

I am not here to be stronger than you

This joint exhibition of Ukrainian artists AntiGonna and Alyona Tokovenko is a public, yet personal conversation on pain, radical intimacy, premonition, fear, traumatic memory, and mutual care. The artists are longtime friends; moreover, when fleeing the potential threat of directly experiencing the horrors of the Russian invasion, they supported each other in navigating an avalanche of sorrow and found their shelter in Paris. Then, in a significant instance, the radical and rebellious talent of Sophie Podolski (1953-1974), a Belgian poet and artist of Ukrainian origin, became an important reference point for this show's artistic collective. The bittersweet precision of Podolski's texts, as well as her life story, brought up numerous reflections and connections to the current state of each one of us. The title was borrowed from Podolski's magnum opus *Le pays ou tout est permis*, which opens up both the political and personal dimensions of the conversation that occurs in the exhibition space.

The glorification of strength and heroism could overshadow individual fragility. In the face of unimaginable violence, one can easily forget that personal dramas are not put on hold but rather are added to the social horrors experienced. Amidst the ongoing cycle of events, when images of violence are disseminated on algorithm-based platforms — is there a place for an artist whose work is filled with pornographic imagery, transgression and mysticism? In their works, the artists invite others to their mythical chamber, where transgression becomes the last resort for personal relief. It's a place where everything is dissolving, everything is permitted, where patriarchal frames of reference crack, and where it is still possible to imagine an escape from the binary world.

How can such a conversation happen to avoid establishing hierarchies?

The show's artistic team has been attempting to break the aforementioned boundaries for a long time — oscillating between questionably differentiated roles of performer, accomplice, artist, model, friend, loved one, curator, and collaborator.

Tokovenko and AntiGonna speak using very different mediums — the former through painting and the latter through the moving image — yet their dialogue has been built around common themes for decades of their friendship.

Speaking of pain and trauma with masochistic and ritual vocabulary, they strive to escape the oppression of conservative discourse. Their artistic practices have been rooted in such a conversation for more than a decade, and since 2022 their shared language has further sharpened to talk about violence and vulnerability while sharing pain and sharing love.

AntiGonna Daša Anosova Alyona Tokovenko Alexandra Tryanova

Public programme events:

Art Histories from the Ukrainian South: a talk by Alexandra Tryanova. 5 May 2023

Pain and its Politics: a talk by Rachel Warriner moderated by Daša Anosova. 26 May 2023

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Alyona Tokovenko (born in Odesa, Ukraine; based in Paris) is an artist working across mediums including painting, installation, sculpture, but also video and performance, exploring questions of trauma and fetish and its flow in our consciousness and memory.

In 2022-2023 Alyona was a resident of Cité Internationale Des Arts in Paris and Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. She currently studies at the fine art department at École des Beaux-arts at Mimosa Echard's studio.

AntiGonna (born in 1986, Vinnytsya, Ukraine; based in Paris) is an independent filmmaker, artist and trash model who focuses on questions of fear, violence, death and sexuality expressed by narrative post-porn and body-horror moving images; she works with a form of experimental documentary combined with a music video, live art, photography and VR.

Her works were exhibited at Castello di Rivoli Museo (Turin); Haus der Kunst (Munich, Germany); Moderna Museet (Stockholm); Cité Internationale Des Arts (Paris); Arsenal Gallery (Białystok, Poland); PinchukArtCentre (Kyiv), but also became a part of the screening programs at 56th edition of Tampere film festival and 33rd edition of Fid /Marseille.

Daša Anosova

Daša is a researcher and cultural worker from Kyiv, Ukraine. She is the 2020/2021 Chevening cohort alumna; graduated from King's College London with an MA in Education in the Arts and Cultural settings. She developed a number of art and cultural projects as a part of self-organised Ukrainian art collectives and continuously collaborated with a Ukrainian pressist publishing as an editor and translator. She's been teaching at the Kyiv Academy of Media Arts since 2019 and at the British Council Ukraine from 2016-2019. She is currently a PhD student at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European studies. Her current research is focused on

Together with Vlad(a) Vazheysky, she is a co-convenor of the Perverting the Power Vertical seminar and platform series (2022/23 iteration) at the UCL SSEES FRINGE Centre for the Study of Social and Cultural Complexity. Since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Daša has co-organised a number of initiatives benefiting Ukrainian fundraising and post-war reconstruction efforts such as the Records of War archive, Oberih project, and the Reconstruction of Ukraine symposium.

Alexandra Tryanova

Alexandra is an independent curator and researcher, a member of the Culture Commons Quest Office at the Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts (Antwerp University). She graduated from the Kask Curatorial Studies course in 2022 and holds MA's in cultural studies and law. In her work Alexandra focuses on artistic practices connected with recreation, gender, collective memory, and Eastern European avant-gardes. Recent projects and exhibitions: *Just like Arcadia*, Kunsthall Extra City, Antwerp, Belgium (2022); *Conflict Zones*, Jester, Genk, Belgium (2022); *Velniai*, Klaipeda Cultural Communication Centre, Klaipeda, Lithuania (2021). Recent publications: *Passivity: Between Resignation and Pacifism* (co-edited with Pascal Gielen), 2023, Valiz, Amsterdam. Previously Alexandra held the position of curator at the Museum of Odesa Modern Art and PinchukArtCentre (Kyiv). Since 2017, She runs an independent non-production residency Kunsthalle Lustdorf based on temporary independent artistic and curatorial associations for open practices and technologies in the area of the Green Valley in the suburbs of Odesa. Lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium.

Supporters:

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About Mimosa House:

Mimosa House is an independent, non-profit art institution in the heart of London.

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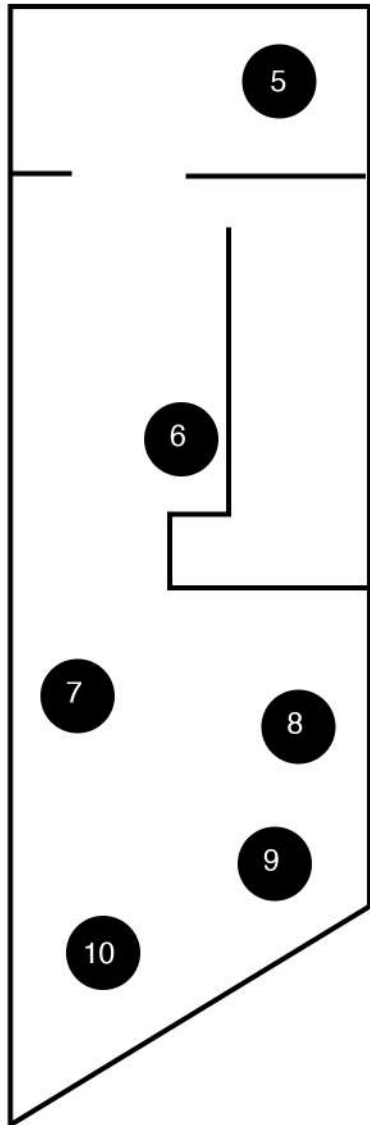
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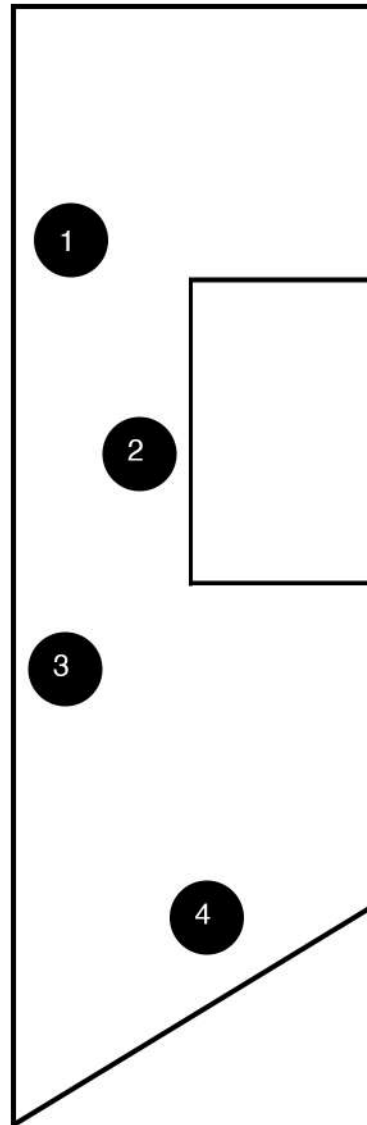
Images and press requests:

Mimosa House 

First floor



Ground floor



1. **Alyona Tokovenko** From the series Forced Shape (2023)
acrylic on textile, organic materials

2. **Alyona Tokovenko** From I'm an Insect series (2023) *acrylic on canvas*

3. **AntiGonna** Rave on Bones (2017) *video, 6' 46"*

AntiGonna questions the exotisation of the Ukrainian nightlife scene and socio-political contradictions during the Russian invasion of Ukraine's early years in the war. The label "Kyiv - new Berlin" fastly became a popular marker for defining the vibrant clubbing scene there but simultaneously reflected tendencies of the commodification of the underground and simplification proposed by the Western gaze. Also, at the time when work was created, an essential question in Ukrainian society was if people had a moral right to continue their usual lifestyle during the ongoing war.

4. **Alyona Tokovenko** Collective Body 2022 *acrylic on canvas*

5. **AntiGonna** Endless story of disease. Kyiv Porn Horrors, part 1. SBOYKA (2016-2021) *video, 13 series, total duration 78' 47"*

Here the narration on the Kyiv underground scene is metaphorically depicted with AntiGonna's transgressive language. The characters in this series are presented by some of the key personalities of the scene, and their collaboration with AntiGonna as a director is filled with horizontal co-authorship - they play out their own story and give their interpretations of the chosen topic.

6. **AntiGonna** Empire Is Not a Mother! Decay and Decay (2023) *video performance 7' 12"*

7. **AntiGonna** Fortune Telling by Clitoris (2019) *object, mixed media, video documentation of the performance*

8. **Alyona Tokovenko** From the The Way to Convert series (2023)
acrylic on textile, organic and mineral materials

9. **Alyona Tokovenko** From the The Way to Convert series (2023)
acrylic on canvas, organic and mineral materials

10. **Alyona Tokovenko** From the The Way to Convert series (2023)
acrylic on canvas, organic and mineral materials