

VOLOSHYN GALLERY

OLEKSIY SAI EXHIBITION

August 17th - October 8th, 2023
Tereshchenkivska Str. 13, Kyiv, Ukraine, 01004



Installation view of Oleksiy Sai Exhibition at Voloshyn Gallery, Kyiv, 24.02.2022. Photo: Oleksiy Sai

Voloshyn Gallery is pleased to present *Exhibition*, a solo show by Oleksiy Sai. Curated by Natalia Matsenko. The exhibition will run from August 17th to October 8th, 2023.

"This exhibition was scheduled to open on February 24, 2022. A week before the date, its author and I were exchanging anxiety-ridden jokes about a possible day of the invasion and had to reschedule a planned meeting due to COVID-19.

In a way, the exhibition has indeed opened on time, though only for a very limited circle of viewers, that is, for the artist, his family, and some of his friends and peers who have been using the place as a bomb shelter. The works, arranged into a display in the gallery in the historical center of Kyiv, have both witnessed the moment when an eight-year-long simmering conflict turned into a full-scale war and participated in it.

This time, the exhibition finally opens for public. It is true that our life has changed drastically in the last seventeen months. However, this has little to do with the relevance of the *Bombed* series: if anything, the reality have come even closer to what is shown in these works. Hence, I would like to come out with the following text written in February 2022:

"*Bombed* series unites bird's-eye views of Eastern Ukrainian landscapes pockmarked by bomb craters left by the war. Sai obliterates the surfaces of his earlier works almost completely with disk grinders, drills and abrasive materials, transforming them into tactile maps of ruination. Gradually losing the original legible images, the works become almost abstract while remaining filled with wholly concrete meanings.

The artist began working on the series back in 2015 as a response to the current events in the country.

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Physically tasking, monotonous actions served as therapy of a kind, helping the artist to keep his hands and mind occupied and express through his material at least a part of the complicated emotions sparked by the current events. Without aiming to provide a straightforward document of his anxiety and pain, the artist sought to “be on the same wavelength with his environment” by going through the meditative and masochistic process of simultaneous creation and destruction.

Having started out with individual works and individual drill holes, he kept increasing the number of both. Works of various series, dates and formats were subjected to abrasive action. By 2018, he had accumulated a whole series' worth of such works. Single drill holes have gradually transformed into a sweeping abstract ornament rendering the original image unrecognizable.

One of the latest works, created right before the exhibition, has approximately 7,000 holes. The monotonous perforation motive without a single dominant note leaves the viewer without a visual and emotional support frame. The series will continue as long as shelling continues, and as long as the media keeps providing information. Automatic mechanical actions appear as both a therapeutic instrument and a metaphor for the situation where reason is usually of little help.

In his Images of the world and the inscription of war, the documentary filmmaker Harun Farocki focused on the “blind spots” in interpretations of aerial photographs created during the US bombing of a German factory in 1944. It wasn't until the 1970s that a CIA analysis of WW II archives discovered that these photographs were among the earliest evidence of the existence of Auschwitz: they just were not recognized as such at the time. The landscape and its relief appeared as witnesses to and participants in the historic process where each pothole, groove or protrusion were clues or elements of memory. The function of landscapes in Sai's project is somewhat similar.

The artist emphasizes the symbolic link between his works and the concrete territory and its fate, between the surface of his works and the mutilated earth surface. This gesture blurs the boundaries between the individual and the collective, and landscape provides foundations for this union. The bird's-eye view in scale provides the distance we so desperately need when it comes to the current events that we cannot block out”.

text by Natalia Matsenko

The exhibition has been covered by a number of publications, with editorials in the likes of [The New York Times](#), [Miami Herald](#), [W Magazine](#), [NPR](#), and [Glass Magazine](#) telling the world about the events taking place in Ukraine.

Opening reception: August 17, 6–8pm

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About Oleksiy Sai

Oleksiy Sai (b. 1975, Kyiv, Ukraine) is the artist who uses different media, but is mostly known for his personal invention – the praxis of Exel-Art. Sai has been working with Excel software as a visual language resource since 2004. Besides the fact that Sai sees the means of Excel as the most appropriate mode of addressing the office life realities, the artist's choice to embrace the software developed to process large corpuses of data is also an attempt to demystify art practice as such.

He graduated from the Kyiv College of Arts and Industries with a degree in graphic design in 1993, and from the Department of Easel Graphic Art at the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture in 2001. Sai showed in the PinchukArtCentre Prize (2009), the nationwide contemporary art prize for young Ukrainian artists.

Oleksiy Sai took part in many group and solo exhibitions in Ukraine and abroad. Recent group exhibitions include: A Letter from the Front – Лист з фронту at Haus der Kunst (DE); Hi-Resolution: Ukrainian Culture and Contemporary Art Now!, The James Gallery, NYC, US; She Asked, I Followed. Her Name Is After, Fredric Snitzer Gallery, Miami, FL, (US); Worth Fighting For at PinchukArtCentre, Cologne (DE); Permanent Revolution, Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary; MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo in Rome (IT). His work forms part of collections both public and private, including Ludwig Museum in Budapest, (HU), Museum of Odesa Modern Art (UA). Sai's works have been covered and reviewed by The New York Times, The Guardian 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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