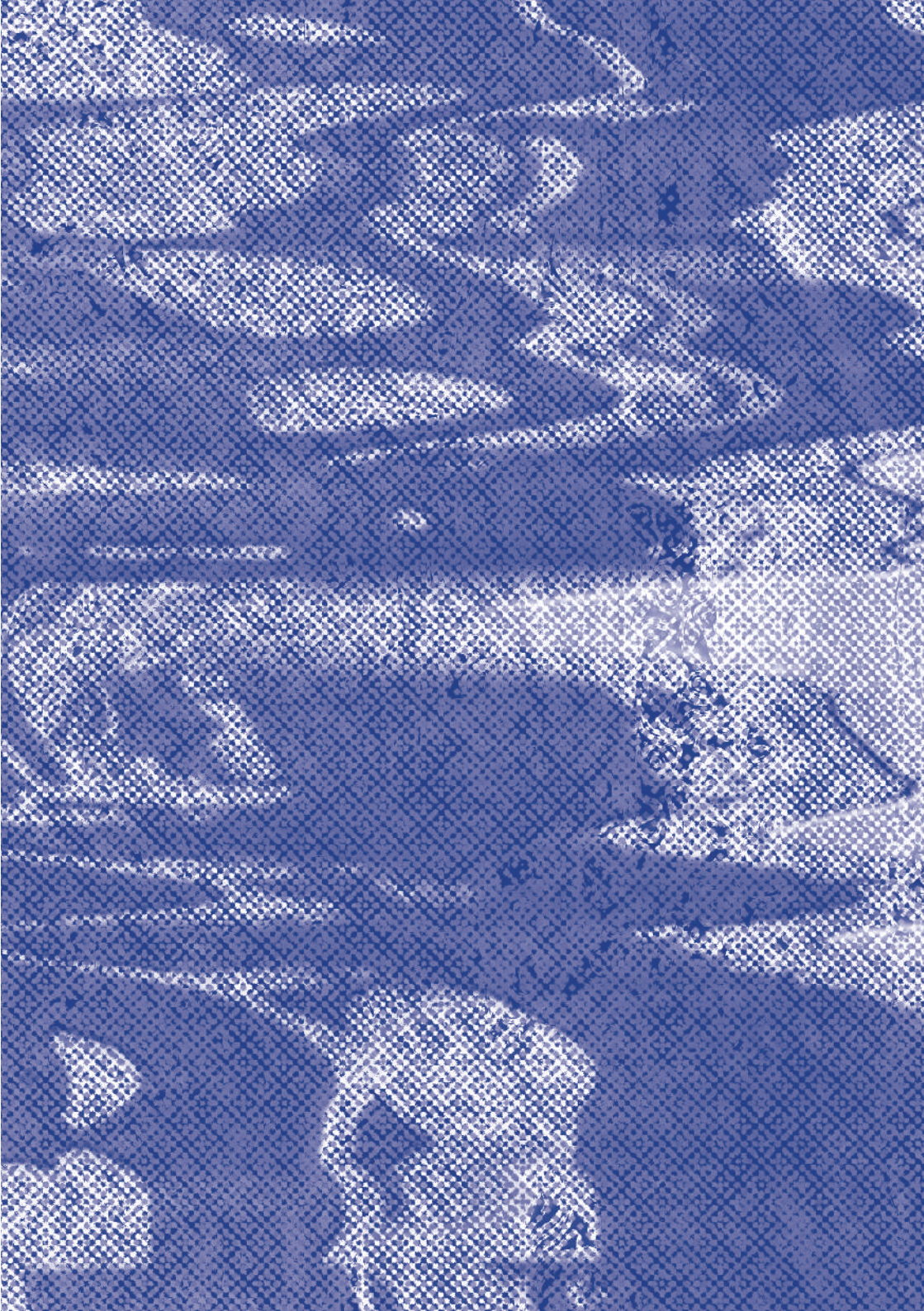
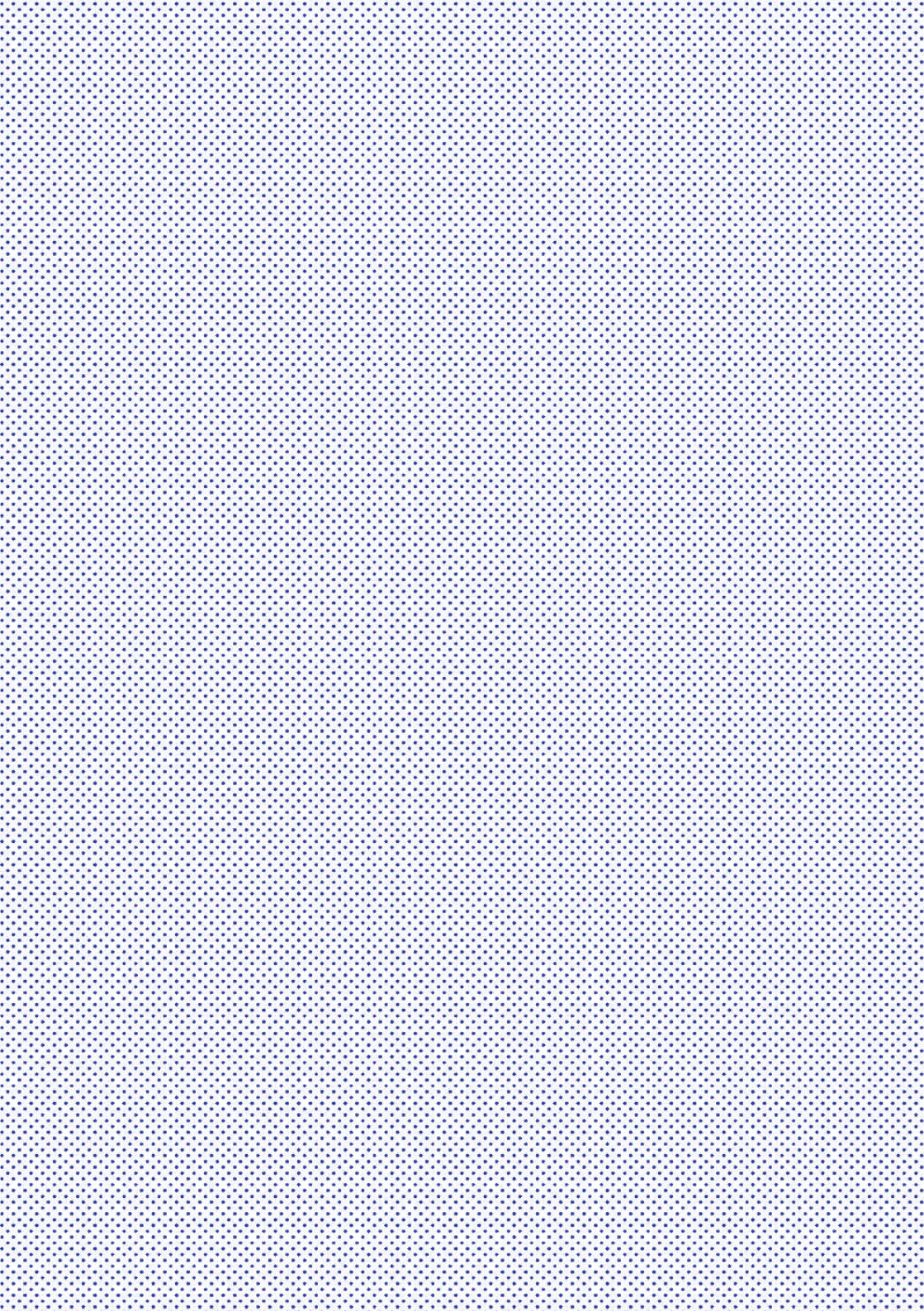
Special thank you to the following experts who contributed specialized sessions during the *Her\* Gaze* online laboratory program: Yosh from Feminist Workshop, Anzhelik Ustymenko, Lesia Kulchysnka, Svitlana Telukha and Clemens Poole.

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The publication *Undercurrents* is carried out within the project "Her\* Gaze" implemented by the Goethe-Institut Ukraine in collaboration with the NGO "Feminist Workshop" under the Eastern Partnership program of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.







## Про «Ї\* погляд» / *Her\* Gaze*

«Ї\* погляд» / *Her\* Gaze* був ініційований як спроба сформувати ефемерні простори для феміністичних спільнот – своєрідні схованки для колективних рефлексій про російську війну проти України. Його породило глибоко вкорінене прагнення будувати та зміцнювати феміністичні зв'язки, потреба в яких особливо загострюється в суворому контексті війни. Як багатогранна програма, спрямована на взаємообмін та розвиток художниць «Ї\* погляд» / *Her\* Gaze* складався з двох автономних частин: офлайн-програми резиденції для молодих українських феміністичних художниць під назвою «Ми разом, тому що», а також онлайн-лабораторії для художниць з України, Польщі та Німеччини. Залучивши художниць з різним досвідом та використовуючи різні робочі мови, обидва напрямки «Ї\* погляду» / *Her\* Gaze* порушували актуальні питання солідарності та імперіалістичного пацифізму в пошуках феміністичної справедливості та щирих актів прислухання. Учасниці проєкту намагалися знайти відповіді на численні запитання. Як художницям-феміністкам орієнтуватися – індивідуально та колективно – в контексті війни росії проти України? Як насильство війни сприймається та інтерпретується з різних точок зору? Як художницям-феміністкам етично працювати з історіями жертв війни та травмою, щоб сприяти трансформації як на особистому, так і на соціальному рівні?

Програма резиденції «Ми разом, тому що» за кураторства Валерії Зубатенко стала рідкісною, але життєво необхідною можливістю для феміністичних художниць, які досі проживають в Україні, збиратися разом та обмінюватися досвідами, плекаючи відчуття колективності. Влітку 2023 року 12 молодих українських художниць-феміністок

зібралися на тиждень у Трускавці на заході України. Резиденція проходила в санаторії – просторі, що використовується для лікування та реабілітації людей з хронічними захворюваннями, який зараз, як і багато інших місць на заході України, частково став домом для внутрішньо переміщених осіб. Зібравшись у місці відпочинку в час, що характеризується неспокоєм, учасниці колективно вивчали власний і чужий досвід війни за допомогою феміністичної оптики. Вони прагнули знайти підвалини для феміністичних альянсів, а також розробити стратегії турботи про себе, отримавши при цьому простір для мистецьких експериментів під час реалізації програми. Оскільки всі художниці досі проживають в Україні, їхні особисті й суперечливі відчуття близькості та віддаленості від війни були постійною темою для розмов. На другий день резиденції, коли учасниці та кураторська команда були змушені перенести свій робочий простір у бомбосховище через неминучу російську атаку неподалік, реальність цієї теми стала аж ніяк не абстрактною чи невловимою.

Оскільки молодіжна резиденція була сфокусована на колективному діалозі, обміні та творчому розвитку, публічна презентація робіт, створених у рамках програми, стала спонтанною і неочікуваною. Проте у зв'язку з аурую невідкладності, що огортала резиденцію як у безпосередньому контексті недавнього обстрілу, так і в ширшому контексті війни, учасниці зробили рішучий вибір на користь негайної самоорганізованої мистецької дії. Вони усунули стіни між власними секціями санаторію і представили імпровізовану групову виставку, на якій були представлені їхні незавершені роботи. У цій виставці, що постала з нагальної потреби, втілилася ефемерна сутність емоцій та важливість солідарності в умовах несприятливих обставин. Після інтенсивного і трансформаційного тижня учасницям запропонували онлайн-семінар для збереження імпульсу резиденції. Загалом, програма резиденції

«Ми разом, тому що» надала молодим українським художницям-феміністкам простір для колективного опрацювання своїх почуттів щодо війни та усвідомлення потенціалу власних мистецьких голосів.

Онлайн-лабораторія «Її\* погляд» / *Her\* Gaze* за кураторства Олівера Догерті та дуету Variable name/Назва змінна (Марина Марінченко та Валерія Карпань) стала відповіддю на нагальну потребу мисткинь з України, Польщі та Німеччини об'єднатися задля співпраці й артикулювати необхідність в міжнародній феміністичній солідарності як формі спротиву. Протягом чотирьох місяців десять художниць зустрічалися онлайн, щоб сформувати феміністичні мистецькі підходи до сторітелінгу, здатні проявити приховані голоси та історії. Упродовж програми онлайн-лабораторії учасниці отримували відгуки від численних активісток, режисерок, дослідниць та художниць, чії практики спрямовані на досягнення феміністичної справедливості в українському контексті. Ці відгуки, а також обмін думками та діалог між учасницями уможливили появу стратегій для прогресивніших методів сторітелінгу.

Онлайн-лабораторія «Її\* погляд» / *Her\* Gaze* відштовхувалася від критичного погляду на присутній в інтернеті надлишок зображень і документації того, що називають «найбільш задокументованою війною у світі». Якщо такі зображення часто відтворюють насильство війни та зводять україн\_ок до безіменних жертв, то учасниці онлайн-лабораторії намагалися знайти тонкі підходи до війни, які не загрожують ретравмуванням глядач\_ок і не перенасичують їх видовищними зображеннями. Таким чином, українські феміністичні історії та люди, з якими працювали учасниці, набули агентності та суб'єктності.

Окрім проблематики домінантних зображень, учасниці онлайн-лабораторії також розглянули як форму спротиву

окупантові роботу українських архівних інституцій та дослідниць – і в Україні, і в екзилі – над збором та фіксацією фрагментів та досвідів війни. Оскільки з доступом до неопублікованих архівів виникли проблеми, кураторська група вирішила налагодити тіснішу співпрацю з незалежними дослідницями, які сумлінно збирали усні історії про жіночі досвіди війни, переважно за допомогою методів, заснованих на інтерв'ю. Деякі учасниці працювали безпосередньо з транскрибованими дослідницькими інтерв'ю, тоді як інші звернулися до наявних подкаст-архівів або навіть вирішили провести інтерв'ю самостійно. Беручи до уваги важливість збереження феміністичних точок зору під час війни, учасниці навчалися у дослідниць і по-художньому оживили їхню роботу, щоб забезпечити архівування її-історій (*herstories*), не витерши їх із колективної пам'яті про війну.

Навіть для більшості україн\_ок, які досі живуть в Україні, сприйняття та розуміння російської військової агресії невіддільне від її цифрової репрезентації на екранах. Збираючись у віртуальному просторі, онлайн-лабораторія водночас підхоплювала й підточувала опосередковане цифровими технологіями переживання досвіду війни. Учасниці та кураторська команда шукали феміністичні способи налагодження зв'язку між пристроями, незважаючи на ризик поганого з'єднання, займаючи тимчасовий простір солідарності, рефлексії та скорботи.

Долучаючись до обох напрямків роботи «Її\* погляду» / *Her\* Gaze*, учасниці проходили через процеси навчання і відчування. Серйозність і складність цього процесу, як і самої теми не можна недооцінювати. Колективна взаємодія зі спустошливою темою війни привела учасниць до вразливих позицій. Позицій, з яких їм доводилося висловлювати біль, спричинений їхньою вимушеною роллю свідків страждань, завданих росією Україні. Позицій, в яких вони сумнівалися у важливості власного голосу

в діалозі про війну. Проте критичний і чутливий характер «Її\* погляду» / *Her\* Gaze* дозволив нам об'єднатися у спільній вразливості, плакаючи емпатію задля підтримки одна одної та розширення можливостей деколонізації та інклюзії.

Зрештою, у випадку українських учасниць, це були позиції, в яких їхній власний травматичний досвід ризикував знову вийти на поверхню. Проте художниці продовжували працювати з темою війни через відчуття необхідності, зумовлене спільним феміністичним прагненням будувати сильніші спільноти та краще майбутнє. Хоча робота з цією трагічною темою привела нас – як учасниць, так і кураторську команду – до відверто вразливих позицій, чутлива сутність «Її\* погляду» / *Her\* Gaze* дозволила нам об'єднатися на основі цього спільного почуття. З цієї вразливої точки зору ми представляємо ескізи, фрагменти та роздуми, що увійшли до *Undercurrents* і репрезентують процес колективного смутку, в якому ми віднаходимо надію на можливості трансформації та прагнемо до більш емпатичного світу.

## Про кураторок

Variable Name/Назва змінна – художня група, яку створили українські мисткині та кураторки Валерія Карпань та Марина Мариніченко у 2018 році. Variable Name/Назва змінна працюють на межі партисипативного мистецтва та неформальної освіти. Художниць цікавлять процеси



комунікації та обміну у міському середовищі, мультисенсорні досвіди, пам'ять і практики комеморації. З 2022 року група працює над представленням українського контексту в міжнародних інституціях через публічні виступи, виставки і резиденції. Одним з важливих кураторських проєктів стала колективна виставка українських художниць «Вголос/Out loud» в галереї «Лабіринт» (Люблін, Польща), покликана оприаявити проблему апропріації росією української культури. Валерія Карпань отримала ступінь магістра культурології у Національному університеті «Києво-Могилянська академія», нині навчається на докторській програмі з сучасного мистецтва у College of Arts University of Coimbra (Португалія). Марина Марініченко продовжує освіту в College of Arts University of Coimbra (Португалія), де здобуває ступінь магістра, а також залучена до діяльності академічної ініціативи Invisible University for Ukraine від Центральноєвропейського університету.

Олівер Догерті (він/вони) – куратор і культурний фасилітатор, який виріс на незайнятих землях племені ваддауррунг на території сучасної Австралії, а зараз мешкає в Берліні. У 2020 році Догерті був куратором групової виставки Futureless у берлінському арт-хаусі SomoS, яка представила безліч можливостей для квір-феміністичного майбутнього. У рамках Futureless Догерті познайомився з українськими художницями Марією Куликовською та Олегом Винниченко, які запросили його курувати програму в їхньому арт-просторі Garage33 Gallery-Shelter, що мав фізично відкритися в Києві у 2022 році. Хоча плани щодо проєкту не змогли здійснитися через повномасштабне вторгнення росії в Україну, дослідницька поїздка Догерті в Україну в 2021 році стала каталізатором його підтримки квір-феміністичних художниць і художників та людей, вимушено переміщених під час повномасштабного вторгнення. Упродовж 2022 року Догерті координував культурну програму в берлінському проєктному просторі SP\*TI, яка стала важливим простором

для предсталвлення думок переміщених ЛГБТ+ митців і мисткинь та членів і членкинь спільноти. У цьому контексті він започаткував програму резиденцій для ЛГБТ+ митців, переміщених осіб внаслідок війни росії проти України, за підтримки Goethe-Institut та Artists at Risk. Олівер Догерті отримав ступінь магістра з просторових стратегій Weissensee Academy of Art у Берліні.

Валерія Зубатенко – українська незалежна ліва художниця, дослідниця та кураторка. Останні 11 років присвятила активізму, роботі в громадському секторі та в сучасному мистецтві. Публікується як незалежна есеїстка в низці українських видань. Отримала філософську освіту в Києві, наразі навчається на програмі Fine Arts в LUCA School of Arts, в Брюсселі. Працює через постколоніальну та феміністичну оптику з темами війни, насильства, соціальної нерівності тощо.

Софія Дорошенко – художниця родом з Луцька. Навчалась в Львівській Національній Академії Мистецтв на кафедрі сакрального мистецтва. Після революції Гідності переїхала в Київ, навчалась в Національній Академії Образотворчого Мистецтва та архітектури. Займалась документальним театром та навчалась на курсі сучасного мистецтва «Простір уваги» Лади Наконечної та Катерини Бадянової. Працює художницею з костюму з кінопродакшн компанією «ТАБОР», разом з ними після початку повномасштабного вторгнення займається волонтерською діяльністю по відбудові будинків херсонщини та допомозі українській армії. В особистій мистецькій практиці займається дослідженням локальної історії, урбаністики, стріт-арту та станкової графіки. Паралельно займається менеджерською та організаційною роботою культурних та мистецьких проєктів.

Текст Валерії Зубатенко про резиденцію для художниць-початківць, яка відбулася влітку 2023 року в місті Трускавець, в рамках проекту Ії\* погляд.

## МИ РАЗОМ, БО НЕМАЄ ЗАЙВИХ

офіційна частина замість прологу, написана мною у whatsapp смм-менеджерці підозрюю, що цей текст так і не був опублікований в соцмережах

Резиденція була організована в якості своєрідного зрізу того, як молоді мисткині, що живуть в Україні, досвідчують війну через феміністичну оптику. Рефлексії відбувались паралельно з навчальною складовою резиденції, що включала в себе феміністичну теорію, філософію та теорію сучасного мистецтва. Фокусом резиденції «**ми разом, бо**» стали пошуки відповіді на питання, що уможлиблює солідарність і які нові типи зв'язків почали об'єднувати нас під час повномасштабного вторгнення.

Велику увагу ми окремо приділили локальному контексту Трускавця та мешканцям санаторію «Весна», в якому ми жили, вписуючи в нього наші різні художні практики замість того, аби його інструменталізувати. Не дивлячись на різний бекграунд учасниць, нам вдалось не просто бути і працювати разом в етичних феміністичних підходах, але й стати справжнім ситуативним колективом та ресурсним місцем одна для одної. Наприклад, деякі учасниці вперше ініціювали колаборативну роботу з іншими, а інші знайшли для себе зовнішню підтримку в прийнятті та утвердженні

себе як мисткинь. І така динаміка лише показує наскільки необхідними є простори колективних взаємодій, особливо в скрутні часи.

### вступальне слово

все було так. але і було інакше. для контексту я скажу, що мене запросили в цей проект в якості кураторки ще до утвердження його кінцевого вигляду. першопочаткова ідея здалась мені сумнівною: дві окремі частини одного проекту, а саме: онлайн-програма для серйозних мисткинь та підлітковий арт-табір офлайн, в рамках яких має рефлексуватись жіночий досвід війни. на кожен частину окремі кураторські постаті, не пов'язані між собою. так виглядало «дано», запропоноване менеджерками проекту.

як феміністична художниця та теоретикня, я, перш за все, хотіла розірвати бінарні опозиції «доросла/дитина», «професійна художниця/аматорка», «жіночий досвід/???». феміністичний проект не може впроваджуватись на не-феміністичних засадах. фемінізм на практиці культурних проєктів – це не наявність «жіночої» тематики, це «де-маскулінізація» ієрархічних структур всередині функціонування проєктів. з таким підходом я заходила в проєкт (і виходжу з нього, лише упевнившись в його релевантності). згодом доєдналась кураторська команда онлайн частини, з якою ми поділяємо спільні цінності та підходи до роботи. разом ми намагались видозмінити проєкт.

не дивлячись на зміну запропонованого формату «арт-кемпу» на «резиденцію для молодих художниць», всюди проникний меншовартісний дух «арт-кемпу» не давав спокою не лише на рівні назви. до останнього місяця проєкту на робочих зідзвонах мені доводилось виправляти менеджера проєкту: «**резиденція**», не «**арт-кемп**». доводити значимість, говорячи усталеною мовою, зрозумілою інституціям,

водночас не сприймаючи онтологічну модель, описану цією мовою. але наші учасниці вирішили піти іншим шляхом.

### шукати знаки

сходинок вниз вели до бомбосховища готелю «Весна». сирени волали. в наступні дні ми будемо спускатись у це бомбосховище неодноразово, бо саме в дні нашої резиденції в Трускавці лунали сирени. перша пролунала приблизно о 4 ранку. «прокидайся, війна!». це було так само, як у перший день повномасштабного вторгнення. я дивилась на наших дівчат, сівших колом, і думала: ось, що значить бути художницею під час війни. я хочу, щоб це побачив німецький офіс, я хочу, щоб це бачила публіка в Берліні. це розриває мені серце: яке до біса мистецтво? хіба недолугий жарт, про те, що такий у нас тут перформанс, такі у нас тут мультікіпультікі. одна з дівчат кладе голову на плече іншої. ми разом.

### запрошуємо вас на день відкритих дверей

одним із завдань на резиденції було створення самокурованої колективної поп-ап виставки. наші учасниці вирішили зробити наступне: вони відкрили наш робочий простір, в який і так періодично намагались зазирати гості готелю, оскільки він був прямо навпроти їдальні. аби люди не боялися заходити в цей простір, по готелю були розвішані афіші, зроблені в тій самій стилістиці, що й інші об'яви в готелі. жодної претенційності на велике серйозне сучасне мистецтво. мистецтво не заради мистецтва, а заради побудови підсилюючих соціальних взаємозв'язків. щирому жесту не важливо чи знайде він схвальний відгук через вписування у загальноприйнятий категоріальний апарат.

мистецька акція була подана як «день відкритих дверей» у майстерню молодих художниць. учасниці спілкувались

з усіма охочими і розказували, що ж тут відбувалось за закритими дверима, а також пропонували скористатися можливостями простору для власної творчості. запрошення людей ззовні показало, що такий простір, як той, що ми створили разом, потрібен не лише тим, хто змогли «правильно» заповнити заявку на участь. мистецтво під час війни має підсилений соціальний функціонал і може бути інструменталізоване, зокрема, для живих потреб тут і зараз, а стіни галерей це вже зовсім інша історія.

### з якою ми працювали у «Пороховій вежі» у Львові під час нашої колективної виставки «немає зайвих»



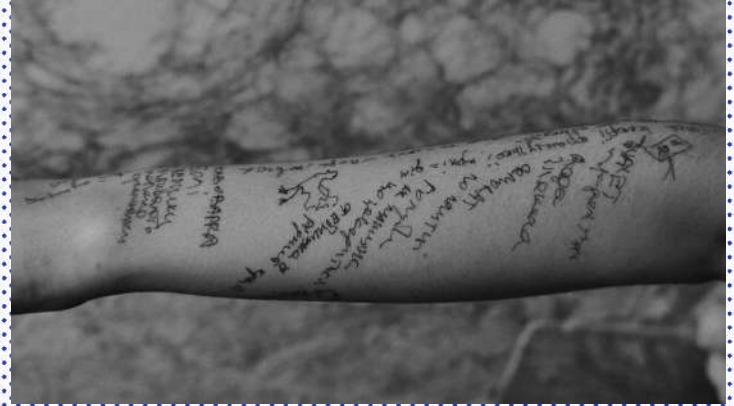
Фото зруйнованого російською армією будинку в Ірпіні, Україна. З перформансу Олександри Кохан

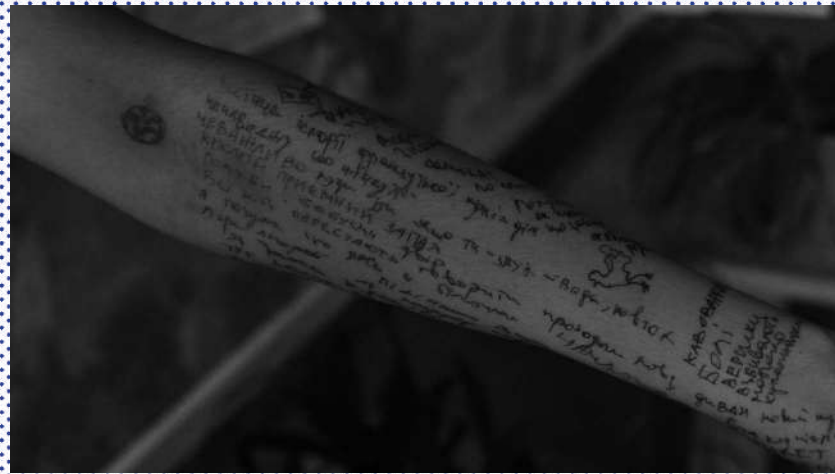
На цих світлинах документація майстерні, яка відбулася в рамках програми резиденції для митчинь-початківць *Ми разом*, бо в Трускавці, влітку 2023 року.

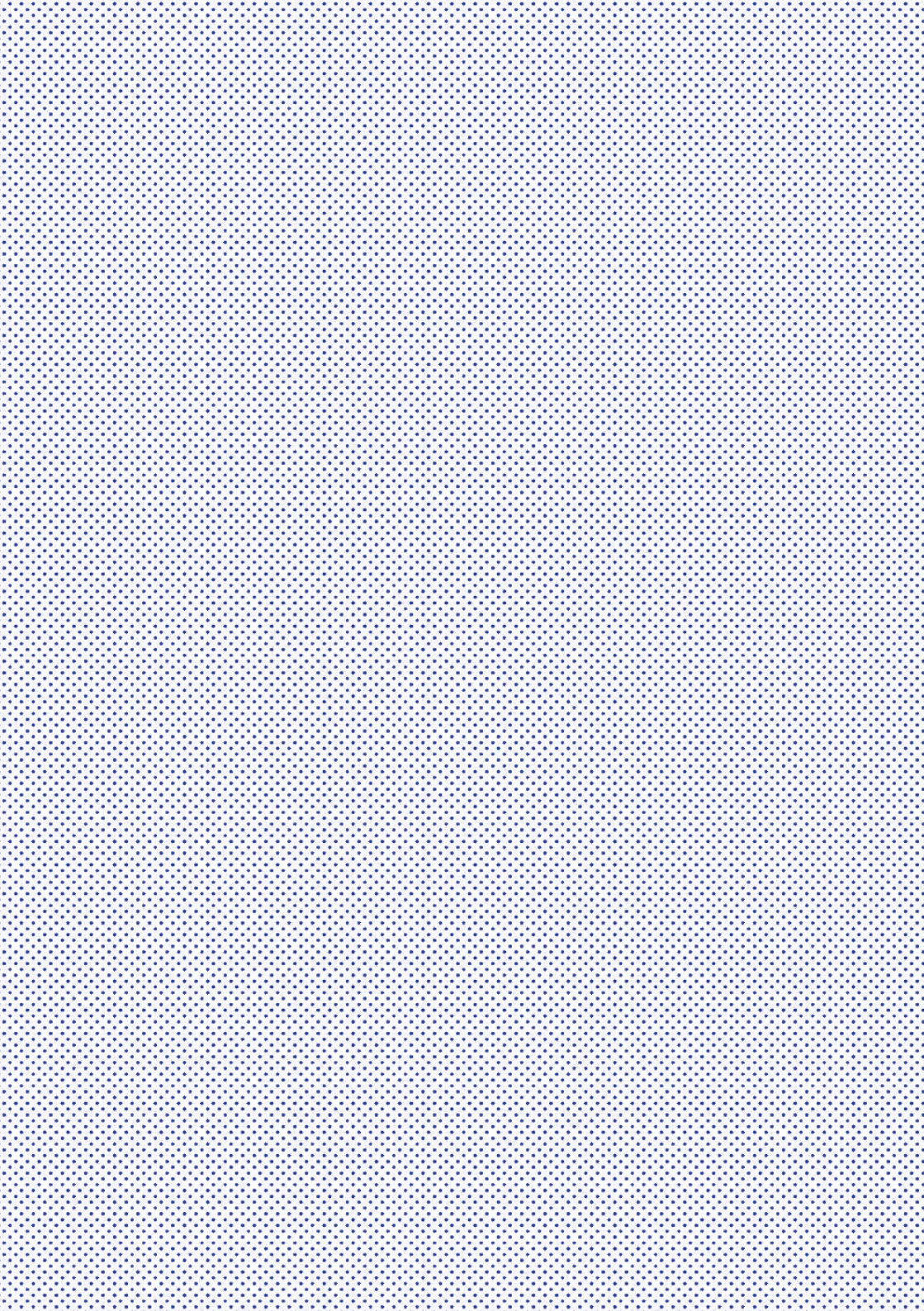
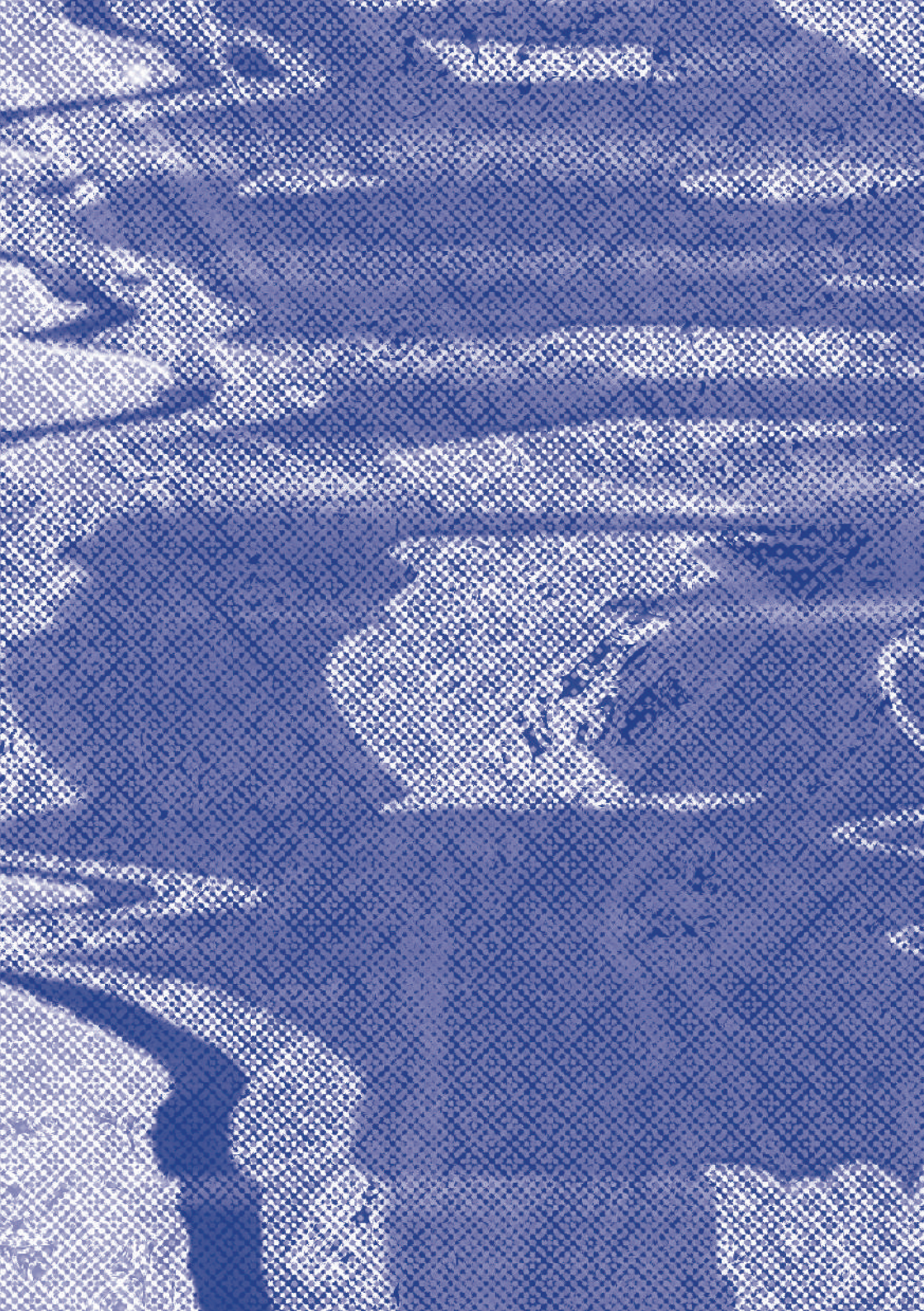
Розвиваючи спільноти попри фізичні і цифрові відстані, куратор\_ки *Her\* Gaze* розмірковували над можливостями встановлення зв'язку між онлайн і офлайн-програмами.

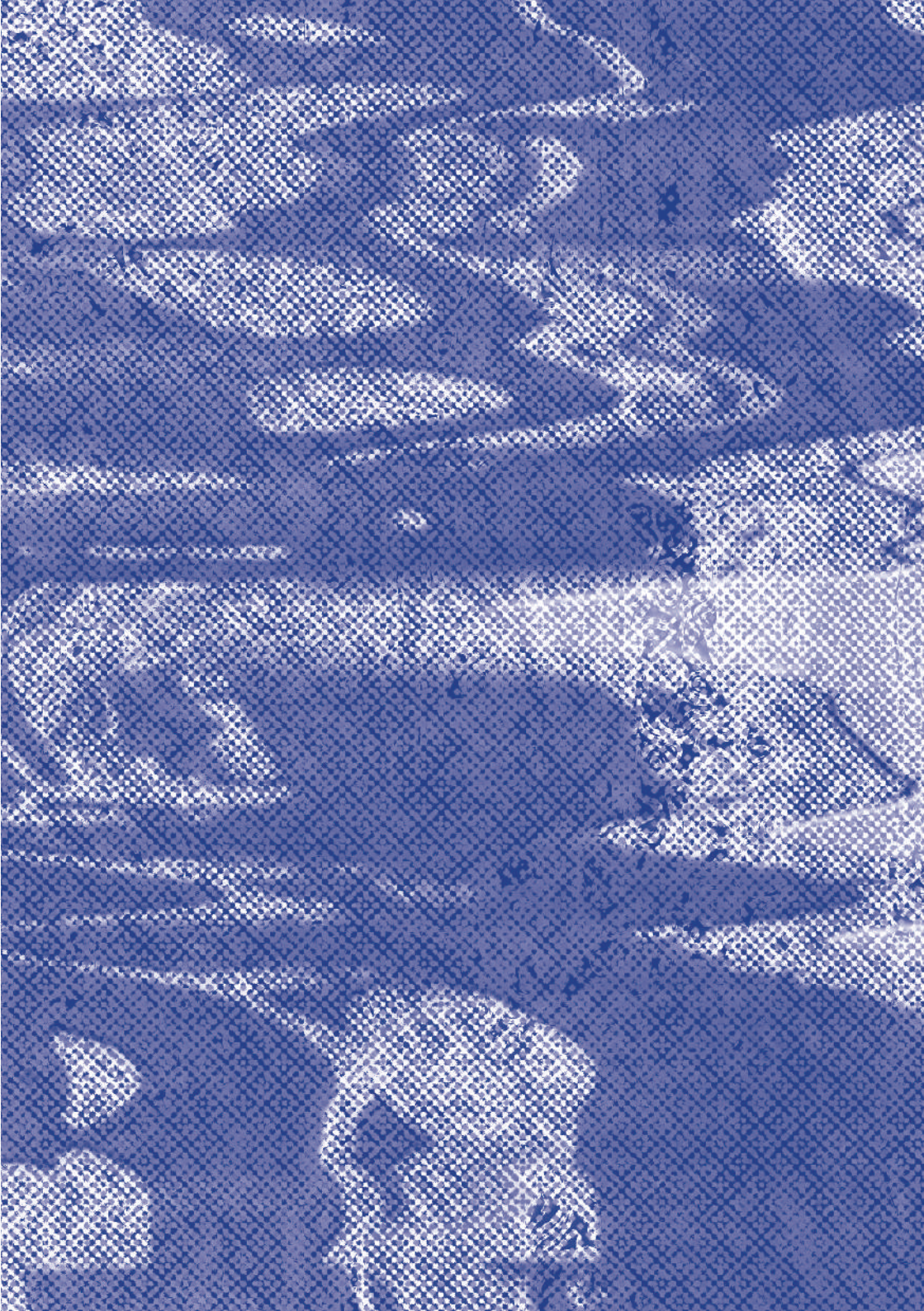
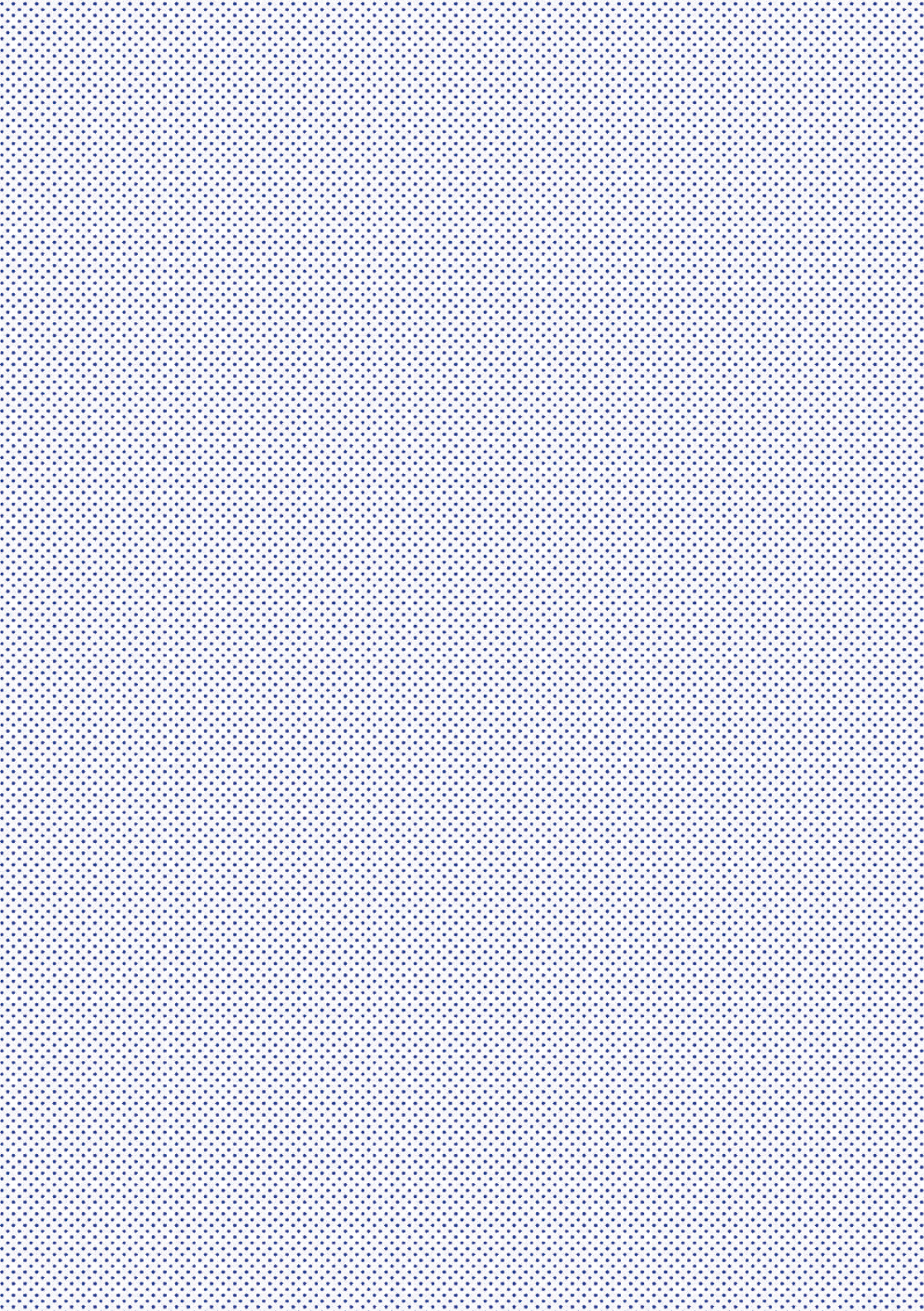
Незважаючи на те, що формати 5-місячної онлайн-програми та 10-денної резиденції у фізичному просторі різко відрізняються один від одного, команда куратор\_ок залишалася на зв'язку та обмінювалась перебігом обох проєктів і питаннями, які виникали в процесі. Крім того, частина команди онлайн-куратор\_ок Валерія Карпань і Марина Марініченко приєдналися до зустрічі митчинь-початківць у Трускавці, щоб запропонувати колективні роздуми про санаторій як прихисток у часи потрясінь. Обговорюючи історичну роль санаторних просторів для кількох поколінь українських мит\_чинь та інтелектуал\_ок, група досліджувала архітектурне втілення концепції колективної охорони здоров'я, як її пропонували владні режими різних часів. Вправа залишила візуальні сліди на тілах і речах художниць, надихаючи на подальший розвиток ідей.













## About Her\* Gaze

*Her\* Gaze* was initiated as an attempt to form ephemeral spaces for feminist communities as sanctuaries in which to collectively reflect on Russia's war against Ukraine. It was borne out of the deep-seated drive to forge and fortify feminist bonds, a need that is distinctly amplified in the harsh context of war. As a multifaceted program with artist exchange and development at its core, *Her\* Gaze* has unfolded in two distinct parts – an offline residency program for young Ukrainian feminist artists titled *We Are Together Because*, as well as an online laboratory for artists from Ukraine, Poland and Germany. While inviting artists of different backgrounds and using different working languages, both branches of *Her\* Gaze* addressed common issues of solidarity and imperialistic pacifism in search for feminist justice and sincere forms of listening. The participating artists attempted to find answers to questions such as: how can feminist artists orient themselves both individually and collectively in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine? How is the violence of war perceived and interpreted from different standpoints? How can feminist artists ethically engage with the stories of victims of war and trauma in ways that encourage transformation on both personal and societal levels?

*We Are Together Because*, a residency program curated by Valeriia Zubatenko, was a rare yet vital opportunity for feminist artists who still reside within Ukraine to gather, exchange and nurture a sense of collectivity. In the summer of 2023, 12 young Ukrainian feminist artists convened for one week in Truskavets in Western Ukraine. The residency took place in a sanatorium, a space used for the treatment and recovery of people with chronic illnesses which has now, like many places in Western Ukraine, partially become a home for internally displaced

persons. Gathering in a site of rest in a time characterized by unrest, the participants collectively reflected upon both their own and others' experience of the war through feminist optics. They sought to find grounds for feminist alliances and also develop strategies for self-care, while being given space to artistically experiment as the program unfolded. With all of the artists still residing in Ukraine, their personal, conflicted feelings of both proximity and distance to the war was a recurring topic of conversation. On the second day of the residency, as the participants and curatorial team were forced to relocate their working space to a bomb shelter due to an imminent nearby Russian attack, the reality of this topic felt anything but abstract or intangible.

Since the focus of the youth residency was on collective dialogue, exchange and artistic development, a public presentation of the artworks developed within the framework of the program was not expected. Nevertheless, with an aura of urgency enveloping the residency both in the direct context of the recent attack and the broader context of the war, the participants made a decisive turn towards immediate, self-organized artistic action. They opened the dividing walls between their section of the sanatorium and presented an impromptu group exhibition which showcased their works-in-progress. This exhibition, borne out of urgency, embodied the ephemeral nature of emotions and the importance of solidarity amidst adversity. Following the intensive and transformative week, the participants were offered online mentoring to sustain the momentum of the residency. In essence, the residency program *We Are Together Because* offered a space for young Ukrainian feminist artists to collectively process their feelings towards the war and understand the potential of their own artistic voices.

Curated by Oliver Dougherty and the curatorial duo *Variable name/Назва змінна* (Maryna Marinchenko and Valerie Karpan),

*Her\* Gaze's* online laboratory program responded to the urgent need for artists from Ukraine, Poland and Germany to unite, collaborate and address the urgent demand for international feminist solidarities as a form of resistance. Across four months, ten artists convened online to shape feminist artistic approaches to storytelling that unearth concealed voices and stories. Throughout the online laboratory program, the participants received input from various activists, filmmakers, researchers and artists that all direct their practices towards feminist justice in the Ukrainian context. This input, along with the exchange and dialogue with one another, has enabled the emergence of strategies for more transformative methods of storytelling.

The starting point of *Her\* Gaze's* online laboratory was a critical perspective on the plethora of imagery and documentation that has emerged online of what has been described as "the most documented war". While such imagery often reproduces the violence of the war and reduces Ukrainians to nameless victims, the online laboratory participants have been guided to find subtle ways of approaching the war that do not risk the retraumatization of viewers nor saturate them with the images of a spectacle. In this way, the Ukrainian feminist stories and people that the participants have engaged with gain nuance, agency and subjectivity.

Beyond the problematics of dominant online imagery, the online laboratory participants also considered how Ukrainian archival institutions and researchers – whether in Ukraine or in exile – have been gathering and recording fragments and experiences of the war as a form of resistance against the invader. Since issues were encountered in accessing unpublished archives, the curatorial team decided to establish closer collaborations with independent researchers who have been diligently collecting oral histories of women\* impacted by war, primarily through interview-based methodologies. Some participants engaged directly with the researchers' interview transcripts,

## About curators

while others looked towards existing podcast archives or even chose to conduct interviews independently. With the significance of preserving feminist wartime perspectives in mind, the participants learnt from and artistically activated the work of researchers in order to ensure that herstories may be archived and not excluded from the collective memory of war.

Even for most Ukrainians still living in Ukraine, the perception and understanding of russia's military aggression cannot be removed from its digital representation on screens. Gathering in a virtual space, the online laboratory both embraced and subverted the digitally mediated sense of experiencing the war. The participants and the curatorial team alike searched for feminist modes of connectivity across devices, despite the risk of poor connection, occupying a temporary space of solidarity, reflection and grief.

While unfolding in parallel, across both branches of *Her\* Gaze*, the participating artists undertook processes of learning and unlearning. The severity and difficulty of this process, and of course the topic itself, should not be underestimated. Collectively engaging with the devastating topic of war has led the participants to vulnerable places. Places where they've had to articulate the pain of witnessing the suffering inflicted by russia on Ukraine. Places where they have doubted the importance of their own voice in contributing to the dialogue on the war. Yet the critical and sensitive nature of *Her\* Gaze* has allowed us to unite in shared vulnerability, fostering empathy to support one another and empowering actions of decolonization and inclusion. From this vulnerable standpoint, we present the sketches, fragments and reflections that comprise *Undercurrents*, representing a process of collective grief from which we salvage hopeful methods of transformation and long for a more empathic world.

Variable Name/Назва змінна is an artistic and curatorial group founded by Ukrainian artists and curators Valeria Karpan and Maryna Marinichenko in 2018. Variable Name works at the intersection of participatory art and non-formal education. The artists are interested in the processes of communication and exchange in the urban environment, multisensory experiences, memory, and commemoration practices. Since 2022, the group has been dealing with the representation of the Ukrainian context in international institutions through public performances, exhibitions, and residencies. Among the significant curatorial projects of the collective was the group exhibition of Ukrainian artists *Out Loud* at Galeria Labirynt (Lublin, Poland), which was intended to reveal the problem of russia's appropriation of Ukrainian culture. Valerie Karpan received a master's degree in cultural studies at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and is currently studying at the doctoral program of contemporary art at the College of Arts University of Coimbra, Portugal. And Maryna Marinichenko is continuing her education at the College of Arts University of Coimbra, Portugal, obtaining a master's degree and is also involved in activities of the Invisible University for Ukraine, academic initiative by the Central European University.

Oliver Dougherty (he/they) is a curator and cultural facilitator who grew up on the unceded lands of the Wathaurong nation in what is now known as Australia, and is currently based in Berlin. In 2020, Dougherty curated the *Futureless* group exhibition at SomoS Art House Berlin which presented the myriad possibilities for queerfeminist futures. In the framework of *Futureless*, Dougherty met Ukrainian artists Maria Kulikovska and Oleg Vinnichenko who invited him to curate a program at their art space *Garage33 Gallery-Shelter* which was set to open physically in Kyiv in 2022. While the dreams of the project could not transpire due to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Dougherty's pre-emptive research trip to Ukraine in 2021 became the catalyst for his support of queerfeminist artists and people displaced by the war. Throughout 2022, Dougherty facilitated an extensive cultural program at the project space SP\*TI in Berlin that provided an important platform to the voices of displaced LGBT+ artists and community members. Within this context, he launched a residency program for LGBT+ artists displaced by Russia's war in Ukraine, supported by Goethe-Institut and Artists at Risk. Oliver Dougherty holds a Master's in Spatial Strategies from Weissensee Academy of Art Berlin.

Valeriia Zubatenko is a Ukrainian independent left-wing artist, researcher and curator. She has spent the last 11 years as an activist, working in the public sector and in contemporary art. She has been published as an independent essayist in a number of Ukrainian publications. She received a degree in philosophy in Kyiv and is currently studying at the Fine Arts program at the LUCA School of Arts in Brussels. She works with such topics as war, violence, social inequality, etc. through a postcolonial and feminist lens.

Sofia Doroshenko is an artist originally from Lutsk. She studied at the Lviv National Academy of Arts at the Department of Sacred Art. After the Revolution of Dignity, she moved to Kyiv and studied at the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture. She was engaged in documentary theater and studied at the contemporary art course "Space of Attention" by Lada Nakonechna and Kateryna Badianova. She works as a costume designer with the TABOR film production company, and since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, she has been volunteering to rebuild houses in Kherson and help the Ukrainian army. In her personal artistic practice, she researches local history, urbanism, street art, and easel graphics. At the same time, she is engaged in the management and organization of cultural and art projects.

Text by Valeriia Zubatenko about the residency for emerging artists program which took place in summer, 2023, in Truskavets city, Ukraine, within the project *Her\* Gaze*.

## WE ARE TOGETHER BECAUSE NO ONE IS UNWANTED

the official part instead of the prologue,  
which I sent on WhatsApp to the SMM manager  
I suspect that this text was never published  
on social media

The residency was organized as a kind of snapshot of how young women artists living in Ukraine witness the war through a feminist lens. The reflections were aligned with the educational component of the residency, which included feminist theory, philosophy, and contemporary art theory. *We Are Together Because* residency focused on the search for an answer to what makes solidarity possible and what new types of connections began to unite us during the full-scale invasion.

We paid particular attention to the local context of Truskavets and residents of the Vesna Sanatorium where we lived, incorporating our different artistic practices into the venue instead of instrumentalizing it. Despite the distinct backgrounds of the participants, we managed not only to be and work together using ethical feminist approaches but also to become a real situational collective and a resource for each other. For example, some participants initiated collaborative work with others for the first time, while others found external support in accepting

and affirming themselves as artists. This dynamic only shows how necessary spaces of collective interaction are, especially in difficult times.

### introductory word

that's the way it was. but it was different too. to put it in the context, I will say that I was invited to curate this project before its final format was approved. the initial idea seemed dubious to me: two separate parts of one project, namely an online program for serious artists and an offline teenage art camp, which should reflect on women's experience of war. independent curatorial figures responsible for each part, unrelated to the other. this was the "given" offered by the project managers.

as a feminist artist and theorist, I first of all wanted to break the binary oppositions like "adult/child," "professional/amateur artist," "female experience/???" a feminist project cannot be implemented on non-feminist foundations. feminism in the practice of cultural projects is not the mere presence of "female" themes, it's the "de-masculinization" of hierarchical structures within the functioning of those projects. I entered the project with this approach (and I'm leaving it even more convinced in its relevance). later, I was joined by the curatorial team of the online part, with whom we share common values and approaches to work. together we tried to modify the project.

despite the transformation of the proposed "art camp" format into "residency for young artists," the pervasive inferiority spirit of the "art camp" was present not only at the level of the title. until the last month of the project, I had to correct the project manager during working calls: **it's a "residency," not "art camp."** I had to prove the significance by speaking an established language that institutions understand, while at the same time not accepting the ontological model described by this language. but our participants decided to go the other way.

## looking for signs

the stairs down led to the bomb shelter of the Vesna Hotel. sirens were blaring. in the following days we would go down to this bomb shelter many times because it was exactly during our residency in Truskavets that the sirens went off. the first one went off at about 4 am. "wake up, it's war!" it was just like the first day of the full-scale invasion. i looked at our girls sitting in a circle and thought: this is what it means to be an artist during the war. i want the German office to see this, i want the public in Berlin to see this. it breaks my heart: the hell with art! it all feels like a stupid joke: this is the kind of performance art we have here, this is our flying circus. one of the girls puts her head on the shoulder of the other. we are together.

## we invite you to the open day

one of the tasks of the residency was to create a self-curated collective pop-up exhibition. our participants decided to do the following: they opened our workspace, which hotel guests were already trying to look into from time to time, as it was right across from the dining room. to make people feel comfortable entering this space, posters were hung around the hotel in the same manner as other hotel announcements. there was no pretense of high serious contemporary art. art should not be for the sake of art, but for the sake of building mutually reinforcing social relationships. a sincere gesture does not care whether it finds a favorable response by fitting into a generally accepted categorical apparatus.

the art event was presented as an "open day" in the studio of young female artists. the participants talked to everyone and told them what was going on behind closed doors, and offered to use the space for their own creative endeavors. inviting people from the outside showed that a space like the one we created together is needed not only by those

who were able to fill out the application form "correctly." art during the war has an enhanced social function and can be instrumentalized, in particular, for the needs of the here and now, and the walls of galleries are a completely different story

**we worked with in the Gunpowder Tower in Lviv during our collective exhibition 'There are no redundant'**



The photo of a house destroyed by russian army in Irpin, Ukraine. From performance by Oleksandra Kokhan

These photographs document a workshop that was developed as part of the residency program for emerging artists *We Are Together Because* in Truskavets, Western Ukraine in summer 2023.

Fostering communities across physical and digital distances, the curators of *Her\* Gaze* envisioned possibilities of bridging connections between the on- and offline programs.

Even though the formats of a 5-month long online program and an intensive in-person 10 day residency differ dramatically to one another, the extended curatorial team shared the progress and challenges of both projects as *Her\* Gaze* unfolded. Moreover, part of the online curating team, Valerie Karpan and Maryna Marinichenko, joined the emerging artists' gathering in Truskavets to offer collective reflection on the sanatorium as a shelter in times of unrest. Discussing the historical role of sanatorium spaces for several generations of Ukrainian artists and intellectuals, the group was led to consider the architectural embodiment of the concept of collective healthcare as it has been proposed by the power regimes of different times. The exercise left visual traces on the artists' bodies and belongings, inspiring further development of their ideas.



