



Nikita Kadan, Pogrom, 145x157x2,5 cm, charcoal on paper, 2016

**Voloshyn Gallery at  
VIENNA CONTEMPORARY 2023**

**NIKITA KADAN  
MYKOLA RIDNYI  
VLADA RALKO**

September 7 - 10, 2023  
Kursalon Vienna  
Johannesgasse 33, 1010 Vienna, Austria

Voloshyn Gallery proudly presents a group project by Nikita Kadan, Mykola Ridnyi and Vlada Ralko at [viennacontemporary2023](http://viennacontemporary2023.com).

In the context of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, the country's society grows increasingly aware of the notions of decolonization and post-colonialism. This calls for a thorough inquiry into the effect the dominating presence of the Soviet Union and, further, Russian Federation has had on Ukraine. This legacy has left its mark on the collective consciousness, causing much trauma due to misconceptions and manipulative use of information, which have been the key tools of the colonization policy.

Works included in the display explore intricacies of collective stories, manipulation of public opinion and fragile interplay of private narratives and political reality. Using graphics, film, photography and sculpture, the artists try to encourage critical reflection as to the way the society produces reality, discovering blind spots and counteracting media propaganda and violence in the process.

**Mykola Ridnyi's** part of the project comprises two interconnected series of works. In the first of those, entitled *Blind Spot* (started in 2015 and ongoing), the artist reflects upon the perception of war through the prism of ophthalmology, the science of vision. The presence of blind spot on the human eye retina only manifests when people start losing vision; this calls to mind the philosopher Brian Massumi's thoughts on the impact of the invisible. Recreating the visual effects associated with the development of scotoma, Ridnyi compares those with found images of war-affected areas in the east of Ukraine. The artist emphasizes the parallel between medical conditions causing disruption of vision and the effect that media propaganda has on people's ability to think critically about social and political reality in times of war.

In another work, which is a part of the 2013 series *Water Wears Away the Stone*, Ridnyi explores the topic of false beliefs nurtured by propaganda and the ways those affect personal stories of average people. He also examines political systems that shape our everyday lives. This project comprises a series of sculptures, as well as a video entitled *Dima*. The video is an interview with a former police officer, the eponymous Dima, who had retired from the service to become a stonecutter, disillusioned with corruption and travesty of justice ruling the day in the Ukrainian police of the time. Dima's talk is interspersed with

scenes from old Soviet cartoons. This polished world of socialist animation, the backdrop against which people used to grow up in the USSR, highlights the yawning gap between the ideal and the real. Ridnyi tasked Dima with carving a pair of police boots out of stone to get a sculpture resembling a Soviet monument.

The installation comprising the video and Dima's carved stone shoes was first displayed at the exhibition of PinchukArtCentre Prize nominees. It has been created the same year the Revolution of Dignity started, as if in anticipation of the protests. By mixing documentary depictions of stonecutting routine with those showing the process of creation of the Soviet-style sculpture of police boots, Ridnyi explores the topics of idealism, justice and social (dis-)order.

Engaged in the dialogue with these works are **Nikita Kadan's** graphic pieces from the *Pogrom* series. Based on photographic evidence of the 1941 Lviv Pogrom and other historical atrocities, it reflects upon manipulation of photos depicting crimes and the way their interpretation may be altered by the manner they are presented to the viewer, particularly by captions attached to them. The works are simple non-detailed Expressionist-style sketches. They seem incomplete, as if holding something back, making the events of the past genocide look universal, turning it into just an episode in the long history of similar incidents. The artist emphasizes that while photos documenting violence and its victims can indeed serve as evidence, they may also be used for the purposes of propaganda.

In the 2023 graphics series entitled *Crater*, Kadan continues his exploration of the topic of genocide, examining the implications of a renewed discussion around a genocide that happened in the past against the backdrop of the ongoing atrocities. In the text accompanying the first display of this work, the artist talks about Russia's shelling of the site of Babyn Yar massacre and of the Jewish cemetery in the Ukrainian town of Hlukhiv. He says that missile craters pockmarking graveyards and playgrounds indicate the society's complete immersion into history. The "eternal present" is no longer possible, as both the past and the future are noticeably felt in the current moment. For Kadan, this situation is similar to that one finds at the battlefield, where two different time planes collide.

In her 2013 work *Rubber Circle*, **Vlada Ralko** investigates collective consciousness and its impact on personal experiences. Her practice has been described as an art of complicating and obscuring the self-evident, a sort of a dim glass allowing to see things that are usually invisible. For instance, the Soviet times gave rise to a notion of a woman as a creature inherently unfit for certain kinds of work, thus only being able to perform them at the cost of losing her "feminine essence". This notion was collectively accepted as a mere fact of reality.

Ideologically, Soviet person was to be seen as the master of nature, which resulted in a very particular view of women's role in the world, in turn making many Soviet women reject their femininity as something unworthy. It has to be noted that efforts to subjugate women were essentially due to societal self-censorship; they were a product of twisted conscience rather than some external impact.

In this piece, Ralko explores the rise of the "tough woman" created by the Soviet art and society. The artist tries to grasp the connection between the cultural and the natural through the prism of femininity. Her work examines the effect sociocultural norms and stereotypes have had on perception and representation of female identity on a personal level.

## **About Mykola Ridnyi**

Mykola Ridnyi (b. 1985 in Kharkiv) is a Kyiv-based artist (Ukraine) who works across various media, ranging from early collective actions in public spaces to the creation of site-specific installations. Photography and moving images are currently the primary focus of his practice. In recent films and images, he experiments with nonlinear montage and collages combining documentary and fiction elements. His method of reflecting on social and political reality draws on the contrast between the fragility and resilience of individual stories and collective histories.

Since 2005, he has been a founding member of the SOSka group, an art collective based in Kharkiv. In the same year, he co-founded the SOSka gallery-lab, an artist-run space in Kharkiv. Under Ridnyi's leadership, the gallery-lab played a pivotal role in developing the artistic scene in the region before its closure in 2012. Starting with his curatorial project "Armed and Dangerous" (2017-2021), Ridnyi began developing a platform for collaboration between Ukrainian moving image artists and filmmakers. In 2022, he curated several screening programs of Ukrainian film and video art at MAXXI Rome, Museum Folkwang Essen, and the National Gallery in Sofia.

Mykola Ridnyi has been featured in group and solo exhibitions at venues such as Secession in Vienna (AT), Albertinum in Dresden (DE), Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich (DE), and the Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington (VA, US), among others. Ridnyi was also part of the group exhibitions "All the World's Futures" at the 56th Venice Biennale for Contemporary Art and "Hope!" at the Pavilion of Ukraine during the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia in Venice, Italy. Mykola Ridnyi's works are included in public collections, such as the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Ludwig Museum Budapest, Warsaw Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Art in Lodz, and Arsenal City Gallery in Białystok.

## **About Nikita Kadan**

Nikita Kadan (b. 1982 in Kyiv, Ukraine) works with painting, graphics, and installation, often collaborating interdisciplinary with architects, sociologists, and human rights activists. He is a member of the artist group R.E.P. (Revolutionary Experimental Space) and a founding member of Hudrada (Artistic Committee), a curatorial and activist collective.

Nikita Kadan has recently been featured in important solo and group exhibitions, including "Artists in Time of War" at Castello di Rivoli (Turin, Italy), "Skin and Shell" at the Lewben Foundation in Vilnius (Lithuania), and "The Fire and the Ashes" at the Museum Sztuki in 2023. In 2021, the Pinchuk Art Centre in Kyiv (Ukraine) devoted a major solo exhibition to him, following the initiative of MUMOK (Vienna, AT), which held his first institutional and international solo exhibition in 2019. Nikita Kadan was the winner of the Pinchuk Art Centre Prize in 2011 and the recipient of the Special Prize of the Future Generation Art Prize in 2014. He also participated in the Ukrainian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2015 and the parallel program of the 59th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2022.

Nikita Kadan's works are included in public collections, such as Centre Pompidou in Paris, Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, M HKA – Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, mumok (Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien), National Art Museum of Ukraine in Kyiv, Arsenal Gallery in Białystok, Military History Museum in Dresden, The Art Collection Telekom, The Kingdom of Belgium, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, FRAC Bretagne, and Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prato.

## **About Vlada Ralko**

Vlada Ralko (b. 1969 in Kyiv, Ukraine) works with painting, graphics, installation, and creates art books. In 1994, she graduated from the painting department of the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture in Kyiv. Ralko is the recipient of the All-Ukrainian Triennial of Painting Award (2001) and a CCN Graz Scholarship (2007). She is also the winner of the He for She: Women In Arts award (2019). In her works, the artist often addresses questions of identity within relevant social and political contexts, delving into the existential depths of pain and suffering within a collective body. Her brushwork is emotional, robust, and contrastive, while her palette is saturated.

Vlada Ralko has had solo and group exhibitions, including "Kaleidoscope of (Hi)stories. Ukrainian Art 1912-2023" at Albertinum, Dresden (DE); "Vlada Ralko & Volodymyr Budnikov: Questioning the Visible" at Galeria Arsenal, Bialystok (PL); "Women at War" at Fridman Gallery in collaboration with Voloshyn Gallery, New York (USA); "Ukraine: Short Stories: Contemporary artists from Ukraine" at MAXXI National Museum of 21st Century Arts, Rome (IT); "The phantom of liberty. Version" at Galeria Arsenal, Bialystok (PL), and others.

## **About Voloshyn Gallery**

Established in October 2016 by Max and Julia Voloshyn, Voloshyn Gallery specializes in contemporary art. It exhibits a broad range of works in a variety of media, hosting solo and group exhibitions and taking part in leading contemporary art fairs. Over the course of the last two years, the gallery has participated in The Armory Show, Liste Basel, ARCOMadrid, Art Brussels, Art Cologne, Enter Art Fair, viennacontemporary, Dallas Art Fair, NADA Miami, Untitled Art, Art Athina, EXPO Chicago etc. Voloshyn Gallery is a member of the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA).

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