

Press Kit

Kyiv Biennial

A Bird That Cannot Land

KW

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Exhibition 11.06.–13.09.26

Opening 10.06.26

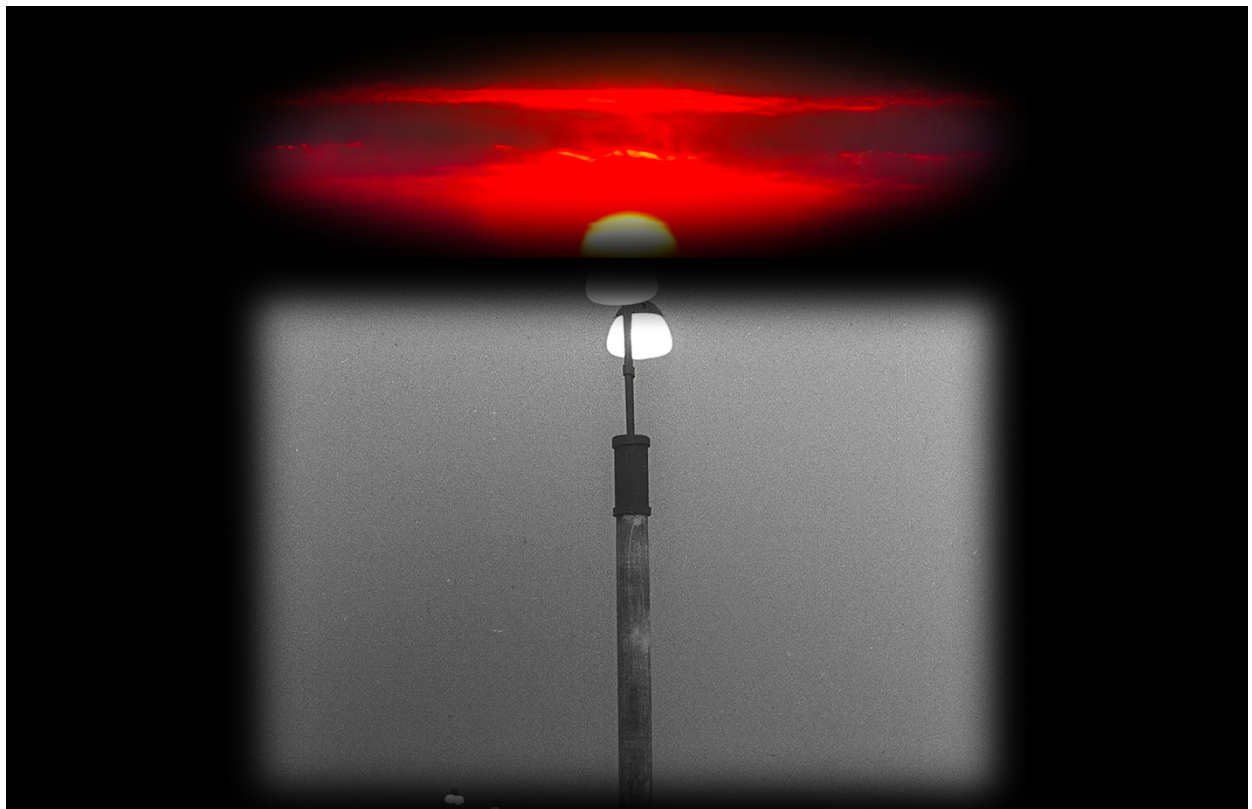
Kyiv Biennial

A Bird That Cannot Land

On Wednesday, 10.06.26, KW Institute for Contemporary Art will open a chapter of the Kyiv Biennial, an expansive exhibition, live and discursive program that takes place across all floors of the building and throughout the summer months.

This chapter is curated by KW's curatorial team and organised in close collaboration with the Visual Culture Research Center, the founders of the Kyiv Biennial.

- Emma Enderby, Director



Lesia Vasylychenko, *Night Without Shadows and Light Without Rippling of Waves*, 2025.
Courtesy the artist © the artist.

The Kyiv Biennial is a nomadic, international project that interweaves artistic, political, and social issues. *A Bird That Cannot Land*, its chapter at KW, takes shape as an extensive live and discursive program and a large-scale exhibition spanning the entire building, contributing to the biennial's reflections through contemporary art, sound, and exchange.

Situated in shifting political realities, *A Bird That Cannot Land* centers on the notion of a "Middle-East-Europe" and its histories of dispute, coloniality, and imperialism. Recurring conflicts reopen the wounds of those preceding them and challenge our sense of shared experience, language, and imagination. By linking post-Soviet Eastern Europe with Central and Southwest Asia, and the Mediterranean, the exhibition and its live and discursive events turn to questions on how we make meaning and experience belonging in times marked by war, uncertainty, and estrangement. Moving through realities where the continuity of meaning is broken, the biennial understands exile in and from the world as a central condition of contemporary life.

Amid this landscape, *A Bird That Cannot Land* aims to open spaces for listening to interconnected pasts and presents, and for rethinking how geographies, histories, and realities are told and perceived. The biennial features over 40 intergenerational and international voices from Berlin and beyond. The works featured are shaped by lived experiences echoing rupture, migrant memories, their affective architectures, and the historical traces that persist both in bodies and in the spaces we inhabit.

The Kyiv Biennial's live program unfolds through a range of formats, foregrounding Berlin's diasporic communities in dialogue with translocal artistic practices. At its center, KW's main hall hosts a week of concerts and performances exploring music's affective force across diverse sonic practices and vocal traditions. This is extended through a series of listening sessions that explore different geopolitical dimensions of sound. Throughout the program, process-based practices approach polyphony as both an aesthetic and social practice of resilience.

Participants: Abdullah Miniawy, Adam Hanieh, Alona Karavai, Anna Ehrenstein and Yara Mekawei, Anna Zvyagintseva, Anton Kats and the Grounded Outer Space People, Assaf Gruber, Aykan Safoğlu, Azar Mahmoudian, Bulgarian Voices Berlin, Dana Kavelina, Eda Aslan, Farahnaz Sharifi, Fehras Publishing Practices, Flaka Haliti, Geta Brătescu, Gulnur Mukazhanova, Heinali and Andriana-Yaroslava Saienko, Hito Steyerl, Hiwa K, Ihor Tsymbrovsky, Ivan Krastev, Joyce Joumaa, Julia Cimafiejeva, Katarina Gryvul, LABOUR (Farahnaz Hatam & Colin Hacklander), Lesia Vasylchenko, Lida Abdul, Lucia Kagramanyan, Madina Tlostanova, Majd Abdel Hamid, Mona Hatoum, Nazanin Noori, Neda Saeedi, Nour Sokhon, Oleksiy Radynski, Philipp Goll, Samia Halaby, Saodat Ismailova, Sattar Stas Shärifullá and Ziliä Qansurá, Seyyare – Anatolian Women's Choir, Stefaniia Bodnia and Jack Dove, Tjan Zaotschnaja, Tolia Astakhishvili, Ulrike Herrmann, Wafaa Saied

In 2025, the Kyiv Biennial took place across Europe through a series of exhibitions and events, including at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, M HKA in Antwerp, the Dnipro Center for Contemporary Culture, the Dovzhenko Centre in Kyiv, and Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz. *A Bird That Cannot Land* expands on the themes from the biennial's various 2025 iterations.

KW Curatorial Team:

Curator: Sofie Krogh Christensen
Assistant Curator: Linda Franken
Exhibition Assistant: Radia Soukni
Live Curator: Lorena Juan
Live Assistant Curator: Nikolas Brummer
Live Program Assistant: Saba Bagheri
Discursive Program Curator: Vasyl Cherepanyn
Discursive Program Assistant: Triin Metsla

Expanded Curatorial Team:

Vasyl Cherepanyn, Visual Culture Research Center (VCRC), Kyiv
Emma Enderby, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin
Nav Haq, M HKA – Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp
Sarah Jonas, Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz
Serge Klymko, Visual Culture Research Center (VCRC), Kyiv
Magda Lipska, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw



In collaboration with

ЦЕНТР ВІЗУАЛЬНОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ
VISUAL CULTURE RESEARCH CENTER

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Funded by the
German Federal Cultural Foundation



Funded by the Federal Government
Commissioner for Culture and the Media



Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung
für Kultur und Medien

The discursive program is funded by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (German Federal Agency for Civic Education)



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Exhibition

Ground Floor and Main Hall

“What we perceive as the darkness of the heavens is this light that,
though traveling toward us, cannot reach us.”
– Giorgio Agamben, *Che cos'è il contemporaneo?*, 2008

Across sciences, literature, and histories, the sky has often been imagined as a vast, open space, its celestial orb associated with possibility, progress, and transcendence. It is the realm of birds, of the life-giving energies of the sun and the stars, and, in earlier cosmologies, of the divine. In our current time, marked by conflict and rupture, the sky has become the backdrop of war and destruction. Turned into a site of surveillance and control, it is now occupied by drones, satellites, and geodata systems, among other forms of military technology. As violence descends from above, the firmament shifts from a space of dreams and openness to one of destruction and domination.

The works presented on the ground floor and in the main hall tell tales of war, displacement, and resilience. Across passing nocturnal skies, dancing shadows, fallen warbirds, and suspended luminous forms, they engage, in different ways, with ideas of light, darkness, and imagination. Traveling approximately eight minutes to reach the eye, sunlight bends and refracts, reaching each of us from slightly different angles. The works on view let us see from many different perspectives at once, a hybrid vision that reflects light in alternating directions and casts moving shadows. Continuing throughout the building, *A Bird That Cannot Land* roams these textured topographies of sight. Drawing on myth, poetry, and speculation, the exhibition opens up worlds long forgotten, present, or still to come; all of them defining our current condition.

During the Kyiv Biennial, the hall of KW becomes a stage for its live program, with a week of concerts taking place from 08–11.07.26. During this period, the exhibition on the ground floor and in the hall will not be on view.

1st Floor

“The idea of the world has been deprecated, for better or worse.
It is also possible that in future, history writing itself will be redefined by
machine learning technology to become something entirely different.”
– Hito Steyerl, *Medium Hot*, 2025

On the first floor of *A Bird That Cannot Land*, we encounter a world in which images have overtaken language as the primary site where history is negotiated, distorted, and produced. Due to the growing impact of technopolitics and populism, words fracture across propaganda and automation. Competing algorithms sort, disperse, and suppress attention, determining what becomes visible. What remains are not coherent narratives but an abundance of circulating pixels and visual data, detached from their original context. Adding to these, the technology of GenAI

(generative artificial intelligence) further erodes the semantic groundwork, weakening the link between images and the realities they once pointed to, even as they multiply their presence.

Meanwhile, numerous active military conflicts and their drone footage, satellite imagery, and algorithmically circulated clips accelerate how reality is mediated through images, forming an immersive condition of post-truths, which operates within broader geopolitical realities, and imperial power structures. The works exhibited on this floor reveal how the infrastructures behind images are rooted in resource extractivism and colonial histories. Unfolding at great velocity in AI systems, data centers, and planetary supply chains, the virtual – far from being immaterial – continues to have tangible effects, particularly on Indigenous communities and colonized lands.

2nd Floor

“It’s not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on the past; rather, image is that wherein what comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation.”
– Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 1982

On the second floor of *A Bird That Cannot Land*, the artists’ works engage with processes of seeing and with the archive as a critical practice. Appearing as matchboxes, fabrics, films, and binary code, the archive takes on unconventional forms: images float in space, walls release fibers, shapes shift, and objects stretch beyond their expected limits. Through careful processes of assembling and montaging historical materials, the artists create visual essays in which archives become gestures, and meaning is nomadic rather than fixed. Treating time as a sculptural dimension, their works layer cultural and historical memory with myth, as well as the ongoing aftermaths of colonialism, and present-day conditions of globalization. By tracing how images and symbols shift meaning across layers, the artists move away from asking which stories are told. Instead, they consider how visual art can hold space for languages and histories that are missing representation or have yet to be fully acknowledged.

In constellations of dreams and speculations, the works invite us to move beyond familiar realities and engage with both visible and hidden worlds, opening up new ways of seeing. Their abstractions suggest alternatives to linearity and offer a critique of how history has traditionally been understood. The artists chart new political trajectories that challenge the established mapping of the world.

3rd Floor

“Despite our consenting to all the indisputable technologies; despite seeing the political leap that must be managed, the horror of hunger and ignorance, torture and massacre to be conquered, the full load of knowledge to be tamed, the weight of every piece of machinery that we shall finally control, and the exhausting flashes as we pass from one era to another – from forest to city, from story to computer – at the bow there is still something we now share: this murmur, cloud or rain or peaceful smoke. We know ourselves as part and as crowd, in an unknown that does not terrify. We cry our cry of poetry. Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone.”
– Édouard Glissant *Poétique de la Relation*, 1990

On its third floor, *A Bird That Cannot Land* forms a reservoir of personal memories and rituals. The works presented here resonate as echoes. Rather than pointing to specific events, they trace the movement of memory: distorted, indirect, and shaped by reflection. The artists conjure a moment of quietude, suspended in time, holding space for what is broken, incomplete, peripheral and unfinished.

The images we carry and that carry us take on different material forms. They appear here in decaying scenes of everyday life, in puzzles triggering childhood memories, in sound responding to destruction, in fragments of national monuments, or in embroideries made when words are no longer sufficient. In these gestures of material renditions, fractured realities are reframed, revealing both their cracks and the forms of repair we rely on to sustain the world and ourselves in it. Tracing lines of mourning, the works position melancholy not simply as emotion, but as a political force, turning toward poetry as a shared language.

The new, relational horizons drawn by the artists remain fluid. They are shaped and reshaped by flows between people, places, and histories. It is in the residues – the dried stains, the shadows cast, the rubble scattered, the memories of land – that the works carry memories, hold spaces for care, and open up possibilities of coming together anew.

More Information about the Artists and their Works

Lida Abdul
In Transit, 2008

In the outskirts of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, abandoned Soviet airplanes lie like skeletal remains of war and occupation. Their bullet-ridden carcasses evoke the lasting scars of conflict.

Against this landscape, Lida Abdul (b. 1973, Kabul) filmed a group of young children engaging with the wreckage not as a relic of violence but as a site of play. With quiet determination, they begin to fill the plane's hollowed body and punctured skin with soft cotton, gently tending to its wounds. This act, both playful and profound, suggests a way to heal what has been broken. Pulling ropes, the children attempt to lift the aircraft like a kite. Though impossible, their effort is filled with imagination and collective determination. The airplane shifts from a weapon into a body, hovering between machine and bird.

Through this performance, Abdul highlights the resilience of children growing up amid war. Their innocence transforms destruction into hope, revealing play as an antidote to trauma. Grounded in the artist's practice, which explores cultural identity, migration, and the destruction and displacement that have shaped Afghanistan's recent history, *In Transit* offers a powerful vision of renewal and possibility.

Majd Abdel Hamid
Son, this is a waste of time, 2015–

The work of Majd Abdel Hamid (b. 1988, Damascus) is grounded in embroidery as a slow, durational way of thinking. Across textile, video, drawing, and installation, the artist transforms stitching into a conceptual and political method, where repetition becomes both image-making and a form of attention. His works unfold through extended periods of manual labor, positioning time not as a neutral framework but as the central material of the work itself.

Drawing on the rich embroidery tradition of the artist's homeland of Palestine, Abdel Hamid's patterned pieces develop gradually, stitch by stitch, accumulating geometries, shifting grids, and subtle variations of color and white that oscillate between order and dissolution. Rather than illustrating fixed narratives, his works allow forms to emerge through the rhythm of making. This slowness resists the speed and extractive logic of contemporary image culture, proposing instead a mode of looking that is sustained and embodied.

Deeply informed by questions of displacement, fragility, and political memory, repetition in the artist's work becomes a way of holding unstable histories and constructing meaning through endurance and care. In this sense, Abdel Hamid's body of work proposes a form of thinking that is circular rather than linear, where each gesture is both continuation and interruption.

Majd Abdel Hamid participated in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Near East Far West* (03.10.25–08.01.26) at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

Eda Aslan

Tears are Falling But Never Touching Each Other, 2025

This installation by Eda Aslan (b. 1993, Istanbul) draws on the ancestral practice of tear catchers – small vessels also known as lachrymatories or ashkdan once used in parts of West Asia to collect and hold grief. Composed of hand-blown glass elements extending across the wall, the sculpture is filled with seawater. As it slowly evaporates over time, traces of salt are left behind, a quiet residue evoking mourning, absence, and transformation.

A poetic undercurrent runs through the work, echoing a moment by the shore: early darkness, rough winds, salt crystallizing on skin. Aslan's work takes shape from the Mediterranean, a place held close, dense with histories of passage, encounter, displacement, and return. It is a site of deep attachment and enduring love, but also of rupture, conflict, and loss. This sensory memory is carried into the installation, grounding it in lived experience, where the body encounters the same elements held within the glass. Between mourning and healing, something remains suspended, unresolved yet present, suggesting that grief does not disappear, but changes form, settling into fragile, enduring traces.

Tolia Astakhishvili

Morning Rituals, 2024

Tolia Astakhishvili (b. 1974, Tbilisi) creates immersive works that blur the boundaries between architecture, sculpture, and painting, often using fragmented materials to evoke states of transition and instability. *Morning Rituals* unfolds as such a fragile, suspended fragment – part wall, part drawing, part body in flux. Composed of paper, ink, plaster, plasterboard, and plexiglass, the work appears both constructed and collapsing, as if caught between formation and disintegration. Surfaces bend, stretch, and tilt forward, evoking a bodily gesture: a posture of beginning but also of fatigue, of carrying weight.

Playing subtly between morning and mourning, the work evokes the quiet rituals of beginning again – small, almost imperceptible actions of repetition and renewal through which bodies and spaces reorient themselves. Yet within these gestures, traces linger: marks, residues, and fragments that hint at what has been carried over.

Tolia Astakhishvili's practice treats architecture as an unstable, living structure – one that absorbs and releases meaning over time to explore themes of memory, displacement, and the shifting relationship between bodies and space. In *Morning Rituals*, this process feels intimate, as if the surface itself is thinking or remembering.

Tolia Astakhishvili participated in *the Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Near East Far West* (03.10.25–08.01.26) at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

Stefaniia Bodnia & Jack Dove

Echoes on a Porous Ground, 2025

Like the layers of sediment excavated during precious metal and mineral mining, war operations leave behind a perforated landscape, resulting in a hollow structure with voids and encapsulated spaces within the layers of the land. In a practice that spans multiple media, Stefaniia Bodnia (b. 2001, Mariupol) and Jack Dove (b. 1983, London) draw parallels between personal trauma and geotrauma, where the layers of geological formations intersect with layers of power.

On five suspended metal plates, the imprinted imagery combines satellite views of the Donbas mining region in eastern Ukraine, where military operations have taken place above and below ground since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. These etchings reveal the porous nature of mined minerals, paired with performative renderings reminiscent of a lost landscape.

The metal plates are amplified by resonators, their sound giving voice to resources, including minerals, land, non-human entities, and human labour. The installation presents the ground vibrations, transmitted through steel and aluminium. Synthesized sounds and processed samples move and distort the metal, while the plates and sculptural elements of endemic flowers become resonant instruments. The material layering reveals vertical structures connecting the subterranean and the digital realms, linking mines to the cloud.

Stefaniia Bodnia and Jack Dove participated in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Vertical Horizon* (11.11.25–06.01.26) at the Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz.

Commissioned by the Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz, the Visual Culture Research Center, and RIB-BON International for the Kyiv Biennial 2025.

Made possible with support from Stroom Den Haag.

Geta Brătescu
The Traveler, 1970

Conceived as a playful self-portrait, *The Traveler* by Geta Brătescu (b. 1926, Ploiești – 2018, Bucharest) is a wooden folding stool animated by photographs of the artist's eyes on its circular seat. Emerging from socialist Romania under Nicolae Ceaușescu's dictatorship (1967–89), the artist's practice developed within a cultural climate still shaped by Soviet models of control. Material shortages and ideological oversight constrained artistic production, encouraging strategies of improvisation, subtle subversion, and working within the intimate space of the studio.

Against this backdrop, Brătescu turned toward familiar domestic objects, reconfiguring them as independent carriers of meaning, and allowing them to accumulate fragments of personal mythology. Her practice of bricolage – assembling fragments, images, and gestures – turns everyday materials into means of expression. The studio itself functioned as a utopian microcosm, a world where imagination can override political and physical constraints. In this way, *The Traveler* embodies Brătescu's broader utopian vision: a world in which the act of looking becomes travel, and the art space becomes both the destination and the point of departure.

Philipp Goll
The End of the Pipeline, 2024

Philipp Goll (b. 1984, Wetter/Ruhr) engages with infrastructures, energy systems, and their entanglement with histories of power and extraction, often foregrounding their political and colonial dimensions.

Presenting a chronology of German-Russian gas contracts, Goll's timeline charts the long history of the countries' joint extractivist ventures in Siberia, which paved the way for European energy dependency. From Soviet gas exports to Nord Stream's destruction, the research outlines how pipelines have functioned as tools of oppression for centuries. Critical in this chronology is the 1960s discovery of the Urengoy gas field in the northern West Siberia Basin. Goll brings forward a broader view of Russia's geopolitical strategy, contextualizing the war in Ukraine in relation to

decades of economic and infrastructural affiliation. The timeline reveals energy as a political weapon that continues to shape our future.

Philipp Goll participated in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Near East Far West* (03.10.25–08.01.26) at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

Hito Steyerl & Philipp Goll
Trassniki, 2026

This new video installation consists of interviews with pipeline workers from the former GDR, also known as “Trassniki”. It was initiated during the initial exhibition of *LeakThe Leak* at the MdbK in Leipzig in 2024, through an exchange with visitors who had worked on the pipeline networks and associated infrastructures in Soviet Ukraine and Russia from the 1970s to the 1990s.

Around 20,000 people worked on two “Central Youth Projects”: the first from 1976 to 1979, on “Druzhba”, a pipeline that expanded across several sections of Soviet Ukraine, and the second from 1982 to 1993, on the “Gas Pipeline”, which ran through several sections of Soviet Russia. Through research and interviews, it became clear that the Trassniki were not only involved in building and welding the pipelines. Their work extended to include other trades, constructing gas compressor stations, housing, roads, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, supermarkets, and more. The interviews provide a vivid picture of conditions on site: the close social relationships formed far from home, the contradictions experienced within the officially proclaimed friendship between socialist states, and the disappointed hopes for socialist progress. They also reveal the hierarchies and power imbalances between East and West Germany, from which the latter benefited through the exploitation of East German labor under extremely harsh conditions and significant health risks.

Interview partners: Wolfgang Dube, Armin Meikstat, Norbert Pfau, Klaus Peter Treutel
Videos: Frank „Hofi“ Hofmeister, Steffen Roller
Photos: Wolfgang Dube, Norbert Pfau
Thanks for advice and connection: Olaf Münchow

Assaf Gruber
Miraculous Accident, 2024–25

Miraculous Accident by Assaf Gruber (b. 1980, Jerusalem) is a double video installation unfolding between 1968 and 2025, exploring how memory, ideology, and intimacy intersect through cinema. Beginning at the Łódź Film School, the work follows Edyta, a Jewish editing teacher exiled during Poland’s political purges in 1968, who forms a charged emotional bond with Nadir, her Moroccan student, and Jarek, her protégé and his closest friend. Their relationship is marked by displacement, asymmetry, and the pressures of political history.

Years later, a letter Edyta sends from Haifa re-emerges, triggering Nadir’s return to Łódź. He begins directing a film that attempts to reconstruct and imagine her life, while also casting new light on his relationship with Jarek, blurring the boundaries between biography and projection. Gruber’s work draws in part on the life of the Moroccan poet and filmmaker Abdelkader Lagtaâ (b. 1949, Casablanca), who plays Nadir in the film, interlacing original footage with film extracts by Lagtaâ’s students and his peers.

Following the artist’s reflections of the way personal narratives intersect broader political structures, love becomes entangled with ideology. Memory is continually refracted through historical

rupture, leaving the viewer suspended between what happened, what is remembered, what is imagined, and what might have been.

Assaf Gruber participated in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Near East Far West* (03.10.25–08.01.26) at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

Part 1: Commissioned by steirischer herbst '24. Produced by steirischer herbst '24, CASKFILMS, and Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW).

Part 2: Commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, the Visual Culture Research Center and RIBBON International for the *Kyiv Biennial 2025*.

Produced by CASKFILMS Co-produced with, tak mi źle films, Adam Mickiewicz Institute TAXISPALAIS Kunsthalle Tirol.

Associate Producer Yusuf Ölmez.

Artistic research for both projects was commissioned by Berlin Artistic Research Programme 2022-23.

Excerpts from the following student films, produced at the Łódź Film School between 1966 and 1983, were interwoven into the project:

Part 1:

A Lesson 41, Abdellah Dirssi, 1966

Amghar, Mostafa Derkaoui, 1968

Shadow Among Others, Abdelkader Lagtaâ, 1969

Report September, Rupen Vosgimorukian, 1969

Elizabeth, Idriss Karim, 1973

But Hope Is of a Different Color, Abdelkader Lagtaâ, 1972

Wait, Wait, Beverly Joan Marcus, 1980

Part 2:

Amghar, Mostafa Derkaoui, 1968

Somewhere on a Given Day, Mostafa Derkaoui, 1971

Wait, Wait, Beverly Joan Marcus, 1978

Patrik, Beverly Joan Marcus, 1980

Dear Dad, Laredj Khader, 1983

Music Part 1

Je Veux Dormir avec Toi performed by Ouroboros. Text: Joyce Mansour Music: Ascal Bernard

Little Rock performed by Ouroboros. Text: Joyce Mansour Music: Ascal Bernard

The poems If Desire (Part 1) and the Poem The Stranger (Part 2) were written by Abdelkader Lagtaâ

With:

Abdelkader Lagtaâ: Nadir

Marta Ojrzyńska: Edyta

Mateusz Górski: Jarek

Dagmara Bąk: Archivist

Marcin Czarnik: Man I

Grzegorz Falkowski: Man II

Writer, Editor & Director: Assaf Gruber

Producer: Guillaume Cailleau

Cinematography: Simon Veroneg

Assistant Producer 2: Lise Goll

Delegate producer 1&2: Aleksander Bilnik (tak mi źle films)

Delegate producer 1: Agata Terpiał (Cinescop)
Assistant director: Moriya Matityahu
Scenography: Maja Pawlikowska
Location manager: Janusz Dąbkiewicz
Sound recording: Maryla Kłosowska & Anna Lenarcik
Sound design: Jochen Jezussek

Samia Halaby
Bird Dog, 1987
Land, 1988
Lighthouse, 1993/2025
The RED CANARY and the grey spider, 1993/2025

Samia Halaby (b. 1936, Jerusalem) is a leading figure of contemporary abstraction and an influential scholar of Palestinian art. Her digitally-generated kinetic abstractions are grounded in an approach to painting as a temporal experience, where shifting shapes and forms can expand our ways of seeing and thinking.

Composed on a Commodore Amiga 1000 computer in her home in New York City in 1988, Bird Dog and Land are animated works of movement and sound using simple computation instructions. They behave like evolving fields, in which shapes gradually shift, expand, and return. Here, movement, space and time are interdependent concepts, creating a sense of seeing while in motion. Halaby's practice often draws on nature and historical movements, such as early Islamic architecture and the Soviet avant-garde. In her work Land, iterative expansion and contraction extend into occupation, as forms grow into, edge over, and against one another, evoking shifting territories and control. The artist describes Land as being dedicated to her homeland of Palestine, from which she was exiled during the Nakba, the mass displacement of Palestinians that started in 1948.

This concern continues in the later works such as Lighthouse and The RED CANARY and the grey spider. Created using Halaby's own Kinetic Painting Program, developed specifically for her practice, the pieces use pulsating structures and melodic sounds to suggest a beacon-like rhythm of emergence and dissolution. Interlocking chromatic systems, Halaby stages an encounter between fragile and predatory forms. Painting becomes a lived field where computation, perception, and political space unfold as continuous becoming and site of possibility.

Flaka Haliti
I SHOUT, YOUR ECHO BOUNCE, WHAT AM I?, 2023

This body of work by Flaka Haliti (b. 1982, Pristina) stages sculpture as a riddle in motion, where form emerges through relation rather than fixed state. The suspended figures evoke bats – creatures that navigate through echolocation – which turn sound into space and space into a matter of resonance. The sense of self is here never direct, but returned, altered, and shaped by its surroundings.

In Haliti's work, composition is never singular. Shifting between smooth, synthetic skins and fragile, skeletal structures, their materiality suggests both resilience and vulnerability. An illuminated snakelike tube coils through them, and has predator and prey collapse into one unstable figure. This entanglement produces a speculative third term: a possible dragon, a harbinger of future myths, and a hybrid in the process of becoming.

The installation unfolds as a field of transformation – where categories dissolve and meaning remains suspended. Echo becomes both method and condition, a way of navigating uncertainty.

What begins as a question, what am I?, never resolves, but multiplies, suggesting identity as something contingent on the topographies through which we move.

Haliti's practice is shaped by displacement, migration, and the geopolitical afterlives of the military presence in the Balkans. Working between Kosovo and Germany, the artist explores how its aesthetics, both in physical and perceptual forms, shape what can be seen, known, or safely expressed.

Mona Hatoum Misbah, 2006–07

In a darkened room, the only light comes from a slowly turning lantern suspended overhead, its shifting glow suggesting intimacy and calm. However, this sense of familiarity is soon shattered in Misbah by Mona Hatoum (b. 1952, Beirut), as the lantern's cut-outs appear not to be decorative patterns, but silhouettes of armed soldiers, their enlarged shadows cast across the surrounding walls.

As Hatoum's Misbah ("lantern" in Arabic) rotates, the menacing figures appear to patrol the room's edges, weapons raised, evoking a sense of surveillance and latent threat. The gentle motion of the light contrasts sharply with the violence it reveals, creating a disjunction between visual beauty and underlying instability. Even the star-shaped motifs of the lantern begin to read as bursts of explosions, recalling conflict and destruction.

Through this interplay of attraction and unease, Misbah transforms the exhibition space into a charged psychological environment that reflects Hatoum's broader concerns about displacement, global violence, and the fragility of perception in a world where the everyday is never neutral.

Mona Hatoum participated in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Homelands and Hinterlands* (09.10.25–11.01.26) at M HKA – Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp.

Saodat Ismailova As We Fade, 2024

As We Fade by Saodat Ismailova (b. 1981, Tashkent) unfolds as a layered projection of memory, ritual, and historical continuity. Filmed on Sulaiman-Too, a sacred mountain in the city of Osh in Kyrgyzstan, the work draws on a landscape shaped by its deep cultural significance, ethnic diversity, and turbulent histories surrounding the collapse of the Soviet Union. Osh itself represents a fragile geographic knot – one of the most densely populated areas in Central Asia– and remains crucial to its political and social stability. Here, the mountain becomes both witness and archive. The film interweaves contemporary recordings of ancient rituals with archival footage from 1929. Through careful editing, bodies move across time in a continuous, almost cyclical rhythm. Gestures repeat, echo, and overlap, suggesting that history does not simply pass, but lingers, reappearing in altered forms.

Presented as an installation of 24 suspended silk panels, the work extends beyond the screen into space. Each layer carries a fragment of the moving image. Figures appear, dissolve, and re-emerge, as if memory itself were shifting before the viewer's eyes. The translucent fabric allows scenes to bleed into one another, creating moments where past and present become indistinguishable.

In As We Fade, visibility is never fixed. Reflecting Ismailova's practice at large, the work traces how suppressed or forgotten narratives persist within landscapes, bodies, and rituals, (re)emerging in fragmented and poetic forms.

Joyce Joumaa
Works of Centuries, 2026

Works of Centuries by Joyce Joumaa (b. 1998, Beirut) begins with an epistolary gesture: in 2015, the British art historian and critic John Berger (1926–2017) composed a posthumous letter to German Marxist revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919). Centering on Berger's letter, Joumaa's work contrasts the different ways of experiencing time: Berger writes toward an absent future, while Luxemburg, in her letters from prison from 1918, focuses on the immediacy of bird-song outside her cell, grounding her in the present.

Newly commissioned for the Kyiv Biennial at KW, the installation proposes an alternative archive: neither linear nor fixed, but dispersed across time and geography. The letter, held in a frame, remains as if still in transit. Beside it, an open wooden frame gathers original Soviet matchboxes into a compact grid, where images of songbirds interlace histories of production, exchange, and ideology. Together, these elements form a synergy of moments and places: Berger's writing desk, Luxemburg's prison cell, the homes where traces of social histories of resistance remain, and the present exhibition space, making the work one that asks how resistance is remembered, imagined and narrated.

Joumaa is an artist and filmmaker whose research-based practice engages with histories shaped by conflict and crisis. Her work locates the political within domestic and mundane objects, treating them not as a neutral ground but as a charged site, where power and future potential are stored and circulated. The matchboxes become containers not only of flames but of narrative, pocket-sized vehicles passing hands, homes, and borders. Below, an enlarged matchstick interrupts this scale. Stripped of use, the objects evoke a suspended event: ignition deferred, history held just before combustion. Joumaa's Works of Centuries holds the potential to kindle a future political flame.

Works of Centuries references John Berger, "A Letter to Rosa Luxemburg" (2015), first published in The New Statesman. Courtesy of the publisher.

Dana Kavelina
Grey Earth, 2026

This stop-motion animation film by Dana Kavelina (b. 1995, Melitopol) intertwines war, extraction, and ecological exhaustion through the parallel journeys of two figures: a soldier positioned on the front line and a cow taken from an industrial dairy farm. Following an explosion, both characters experience a moment of suspended freedom – the cow breaks free from the truck transporting her toward slaughter, while the wounded soldier is straying through a grey zone, abandoned by his unit.

Alongside these figures, the soil emerges as a central presence: not as inert ground, but as a living entity that holds memory, violence, and continuity. Exhausted by both warfare and industrial agriculture, its depiction resembles a hollow earth – a territory stripped of its substance, where soil becomes an empty resource rather than a living ground. The film thus also seeks moments of connection, suggesting the earth as an active force capable of resistance, a material witness that bears the marks of repeated destruction.

Through its handmade animation, the film proposes restoring the organic world with artificial materials, recreating in miniature the work of nature and destruction, compressing cycles of life, war, and extraction. In her animated videos, installations, paintings, and graphics, Kavelina addresses military violence, the distance between historical and personal trauma, memory and misrepresentation.

Dana Kavelina participated in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Near East Far West* (03.10.25–08.01.26) at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Hollow Earth* (11.11.–05.12.25) at Kunstraum Memphis in Linz.

Commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, the Visual Culture Research Center, and RIBBON International for the Kyiv Biennial 2025.
Co-produced with steirischer herbst '25.

Supported by the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program, funded by the Federal Foreign Office (AA).

Gulnur Mukazhanova
Material as Memory, 2026

This site-specific installation by Gulnur Mukazhanova (b. 1984, Semipalatinsk), commissioned for the Kyiv Biennial at KW, unfolds as a charged intervention into architectural space. The work's built-in niche is lined with magenta-red velour fabric produced in the Soviet-era and now circulating in Uzbek and Kazakh textile markets. This material trajectory recalls longer histories of textile circulation across Central Asia, from Silk Road networks exchange to Soviet industrial standardization and contemporary post-Soviet trade routes across the Asia-Pacific. The fabric thus appears as an archive, holding within its fibers layered economies, ideologies, and migrations.

Mounted onto drywall and then partially scraped away, the velour reveals the fragility of both surface and structure. Torn fabric and fractured plaster expose what is usually concealed, rendering the architectural body wounded and vulnerable. The dislodged material gathers below, forming a soft field of debris. The workhollowed niche operates as a portal into a mythical realm of intertwined temporalities and geographies. As in Mukazhanova's broader practice, the work foregrounds fabric as a carrier of history, where layering material becomes a means of assembling and unsettling the sedimented histories embedded within it. These fragmented textiles – once garments passed between families – become carriers of intergenerational trauma and deep-rooted anxiety born from the forced sedentarization of the Central Asian nomadic peoples.

Working at the intersection of personal memory, post-Soviet material culture, and embodied histories, Mukazhanova treats textiles as containers of affect, labor, and historical residue. Through their tactility, the material itself remembers. Its worn surfaces become a sensory archive, where pain is not only narrated but physically felt across generations.

Oleksiy Radynski
Where Russia Ends, 2024

Where Russia Ends by Oleksiy Radynski (b. 1984, Kyiv) is an essayistic road movie that investigates the often-overlooked histories of settler colonialism and environmental destruction in Russian-occupied Indigenous territories. The work emerges from the discovery of previously unknown archival film materials at the Science Film Studio in Kyiv in 2022, documenting a series of 1980s expeditions by Ukrainian filmmakers across Siberia and the Far North.

These recovered fragments form the starting point for a wider reconstruction of erased and suppressed histories, revealing the long trajectory of imperial expansion and the multiple wars waged against Indigenous populations in what would become colonies of the Russian state. Echoing Radynski's wider documentary works examining the political, ecological, and industrial legacies of the Soviet and post-Soviet landscape, the film traces how cinematic documentation itself became entangled with systems of extraction and control.

Where Russia Ends exposes the extractivist ideology underpinning the so-called development of natural resources, where landscapes are transformed into sites of exploitation. Radynski's work

reflects on the layered complicities – cultural, scientific, and cinematic – that enabled the Russian imperial project to persist and expand across vast and contested territories.

Oleksiy Radynski participated in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Near East Far West* (03.10.25–08.01.26) at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

Neda Saeedi
Abyssal Zone, 2026

In *Abyssal Zone* by Neda Saeedi (b. 1987, Tehran), glass volumes, suspended within an iron skeletal frame, hold fragmented bodily gestures: a hand, a bowed head, a partial embrace. The sculptural installation, commissioned for the Kyiv Biennial at KW, echoes the statue Mutter Heimat, a part of Berlin's Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park. Representing the homeland, sacrifice, loss, victory, and national defense, this allegorical monument presents the sorrowful figure of a mother hunched in grief. In the exhibition space, the monument dissolves into segments, as if memory itself could not sustain a whole image. The transparency of the glass refuses monumentality; it leaks, reflects, and fractures its surroundings.

Saeedi's forms do not monumentalize loss but reveal its construction – how narratives are assembled like scaffolding, filling voids with partial truths. The work suggests that monuments are less anchors than placeholders, occupying gaps in collective memory, especially along former Soviet borders like Berlin, where histories are most forcefully drawn and redrawn.

This logic extends to the condition of displacement. To arrive in a new land is often to compress language, gesture and history into something legible, translatable, a reduced version of the self. As that identity expands again over time, its fractures become visible and continuity reveals itself as approximation. Saeedi's sculpture inhabits this moment of re-expansion: The glass fragments do not resolve into wholeness, but insist on their seams and discontinuities. The work becomes not only a reflection on monuments filling narrative voids, but on the self as a similarly assembled, compressed, and imperfectly unfolded structure.

Aykan Safoğlu
1991, 2026

1991 by Aykan Safoğlu (b. 1984, Istanbul) is a puzzle composed from wayward reproductions of the artist's own drawings, childhood photographs, and rubbings, scattered across the floor like a mosaic in ruins.

Commissioned for the Kyiv Biennial at KW, the piece takes its title from the year a beluga whale known as Tichka escaped a Soviet military facility in Crimea during a storm, just months before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Swimming through the Black Sea into Turkish territory, the whale reached the town of Gerze in early 1992, where it was renamed Aydın (bright), and embraced by the local community. Recaptured and returned to a makeshift oceanarium in Ukraine, Aydın later escaped again, making his way back to Gerze. Scientists, military authorities, journalists, and villagers projected competing narratives onto the animal, each attempting to define its belonging within newly shifting geopolitical realities, ultimately turning it into a media sensation.

Safoğlu's scattered images evoke both childhood play and archaeological fragments, referring to pebble mosaics from antiquity unearthed across the Anatolian region, where images survive only as partial constellations. 1991 becomes less an image than a field of negotiation – where interlacing personal memory and geopolitical rupture, it holds ideas of broken childhood memories and their relation to macro-histories, inviting viewers to imagine what lies beneath the surface.

Across film, photography, and performance, Safoğlu assembles intimate archives that translate, pixelate, and fragment ontological questions. In an attempt to undo his own migrant image archive, the artist shreds memory into pieces that resist being put together into a singular narrative. Dispersal becomes a method of disruption and survival, reworking the image of the self as inherently incomplete and mediated.

Aykan Safoğlu participated in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Near East Far West* (03.10.25–08.01.26) at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

Hito Steyerl THE LEAK, 2024

In this work, Hito Steyerl (b. 1966, Munich) exposes how gas flows, propaganda, and conspiracy theories intertwine. Central is the history of the Nord Stream pipeline and its predecessors. The video narrative also explores how the so-called “cultural pipeline” between Soviet Russia and (West) Germany has been a crucial part of the promotion of fossil fuel infrastructure.

THE LEAK unveils the connection between the dominant culture, colonialism, and environmental destruction in the Russian-occupied territories of the native peoples of Siberia.

Hito Steyerl participated in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Near East Far West* (03.10.25–08.01.26) at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

The installation of Hito Steyerl's work THE LEAK was jointly produced by KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, and Deichtorhallen Hamburg.

Lesia Vasylenko Night Without Shadows and Light Without Rippling of Waves, 2025

The stars we observe may no longer exist, yet their light continues to reach us across vast stretches of time. In *Night Without Shadows and Light Without Rippling of Waves* by Lesia Vasylenko (b. 1990, Kyiv), this persistence becomes a framework for understanding how images carry information beyond temporal, technical, and political limits. The work unfolds as a media archaeology of vision, where each technological moment leaves behind its own trace.

In its lower part, the video installation reconstructs a century of Ukrainian night, weaving together footage from 1918 to 2025 into a single, continuous duration. Here, time collapses into simultaneity: blackouts, distant stars, and moments of shelling coexist within one extended night. The work reveals how conflict transforms darkness into a space of vulnerability, while also holding the residue of histories that refuse to disappear. The night becomes a site where suppressed narratives and unseen witnesses haunt and persist, returning as quiet, spectral presences.

Above the night, dawn emerges. Drawing on the concept of the tachyon – a hypothetical particle that travels faster than light – it compresses decades of sunrises into a single, continuous emergence of light. Generated from accumulated images, the work reflects on how memory is constructed, mediated, and increasingly reshaped by predicting technologies and artificial systems, lingering just at the edge of perception.

Lesia Vasylenko participated in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Near East Far West* (03.10.25 – 08.01.26) at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Vertical Horizon* (11.11.25–06.01.26) at the Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz.

Anna Zvyagintseva

The Order of Things, 2015–

The Order of Things by Anna Zvyagintseva (b. 1986, Dnipro) begins with images of quiet continuity: a woman holding a child, a dog resting by a window, figures gathering, pausing, inhabiting everyday life. Drawn from the artist's archive of sketches made in peacetime, these scenes are translated into iron wires: solid, weighty, and seemingly durable. Yet the stability they suggest is immediately unsettled. Parts of the images are missing and fragments have fallen away. What once appeared whole is now interrupted.

Created during the early years of war in Ukraine, the work reflects how conflict reverberates beyond the front lines, subtly altering the fabric of daily existence. The "order of things" is no longer intact. Instead, it is marked by absence, by gaps that cannot be restored. This rupture deepens in light of 2022, when Russia's war in Ukraine reached Kyiv, the artist's home city. What was once an echo became a direct, physical reality. The disintegration visible in the work reads not only as metaphor, but as material consequence.

Zvyagintseva's sculpture holds the tension between past and present, between memory and disruption, showing how even the most ordinary moments are reshaped, fractured, and redefined by the persistent presence of war.

Anna Zvyagintseva participated in the *Kyiv Biennial 2025 – Homelands and Hinterlands* (09.10.25–11.01.26) at M HKA – Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp.

Public Program

Live Program

The Kyiv Biennial's live program unfolds through a range of formats, foregrounding Berlin's diasporic communities in dialogue with translocal artistic practices. At its center, KW's main hall hosts a week of concerts and performances exploring music's affective force across diverse sonic practices and vocal traditions. This is extended through a series of listening sessions that explore different geopolitical dimensions of sound. Throughout the program, process-based practices approach polyphony as both an aesthetic and social practice of resilience.

Concert

Bulgarian Voices Berlin

Sun, 14.06.26, 16:00–17:00 (bul)

Performance

Anna Ehrenstein and Yara Mekawei

The Cloud Is Still Balkanized

Sun, 14.06.26, 18:00–19:00 (en)

Listening Session

Stas Shärifulla and Ziliä Qansurá

Qosh yulı: On birds and stars as feathers

Thu, 25.06.26, 19:00–20:30 (en)

Concert

Heinali and Andriana-Yaroslava Saienko

Гільдегарда (Hildegard)

Wed, 08.07.26, 19:00–20:00

Concert

Abdullah Miniawy

The evens, Rahma

Wed, 08.07.26, 21:00–22:00

Concert

Nour Sokhon

Beirut Birds (بيروت طيور)

Thu, 09.07.26, 19:00–20:00

Concert

Wafaa Saied

Thu, 09.07.26, 21:00–22:00

Concert

Katarina Gryvul

SPOMYN

Fri, 10.07.26, 19:00–20:00

Concert

Ihor Tsymbrovsky

Fri, 10.07.26, 21:00–22:00

Performance

Nazanin Noori

A LETTER TO EUROPE

Sat, 11.07.26, 20:00–21:00 (fa, en)

Concert, Participation

Seyyare – Anatolian Women's Choir

Open Rehearsal

Thu, 16.07.26, 19:00–21:00

Listening Session

Lucia Kagramanyan

Panorama Yerevan: On Armenian Lullabies

Thu, 23.07.26, 19:00–21:30 (en)

Residencies

Grounded Outer Space People

Open Studio

Tue, 25.08.26, 19:00–20:00 (en)

Wed, 26.08.26, 19:00–20:00 (en)

Thu, 27.08.26, 19:00–20:00 (en)

Performance

Grounded Outer Space People

Fri, 28.08.26, 20:00-21:00 (en)

Listening Session

Fehras Publishing Practices

Fayrouz: On musical production in 60s Lebanon

Thu, 03.09.26, 19:00-21:00 (en)

Performance

Performance Program

Sat – Sun, 12.09.26-13.09.26

Discursive Program

The Kyiv Biennial's discursive program invites academic debates on matters of migration, exclusion, and co-existence, as well as extractivism and petrocapi-talism. Through a series of keynote lectures by political scientists, decolonial researchers, and feminist thinkers, it examines contemporary conditions and interconnected histories of different regions of a "Middle-East-Europe" shaped by imperialism, war, economic crises, and their aftermath. The program also features panel discussions reflecting on personal experiences of displacement and resettlement, as well as gatherings tackling the ecological implications of colonial infrastructures and the situation of Indigenous peoples, also embracing the therapeutic formats.

Talk

From Here to There: Practice, Distance, and Self-Positioning
with Julia Cima-fiejeva, Hiwa K, and Farahnaz Sharifi, moderated by Azar Mahmoudian
Fri, 12.06.26, 19:00–20:30 (en)

Talk

Leak. The Other Side of the Pipeline
with Oleksiy Radynski, Hito Steyerl, and Tjan Zaochnaja, moderated by Philipp Goll
Sat, 13.06.26, 19:00–20:30 (en)

Screening / talk

Oleksiy Radynski
Special Operation
Sat, 13.06.26, 20:30–22:00 (en)

Lecture

Feetless Birds Die in the Air? Or Unsettlement as a Generative Condition
with Madina Tlostanova
Sun, 14.06.26, 14:00–15:30 (en)

Participation

Cafe Death
with Alona Karavai
Sat, 20.06.26, 19:00–21:00 (en)
Sun, 21.06.26, 19:00–21:00 (uk)

Lecture

Migration is the 21st Century Revolution
with Ivan Krastev
Mon, 29.06.26, 19:00–20:30 (en)

Lecture

The Middle East in an Age of War and Climate Breakdown
with Adam Hanieh

Wed, 15.07.26, 19:00–20:30 (en)

Lecture

Money as a Weapon
with Ulrike Herrmann

Fri, 04.09.26, 19:00–20:30 (en)

Mediation & Participation

KW's Mediation and Participation Program offers a welcoming space to engage with the ideas emerging from our exhibitions and broader social conversations. Designed to be engaging and accessible, it invites everyone—children, teens, adults, students, school classes and educators—to be curious, slow down and have fun. Through a variety of artistic and mediation tools, we encourage meaningful exchange and inspire new perspectives on contemporary art and beyond.

Events

KW Colouring Book

This summer, all children visiting our exhibitions will be offered a limited-edition colouring book for free, featuring a series of drawings by Geta Brătescu. The second release of our KW Colouring Book Collection. The publication is also available for purchase on-site in our bookshop.

Workshop

Somatic Exercises in the Exhibition

Sat, 27.06.26, 17:00 –19:00 (en)

Fri, 31.07.26, 17:00 –19:00 (en)

Fri, 28.08.26, 17:00 –19:00 (en)

Tour

Kyiv Biennial

A Bird That Cannot Land

Sat, 13.06.26, 16:00–17:00, de

Sat, 20.06.26, 16:00–17:00, en

Sat, 27.06.26, 16:00–17:00, de

Sat, 04.07.26, 16:00–17:00, en

Sat, 18.07.26, 16:00–17:00, de

Sat, 25.07.26, 16:00–17:00, en

Sat, 01.08.26, 16:00–17:00, de

Sat, 08.08.26, 16:00–17:00, en

Sat, 15.08.26, 16:00–17:00, de

Sat, 22.08.26, 16:00–17:00, en

Tour

Guided Tour for Teachers

Wed.: 17.06.26, 16:00 - 17:30 (de)

Tour

Curator's Tour

Kyiv Biennial

A Bird That Cannot Land

Thu, 16.07.26, 17:00–18:00 (de)

Thu, 13.08.26, 16:00–17:00 (en)

Tour

Public Guided Tour with German Sign Language (DGS)

Kyiv Biennial

A Bird That Cannot Land

Sa, 29.08.26, 14:00–15:30

Tour

Kyiv Biennial

A Bird That Cannot Land

Sat, 05.09.26, 13:00–14:00 (hy)

Tour

Kyiv Biennial

A Bird That Cannot Land

Fri, 19.06.26, 17:00–18:30 (uk)

Sat, 27.06.26, 17:00–18:30 (uk)

Fri, 28.08.26, 17:00–18:30 (uk)

Open House

Admission free & long opening hours

Wed, 09.09.26, 16:00–19:00

General Information

Address

KW Institute for Contemporary Art
Auguststraße 69
10117 Berlin
www.kw-berlin.de

Opening hours

Wed–Mon 11:00–19:00
Tue closed

Exhibition ticket

10 € / reduced 6 €

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Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt	BERLIN	
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Titles and Dates are subject to change