

# I See Something You Can't See

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*Jelena Jeremejewa*

Behind the hypnotic facades of institutionalized placation, a war is being waged. A war that can no longer be said to be simply economic or even social and humanitarian, since it is all-encompassing, since it is a war on what we've known to be true. While everyone is well aware that existence has a tendency to become a battlefield where neuroses, phobias, somatizations, depressions and anxieties blow up into numerous withdrawals, no one is able to grasp the course or the stakes of this war. Paradoxically, it is the totality of this war, no less in its means than its ends, that enables it to shroud itself in invisibility.<sup>1</sup>

## **I see something you can't see<sup>2</sup>**

Epistemic violence and injustice in art is a complex issue that affects artists and curators, spaces and exhibition techniques, as well as society as a whole. It is an unusual one, because the question relates to the ways in which knowledge and ignorance, power and powerlessness intersect and lead to the marginalization and exclusion of certain types of knowledge and experiences beyond the art world. As modes and forms of knowledge that are not primarily derived from scientific research, all of these particles play a weighty role in the production and reception of art, as do those of naiveté, lack of awareness and disinterest, skepticism, and ignorance.

In this essay, I will present some examples from spatial art, painting, and video art, which methodically as well as aesthetically point to problematic historical implications and habits of seeing and which, have so far been systematically pushed into the position of non-existence as far as their knowledge desideratum is concerned.

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1 TIQQUN Grundbausteine einer Theorie des Jungen-Mädchens, Berlin 2009, 11, translation by the editor.

2 The complete article was written in German. It was translated by Lena Schützle (ed.) and Erin Schafranek.

## But where is it? I can't see it...

Anna Schapiro's current work *Offene Geheimnisse* (English: Open Secrets, pictures 2–3) in the Leibnitz Hall of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities consists of three parts and involves a controversial conversation that refers to the numerous historical overlays and fractures from the host institution.

The former Kassensaal of the Preußische Seehandlungsgesellschaft, where the first part of the work was shown, was built between 1901 and 1903. From 1918, it served as the Prussian State Bank, where the customers of that time could make their deposits and withdrawals, while also recording profits and losses. Everything relating to their business endeavors with the enormously expanding world. A relationship in the manner of a colonial dominion that divided the world into sovereign owners and available resources.

The tiled floor in the foyer of the hall, which was laid at the beginning of the century, is decorated with swastika patterns dating back to the time when the symbol was still innocent, before it was appropriated and misused by the Nazi atrocities. Today, numerous visitors find it difficult to distinguish the swastikas as such, even though it is quite obvious. When the artist asked the manufacturer Villeroy-Boch, the answer was: “Both tile designs have been in the collection since the end of the 19th century and the swastika symbol has been part of many cultures for a long time.”



Picture 1

© Schapiro

At the opening event, Anna Schapiro placed a ticking clock and a chiselling hammer in the foyer, which directs visitors to her work. The QR code takes you to a study

by the Scientific Services (*die Wissenschaftliche Dienste*) on behalf of the German Bundestag on the removal of unconstitutional symbols from the property of third parties.<sup>3</sup>

Not only the floor, but also the walls bear traces, albeit from a different time. Right before Germany's capitulation, during the conquest of Berlin, the building was taken by the Red Army, the sandstone pillars bearing the marks of their machine guns. The victors over fascism, the liberators of the concentration camps were mostly men. Weary heroes, themselves survivors of a catastrophe instigated by Germany. Men who took revenge on the female population of a defeated Germany. Their commanders, decorated with medals, were at the same time the builders of another, no less bloody and brutal dictatorship escalating far beyond the GDR. This victory and its superficial reception veiled irreconcilable ideological differences.



Picture 2  
© Schapiro

The tiled floor in the Leibniz Hall has remained untouched by it all. And now Anna Schapiro is applying a new and temporary addition to it, adding a powerful layer. A 20x8 meters ink print opens up an expressive and abstract color space that

3 <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/413654/2be32c19e2c86feecc6a55dcd9a92f6a/wd-7-080-07-pdf-data.pdf> (28/10/2023).

evokes countless connections within this environment, even without having to explicitly reference the artist's Jewish origins. Schapiro was born in Moscow and came to Germany as a small child with her family as a Contingent refugee.

A complex history mirrors a complex technique. First, the floor is covered with strips of rice paper, upon which the artist applies color pigments and inks dissolved in water in a process involving numerous steps. The wet and fragile paper soaks up the pigments, transfers them to the floor, is carefully moved, and finally carefully removed. The different sections of color transferred onto the floor are watercolored – shimmering, velvety and shiny depending on the way the light falls and the angle from which they are observed (pictures 2–3).



Picture 3  
© Schapiro

Blue to purple, green and yellow, sections of color merging into each other as organic and cosmic structures, muscle fibers, x-rays and bone fractures, all bearing the pattern of the small fragments within the rectangular tiles that make up a whole picture. In its fragility, the work refers to a painful absence of an *original*, the source, the origin. These come to the fore in the second part of the work, when the floor work has been removed and the paper strips themselves have been put on display.

The initial questions of Anna Schapiro's work touch on the infinite interfaces and hierarchies between academic, institutional, artistic and historical knowledge along

with the unwillingness to know, and address, that “ontological cleft”<sup>4</sup> between abstract and “safe” knowledge; extending to the economically safeguarded existence of the Eurocentric perspective on the past as well as the present. Its monopoly and interpretative sovereignty over people often in their midst, often on the felt peripheries, all within their vulnerability, fragility and contradictions. A gap between those who have suffered the fate and those who have archived it, thought it through and theorized it. Those who will write books about it and make films and create works of art. Those who will research it, look at it, consume it. Timothy Snyder is a historian who writes about the specificity of the German politics of remembrance:

...the Germans are absolutely right that democracy requires continuously confronting history, especially with regard to the Second World War and the Holocaust. [...] But the history at stake here is not only German history, because almost all German murders took place in territories that Germany brought under its control only after 1938.<sup>5</sup>

Different experiences of violence, specific injustices, genocides and epistemicides, unheard voices that cannot be separated from the history of Western knowledge systems, are alluded to in Anna Schapiro's work, but never fully narrated. However, the work can be read as an invitation to take a more human approach towards those relations of inequality, power, and domination that are inherent in knowledge and sciences, while also having become invisible during the analysis process.

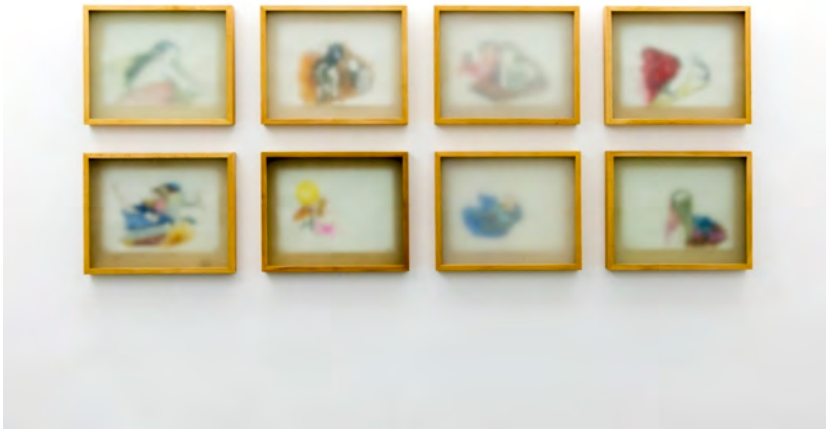
The unique interplay of the work and space raises the question about the role of knowledge in this timeless procession of injustices, blind spots, and silence. Our line of sight dictated by the work addresses us directly – from above we look down on a defenseless, exposed groundlessness. There, where the ground gave us support and steadfastness only a short time ago, a curtain opens. A curtain that delicately and gently lays itself over everything, not to cover or shroud, but to reveal.

## I see something you can't see

In 2015, following the annexation of Crimea, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the occupation of the eastern territories, Ukrainian artist Lesia Khomenko painted a series of works that, at first glance, do not fit into her previous large-scale practice

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- 4 Apffel-Marglin, Frédérique: Introduction: Rationality and the World, in: Apffel-Marglin, Frédérique/Marglin, Stephen A. (eds.): *Decolonizing Knowledge. From Development to Dialogue*, Oxford 1996, 1–39, 3.
  - 5 Snyder, Timothy: Falsche Erinnerungen, in: Konarzewska, Aleksandra/Schahadat, Schama/Weller, Nina (eds.): “Alles ist teurer als ukrainisches Leben” Texte über Westsplainung und den Krieg, edition. fotoTAPETA\_\_Flugschrift Berlin 2023, 128–136, 132.

of frameless paintings. *After The End* plays with the relationship between knowledge and ignorance, consisting of smaller, framed watercolor drawings hidden behind a frosted glass panel. This acts as an amplifier of the performative boundary between what the artist knows, feels, and depicts and what the viewer sees and puzzles over (picture 4).



Picture 4  
© Khomenko

I myself have recently rethought this work. It was created in 2015 and is about the future. Now in 2023, as I find myself in this very future, I am discovering many new details in this work. This work is about the impossibility of transferring experiences. On the one hand, it was difficult for us in Kiev in 2015 to really understand those who had lost their homes in the East. So I compared my quiet, safe life to the life that was beyond our experience. I kept ‘silent’ chronicles of my life at home. All my peaceful sketches were overlaid with the feeling that there was war in my country. It is such a contrast – the images themselves and the context of their creation.<sup>6</sup>

The lack of clarity provokes an effort on the other side, which is inevitably connected with knowledge, and the will to know. Any complexity that might imply or lead to a

<sup>6</sup> Interview with the artist, August 2023.

singular interpretation has to be worked through; an understanding does not come automatically. The viewer focuses and focuses in the hope of recognizing, of recognizing “correctly” and gradually begins to doubt themselves: is there such a thing as “right” knowledge (pictures 4–5)?



*Picture 5*

© Khomenko

After the full-scale invasion, Khomenko had to leave Ukraine with her daughter; her husband has been fighting on the frontline ever since. As an artist, she is faced with the question of how to transfer her own knowledge which has explosively grown due to the outbreak of war – a kind of knowledge that no one ever wanted – into art in order to reach people. For this specific knowledge about war, its concepts and its sounds proved to be incompatible to and isolated from a peaceful world to which one belonged only a few short months ago.

At the time, frosted glass was part of her artistic strategy, in which the correct or final image only emerged through the blurriness of the glazing.

By chance, my gallerists discovered that the painting under the glass looks clearer from a distance, while it looks rather blurry up close. For me, this also became a

metaphor for historical distance. Whereas the blur then addressed my imagination and longing, today it addresses memory from that same historical distance. The work changed its meaning, but it still speaks of a certain 'blindness' in relation to the present moment.<sup>7</sup>

In doing so, by no means does the artist act as a holder of knowledge in the process of withholding something from the viewer, for the blurring also always appeals to the viewer's own self. On the other hand, the blurs are a strong visual reminder of the obscurity of the brutalities dominating the visual field: of the dead, injured, and tortured. Images which can be interpreted as anything but peaceful, and refer to one's own vulnerability as well as that of others. A filter or soft focus carefully constructed between me and the world in order to be able to endure it.

In contrast, the painting Khomenko made in 2023 for the exhibition *Motherland* in Berlin's Ephraim Palais is characterized by a different arrangement of visibility and invisibility. The work titled *A Moment of Silence* shows soldiers gathered at the grave of their fallen friend during a minute of silence, when all words and mourning songs have fallen silent. A moment of silence as a ritual or immaterial tribute next to a material gravestone.

The image is based on my research into the self-portrayal of soldiers in war on social media. Soldiers retouch and obscure their faces, pixelate and shadow the backgrounds for security reasons, because you never know who will see it.<sup>8</sup>

What lies in front of us is not a study, but a captured moment, like a photograph. Faces are pixelated and covered, while the postures and arrangement of the mourners literally hanging in the air, are fragmented, evoking a terrible premonition that they themselves won't be alive much longer.

No eye contact, no attempt to be identified, the painting itself is a memorial (picture 6).

For all its ambiguity, however, the work wants to share its knowledge, to communicate something of itself – it longs to escape the realm of the personal into foreign, peaceful and safe environments. The deconstruction of the figures is the first step of the process of translation from digital to pictorial language. Detached from information, utility and sobriety, deprived of intensity and instant media accessibility, Khomenko's practice makes the experience of horrendous suffering digestible for outsiders and perhaps even the unsuspecting. It softens, spares details, hints at the sore points without touching them and cements together the divide between us and them.

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.



Picture 6  
© Khomenko

How, why, and with whom to share the knowledge that has mutilated and raped you? An experience that has neither meaning nor use nor application, at least not in the Western European world, in this chic hall with freshly painted walls and faithful parquet floor lining the new magnificent exhibition spaces. The intersecting axes of differences are politicized and ethically charged. They force their way into the spotlight and into relevance – posing the question of how to bridge this chasm between one's own experience and letting others know? Who does this gap protect, and from what?

The reality of war and destruction unfolds directly for those who are at its mercy, here and now. It may still be possible to intervene in it. The reality of its pictorial or mediatized orchestration, whether intentional and strategic, or accidental and impotent and desperate and unintentional, which is misappropriated in the hands of other storytellers and philosophers is belated, displaced and inaccessible (if the names and numbers scrawled on the torture chambers, drawings of the children, recordings from phone cameras *had a purpose* for those who made them). How is knowledge created from it? What loops of legitimation do experiences have to go through so that the most resistant fragments can ascend into the pantheon of intelligible knowledge?

Experience amalgamated into works of art is threatening as well as threatened by deceptive knowledge, along with the inability to digest it as it is, to be spat out. Who are the people in the picture? Who are they beyond the role of soldier? Beyond the grief and fear? Who were they before the war broke out and made them into what they are depicted as now?

As I write this, up to 10,000 soldiers are being held in Russian captivity, according to human rights groups. A large number of them have been and are being tortured with electrical currents.<sup>9</sup>

## Repeat after me



Picture 7

© Yuriy Biley, Pavlo Kovach, and Anton Varga

The HD video work *Macht es mir nach* (English: *Repeat after me*) by the Open Group, founded in Ukraine in 2012, was shown as part of the exhibition *Kaleidoskop der Geschichte(n)* in Dresden's Albertinum. In it, internally displaced persons, gathered at a camp in the city of Lviv, reenact different types of weapons they have experienced and heard. Beforehand, they briefly share their fate and conduct a kind of karaoke session by asking the viewer to imitate the sound they just made. Their sounds are then transcribed into sequences of letters and faded in to make it easier to imitate. In front of the flat screen monitor is a microphone, a kind of technical bridge for the acoustic approach to the unknown; physical knowledge that the people have acquired and which the artists want to pass on. By imitating different types of weapons, the sound sequences convey fragments of the experience that has

9 Ukrainian prisoners of war say they were tortured at Russian prison (16/8/2023) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-66453692#> (25/8/2023).

become part of everyday life in Ukraine, but which, according to the artist Yuriy Biley, has its target audience mainly abroad (pictures 7–8).



Picture 8

© Yuriy Biley, Pavlo Kovach, and Anton Varga

The work was presented together with other pieces of work as part of the *Peilung* series at the DAAD Gallery in Berlin. The screening program called *Talking about myself? Talking about You*, which was previously shown at the Voloshyn Gallery in Kiev in the summer of 2023, aimed to present the process of performing trauma as an artistic method.

In Berlin, the audience consisted mainly of Ukrainians and Germans with an affinity for art and culture. The collective experience of watching, the absence of the microphone being pointed directly at people's faces liberated and loosened up the audience, who made themselves comfortable on chairs and beanbags in the dark, to hum, to rattle, to make sounds... Gratefully, yet hesitantly they responded to the invitation to connect to the artwork by repeating the sounds.

At the same time, this staged gesture of the internally displaced people also embodied their inability or unwillingness to speak about what they had suffered, a way of reducing them to the traumatic fragment of a human biography, the spotlight into which violence and destruction had drawn these "lesser people." Have the communicative threads of spoken language already been severed? And can their symbolism be in part deciphered by us through imitation? Or the flipside is that everything has

been said long ago, verbal communication has failed, led to nothing, could not avert the worst. And so there is nothing more to say but so much more to understand.

Sasha Kurmaz's work titled *I want to tell you about it* is a completely different story, in which the artist together with an actor circumvent spoken language to expressively illustrate something that cannot be said:

My body unexpectedly and quite sharply reacted to the atrocities committed by the Russians in the region of Kyiv. I was stunned and paralyzed with internal tension. The loss of the verbal ability to communicate with the world around me, and the ability to physically control one's own body in general became the impetus for creating this work.<sup>10</sup>

And yet, in both works, the audience becomes a witness to the testimony of others. Who or what is really raping or overpowering whom here? Whose desire is aroused or satisfied? Do the traumatized civilians with their trauma overpower the artists? Do the artists overpower us, by aestheticizing and exposing someone else's trauma as well as their own? In which power structures of visibility and invisibility are these works of art entangled?

The division of labor seems to be deeply rooted in predefined roles: between those who have suffered it and us who want to interpret and understand their experience, connect with it.

What role do the newly traumatized Ukrainians fulfill for the German spectator? And vice versa? Exhausted and increasingly bored by the media and press coverage of bloodbaths in foreign countries, sometimes in the form of artistic documentaries, serving the constant demand for artworks that comment on the victim's experience. The ambivalence of this narrative is often not tolerated, swept under the rug.

In the current political context, there are not any satisfactory answers to the perpetually uncomfortable questions when, for example, arms deliveries to Ukraine are systematically delayed while the liberation of the occupied territories, which is directly dependent on these deliveries, is simultaneously criticized. This time the atrocities are being committed by others. "It's not our war" was sprayed on the walls of houses and central locations in Berlin last fall/winter, challenging solidarity with Ukraine.<sup>11</sup>

"You are just a coin, passed from hand to hand. Your future is the price of other people's prosperity and security," Nikita Kadan summarized on the podium at the

10 «Я хочу розказати тобі про це» Саша Курмаз | "I want to tell you about it" Sasha Kurmaz, h <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AcyXZfEBZY> (17/11/22).

11 Stohnushko, Polina: Das ist unser Krieg (4/4/2023) <https://www.monopol-magazin.de/das-ist-unser-krieg?amp> (10/3/2024).

Heinrich Böll Foundation in Berlin in September 2023 and in his work titled *We are the price* (picture 9).



Picture 9  
© Nikita Kadan

In search of a possible answer, Snyder retrospectively traces the fatal blurring of the difference between responsibility and guilt in German society, which he observes as a historian:

For this reason, the politics of remembrance have always been interwoven with Germany's foreign policy towards former Eastern Europe and Asia (German: Ostpolitik), sometimes in a twisted way. [...] The combination of Ostpolitik and politics of remembrance led Germans to forget their own history, and in the process made a new war in Eastern Europe possible in the first place.<sup>12</sup>

As a result of Germany coming to terms with the past (German: Vergangenheitsbewältigung) and 75 years after the end of the Nazi era, the question of responsibility for Germany's war of extermination is still confined to Russia, changing perspective remains tenuous and is met with massive resistance not only from the business community, but also from scientific and cultural communities. Kateryna Mishchenko tries to summarize it through an economic lens: "Somehow everything is more ex-

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12 Snyder: Falsche Erinnerungen, 129, commentary by the author.

pensive than Ukrainian life,”<sup>13</sup> while the Ukrainian writer Victoria Amelina, who was fatally injured in a Russian missile attack less than half a year ago, warned about another “executed renaissance” of Ukrainian culture by imperial Russia:

There is now a real threat that Russians will successfully execute another generation of Ukrainian culture, this time by missiles and bombs. For me, it would mean the majority of my friends getting killed. For the average westerner, it would only mean never seeing their paintings, never hearing them read their poems, or never reading the novels that they have yet to write.<sup>14</sup>

### A loss to be borne?

As Susanne Strätling points out, such historical changes of perspective promote an increase in knowledge, a shift which is imperative not only in Germany, but the world over. However, such changes also require a concurrent – and no less radical – loss of knowledge, a practice of “systematic unlearning,”<sup>15</sup> without which one falls into old colonial habits, imagining oneself as a victim in the face of one’s own abundance of power.

The trauma of war must first become an experience in all its temporal and spatial complexity, of perspectives, that of people and that of landscapes. Its raw realism must come closer to concepts and theories with which research operates. And this step requires effort on both sides, because wars and violence first render people mute, blind, then dead.

Experience that has been repeated for centuries and by many, at some point ceases to be experience and can be addressed as a structural problem. Against the anxiety-ridden uncertainty about the underlying contexts, about one’s own roles in them, and about the existence of something that cannot be represented in all works of art. Works of art that, despite everything, make an honest attempt to try.

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13 Mishchenko, Kateryna: Irgendwie ist alles teurer als ukrainische Leben in: Konarzewska, Aleksandra/Schahadat, Schama/Weller Nina (eds.): “Alles ist teurer als ukrainisches Leben” Texte über Westsplaining und den Krieg, edition.fotoTAPETA. Flugschrift Berlin 2023, 137–139, 139, translated by Erin Schafranek.

14 Amelina, Victoria: Cancel Culture vs execute culture. Why Russian Manuscripts don't burn, but Ukrainian manuscripts burn all to well (31/3/2022) <https://www.eurozine.com/cancel-culture-vs-execute-culture/> (26/8/2023).

15 Strätling, Susanne: Zeitenwende. Ein Begriff des 24. Februar 2022, in: Mischchenko, Kateryna/Raabe, Katharina (eds.): Aus dem Nebel des Krieges Die Gegenwart der Ukraine, Berlin 2023, 215–226, 223, translated by Erin Schafranek.

The unrepresentable in art always refers to the unimaginable in epistemology, in reality, also in politics. Svitlana Matviyenko's allegory of "vertical occupation"<sup>16</sup> leads down and up, beyond the obvious human victims, and wants everyone *to know* about the permanent pollution of the Ukrainian environment, from the groundwater to the air we breathe, which will remain long after the invaders have been expelled from Ukraine.

## Short biographies of artists mentioned in the text

**Frédérique Apffel-Marglin** was first a student of Indian classical dance (Orissi style) and did field research among the temple dancers of Jagannath Temple in Odisha in Eastern India in the mid-1970s. Her later field research was among agricultural communities in coastal Odisha. Apffel-Marglin was a research adviser at the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) in Helsinki, an affiliate of the United Nations University, from 1985 to 1991.

**Timothy Snyder** is an American historian specializing in the history of Central and Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and the Holocaust. He is the Richard C. Levin Professor of History at Yale University and a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna. He has written several books, including *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, *The Road to Unfreedom*, and *Our Malady*. Several of them have been described as best-sellers. Snyder serves on the Committee on Conscience of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. He is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

**Susanne Strätling** is a German Slavicist and literary scholar. Her work focuses on literature and mediality, poetics and poesis, history of concepts and knowledge, poetic and political metaphorology of building under socialism and rhetorical theory. From 2018 to 2020, she was Professor of East Slavic Literatures and Cultures at the University of Potsdam. Since 2020, she has been Professor of General and Comparative Literature with a focus on Slavic Literatures at Freie Universität Berlin.

**Kateryna Mishchenko** is an author, curator and co-founder of the independent Ukrainian publishing house Medusa. She taught literature at the National Linguistic University of Kyiv and worked as a translator in the field of human rights. Her essays have been published in Ukrainian and international anthologies and

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16 Matviyenko, Svitlana: *Vertical Occupation* (4/3/2024) <https://www.londonukrainianreview.org/posts/vertical-occupation> (16/3/2024).

magazines as well as in her book *Ukrainian Night*. Kateryna Mishchenko lives and works in Kyiv. She is currently a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.

**Victoria Amelina** is a Ukrainian writer, war crimes researcher. On 27 June 2023, she was injured during the Russian attack on Kramatorsk. The restaurant was hit by an Iskander missile. Amelina died due to her injuries. Amelina was a member of PEN International. In 2018, she took part in 84th World PEN Congress in India as a delegate from Ukraine and gave a speech on Ukrainian filmmaker and political prisoner in Russia Oleg Sentsov. From 2015, when her first book *The Fall Syndrome: about, or Homo Compatiens* was published, she dedicated her time solely to writing. Her debut novel deals with the events at Maidan in 2014; the foreword was written by Yurii Izdryk. The novel has received several literary awards, and was welcomed by critics and scholars from Ukraine and wider Europe.

**Hito Steyerl** is a German filmmaker and author who deals with questions of post-colonial criticism and feminist critique of representation in essayistic documentary films and texts. Her works operate at the interface between film and the visual arts as well as between theory and practice. In the field of art, she works as a commentator, critic and teacher – currently as Professor of Media Art at the Berlin University of the Arts.

**Jacques Rancière** is a philosopher specializing in political philosophy and aesthetics.

**Lesia Khomenko** is an artist, co-founder of curatorial Union HUDRADA, a self-educational community based on interdisciplinary cooperation. Since 2004 member of R.E.P. group. Her works have been shown in several solo and group exhibitions.

**Nikita Kadan** is an artist, author and activist. Nikita Kadan studied at the National Academy of Fine Arts in Kiev. His artistic repertoire ranges from installations, graphics and painting to wall and poster design in public spaces. His interdisciplinary collaborations with architects, human rights activists and sociologists are as diverse as his media.

**Sasha Kurmaz** studied at the Faculty of Design of the National Academy of Culture and Art Management in Kiev. In his artistic work, he uses photography, video and public intervention to trace social contexts that touch on poetic and political themes. In most of his works, he plays with the disempowerment of power structures, explores the changing relationship between people and the modern world and examines the tension between citizens and the state.

**Svitlana Matviyenko** is an Associate Professor of Critical Media Analysis in the School of Communication and Associate Director of the Digital Democracies Institute. Her research and teaching, informed by science and technology studies and the history of science, are focused on information and cyberwar, media and environment, critical infrastructure studies and postcolonial theory. Matviyenko's current work on nuclear cultures and heritage investigates the practices of nuclear terror, weaponisation of pollution, and technogenic catastrophes during the Russian war in Ukraine.

**Polina Stohnushko** is a PhD student and scholarship holder of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation as well as a graffiti researcher. She specialises in graffiti with social and political messages in Berlin. In addition to her academic work, she creates urban interventions.

