

# VOLOSHYN GALLERY

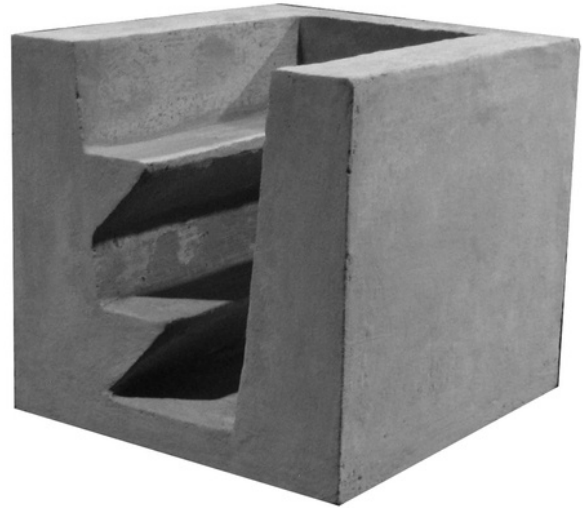
## EXPO CHICAGO

APRIL 13-16, 2023

Booth 281

MYKOLA RIDNYI

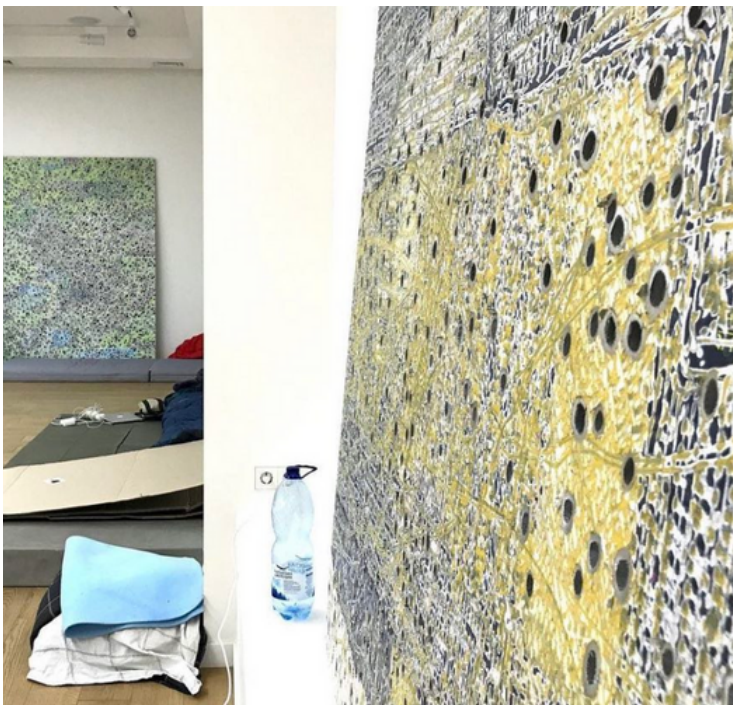
OLEKSIY SAI



**Voloshyn Gallery** presents a project by **Mykola Ridnyi** and **Oleksiy Sai** at **EXPO CHICAGO**.

Refuges. Bomb shelters. We overlook them in usual, peaceful times, just as we overlook the notion of war until danger becomes clearly perceptible. Every Ukrainian town and city has bomb shelters. During the Cold War, the USSR and U.S. propaganda brought about nuclear anxiety and the cult of “homeland protection.” After Ukraine gained its independence, many Soviet-built shelters were abandoned and closed off; others were repurposed as storage spaces, gyms, second-hand stores, and whatnot. The ***Shelter*** series by **Mykola Rindyi**, created in 2012-2013 and presenting bomb shelters as both a relic and a phenomenon, has acquired a new meaning in 2014, after the Russian invasion of the east of Ukraine, and especially in 2022, with Russia’s full-scale aggression. Ridnyi’s project originated during the artist’s high school years, when he had civil defense classes held in an actual bomb shelter in the school basement. Concrete sculptures making up the series are made after models of bomb shelters. According to the author, this work was a response to feelings that were floating in the air shortly before the war broke out.

This investigation of environments, territories and their destinies through amalgamation of personal experience and societal reality finds its continuation in the **Bombed** series by **Oleksiy Sai**. It comprises bird's-eye-view images of landscapes of the east of Ukraine pockmarked by explosion craters left by the war. Using a disc grinder, drill, and abrasives, the artist almost completely ruins the surfaces of some of his previous works from different series, of different years and sizes, transforming them into textured maps of destruction. Gradually losing their initial sharpness, they become nearly abstract while still remaining clearly meaningful. This series was started back in 2014 as the author's reaction to then current events unfolding in the country. Sai viewed working on it as a kind of therapy that would help keep himself busy and convey at least a part of harsh emotions triggered by the circumstances to the material through the exhausting monotony of the activity. Not intending to literally imprint his pain or anxiety, the artist was rather trying to "tune in to the surrounding reality" through the meditative and masochistic process of simultaneous creation and destruction. By 2018, the works accumulated into a series. Holes in them gradually assemble, producing a massive pattern that conceals the initial images.



*"I was supposed to open an exhibition at the Voloshyn Gallery on February 24th. It was a series of works started in the winter of 2014, in which I destroyed my paintings, turning them into kind of landscapes scarred by traces of bombings. We were ready to open, but then the gallery had to become our bomb shelter. We had been staying there with other artists and families during the first few days of the invasion."*

*Oleksiy Sai for Zaborona Media*

*“In his documentary *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*, filmmaker Harun Farocki examined the “blind spots” in the interpretation of aerial photos taken during an American bombing of a German plant in 1944. It was not until the 1970s that those were recognized by CIA analytics as one of the first photographic proofs of existence of the Auschwitz concentration camp. Here, landscape and its relief appear as witnesses and participants in a historical proceeding, with every pothole, pit or bump being an evidence and a component of memory. In Sai’s project, landscape plays a similar role. However, he does more than just capture the tangible destruction and intangible anxiety and pain (both private and collective) in the materiality of perforated metal. The artist symbolically links his oeuvre to a specific territory and its fate; the surface of his works, to mutilated ground. This gesture unites the personal and the common, blurring the limits, and landscape underlies this unity. The sight of it as if stretched down below, scaled, creates the distance one lacks so badly when it comes to the current events, which are impossible to disengage from.”*

*Natalia Matsenko*

The Bombed series is combined with an earlier large-scale series called **Excel-Art**, in which Oleksiy Sai tries to find an adequate visual language to describe contemporary processes and creates a series of works in the program that performs calculations - Microsoft Excel. Millions of office workers perform their jobs without facing reality, and the data he uses as elements of visual language can be easily understood by a person of corporate culture - perhaps the youngest of the clearly defined cultures of humanity. Both series, being side by side, create an extraordinary chemistry. These are two parallel worlds that, however, are connected to each other by a certain fatality, ruthlessness, and the principle of optical mixing.

This heavy and unsettling dialogue concludes Oleksiy Sai's **News** series of 2022. The artist's goal is not to convey information about events, but to convey a physical sensation, something that the body and mind remember, to convey the physical and emotional impact of a massive, inhuman war that is truly terrifying. In his works, the emotional aftermath of consuming news is depicted as a column of black smoke that rapidly tries to fill every millimeter of clean space. Oleksiy delves into the study of the change in the non-material environment after the influence of a stimulus such as information, and how it is transformed under the pressure of certain stressors.

## **About Mykola Ridnyi**

Mykola Ridnyi is an artist, film director, curator, and writer. In 2005, he co-founded the SOSka art group and the homonymous gallery-laboratory situated in Ukraine's Kharkiv. His works were shown in the Ukrainian pavilion at the 2013 and 2015 Venice Biennale. They were also included in the 2015 Biennale's central project, entitled All the World's Futures.

Ridnyi's pieces are in the permanent collections of the Pinakothek de Moderne (Munich, Germany), Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (Berlin, Germany), Ludwig Museum (Budapest, Hungary), Museum of Modern Art Warsaw (Warsaw, Poland), and Arsenal City Gallery (Bialystok, Poland). His 2019 work Lost Baggage, created for the 12th Kaunas Biennial, is a part of the permanent exhibition of the Ninth Fort Holocaust Memorial museum

His works have been shown throughout Europe in personal exhibitions at the Voloshyn Gallery (Kyiv, Ukraine), Labirynt City Gallery (Lublin, Poland), Blockhaus DY10 (Nantes, France), and Edel Assanti (London, UK), to name a few. He also participated in collective exhibitions including those held in the Kyiv pavilion at the Tbilisi Architecture Biennial, 12th Kaunas Biennial (Kaunas, Lithuania), Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin, Germany), and PinchukArtCentre (Kyiv, Ukraine), as well as in film festivals, namely 11th Odesa International Film Festival and 49th Molodist Kyiv International Film Festival.

## **About Oleksiy Sai**

Oleksiy Sai was born in 1975 in Kyiv, where he still lives and works. In 1993, he graduated from the Graphic Design Department of Kyiv Art and Industry College, and in 2001, from the Easel Painting Department of the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture. That same year, Sai stepped into the contemporary art scene. Known as the founder of Excel Art, he often uses in his practice corporate tools originally intended as a means of communication rather than artistic media. He also creates installations, objets d'art, digital art, and graphics. In 2009, he was nominated for the PinchukArtCentre Prize. Oleksiy Sai participated in numerous collective and personal projects both in Ukraine and abroad. His works have been displayed at the Black Square Gallery (Miami, USA), Saatchi Gallery (London, UK), Bunsen Goertz Gallery (Nuremberg, Germany); they are included in the collections of auction houses, such as Philips de Pury, ArtCurial, as well as in private collections of Western and Eastern Europe.

### **About Voloshyn Gallery**

Founded in October 2016 by Max and Julia Voloshyn, Voloshyn Gallery specializes in contemporary art. It showcases a broad range of media in contemporary art, hosting solo and group exhibitions and participating in leading contemporary art fairs. Voloshyn Gallery is a member of The New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA).

Voloshyn Gallery participates in leading contemporary art fairs. Over the course of the last two years, the gallery has participated in The Armory Show, ARCOmadrid, Liste Basel, Art Cologne, Vienna Contemporary, Dallas Art Fair, Nada Miami, Untitled Art, Art Athina, Expo Chicago etc. Zhanna Kadyrova's solo presentation from Voloshyn Gallery was awarded the Pulse Prize (2018) at the Pulse Art Fair. The project was also noted by the curators of the Perez Art Museum Miami.

### **About EXPO CHICAGO**

EXPO CHICAGO, The International Exposition of Contemporary & Modern Art, features leading international galleries alongside the highest quality platform for contemporary art and culture. In 2023, EXPO CHICAGO will host 170 leading international exhibitors at Navy Pier's Festival Hall. Since its inception, EXPO CHICAGO has remained dedicated to supporting local, regional, and international arts communities, with strong regional support throughout the Greater Midwest, both US coasts, and maintained a growing international commitment from Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

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