

# secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession  
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien  
T. +43-1-587 53 07, F. +43-1-587 53 07-34  
office@secession.at, www.secession.at

## Press release

### Mykola Ridnyi September 15 – November 12, 2023 Grafisches Kabinett

**Preview for the press:** Thursday, September 14, 2023, 11 a.m.

**Opening:** Thursday, September 14, 2023, 7 p.m.

**Exhibition talk:** Mykola Ridnyi in conversation with David Riff  
Thursday, September 14, 2023, 6 p.m.  
(in English)  
An event by the Friends of the Secession

Mykola Ridnyi's generation of Ukrainians grew up in a climate of increasing orientation toward the West and the European Union. This emancipation from Russia found expression in the 2004 Orange Revolution and was defended in the Euromaidan events of 2013–14. It was a process that went hand in hand with the emergence of a confident Ukrainian arts scene, among whose leading exponents Ridnyi ranks. Long before graduating from the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts in 2008, he was instrumental to the formation of a politically active arts scene, both as an artist in his own right and as a curator and author. He was a founding member of the art collective SOSka, whose SOSka gallery-lab, an artist-run space that existed from 2005 until 2012, was a key contribution to the local artistic infrastructure. Ridnyi's curatorial project *Armed and Dangerous* (2017–2021) prompted him to begin developing a platform for collaborations between Ukrainian moving-image artists and filmmakers. In 2022–23, he curated several Ukrainian film and video art screening programs at DAAD-Galerie, Berlin; MAXXI, Rome; Museum Folkwang, Essen; and the National Gallery, Sofia.

In his most recent works, Ridnyi has turned his attention to fundamental questions concerning the role of media and the representation of war. The two works he shows at the Secession shed light on different facets of his oeuvre: a new video that, in light of the current situation in Ukraine, came into being in unwonted circumstances; and a work on the façade that extends the exhibition into the public space, which has long been an important arena for the artist's activities.

Two monumental banners emblazoned on the Secession's prominent and widely photographed façade bring images from the war in Ukraine to downtown Vienna: one shows a residential building that was hit in a rocket attack in 2014, a reminder that this war actually began almost a decade ago; the other is an aerial shot of North Saltivka, the district of Kharkiv in which the artist grew up and that is also the new film's subject. The motifs derive from *Blind Spot*, a series Ridnyi started working on in 2014, initially by gathering images from the internet that documented the war in the Donbass and other areas in eastern Ukraine. But we see no more than details, the images are "impaired," as though seen by someone suffering from a severe visual disorder. "Blind spot" is the medical term for a small area of the retina that lacks photoreceptor cells. Our brain supplies the missing information, implying that our reality is always already a construction. In Ridnyi, this peculiarity becomes a metaphor for our society, which is embroiled in a media war.

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Inside the Grafisches Kabinett, we present his new film *The District*, a very personal meditation on the war as it manifests itself in his native Kharkiv:

“*The District* is a new film dedicated to Northern Saltivka. This is the district where I lived during my school years and study at the Art Academy in Kharkiv. Since the beginning of 2022, this densely populated outlying neighborhood of the city has become the frontier of the Russian invasion and has suffered significant destruction due to artillery strikes. Although some people have already returned from evacuation, the district still makes the impression of a ghost town. However, this will not be a documentary about the war, but a dive into my personal memories.” (1)

Footage recorded on the scene is defamiliarized by effects such as pixel clouds and montaged photographs and drawings, forging a coexistence of past and present, outward and inward landscapes, facts and recollections. The images are accompanied by a voiceover narrative: a female voice recites the artist’s memories of places of his childhood and youth that no longer exist.

(1) Announcement on Ridnyi’s Instagram account, August 1, 2023

Mykola Ridnyi (b. Kharkiv, 1985) lives and works in Kyiv and Berlin, where he is currently a fellow of the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe’s Artistic Research Grant Program.

Programmed by the Board of the Secession  
Curated by Bettina Spörr

The exhibition by Mykola Ridnyi is sponsored by the Dr. Éva Kahán Foundation.

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## **Publication**

### ***Mykola Ridnyi***

Format: 17 x 24 cm

Details: Softcover, Schutzumschlag, 80 Seiten

Series design concept: Sabo Day

Graphic design: Sabo Day, Rosen Eveleigh

Texts: Daniel Muzyczuk, Anna Remešová, Mykola Ridnyioemi Smolik (essay), Pauline Chirata Mukondiwa (poem), Fadzai Veronica Muchemwa (conversation)

Ca. 40 images

Secession 2023

Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, Köln

ISBN 978-3-7533-0524-0

EUR 18.-

The book to be released in conjunction with the exhibition includes an essay by Daniel Muzyczuk that explores the context of Ridnyi's new film *The District* and his interest in the Polish artist Władysław Strzemiński's (1893–1952) Theory of Vision. In a conversation with Anna Remešová that was originally published in the Czech online art magazine Artalk seven months after the outbreak of the war, Ridnyi first sketches the idea for the film that now premieres at the Secession. The book contains numerous illustrations as well as an artistic intervention, consisting of a series of postcards showing eight video stills from the artist's new film *The District*, a personal exploration of his memories of the largely destroyed district of North Saltivka in Kharkiv, where he lived during his school years. One randomly selected motif is enclosed with each book, like a shared memory.

The digital publication is available for free at [https://secession.at/category/digital\\_publication](https://secession.at/category/digital_publication).

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### Current exhibitions

Hauptraum

**SoiL Thornton** *Choosing Suitor*

September 15 – November 12, 2023

Galerie

**Mai Ling** *NOT YOUR ORNAMENT*

September 15 – November 12, 2023

Grafisches Kabinett

**Mykola Ridnyi**

September 15 – November 12, 2023

### Publications

*SoiL Thornton. Choosing Suitor*

Softcover, dustjacket, 168 pages, EUR 24,00

*Mai Ling. NOT YOUR ORNAMENT*

Softcover, 88 pages, EUR 18,00

*Mykola Ridnyi*

Softcover, dustjacket, 80 pages, EUR 18,00

### Permanent presentation

Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*

*Beethoven – Painting and Music* in cooperation with  
Wiener Symphoniker

### Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

### Admission

Regular € 12,00 | Students under 26 € 7,50

Seniors 65+ € 10,00 | Free admission for children under 12

### Press contact Secession

Julia Kronberger

T. +43 1 587 53 07-10, [julia.kronberger@secession.at](mailto:julia.kronberger@secession.at)

### Press images

download at <https://secession.at/presse>

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**Mykola Ridnyi**  
*The District, 2023*

## Credits

Written and directed by  
Mykola Ridnyi

Voice narration  
Kateryna Stetsevykh

Camera  
Artem Bondarenko

Sound recording  
Serhii Husiatnik

Edited by  
Mykola Ridnyi  
Artem Bondarenko

Sound design  
Serzh Avdeev

Trumpet improvisation  
Dmytro Bondarev

Studio sound recordings  
Yuriy Wodolazhskyi  
Andrei Cucu  
Special thanks to  
Malte Giesen

VFX design  
Evgen Zinchenko

Title design  
Daniil Revkovskyi

Color grading  
Artem Bondarenko

Producer  
Mykola Ridnyi

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Executive producer

Serhii Husiatnik

Location guide

Rodion Prokhorenko

Image credits

Director's Family Archive

Borys Mendel, From the *Kharkiv. Architecture, Monuments*, Photo Album, Mystetstvo, Kyiv, 1986

Robert Papikian, From the *Kharkiv And Its Residents*, Photo Album, Mystetstvo, Kyiv, 1989

Boris Redko, *Untitled*, 1988, 1989, Museum of Kharkiv School of Photography

Production and post-production

Brahma Films

Commissioned by

Secession

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## Mykola Ridnyi

### Biografie | Biography

Mykola Ridnyi ist ein Künstler, Filmemacher und Essayist. Er wurde 1985 in Kharkiv, Ukraine, geboren. Ridnyi schloss 2008 sein Studium an der Nationalen Akademie für Design und Kunst in Kharkiv ab. Seit 2005 ist er Gründungsmitglied des Kunstkollektivs SOSka group. Er lebt und arbeitet in Kyiv, Ukraine und Berlin, Deutschland.

Mykola Ridnyi is an artist, filmmaker and essayist. He was born 1985 in Kharkiv, Ukraine. Ridnyi graduated in 2008 from the National Academy of design and arts in Kharkiv. Since 2005, he has been a founding member of the art collective SOSka group. He lives and works in Kyiv, Ukraine and Berlin, Germany.

### Einzelausstellungen (Auswahl) | Solo exhibitions (selection)

- 2021 *Excavations from the Future*, Voloshyn Gallery, Kyiv, UA  
*Horses' Traces* (with Clemens von Wedemeyer), Bakhmut Museum of Local History, Bakhmut, UA
- 2019 *Wolf in a Sack*, Arsenal City Gallery, Bialystok, PL
- 2018 *Facing the Wall*, Labirynt City Gallery, Lublin, PL
- 2016 *Under suspicion*, Edel Assanti, London, GB  
*Forecast for Yesterday*, Blockhaus DY10, Nantes, FR  
*Hang zum Konflikt*, (with Anna Witt), Kunstraum München, Munich, DE
- 2015 *Clenched Staring Eyes*, Art Agenda Nova, Krakow, PL
- 2014 *Shelter*, Visual Culture Research Center, Kyiv, UA
- 2012 *Labor Circle*, CCA Ujazdowski Castle, Project room, Warsaw, PL

### Gruppenausstellungen (Auswahl) | Group exhibitions (selection)

- 2023 *Kaleidoscope of (Hi)stories*, Ukrainian Art 1912–2023, Albertinum, Dresden, DE  
*Global Spotlight: Video Art from Ukraine*, Museum of contemporary art Arlington, US  
*Fruits of Wrath*, Haus am Lützowplatz (HaL), Berlin, DE
- 2022 *Survival Kit 13*, Latvian Center for contemporary art, Riga, LV  
*A War in the Distance*, Steirischer Herbst festival in cooperation with Neue Galerie Graz /  
Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz, AT  
*Extremely Normal*, Fotograf Festival, Prague, CZ  
*Transition*, LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur, Munster, DE  
*Material Nation*, Urania Berlin, DE  
*What Matters*, Akademie der Künste Berlin, Berlin, DE  
*Tangled Hierarchy*, John Hansard gallery, University of Southampton, GB  
*Tangled Hierarchy 2*, TKM Warehouse, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Kochi, IN  
*Refinerymonastery*, 20-th Pancevo biennial, Pancevo, RS
- 2021 *Transgressions of the Real*, Kunstpavillion, Innsbruck, AT
- 2020 *The Hotel, the Sanatorium, the Pension and Their Refugee's Rooms*, Kyiv Pavillion of the Tbilisi  
Architecture biennial, GEO / UA
- 2019 *After Leaving / Before Arriving*, 12th Kaunas Biennale, LT

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*Picture This. Selected Pasts, Subverted Facts*, Budapest Gallery, HU

*Never Again. Art Against War and Fascism in 20th and 21st Centuries*, Warsaw Museum of Modern Art, PL

*Tale of Novorossiya*, Arsenal City Gallery, Poznan, PL

2018 *Restless Monuments*, Zilberman gallery, Istanbul, TR

*Neighbors*, Warsaw Under Construction 10, Cepelia Pavillion, Warsaw, PL

2017 *The Image of War*, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, SE

*If Seeing is Believing*, Fullersta Gard, Stockholm, SE

*It Won't Be Long, Comrades!*, Framer Framed, Amsterdam, NL

*Your Country Doesn't Exist*, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka, HR

2016 *Photography Today: Distant Realities*, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, DE

*Sentsov's Camera*, GfZK-Museum of Contemporary Art Leipzig, DE

*Universal Hospitality*, Into the City / Wiener Festwochen, Vienna, AT