

SOFIIA YESAKOVA

Born in Kyiv / UA (1998)
Lives and works in Berlin / DE

‡ **Frontviews member / curatorial board**

EDUCATION

2016 — 2021 Master of Fine Arts. National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, Kyiv, UA (NAFAA).
Studied on department of monumental painting named after Professor Mykola Storozhenko

SOLO-| DUO EXHIBITIONS

>upc 2025: “Black wall”, Umbrella, Nørre Nebel, DNK
>upc 2025: “Caesura”, spazio DISPLAY, Parma, IT
>upc 2024: “Ugly scenes, nuances”, Super Bien, Berlin, DE
2024 — “Recollecting the emptiness”, Prima Kunst e. V., Kiel, DE
2024 — “People in Paradise will enjoy the spectacle of hell's torment”, Antwerp art box, Antwerp, BEL
2022 — “RAUSCHEN”, Kunstraum R52L, Berlin, DE
2022 — “Cargo 200. HAUNT Table #6”, frontviews at HAUNT gallery, Berlin, DE
2022 — “Heteronomy of freedom. Window Project/Fenster project”, Prenzlauer studio, Berlin, DE
2022 — “Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces”, Showroom at Leibnizstraße 57, Berlin, DE

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

>upc 11.04.2025: “There is Hope”, frontviews at HAUNT gallery, Berlin, DE
>upc 20.04.2025: “Moin, Jean Gabin”, Area 35 Art Gallery, Milan, IT
2024 — “Fatmah”, Contemporary Cluster, Rome, IT
2024 — “After the dust settles”, TSA GVL, Atlanta, USA
2024 — “Analysis of Anger”, Zentrale für Kunst, Werkschauhalle Spinnerei, Leipzig, DE
2024 — “I only work with lost and found”, Kreuzberg Pavillon/Bethanien, Berlin, DE
2024 — “Spanning Delta – A Bridge to Transformation”, PAKD gallery, Berlin, DE
2024 — “Fight or flight”, Adlerhalle, Berlin, DE
2024 — “The inner Insularity of Utopianism”, Untergeschoss der Pandora gallery, Berlin, DE
2024 — “A promise of tomorrow”, frontviews at HAUNT, Berlin, DE
2024 — “Traces of Timelessness”, Künstlerhaus Sootböern, Hamburg, DE
2024 — “Memories we have forgotten”, The Address Gallery, Brescia, IT
2023 — “Round Trip Fluidum, 2”, Fabbrica del Vapore, Milan, IT
2023 — “When the firebird flies”, Kunstverein Meissen e. V., Meissen, DE
2023 — “Polifonija”, ZIRKA Space, München, DE
2023 — “Visual Dominance”, AS/EM space, Leipzig, DE
2023 — “Homoöstase”, FRAPPANT gallery, Hamburg, DE
2023 — “MoNo”, HB55 Kunstfabrik, Berlin, DE
2023 — “et cetera pp”, Palais Lichtenstein, Chemnitz, DE
2023 — “The future is not ours to see”, Upstairs - Gallery, Oldenburg, DE
2023 — “Pandoras new casa”, Untergeschoss der Pandora gallery, Berlin, DE
2023 — “Time is running out”, NOTAGALLERY, Berlin, DE
2023 — “The soft and the hard”, Showroom at Potsdamer Str. 93, Berlin, DE
2023 — “Förderpreis Junge Kunst”, Rathaus Galerie Reinickendorf, Berlin, DE
2023 — “Quicky - why not?”, gallery Mazzoli, Berlin, DE
2023 — “Roaminale #2. Screen.” Roam e. V. project space, Berlin, DE
2023 — “Living solidarity day”, MOOS space, Berlin, DE
2022 — “Art Biesenthal”, Wehrmuehle, Biesenthal, DE

RESIDENCES / SCHOLARSHIPS

2024 — Scholarship holder residential fellowship Kebbel Villa, International Künstlerhaus, Schwandorf, DE
2024 — Scholarship holder Goldrausch Künstlerinnenprojekt, postgraduate professional course, Berlin, DE
2023 — Residential fellowship ZIRKA Space, München, DE
2023 — Residential fellowship Begehungen, Palais Lichtenstein, Chemnitz, DE
2023 — Förderpreis Junge Kunst, award for Fine Arts, Kunstverein Bagatelle, DE
2021 — Residential fellowship and development course Soshenko 33, Kyiv, UA
2018 — Scholarship holder residential fellowship Velikyy Perviz, Poltav's'Ka Oblast, UA

CURATION

>upc 11.04.2025: “There is Hope”, frontviews at HAUNT gallery, Berlin, DE
2024 — “The inner insularity of utopianism”, Untergeschoss der Pandora gallery, Berlin, DE
2020 — “Review (of) the academy”. Self-organized student exhibition in National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture (with Daria Maiier), Kyiv, UA

ABOUT

Sofiia Yesakova (b. 1998) lives and works in Berlin. She is a current participant in the Berlin postgraduate Program **Goldrausch Künstlerinnen**. Sofiia is also a member of **Frontviews at HAUNT** Berlin and in the curatorial board.

Central to her artistic practice is the research into the increasing role of information in regulating human behaviour, total control, as well as the rapid adaptation to any situation and the reduction of everything to statistics. A search for truth in a stream of interference. Sofiia has chosen lifeless language as an alternative form of artistic narrative - a diagram or an engineering-like schematic drawing. Bureaucratically consistent, dry and lifeless. She uses language of minimalism, but also focuses on expressing thoughts and emotions, reflecting, and conveying the atmosphere, that is, what minimalism has tried to deny and possibly suppress. For Sofiia, the balance between emotionality and rationality is important (the direction that prefers the mind to the senses in cognition, turns away from sensory reality). Now a main material for the artist is gesso, wood and a lot of layers of gelatine. To create works, she uses different techniques such as woodcarving, icon painting, multi-layered approach, blueprint-like drawings and also installation designed specifically for certain spaces with an attitude of respect for architecture.

“In recent years, I have been inspired by the idea of ciphering and creating a certain structure of visual storytelling. I was inspired to do this by the engineering drawings of my partner, who is a civil engineer by profession. These drawings are also a certain cipher that few can read. In my artistic practice I work a lot with spatial interventions in order to create certain emotions and sensations in the spectator, not only from the work but also from the architectural experience. For me the sensations of reality and illusion, the boundary between the emotional and the rational, the tension between softness and hardness are important to me.

The contradictory feelings of the elegance of the refined forms of the wooden planks with their oppressive contextual part is an important part of understanding my work. The element of absence is the result of deliberately rejecting the figurative images and pieces we understand. Many of the works with drawings are also resembling frescoes in a temple, part of the wall of which seems to have been removed from and moved into the gallery space. There is another connection to the religious theme. An important contextual support is the iconology I use to communicate with the viewer, as well as the multi-layered complexity of our history and symbolism”.

SOFIIA YESAKOVA

The works of Sofiia Yesakova are inspired by statistical diagrams, information technology and constructivism.

She also uses the technique of icon painting for her paintings, without figuration or religiosity, with gesso, many layers of gelatine and wood. In **Cargo 200 Experimental projections on surfaces 5.8.** Yesakova creates a seven metre long architectural wall intervention. In it, she refers to Malevitch's black square; in contrast to minimalist abstraction, her work is a carrier of almost unbearable emotionality.

The work deals with war as a phenomenon: Cargo 200, the military's term for transports of fallen soldiers back home, in a zinc container. The black square here is the place of burial, seen from above. Yesakova's meticulous painting is situated in the field of tension between abstract form and oppressive context. It is a work of remembrance and mourning. By devoting herself to violence with almost mathematical precision, Yesakova makes the unbearable visible.



Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 5.8., 145 × 110 × 7 cm, 700 × 4 × 2 cm
acrylic, gesso and wood board, pine wood planks with carving, 2024
Installation view of the exhibition "I only work with lost and found" at Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin, DE, 2024

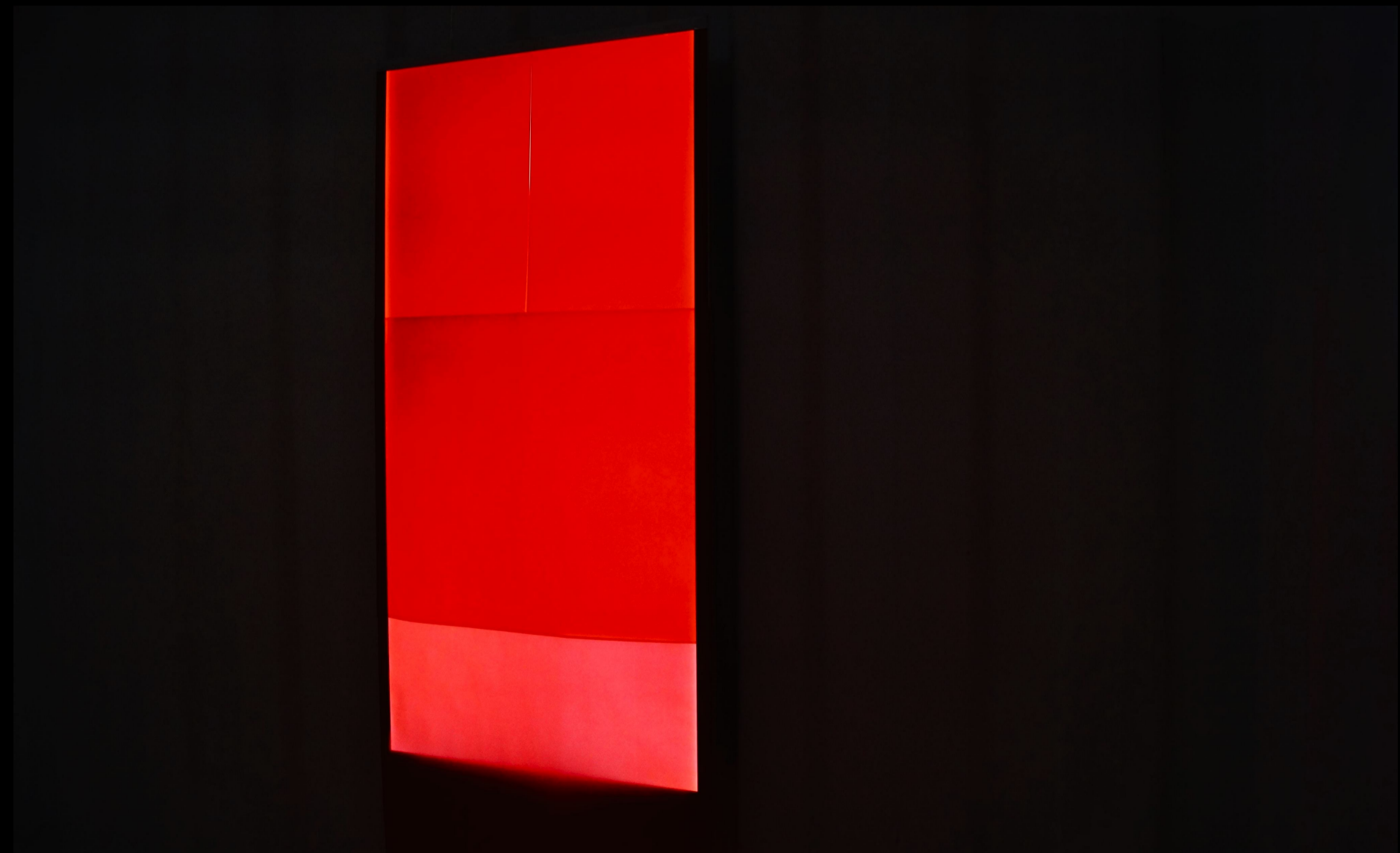


SOFIIA YESAKOVA

Is it possible to fill these gaps created by the lack of answers to some of the questions of our history? "The subject hastens to fill these gaps with the appropriate ideas, to fill the gaps with sometimes even inappropriate pieces of the mosaic." Jacques Lacan War memorials give the impression of something depressing and coldly detached, but have regained topicality through the disputes between various groups about history. Who will be remembered and how. The exhibition shows works from the series Cargo 200, working surface is prepared as in icon painting, but without concrete icon images, only with schemes.

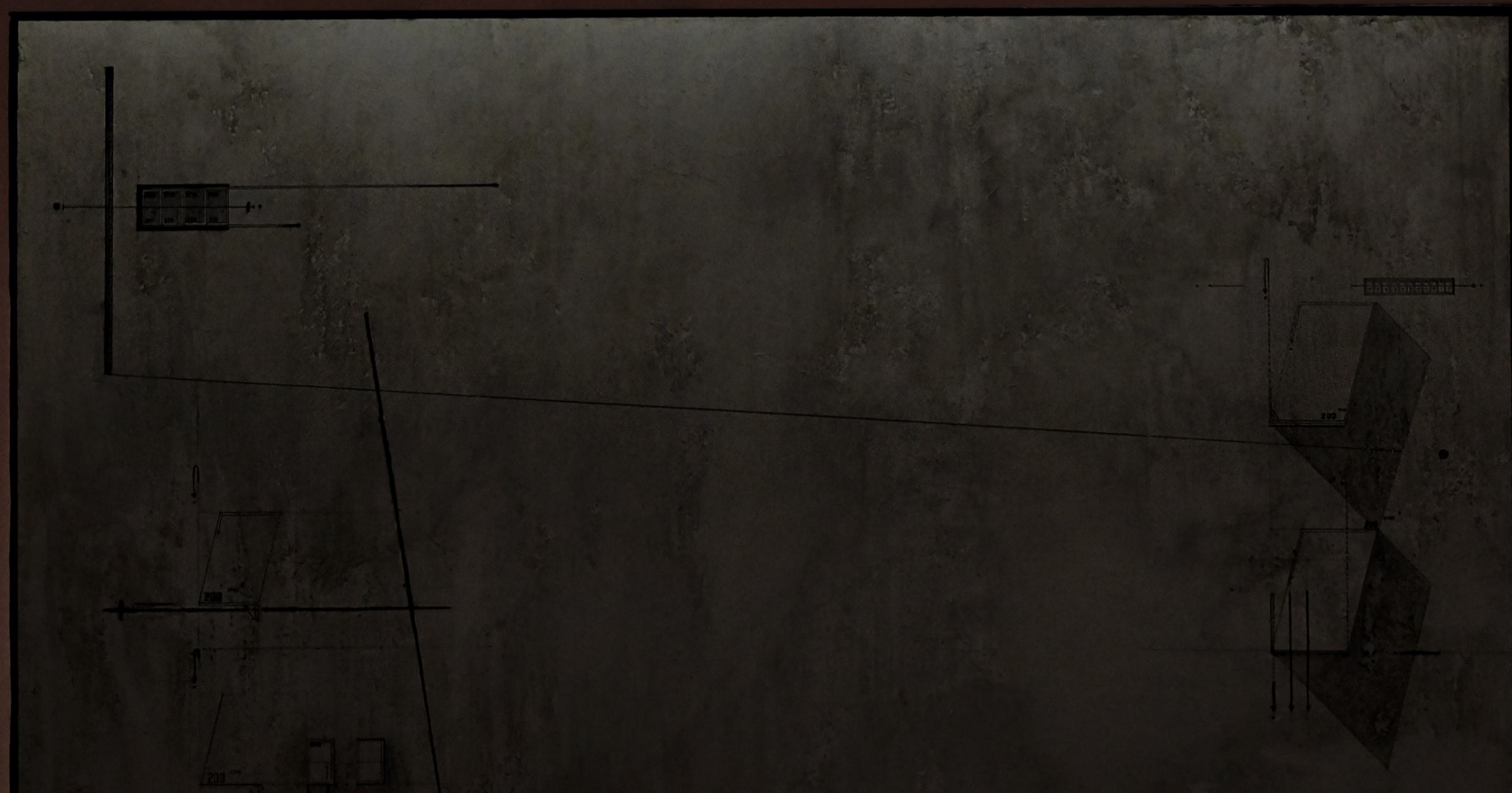
This installation is about the phenomenon of war as a whole, not just about current events. Evil, that's always the others, you would never use that to describe yourself. In this installation I use the colour red as a reference to the night vision equipment, which creates a contrast as well as a sense of warmth and something alive from the seemingly lifeless monument-like sculptural interventions. The warmth in this installation creates a subtle connection between life and death, a state of transition, as if dissolving the rough forms in the space. Also using concentration camp templates to create a visual narrative, I refer to Agamben's thought as well as his understanding of concentration camps as a "biopolitical paradigm of modernity" because of its intense production of life that can be killed. Thus the camp is an authorisation by sovereign power to kill and is also an example of the biopolitical production of "naked life". Power dictates who is allowed to live and who must die.

The space is a sea container, which has precise set parameters, as do the coffins "Cargo-200", which intensifies the contextual component, as well as the inner tension in the space.



Recollecting the emptiness, 200 × 100 × 8 cm, 150 × 25 × 9 cm
Acrylic, gesso, gelatin and wood board, pine wood planks, red film, LED light
Installation view of the solo exhibition "Recollecting the emptiness" at Prima Kunst e.V.,
Kiel, DE, 2024

Portfolio



Recollecting the emptiness, 200 × 100 × 8 cm, 150 × 25 × 9 cm
Acrylic, gesso, gelatin and wood board, pine wood planks, red film, LED light
Installation view of the solo exhibition "Recollecting the emptiness" at Prima Kunst e.V.
Kiel, DE, 2024

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In this series of works, I turn to Deleuze's philosophy of layering, distinction and repetition, vibration and oscillation. Contrasts are an integral part of our history. I adhere to the concept of "punitive restraint" (Foucault) in an attempt to hide the emotional component, as if cut by anxiety. Awareness of unrealised utopias, thinking in categories of totality — all of this is hidden in the details carved into the wooden surface and hidden in black pigment.

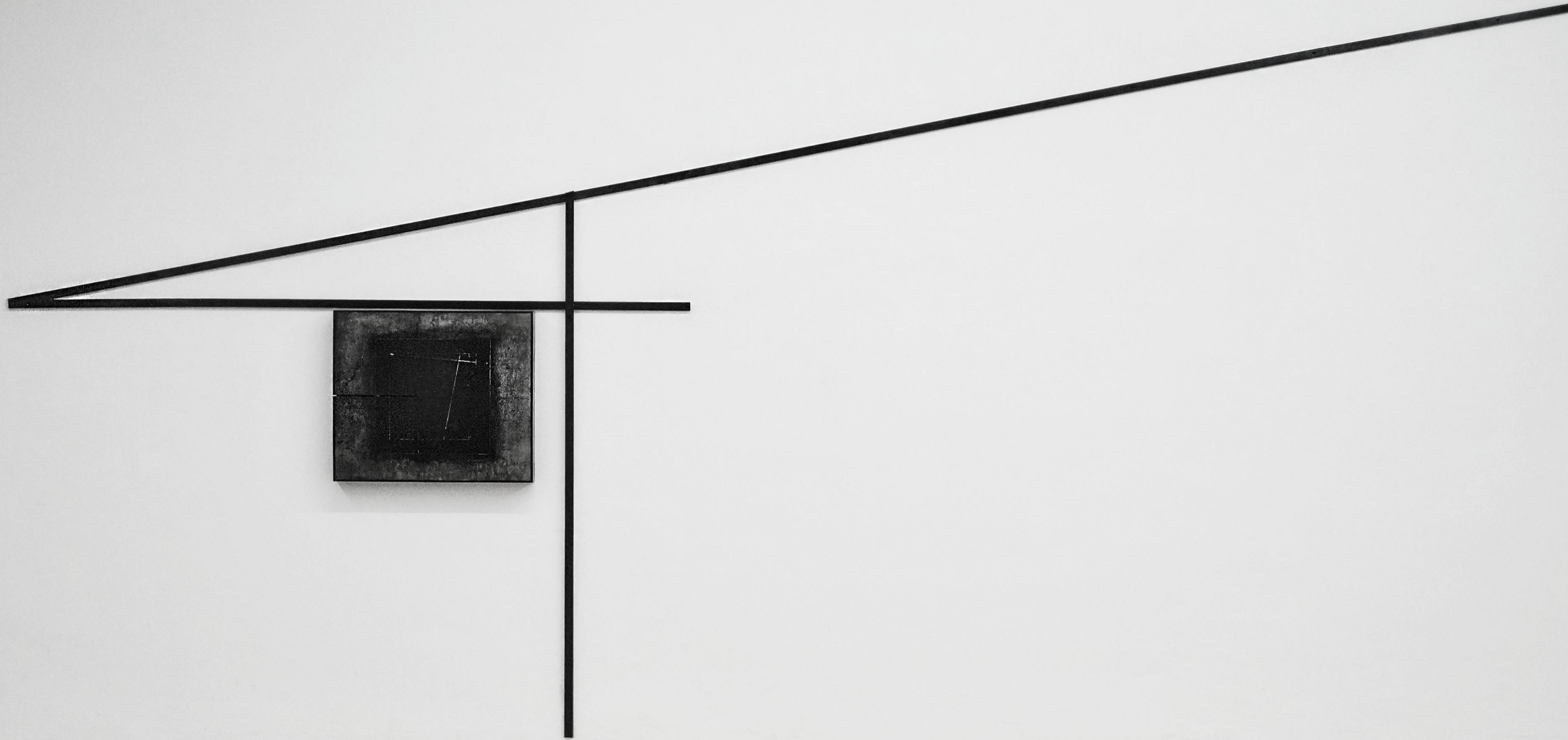
I continue to reflect on the repetition of violence in history and the system of formalisation, classification and ordering of events that create distance between us and the emotional perception of the tragic episodes of our time. For the visual narrative I turn to religious symbolism, techniques often used in sacred art, as well as the cold conventionality of minimalism. The vertical, fragile lines of the monument-like sculptures contrast with the contextualised element. The horizontal, repetitive lines of the drawing on the "monuments" are remotely reminiscent of a bureaucratic form or a formal list stretching into infinity. An endless repetition of history's mistakes that cannot be fixed. Modernity is immersed in anxiety and catastrophising. From this comes the desire to systematise everything.

The aesthetic visualisation of violent scenes in different epochs had a cathartic function, as well as being conditioned by eschatological consciousness and collective fears. When confronted with images of visualised violence, we experience a range of emotions that have a "purifying effect". Clear examples can be seen in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Through the tragedy of the individual, the tragedy of the world is manifested. And vice versa. An interest in the interaction of the object with the space can also be seen in the works, and the contrasting elements of the installation are placed in dialogue.



Ugly scenes. Nuances, 300 × 10 × 9 cm, 80 × 30 × 3 cm
Acrylic, gesso, gelatin and wood board, pine wood with carving and black pigment, 2024
Installation view in Kebbel Villa open studios, Schwandorf, DE, 2024





Installation view **Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 5.7.**, 60 × 70 × 9 cm, variable dimensions (pine wood planks)

Acrylic, gesso and wood board, pine wood planks

Installation view at Kuenstlerhaus Sootbörn, Hamburg, DE, 2024

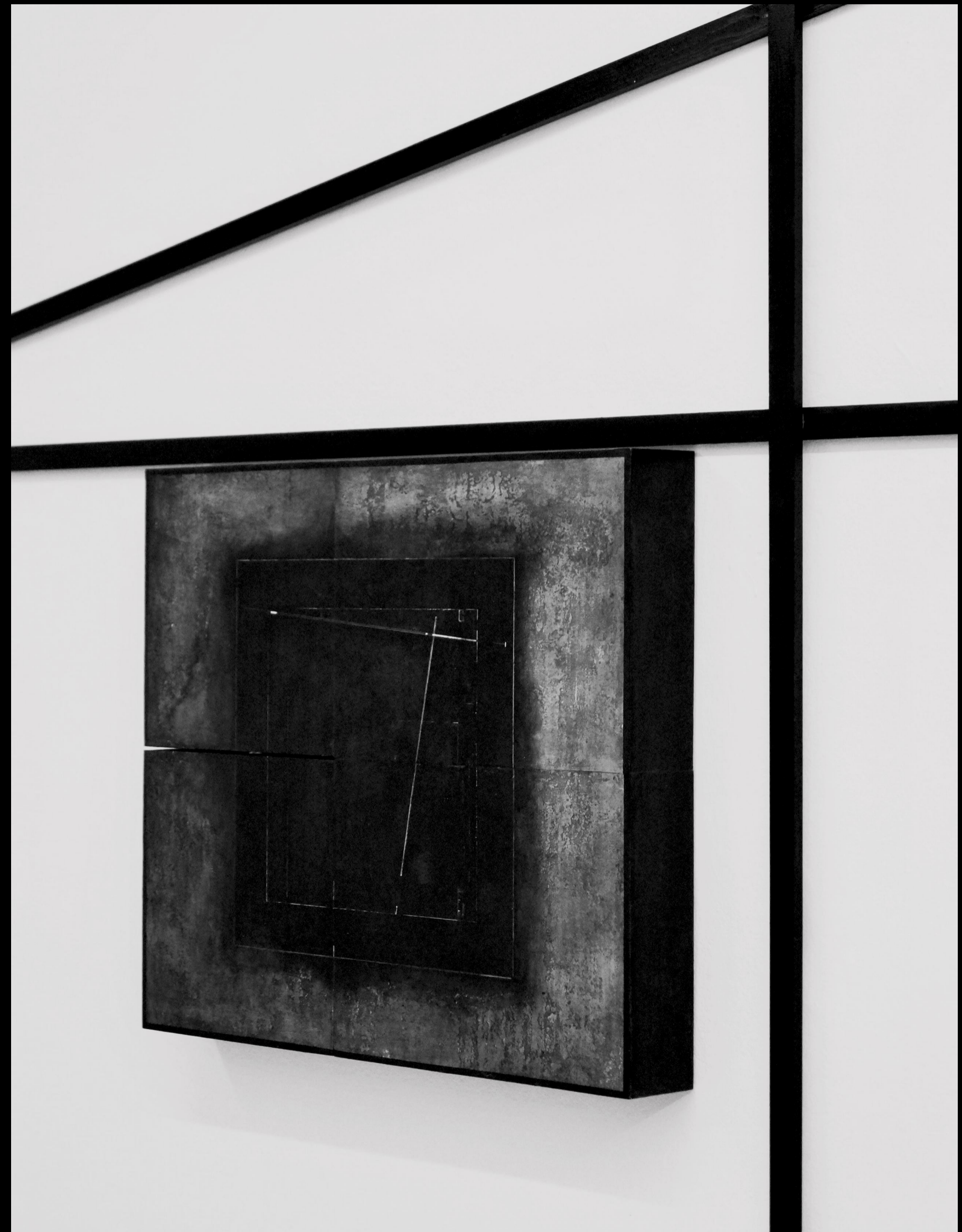
SOFIIA YESAKOVA

The wooden, long elements in this installation “Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 5.7.” are constructivist details, referring back to the dream of a better world that the constructivists dreamed of. So what went wrong? We are now in the “future” and a better world is not in sight. This work is also done in the technique of iconography, but without specific religious figures. The black square in this work is the place of burial. Since we don't know all the dead, we don't know their names and fates, we can barely make out a few coffins in the work in the projection from above. This work as a whole is about war as a phenomenon, not just about current events.

Cargo 200 is a term from military jargon. It refers to the transport of those killed in war back home. For the transport, the body of the deceased is placed in a special container, usually made of zinc. In my project, I use the method of “objectification” of my subjective war experiences by intuitively reenacting the death of fellow citizens and soldiers through an experimental “an-ordering” on surfaces. This process captures the event rationally and insensitively, which is known to be a consequence of habituation to war. In war, the imaginary has no connection with reality. The traumatic nature of the reality of war is beyond our imagination. Overcome by this reality, we nevertheless cannot comprehend the fear of the possibility of our own death, which is unimaginable to us. When we think about our own death, we can be horrified, but when we talk about the death of thousands, the impossibility of mathematically multiplying the horror prevents us from trying to comprehend it. The world of war is made up of its own signs, most of which have hardly changed over the millennia. It is a series of archaic symbols that stand for center/periphery, order/chaos, vertical/horizontal, good/evil, life/death, victory/defeat, friend/foe. This series of works explores the problem of war perception, which is that our own consciousness can never share the level of consciousness of dying soldiers and vice versa. In the course of war, after a certain time, we see war only as a familiar field with its signs and “special effects”. We no longer see people. What kind of people sat there in the trenches and were shot at by artillery — we don't know. What they did for a living beforehand and whether they had families and children — we don't know that either. Nor do we know what life the sudden war pulled them out of. And how they perceived it, how they experienced it and what they felt and how they dealt with thoughts about their possible death — we don't know. We don't know anything and we can't imagine. How did these men accept the role of “cannon fodder”— this whole cruel ordeal?

Human rationalism works like this: Unconsciously, we try to abstract from a traumatic reality. As a result, unfortunately, we ignore the catastrophe itself. Reality is absent. We hardly notice it because we simply cannot imagine the reality of war, death. It is a paradox. We generally dislike seeing violence as it exists in reality. The only worthy response to the challenge of terrorism would be to radically change the rationale of our thinking. However, the clearer it becomes to us what is actually happening, the more we refuse to be aware of it. Humanity is unconsciously writing the story of its own end. Destruction of the world is possible today as never before. That is why we need to wake up from our sleep. The search for our own comfort always leads to the worst

Installation view Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 5.7.
60 × 70 × 9 cm, variable dimensions (pine wood planks)



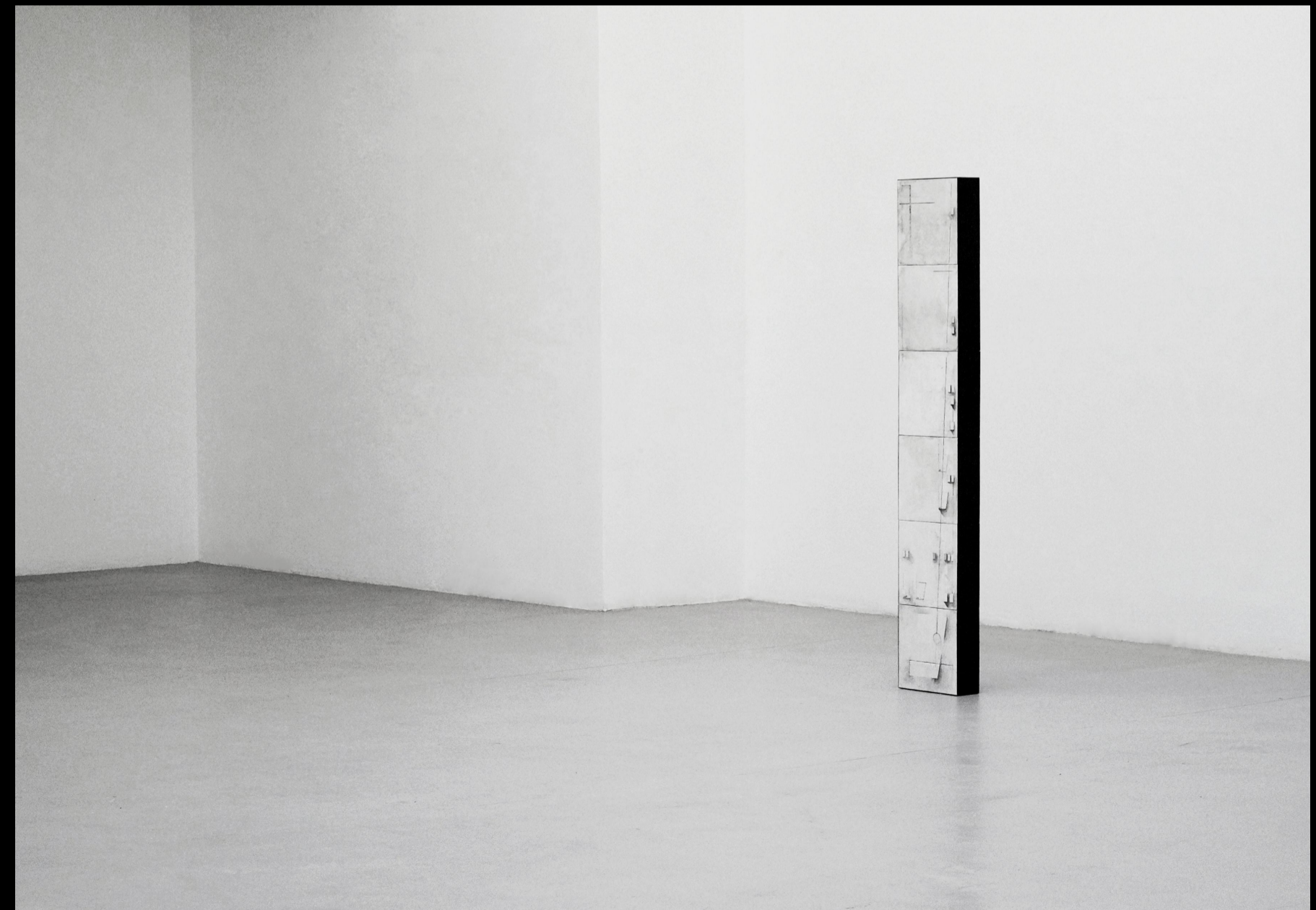
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In this work, the artist uses a completely emotionless graphic element/chart, which is an example of our perception of statistical, emotionless data. If you look closely, you will notice the inscription "Cargo 200", as well as coffins in the upper perspective, which is a senseless, dry counting of dead soldiers. Mass casualties have become mundane, and people in turn see everything as statistics and counting. It is also a reference to the architectural plans of concentration camps, neat and precise, looking at which it is impossible to believe in the cruelty taking place in the recent past, as well as in the reality of those events. The human past, and such artefacts, are sources of information about what we can do to other people. Our fears are not always the same as what is truly horrifying.

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Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 4.2., 150 × 25 × 9 cm
Acrylic, gesso, gelatin, wood board, 2024
Installation view at Kuenstlerhaus Sootbörn, Hamburg, DE, 2024



SOFIIA YESAKOVA

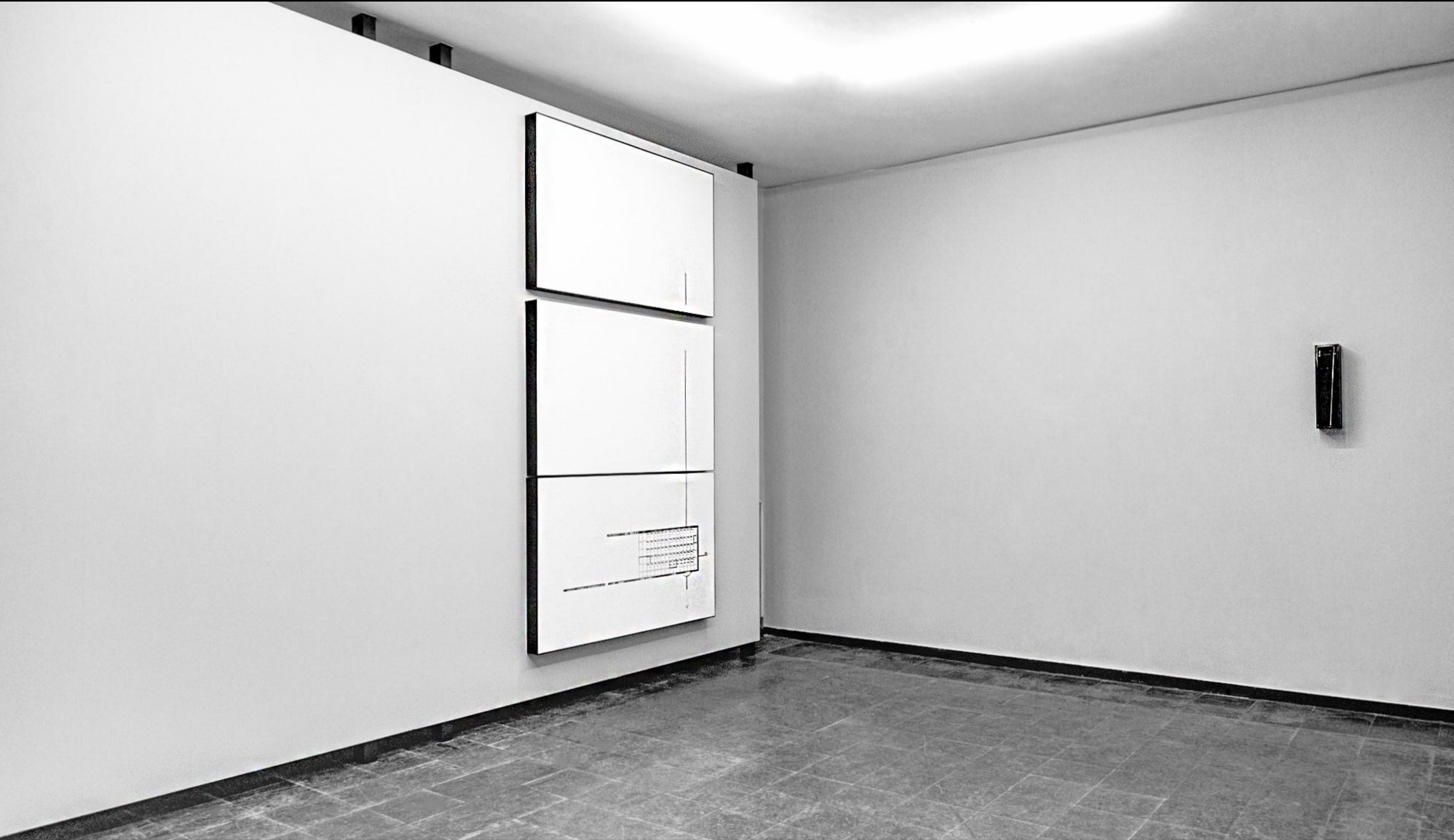


The site-specific installation is built on contradictions. Sensual experience of being and indifferent calculation. According to statistics, 90% of the data existing now in the information space were produced in the last 2 years. Every day new symptoms of information overload are discovered truth in the stream of noise becomes barely visible, it becomes more and more difficult to analyse “true” or “false” ideas. Disorderly consumption of news leads to information blindness. The main task of the thinking individual is to escape from the affective impact and manipulation of new media on consciousness.

A transparent curtain fastened with screws shows the accessibility of information, a sense of freedom of choice at a first glance, but also the impossibility of accessing the truth and verifying its veracity control of information flow, creation of only biased materials for media space, all this is a tool for gradual change of citizens' personality and is also a mechanism for controlling the general opinion we live in an age of illusion of information availability. Security is also an illusion

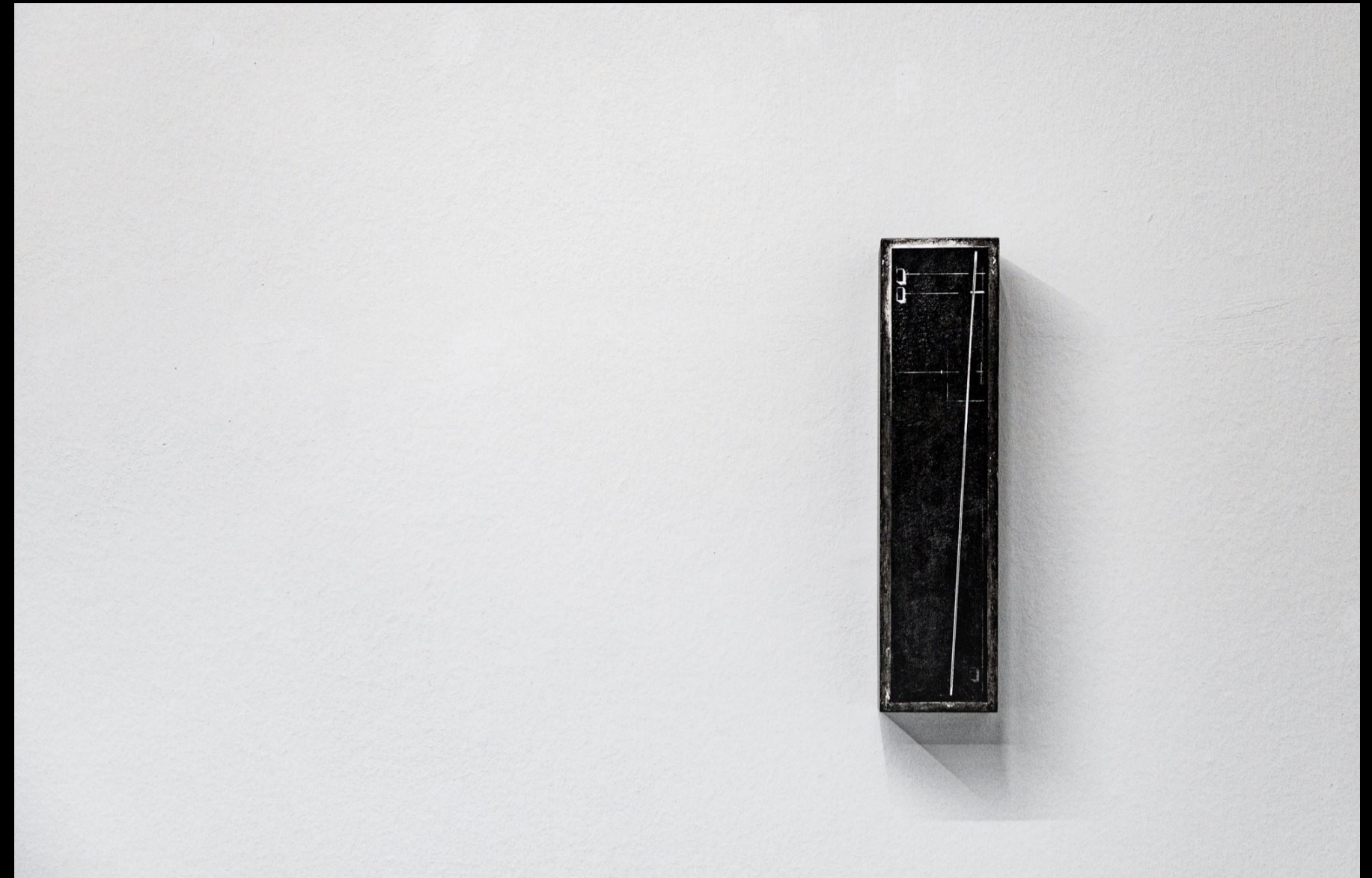
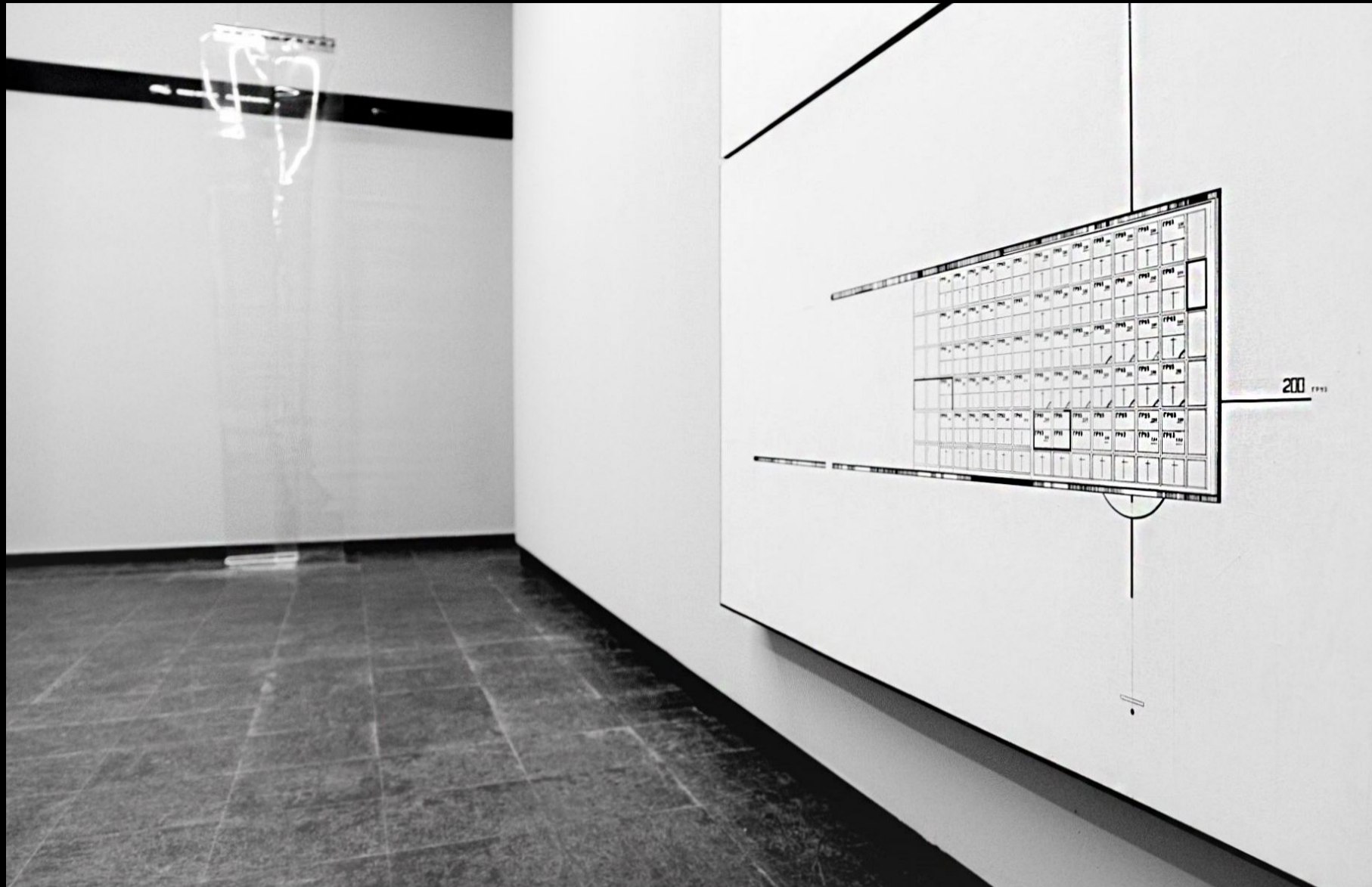
Installation view of the solo exhibition **“People in paradise will enjoy the spectacle of hell’s torment”**
Dimensions variable
Acrylic, gesso, wood board, PVC curtains, screws, mourning ribbon, 2024
at Antwerp art box, Antwerp, BEL, 2024





Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 5.5., 135 × 82 × 8 cm (×3)
Acrylic, gelatin, gesso and pine wood board
Installation view of the exhibition "A promise of tomorrow" at Frontviews at HAUNT, Berlin, DE, 2024

SOFIIA YESAKOVA



Installation view of the exhibition "A promise of tomorrow" at Frontviews at HAUNT, Berlin, DE, 2024

Portfolio

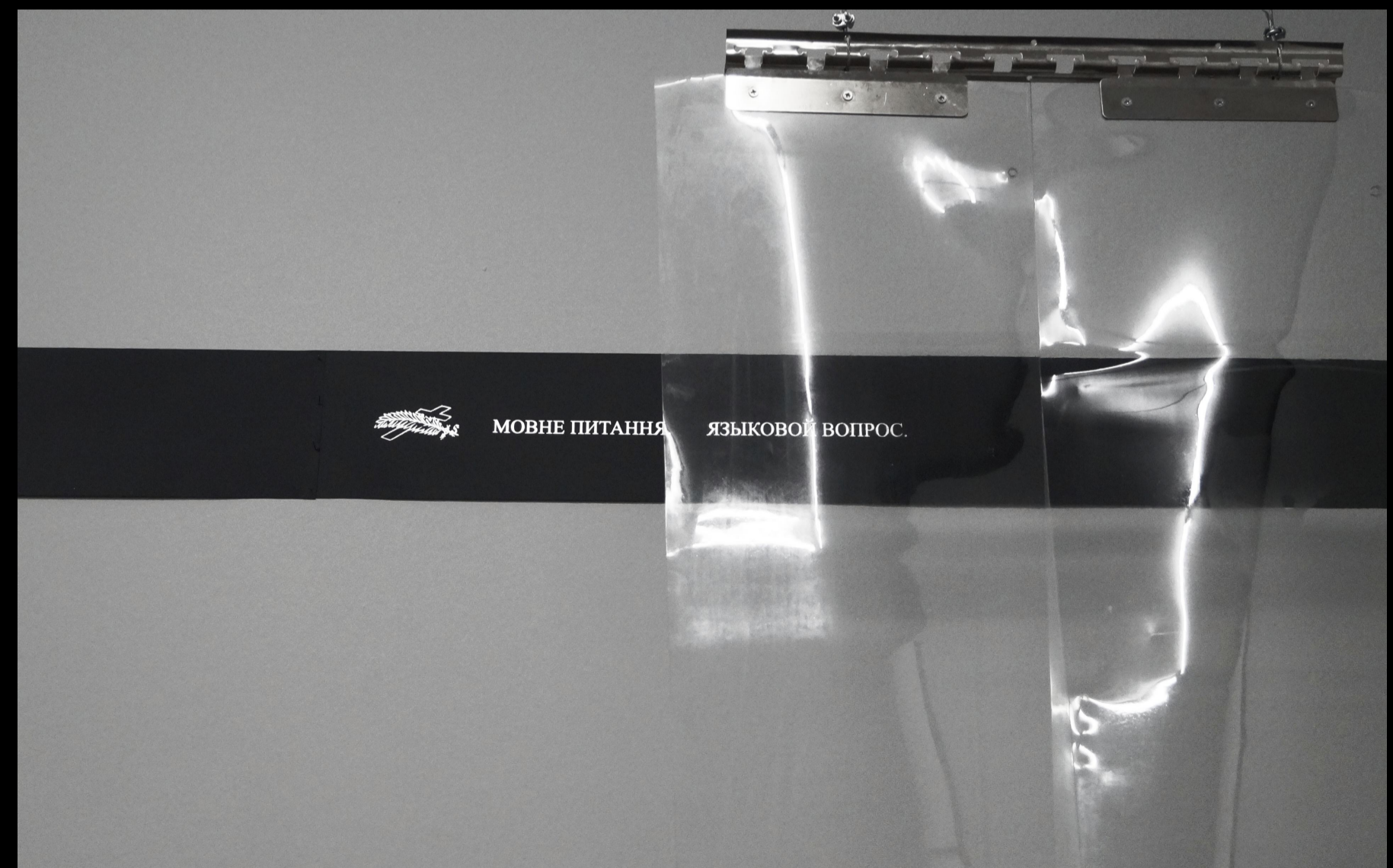
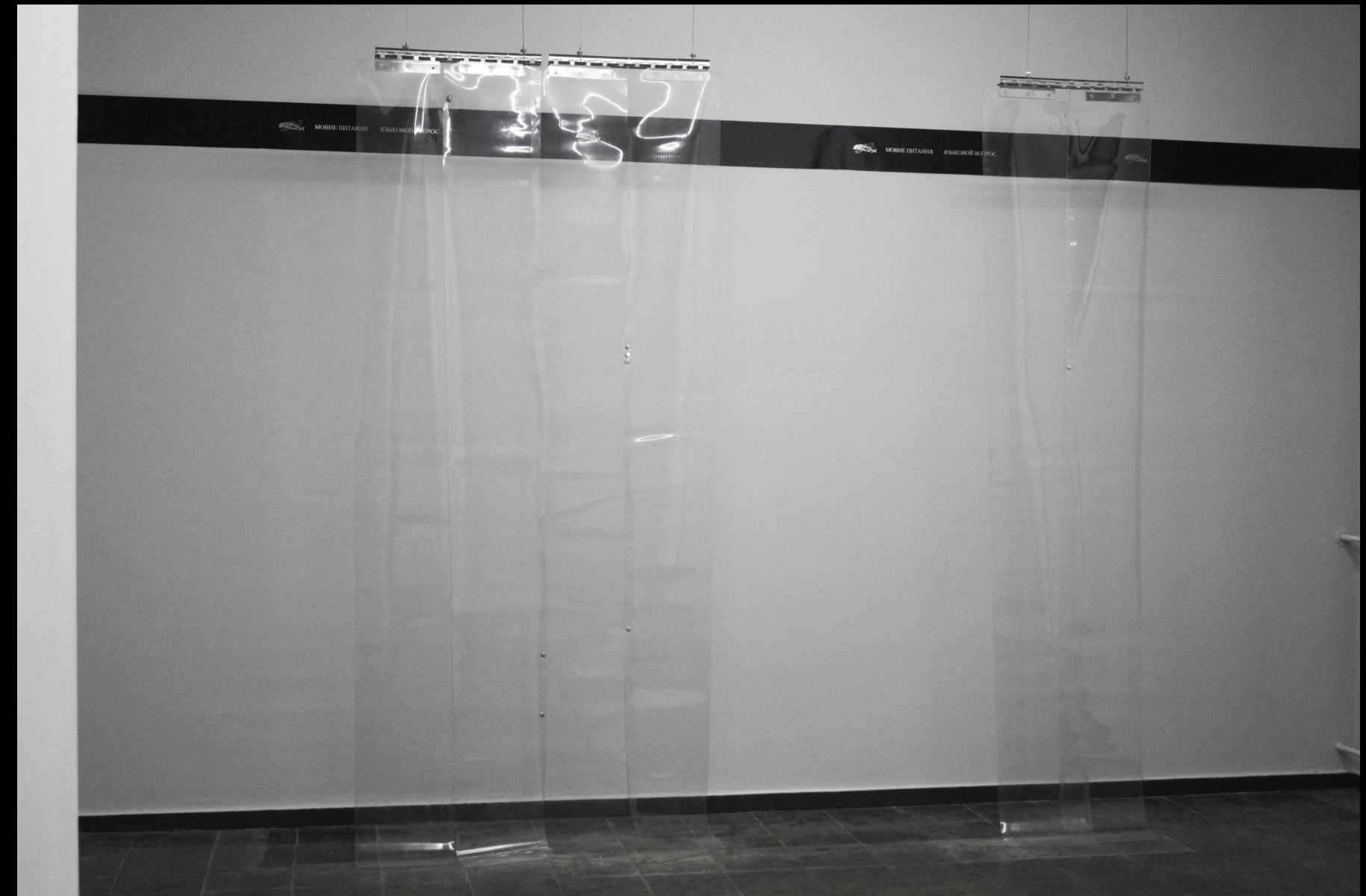
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In the installation, the artist uses a completely emotionless graphic element/chart, which is an example of our perception of statistical, emotionless data. If you look closely, you will notice the inscription Cargo-200, as well as coffins in the upper perspective, which is a senseless, dry counting of dead soldiers. Mass casualties have become mundane, and people in turn see everything as statistics and counting. It is also a reference to the architectural plans of concentration camps, neat and precise, looking at which it is impossible to believe in the cruelty taking place in the recent past, as well as in the reality of those events. The human past, and such artefacts, are sources of information about what we can do to other people. Our fears are not always the same as what is truly horrifying.

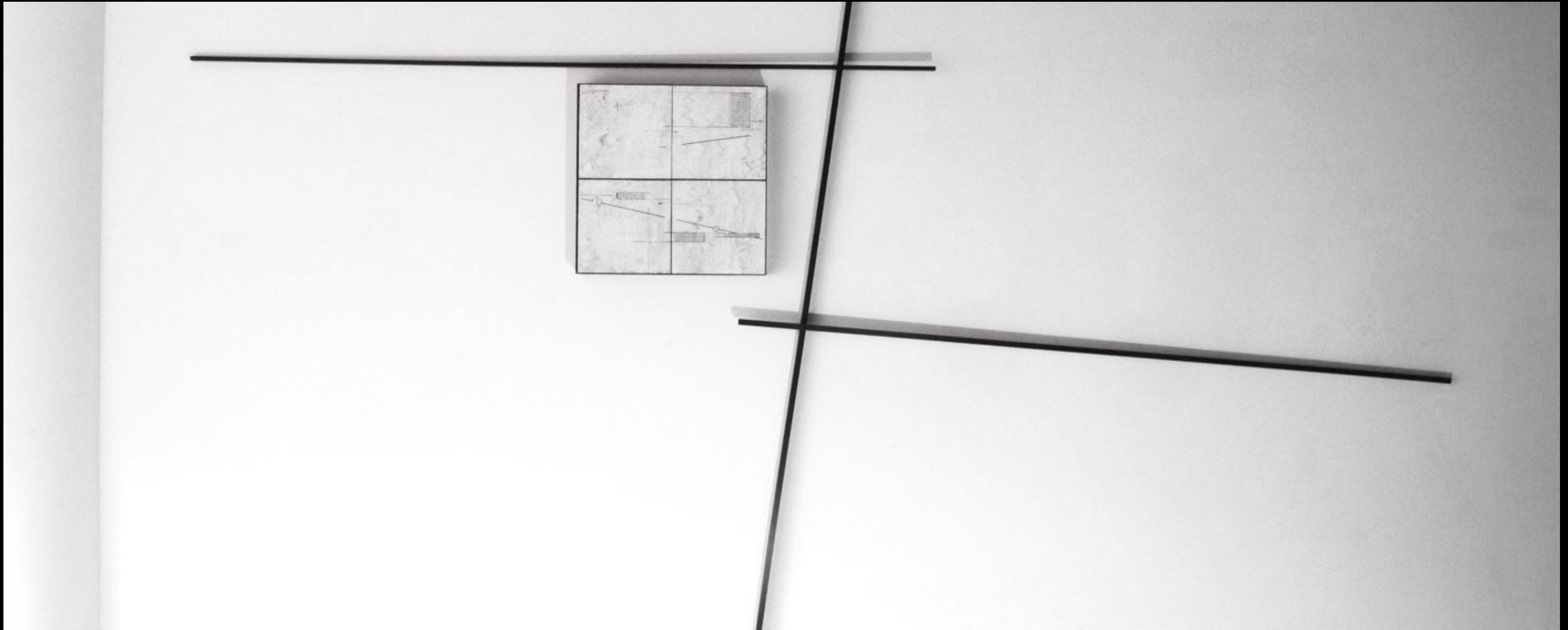
The next element of the installation is a funeral ribbon on which is written "language issue" in Ukrainian and Russian, which is also a reference to a rather discursive topic in Ukraine. For some it is important, but in my opinion such divisions in society only separate and distract from the main thing. Also the pressure on people's freedom of choice is a dangerous tendency and spoils the healthy internal climate of society and creates a space of fears. There are many such examples in different societies. Appealing to emotions rather than thinking is a standard technique aimed at blocking people's ability to analyse rationally, as well as their ability to think critically about what is going on. The so-called collective unconscious leads to exaggeration of potential harms and escalation of conflicts.



People in paradise will enjoy the spectacle of hell's torment

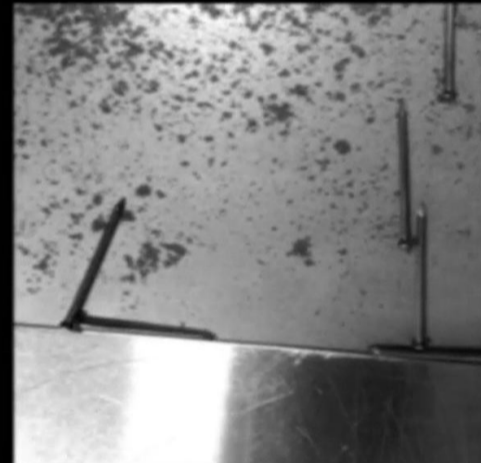
PVC curtains, screws, mourning ribbon, 2024

Installation view of the exhibition "A promise of tomorrow" at Frontviews at HAUNT, Berlin, DE, 2024



Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 6.1., 60 × 60 × 9 cm, pine wood planks — 220 × 2 cm
Acrylic, gesso, gelatine, wood board, pine wood planks (x3)
2023

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The latent function of audio accompaniment in the project is the construction of an existential and emotional space, the creation of a sense of encirclement (surroundings) and, consequently, the involvement of the listening subject in some imaginary life conditions and situations. Long-delayed reverbs can emphasize or evoke feelings of loneliness and emptiness, evoking large empty spaces that are “filled with other people” in everyday urban life. The tactility of anxiety, located in the center of the sound, increases as you listen.

black and white video/sound, 23 min.
Video design by Sofiia Yesakova
Sound design by WM

Portfolio



Blind Spot. 1.1-1.10., 40 × 40 × 5 cm

Acrylic, gesso, gelatin, pine wood board, varnish

Installation view of the exhibition "A Promise of tomorrow" at Frontviews at HAUNT gallery, Berlin, DE, 2024

SOFIIA YESAKOVA

This work made in the technique of Orthodox iconography. But we don't see certain images, the glossy surface reflects us, unifying and blurring the image we see. Fleeting reflection on the surface. This series is not only about what is happening now, but also in general about history repeating itself and the endless violence in the world. We don't know the fate of the many people who died, we only see numbers and statistics.

Can human beings be understood in their irrational horror? Can his essence be grasped in a moment of utter despair?

We can speak of fear as something concrete and tangible. Horror, on the other hand, has no object. It is linguistically ineffable, refers to something inexpressible with the means of expression. "Total nothingness, a silent scream". For us, the world of war is a reality "abandoned by God". The Christian concept of "dark night" refers to the state of the "soul". It is in a state of "total alienation" from the love of God and is left to man's own resources, where man himself becomes hell. In these works, the artist uses the method of desecration to show the all-consuming horror and torpor that cannot be grasped by ordinary thinking.

Psychophysical degradation is the essence of war, and violence, blood and death are the accompanying special effects.



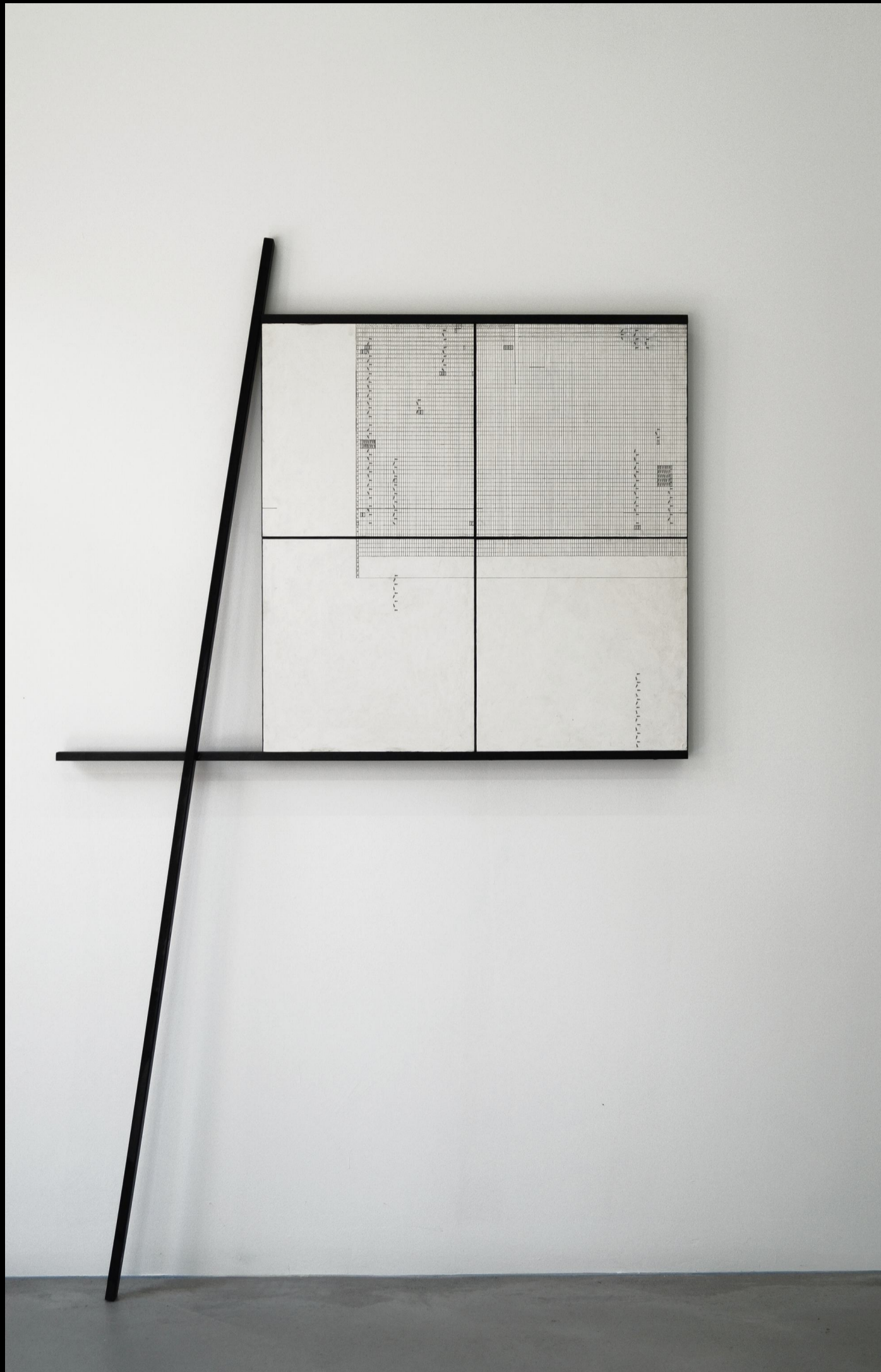
Blind Spot. 1.1-1.10., 40 × 40 × 5 cm (x8)

Acrylic, gesso, gelatin, pine wood board, varnish

Installation view of the exhibition "A Promise of tomorrow" at Frontviews at HAUNT gallery, Berlin, DE, 2024



Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 4.1., 205 × 205 × 8 cm
Acrylic, gesso, gelatin, pine wood planks and wood board
Installation view of the exhibition "Round trip fluidum 2" at the Fabbrica del Vapore gallery, Milano, IT, 2024



Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 3.2., 100 × 80 cm, 200 × 3 × 2 cm
Acrylic, steel nails, gesso, gelatin, pine wood planks and wood board
Installation view of the exhibition " Visual Dominance", AS_EM gallery, Leipzig, DE, 2023

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Installation view Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 4.1.
280 × 110 × 10 cm, Acrylic, gesso and wood board
Frontviews at HAUNT, Berlin, DE, 2022

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In this series, I return to icon painting, combining military technology such as the screen view of a military drone with classical Christian religious symbols commonly used in religious themes of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The cross not only symbolizes the death of the crucified but also the resurrection and victory over death. This dual meaning is referred to as the “paradox of the cross” and is unique to the symbolism of the cross in Christian thought. My intention was to return to this iconographic idea — depicting death alongside resurrection and sacrifice.

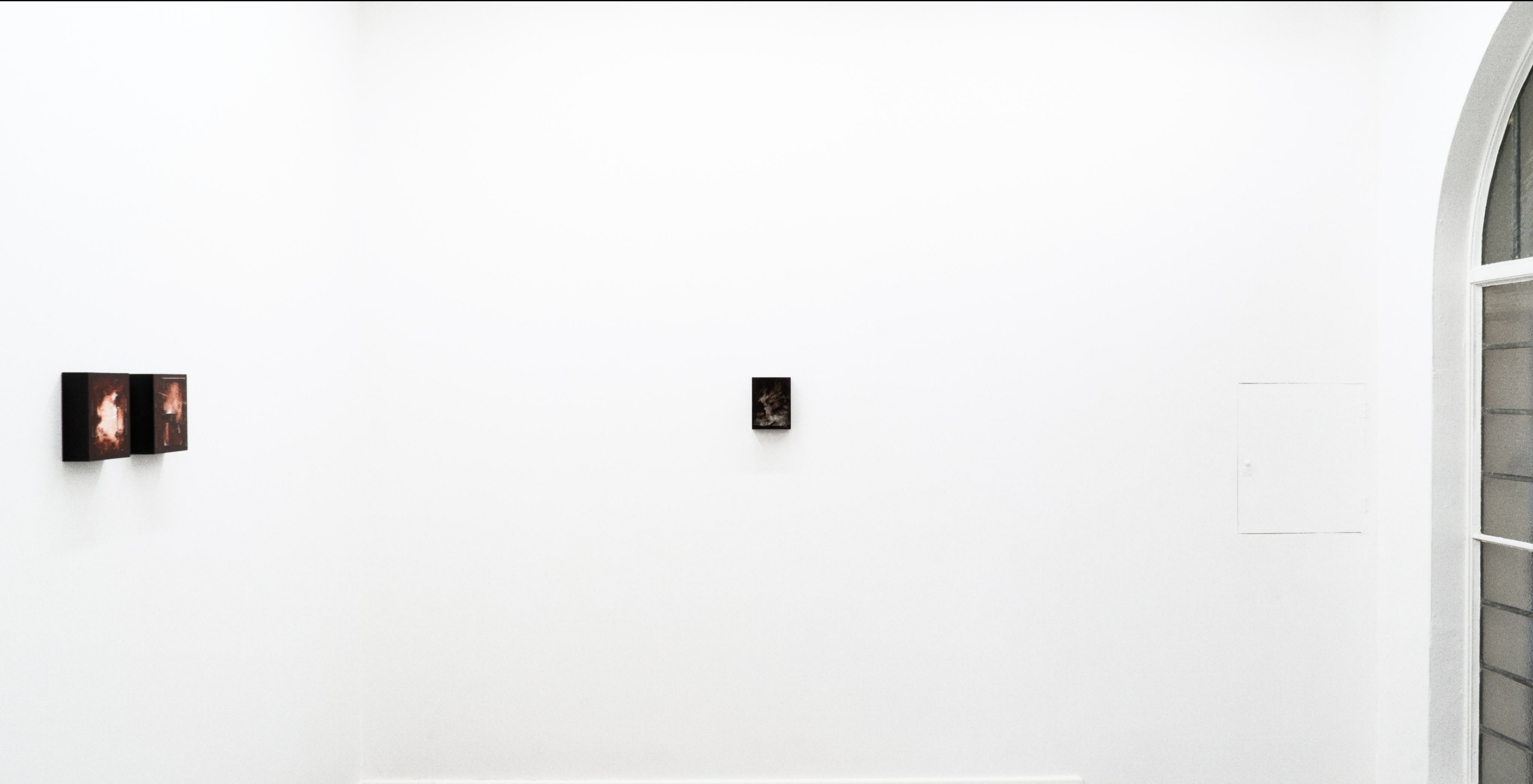
As I looked at works of the Renaissance, I always noticed a completely calm landscape in the background, despite the often dynamic scenes with depicted human bodies. I chose the same motif and transferred it to the intensely tense landscape of the front lines. The calmness is only diluted by the strict lines seemingly cutting through the surface of the work, evoking a sense of uncertainty and inner disturbance. An important motif in my works is also the depiction of the crosshairs and the view from a slightly different perspective. It is an interpretation of the classical theme of crucifixion representations, albeit without human figures. We see the target of the drone and also the explosion, which to me is a symbol of sacrifice in a modern context and new technologies; in a religious context, it can also be a symbol of redemption. The world of war is also a kind of religion, with its own attitudes, rules, and the suggestion of a “holy duty”.

The world of war also has its own ideology. War can be a sacred mission, and militarism is propagated in a ritual context. War is usually a highly formalized practice. Like the ritual itself, warfare is carried out through strictly prescribed movements, gestures, clothing, and forms of language. Soldiers are identical and structured according to a certain norm. Formations of organized violence with their columns and rows. So, I see a structural affinity to religious practices here.

War landscape in the optic of icons. 8.0., 140 × 104 × 7,5 cm

Acrylic, gesso, gelatin and wood board, 2024

Installation view of the exhibition "Memories we have forgotten" at the Address gallery, Brescia, IT, 2024



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