



Alena Kuznetsova

Portfolio  
Texts

Kyiv, Ukraine

CV

## ALENA KUZNETSOVA

is a professional multidisciplinary artist born in 1986 and works in Kyiv, Ukraine. Participant of Ukrainian and international projects, author of 14 solo shows and exhibiting since 2009.

Alena's creative work includes painting (main media), graphics, text, land art, photo, video installation, and ceramic sculpture. She explores the concepts of nature, transformations, femininity, fragility, life and death through her art. The artist endeavors to find a balance between humans and nature and the role of female artists, felt in the context of events taking place in Ukraine.

### Education:

**2003-2008** – Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture. Master's degree, specialty Fine Arts.

### Other Educational programs:

**2022** – Art in Times of Crisis (Dr Emma Mahony), NCAD, Dublin.

**2015** – School of Visual Communications, Kyiv.

**2014-2015** – School of contemporary art, MARI, Kyiv.

### Selected solo shows:

**2023** – Flowers or Explosions, Forsa gallery, Kyiv (UA)

**2022** – Relations with the image, Imagine point gallery, Kyiv (UA)

**2021** – Gamma, Ornament Art Space, Kyiv (UA)

**2019**

- Trajectory, Mironova foundation, Kyiv (UA)
- Mechanical Ballet. Act 3, French Institute, Kyiv (UA)

**2018**

- FLUX, Triptych: Global Arts Workshop, Kyiv (UA)
- Mechanical Ballet, White World, Kyiv (UA)

**2017**

- What color do you see?, MASLO the gallery, Khmelnytskyi (UA)
- GRAVITY, NEBO art gallery, Kyiv (UA)
- KILL BILL, America house, Kyiv (UA)

## **Selected group shows:**

**2025** – Serendipitous Events, Port of Culture, Ukrainskyi Dim, Kyiv

### **2024**

- Melancholy, Draft Gallery, Kyiv
- Sci-Fi Art, Portal 11 Gallery, Kyiv

### **2023**

- Concentration of the will, M17 Contemporary art center, Kyiv
- Ukrainian 12, Portraits International gallery, Brussels (BE)
- Awakening, Museum of Kyiv (UA)

### **2022**

- From Ukraine with love, Gallerie Lorient, Copenhagen (DK)
- And Get Up!, Gallery Lavra, Kyiv
- Wartime. Reflections..., Dzyga, Lviv (UA)
- The Art of Resistance, Sala d'Exposicions Municipal, Valencia (SP)

### **2021**

- Bohemian art corner. CQ edition, Kyiv
- New human nature, NVAIR, Zbarazh castle (UA)

### **2020**

- Objects art prize, Chocolate House, Kyiv
- Habitat. Manifesto 2020, Lavra gallery, Kyiv

### **2019**

- Collective art show, Van Gogh Art Gallery, Madrid (ES)
- Summer salon, Triptych: Global Arts Workshop, Kyiv
- Verbalization, Lavra gallery, Kyiv
- Objects art prize, nominees' exhibition, Chocolate House, Kyiv

### **2018**

- Simulacra anatomy, MARI, Kyiv
- Modern art international exhibition, Seoul (KR)
- Values on the way, Lite-haus galerie + Projektraum, Berlin (GE)
- Exposure, AkT, Kyiv

**2017** – Marry me!, Zenko Foundation, Museum of Kyiv history



## Art Residencies, Competitions, Art Fairs:

- 2024-2025** – Serendipitous Events (art laboratory), Port of Culture, Kyiv (UA)
- 2024-2025** – Martin Roth Initiative, online residency, Zeitz (DE)
- 2024** – MC6 art residency, Slavske (UA)
- 2022** – Artists at Risk residency, AICA, Dublin (IE)
- 2022** – Cultural Traffic residency, Vyzhnitsa (UA)
- 2020** – Final of Art Competition "Objects art prize", Chocolate House, Kyiv (UA)
- 2019** – Art Bodensee fair, Dornbirn (AT)
- 2019** – Final of Art Competition "Objects art prize", Chocolate House, Kyiv (UA)
- 2018** – Nazariy Voitovich Art Residency, Travneve, Ternopil region (UA)
- 2018** – Modern art international exhibition (Art Fair), Seoul (KR)

## Publications:

- 2024** – Argument №9, p.66-79 (FR-CH)
- 2024** – Sci-Fi Art, Catalogue of the group exhibition, Portal11 gallery, p.20–21 (UA)
- 2022** – Argument, Hors-serie Ukraine, p.16-25 (FR-CH)
- 2020** – Collection of works of modern art, White World gallery, p.200-201 (UA)
- 2019** – AirBaltic, p.19 (EE)
- 2018** – Personal catalogue (UA)
- 2018** – International Modern Art Exhibition, Gallery Harang, p.10 (KR)
- 2018** – Values on the Way, NVAIR (UA-DE)
- 2018** – Exposure, KUCA 2018, Korea and Ukraine Contemporary Art Exhibition, p.62 (UA)
- 2017** – Marry me!, Zenko gallery, p.26-27 (UA)

# PROJECTS & Texts

## Nearly three years

### Text for joint publication within MRI, 2025

This morning I was woken up at 7 o'clock by loud explosions. I opened the notification on my phone – imminent ballistic missile attack on Kyiv, where I live. Even that didn't spur me into action. I didn't run to the shelter, because it's 10 whole minutes away. My body, some reptilian part of me beyond my control, was just leaping back into bed when the loud explosions rang out. Our air defence was shooting down the missiles. I haven't felt fear for a long time now, at least not consciously. Maybe my survival instinct is defective. Or maybe my survival instinct has eliminated fear because it's impossible to live in a constant state of fear.

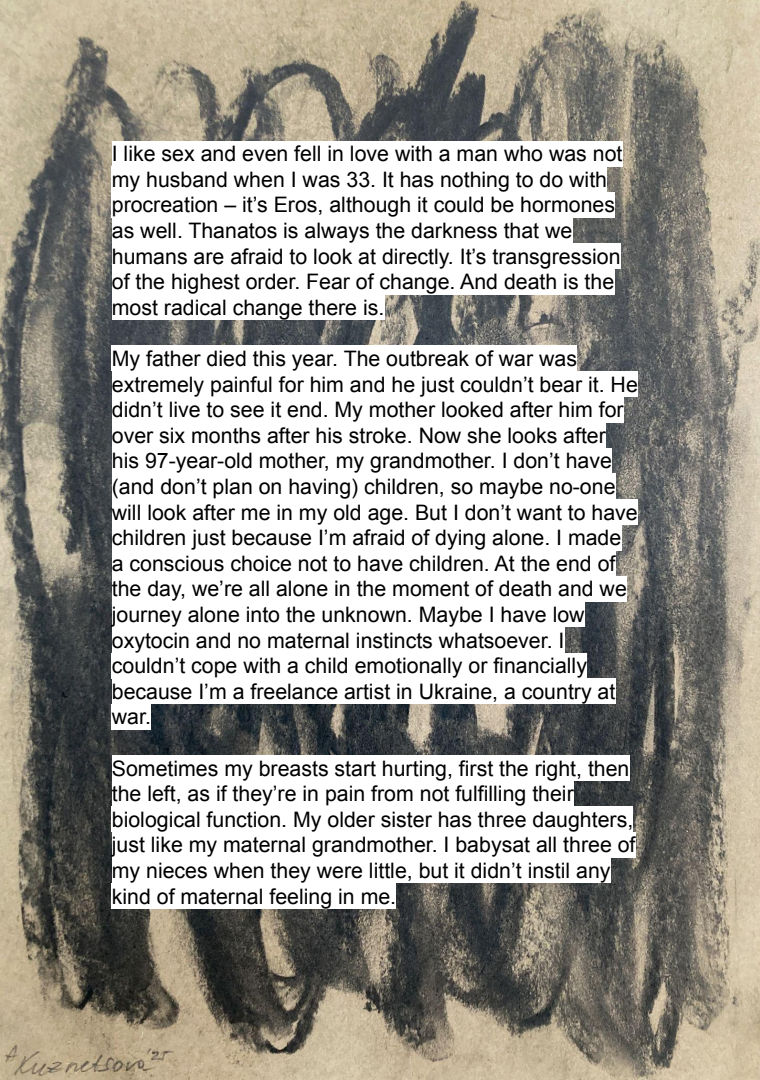
Today, on 20 December, I had an appointment at the nail salon. I haven't gone much recently, but I decided to glam myself up a bit for Christmas. In the end I woke up really late because of the morning's missiles and totally forgot about the appointment. It just slipped my mind, because the first thing I did after waking up was to look at the damage and destruction caused by the attack in the very centre of Kyiv. Then I checked social media to see if anyone I knew had been affected. It might sound ironic, verging on absurd – forgetting a manicure because of ballistic missiles and apologising profusely to the nail technician afterwards.

Isn't it reckless to get beauty treatments when you could get hit by a missile at any moment? Isn't it unethical to spend money on a manicure when people you know constantly need drones and equipment at the front? What about getting your hair done? Buying new things? I'm well aware that guilt isn't the best compass in life and that you have to take care of yourself. But we all have to make decisions about how to spend our money.

My family has a Soviet past and a Russian surname, Kuznetsova, which is actually the most common surname in the world (other versions include Kovalenko and Smith). My professional name, Alena, is Russian too, and that upsets me a bit. The name in my passport is even worse – Vladlena, a shortened version of Vladimir Lenin. What a perfect name in this day and age... I was joking recently with an artist friend about decommunisation. Sometimes you have to start with yourself, so we coined the slogan, 'Decommunise yourself', which is exactly what I did with my name.

I'm 39, although I look around 30. I've always looked younger than I am because I've always enjoyed exercise. The body helps us to feel alive. These days I want to go dancing, climbing or to yoga classes, but I just can't muster up the energy. My body is objectively ageing.





I like sex and even fell in love with a man who was not my husband when I was 33. It has nothing to do with procreation – it's Eros, although it could be hormones as well. Thanatos is always the darkness that we humans are afraid to look at directly. It's transgression of the highest order. Fear of change. And death is the most radical change there is.

My father died this year. The outbreak of war was extremely painful for him and he just couldn't bear it. He didn't live to see it end. My mother looked after him for over six months after his stroke. Now she looks after his 97-year-old mother, my grandmother. I don't have (and don't plan on having) children, so maybe no-one will look after me in my old age. But I don't want to have children just because I'm afraid of dying alone. I made a conscious choice not to have children. At the end of the day, we're all alone in the moment of death and we journey alone into the unknown. Maybe I have low oxytocin and no maternal instincts whatsoever. I couldn't cope with a child emotionally or financially because I'm a freelance artist in Ukraine, a country at war.

Sometimes my breasts start hurting, first the right, then the left, as if they're in pain from not fulfilling their biological function. My older sister has three daughters, just like my maternal grandmother. I babysat all three of my nieces when they were little, but it didn't instill any kind of maternal feeling in me.

Over the past three years my memory has deteriorated significantly and now some details just vanish. I've become one of those people who used to really annoy me. Isn't that a great exercise in inner growth? Learning to accept your own weakness and the chaos of the big, bad world in which you are just a tiny creature whose sphere of control is constantly encountering new limits.

Can you get used to war? I've noticed that my friends and I are all living in a similar state – not so much resignation as exhaustion, where all emotions fade away and you don't even feel burning anger at the relentless death and destruction or at Russia. This year I've felt physically exhausted too, which leaves me with even fewer options to cope with this damn stress.

In three years of war I've got used to the fact that I could die at any moment. This realisation has taught me to be less afraid of life, to value it more, even amidst a war. Recognition of my own mortality and the limited time at my disposal has given me more freedom to make changes, to be flexible, to do things I never dared to do before, to be open, vulnerable and honest with myself and my loved ones. Maybe this is maturity?

*Alena Kuznetsova, 2025*

# Horizontal Links

(with mycologist Alisa Atamanchyk, 2025)



*2-channel video, grow-boxes, installation*

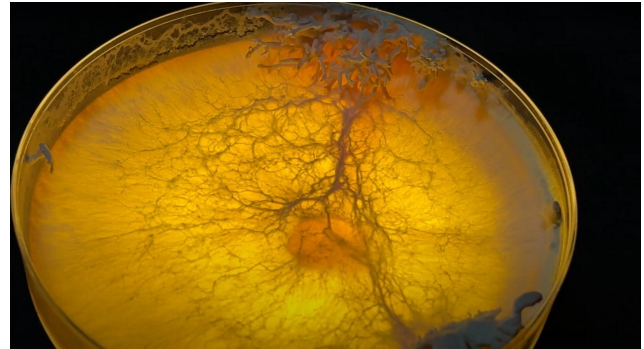
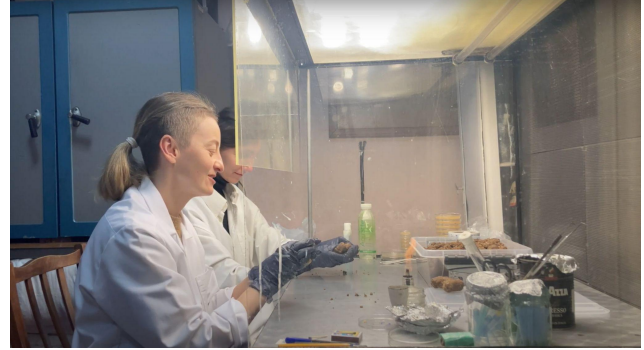
The question of whether Ukraine’s artistic and scientific communities function as truly “horizontal” networks remains open to debate. It is difficult to imagine these fields being completely free of competition and misogyny. Yet, the ability to maintain communication, share resources, and exchange ideas — where colleagues function as part of a single “organism” — creates opportunities for both survival and growth. A compelling natural example of such a system is mycelium.

Embodied within the concept of the rhizome — a decentralized, networked system that constantly adapts and forms new connections — mycelium in nature, like horizontal connections in society, operates as a nonlinear structure. It facilitates interaction, resource exchange, and resilience in complex environments. The way information flows through such systems highlights their interconnectedness, multiplicity, and openness to new relationships.

Can the principles of these adaptive networks be applied to society, replacing rigid hierarchical structures with more fluid, cooperative ones? Can this vision become a reality here and now? What conditions are necessary for people to collaborate rather than compete, to share experiences instead of withholding them? The Laboratory of Random Events Initiative, along with other art residencies, has served as an example of such a utopian space — where, even if only briefly, artists and scientists shared a common goal, access to the same resources (a “fertile soil”), and conditions that fostered new relationships and ideas. It functioned as a multidimensional structure, where all points were interconnected and capable of integration.



1. 2-channel video  
*Left: 13'48", Right: 7"*



*Screenshots:*

## 2. Growboxes with fungi cultures

*120\*45\*45 cm (\*3), glass, fungi,  
nutrient medium, heated cabinets*





3. Installation with mycelium elements  
*180\*100\*30 cm, metal mesh, threads, mycelium*





# Flowers or Explosions

Painting, graphics, objects, 2022-2023

The painting series appeals to the schizophrenic dichotomy of blooming life and death (which is now too close). We have learned to live, work, and even find inspiration in the permanent stress and eggregore of war, the relevant information field, and while friends or relatives are at the front. We Ukrainians, who have been experiencing the war for three years now, differ from people who haven't experienced this trauma. The explosion that creates this chasm shatters the "liberal" idea of the continuity of time.

What is war, if not global changes, when the one who survives is the one who adapts more flexibly either to risks or to new conditions, who has gone through and overcome trauma and finds a resource (in this trauma or outside of it) and meaning to rejoice and enjoy? The quickest and most effective practice of inner growth, isn't it?

What is a flower, if not a manifestation of life, so fragile and short-lived? An explosion is a flower-like symbol from the center to the periphery. There are even cannons called Peonies, and visually, the fire of their shot looks like a peony. Isn't that symbolic? In my work on it, I use napkins in the form of flowers, from my grandmother (a woman with of the soviet past, whose favourite phrase was "If only there was no war"), and multi-layered mixed media, including appliqué and embroidery. Almost all works contain the eyes symbol: of an observer of events, and each of the works has the name of the top context that was happening at the time of its creation/end: *My friend's battalion is raising money for optical sights; Eyewitness of the ground; In the middle of a bad war dream (I wish), a ray of light occasionally occurs and brings us back to life; Counteroffensive; Storm shadow; Free the leopards; Is it wind or Air defense at work?*

*Animal's bones, glass, flowers, 2023*





*Counteroffensive*, 150\*150 cm, oil, acrylic, oil pastels,  
spray paint on canvas, 2023

*Terra Ukraïna*, 65\*130 cm, oil, acrylic, stencil with spray paint on canvas,  
2022



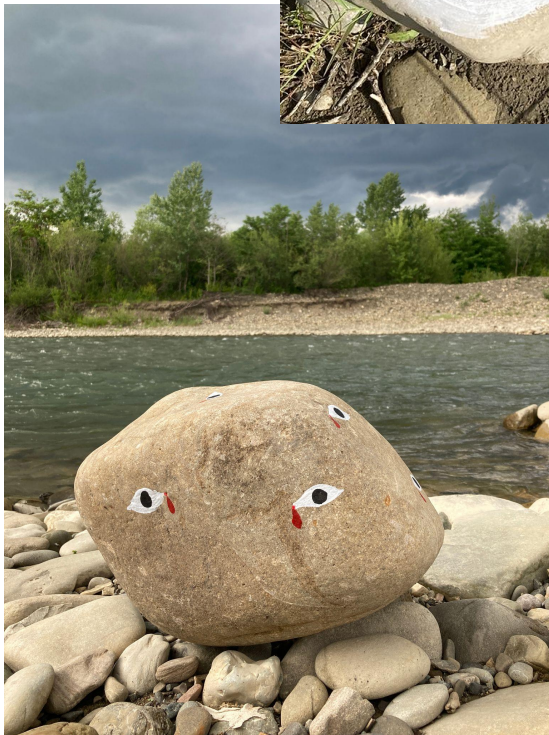


# To scatter stones

Land art, 2022

The huge field of stones on a river Cheremosh banks, Pokuttya, Ukraine. It reminded me how I painted on the stones in Crimea (which is now occupied by Russia), on the seashore in 2011 and 2012. This a first art project since the full-scale invasion. Short quotes and drawings, I was thinking about, painted just on the stones. It reflects my feelings about the war in a relatively safe place, and the fundamental changes of my art because of the war.

...Red, black and white.







## Ukraine is me

Painting, graphics, 2022

Ukraine is me is 2022 series of self-portraits in blue and yellow, made at Artists at Risk residency in Dublin in a temporary 3 months shelter.

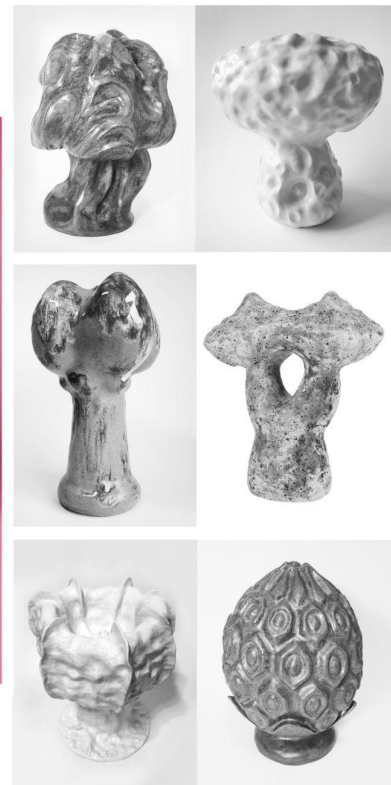
It is a statement of self identity, a Ukrainian. It is an attempt to feel alive again after the beginning of the full-scale invasion of russia to the territory of Ukraine through a return to a simple academic approach in state flag colors. This is an attempt to get back some strength to myself after being absolutely exhausted volunteering non-stop for a half of year to help Ukraine and everyone except myself (this project is a process of realizing this mistake).

Acrylic on paper, canvas, ~ A4 format each, 2022

# Fantastic Mushrooms

Ceramic objects, 2020-2021

I have been interested in the subject of fungi since childhood. This is the most mysterious, oldest of all living things, and probably the least studied kingdom, endowed with its intelligence. They – mycelium, and fungi – are everywhere and much closer in terms of genome to humans than to plants! It is a web that connects different organisms and transmits information, it is a prototype of the Internet. Saprotrophs fungi are at the end of the food chain, and the closest to the phenomenon of death than all other creatures. They break down matter, turning it into nutritious soil for further life, and therefore they are at the beginning of the chain at the same time! They teach us not to be afraid of death because it is an integral part of the life cycle.



*Clay, glaze, h~28 cm each*

# To the river

video, 2023



*video 40'04", 2023*

The caustic phenomenon on the water's surface is an ideal environment for contemplation. It resembles a web, the Internet, or mycelium, rhizome. It is also a metaphor for the impermanence of the world and changes, as well as of our worldview, life habits, and beliefs. The video also refers to the Kakhovka tragedy of 2023, which occurred due to the Russian occupiers undermining the dam of the reservoir.



# Relations with the image

Painting, video, 2020-2021

Our relationships are also our stories, shared with others.

This is not exactly a "series", but a cycle of 11 works of various formats, which I think are prophetic. I started it at the end of 2019 because I felt pain as if I had died and a personal crisis that I could not explain logically. The worst thing for me is the crisis of meaning.

This cycle is an attempt to look into the eyes of my truth - the images from which I have largely weaned myself, studying color and abstract art for the past 10 years.

I consider this series a return to real life, containing complex relationships, such as Eros and Thanatos, unspeakable, subconscious.

Visualizing your demons is like bringing them to the surface to let them disappear. Thinking of the beauty and fear, of your role: artist, woman, about the rules that limit your mind in this world.

*Relations with image 1, 130\*100 cm, canvas, oil, applique, 2019-2021*





*Shark-neckline, 95\*55 cm, canvas, oil,  
beads, applique, 2019-2021*



*Exposing, 45\*50 cm, canvas, oil, beads.  
2019-2021*



# Heterotopia

Video, 2020-2021

<https://youtu.be/hbCsXDLYBJY>

This video is the exploration of fruitless attempts to understand my controversial identity, desires and ideas, to find my perfect place (which is actually illusive). It is a part of Relations with the Image cycle.

Michel Foucault introduced the concept of "heterotopia" (fr. Hétérotopie) to be able to reflect the semantic diversity, i.e. to present all the meanings embedded in the understanding of space. Thus, heterotopia can be both a real place and something close to utopia, parallel to a real space (for example, a prison, a ship, a museum, a hospital), the fullness and content of which allows us to bring a real place closer to the virtual one.



*video, 18'16", 2020-2021*

# Broad Perspective

## Painting

Broad Perspective is about a place that is missing: a person seems to be “nowhere” while moving, and which symbolic meaning have changed recently for many. The fleeting landscape from the car window – to the topic of change, which we feel most strongly in Ukraine. What are the connections and relations between friends and families now, when we are taken apart by the war? More than 4 million refugees left Ukraine and 6,5 million of internally displaced persons since the 24th of February...for all of them the long road became more familiar than ever.



*Stripes 6, 90\*140 cm (diptych), oil on canvas, 2021*

# Hello, mum, hello, granny

Knitted napkins, video, 2016

In this work, I raise a question about the details of cognitive vocabulary, the degree of honesty-puritanism, borders in the communication between the generations, and the language barrier as part of the same ethnic language of each generation rates personal world. Therefore, I always had a strong association with my older relatives in these knitted napkins at my grandma Zhenya's house. I even have used these napkins in my later project Flowers or Explosions (after Zhenya's death in 2021). This is something concrete and stable, that always remains unchanged. It's like an unknown or forgotten language for me, that I can use to become a little closer to all of them, creating a new communication process, and inventing new game rules.



## Press

1. [Interview for «Argument» \(Paris, France, 2024\)](#)
2. [Horizontal Links \(L'officiel Ukraine, 2025\)](#)
3. [Marie Claire \(2023\)](#)
4. [Подобиці \(2023\)](#)
5. [The Village \(2023\)](#)
6. [IMMART \(2022\)](#)
7. [Revenue Argument \(2022\)](#)
8. [The-Village \(2022\)](#)
9. [Esthète Газета \(2022\)](#)
10. [Antikvar \(2022\)](#)
11. [In Kyiv \(2022\)](#)
12. [ArtDependence \(2019\)](#)
13. [AirBaltic \(2019\), p. 19](#)
14. [Art Ukraine \(2018\)](#)
15. [Ukraine art news \(2018\)](#)
16. [The culture trip \(2017\)](#)
17. [Art Ukraine \(2017\)](#)
18. [Chernozem \(2017\)](#)



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