

# JUST LIKE ARCADIA

If you face the South, Moscow will be far behind

Participants: **Simon Fujiwara, Anna Jermolaeva, Nikolay Karabinovych, Yuri Leiderman, Voin de Voin & Hanayo**

Curated by: **Alexandra Tryanova**

**24.06 — 10.07.2022**

The exhibition's title quotes at once two works created in the 80s in entirely different geographies but connected by a romantic foreboding of an unreachable another place. One of them is the title of the song *Just like Arcadia* by the British group *Psychic TV*. *Arcadia* embodies a utopian ideal of unattainable harmony between humans and nature named after the ancient Greek historical region and simultaneously a scene of simple pleasure and quiet. Consonant to such a description, the picturesque landscape of the seaside district of Odesa, which became one of the playgrounds for the local avant-garde artistic group in the early 80s, and where I grew up, bears the same name. Here in 1983, before his departure to Moscow, artist Yuri Leiderman created the work "If you face south, Moscow will be left far behind." The precise and poetical liberating impulse of this artistic gesture would become later an important referential point for the discussion on the decolonization of the northern Black Sea, a place of multiculturalism, fertility, and abandoned beauty, a dreamlike landscape with an endless coastline, a spirit that always tended to step out protocols and conventions.

Artistic statements related to identity construction, relations between center and periphery, premonitions, and power structures contoured the mind map of this essay-like exhibition in an attempt to launch a conversation on the experience of being in between different cultures and hierarchies in the Ukrainian south. These places' ghostly past, present, and future call for more intensive knowledge production and sharing. Of course, rational and quantifiable actions in this domain could be approached despite all the obstacles of translation and local context strangeness. But there is also another approach to the knowledge exchange that grounds on a transfer of a psycho-emotional experience. Even being tied with a trauma nowadays, such a type of liminal experience could be not only negative, but also may create a constitutive impulse for a better understanding of its uniqueness and the context behind it.

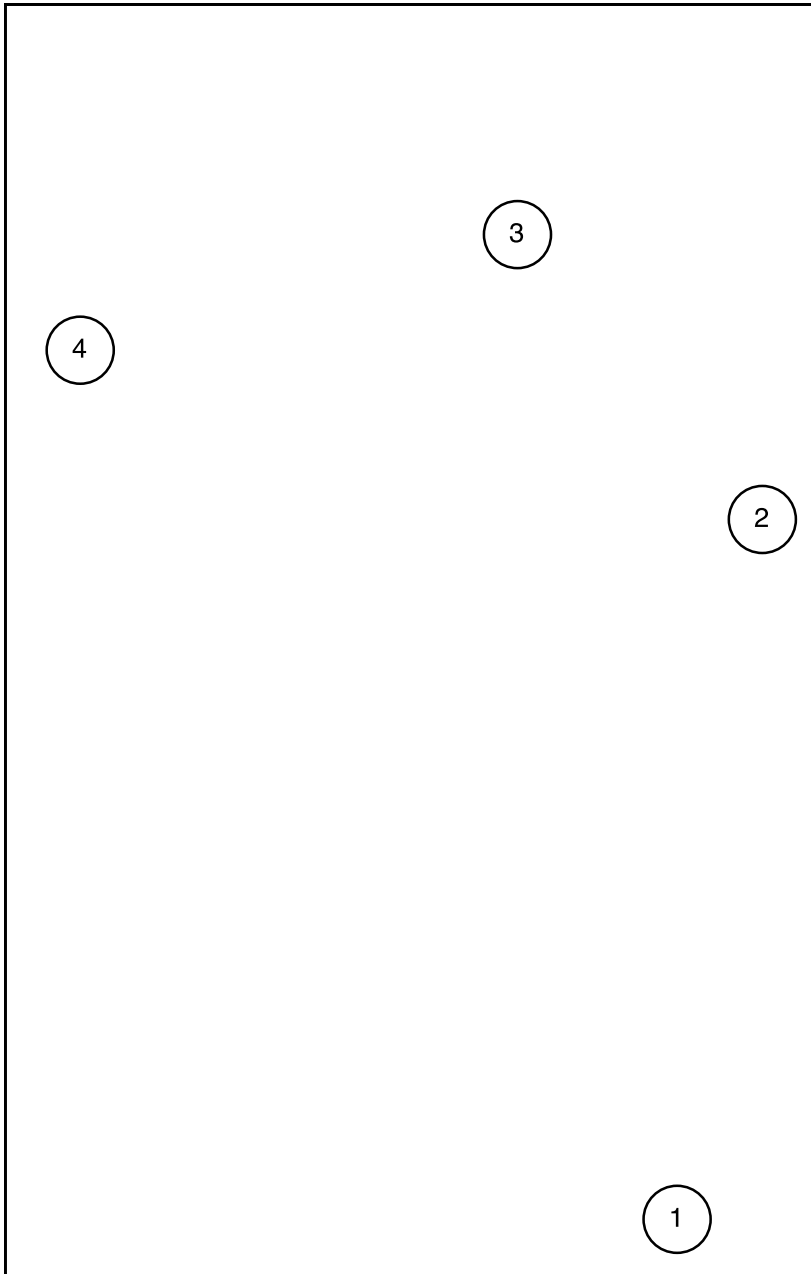
In her practice, Anna Jermolaeva focuses on analyzing social structures, human nature, freedom and restriction, power and powerlessness. In her video *On / Off*, the artist approaches a figure of phallus full of connotations of hierarchical predominance. Making it operate the electricity, the artist reveals a controversial effect: on the one hand, the predefined algorithm of actions tames the independence of the phallus, domesticating it, but on the other, it still switches the light off, fully representing its limiting power. In the meantime, such absurd repetitive action of a body part permits us to speculate on the limitations caused by imposed hierarchies. Still, the local society has to take many steps more to continue an emancipatory struggle against discrimination to defend fundamental rights, individual autonomy, and variety.

In his recent *Who the Bær* project, British-Japanese artist Simon Fujiwara creates a cartoon character that seemingly has no race, gender, sexuality, or nationality to question the processes of identity formation nowadays. Talking in this relation about the matter of authenticity, Fujiwara says: "We are pulled between the impossible poles offered to us at the moment, one narrative being, "You can be anyone, change anything, do anything and become anything!" and the other, "Find your authentic self—be your true, pure you that you find deep inside." Such ambiguity influences identity reshaping, provoking intensive wavering between the extremes of joy, hedonism, melancholy, and loneliness.

"Wind of Change" is a song by West German rock band *Scorpions*, recorded for their eleventh studio album, *Crazy World* (1990). The power ballad was composed and written by the band's lead singer Klaus Meine following the band's visit to the Soviet Union at the height of perestroika. With estimated sales of 14 million copies sold worldwide, "Wind of Change" is one of the best-selling singles of all time. As of 2022, the *Scorpions* still perform the song live but with lyrical changes in light of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. The opening lines are changed to "Now listen to my heart / It says Ukraine, waiting for the wind to change." Meine stated, "It's not the time with this terrible war in Ukraine raging on, it's not the time to romanticize Russia." In his continuing research, Nikolay Karabinovych often refers to the musical archive. He constructs speculative narratives and reflects on images and figures of pop culture to shed light on the invidious historical crossroads. Here, using such a reckless sound as a whistle, Karabinovych deconstructs the enigmatic melody and plays a slightly neurotic interpretation reminding failed attempts and false steps.

Ritualistic performance by *Voin de Voin & Hanayo* "Black Sea dolphins" draws attention to the current ecological emergency at The Black sea, where dolphins are massively dying because of the military sonars and war actions. Some of the dolphins had burns from a bomb or mine explosions, and they could no longer navigate and could not look for food. Their bodies are found on beaches of Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey. *Voin* and *Hanayo* explore sound terror and how sound is exercised to influence and control by activating vibrations and sound frequency tools.

Alexandra Tryanova



1.  
**Anna Jermolaeva** (b. 1970, St. Petersburg.  
Lives in Vienna)

*On / Off*, 1999  
video, 00' 15", loop  
Courtesy of the artist

2.  
**Simon Fujiwara** (b. 1982, Harrow,  
United Kingdom. Lives in Berlin)

*Who`s Mirror? (Identity Shadow)*, 2021  
Charcoal, pastel, and inkjet print on paper  
Courtesy of the artists and Dvir Gallery

3.  
**Voin de Voin** (b. Sofia, 1978. Lives in Sofia)  
&  
**Hanayo** (b. Tokyo, 1970. Lives in Tokyo)

*Black Sea dolphins (2022)*  
performance

4.  
**Yuri Leiderman** (b. 1963, Odesa, Ukraine.  
Lives in Berlin)

*If You Face the South Moscow Will Be Far  
Behind*, 1983  
photo  
Courtesy of the artist

5.  
**Nikolay Karabinovych** (b. 1988, Odesa,  
Ukraine. Lives in Antwerp, Belgium)

*Wind of Change*, 2022  
sound, 03' 17", loop  
Courtesy of the artist

Once Upon a Who there was a little bear who's name was Who the Baer,  
Now Who, as Who was known to be,  
Seemed rather ordinary,  
Just another Rupert, just another Pooh,  
Who was a nobody, Who was just a 'who?'  
Small and white, clean and bright,  
Who wore a simple pair of jeans in blue  
Jeans like the ones worn by me or worn by you,  
So what makes Who special  
What makes Who Who?  
Is it their golden heart that sparkles brightly in the dark?  
Is it that crazy tongue Who can't control, however hard?  
Maybe it's something you can't see?  
Who's class, Who's race, Who's sexuality?  
What is Who's Gender? What is Who's nationality?  
Oh, will somebody tell me?  
What is Who's Identity?!

**Simon Fujiwara**

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