

Sofiia Yesakova

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

‡ Frontviews member / curatorial board

EDUCATION

2021 – MA in Fine Arts. National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, Kyiv, UA
2019 – BA in Fine Arts. National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, Kyiv, UA
Studied at the Department of Monumental and Sacred Painting, named after Professor Mykola Storozhenko

SOLO & DUO EXHIBITIONS

2026 – “Phantom. Chapter II”, Georgen-Parochial II Cemetery House, curated by Iana Pitenko, Berlin, DE
2026: – “The Solemity of the Repulsive”, ROAM e.V., Project Space, Berlin, DE
2025 – “Vanitous Spectre”, Iron House (Nymphenburg Castle), Munich, DE
2025 – “A line that penetrates matter”, Chemnitz Art Space, Chemnitz, DE
2025 – “Black wall”, Umbrella | west coast exhibitions Gallery, curated by Jan Wawryzniak, Nebel, DNK
2025 – “O dark dark dark”, spazio DISPLAY, curated by Ilaria Monti, Parma, IT
2024 – “Ugly scenes, nuances”, Super Bien. Berlin!, curated by Elisabeth Sonneck, 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, curated by Sued Blankenburg, Berlin, DE
2022 – “Cargo 200”, frontviews at HAUNT Gallery, curated by Nicola E. Petek, Berlin, DE
2022 – “Heteronomy of freedom”, Prenzlauer Studio Showroom, Berlin, DE

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2026 – “ESC 2035. We never changed”, 0_1 gallery, The Hague, NL
2026 – “Echoes that refuse to fade”, FaVu Gallery, Brno, CZE
2026 – “Piegato Una Sola Volta”, Spazio relativo | Villa Davia, curated by Iside Calcagnile, Sasso Marconi, IT
2026 – “Better Version of You”, Jergon Gallery, curated by Evgeniya Kiseleva-Afflerbach, Berlin, DE
2025 – “B_LA_M”, super bien! and CROMA, Project Space, Mexico City, MEX
2025 – “Doubled presence in a disembodied space”, Trost, Project Space, curated by René Stiegler & Markus Sworcik, Graz, AT
2025 – “The big Fatigue”, Factory building at Hermann-Blankenstein-Straße 20, Berlin, DE
2025 – “Third space”, frontviews at HAUNT Gallery, Berlin, DE
2025 – “Light bent backward, waiting to be forgotten”, arka arka, Vienna, AT
2025 – “Moin, Jean Gabin”, Area 35 Art Gallery, Milan, IT
2025 – “There is Hope”, frontviews at HAUNT Gallery, Berlin, DE
2024 – “Fatmah”, Contemporary Cluster Gallery, curated by Giacomo Guidi, 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”, Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin, DE
2024 – “Fight or Flight – An Exhibition About Fear”, Adlerhalle, Berlin, DE
2024 – “The inner Insularity of Utopianism”, Untergeschoss der Pandora Gallery, Berlin, DE
2024 – “A promise of tomorrow”, frontviews at HAUNT Gallery, Berlin, DE
2024 – “Traces of Timelessness”, Künstlerhaus Sootböern, Hamburg, DE
2024 – “Memories we have forgotten”, The Address Gallery, curated by Riccardo Angossini Brescia, IT
2023 – “Round Trip Fluidum 2”, Fabbrica del Vapore, curated by Elisabeth Sonneck, Milan, IT
2023 – “When the firebird flies”, Kunstverein Meissen e.V., curated by Nicola E. Petek, Meissen, DE
2023 – “Polifoniia”, ZIRKA Space, curated by Jan Struckmayer & Nastia Stemenko, Munich, DE
2023 – “Visual Dominance”, AS/EM space, curated by Lukas Schleupner, Leipzig, DE
2023 – “Homoöstate”, FRAPPANT gallery, curated by Maxime Chabal & Stina Stühmer, Hamburg, DE
2023 – “MoNo”, HB55 Kunstfabrik, curated by Tim van den Oudenhoven, Berlin, DE
2023 – “et cetera pp”, as part of Begehungen Festival, Palais Lichtenstein, Chemnitz, DE
2023 – “The future is not ours to see”, Upstairs - Gallery, Oldenburg, 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
2022 – “Art Biesenthal”, Wehrmuehle, Biesenthal, DE

RESIDENCIES / SCHOLARSHIPS / GRANTS

2024 – Residential fellowship, Kebbel Villa, International Künstlerhaus, Schwandorf, DE
2024 – Participant & scholarship holder, Goldrausch Künstlerinnenprojekt, postgraduate professional program, Berlin, DE
2023 – Residential fellowship, ZIRKA Space, Munich, DE
2023 – Residential fellowship, Begehungen, Palais Lichtenstein, Chemnitz, DE
2023 – Förderpreis Junge Kunst (Fine Art Award), Kunstverein Bagatelle, Berlin, DE
2021 – Residential fellowship & development course, Soshenko 33, Kyiv, UA
2018 – Residential fellowship & scholarship holder, Veliky Pereviz, Poltava's Oblast, UA

CURATION

>upc. 2027: – “When every Path is a Crossroad”, ACUD Gallery, Berlin, DE
>upc. 2027: – “The Fragility of Eternity in Every Vanishing Gesture”, frontviews at HAUNT Gallery, Berlin, DE
2024 – “The inner insularity of utopianism”, Untergeschoss der Pandora Gallery, Berlin, DE
2020 – “Review (of) the academy”, exhibition co-curated with Daria Maier, Showroom, National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, Kyiv, UA

Sofiia Yesakova (*1998) lives and works in Berlin. In 2024 she participated in the Berlin postgraduate program **Goldrausch Künstlerinnen**. Yesakova is a member of **Frontviews at HAUNT Berlin**, where she is also part of the curatorial board. Central to Yesakova's artistic practice is the research into the increasing role of information in regulating and controlling human behaviour—being able as it is to rapidly adapt to any situation and reduce everything to statistics. A search for truth in a stream of interference.

Yesakova uses diagrams or engineering-like schematic drawings to arrive at an alternative form of artistic narrative. Bureaucratically consistent, dry and lifeless. She often refers to theoretical concepts like Gilles Deleuze's layering approach of thinking, Jacques Lacan's analysis of society's structures and Giorgio Agamben's biopolitical concepts. In recent years, she has been inspired by the idea of ciphering and creating a certain structure of visual storytelling, often inspired by engineering drawings. Using spatial interventions in order to create certain emotions and sensations, she deals with the intertwining of reality and illusion, the boundary between the emotional and the rational, or the the tension between softness and hardness. The theme of war memorials has also become an important part of Sofia's artistic practice in recent years. In her work, she turns to monuments as historical markers and as sites of collective memory, trauma, and identity. By examining their forms, materials, and symbolism, Sofiia explores how societies choose to remember or to forget the past. War memorials give the impression of something depressing and coldly detached, yet they have regained relevance in the context of disputes among various groups over history, over who is remembered, and how. Her practice resonates with the writings of Paul Virilio, who explored the relationships between memory, war, and the built environment. Virilio emphasized how monuments and memorials embody both remembrance and erasure: they preserve traces of loss while simultaneously shaping narratives of power and identity. Sofiia engages with this paradox, highlighting the way a single memorial can inspire reverence in one era, yet provoke doubt or resistance in another. Yesakova foregrounds the fragile, shifting meanings inscribed in these sites. A memorial may stand as a site of reverence for one generation, yet provoke estrangement or resistance for another. Her work reveals this instability, the way monuments can obscure as much as they commemorate. In Yesakova's work, the symbolism and imagery of the Renaissance may intersect with rigid constructivist forms, and plans and drawings from concentration camps contrast with the clean idiom of minimalism. A lot of her works make reference to the formerly religious context of art. They use iconology or resemble frescoes from a temple, like a part of a wall taken from its original context and moved into the gallery space. This gesture of “dislocation” reinforces the tension central to her practice: the confrontation between the permanence implied by stone or monument, and the fragility of memory when uprooted from its context. Working with materials like gesso, wood and layers of gelatine, Yesakova uses different techniques such as woodcarving, icon painting, blueprint-like drawings and site-specific installations in regard to the history of the place and with respect for its architecture.

Sofiia Yesakova earned her MA in Fine Arts from the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture (NAFAA) in Kyiv, UA. Her recent exhibitions include a duo show *“Black Wall”* at Umbrella | West Coast Exhibitions Gallery in Denmark; *“O, dark dark dark”*, a duo exhibition at spazio DISPLAY Art Space, curated by Ilaria Monti, Parma, Italy; and another duo exhibition *“Vanitous Spectre”* at Iron House, located within Nymphenburg Castle, Munich, DE.



Sofiia Yesakova. *Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces.*

Published by: Goldrausch
Künstlerinnenprojekt

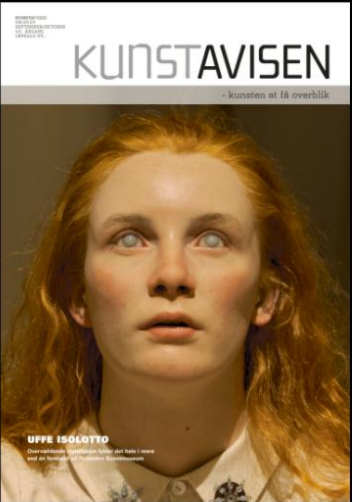
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I only work with lost and found – Goldrausch
2024
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2024



Sofiia Yesakova & Sascha Kregel:
Black Wall, Umbrella – West Coast
Exhibitions

Published by: Kunststavisen magazine

Text: Af Egil Hvid-Olsen
Fotos: Jacob Friis-Holm Nielsen

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2025

Ikonens tomme tvilling

Sofiia Yesakova og Sascha Kregel:
Black Wall, Umbrella – West Coast Exhibitions

Af Egil Hvid-Olsen
EHO@KM.DK

**Et ældgammelt
spørgsmål**
Teodicéproblemet er et
gammelt begreb indenfor
teologien. Ordet teodicé er

dannet af de græske ord for
Gud og retfærdighed. Skåret
ind til benet stiller begrebet
spørgsmålet om, hvorfor der
findes ondskab i verden,
hvis Gud er god. Der findes
mange forsøg på svar, men
ikke alle finder dem brug-
bare. Det skulle da lige
være, hvis man abonnerer

på forestillingen om, at Gud
er ond, eller at Gud ikke
eksisterer. Disse to svar
opløser det spørgsmål, som
begrebet stiller, men efterla-
der et mennesket i en
dystopi.

Billedkunstneren Sofiia
Yesakova er født i 1998 i
Kiev. Kort efter Ruslands
angreb på Ukraine i februar
2022 flyttede Yesakova til
Berlin, hvor hun bl.a. har
skabt det værk, der kan ses
i det lille, men særdeles
ambitiøse udstillingssted
Umbrella i den lille
vestjyske by Lydm.

**Tilstedeværelse
og fravær**
I den ortodokse kristendom
er ikoner fremtrædende. De
gen giver kendte bibelske
personer eller hændelser.
Ofte er det Kristus eller
Jomfru Maria, der er por-
trætteret på ikonen. Det

særlige ved ikonerne er, at
man anser dem for at gøre
den, der findes på maleriet,
nærværende. Den portræt-
terede er således til stede,
ligesom beskueren er det.
Det iøjnefaldende ved
Yesakovas værk er ikke, at
hun har skabt 98 næsten
ens paneler, der umiskend-
ligt minder om de rammer
og baggrunde, en ikons
motiv bliver malet på. Det
iøjnefaldende er, at der
intet motiv er, blot en sort
flade på hvert eneste panel.
Her er intet guld, intet lys
og ingen bibelsk person.
Således har Yesakova malet
Guds fravær med en henvi-

ning til den uretfærdighed,
det overgreb, den rædsel og
den lidelse, der præger
Ukraine i disse år. Værket
kunne for så vidt lige så
godt have været lavet på
baggrund af andre invasi-
onskrige, for når våbnene
taler, er det svært for Gud
at få ørenlyd, og så bliver
teodicéspørgsmålet igen
påtrængende: Hvis Gud er
god, hvorfor findes der så
ondskab i verden?
De 98 sorte ikoner er
Yesakovas bidrag til det
samlede værk, der også
nummer en lydside. Tyske
Sascha Kregel har lavet en
slags komposition, der –

uden at blive egentlig uhyg-
gelig eller voldsom – under-
støtter Yesakovas værk og
dermed bliver en del af det.
Lydene er kraftige, men
ikke enervende. De er
dystre, men ikke skræm-
mende. Umelodiske og dog
iøjnefaldende. Det sidste
måske netop, fordi de flet-
tes sammen med de 98
paneler, så der opstår en
helhed af billedkunst og lyd
i rummet.

umbrella
Lydmunvej 95, Nørre Nebel
Frem til 9. november



Fotos: Jacob Friis-Holm Nielsen

Daily Lazy. *Echoes that Refuse to Fade*. Brno, CZ. 2026
Saliva Live. *Echoes that Refuse to Fade*. Brno, CZ. 2026
CULT. *The Gaze has a History: Yesakova, Struger & Palyvoda at FAVU Brno*, Brno, CZ. 2026
FAKEWHALE.LOG. *Doubled presence in a disembodied space*. Review, Graz, AT. 2026
KUBAPARIS. *Black Wall. Umbrella* | west coast exhibitions Gallery, Nørre Nebel, DNK. 2025
Contemporary Art Library. *Black Wall. Umbrella* | west coast exhibitions Gallery, Nørre Nebel, DNK. 2025
Art Viewer. *Vanitous Spectre*. Munich, DE. 2025
FAKEWHALE LOG. *Vanitous Spectre*. Review, Munich, DE. 2025
KUBAPARIS. *Vanitous Spectre*. Nymphenburg Palace, Iron House, Munich, DE. 2025
Contemporary Art Library. *O, dark dark dark*. Spazio DISPLAY, Parma, IT. 2025
Saliva Live. *Light bent backward, waiting to be forgotten*. Vienna, AT. 2025
Saliva Live. *O, dark, dark, dark*. Parma, IT. 2025
Saliva Live. *Third Space*. Berlin, DE. 2025
Insideart. *Fatmah and the Good Wishes of the Contemporary Cluster*. Andrea Bardi. Rome, IT. 2024
Exibart. *Unexpected Dialogues and New Proposals*. Francesca de Paolis. Rome, IT. 2024
Espoart. Contemporary art magazine. The new Contemporary Cluster venue opens with *“Fatmah”*: immersing yourself in memory. Ilaria Introzzi. 2024
O FLUXO. Solo exhibition *Ugly Scenes. Nuances*. Super Bien!, Berlin, DE. 2024
Nasty Magazine. *Fatmah. Contemporary Cluster*. Rome, IT. 2024
Goldrausch Künstlerinnen Projekt. Interview with Beate Scheder. 2024
Artribune. *La galleria Contemporary Cluster a Roma cambia sede*. Intervista a Giacomo Guidi. 2024
KUBAPARIS. *Traces of timelessness*. Hamburg, DE. 2024
KUBAPARIS. *Memories we have forgotten*. The Address gallery, Brescia, IT. 2024
Saliva Live. *People in paradise will enjoy the spectacle of he'lls torment*. Antwerp, BEL. 2024
Saliva Live. *The inner insularity of utopianism*. Berlin, DE. 2024
Art Viewer. *Memories we have forgotten*. Brescia, IT. 2024
DAZED. Summer issue 2022. *The art of conflict*. 2022

<https://sofiiayesakova.com/publications/>
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The anatomical theater is a space historically associated with the production of knowledge through dissection. The act of investigation is transformed into a procedure. The object is executed in the same technique as the other works and, in its materiality, refers to an architectural surface. It is perceived simultaneously as a table and as a fragment of a wall, as if it were part of a church fresco cut out of its original context and transferred into the exhibition space. The images engraved on its surface (arches and a relief of a skull in the center of the large arch) create different historical associations. The arches refer to the architecture of crematoria, pointing to the industrialized organization of death under the Nazi regime. At the same time, they also recall icons. The skull with crossed bones behind it resonates with visual codes embedded in structures of power. These forms possess an extended genealogy. Emerging in the early modern tradition of memento mori, the skull was widely present in Christian visual culture of the eighteenth century. Over time, this symbolism shifts: from theology to a political technology in which death is administered, calculated, and stripped of individuality. The form of the skull refers to Christian iconography, but on the other hand evokes associations with Nazi symbolism. These meanings coexist within a single image without being reducible to one another. The work unfolds within this superimposition. It traces how symbols migrate between different regimes of meaning. Religious iconography and totalitarian visual systems reveal a structural proximity. Both produce belief through repetition. The body appears as an object of possession and reduction to a sign. The viewer, assuming the position of a researcher, becomes involved in an act of reading shaped by internalized codes and historical memory. Perception unfolds automatically, guided by associations. Interpretation in this case depends on individual experience, cultural context, and accumulated visual knowledge. Thus, the meaning of the work is formed not only within the object, but also in the process of its perception. Death appears as a unit subject to counting, transportation, and incorporation into logistical and architectural structures. The reference to “Cargo 200” extends this logic, placing the work within a continuum in which the management of death continues across different historical regimes. The cold, clinical structure of the table intensifies the sense of detachment. Precision establishes a logic of ordering and analysis. The work reveals the conditions under which evil becomes indistinguishable.

In this part of work (skull relief in the middle of the big arch), I discuss the appropriation of religious symbols by the military construct and the subsequent emergence of new associations. For example, the skull with crossed bones is associated with the Wehrmacht, but this symbol was often used in churches and on gravestones in the 18th century. This work examines how religious symbols are reinterpreted within a military context and acquire new meanings. It is a shift in the function of the image depending on the system in which it operates. The skull and crossbones, now often associated with the Wehrmacht, originally belonged to the Christian visual tradition as a memento mori. In churches and on 18th-century gravestones, it pointed toward the possibility of salvation. In the military context, the meaning of the symbol changes. Death is no longer understood as a religious category, but becomes an element of discipline and power. The image is used for identification, intimidation, and the construction of a collective identity. This shift can be understood as a transition from a religious to a functional use of the symbol. In this sense, as Paul Virilio notes, visual forms within military systems become part of a broader logic of control and the organization of perception. The work shows that the meaning of a symbol is not fixed, but shaped by the context in which it is used.

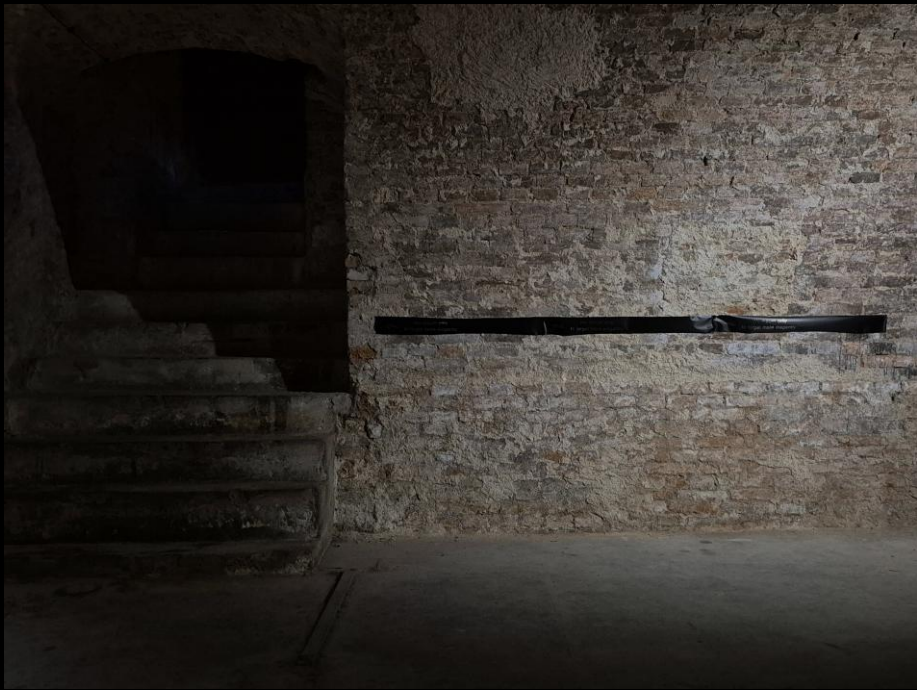
In this series of works (funeral ribbons), I use poetically formulated phrases that feel like incomplete or contextless statements, open to ambiguous interpretation. The phrases are printed on long funeral ribbons. For example, the phrase that I use for the exhibition in FAVU: “We mourn only to forget more elegantly” is intentionally ambiguous. I am not referring to the grief of an individual, but to a more global phenomenon, one that is instrumentalized by the state in order to later forget. For instance, the remembrance of fallen soldiers. The phrase questions the sincerity of mourning and reveals it as a structured, almost instrumental gesture. The word “elegantly” is crucial here. It introduces the dimension of aesthetics and intention. Forgetting appears as something carefully shaped and refined. At the same time, it is important to me that the phrase itself sounds appealing. It has a certain softness and almost poetic completeness. This aesthetic attractiveness points to a broader idea. The allure of evil and violence, especially when they are framed through symbols, rituals, and language. Evil often appears in an aestheticized, culturally mediated form that makes it acceptable, and at times even desirable. In this context, the work does not address individual grief, but a broader system.

We Mourn Only To Forget More Elegantly 1.1.,

400 × 200 × 20 cm, Acrylic, gesso, gelatine, varnish, wooden boards, multiplex, acrylic glass, 2026



Echoes that Refuse to Fade
Exhibition view. FAVU Gallery, Brno Czech Republic
2026



Echoes that Refuse to Fade
Exhibition view. FAVU Gallery, Brno Czech Republic
2026

Series of works *Blind Spot* evokes a psychological state of tension experienced by the viewer who sees only their own blurred reflection, an atmosphere of expectation, uncertainty, and emptiness. A mirrored yet murky surface. The reflection is present, but it does not yield a clear image. It evokes the same cognitive discomfort we experience in the chaos of information. The “numerical screen” of the media, infographics and death counters turns grief into abstraction. The glossy surface acts as a “screen” onto which the imagination projects its own information. There is no concrete body. A number doesn’t smell like blood, doesn’t cry, doesn’t decay. The “iconnpanel” is stripped of the image of suffering. Instead of a wound, there is emptiness. This uncertainty creates internal stress, a psychological equivalent of anxiety, when danger is present, but the threat never materializes.

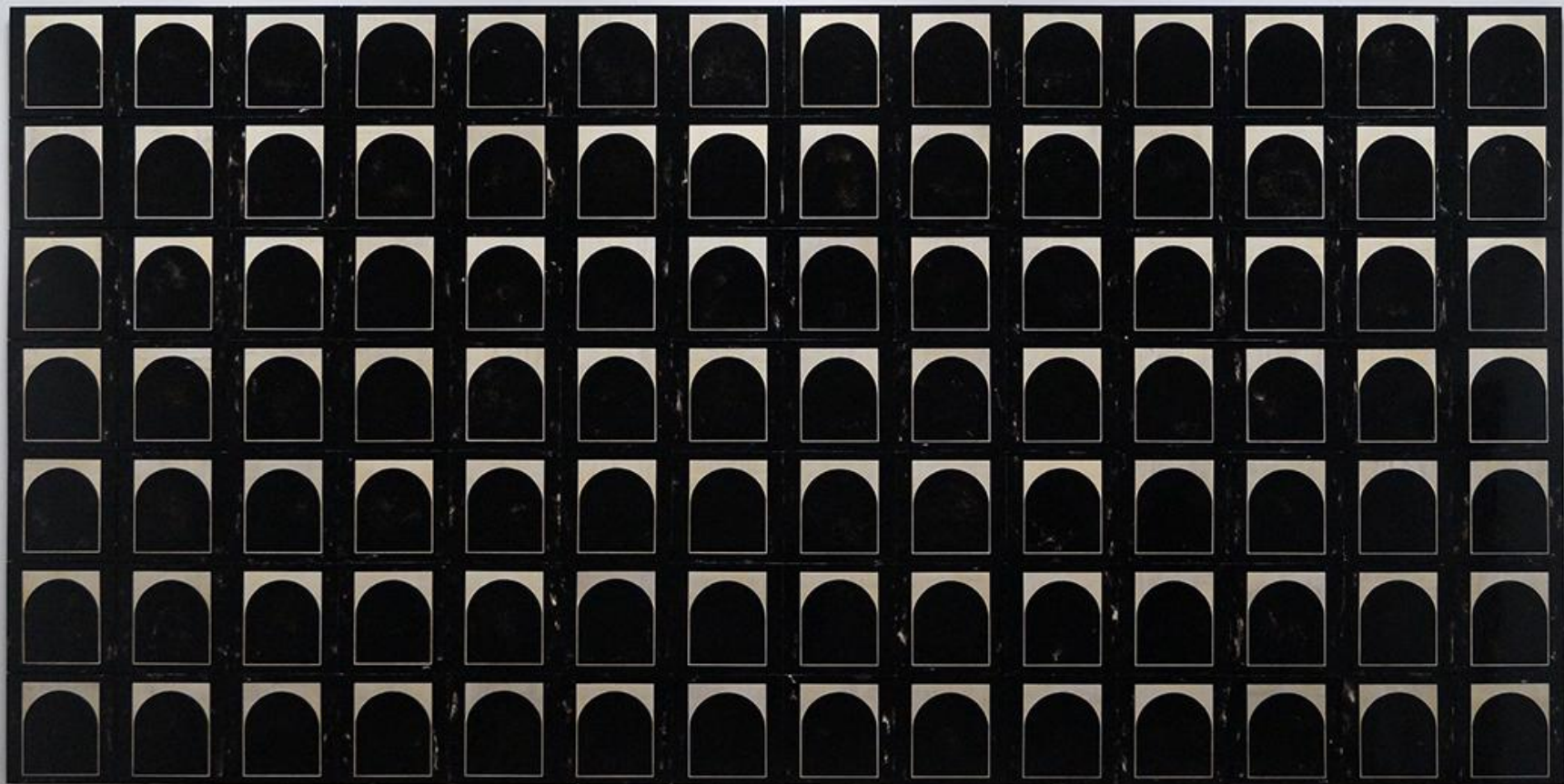
The series *Blind Spot 2.1.–2.100.* consists of 100 panels. This repetition and desacralization are an important part of the statement. Like news bulletins about new fronts and crises: the sheer number overwhelms, turning tragedy into background noise. The sacred format is transferred into a secular narrative. We expect consolation but receive only the horizontal plane of statistics and emptiness, hence the sensation of a “world abandoned by God.” Identical panels act as a visualized “casualty report”: anonymous, almost statistical. Their quantity and monotony transform silent horror into a mass, endless repetition of violence. The “mute scream” of the works emphasizes horror without an object. An iconostasis without icons visualizes the very structure of modern tension: the endless replication of traumatic events, the loss of the image of truth. Faced with condensed emptiness, the viewer is simultaneously under pressure, each sees only their own reflection, but collectively we share the same dark side of our world. The rhythm of repetition resembles liturgy, but the prayer is addressed not to God, but to the void, dramatizing the sense of abandonment. As a result, repetition exposes the method of statistics while simultaneously breaking through its numbing effect. Numbers don’t allow us to feel tragedy. Psychic numbing: the more victims there are, the weaker the emotional response, the brain shields itself from overload. The panels multiply, but the feeling remains at zero: the viewer realizes that a hundred feels the same as one.

All panels seem the same, individuality is erased, leaving an impersonal “single case.” This is how statistics work: methodologically, it “levels” the difference between lives for the sake of strict accounting. In this work, I chose rhythm over narrative. In an icon, there is a central event. Here, instead of an event—there is rhythm. Instead of a single sacred narrative, I propose a layered system. A reference to the icon-painting tradition, a sacred context. A clean, reflective surface gathers reflections of people, benches, the hall—reality is assembled from multiple fragments. An icon usually contains a revelation, but here there is only reflection, in which each person sees themselves. The space is cathedral-like and oppressive: long “church” benches dictate the posture of the body (sitting, waiting, silence), while the number of identical panels exerts pressure.

The benches create a ritual of waiting and co-presence. In a church, their function is to unite the congregation in prayer; here, to gather viewers in shared silence, the horror of war as a collective but unspoken experience. The mirrored emptiness emphasizes that behind every number is a face, yet we see only our own reflection—a sign of personal responsibility for someone else’s “invisibility.” This work is not about numbers, but about how numbers kill feeling. Through repetition, you intensify the numbness to the point of loud, almost physical pressure, forcing the viewer to perceive the scale of the tragedy precisely through its apparent imperceptibility.

Blind Spot 2.1.-2.100.,
each 40 × 40 × 5, total 280 × 560 × 5 cm, Acrylic, gesso, gelatine, varnish on wooden board
2025





Blind Spot 2.1.-2.100.,
each 40 × 40 × 5, total 280 × 560 × 5 cm, Acrylic, gesso, gelatine, varnish on wooden board
2025

In the series of works ***Ugly Scenes. Nuances***, I engage with the philosophical inquiries of Gilles Deleuze, exploring the concepts of layering, differentiation, repetition, vibration, and the multilayered nature of reality, where processuality and oscillations are the fundamental principles of existence. Contrasts, as an inseparable part of the historical process, structure perception, and my work is aimed at contemplating these oppositions within the context of rigid philosophical and social constructs. Within this framework, I adhere to the theory of "punitive restraint" (Foucault), where concealing the emotional component, seemingly cut by anxiety, becomes an act of control over perception and an attempt to focus on intellectual analysis.

The theme of unrealized utopias and thinking in terms of totality is deeply integrated into my work, hidden in the carved details on wooden surfaces, absorbed by black pigment, which symbolizes both absorption and the absence of light. I continue to develop the idea of the repetition of violence in history, emphasizing the processes of systematization, classification, and ordering of events. These processes, in essence, create a distance between us and the emotional response to the tragic episodes of our time, turning them into abstraction and statistics. My visual narrative draws inspiration from religious symbolism, often used in sacred art, and the strict conventions of minimalism. The fragile vertical lines of the works contrast with contextual elements, creating tension between form and content. Modernity, immersed in anxiety and catastrophization, demands organization, even in the most chaotic reality.

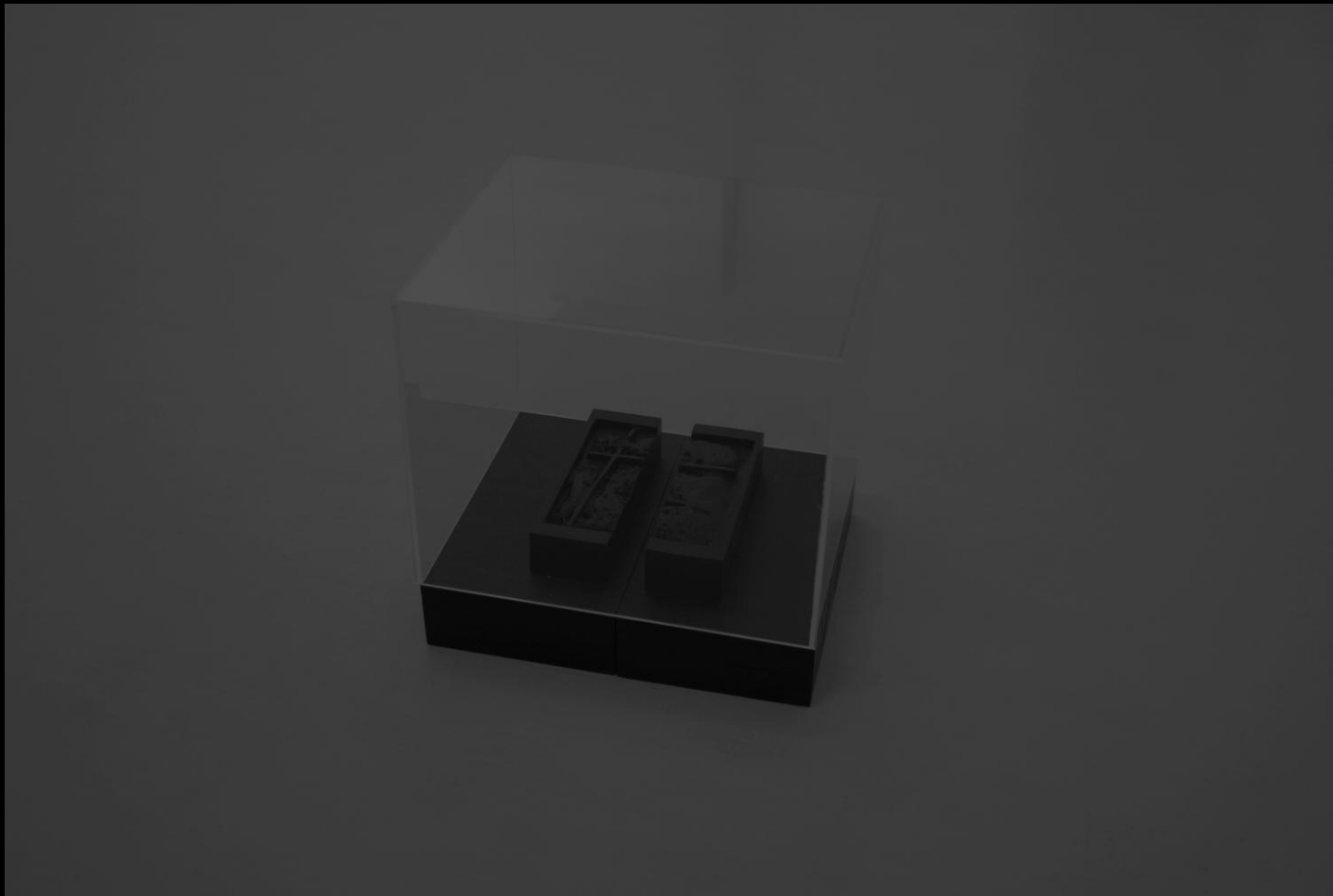
My approach also intersects with the concept of the "world as a dynamic structure" by Deleuze, where recurring forms and processes possess their own internal logic and movement. I continue to use suggestive visual methods, deliberately concealing the emotional component behind a rigid minimalist form. This forces the viewer to closely search for the hidden meaning, immersing them in a process of reflection and interpretation. Particular attention in the works is given to elements of bone deterioration, a symbol of the confrontation between physical form and human vulnerability, both physically and mentally. Bone erosion serves as a metaphor for inevitable mortality and reflects the eternal clash between decay and renewal. Here, a dichotomy arises: decay gives meaning to life and simultaneously provokes anxiety. Bone is the foundation of the human body, its core, but disorganized bone deterioration destroys this stability, reminding us of the fragility of existence. However, destruction is not an end, but a movement—the decay of the old opens space for the new.

Additionally, I use elements visually similar to the works of artist Hans Schwarz, particularly his piece *Death and the Maiden*, to create a dialogue that highlights issues that still concern us all, with a 500-year gap. This allows the modern viewer to reconsider timeless themes, despite cultural and historical differences. Aesthetic visualization of violent scenes in different eras traditionally carried a cathartic function, conditioned by eschatological consciousness and collective fears. When encountering images of violence, we face a whole spectrum of emotions that have a "cleansing" effect. This phenomenon can be observed in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, where the tragedy of the individual served as a metaphor for the tragedy of the world. In my works, this interconnection is also evident, linking personal and global tragedy through the language of art.

Ugly scenes. Nuances 1.2-1.3., 2.1

190 × 11 × 4 cm (x2), beech wood, gesso, black lacquer, black wood, linseed oil, acrylic glass
2025





Ugly scenes. Nuances 1.2.-1.3., 2.1
190 × 11 × 4 cm (x2), beech wood, gesso, black lacquer, black wood, linseed oil, acrylic glass
2025

For the exhibition ***A Line that Penetrates Matter***, Sofiia Yesakova creates a sense of isolation through the use of semi-transparent polyethylene film covering the surfaces of the space, immersing the viewer in an intimate, almost sacred, timeless zone. The space, isolated from the external world, becomes a place for concentrating attention on the line as a metaphorical element. The lines cut through the tranquil space, their elegance contrasting with the contextual component, creating a feeling of vulnerability.

Matter, after being pierced, remains, only its form changes. For Georges Bataille, a wound or cut is “the revelation of a secret or an access to the sacred,” and “the sacrifice—an act where pain acquires a sacred dimension.” In the Renaissance, piercing with arrows was used as an aesthetic device. The strict lines emphasize the fragility and tension of the body. For Bataille, the piercing of the body is a symbolic rupture of boundaries, through which the subject encounters an extreme experience. The openings of wounds and penetrating lines in the presented works subject matter to a graphic structure, creating a tangible tension of sacred connection. The wood (matter) retains a “memory of pain.” In the cracks, scars, and traces of tools, the experience of time and touch is recorded.

Throughout the entire exhibition runs the idea of fear of the inexplicable and the aestheticization of it as a final acknowledgment of humility in the face of the impossibility of rationalizing it. The fear of physical death, as well as the inevitability of decay, is traced in the works from the series ***Ugly Scenes. Nuances***. Yesakova explores these fears through distortion and deformation, transforming ugliness and suffering into an aesthetic object of reflection. The aestheticization of suffering as an act of humility. The central object of the exhibition is an eye, pierced by a metallic element and seemingly forced to remain open. A mute witness, and at the same time a symbol of vulnerability. This is a reference to Lucia of Syracuse, the saint often depicted holding her own eyes on a plate in her hands.

All the objects of the exhibition are united by a tangible cinematographic sensitivity, as well as subconscious fears, which refer to Georges Bataille’s reflections on eroticism and death.

Ugly scenes. Nuances 3. 1.

maple wood, beeswax, solvent-based wood paint, acrylic glas, multiplex, metal rod, acrylic
2025





Ugly scenes. Nuances 1.2.-1.3., 2.1
190 × 11 × 4 cm (x2), beech wood, gesso, black lacquer, black wood, linseed oil, acrylic glass
2025

Is it possible to fill the gaps created by the lack of answers to some of history's questions?

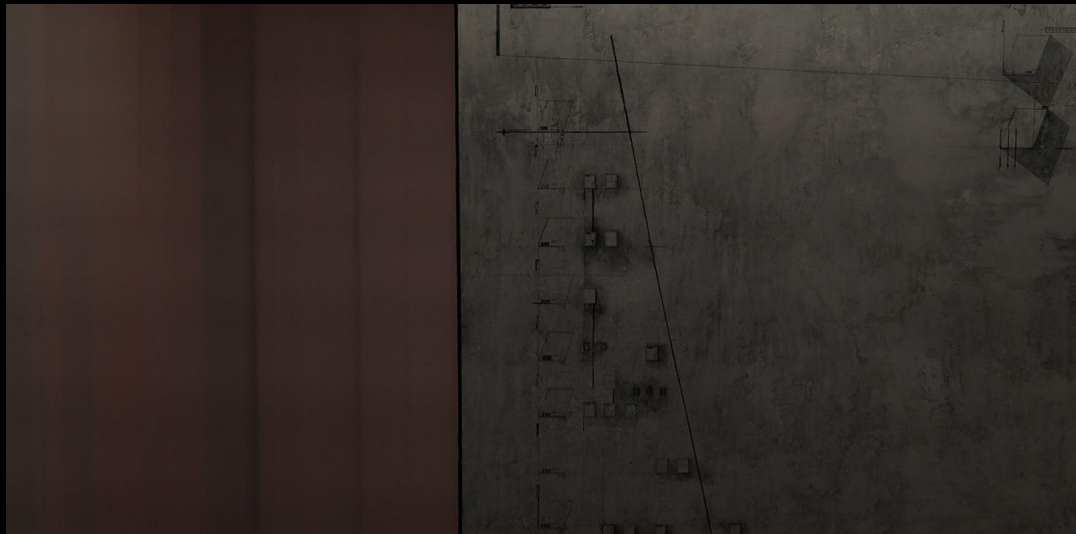
"The subject hastens to fill these gaps with appropriate ideas, sometimes even with pieces of the mosaic that do not fit." — Jacques Lacan.

War memorials give the impression of something depressing and coldly detached, yet they have regained relevance in the context of disputes among various groups over history, over who is remembered, and how. The exhibition presents works from the ***Cargo 200*** series. The working surface is prepared using techniques from icon painting, yet without specific iconographic images, only schemes, as if the structure of faith remains, but the content has fled. This installation reflects on the phenomenon of war as a whole, not merely on current conflicts.

Evil is always "the other." One would never use such a word to describe oneself.

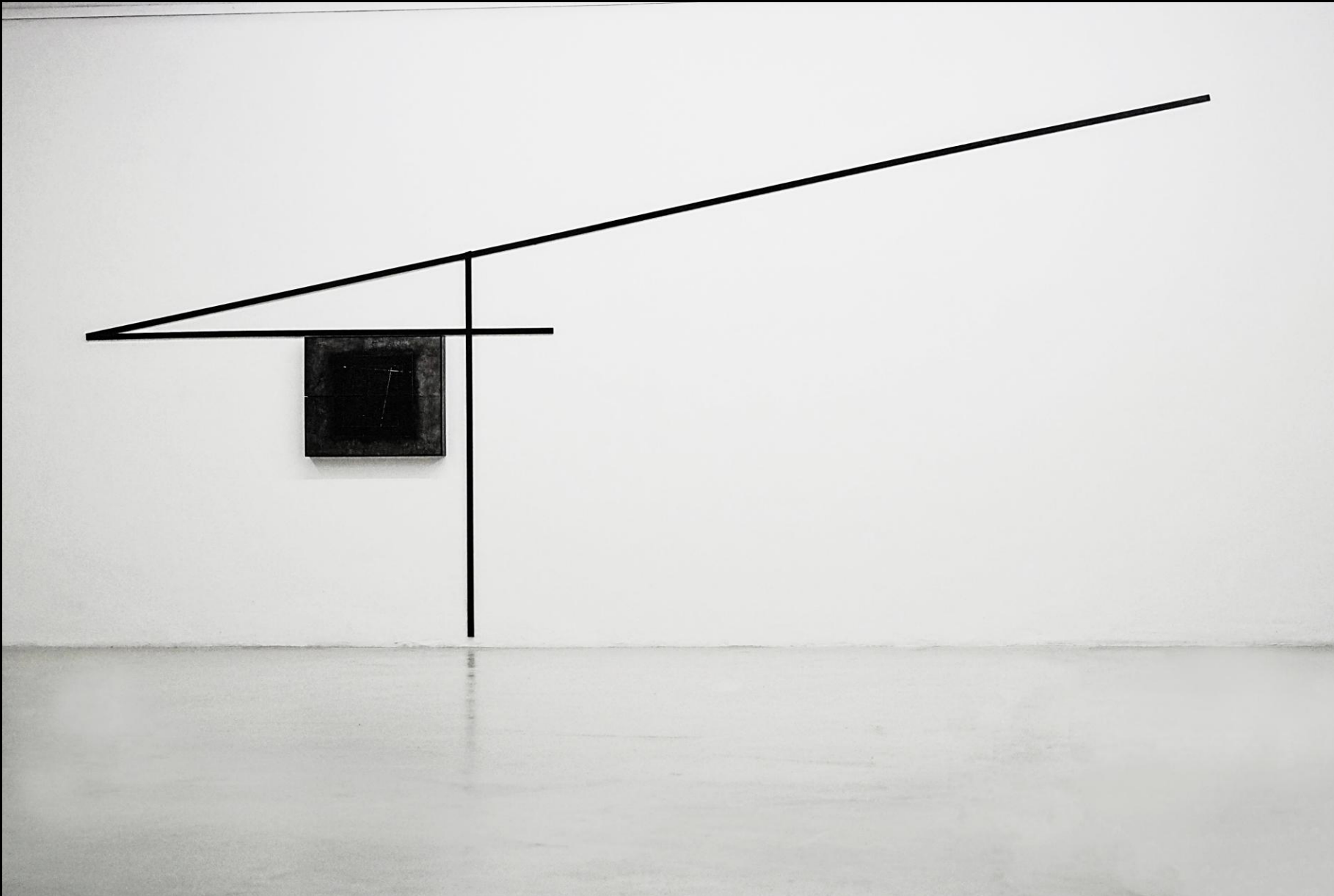
But evil is not outside us. It is sedimented in our silences, embedded in our omissions, in the rituals of forgetting we mistake for healing. Memorials do not preserve memory, they formalise oblivion, dressing amnesia in marble and symmetry. We mourn only to forget more elegantly. What begins as commemoration ends in abstraction, and abstraction becomes justification. The scheme without image, the icon without God. This is modern memory. A hollow liturgy of grief repeated to assure ourselves we are not complicit. We are. We always are. We turn memory into form. We give suffering a shape so that it becomes bearable. But form is a way of disarming horror. The icon without a face, the memorial without pain, the text without a scream—all of them are attempts to domesticate the unbearable. Symbols that once served as consolation now function as barriers. Not to remember, but to not come too close. The schemes etched onto the wood do not pray, and they do not accuse. They are silent. And silence, repeated a thousand times, becomes a system.

We live among objects meant to remind us of suffering, and yet we feel nothing. This numbed memory is worse than forgetting. Forgetting, at least, is honest. Memory reduced to form, to an aesthetic gesture, to a cultural obligation—is a lie passed off as compassion. There is no redemption in repetition. No salvation in understanding. History is a scar we scratch open again and again, just to prove we're still alive. But that isn't life. It is existence after defeat.



Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 5.1.
200 × 100 × 8 cm, Acrylic, gesso, gelatin and wooden board
2023





The long wooden elements in the installation *Cargo 200. Experimental Projections on Surfaces. 5.7.* are constructivist details, referencing the dream of a better world once envisioned by the constructivists. But what went wrong? We are now living in that imagined "future," and yet a better world remains out of reach. This work also employs the technique of iconography, though without specific religious figures. The black square represents a burial site. Since we do not know all the dead, their names, their stories, we can barely make out a few coffins in the overhead projection. The piece, taken as a whole, speaks to war as a broader phenomenon, not just a comment on current events. Through her visual and symbolic language, the artist addresses the cyclical recurrence of world-historical events. Themes of violence and resistance are deeply embedded in the human condition. Our capacity to adapt to the senselessness of war and tragedy, regardless of scale, stands in stark contrast to our awareness of their devastating consequences. Catastrophes leave indelible scars on the human soul.

Sofiia's work does not offer comfort or resolution. Instead, it demands engagement, a challenge to viewers to recognize their role within the cycles of history and to reflect on the choices that either sustain or disrupt them. Violence does not return. It never leaves. Resistance is not heroism, but the final tremor of a being unwilling to yield to the void. The artist offers no salvation; she charts the anatomy of despair, showing that lucidity is not a virtue, but a burden too heavy for most to bear.

Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 5.7., 60 × 70 × 9 cm, variable dimensions (pine wood planks), Acrylic, gesso and wooden board, pine wood planks, 2024

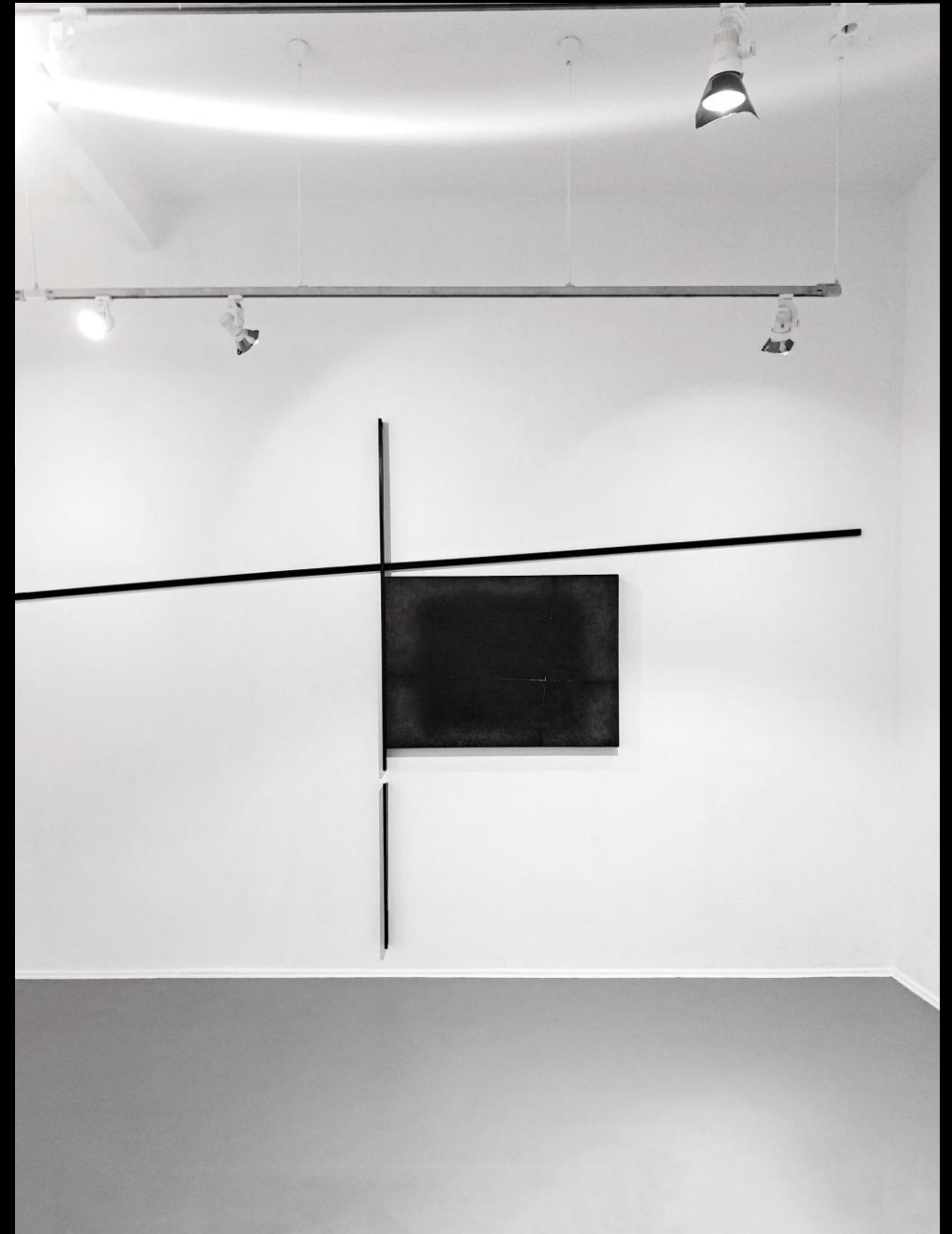
The works of Sofiia Yesakova are inspired by statistical diagrams, information technology and constructivism. She also uses the technique of icon painting for her paintings, without figuration or religiosity, with gesso, many layers of gelatine and wood.

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



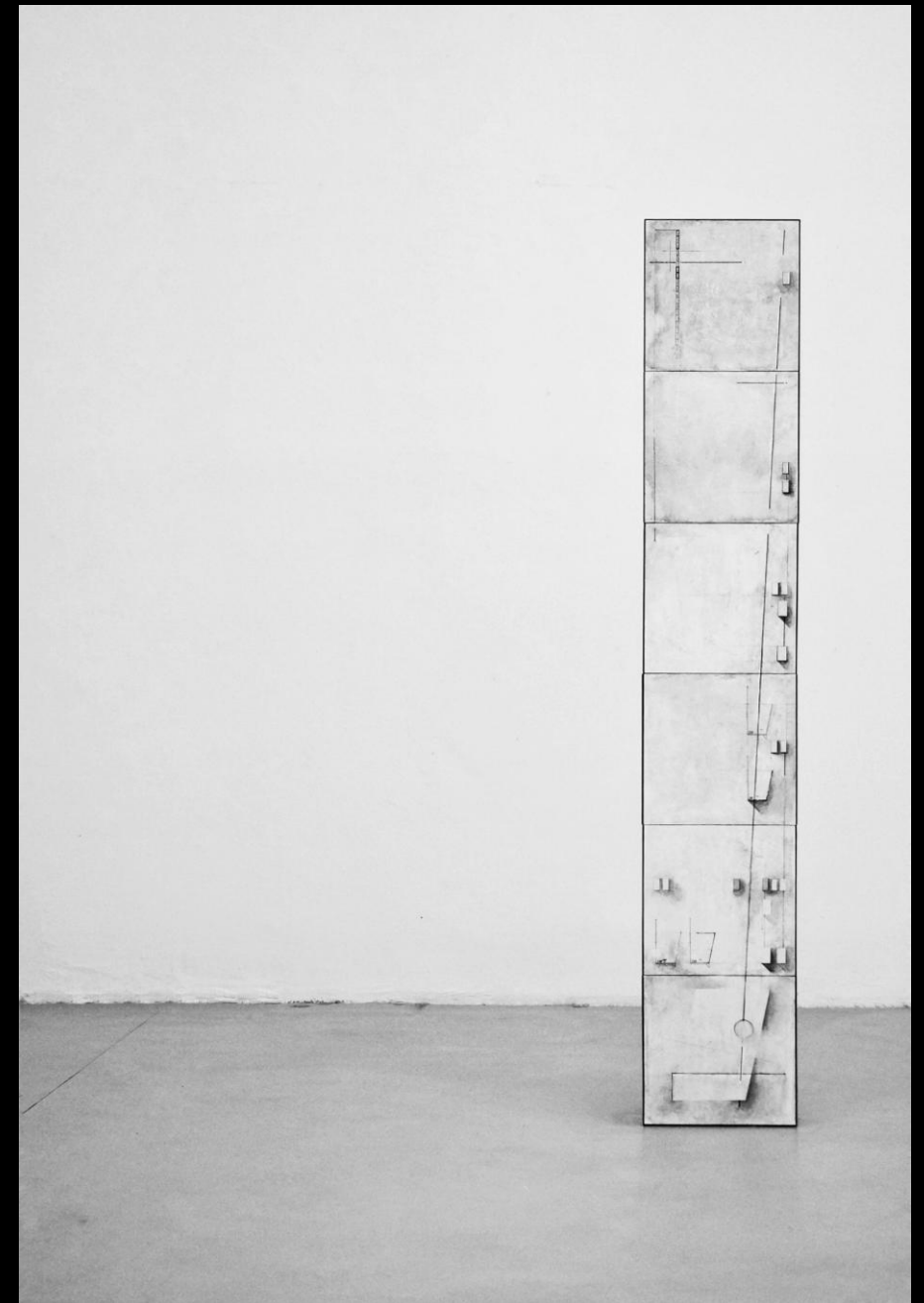
Cargo 200 is a term from military jargon. It refers to the transport of those killed in war back home. For the transport, the body of the deceased is placed in a special container, usually made of zinc. In my project, I use the method of "objectification" of my subjective war experiences by intuitively re-enacting 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.

Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 5.1.
200 × 100 × 8 cm, Acrylic, gesso, gelatin and wooden board, 2023





Ugly scenes. Nuances 1.1., 175 × 10 × 10 cm, 70 × 40 cm, 100 × 25 cm, Acrylic, gesso, gelatin, wooden boards, black lacquer, funeral ribbon, 2024

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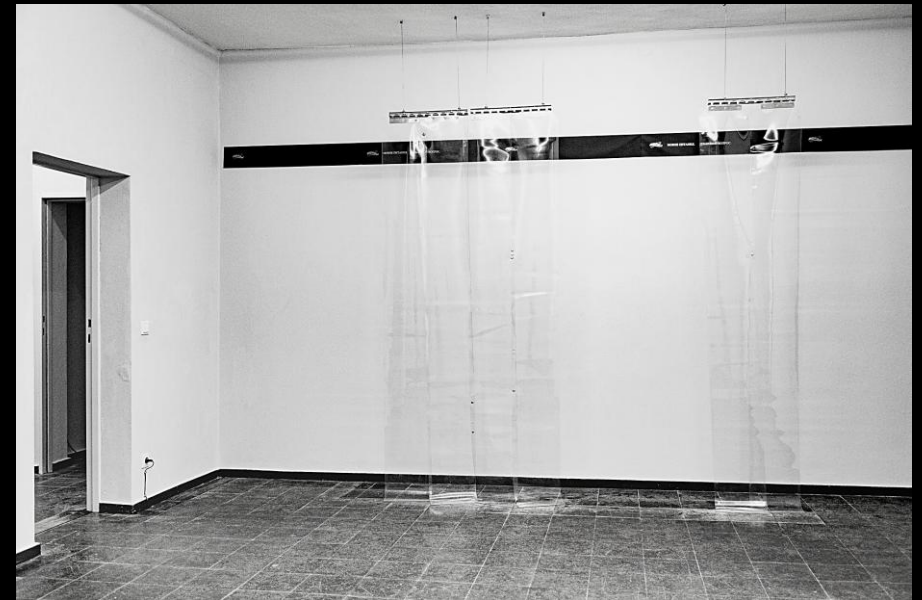
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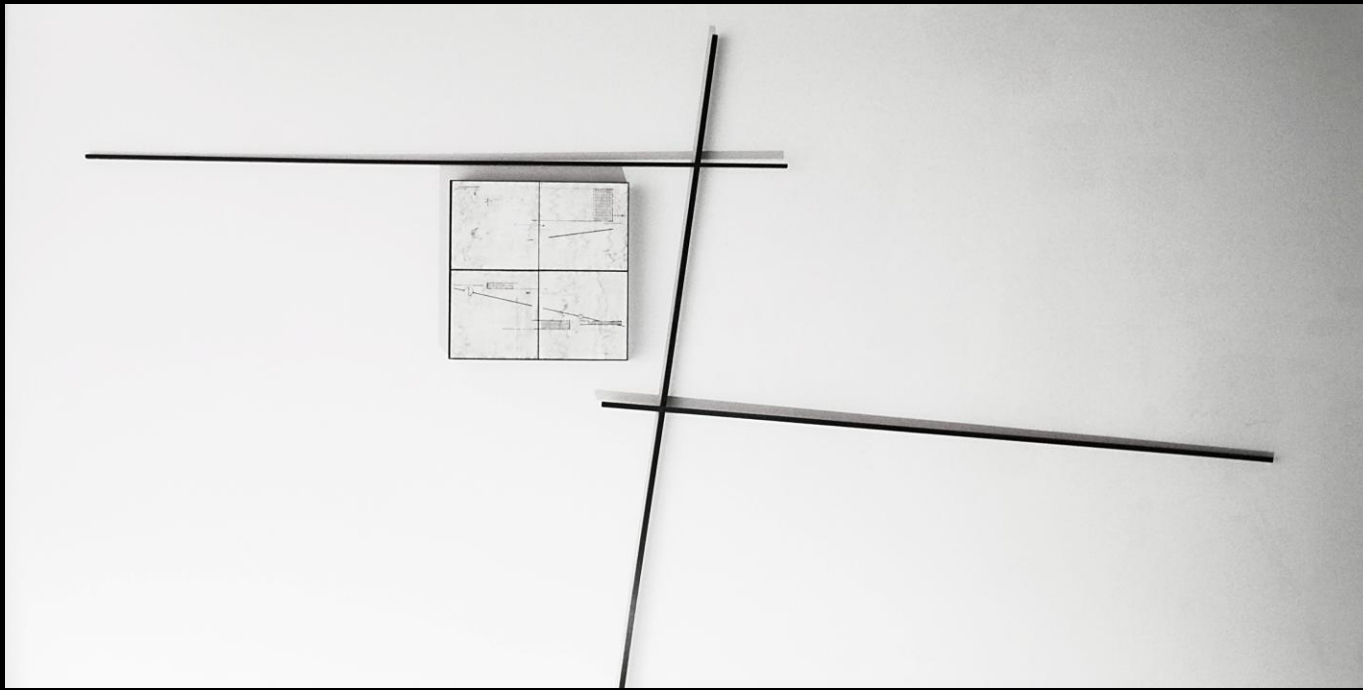
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Installation view. *People in paradise will enjoy the spectacle of hell's torment.*
PVC curtains, screws, mourning ribbon. *Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 5.5.*
135 × 82 × 8 cm (×3),. Acrylic, gesso and wood board. Close-up.





Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 6.1., 60 × 60 × 9 cm, pine wood planks - 220 × 2 cm (X3), Acrylic, gesso and wooden boards, 2023



Installation view, *Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 4.1.*, 280 × 110 × 10 cm, Acrylic, gesso, wooden planks and MDF panels, 2022

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Installation view, *Cargo 200. Experimental projections on surfaces. 4.1.*, 280 × 110 × 10 cm, Acrylic, gesso, wooden planks and MDF panels, 2022

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 draw on the concept of *punitive restraint* (Foucault) in an attempt to conceal the emotional component, as if severed by anxiety. The awareness of unrealised utopias and thinking in terms of totality are embedded in the details carved into the wooden surface and obscured by black pigment.

I continue to reflect on the recurrence of violence in history and the systems of formalisation, classification, and ordering of events that create a 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 employed in sacred art, and the cold conventionality of minimalism. The vertical, fragile lines of the monument-like sculptures stand in contrast to the contextualised element. The horizontal, repetitive lines drawn on the "monuments" faintly resemble bureaucratic forms or formal lists extending into infinity, an endless repetition of history's mistakes that cannot be corrected. Modernity is steeped in anxiety and catastrophising, giving rise to a compulsion to systematise everything.

The aesthetic visualisation of violent scenes across different epochs has served a cathartic function, shaped by eschatological consciousness and collective fears. When confronted with such imagery, we experience a range of emotions that have a "purifying" effect. Clear examples of this can be found in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Through the tragedy of the individual, the tragedy of the world is revealed, and vice versa. An interest in the interaction between object and space is also evident in the works, where contrasting elements of the installation are placed in dialogue.

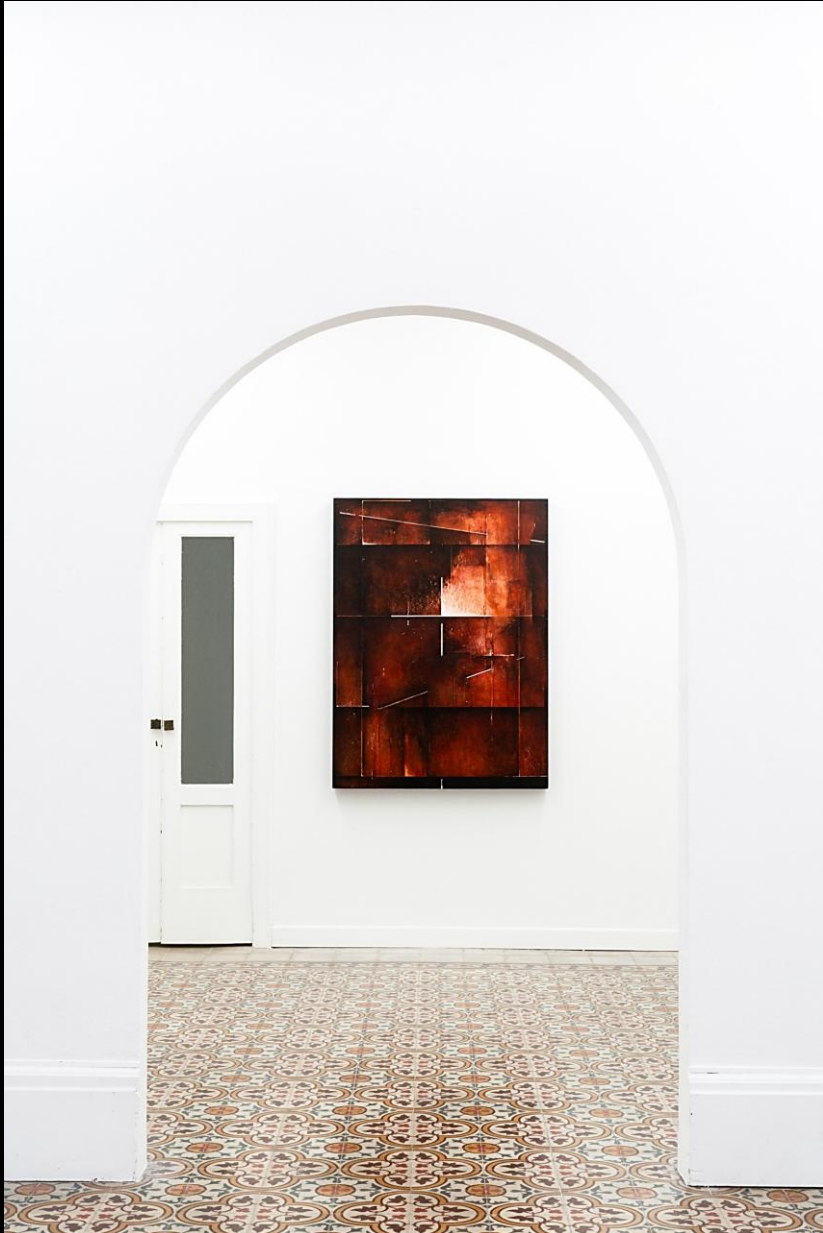


Ugly scenes. Nuances 1.1., 175 × 10 × 10 cm, 70 × 40 cm, 100 × 25 cm, Acrylic, gesso, gelatin, wooden boards, black lacquer, funeral ribbon, 2024





Ugly scenes. Nuances 1.1., 175 × 10 × 10 cm, 70 × 40 cm, 100 × 25 cm, Acrylic, gesso, gelatin, wooden boards, black lacquer, funeral ribbon, 2024

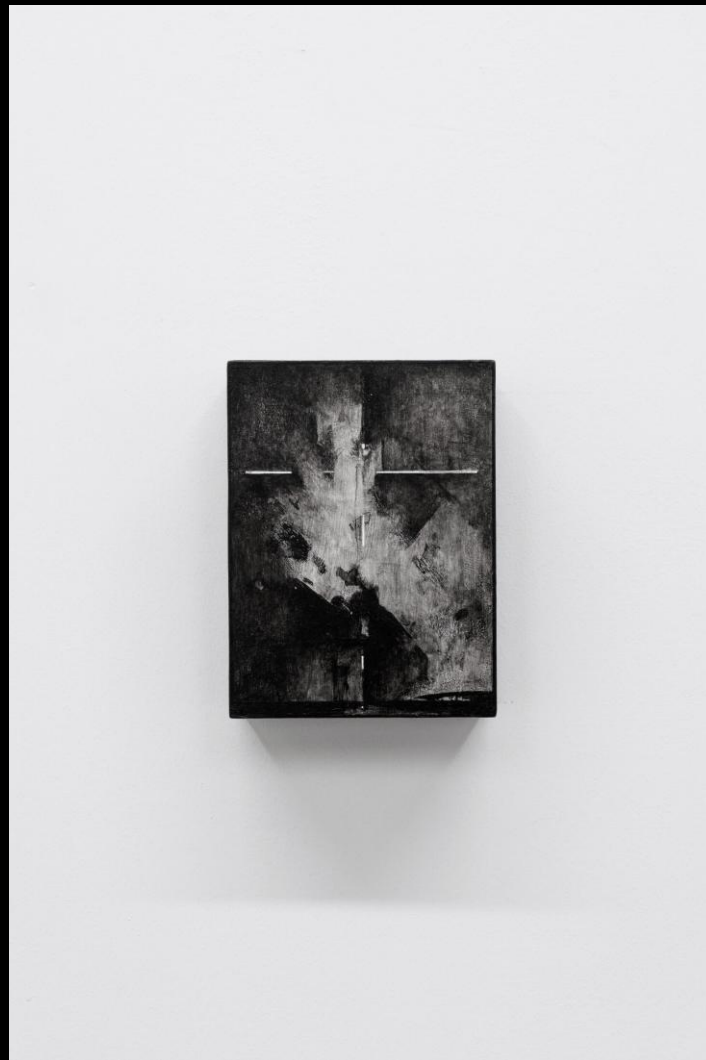


War landscape in the optic of icons.. 8.0, 140 × 104 × 7,5 cm, Acrylic, gesso and wooden board, 2024
Installation view of the exhibition *Memories we have forgotten*, the Address Gallery, Brescia, IT, 2024

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. Instant 3.6. Instant 3.7. Instant 3.1., Acrylic, gesso and wooden boards, 20 × 15 × 5 cm, 2024

The exhibition *Light bent backward, waiting to be forgotten* brings together three artistic practices in which light, traditionally a symbol of visibility, knowledge, and truth no longer moves forward. It refuses to be guiding, all-penetrating. Instead, it turns toward oblivion, distortion, and transformation. Light no longer illuminates but recedes, like memory, like voice, like a trace dissolving into matter. The deviation backward becomes a gesture pointing to resistance against the linearity of time, or to something that once moved forward but now unexpectedly retreats. This is exhibition about what becomes invisible, elusive, unfixable, about materials susceptible to decay. About structures that seem clear at first glance but conceal duality, violence and ideology.

In the practice of Nabil Aniss, light is less a visual phenomenon and more an inner energy that arises through sound, movement, trance, and self-harm. Aniss engages with the history of oppression and mysticism as acts of liberation. In his new work *Structures and Positions*, Aniss refers to Michel Foucault's essay *The Utopian Body*, in which the body is described as elusive, both real and impossible. In this film, the body becomes an "in-between" space, oscillating between visibility and disappearance, between social control and emancipation. Light here serves as a metaphor for a utopian gesture: a departure from fixed bodily identities and the unveiling of spaces of freedom hidden within ritual. In his films, bodies become sources of light that, however, deviate backwards. Inward, toward their origins.

Céline Struger works within a space where the organic and the artificial, the material and the fluid, interact in an eternal cycle of transformations. Her sculptures and installations are traces of processes that have already begun and are yet to be completed. Water, her primary material, flows through forms, changes them, and destroys them. It interacts with rust, tannins, and pigments, creating painterly traces of time, erosion, and entropy. In her practice, light is not an illuminating spotlight but a reflection, fleeting and temporary. Light may vanish into rust, dissolve in water, or be absorbed by porous surfaces. Here, light is decay. It deviates backwards, becoming a material trace of a lost presence. The space Struger creates is one where the sacred collides with the abandoned.

In her practice, Sofiia Yesakova uses visual strategies that deliberately conceal emotional content within strict minimalist forms, prompting viewers to search for and carefully consider hidden meanings. Her works point to how a "pure" visual language can mask the violence of systems and ideologies. Yet within these schematics, there is a disruption. The lines are too thin, the images too fragile, the materials too alive, as if living imagery interrupts and destabilizes the rigid structures. Here, light is no longer absolute; it cracks, trembles, and loses focus. It deviates backwards, toward the pre-rational, the sacred, the iconological memory torn from its context and placed into a new space. In the works presented, the motif of bone decay (osteosarcoma) symbolizes the confrontation of physical form with human vulnerability.

Across all three artistic positions, light is something that no longer strives toward the center. It slips away. It no longer points the way but turns toward the past, toward the body, toward ritual, toward material. It deviates backwards, to where memory is inseparable from forgetting, where form disintegrates in order to be reborn.





Ugly scenes. Nuances 4.1., 100 × 100 × 5 cm (x2), black wood, linseed oil, beeswax, funeral ribbon, 2025

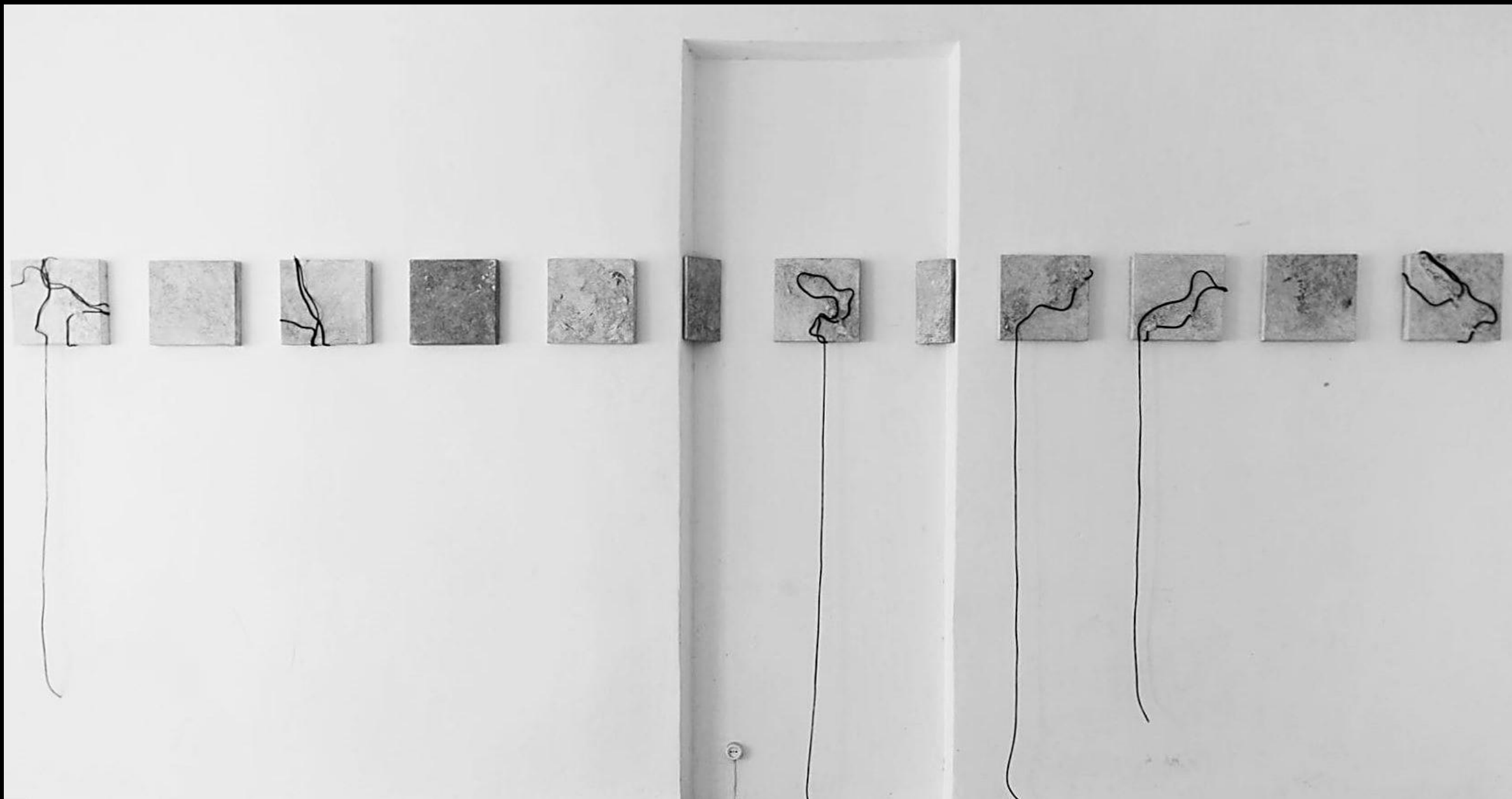
In *Altar in a modern context. 1.2.*, I use a minimalist mode of presentation, referencing the minimalists of the 20th century, particularly the Rothko Chapel. While studying in a workshop focused on monumental art and temple culture, I chose to turn to the Western tradition and reinterpret the space of the Catholic Church as a Western European analogue to the Orthodox iconostasis, assigning it a new role in a contemporary context.

The central idea of this part of the project is to explore the role of fear and pain through introspection. Fear, as a senseless phenomenon, lingers in the air and compels us to search for its causes. It shatters the familiar structure of life, seeking out its cracks and weak points in order to provoke a conflict with existence itself. Considering the significance of the iconostasis and altar in today's context, I chose to elevate the metaphysical image of pain and place it where religious imagery would traditionally reside.

As I see it, the image of pain and fear represents a refusal to settle for an illusory peace of mind. "Work addiction" becomes the only escape in the modern world. By constantly acting, enslaved by the fruits of our labor, we become mere extensions of those fruits (objects), and unconsciously avoid facing ourselves, because doing so reveals a deep sense of emptiness. In this case, pain becomes a form of salvation, alleviating that emptiness. And thus, it becomes chronic. This is an iconostasis of lifeless, industrial color, its texture reminiscent of a tombstone or an old concrete wall. At its core are compositionally arranged examples of engineering calculations, within which pulsating forms reside—a formal representation of pain and fear.



Altar in a modern context. 1.2., 350 × 200 × 7 cm, Acrylic, gesso, wooden boards, MDF panels, 2021



Altar in a modern context. 1.3., 30 × 30 × 5 cm (X20), Acrylic, gesso, wooden boards, MDF panels, 2021



In the first part of the project there are 20 interconnected works of square shape and size, forming a frieze-like structure.

Works above eye level to emphasize the impossibility of influencing the processes of globalization. The strict architecture of geometric shapes, structure and the rejection of unnecessary elements arose from the desire to control and systematize uncontrollable life processes. The deprivation of the body and, therefore, bloodlessness is an algebraized state of abstract drawing, in which visibility is separated from the rest of the physical meaning, following the example of the modernist desire for absolute autonomy.

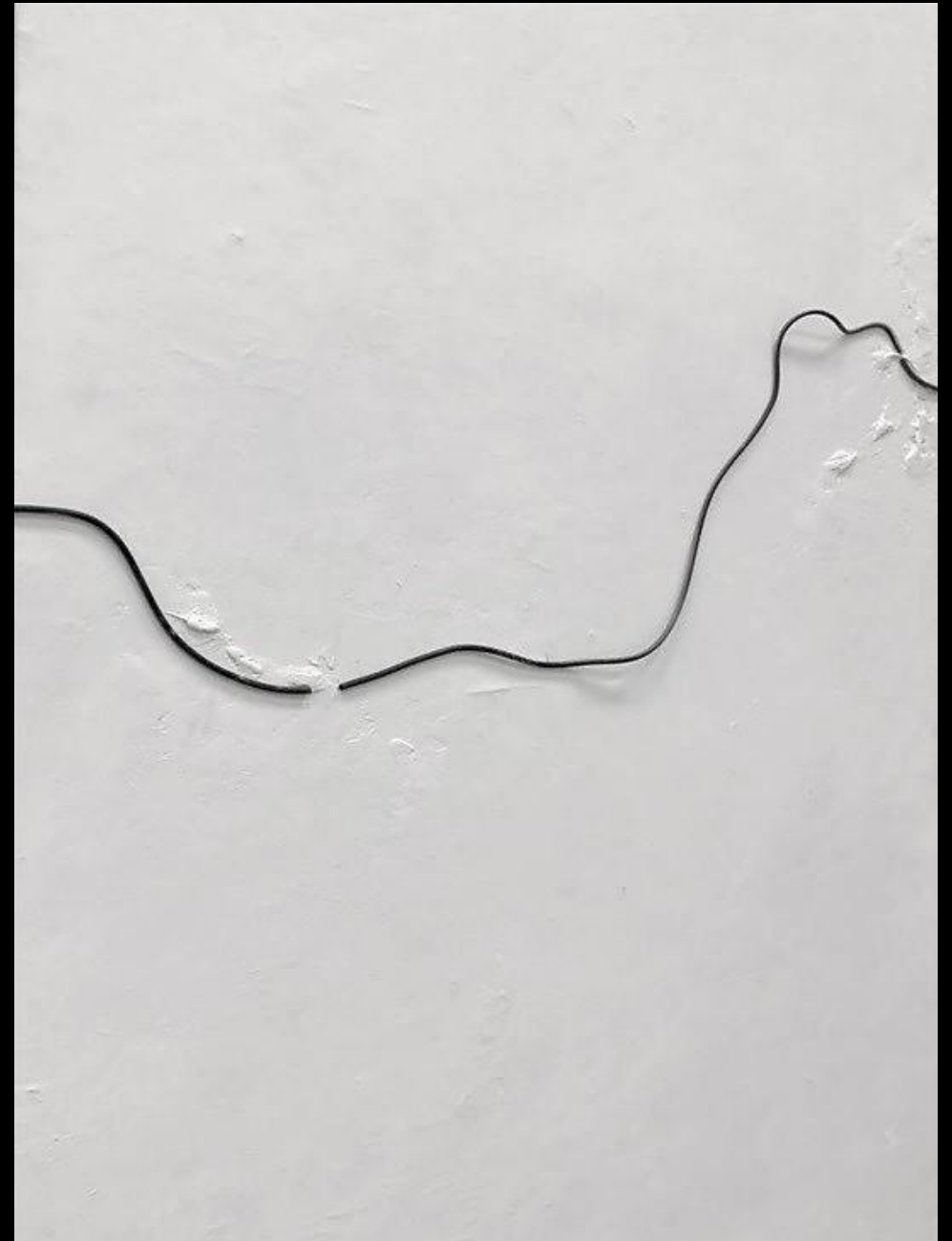
On the central wall is the third part of the project, namely, my interpretation of the altar, the structure of which also resembles an Orthodox iconostasis, but without drawings and ornaments. Only its size and shape evoke similar feelings of purity and grandeur in the viewer, but in the modern sense, due to the sterility, in which even lifeless pipes resemble anthropomorphic objects. In my opinion, this is due to the unconscious fear of emptiness and, therefore, human mortality. In the second and third parts of this project, black tubes create a formal image of vessels or arteries, giving the ascetic, inanimate matter a sense of corporality and internal pulsation. They are metaphorical and may resemble a cord or cable, which is also a symbol of a certain connection and distribution of information. This is an algorithm that is built on a non-verbal, visual level.

The main goal of this installation is to convey sensual impulses, a sense of the continuity and unpredictability of many globalization processes, to give the viewer a unique perception of the author's encrypted algorithm. It is impossible to understand the nature of reality, but you can feel it. Our brain itself can create movement by looking at a static installation and imagining the unthinkable. The main goal is also to create an illusory space in which the viewer is located. In conclusion, the purpose of this work was to convey the processes that excite me in the language of minimalism, with its strict formal rules that correspond to my personality and character. In fact, I focus on expressing my thoughts and emotions, reflecting and conveying feelings—that is, what minimalism tried to deny and, perhaps, suppress.



Ugly scenes. Nuances 1.2-1.3., 2.1

190 × 11 × 4 cm (x2), beech wood, gesso, black lacquer, black wood, linseed oil, acrylic glass
2025



<https://sofiiayesakova.com/>