

Exhibition

This Cat Was Drawn During the War

20th March 2026 – 13th September 2026

The Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art invites you to the exhibition *This Cat Was Drawn During the War*. The exhibition reflects on the role of art in times of war, crisis, and violence.

The power of art — as opposed to propaganda — lies, among other things, in its ability to unsettle our habitual ways of perceiving reality and to reveal doubts. It is precisely within the field of contemporary art that meanings important to the community are negotiated. When looking at an artwork, it is worth asking questions both about its message and the means employed, as well as about the sources from which its formal solutions derive. By interpreting and provoking reality, artists expose the dominant discourses of visual politics.

Does war change art? Yes, just as it changes human life. Most existing problems intensify, and new ones arise.

The exhibition title *This Cat Was Painted During the War* only appears to be a simple statement. First of all, this is not a cat (“ceci n’est pas une pipe” — “this is not a pipe”), although it evokes associations with the dopamine-driven pleasure of looking at pictures on the internet. The sentence was spoken by the artist Kateryna Libkind, emphasising that war provides an inescapable frame for every situation.

Secondly, the verb “painted” plays with the widespread belief that art is created by drawing, painting or, alternatively, sculpting. Meanwhile, the exhibition presents works created using other strategies.

Thirdly, we are confronted with a fundamental question about the direction of our own actions in times of total crisis. Is there still room for critical reflection during wartime?

Thus, the exhibition addresses art created in the face of war. Issues related to the long-lasting imagery of the Second World War and the war in the former Yugoslavia return, and above all the war closest to us in time and geography — the war against Ukraine, whose struggle for freedom and life we support. It is from the experience of this war that our exhibition grows.

The presented works were selected in response to questions we asked ourselves as curators. Is art effective? What can we expect from it in times of crisis? How does it address important issues in public debate, including the experience of war, European

identity, women's rights, or decolonisation from the perspective of countries of the former socialist bloc? How does war affect our sensitivity when documentation from sites of crimes coexists on computer screens with pop culture and AI-generated images? And can art help us imagine the world differently from the ways suggested by dominant narratives?

The exhibition's public programme brings together panel discussions and conversations that reflect on wars as an ongoing condition shaping Europe's cultural, political and personal landscape. Since experiences differ, what do we have in common and what connects us today?

Moving beyond linear historical narratives, the programme examines how the legacy of the Second World War, socialism, post-socialist transformations and ongoing conflicts continues to shape memory, everyday experience and artistic practices, and how all these experiences influence our present. Art, culture and literature are viewed here as critical tools that reveal recurring historical crises and may warn against new tragedies.

Opening

20th March 2026, 7 PM, free entrance

Opening weekend

21 March 2026, 12:30 PM, free entrance

Discussion: *Europe after 1945: Art, Memory and Historical Continuities*

Participants: Valentinas Klimašauskas, Tomáš Pospiszl, Zdenka Badovinac, Edit András

Moderator: Kateryna Iakovlenko

22 March 2026, 12:30 PM, free entrance

Discussion: *Why Do Justice and Testimony Require Evidence? Culture as Resistance and the Problem of Appropriation*

Participants: Anastasiia Cherednichenko, Damir Šagolj, Ewa Majewska, Johana Kotišová

22 March 2026, 4 PM, free entrance

Discussion: *Personal Dimensions of War*

Participants: Anna Gruver, Karolina Sulej

Moderator: Kateryna Iakovlenko

Artists

Katya Buchatska (Ukraine), Peggy Buth (Germany), Mario de Vega (Mexico), Wojciech Fangor (Poland), Ksenia Hnylytska (Ukraine), Agnieszka Kalinowska (Poland), Oksana Kazmina (Ukraine), Pavlo Khailo (Ukraine), Tarik Kiswanson (France/Palestine), Yulia Krivich (Poland/Ukraine), Aleksandra Kubiak (Poland), Zbigniew Libera and Darek Foks (Poland), Katya Libkind (Ukraine), Honorata Martin (Poland), Ivan Moudov (Bulgaria), Lada Nakonechna (Ukraine), Ilona Németh (Slovakia), Olaf Nicolai (Germany), Mariola Przyjemska (Poland), Tanel Rander (Estonia), Monika Sosnowska (Poland), Ivan Svitlychnyi (Ukraine), Miloš Trakilović (Bosnia and Herzegovina/the Netherlands), Variable Name (Valeria Karpan and Maryna Marynichenko) (Ukraine), Zbigniew Warpechowski (Poland).

Curators

Anna Łazar i Lada Nakonechna

Public Program Curator

Kateryna Iakovlenko

Architecture

Ivan Melnychuk

Organizer

Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art

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Honorary Partner

Embassy of Ukraine in Poland

Media partners

TVP Kultura, VOGUE Polska, TOK FM, SZUM, Miej Miejsce, artinfo.pl, artslooker, Suspilne Kultura

More information

<https://u-jazdowski.pl/en/programme/exhibitions/this-cat-was-drawn-during-the-war>

Press materials

<https://u-jazdowski.pl/en/press-room/komunikaty-prasowe/exhibitions/this-cat-was-drawn-during-the-war-931898768>

Media contact

Agnieszka Niedzielak-Kowalska
Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Zamek Ujazdowski
+48 510 160 640
a.niedzielak-kowalska@u-jazdowski.pl