

Artist Statement

We are a long echo of each other

Evgeny Antufiev
& Lyubov Nalogina

"First of all, we have to answer certain questions. How has the Russian army ended up in Ukraine? Why is the totalitarian aesthetics popular again in my country? Why have voices that have long been silent reappeared from the void? I don't know how to answer these questions with art.

This is a strange project which is yet to become complete. A few years ago, I bought a small part of the archive belonging to Marshal A. A. Grechko who was the Minister of Defence of the USSR during the Cold War. Grechko was also the person who brought tanks into Prague during the Soviet invasion of 1968. The archive contains a vase offered to him by the Czech military and documentation of the awards given by him to soldiers for the 'success' of this invasion.

The minister was a hunter. The archive includes a photo of him with dead animals laid out after a hunt as well as chairs with armrests made of animal horns. This part of the archive appears as Soviet Gothic. Men looking like grim killers. There is an aesthetic of evil in the images. These archival documents are juxtaposed with a series of mosaics in the traditional style of monumental Soviet art that I have created in collaboration with my wife, Lyubov Nalogina. The animals on the mosaics are anticipating the war. They are anxious.

Our artistic language is hardly suitable for talking about war and violence. We work with materials, symbols and memory. Yet art exists within the context of its time. Especially during the war, especially in the aggressor country. Unable to find artistic means to talk about the present, we turn to the past. Violence does not appear out of nowhere: it is an echo of other violence. The history of Russia is often thought to be cyclical.

We are concerned that the metaphor of this exhibition may seem obscure. Our opinion on the Russian war in Ukraine should not have any second interpretation: this war must be stopped, this war is a crime, the criminals must be prosecuted."

EMALIN

1 Holywell Lane
London EC2A 3ET
www.emalin.co.uk