

**Dear Future,  
Droga Przyszłości,  
Дороге Майбутнє,**

“We would like to learn not to be afraid to plan many years ahead, not to be afraid to dream and take long-term actions,”<sup>(1.)</sup> wrote Viktoria Amelina, a Ukrainian writer who died on 1 July 2023 in hospital as a result of injuries sustained during the Russian bombing of Kramatorsk.

For us Ukrainians, the future remains uncertain as long as the Russian invasion continues. Any curatorial or artistic practice fades in the face of shelling, torture, mass deportations and countless war crimes. When we opened the first edition of the exhibition on the streets of Warsaw in January 2023, turning to the future was a therapeutic gesture. A year and a half after the invasion, the initial shock was followed by a phase of cruel 'normalisation' of the war situation. The first reconstruction practices and reflections on the future of the country, the region and Europe.

In the exhibition at Galeria Bielska BWA, we are writing a “letter to the future” presenting statements from artists, architects and volunteers from Ukraine and Poland. Their attitudes and practices present different strategies for long-term reconstruction and relief. They address issues of migration, ecology, decolonizing practices and collective care. We consider what tools are available in the artistic 'arsenal' to create a new future.

In the Works of **Nazar Furyk** we see the documentation of the collective experience of martial law, the aftermath of destruction and bombing in Ukraine. Operating with the aesthetics of an impartial camera lens, Nazar manages to familiarize himself with the new daily realities. The artistic practice of **Danylo Halkin** focuses on the rescue, preservation and care of the of Ukrainian cultural heritage that has not yet been granted the official status of a monument by the Ministry of Culture in Ukraine. By moving the stained glass blocks to the gallery space, Halkin emphasises the need to preserve the cultural heritage of the second half of the 20th century, often understood as 'Soviet heritage', and which has often been destroyed or neglected under the Decommunization Act. In her neon installation, **Maria Matiashova** refers to the passing of empires that, despite their greatness, eventually crumble, and yet, on a historical scale their disappearance appears quite mundane, inevitable and natural.

The themes of reconstruction and rebuilding became not only practical issues, but also theoretical ones to build visions of a better world after reconstruction. At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, part of the art community stood up for the country. The other part transformed its artistic practice into direct aid activism and a practice of caring.

The **Livyj Bereh** collective has developed its own way of repairing buildings in the northern and eastern regions of Ukraine, while documenting and collecting artefacts, presenting the stories of small villages and towns.

The Project **OKNO** by the **BRDA Foundation** is a Polish-Ukrainian initiative by **Zofia Jaworowska** and **Petro Vladimirov** to collect used windows, secure and repair them, and then send them to Ukraine. This is a response to an immediate need, as the consequence of any missile attack is the destruction of windows in buildings within a few dozen metres of the blast site. The opening of the exhibition “Dear Future, vo. 2.” in Bielsko-Biała is preceded by a campaign to collect windows, some of which will be used in the exhibition, which has been running since the

beginning of October. All the windows collected will be sent to the needy in Ukraine after the exhibition has been dismantled.

By contrast, artist and activist **Małgorzata Mycek** alludes to the motifs of reconstruction familiar from socialist realist paintings in order to the dismantling of walls, which she understands metaphorically as the boundaries that divide people and political opponents.

We also ask about the future of nature in the context of war. In addition to the destruction of civilian infrastructure, the invasion also results in environmental disasters. In 2023, the Russian bombing of the Novaya Kakhovka dam in the south of the country resulted in the destruction of the unique biosphere of the entire region, as well as a humanitarian disaster.

The motif of water taken up in **Anna Sydorenko**'s works is not directly related to the situation in Novaya Kakhovka - the artist gives subjectivity to the element and nature in a broader context. Water is shown here as an element that unites and coalesces collective memory. **Weronika Zalewska** unmask the hidden aspect of the 'great Soviet project', which was the colonisation of nature. Through Soviet encyclopaedia entries, she shows this process - from the romanticisation of the colonised countries of the Russian empire to the development of industry and the militarisation of nature.

Another dimension of the subjugation of nature to man is shown in the film "Similar Image" by the collective **Fantastic Little Splash**. Although people think they control it, nature seems to be stronger and leads them into the forest - unpredictable and magical. And the deeper a person goes into this forest, the quicker they can disappear into it....

Wars, imperialism, economic crises and climate warming are forcing multitudes of people to migrate. **Pamela Bożek**'s sculpture, made from the fruit of the greater burdock, which is one of many migratory plants, tells the story in a metaphorical way.

The greater burdock wanders grafted to the bodies of animals and humans, using them like vehicles to travel to populate new areas.

**Marta Romankiv** works directly with migrants living in Poland. She asks them what kind of Europe they would like to live in and who should build it. Here in Bielsko-Biała, she organises "Euroworkshops" giving their participants a platform to express themselves.

The opening of the exhibition is accompanied by a performance by **Alicja Czyczel**, a reflection on ethical coexistence in times of climate crisis.

*Yulia Krivich*

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<sup>1</sup> Viktoria Amelina, 2023, Deoccupation of the future or the unscripted text for the New York festival, Pismo magazine, [https://magazynpismo.pl/idee/osobista\\_historia/wiktoria-amelina-deokupacja-przyszlosci-albo-nienapisany-tekst-na-festiwal-w-nju-jorku/?seo=pw](https://magazynpismo.pl/idee/osobista_historia/wiktoria-amelina-deokupacja-przyszlosci-albo-nienapisany-tekst-na-festiwal-w-nju-jorku/?seo=pw)