

# Julia Abzaltdinova

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portfolio





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## BIO

Julia Abzaltdinova is an interdisciplinary artist. She lives and works in Ekaterinburg and Moscow.

She graduated from the Rodchenko Moscow School of Photography and Multimedia (2014) and the School of Contemporary Art "Free Workshops" of the Moscow Museum of Modern Art at the Russian Academy (2023).

She mainly works with visual media: photography, installation, video. This year the artist has focused on creating photo sculptures and photo installations, intertwining them with sound. Her artistic experiments now include performative practices, her voice work, analog graphic arts and digital collage.

Julia researches varied social themes such as individual and group identities, human impact on the natural environment. She creates inclusive projects in co-authorship with blind and visually impaired people. The artist realizes in her conceptual projects the methods of typology, seriality, psychological practices, as well as critical approach and irony. She works with found archival materials.

Julia's solo exhibitions have been shown at the Yeltsin Center (Ekaterinburg), the Center for Contemporary Culture "Smena" (Kazan), the Museum Center "Peace Square" (Krasnoyarsk), the Voronezh Center for Contemporary Art, as well as in museums and galleries in Moscow, Krasnodar, Kaliningrad, Tobolsk and Vyksa. The artist has participated in biennial and festival group exhibitions such as Ural Industrial Biennale of Contemporary Art (Ekaterinburg), Vienna Photo Book Festival (Vienna), Phodar International Biennale (Bulgaria, Sofia), International Photo Festival (China, Pingyao) and others.

Her works are in the collection of the Moscow Museum of Modern Art and in private collections in Italy, Georgia and Russia.



## ARTIST STATEMENT

I am a multidisciplinary artist. I am largely working with visual media such as photography, installation and video. Photography has always remained my primary medium. I am actively expanding its traditional boundaries. I closely intertwine photo installations and photo sculptures with sound, video, and performance. I also work with the physicality of photographs. For instance, I stitched together parts of ripped personal printed photos that have been discarded. I designed tactile lightboxes and photo sculptures. I printed photos on a variety of industrial and artistic materials. Moreover, I modify photos or create new ones with the use of neural networks. This way, I am creating a hybrid of photography with other media, exploring synaesthesia in art.

Initially, my art practice focused on the themes of state and national identity, human impact on the natural environment. I am currently working on a project about the lives and worldview of blind and visually impaired audiences, lives of African migrants in Russia and challenges the self-identification of a female artist.

In my most recent projects, I often use psychological methods, including self-reflection, empathetic interaction with project participants, art therapy, and neurosis research. This interdisciplinary approach allows me to push the boundaries of contemporary art and offer the audience new authorial conclusions.

My personal experience is the foundation of almost all my projects. Often crucial events in my life is impetus in my artistic practice. My artistic message takes shape at the intersection of my identities that is important for me. Rather than identifying as a Russian national, I bring to the forefront my ethnic identity that belongs to national minorities of Russia. I am half Tatar, half Bashkir — both Turkic groups that led a nomadic life. The nomadic aspect has influenced the geography of my projects.

In the past, Tatars ruled over colonized people and conquered Russian principalities among other territories. While the Bashkirs throughout their history were twice subjugated by feudal Russia. Therefore, the problems of colonization and decolonization are important to me as a representative of different cultures. My multicultural identity is valuable for going beyond the local and building a dialogue between the artist and the international audience.

Photography is usually seen as a tool of social communication and its effectiveness is tied to creating new visual narratives. I approach photography in a wider sense, as a modern model of thinking. I create a visual ornament of Russian reality. Through photography, I address the viewers daring them to start a dialogue about life, the challenges of our time and our hopes for the future.

# CV

## Education:

2022 - 2023 – The School of Contemporary Art "Free Workshops" of the Moscow Museum of Modern Art at the Russian Academy, Moscow

2014 - 2015 – "Photodepartment.Institute", St. Petersburg, Russia

2011 - 2014 – The Rodchenko Moscow School of Photography and Multimedia, Moscow

## Solo exhibitions (selected):

2023 - "Places real-virtual-imaginary", Vyksa Artist-in-Residence, Vyksa, Russia

2020 - "CHAD", Bogorodskoye Gallery (Association "Exhibition Halls of Moscow"), Moscow

2018 - "The Big Game", Museum Center "Peace Square", Krasnoyarsk, Russia

2017 - "The Big Game", Boris Yeltsin Museum, Ekaterinburg, Russia

Voronezh center of the contemporary arts, Voronezh, Russia

## Group exhibitions (selected):

2023 - "The edge of the air", Untitled gallery, Tbilisi, Georgia, curators Teona Yamanidze, Oksana Yushko

2022 - "After Photography", Victoria Gallery, Samara, Russia

2021 - "The Art of Being Nearby", Tsaritsyno Museum-Reserve, Moscow

2020 - "One for all", North Caucasian branch of the Museum of Fine Arts named after A.S. Pushkin, Vladikavkaz, Russia

2019 - "Homo ludens: the man playing", Ark Gallery, Moscow

2015 - "Voices", A3 Gallery, Moscow

## Biennials, festivals (selected):

2023 - "Orangeria", Vyksa Festival, Vyksa, Russia

2021 - "Hug and Cry", Sinara Art Gallery, special project of the 6th Ural Industrial Biennale of Contemporary Art, Yekaterinburg, curator Lev Shusharichev

2019 - 10th edition Phodar Biennial, Sofia, Bulgaria

2015 - short list of the competition "Fotomaniya-2015", Baltic Biennial of the photo, Kaliningrad, Russia

2014 - "Radar", ViennaPhotoBookFestival, Vienna, Austria

International festival of a videoart SEYChAS&POTOM'14, Moscow

2013 - Pingyao international photography festival, Pingyao, China

## Screening:

2020 - Riga Photomonth, online screening "The Nature of the Beast", Riga, Latvia

## Awards:

2016 - International Photography Grant, "People" nomination, 3rd place, International Photography Magazine, UK

## Art-residences (selected):

2023 - Ria Keburia residency, Kachreti, Georgia

GES-2 House of Culture Residency programme, V-A-C museum, Moscow

Vyksa Artist-in-Residence, Vyksa, Russia

2019 - "Camp as one", Anapa, Russia

The works are in the collection of the Moscow Museum of Modern Art and OMK-Participation Fund as well as in private collections in Italy, Georgia and Russia.

## PLACES REAL-VIRTUAL-IMAGINED

2023, tactile photo-sculptures, installation

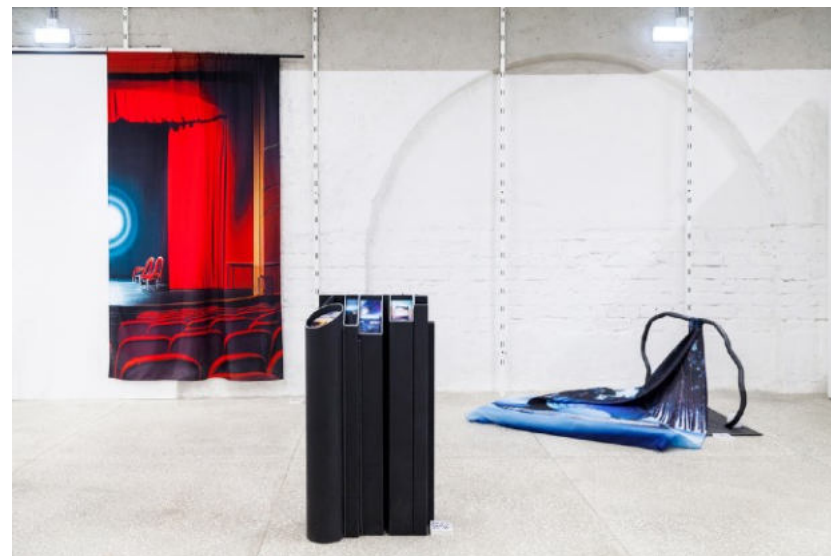
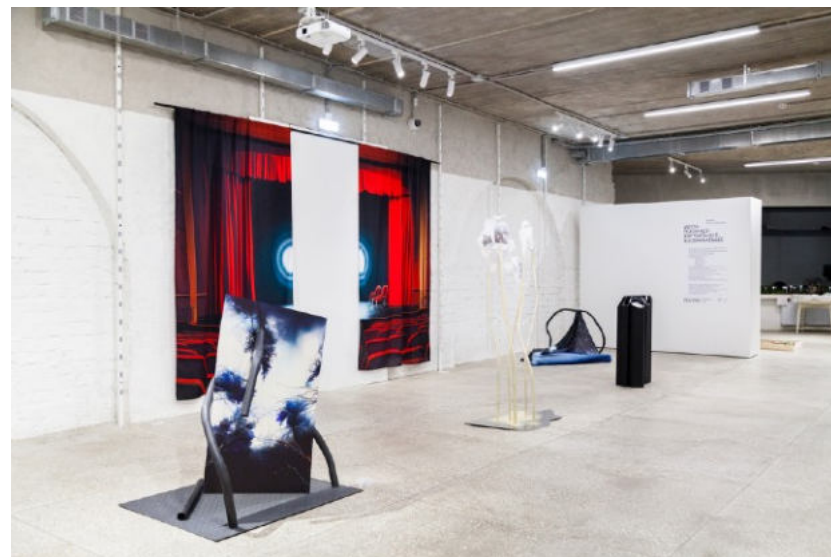
Our understanding of the world, our city, our place and environment is shaped by our perception of life. In today's society, it is common to distinguish people with disabilities as a separate inclusive group of people. However, for me people with this or that disability are not Other, but unique. And I, as a mostly visual artist, am close to people with visual disabilities, as we have an increased focus on vision, whether we "see" with our eyes or not. Therefore, six blind and visually impaired participants of different ages and genders were invited to join the project as co-creators.

The visible and the imaginary, the virtual and the real, the sensory through and through the algorithms of neural networks, the digital and the analog - these are all components of my theoretical interests in this project.

The first phase of the project was to put a professional camera in the hands of the blind co-authors in order to take photographs of their chosen locations in the city. These urban locations were important and special to each project participant.

The task of "seeing" for the blind and visually impaired is partially compensated by imagination, by the reconstruction of past visual experience (if they have not lost their sight since birth), and also by the reconstruction with the help of information obtained through touch or hearing. I reproduced this method of completion in the second stage of the project, when I worked with the Midjourney neural network. The co-authors of the project, while shooting in their chosen urban locations, used a few words to describe the place, their emotional state, feelings, or assigned colors to the place. The captured photo was loaded into the neural network, and according to the entered prompts (words), it changed, resulting in a pictorial image.

As an artist, in this project I act as a mediator between the camera and the project co-authors, between the co-authors and the neural network, between the real and the virtual, between the imaginary and the material, between the familiar and the incomprehensible, between inclusion and art. Thus, I continue to work in my artistic practice with synthesis in art, as a synthesis of heterogeneous elements aimed at forming a unified image.



The solo exhibition "Places Real-Virtual-Imagined" in the art residence "Vyksa AIR", Vyksa, Nizhny Novgorod region. April 15 - May 15, 2023



Photo sculpture #2. Egor  
Profile pipes, artificial leather, interior film, UV-printing, installation  
100 x 100 x 9 cm

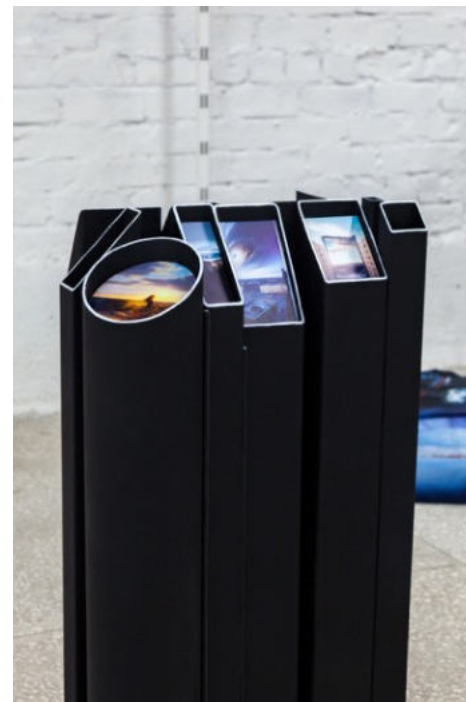


Photo sculpture #1. Dmitry  
Water and gas pipes, profile pipes, cables, liquid rubber,  
enamel, UV-printing, installation, 54 x 30 x 101 cm



Photo sculpture #3. Nina  
 Gabardine, water and gas pipe, sublimation printing, installation  
 400 x 3 x 255 cm

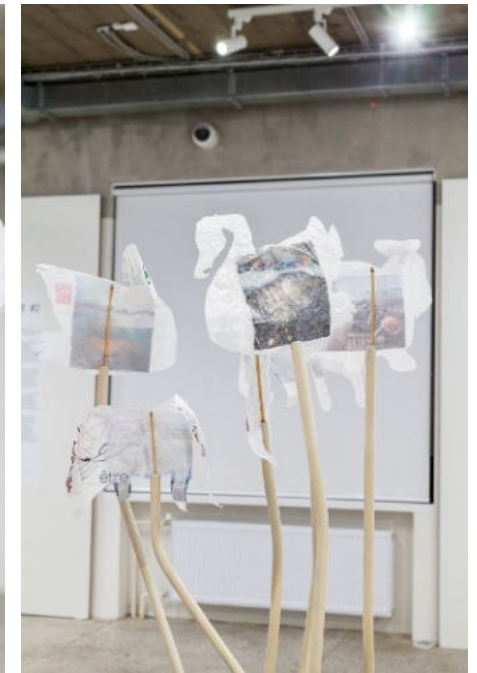
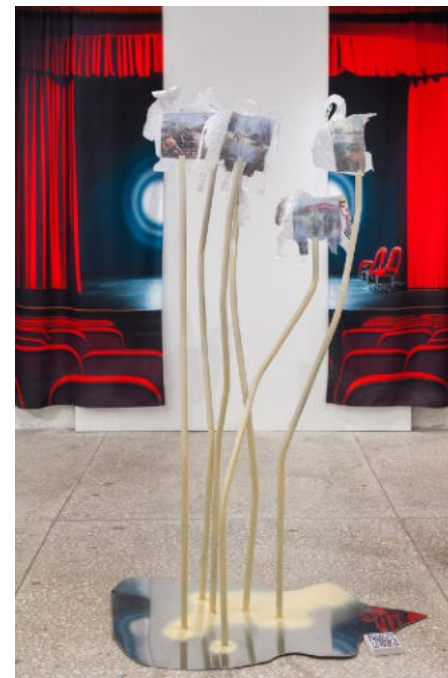


Photo sculpture #6. Irina  
 Steel sheet, water and gas pipes, tracing paper, polyethylene,  
 enamel, installation, 105 x 58 x 185 cm



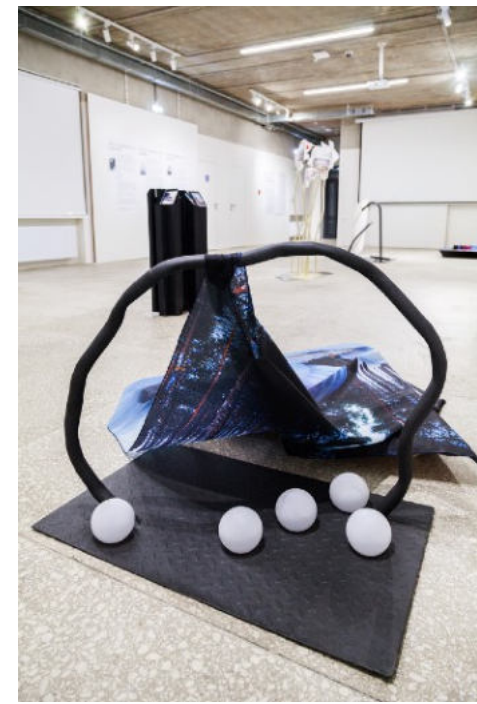


Photo sculpture #4. Marina  
Steel sheet, water and gas pipes, plastic, primer-enamel, UV-printing,  
installation, 86 x 100 x 116 cm

Photo sculpture #5. Vera  
Steel sheet, water and gas pipe, polyester silk, plastic, primer enamel,  
sublimation printing, installation, 180 x 130 x 73 cm

## TO SHOW WHAT CANNOT BE SEEN

2020-2021, audiovisual and tactile installation

It is a two-part project, an audiovisual and kinesthetic installation, realized in Krasnodar in collaboration with a local community of blind and visually impaired people.

In this work I turn to practice of "empathetic interaction", trying to get my feelings and perception (as the author's) in sync with those of a spectator. Here I use the method of art therapy, shaping viewer's appeal for realization of new visual experience for him/her or solving his/her visual issues, strongly associated with their corporality.

The main topic of this "collaborative investigation" is such aesthetic category as "beauty". How do blind people think themselves beautiful? How do the other people see them? What emotions does a visually impaired person have when accepting oneself and one's body?

The result of this art-interaction is a series of portrait photos of blind people and sound clips. Audial part of the installation consists of interviews (talks with visually impaired people) and audios of our communication during the shooting. Visual and kinesthetic part is represented by portrait photos settled in lightboxes.

Person's contours (inflexions of the body, traits and features, garment pieces) and interior design items get volume in the photos by the means of chasing with sharp needle, which can be associated with Braille lettering. Portraits are put in lightboxes, which let warmth pass through the picture surface. Heat control is regulated by the thickness of the plastic elements of the box. Usage of thin and thick plastic metaphorically points at the level of contact between the artist and the character. If there is a lot of empathy in our interaction and social distance is shortened — picture surface is warmer. And vice versa.

Focus change — from visual to tactile and audial perception — provides an opportunity to consider the category of beauty from different points of view.

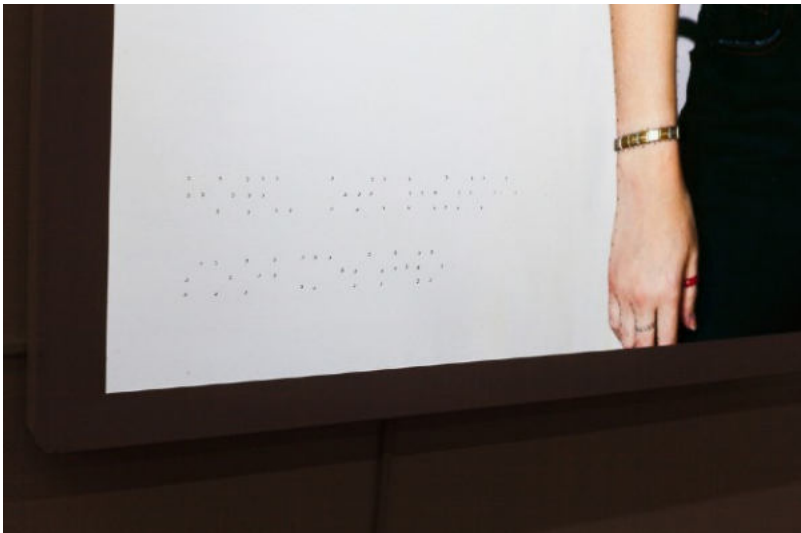


Group exhibition "The Art of Being: The Space of Caring" at the Tsaritsyno Museum-Reserve, Moscow, March 16, 2020 - May 10, 2021



Group exhibition "The Art of Being: The Space of Caring" at the Center for Contemporary Art "Typography", Krasnodar, November 6, 2020 - January 17, 2021





The full project can be viewed on the website [here](#)

## WELL, WHY WOULD I DOING THIS ART

2019, photoobjects, video, installation

Women play with a strong hand in contemporary art, but various personal and impersonal reasons often become a drag on their creative careers. Childbirth, keeping household or painful breakups; necessity of earning money outside the sphere of art or poverty forced by inability to take a strong position in this “art-market”; gender discrimination and “macho-politics” of society; depression, lack of sleep, intensive rhythm of life — nowadays all of these factors can be the reasons for the numerous confusions, negative emotions and neuroses of woman artists.

The installation room is the image of a paintress' inner world, where the home interior and the lights create visible comfort, while “inmates” — photos, videos, sounds (given as visual images, thoughts and memories) — evoke feelings of discomfort, despair, fatigue and monotony.

Sublimation of negative psychological emotions into art has a therapeutic effect on me. The viewer is welcome to become a part of this artistic act and to dip into the space constructed by the artist.



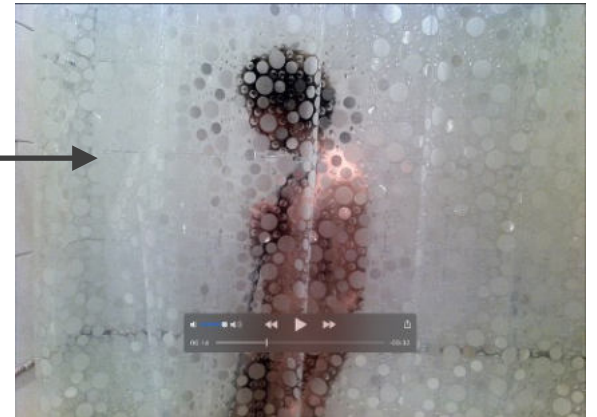
Group exhibition "What Women Want" at the Gallery "Park", Moscow, January 29-March 8, 2020



Group exhibition "Hug and Cry" at Sinara Art Gallery, Ekaterinburg, September 19 - November 14, 2021



Please follow the link [here](#)



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## THE RED THREAD

2017-until now, work in progress, installation, photography, thread

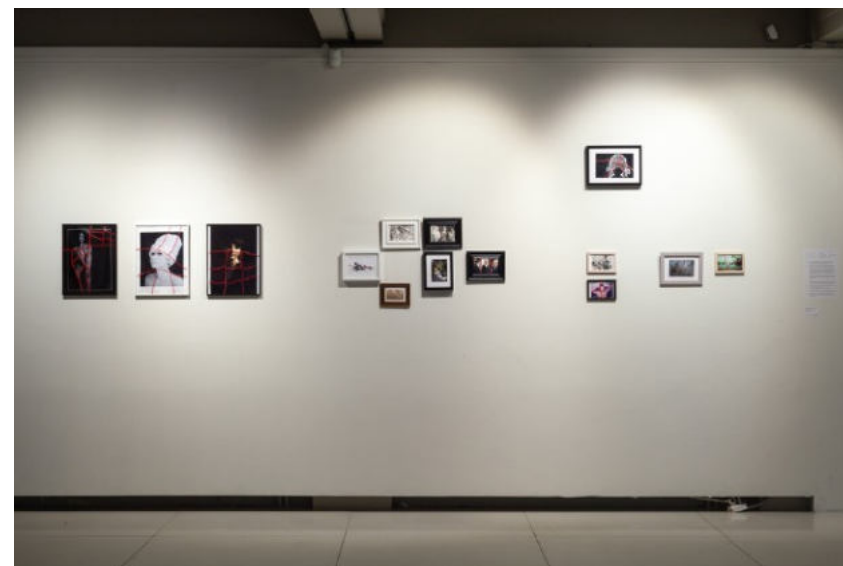
In the digital age, a printed photo is already a rarity or a burden. Printed photos are not ubiquitous in the life of an ordinary modern human. Today, to rip up a photo is not already a mass action. It is associated with stronger emotional motives, like when a relationship is over and you want to rip up and burn the photos of him or her, or when you want to clean up your life and go through your things. In this case, a printed photo is perceived just as a thing, but not as a carrier of information or memory. Nowadays, to rip up and throw away a photo is more a psychological act than a pragmatic action.

What is the reason to get rid of photos in every private story? Is it banal or unique in the age of the digital world? What are the new feelings, or their absence, that everyone has today when they want to rip up and throw away the photo? How will the printed photo look like, and what will it depict and how? Is it possible to move a “for disposal” photo to an artistic space from a non-artistic space? Is it possible to find any features of an artistic context in the act of disposal of a photo as a thing?

The artist collects the rips up photos and the stories about the reasons for their “destruction”. Ripped photos are carefully stitched with a red thread, like with surgical sutures. The object of the photo itself turns into an artist's canvas from the material for fixation.



Group exhibition "Homo Ludens: The Man Who Plays" at Ark Gallery, Moscow, October 30, 2019 - January 19, 2020



Group exhibition "After Photography", Victoria Gallery, Samara, March 31 - May 21, 2022







The full project can be viewed on the website [here](#)

Performance at the festival of contemporary photography "Presence",  
St. Petersburg, 2017



## CHAD

2016 - 2020, photography

This work shows collective social image of a certain category of people through a general portrait of a contemporary "man in a case". He is an average office worker always wearing business suit, doing routine work every day, suspecting and some times realising that he lives a grey, sad and dull live of a small screw in the system.

The main character in "The Man in a Case" by Anton Chekhov «...displayed a constant and insurmountable impulse to wrap himself in a covering, to make himself, so to speak, a case which would isolate him and protect him from external influences.» In contrast to Chekhov my Belikov is not afraid of innovation, he is not afraid of deeds unauthorized by superiors and he is not afraid of actual reality. But he is afraid "to burn" at work or to "lose his spirit" without comprehending the meaning of his life. That's why I gave him the colored smoke and put him into pastoral city landscape. This smoke is used in entertainment industry, causes associations linked to revolutionary sentiments.

Smoke is the Fire Index, a symbol of countless attempts to "take fire" or a fact of combustion. According to the funeral rituals of some peoples by the smoke of a grave fire we can judge about the life of the deceased in another world. The smoke that goes directly up tells us that the gods gave the dead eternal bliss. Continuing the theme of existential I give the "will" to my heroes and place the Man in a peaceful natural landscape and reconcile Man and nature. Through the smoke I show the transition from portrait to landscape, from person to nature, from body to spirit.



The solo exhibition "Chad" at the Gallery "Bogorodskoe", Moscow, March 5 - June 29, 2020









The full project can be viewed on the website [here](#)

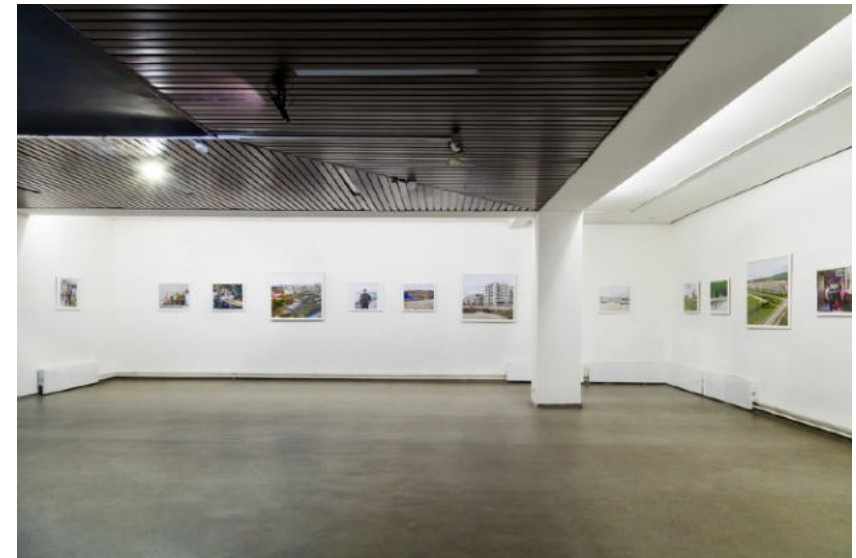
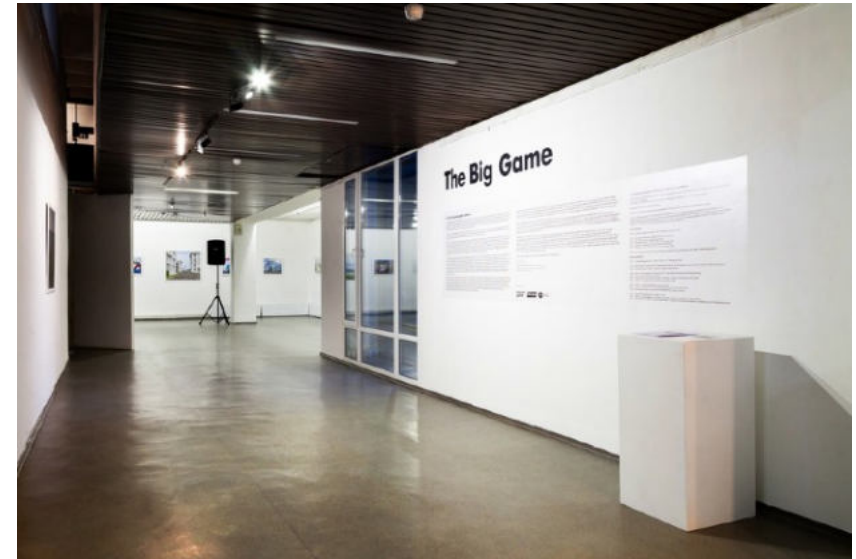
## THE BIG GAME

2010-2016, photography

The project consists of three parts. It explores the space and time of global changes in the country through one single and bright point on the map – the city of Sochi and its neighborhood during the separate period of history – preparation, conducting and heritage of Winter Olympic games.

The first part of the project called "Legends" started 6 years ago. It traces visual modification of the city caused by upcoming events. Parallel with the study of ancient myths the author moves on to interpretation of the new mythology of the place and time.

The second part of the project "Fan's passport" was shot during the Games. It creates the portrait of Russian fan who landed in this area as landing troops and became the symbol of the new Russian identity. The third part "National park" was created two years after the Games. It aims to show heritage of modern ideology through the new face of the city, mainly-changed landscape and actual portraits of local residents. It also intends to create the image of reserved human habitat.



Personal exhibition at the Museum Center "Peace Square", Krasnoyarsk, March 8 - April 10, 2018

An essay by Irina Chmireva, PhD in Art History, can be read [here](#)



## I part. LEGENDS

2010-2013, photography

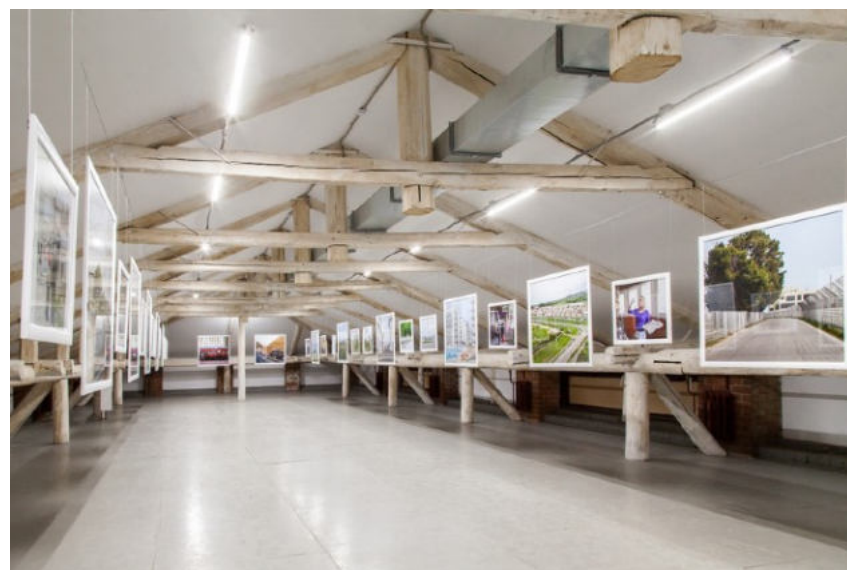
The centuries-old principle of Sochi territory development can be described as "from the mountains to the sea". From the ancient time the local inhabitants of this lands had being fighting between themselves for the territory. But they also had being defending the land from the external conquerors. Stories about aggression, seizures of land, evictions and resettlements gave birth to numerous myths. For example, as a result of the Caucasus War of 1817-1864 the native inhabitants - the Ubykhs - were relocated to the Ottoman Empire, and by now have lost their national identity.

The recent history of the Sochi city is connected to the 2014 Winter Olympics, which also fostered new myth-making. Surprisingly, those new myths and legends are somewhat similar to ancient ones, which confirms the cycling of time. The modern information space is full of the new city legends and rumors: local residents' resettlement from the sites of future Olympic facilities, the foreign labor inflows, national parks' territory reduction and related ecologists protests, the Mzymta river irrigation to allow new highways construction, weather manipulations to allow better conditions for construction works, and the shoreline destruction.

The first part of the project is an attempt to interpret and visualize this new mythology of this place and time.



Personal exhibition at the Voronezh Center for Contemporary Art, April 20 - May 9, 2017



Personal exhibition at the Center for Contemporary Culture "Smenda", Kazan, May 20-30, 2017









The entire series of Part I of the project can be viewed on the website [here](#)

## II part. SPECTATOR PASS

2014, photography

Lewis Carroll's Alice just had to step through the mirror to get to the world of the Looking-Glass. To become an equal participant of Russia's new utopia – XXII Winter Olympic Games in Sochi – one had to purchase a Spectator pass. Spectator pass, special Olympic document, enabled its holder to attend sport events, to move around the city in special Olympic transport and to visit recreation and entertainment areas.

The main focus is on people. The people who “drew the lucky ticket” and perhaps experienced the most important event of their lives. These people found themselves in so-called Olympic Looking-Glass, modern isolated city built with innovative technologies taken into account which looks a little bit awkward against the Caucasus Mountains landscape.

Has the new ideology been recently created in Russia and is it the newly transformed Olympic Sochi that was supposed to become its symbol? As with Carroll's' Looking-Glass, we haven't found any clearly defined myths of the new Russian statehood. The camera captured the easily recognizable mix of dissimilar Russian realities adopted by Russians either from their Soviet past or from the screens of modern TV sets. A Russian tricolor flag was perhaps the only unifying factor. All this can inevitably evoke a smile. But is it stupid? Weird? Ridiculous? Of course, not! This is just a vivid proof that modern Russia is still as far from the West as it is from the East and that it still goes by its unique way through its another Looking-Glass.



Personal exhibition at the Art Gallery of Yeltsin Center, June 8-July 9, 2017



Personal exhibition at the Palace of the Vicar of the Tobolsk Kremlin, Tobolsk, July 27-August 3, 2017











The entire series of Part II of the project can be viewed on the website [here](#)



### III part. RESERVE

2016, photography

Futurism and the innovative ideas of the Olympic Sochi project, which the guests admired in 2014, are gradually becoming familiar. Present in Sochi overtakes the future, the city gradually returns to the normal course of time from an incredible temporary situation of "future-present". The river of daily routine continues to flow in this soothing renewal of Sochi, fading after the revolutionary transformation. The new questions are born in this unhurried rhythm. The sociologists and political scientists view the 2014 Olympics as an event, how did it influence the people, quality of life for citizens and visitors? How the architecture and the new landscapes built for the mega-events, affect the climate and the wildlife? (Sochi is on the border of the national natural park).

It addresses the problems of modern society archeology, reveals and systematizes artifacts of human activity. This is important not only for us, who is living today, accustomed to the signs of everyday life, and not thinking about the history we create. This is important for the next generations, who will be able to capture the traces of our activities from the photos and to see the scale of the accomplishments. There is a term for this is the history of photography: "to see and fix the human landscape". The landscape with traces of human life, and apart from the remains of routine, it keeps the monuments of our desire to realize ideals.

Will these territories remain protected in the future, or will they be developed by new inhabitants and will produce new myths? Time will show.



Personal exhibition at the Krasnodar Art Museum named after F. A. Kovalenko. F.A. Kovalenko, January 25 - February 11, 2018



Personal exhibition at the Friedland Gate Museum, Kaliningrad, May 25-June 25, 2017









The entire series of Part III of the project can be viewed on the website [here](#)

## KARAGANDA

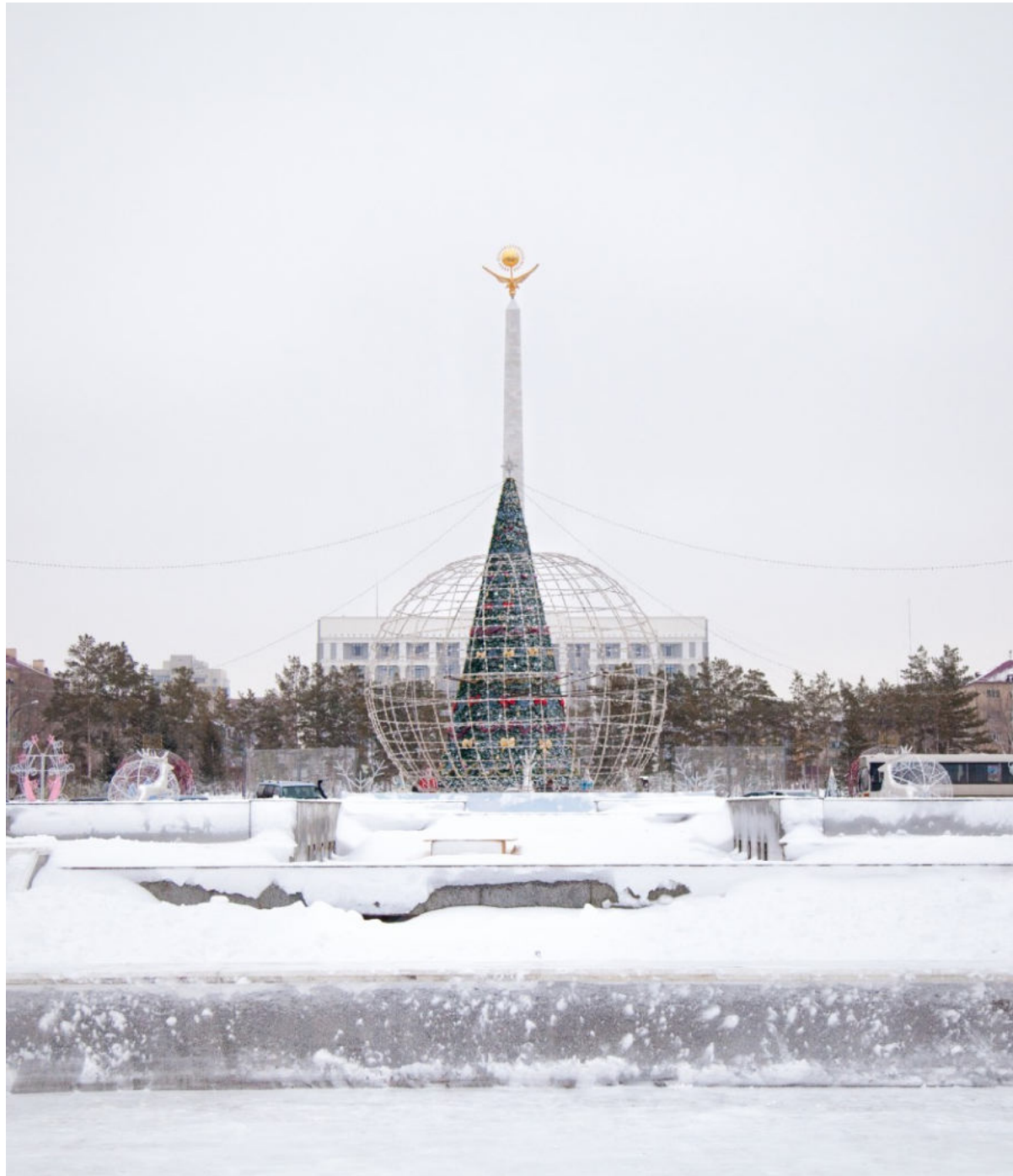
2015, photography

Geographically, Karaganda is the heart Kazakh Upland, city of spoil tips and unlamented Karlag\*. The town was founded on the site of the coal seams of the Karaganda coal basin. In 1833 a shepherd boy Appak Baizhanov discovered coal in a found lump. First, the coal was developed by a nearby settlement, and by the end of XIX century a working village evolved in the tract of coal mining basin - Karaganda. The young city is surrounded by vast steppes. In winters snowstorms and blizzards are frequent. I have seen few people on the street in the winter I spent there. This photo series addresses the idea of everyday "surviving" in the severe conditions through portraits of citizens in their living spaces juxtaposed to urban landscapes.

\* Karlag was one of the largest Gulag labor camps, located in Karaganda











The full project can be viewed on the website [here](#)

## YOURS

2014, video, 3'49"

The slogan of the XXII Olympic Winter Games in Sochi: "Hot. Cool. Yours" - states that, among other things, the Olympics are YOURS.

The video shows local Sochi residents before the start of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. They were chosen at random, of different ages, genders and activities. They were asked to think about what the Games would bring to them personally and what changes would occur in their lives.

They were assigned three conditions: not to move, look only into the lens and think for 3 minutes about what the 2014 Olympics would be for them personally. The "live" portraits were a visual exploration of a portrait of the city in the conceptual context of time and place.



To watch the video, please click [here](#)

Winner of the Mini video contest at the NOW & Tom '14 International Video Art Festival

## NOISE IN THE PARK

2014, photography

A park as an open grassy green area, designed for enjoying your leisure time, appeared on the wave of Romanticism in the XVIII century. Opened to public city parks appeared in Europe only at the beginning of the XIX century. Parks were promoting the cult of nature, harmony, quietness, seclusion. The main idea of any park was to recreate an untouched or somehow reshaped part of nature.

Some of parks in Russia have remained since the times of tsars (estates and gardens), others were created during the communist epoch (parks of culture and recreation, physical education). At the moment all of them are much more open and accessible for citizens thanks to modernisation and introduction of new elements. And in Moscow you can find some extremely positive examples of that change. But the result of such intrusions to the original structure or composition of the park can't always be good.

Thus, drifting through Moscow parks, I focused to search for the places where the story of the change has gone in the wrong direction. I chose the visual nuisances, noises, dissonances, and reconstructed my own image of the abandoned, deprived of attention park.









The full project can be viewed on the website [here](#)



## CONTACTS

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