

Ukrainian War archive: INVASION

Photographers

Julia Kochetova

Lisa Bukreyeva

Roman Bordun

Sasha Kurmaz

Sergii Polezhaka

Vyacheslav Ratynskyi

Vladyslav Musiienko

Yana Kononova

Yana Sidash

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The exhibition is arranged by Ukrainian Warchive together with Centrum för fotografi with curation by **Emine Ziyatdinova**.

Sound:

Marevo by the Ukrainian Composer **Anna Korsun**/ Ensemble Modern, conducted by Susanne Blumenthal.

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Julia Kochetova (b. 1993) is Ukraine photojournalist and documentary filmmaker based in Kyiv. She studied journalism at Taras Shevchenko National University (UA) and Mohyla School of Journalism (UA), participated in IDFA academy (NL).

As a freelancer, Julia covered Maidan revolution (2013-2014), the annexation of Crimea (2014), and Russia-Ukraine war (2014-now). She is a contributor to the media outlets: Vice News, Der Spiegel, Zeit, Bloomberg, Vanity Fair, The Guardian, FP, Reuters, NBC. Her work from the conflict zone was presented at personal and group exhibitions in UK, USA, France, Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Serbia, and Ukraine.

Her work reflects on topics of home, trauma and occupation with the main focus on person in transition. Julia's autobiographical love story film «See you later» was presented and got special awards in different film festivals in Estonia, France, Brazil, Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus. Julia posts her personal visual diary of Invasion since February 24 2022 on Instagram - @seameer.

“War Is Personal” - is the ongoing visual diary of a Ukrainian, reporting from Ukraine.

I'm not a war photographer, it's a war happening in my country. And I'm holding my camera and trying to hide how shaky and nervous my hands are.

“One day everyone will leave.

The story will stop being that interesting for foreigners. This war will be too long and too bloody – it’s impossible to edit and publish. Too much focus, there will be a bigger and louder explosion somewhere and everyone will book a war tour to a new destination. You will stop writing, putting emojis in comments, and praying. That’s ok, I know it will happen one day.

One day alarm sirens will shut up.

One day we will have so many houses that no one returns to, because the owners of these keys have been killed in their yards.

One day we will find the last unburied body.

One day we will sit in the kitchen and keep silent for hours. We will have a map of the country where someone ours died in each region. One day we will sit in the kitchen and I hope I have someone to talk to and you will come back alive.

I know this day will come.

I hope we will chat and my voice does not tremble as it does now.

I hope and I love you too.”

Lisa Bukreyeva (b. 1993) is a documentary photographer based in Kyiv. She started her career in photography in 2019.

Her work explores Ukrainian life, youth culture. Since the Russian invasion her camera turned into documentation of the war and events affecting her community. Lisa is a member of Burn My Eye collective. Her award-winning work was exhibited internationally, including: 2022 Photo Elysée, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2022 Noorderlicht, Groningen, Netherlands, 2022 Deichtor Hallen Internationale Kunst Und Fotografie, Hamburg, Germany, 2022 PEP, Kommunale Galerie, Berlin, Germany, 2021 BIAŁYSTOK INTERPHOTO FESTIVAL, 2020 ICP Concerned, New York, USA.

“Do not look on pain of others”, analog.mixed, Ukraine 2022

The Ukrainian-Russian war, especially after the start of the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, is perhaps the least censored war in human history. Anyone can see the events on the frontline, the consequences, and the deaths almost online. But social networks often hide content and set filters for audiences from different countries. Does the whole world see what Ukrainians see? How did our lives become sensitive content? In my work, I archive footage from the news that we see everyday. News from a country where it is impossible to live, but it is also impossible not to live in it. Just as it is impossible to comprehend all this horror.

Roman Bordun (b. 1987) is a photographer, documentary filmmaker and artist based in Lviv, Ukraine.

He graduated from the Faculty of civil engineering at the Lviv Polytechnic University. In 2019, he debuted with full-length film “The Diviners” at Docudays UA and DOK Leipzig festivals. Since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, he has been actively photographing in the de-occupied territories.

“Let’s leave it to the better times”

Visible destruction has become part of the landscape of the de-occupied Northern Ukraine. The foreign politicians and journalists come to see it. Witnesses and victims of the war crimes are trying to get used to their new status. They resemble museum workers, showing the ruins of their lives to the audience. The remains of homes still reminds us of a life which was abruptly destroyed and became the object to observe around the world. However, there is still a side of the tragedy which remains beyond the viewers grasp - the personal lives became a museum of dust and ashes.

When and how did the sense of normality stop to exist for us?

*The project includes work created before and after 24 of February 2022.

Sasha Kurmaz (b. 1986) is interdisciplinary artist from Kyiv, Ukraine where he currently lives and works. In 2008 he graduated from the Design Department at the National Academy of Culture and Arts in Kyiv, and the Communications Engineering Department at the Kyiv Electromechanical College in 2005.

Sasha uses various media and approaches in his artistic practice such as photography, video, and performative situations, as well as diverse strategies to engage the audience through collaborative practice. He also actively experiments with found and archival images and develops conceptual artists' books. The main focus of his work is social and political issues and global challenges that Ukrainian society has faced in recent years.

Kurmaz's works have been widely presented at many international exhibitions and festivals, including exhibitions at the Latvian Museum of Photography, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Künstlerhaus Vienna, Kaunas Photo Festival, Akademie der Künste (Berlin), NRWForum Düsseldorf, Museum Folkwang, Athens Photo Festival, C/O Berlin, Skovde Art Museum, Zamek Ujazdowski, Format Photo Festival, ZKM Museum of Contemporary Art, and many others. In 2016 he received the C/O Berlin Talent Award (Germany), and Kazimir Malevich Artist Award in 2020 (Ukraine).

“Red Horse”, 2022 (working title for work in progress)

A series of artistic works are dedicated to the events that began after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The work is an attempt to comprehend the impact and consequences of the war on the Ukrainian landscape and public space in general. The series consists of collages created from photographs, drawings and found images that have been/will be created in cities and towns that have been directly affected by Russian military aggression. The artist plans to organise the work in such a way that the total number of collages included in the final project corresponds to the number of days the full-scale war in Ukraine will last. Therefore, the final presentation of the entire series will be possible only after the end of hostilities.

Sergii Polezhaka (b. 1991) is a Ukrainian director, producer, and documentary photographer.

After several years working as a conflict visual journalist and graduating from Danish School of Media and Journalism in 2016, Sergiy co-founded New Cave Media and switched to immersive 360/VR storytelling as a director and producer. He directed a «No hero» story, the first 360° webdoc in Ukraine in early 2017. Sergiy combined managing his company with producing new projects for media like RFE/RL and The New York Times, NGOs like UNICEF, GIZ, WWF and commercial clients Mitsubishi, Motorola Ukraine and Array Inc.

In 2017 New Cave Media received a Journalism 360 Challenge Grant from Google News Lab, ONA and Knight foundation with a project Aftermath VR. This project tells a story of a cruel morning of 20/02/2014, when police forces killed 47 protesters in Kyiv, which marked the climax and breaking point of the EuroMaidan protests. As a director, Sergiy focused on building interactive storyline and a user experience in the Aftermath VR project, which won the “Open Frame Award” at goEast Film Festival and was selected to the Sheffield Doc/Fest in 2019.

Filmography: Aftermath VR: Euromaidan (2019) (director)

Personal exhibitions: Bridges of Donbas (Izone, 2016)

“Naïve Ukrainian Gardens”, 2022

In my visual project I am researching a vital part of the Ukrainian visual culture - naïve Ukrainian gardens, which surprisingly have turned out to be a point of envy, hatred and fear from Russian soldiers.

“Across Ukraine I’ve seen beautifully cultivated beds of tulips, daffodils and forsythia. In far too many villages along the front, the owners are gone. I don’t know if they fled or are dead, but their gardens remain, blooming brightly under a shadow of war with no one to appreciate their glory”, - Cary Fukunaga, 30.04.2022

As a local, I am very thankful for Mr. Fukunaga’s note and would like to add another layer to his highlight:

Surprisingly, these naïve gardens as such turned out to be objects of envy, since they - even on this very basic level - appeared to be a pretty exotic phenomena to Russian soldiers. Creating something beautiful at your personal will, which requires a prolonged care and hard work is present here, between Ukrainians. And that’s what drove Russians crazy. No desire to obtain - why bother? Better to destroy.

In Bohdanivka, Kyiv region, Russians stayed in one of the houses by the edge of the village. Average-sized house by European measures, mixture of styles in the garden, combining popular pines and local Ukrainian guelder rose, carefully mown lawn. A kids’ swimming pool and a trampoline. All broken, burnt windows, shell craters in the yard. In addition to destruction, Russians left a mark on one of the walls.

A short scornful and jealous verdict reads: “Bourgeois”.

And the garden, the attitude to the place, not as intimate as your bedroom yet not as social as a city square is pretty peculiar. In both Ukrainian and Russian literature there's a piece called "Cherry Garden". It's hard to compare them seriously - one is a 15-line long poem, another is a 4-act play. Yet the image of the garden is remarkable.

Ukrainian one was written by a Taras Shevchenko in mid-19 century and the garden here represents a place for an evening family get-together after a long day of hard labour. Cosiness, romanticism, care.

In the Russian play, written by Anton Chekhov half a century later, a cherry garden is an object of enormous aesthetical value, which is heavily expressed by the owners of the manor (hence the title), while the characters of the play have various opinions on how to deal with it, which results in a manor being sold, owners leaving the place and, ultimately, a cherry garden being chopped down.

I suggest Russians have to deal with their perception of beauty and an overall culture on their own, but what I see in the destroyed Naïve Ukrainian Gardens is a clear view on the values compass in this conflict. A nice compass should help get oriented with the help of the right questions. Here's some question I want to ask myself and viewers: Have we been looking for this cosiness for too long? Have we been busy with our inner peace too much so that we missed a moment when our neighbour finally turned into a monster? Have we been building our inner garden walls too high, needlessly covering our gardens from each other and forgetting about the other - outer - walls?

Vyacheslav Ratynskiy (b. 1990) is a Ukrainian freelance photojournalist and documentary photographer.

He was born in Zhytomyr. He has been living and working in Kyiv for the last 10 years. Has a master's degree in journalism. As a freelancer he worked with major Ukrainian and foreign publications and agencies, such as NV, Hromadske, Forbes, The Guardian, Le Monde, The New York Times, BBC, Der Spiegel, Reuters among others. His work has been exhibited in Ukraine and internationally.

Since the first hours, he has been covering the Russian war against Ukraine.

“Ukraine: the new ordinary?”

The war caught everyone off guard although we did some preparations during the last couple of weeks before it started. I woke up in my apartment from explosions at 5 a.m. on February 24th, in a quiet residential area of Kyiv.

On that day I filmed people fleeing the city or hiding from rockets in the subway, queues at gas stations and lines at military checkpoints, queues for cash in banks, or queues at shops. I spent the night together with my neighbors and 300 other people in the basement of the nearest school. It was impossible to sleep, so I took photos.

Let's be honest, I've never been a military photojournalist, I've shot Donbas a bit, but those were random trips. But when war is everywhere, you no longer have a choice.

I have always been interested in photographing everyday life, and what could be more honest and interesting than everyday reality? Suddenly I had to face the “new ordinary” of a country swallowed by war, and I became one of its heroes. Together with other fellow citizens, I stand in lines and flee the city, sleep in basements and listen to explosions, build barricades and throw Molotov cocktails, unload humanitarian aid and live in schools, train to shoot and impose tourniquets, liberate cities and bury the dead together, we cry and laugh at the same time. Together with all Ukrainians we live and document the “New Ordinary”.

In this project, I am trying to capture how Ukraine and its citizens live during the Russian invasion: when there is shelling every day; you can see anti-tank hedgehogs at every step, and trenches on the way to the store; when the school in the city center is destroyed by a missile; when a piece of shrapnel can pierce a wheel of your car; when you need to leave a gym during the training because of air raid warning; when there's a hole in the dome of your church.

This is Ukraine and is it the “new ordinary”?

Vladyslav Musiienko (b. 1971) is Ukrainian photojournalist based in Kyiv, Ukraine.

He graduated from Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University with a major in radiophysics. He started his photography career in 2005 as photo correspondent at newspaper “Gazeta po Kyivsky”. For over 17 years of his press photographer career he has been cooperating with Ukrainian and international agencies such as Reuters, AP, AFP among others. In 2014 nominated the shortlist Sony Photo awards, current affairs category.

“Ukrainian Landscape In Times Of War”

The project is about the fact that the war, unfortunately, has become a part of Ukrainian life, and its visual manifestations have become part of the surrounding landscape. The blown up military equipment, destroyed machinery and infrastructure are on the horizon. And it is trying to become a new normal. But apocalyptic sceneries cannot be the norm.

Yana Kononova (b. 1977) is an artist with an academic background in social sciences, and holds a PhD in sociology.

She was born on Pirallahi island in the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan - now an important site of oil extraction. During the First Nagorno-Karabakh War, her family emigrated to Ukraine. Having later relocated to the countryside of the Trachtemiriv peninsula - which has a rich geological and cultural history - Kononova turned to photography.

She graduated from the Photoschool of Viktor Marushchenko before following a photography course organised by the Image Threads Collective (USA). In 2019, Kononova won the Bird in Flight Prize in emerging Photography, and in 2022 was the recipient of the Hariban Award, presented by Benrido. Her works have been exhibited in Ukraine and abroad.

“Radiations of War”, 2022

I started working on the Radiations of War series in March 2022. Since then, I've been staying in areas that were occupied by Russian troops, or territories where hostilities have occurred. I also travel to places that have experienced the terror of Russian missile campaigns. In these places, I take pictures on my medium format camera of war crimes, destroyed civilian infrastructure, the activities of various Ukrainian services, the bodies of fallen warriors and the victims among the civilian population.

I didn't have any experience of being a war correspondent before the invasion, so these trips became an intimate encounter face-to-face with pain. It was as if the war had barbarically perforated holes in the Earth, through which pain was inflicted in an endless stream - blending planetary and human aspects of existence, and forming an unbreakable bond between the living and those who died terrible, unjust deaths.

The term 'radiation' alludes to that composite, to the polluted nature of the experience of war, to the fact that in its perception there is always something beyond visual information - some kind of hum, some kind of trembling - that changes our sense of space. It passes through memory, through the body, beyond the body, through generations.

My artistic approach sits between impartial observation - of bearing witness and documenting - and of capturing some more symbolic gestures that foreground the existential dimensions of technical warfare, violence and genocide. These images speak to the consequences of trauma for human existence, as well as to our wider planet.

Yana Sidash (b. 1995) is Ukrainian documentary photographer based in Lviv.

Yana is a finalist of the International Fujifilm Moment Street Photo Awards 2021 and a graduate of the ICP Visual Storytelling course 2022. Her works have been exhibited in Ukraine, US, countries of Europe and Asia. Her work has been published in The Fisheye magazine, Nowhere Diary, The Ukrainians, Bird in Flight, Ukrainer, among others.

“People Under Attack”

«I’ve got nowhere to return to», «I have no home», «I don’t know what happened to my house» — a photographer heard many times from people she photographed since the full-scale invasion started last year. The project portrays the people who are staying in metro stations, basements and survivors of Russian occupation in the recently liberated villages in Kharkiv and Donetsk regions.

Kharkiv and Donetsk regions have been suffering from daily shelling by the Russian army since the beginning of the full-scale war. Some people have evacuated, but there are those who are unable to leave the city despite the ongoing attacks. Many of the portrayed people have no place to return, as their houses are destroyed. The photographer brings attention to the victims and survivors of the attacks, who despite the cruelty, danger and harsh conditions were able to retain their kindness and humanity.

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