

Voloshyn Gallery at ARCOmadrid 2023

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IFEMA MADRID

Avda. del Partenón 5, Madrid



*Nikita Kadan, from the series Broken Pole, 2020.
Courtesy the artist and Voloshyn Gallery*

Voloshyn Gallery, the first ever Ukrainian gallery to participate in ARCOmadrid, is pleased to present a duo project by Ukrainian artists Nikita Kadan and Mykola Ridnyi. This project is a gloomy exploration of the ongoing war in Ukraine. The artists inquire into some historical events that preceded it, at the same time speaking of phenomena outside of its scope. In their works, they link the artistic avant-garde of the 1920s and the establishment of ideologized Soviet culture in the 1960-70s to the current war.

Nikita Kadan and Mykola Ridnyi are among the most prominent members of Ukraine's art scene. Both artists have twice participated in the Venice Biennale. Nikita Kadan's works have been displayed at the art institutions like Castello di Rivoli (Rivoli), M HKA (Antwerp), mumok (Vienna), and at the European Parliament. They are included in renowned public collections such as those of Pinakothek der Moderne (Munich), M HKA (Antwerp), mumok (Vienna), Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci (Prato), and Centre Pompidou (Paris). Mykola Ridnyi's works have been shown at numerous galleries both in Ukraine and abroad, including Pinakothek der Moderne (Munich), daad galerie (Berlin), Transmediale (Berlin), Center for Art and Media (Karlsruhe), Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst (Leipzig), Museum of Modern Art (Warsaw), and Bonniers konsthall (Stockholm). He has won a number of fellowships, including those offered by the Berlin Academy of Arts, Iaspis (Stockholm), and Gaude Polonia (Krakow).

The project includes both recent works documenting the full-scale war and earlier pieces that examine geopolitical events preceding Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014. The artists offer a deep analysis of the meaning, background, and effects of the war.

In his artistic practice, Nikita Kadan consistently explores the themes of conscious personal attitude towards politics and historical responsibility. He shifts an artist's role from mere esthetic contemplation to initiation of qualitative social change. At ARCOMadrid, Nikita Kadan will present his new works *Composition with Three Legs (after Henryk Streng / Marek Włodarski)*, *Shadow on the Ground*, as well as the *Repeating Speech* series. All of these were created after the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The artist started working on them on February 24, 2022 in Voloshyn Gallery, where he had been staying for some time hiding from missile attacks.

The gallery is located in Kyiv's cultural and historical center, on Tereshchenkivska Street, in a historical building formerly owned by a renowned entrepreneur and philanthropist N.A. Tereshchenko. It is a six-story edifice with a semi-basement and a basement. During World War II, the semi-basement has been used as a bomb shelter. When the current invasion broke out, Voloshyn Gallery sheltered in the building its staff and several artists, including Nikita Kadan.



Kyiv, Tereshchenkivska Str. 13

Here, on the first day of the full-scale war, he started working on his new project. During the days that followed, switching between organizing projects with his peers and taking to the press, the artist began his series of eloquent slogans against Russia's assault entitled *Repeating Speech*.



Nikita Kadan's sleeping place at Voloshyn Gallery. Photo by Anna Kopylova, courtesy Voloshyn Gallery

Among other works, it includes a banner reading "FUCK WAR", which initially hung on the facade of the Secession gallery in Vienna. It is one of Kadan's many viral gestures aimed at denouncing the war. At that same time, he began working on a series of drawings titled *The Shadow on the Ground*. Each of those depicts plowed black soil with a human figure, a shadowy silhouette overlapping it. Soil absorbs bodies, and everything left behind is a shadow on its surface. It cannot be hidden or erased. The motif of a plowed black field refers to hundreds of photos showing corpses partly covered by soil, explosion craters produced

by missiles and bombs, and mass graves hurriedly dug on the outskirts of cities and villages. Images of these kinds gained wide circulation in social and mass media during the war period. Another motif present in the drawings is that of the “rich Ukrainian soil”, central for both colonial and nationalist narratives about Ukraine’s “global mission”.

Along with these pieces, Voloshyn Gallery presents Kadan’s earlier works from the *Broken Pole* series. In it, the artist examines the avant-garde legacy (particularly the works by the artist Vasyl Yermilov), reimagining it with a contemporary flair. The series brings together tar-covered metal shields and silkscreen prints of photographs of buildings destroyed during the hostilities in Donbas after 2014.



Nikita Kadan, from the series *The Shadow on the Ground*, 2022. Courtesy the artist and Voloshyn Gallery

“These are photos I took in 2015 and photos of lost avant-garde works by Vasyl Yermilov. This is, in fact, a black hole that sucks up history of art, history in general, and modernity,” Nikita Kadan says.

Today, Donbas has become a place where history is being replaced with ideological myth-making and military propaganda. This area is a place of rich historical memory. It is associated with the workers’ revolutionary movement in the early 20th century. It was also the local center of two stages of industrial modernization: the pre-revolutionary, characterized by the presence of European capital and cheap local labor under police supervision in the Russian Empire, and the post-revolutionary, i.e. the 30s wave of early Soviet labor enthusiasm and Stalinist repressive coercion. Moreover, it holds recollections of the development of social infrastructure and industry after the World War II and their collapse during the post-Soviet period.



Mykola Ridnyi and evacuated works, Kyiv, April, 2022. Photo by Anna Kopylova, courtesy Voloshyn Gallery

Engaged in a dialogue with Kadan’s works is the series of minimalistic yet eloquent sculptures by Mykola Ridnyi entitled *More Flags*, evacuated from Kharkiv in the spring of last year.

Ridnyi works across different media ranging from early collective actions in public space to the amalgam of site-specific installations, sculpture, photography, and moving images. This combination constitutes the current focus of his practice. In a number of works created within the last several years, Ridnyi explores the theme of vision in the context of reality affected by political catastrophes and war. How do we talk about violence without reproducing it? How do we stay compassionate amidst a flow of sensational news and shocking content?

The sculptures included in the series reproduce various shapes of government buildings, marketplaces, apartment blocks, and transport facilities. All of them share a common detail, namely the presence of a flag. This series was initially meant as an inquiry into the symbolic purpose of flags as ideological markers of territory. In times of war, a flag assumes ambivalent meanings ranging from a symbol of solidarity, national identification, and safety to that of occupation and direct threat. Seen from the military perspective, facilities marked with a flag are often potential targets. Black paint covering the sculptures erases any linkage to the original architectural context and provokes associations with burned city landscapes. Forms shaped in a rough expressionist manner symbolize damages that Ukraine's urban infrastructure suffered due to the Russian attacks.



*Mykola Ridnyi, from the series More Flags, 2015.
Courtesy the artist and Voloshyn Gallery*

About ARCOmadrid

ARCOmadrid is Spain's International Contemporary Art Fair, emerging as one of the main contemporary art market platforms since its foundation. In 2023, it celebrated its 42nd edition with the Mediterranean at its core. The program, Mediterranean: A Round Sea, curated by Marina Fokidis with the advice of Bouchra Khalili, Hila Peleg, and Pedro G. Romero, will hinge on the art scenes of the countries surrounding this sea, from north to south and coast to coast. ARCOmadrid 2023 will be held on February 22-26 in halls 7 and 9 of IFEMA MADRID.

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, Art Cologne, Enter Art Fair, Liste Basel, 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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