

PORTFOLIO JEANNA KOLESOVA

ARTIST STATEMENT

My artistic practice, rooted in research, encompasses various time-based media — films, video and digital installations, performance lectures, web, and writings. Within my works, I identify and critically examine issues that permeate and shape our daily lives. I am particularly fascinated by how history, information, and images support particular narratives, impact perception, and imprint themselves on human bodies, behavior, memories, as well as natural landscapes and (non)biological agents.

Beneath my artistic approach lies my personal experience of the Soviet Union's collapse, its aftermath — pervasive violence and the resurgence of imperial and colonial discourses and actions. I reflect on socio-historical dynamics, such as the role of social networks in military conflicts, state violence, technologies of propaganda, manipulation of collective memories, formation of national narratives among others. I am keen on understanding how these dynamics interrelate and influence our perception of "true" and "false." Although I once fell into the traps of a manipulated past and present, I escaped, yet remnants linger in my personality, compelling me to meticulously deconstruct their influence.

Intrigued by the multiplicity of realities, I believe the personal and political, as well as personal and collective, are inherently intertwined. In my works, I seek out gaps demonstrating that diverse perceptions, experiences, and memories can coexist and serve as a tool to demythologize manipulative narratives pushing for "unity" under a nationalist/imperial umbrella.

Memory is an Animal Which Barks with Various Mouths

2-Channel Film

15 Min, 32:9

B&W, Sound, EN/DE Subtitles

Installation 500x400cm

16 Hand-dyed Fabrics 250x80cm

Hand Embroidery 300x80cm

Carpets 200x140cm

2023

Full version:

<https://vimeo.com/849729349>

PW: An!mal

Trailer:

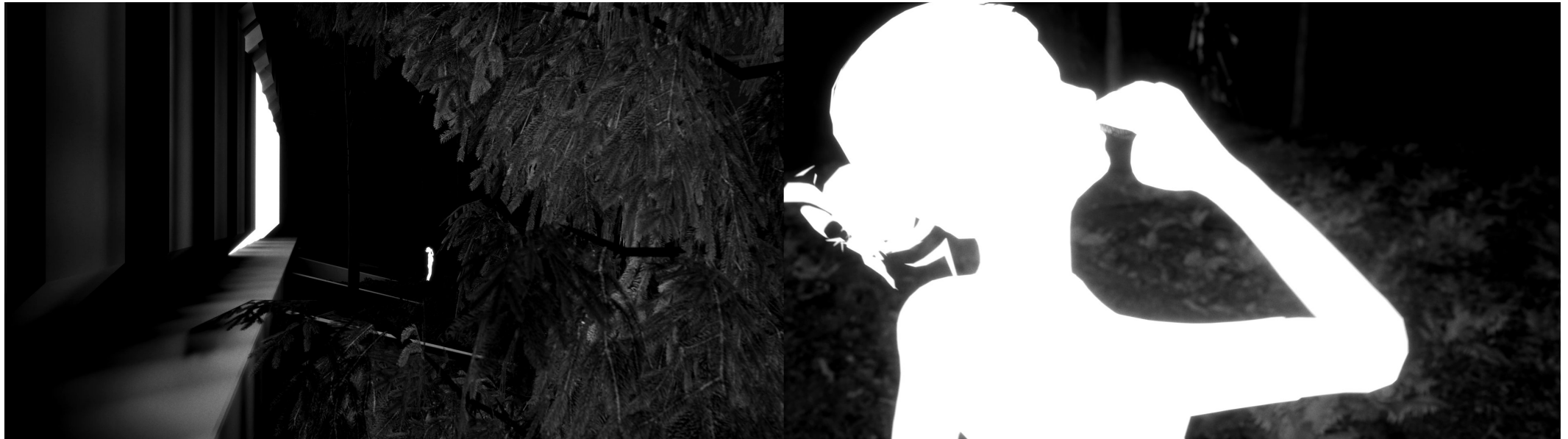
<https://vimeo.com/860598495>

Memory is an animal which barks with various mouths touches on the topic of collective memory in Russia related to the Second World War and how it was manipulated to form national narratives. I identify personal experiences and memories that intersect with those of society to combine the individual and public spheres. Public commemoration, the aggressive patriotic upbringing of children and adolescents, the cult of state power, and the cult of victory form a war-oriented identity. In contrast, the individual memory about the Second World War among those who experienced it instead reflects on the violent, destructive, and tragic side. This discrepancy allows me to identify algorithms of violence and memory manipulation. By highlighting gaps between individual and collective memory one can demythologize the past.

My main question is: When remembering past events, can we find a loophole to break out of the nationalist narrative?



Memory is an Animal Which Barks with Various Mouths
 Film stills
 15 Min, Sound
 32:9



Memory is an Animal Which Barks with Various Mouths
Film stills
15 Min, Sound
32:9



Memory is an Animal Which Barks with Various Mouths
Film still detail
15 Min, Sound
32:9



Memory is an Animal Which Barks with Various Mouths
Installation view: Karl Hofer Scholarship Award
UdK, Berlin (DE), 2023



Memory is an Animal Which Barks with Various Mouths
Installation view: Karl Hofer Scholarship Award
UdK, Berlin (DE), 2023



Memory is an Animal Which Barks with Various Mouths
Installation view: Cultures of Remembrance
Museum des Kapitalismus, Berlin (DE), 2023/24

NARBE//SCAR

2-Channel Video

3D Animation

3 Min, 9:16

B&W, No Sound, EN/DE Subtitles

2023

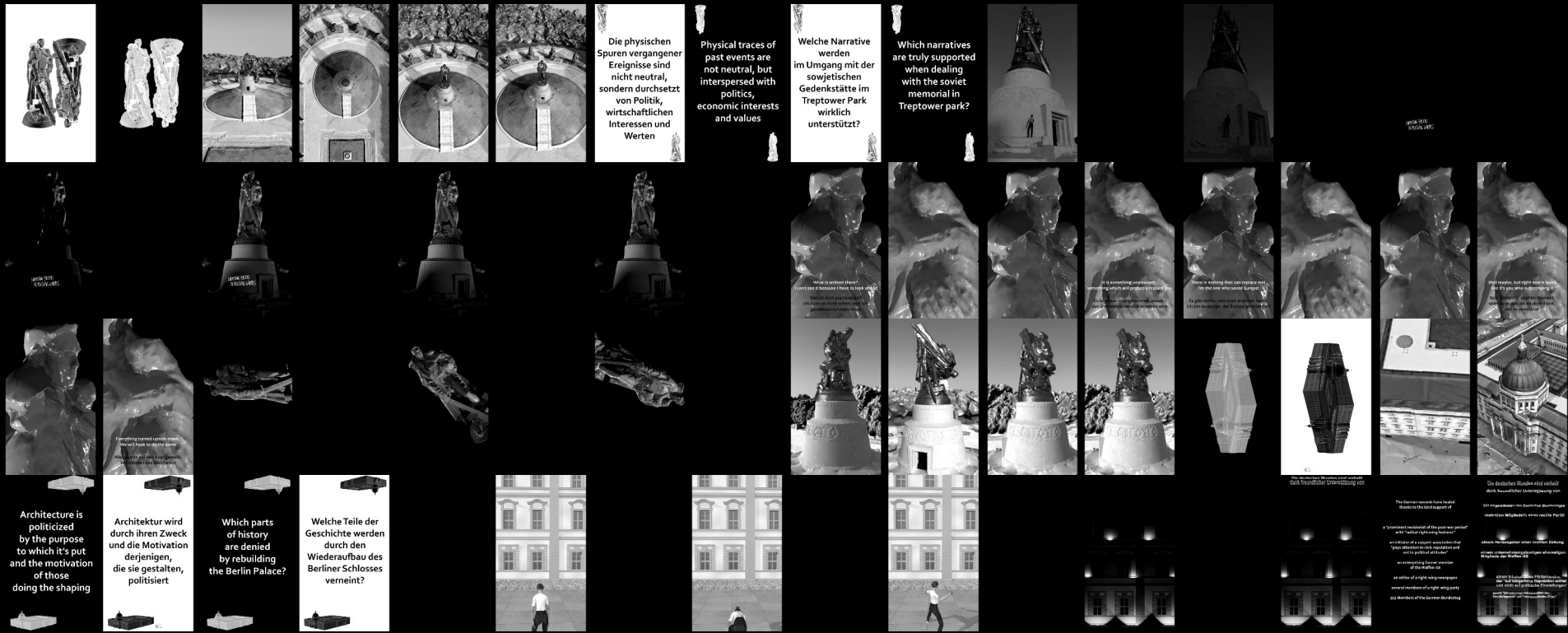
Two contextually different historical monuments of Berlin - Soviet War Memorial in Treptower Park and Humboldt Forum/Berlin Palace - are sources of similar tactics of reshaping and/or manipulation of material parts of history.

Narrative of liberation of the world and Europe from the fascism in WWII is deeply rooted in Russian imperialism. War monuments and commemorative practices around it are used by Russia as a tool for justifying a right to "fight fascism and save the world from it". Not only presence but untouchability and protection, those memorials in Germany are beneficial for narratives which Russia spreading around. There is a direct link between those monuments and the invasion of Ukraine.

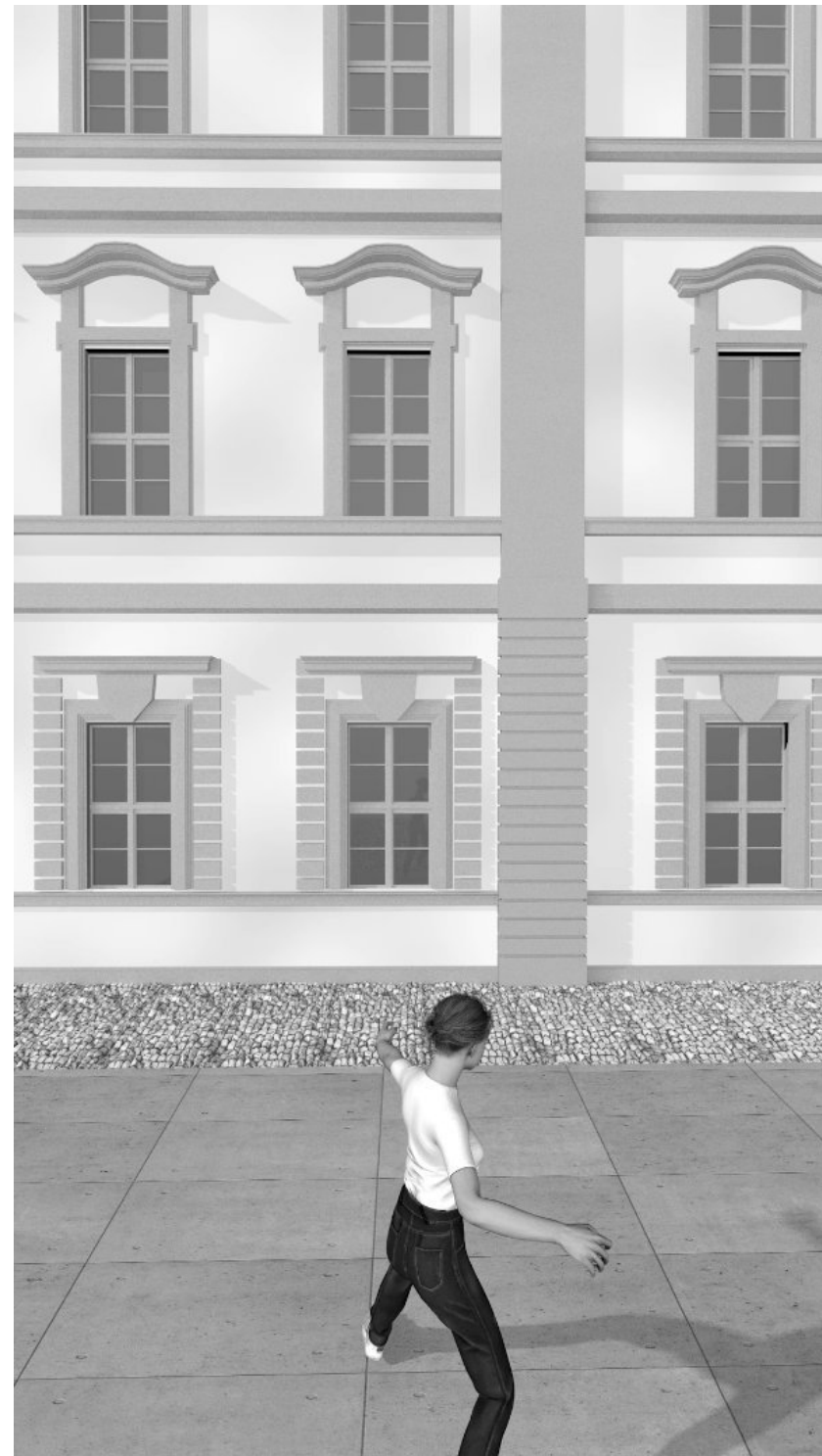
Demolishing the Palace of the Republic and rebuilding the Palace of the German royal dynasty in the middle of Berlin is just one part of the massive politics of invention of a new history in Germany. In the last decade from German public and political figures it has been sounding more and more like there is a need to recover from the "cult of guilt" and focus "on the positive sides of German history". Rebuilding the Palace of the former Royal family not only with state money, but also with big private investments from people who had a Nazi past or currently related with right-wing organizations and parties, is showing who are interested in reshaping "the negative German past".

Narbe//Scar is showing a need in rethinking our relationship with built heritage, questions the authority of the gatekeepers and argues that material representation of violent sides of history should be an image of shame not a pride.

<https://vimeo.com/812545660>



NARBE//SCAR
 Video stills
 3 Min, No Sound
 9:16



NARBE//SCAR
Video stills
3 Min, No Sound
9:16



There is nothing that can replace me!
I'm the one who saved Europe!

Es gibt nichts, was mich ersetzen kann!
Ich bin derjenige, der Europa gerettet hat!

NARBE//SCAR
Video stills
3 Min, No Sound
9:16



NARBE//SCAR
Installation view: European Month of Photography EMOP
Berlin (DE), 2023
aka DISTHENE

Memory and War

Performance Lecture

20 Min, 16:9

Color, EN/DE Subtitles

2022

Collective memory develops non-linearly. It is inseparable from the present and the interests of various social actors shape our perception of the past. Individual memory develops non-linearly. It is inseparable from the present and our own experience and experience of our beloved ones. Individual memory shapes our own perception not only of the past but also the future.

Audio-visual performance *Memory and War* grew from research about use and manipulation of the collective memory of the Second World War by the Russian government for the formation of national myths. During 23 years of Putin's regime the victorious nationalist narrative shaped a society where paramilitary courage and patriotism became mainstream and found their way into popular culture. The individual memory that holds the weight of war within it, has been erased by the bravado of victory. The claim that history and collective memory are linear and constantly evolving has been and remains a key tactic of Putin's regime.

What do we want to remember? Can we change the past? Can we create future memories? Can individual memory influence and change collective memory?

Using the situation in Russia as an example, the mockumentary part of the performance shows how manipulations of collective memory take place. The use of children's games of burying and excavating memory constructs rituals that are based on the non-linearity of individual memory.

I finally learned to talk about a substance that is occupying the minds of the majority of the population of eastern WWII MYTHS.
 Heute möchte ich über eine Substanz sprechen, die die Mehrheit der Bewohner von Ostdeutschland im Kopf tragen, den WWII MYTHS.

and most importantly, can we somehow influence its mitigation.
 und am allerwichtigsten, ob wir irgendwie möglich in ihrem Ablauf beeinflussen können.

So, I found out that the collective memory of the war in itself has always been part of the socio-chemical substance of society.
 Es ergibt sich also, dass die kollektive Gedächtnis an den Krieg in dransich schon immer ein Teil der soziochemischen Gesellschaftssubstanz gewesen ist.

The fact is that the state essentially manipulated and institutionalized the collective memory for several decades.
 Fakt ist, dass der Staat im Grunde das Kollektive Gedächtnis seit mehreren Jahrzehnten schon manipuliert und institutionalisiert.

This led to the over-formation of WWII, which slowly shaped a war-oriented social identity.
 Das führte zum Überwachen an WWII, das langsam eine kriegsorientierte Gesellschaftshenngenschaft harte.

She was captured when she was approximately 16 during her break from work. She was a chemist. When WWII war started she was 2 years old. She was 7 years old when it finished.
 Das ist meine Großmutter Galina. Sie wurde festgehalten, als sie etwa 16 Jahre alt war und gerade eine Pause von der Arbeit machte. Sie war eine Chemikerin. Als der zweite Weltkrieg ausbrach, war sie zwei Jahre alt. Sie war 7 Jahre alt als er endete.

This is my grandmother Galina. She was captured when she was approximately 16 during her break from work. She was a chemist. When WWII war started she was 2 years old. She was 7 years old when it finished.
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This is me with my sister. I'm 7 years old. In a few months I'll read a war poem in front of WWII veterans in my school for the first time.
 Das bin ich mit meiner Schwester. Ich bin sieben Jahre alt. In ein paar Monaten werde ich zum ersten Mal in meiner Schule ein Kriegsgedicht vor Weltkriegsveteranen darbringen.

This is my grandmother's medals made from silver exactly as the majority of Soviet medals dedicated to WWII. Another very common metal for medals was brass.
 Das ist die Medaille meiner Großmutter. Sie ist aus Silber, genauso wie die Mehrheit der sowjetischen Kriegsmedaillen. Ein anderes übliches Metall für die Medaille war Messing.

I've from the ranks. I'm no name. I'm unaccounted for and lost. I'm an accidental fatherless. I'm absent since January 15. I'm frozen in this crystal glass. I like perfumes in amber files.
 Ich komme aus dem Gefolge. Ich bin anonym. Ich bin unaccounted for und verloren. Ich bin ein versehener Vaters Sohn. Ich bin abwesend seit dem 15. Januar. Ich bin in diesem Kristall gefroren. Ich esse Schokolade in einem Bienenwax.

Every summer, if a child in my village said to play a game called Sova. This was a game with simple rules.
 Jeden Sommer spielen Kinder in meinem Dorf ein Spiel mit dem Namen Gabelweisse. Das war ein Spiel mit einfachen Regeln.

I chose the memory of reading poems in front of veterans. I stole a medal from my grandmother. Ich habe die Erinnerung, wie ich die Gedichte vor den Veteranen gesprochen habe, genommen und eine Medaille von meiner Oma gestohlen.

Remember the place where your secret is buried and leave it be over the summer.
 Vergiss nicht, wo dein Geheimnis begraben ist und lass es über den Sommer so.

She took the medal and quietly put it away in a box. She said she did not want to remember anything from her childhood, especially nothing related to war and victory.
 Sie nahm die Medaille und schob sie schnell in ein Kästchen. Sie sagte, sie wollte sich aus ihrer Kindheit erinnern, vor allem nichts, das sie dem Krieg bezieht.

This photo was taken in 1985.
 Dieses Foto wurde 1985 aufgenommen.

You see two groups of teenagers in front of the Soviet war memorial in Volgograd. Steel and concrete remember both of these groups.
 Man sieht zwei Gruppen von Teenagern vor dem sowjetischen Kriegsmemorial in Wolgograd. Der Stahl und Beton erinnern diese beiden Gruppen.

This one in 2022.
 Dieses hier 2022.

I wanted to destroy a medal which was awarded with a sense of pride for the victory in the Second World War.
 Ich wollte eine Medaille zerstören, die mit dem Stolz auf den Sieg im Zweiten Weltkrieg verbunden ist.

I imagined throwing the medal in deep water for many years, to the process of rusting, oxidation destroys the fabric and the metal.
 Ich stellte mir vor, wie ich die Medaille über Jahre in tiefen Gewässern liegen lassen würde, damit der Prozess des Rostens und der Oxidation den Stoff und das Metall zerstört.

I hoped that the process of destroying an object of association destroys everything that happens and it happened in the present and the past.
 Ich hoffte, dass dieser Prozess alles das, was passiert und das, was passiert ist, zerstört.

Here are photos of the celebration on 9th of May in Berlin's Treptower park in 2016.
 Hier sind Bilder von der 9. Mai-Feier im Treptower Park in Berlin aus dem Jahr 2016.

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This one is from April 2022. You see the Treptower Park monument with graffiti text on top of it which says "Wings", "ukrainian blood on russian hands", "peace = water". Stones and bronze remembers both celebrating people as well as graffiti.
 Das hier ist vom April 2022. Auf das Denkmal hat jemand mit Graffiti geschrieben "Wings", "ukrainian blood in russian hands", "peace = water". Stein und Bronze erinnern beide feiernde Leute und Graffiti.

I can't destroy medals. I can't destroy memorials. I can't destroy a memory.
 Ich kann Medaillen nicht zerstören. Ehrensgegenstände nicht zerstören. Ich kann eine Erinnerung nicht zerstören.

Memory develops and changes, memory decomposes and reassembles. What I want to remember shapes who I am. Who I am shapes what I want to remember. Memory flows linear. Past, present and future shapes each other.
 Erinnerungen entwickeln und verändern sich. Erinnerungen zerfallen und bauen sich auf. Was ich erinnern möchte, bestimmt wer ich bin. Was ich bin, beeinflusst was ich erinnern möchte. Erinnerung ist nicht-linear. Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft hängen voneinander ab.

If I can't not destroy a memory, at least I can try to change it.
 Wenn ich eine Erinnerung nicht zerstören kann, kann ich zumindest versuchen, sie zu verändern.



Memory and War
Video still
20 Min, Sound
16:9



Memory and War
Performance Lecture: Ballhaus OST
Berlin (DE), 2022

(In)visible Protest

Website

Installation

C-Print 110x75cm

6 Screens

2021

There is one place in St. Petersburg without police, a thin strip of land connected to the mainland via a tunnel, Kanonersky Island. The island, where the soil contains a whole bouquet of heavy metals, where the central aeration sewage treatment plant is located, where a motorway stretches over the heads of the few inhabitants, is the safest place to express your civic position.

We came there in March 2019 for two hours to publicly express everything that we wanted to say to the Russian government without getting arrested for it. Everyone wrote different statements which were important to them. This protest remained invisible to the public, journalists, and police and did not bring political changes. But for some of us it was an important shift - for these two hours we did not have fear. Fear that accumulates and reproduces over many years, that is passed on from generation to generation, a fear that is with you every minute. Fear of your own homeland.

Since 2016, the political situation in Russia has become entirely repressive. People protesting against state politics are met only with police brutality and with arrests. One person in this picture was arrested for 10 days for taking a part in a peaceful rally on 31 January 2021.

I have invited people from Russia to take part in an online rally, where they can write any statement they want to without getting arrested for their opinion. Spect_actors were welcome to join the protest by sending a one sentence statement via the Telegram channel t.me/invisibleprotest. It appeared after a while on one of the monitors held by the people in the picture

(IN)VISIBLE PROTEST



write your statement



This project was realized by Jeanna Kolesova — jeannakolesova.com



(In)visible Protest
Installation view: Nothing ever happened (yet)
Photography Museum, Berlin (DE), 2021



(In)visible Protest

Installation view: Nothing ever happened (yet)
Photography Museum, Berlin (DE), 2021

Comrade Stone

Video

10 Min, 16:9

Color, No Sound, EN Subtitles

Screen-Prints on Fabric

300x75cm

2021

In collaboration with Victoria Martinez

Developed by Gayatri Spivak, the term *Planetaryity* imagines the whole Planet as a habitation. There is no local place one comes from, there are only points of departures and arrivals. In this view humans are just custodians of the planet with a purpose of care towards others, no matter if it will be human or non-human or even geological agents.*

In contemporary reality we need to go even further and imagine planet and outer space from the perspective of the *world-without-us*, which is a negotiation of perceiving the whole universe as a world only for us, as the most intelligent form of life, and shifting towards the planet as an impersonal agent without human presence. This imagination does not refuse the fact of life, but recognizes a separation between organic and non-organic and that the existence of Earth and other planets emerge from inorganic forms first of all. This understanding can lead us not only to inventing care for others as the main goal of existence, but also to rethink everything we know about the natural processes occurring in the universe, as well as to understanding ourselves.**

Comrade Stone shows the first phase of research on geological agents from Mexico and Bashqortostan, russia. The narrative of the video story revolves around formation of rocks, minerals and reefs (approximately Permian period); interaction of minerals with erosion and extraction; handling of stones for Aztec culture and Shamans from Bashqortostan; contemporary relations between minerals and some industries.

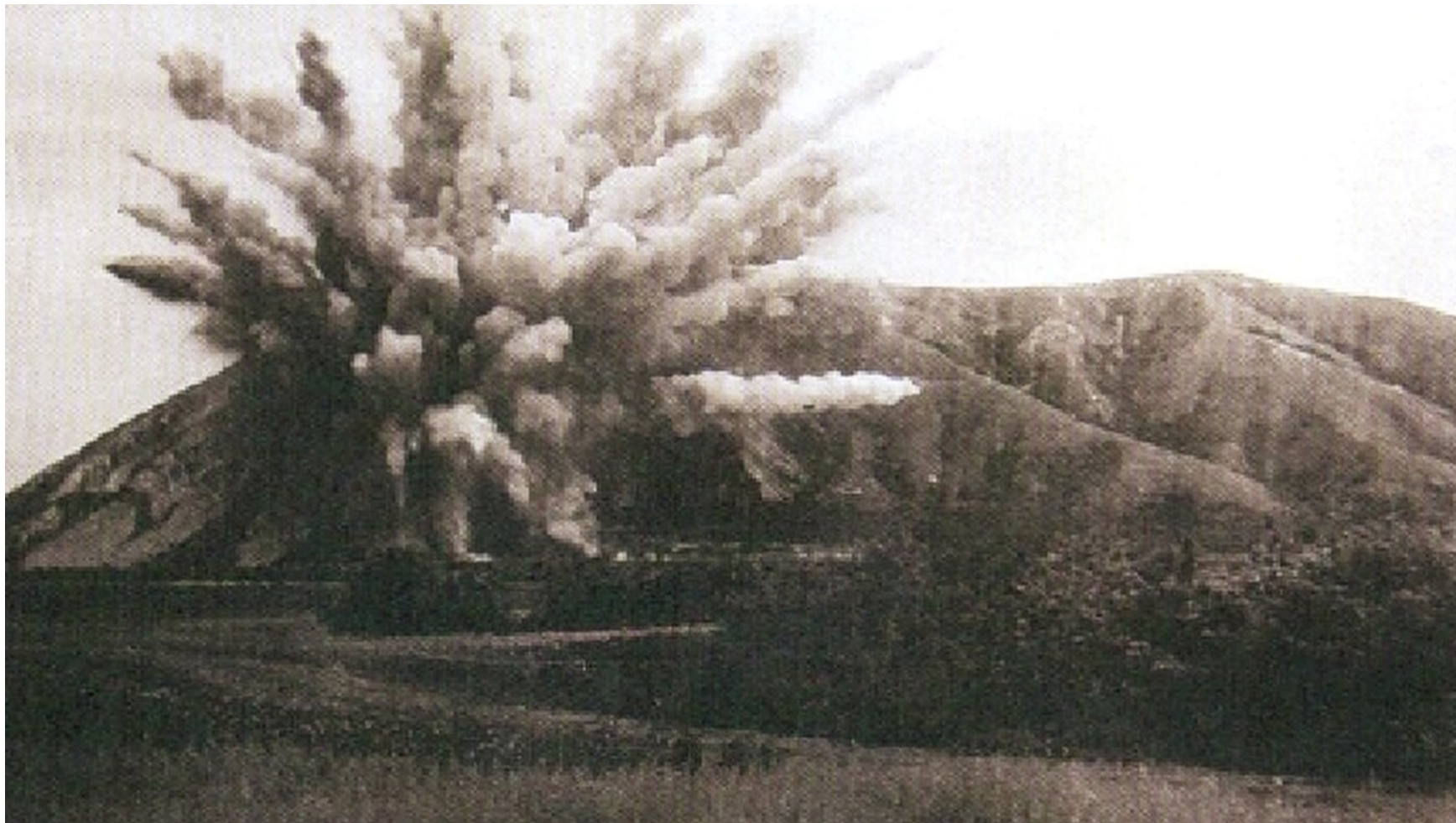
<https://vimeo.com/646510146>

* Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003

** Thacker, Eugene. *In the Dust of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy*. Winchester: Zero Books, 2011, 12-14



Comrade Stone
 Video stills
 10 Min, No Sound
 16:9



Comrade Stone
Video stills
10 Min, No Sound
16:9



Comrade Stone
Installation view: Soft Encounters
Floating University, Berlin (DE), 2021

Parallel Universe

Video

3D Animation

9 Min, 16:9

Color, Sound, EN Subtitles

2021

Is it possible to cope with boundless, uncontrollable fear? With the fear that pervades many generations. With fear for your own life and mental health, or for the future of your comrades and relatives. With the fear of what has not happened to you yet, but what definitely can happen.

I'm talking about the fear of a totalitarian state, a repressive system that crushes everything in its path. In my personal case, it is the fear and powerlessness before the Russian state, its police, and its judicial and prison systems. My tactics of withdrawing, ignoring, protesting, fighting, or migrating have not alleviated this fear.

In the *Parallel Universe*, I create an imaginary world where I directly face the system by following my fears. A world in which everything is possible and impossible at the same time. A world where my action or decision can be a link in a chain, also would not change anything in the system. A world that represents reality and is not reality. A world in which I can and cannot cope with fear and powerlessness.

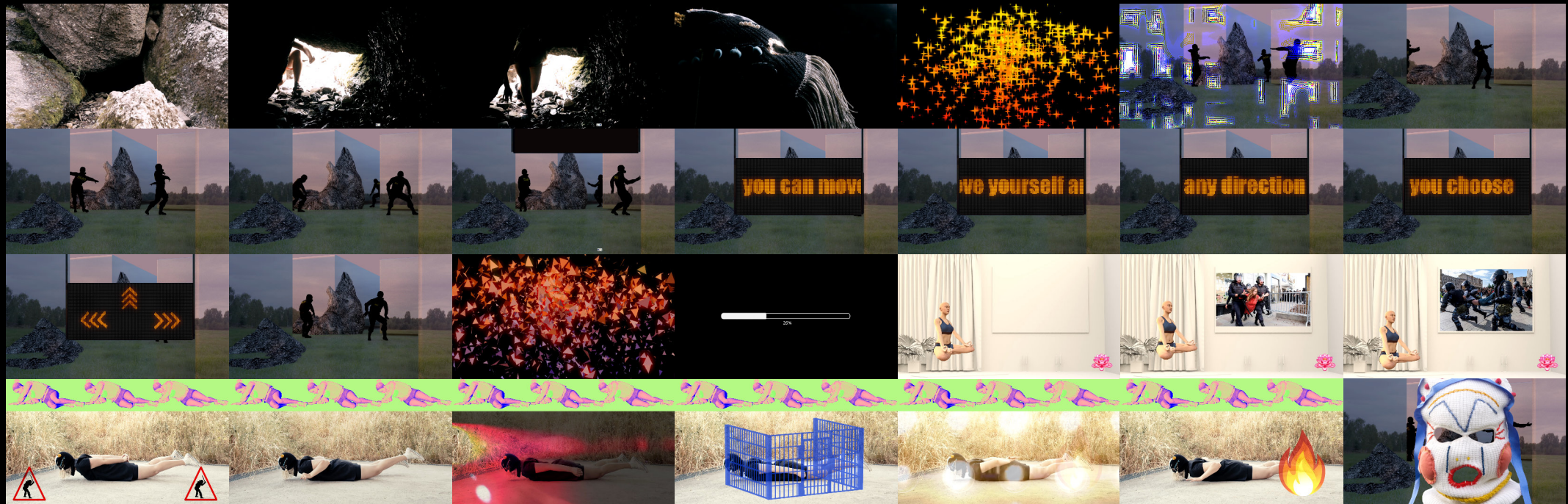
Being in this fictional world I can prepare myself for facing the system's violence in the real world.

Full version:

<https://vimeo.com/663272136>

Excerpt:

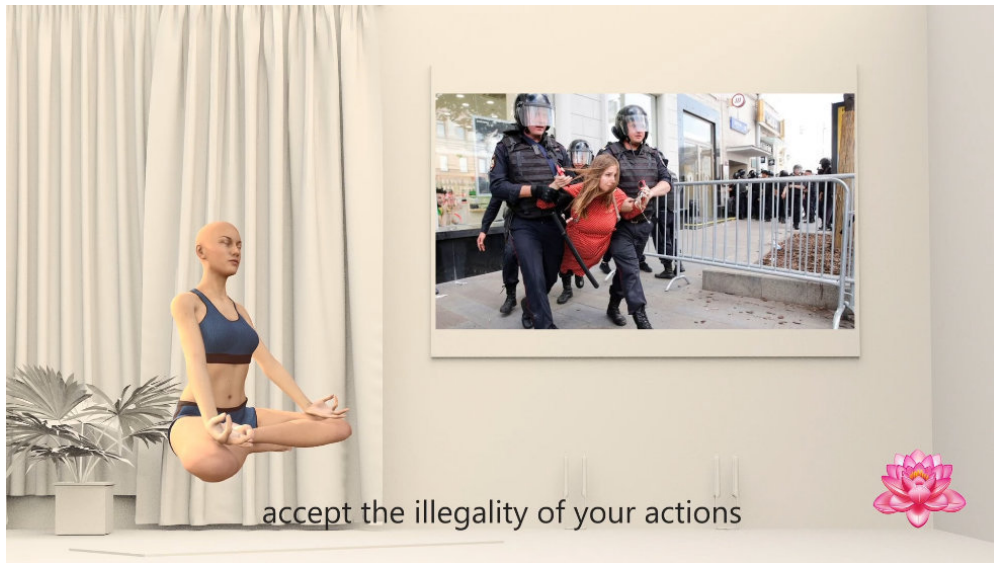
<https://vimeo.com/699036333>



Parallel Universe
Video stills
9 Min, Sound
16:9



Parallel Universe
Video stills
9 Min, Sound
16:9



Parallel Universe
Video stills
9 Min, Sound
16:9



Parallel Universe
Exhibition view: Conditions of a Necessity
Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden (DE), 2021

To All Victims

Installation

Eight Figures

Camera

Tablet with Twitter Account

2018

To all victims examines expropriation of wars through its constant circulation via images and global media channels. This everyday knowledge about military conflicts and numbers of dead people, represented through social media, allows some kind of sense of proximity to other people's suffering. But it seems that some empathy exists only in the digital field in the form of an incredible number of comments on posts about explosions in particular parts of the world.

This project invites viewers to question the power of images and reflect on the presence of powerlessness in real life which is hidden in an active online position.

The installation consists of figures lying on the floor, a camera mounted on top and a tablet that shows the twitter account. Participants are invited to press a button if they want to take a photo. If the photo is taken, there is automatically a tweet produced with this image and text that is randomly taken from comments (on twitter and YouTube) under videos, photos and news about military conflicts and wars. Participants are free to delete the post.

 Twitter: @To_all_victims



To All Victims
Twitter account stills



To All Victims
Installation view: Rundgang
UdK, Berlin (DE), 2018



To All Victims
Installation view: Rundgang
UdK, Berlin (DE), 2018

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