

**Los Angeles Filmforum and Kyiv to LA present
Mykola Ridnyi: The Past, Present
Sunday September 22, 2024, 7:00 pm
At 2220 Arts + Archives**

Los Angeles Filmforum is the city's longest running organization dedicated to weekly screenings of experimental film, documentaries, video art, and experimental animation. 2024 is our 49th year. www.lafilmforum.org

In person: Mykola Ridnyi

No Regrets has some intense footage of people being pierced, voluntarily, but which might prove difficult to view for some.

Filmforum partners with Kyiv to LA to welcome the Ukrainian artist, Mykola Ridnyi. Ridnyi's video work finds powerful and widely-varying approaches to explore the impact of the wars in Ukraine, from the distant past, through the Soviet era, to the invasions of 2014 and today. Throughout, he makes clear how the past suffuses the landscape and people caught in war. From explorations of abandoned spaces (*The District*, 2023) to visions of youth dealing with the battles and dead-ends they face (*No Regrets*, 2016, and *No! No! No!*, 2017) to the remarkable poetry slam setting Lord Byron against Pushkin in dueling interpretations of the historical figure of Ivan Mazepa (*The Battle Over Mazepa*), Ridnyi's films explore collective and personal histories and struggles with empathy and creativity.

A number of Ridnyi's films and photography cycles are connected to his hometown of Kharkiv. The second largest city of Ukraine, Kharkiv is a scientific, cultural and logistical center that became particularly fragile in the context of the Russian war against Ukraine due to its proximity to the border. The body of work created over the past decade is a mix of stories, places and actions, shaping the narrative of people, city and country, and underlines the significance of historical context.

Mykola Ridnyi (born in Kharkiv, Ukraine) is an artist, filmmaker and curator. He lives and works in Berlin where he holds a guest professorship in the Lensbased class at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK). Ridnyi works across media ranging from early collective actions in public space, site-specific installations, photography, and short films. His works reflect social and political realities by drawing on the contrast between fragility and resilience of individual stories and collective histories. The body of his work created within the last decade address the question of how to talk about violence and war but not multiply its brutality in the visual language. <https://www.mykolaridnyi.com/>

Kyiv to LA is a cross-cultural initiative inviting Ukrainian artists and researchers working with moving image to participate in a Los Angeles-based residency and public program. Kyiv to LA is a Marathon Screenings produced project, and is made possible by a generous grant from Nora McNeely Hurley and Manitou Fund. Special thanks to Asha Bukojemsky.

Some useful background for the show:

1922 - Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was created (with subordination to Moscow) leaving behind an attempt to create an independent Ukrainian People's Republic (with a center in Kyiv (1917/1918 - 1921))

1991 - Ukraine became an independent sovereign state as a result of the collapse of Soviet Union

2004 - The Orange Revolution. Ukrainians took to the streets for 3 months protesting pro-Russian rigged elections. The pro-western leader, Victor Yushchenko (who survived a Russian poisoning attack in February of that year) eventually won the vote.

2014 - Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula (part of Ukraine) and provoked the war in Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. Russian troops invaded Ukrainian territory using the support of some Ukrainian residents. For this reason, I prefer to call this period the Russian hybrid war against Ukraine. A passenger flight from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, was shot down by pro-Russian separatist-controlled forces with a surface-to-air missile on 17 July 2014 while flying over eastern Ukraine, killing all 283 passengers and 15 crew. The Maidan Protests begin after pro-Russian Ukrainian president Yanukovich forgoes a political association and free trade agreement with the European Union. Deadly clashes ensued between police and protestors. Yanukovich fled to Russia, and soon after Russia invaded Crimea.

02/24/2022 - Russia started a full-scale invasion of Ukraine which is ongoing.

Screening:

Father's Story

2012, SD digital, color, sound, 3:30 Los Angeles premiere!

For the short episode of Father's Story (2012) Ridnyi asked his father to make a video tour of the cellar beneath the rural house in which his family used to live. Ridnyi's father describes the objects in the dark cellar such as jars with homemade vegetable preserves, glasses for moonshine and old Soviet newspapers. Combined are the concerns of the residents in the past learning their lessons from yet earlier wars, the skills of food preservation, and the abandoning of the cellar after 2004 – relics of past conflicts.

The District

2023, 4K video, color, sound, 20 min. Los Angeles premiere!

Commissioned by Secession, Vienna

The District recites the artist's memories of places of his childhood and youth that no longer exist. In 2022, a neighborhood of Northern Saltivka in Kharkiv became a frontline in the Russian invasion and suffered significant destruction. A walk through the "ghost district" forges a coexistence of past and present, outward and inward landscapes, facts and recollections.

No Regrets

2011 / 2016, SD video, color, sound, 5:28

No Regrets is based on footage of the suspension performance filmed in a night club. Performers are representatives of teenage community fascinated by hardcore music, tattoo and piercing. Youth radicalism

is sublimed in bodily experience and overcoming pain thresholds, practiced as a protest against the routines of everyday life and social normatives.

No! No! No!

2017, FHD video color, black & white, sound, 22 min. Los Angeles premiere!

The main heroes of *NO! NO! NO!* (2017) are young people from Kharkiv. Reaching their early twenties coincided with the breakout of the war in the neighboring regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. A queer activist and poet, a fashion model, a group of street artists, a creator of a computer games – all of them are artists or working in the creative industries, typical of peaceful life in a big city. However, the proximity to the war affects each of the characters and their activities.

The Battle Over Mazepa

2023, 4K video, color, sound, 20 min. Los Angeles Premiere!

Commissioned by Pushkin House, London and John Hansard Gallery, Southampton

The Battle Over Mazepa conceptualizes the historical significance and contemporary perception of Ivan Mazepa, a political and military leader of the Zaporizhian Sich and Left-bank Ukraine in the late-17th and early-18th century. Addressing codes of hip-hop culture, Ridnyi borrows the popular form of a rap battle to collide two great works of world literature associated with this historical figure: *Mazeppa* by Lord Byron in 1819 and *Poltava* by Alexander Pushkin in 1828–29. While Byron envisions Mazepa as a romantic hero, seized by love, Pushkin portrays him as a traitor in accordance with the colonial attitude of the Russian Empire. Highlighting the confrontation of these two texts, Ridnyi invited four rappers from different national and cultural backgrounds to write and perform their response to the poets' lyrics. That resulted in the rap-battle composed in 6 rounds and additional video with performers' interviews where they express a personal take on the projects context

This program is supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles. We also depend on our members, ticket buyers, and individual donors.

Coming soon to Los Angeles Filmforum:

Oct 4 – Experimentations 4: Repossessing the Spirit of Myths in Africa Through Cinema: *Yeelen*, at the Autry Museum

Oct 6 – Experimentations 5: Ritualizing Knowledge Systems, at 2220 Arts + Archives

Oct 20 – *The Wolf House*, at 2220 Arts + Archives

Oct 27 – Experimentations 6: Documentary and Science Fiction: Locating the Uncanny in 1980s Chinese State-Sponsored Films, at 2220 Arts + Archives

Nov 3 – Experimentations 7: Carolina Caycedo, with VPAM, at 2220 Arts + Archives

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