

**TO EXPLODE, BE DESTROYED OR UNEXPECTEDLY RESIST:****An interview with curator Adrien Sina****Adrien Sina****Eugenia Sydorenko*****Вибухнути, бути зруйнованими чи несподівано протистояти:******Інтерв'ю з куратором Адрієном Сіною*****Адрієн Сіна****Євгенія Сидоренко**

Адрієн Сіна - французький куратор, архітектор, історик танцю і перформансу. Його мультидисциплінарна виставка *Feminine Futures: Ukraine*, частина серії *War | Oppression | Dystopia* має за мету надати платформу для того аби українські хореографи висловлювати опір Російській війні проти України. В обраних куратором досі не бачених короткометражних фільмах митці прагнуть створити діалог між власним тілом та архітектурними спорудами. Постає емоційна рефлексія на криваве теперішнє, передчуття майбутніх трагедій, але також на найвище вираження любові та єдності. Цей проект – живий організм, що росте в той час як Адрієн Сіна працює над розширенням мережі хореографів та кіномитців, що спрямовують свої творчі потуги до схожих цілей. У результаті втілюється неконформна ціль куратора: зі співпраці творяться нові роботи, і канону, гегемонії класичного мистецтва протистойть постійний пошук талантів, чиї роботи ще не набули визнання через труднощі які постають в історії перед жінкою або в цьому випадку українкою чи українцем.

У цій розмові Адрієн Сіна говорить про перформативні види мистецтва як переконливий інструмент для репрезентації війни, про рішення надати пріоритет концептуальному ядру виставки над її уніфікацією до одного виду мистецтва чи дисципліни, а також про значення тіла та історії у даній виставці. Окрім того куратор говорить про *War Crime Memorial* – інсталяцію, представлену на Венеційському Бієнале біля російського павільйону на знак протесту проти агресії країни-загарбника. Вивір-компаньйон до *Feminine Futures: Ukraine*, *War Crime Memorial*, як і вищезгадана виставка, створює напругу між архітектурою та жіночим голосом, але робить це у формі тимчасової скульптури.

Євгенія Сидоренко провела і записала розмову з Адрієном Сіною у 2023 році, відвідавши презентацію і показ *Feminine Futures: Ukraine* у Summerhall, Единбург, Велика Британія.

**Ключові слова:** танець, експериментальний фільм, російсько-українська війна, Адрієн Сіна, архітектура.

**Eugenia Sydorenko (E. S.).** *Looking at the timeline of the 'Feminine Futures' project, which you have been curating for over twenty years now, we can see that it has always focused mostly on early twentieth-century female choreographers. It is clear that immense research has been conducted to create the exhibitions where thousands of photographs were displayed. I wonder how it happened that an art-historical project turned into a one that focuses on the current day and reacts to war in an urgent and powerful way?*

**Adrien Sina (A. S.)** The early twentieth century was punctuated with wars and threats of totalitarian regimes. It's the reason why an essential historical part of 'Feminine Futures' focuses on artists' reactions to these issues through dance and performance. Three years ago, in 2020, I conceived 'War | Oppression | Dystopia' as a contemporary section of my 'Feminine Futures' exhibition anticipating future tragedies. This was about the persistence of the same artistic resistance in countries undergoing similar threats. The project then acquired a dramatic urgency with Russia's inhumane aggression towards Ukraine. To my selection of premonitory dances on devastated sites or the collective dynamics affected by undetermined dangers, I associated new dances performed in the midst of the destruction of war, or in shelled cultural heritage sites. Next, we had the in-between and solitary spaces haunting the inner landscapes of uprooted or refugee Ukrainian dancers.

My first curatorial contemporary work in 1995, 'Fugitive Fluctuations', was also about urgency and the anticipation of future problems. At this time, climate change did not exist in public discourse, but I nonetheless introduced this exhibition with the idea of climatic uncertainties. It was also about the collision and war between all the layers of living organisms on our Planet: wars between humans, genetic wars between viruses or bacteria and our humanity. We did not have COVID, but we had AIDS instead, with tragic waves of death. So it was about anticipating many shifts – biotechnological or body-related shifts – and it was translated into video installations and performative displays. We were at a very primitive stage of the World Wide Web, but I started thinking with Paul Virilio about the future layers of human habitation on our Planet. We published reflections on factors of aggregation and disaggregation in 'cyberspace', on 'virtual urbanity', 'virtual communities', and ethical issues related to the missing links between cyber-cities, megacities, homeless or slum cities. I had Dumb Type, a new-media group of Japanese architects, performers, dancers, and composers directed by Teiji Furuhashi, with poignant works about love, death and AIDS. There were also important experimental works by architects at the turning point of their practices through digital media or performance, such as Liz Diller + Ricardo Scofidio from New York, Thom Mayne from Los Angeles, or Kengo Kuma from Tokyo, who was pioneering his ecological architecture projects.

Then I was interested in the ancestors of these artists who were cross-disciplinary, going backward in time to Bauhaus, German Expressionism and Futurism. When I was a postgraduate student in 1986-89, I attended a memorable talk by Bernard Tschumi at the Architectural Association in London. It was entitled 'Episodes of Geometry and Lust', a conceptual interrelation made between the Italian futurist architect Sant'Elia and the French futurist Valentine de Saint-Point who initiated the first cross-media performances in Paris and in New York in 1914-17 with her 'Dances of War and Love'. Here I experienced familiarity and connection between the histories of performance, dance and architecture which was not written by anyone and I started to discover and collect more and more unseen or rare historical artworks, because I wanted to be original and not show what other curators and museums show. This is the process of creating a new field of research through quite a new corpus of photographs, films or manuscripts, many never-before-studied items. It's amazing to see the connection between all these historical discoveries and the contemporary world in which I am interested in. For example, there are so many connections between what happened in Kyiv during the 1910s and 1920s around staging

theatre performances. There was a brilliant exhibition curated by Myroslava M. Mudrak at the Ukrainian Museum of New York in 2015 with all the splendid avant-garde drawings and sketches depicting extremely geometrical and architectural movements in space. They were about renovating dance, freeing it from the narrative codes of ballet and creating a new field which is the field of modernity or abstraction in dance. It is extremely close to all the Ukrainian contemporary dance I am interested in. Early twentieth-century dance history is structured around very specific replies to oppression too. I have an important Estonian section on artists in the 1930s under Soviet occupation, many of whom had to migrate to other countries. Another important section concerns dancers of Jewish-heritage who were in exile or deported to camps. They performed impressive acts of political resistance. Julia Marcus and Oda Schottmüller in the early 1930s, later, Martha Graham, Anna Sokolow and Pauline Koner performed anti-fascist and anti-war dances in the heat of the turmoil. I started 'Feminine Futures: Ukraine' and its 'War | Oppression | Dystopia' section after the invasion of Crimea. I encountered pertinent and poignant works in Ukraine reflecting on these upheavals. The theme of this section was 'Anticipating Future Tragedies' and in fact the tragedy happened.

***E. S. Speaking about connections between past and present. In this exhibition, you focus on contemporary dance, which derives its roots from avant-garde choreography and avant-garde art coming from a place of resistance. I wonder if apart from anticipation of tragedy, resistance to it is also the theme of the project.***

**A. S.** It is a magnificent connection, because there are many layers in this history of dance, war, oppression, and also the powerful face-to-face between artists and history. History is about political convictions, about poetic communities of artists who are resisting. It is about new forms of revolution which are not bloody revolutions but art revolutions, renovating the gaze on creativity and creation. It is the reason why this community in Kyiv during the 1910s was fascinating: it was a revolution against old forms of conservative or academic art and it was innovative, it was about creating new forms of modernity. What I am interested in is the art forms of resistance under fascist oppression or other forms of domination, such as the hegemony of techno-structures or the hegemony of economic and financial powers. Many Latin American artists are resisting consumerism and economical hegemonies. I am particularly interested in all these fields of creativity which have human, social and political components. My exhibitions are entitled 'Feminine Futures' because although women were at the gravity centre of avant-garde movements, they had no power, no right to vote, they were often marginalised and had to struggle to establish their publicity. Male figures were mostly leading these artistic movements and women were often considered as wives of important artists but they had so many things to express. It's by the only strength of their individual resistance that they forged their own space, which is still unrecognised. When twenty or thirty years ago I started supporting totally unknown female artists, it was a pioneer approach. I participated in recent exhibitions such as 'Women in Abstraction', curated by Christine Macel in 2021, with whom I worked 12 years ago on the 'Danser sa vie' dance exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, and 'Women in Abstraction', an impressive large-scale exhibition she curated at the Pompidou Centre in 2021 and at Guggenheim Bilbao the next year. Rapidly, the interest in women artists became more and more important and I am very happy to be one of the pioneer curators who studied and discovered artists who have been forgotten and now are acclaimed in major international contexts. I was also invited by Cecilia Alemani who was the curator of the Venice Biennale in 2022, to the 'Meetings on art' where I gave a lecture on 'dance and war' and artists' war diaries, the subject of my loans to her 'The Milk of Dreams' exhibition. We were also in conversation on the topic of 'curating from feminism' with other curators

specialised in women artists as a concept, through the lens of ideas they initiated early in the early 20th century, during the 1960s-70s up to now.

**E. S.** *You mentioned the hegemony of classical art. From my own experience in modern art galleries, I have to say that when I get to experience the artworks which have a performative and temporal dimension, they overshadow the more classical works, like paintings and sculptures in my mind and memory, not to diminish the expressive power of the latter ones, of course. Do you think that cross-disciplinary projects and art forms, like your project, which combines dance, architecture and audiovisual media, are the most powerful way for artists to represent war?*

**A. S.** As you noticed, I am fascinated by the high level of emotion and perceptual impact that an experimental film which rethinks a dance performance can have with all the fragility of the body in dialogue with the geometry of an architectural space or the uncanny nature of a landscape. These are the most powerful tools for the expression of tragic and vital matters. But I am also supportive of the idea of connecting disciplines and artistic practices and I love the shift from the classical knowledge to innovative experiences. Natalia Trafankowska and Sofia Naumenko, who are part of my exhibition, have a classical dance background that they turn into contemporary practices. Natalia is from Donetsk, she was performing in Alisa Makarenko's dance group in Poznań



Fig. 1. Sofia Naumenko performing in front of the damaged buildings in Irpin. Photo courtesy Adrien Sina.

when the war began. She was intensely involved in humanitarian actions for Ukrainians and refugees, she transported Ukrainian children from orphanages to Poland. She also initiated the flash mob 'Doves of peace for Ukraine', in April 2022, including her 'Dad, hear me... (Dialogue from the need of the heart and soul)', an attempt to communicate with her missing father retained in the blackouts of Ukraine. Sofia is from Bucha, she performed her improvisation 'Flashbacks 2022 – Beauty and horror' in

the near city of Irpin, at The Central House of Culture in Irpin, shelled on 17 March 2022. She was splendidly filmed and photographed by Oksana Zinchenko in this half-destroyed cultural heritage

site. I am deeply interested in historical roots and the ways in which artists are respectful towards the work of their ancestors. They create something unseen and unexpected on the basis of historical discoveries, far away from conservatism which is the repetition of the same codes. Rather than exclusion, I am interested in inclusion, in togetherness, in mixing and combining older experiences with newer ones. Even if historical periods of creativity are punctuated with shifts, there is still a continuity in this thirst for innovation. An example is the baroque architecture which I love. I have a great emotion in front of the Villa Hadriana conceived by Emperor Hadrian, 2000 years ago. For his own throne room, he initiated at the centre of a water theatre the first forms of pulsation of space through curves and counter-curves which inspired Borromini's invention of baroque architecture later in the seventeenth century. Many of my choreographers and dancers have a wide range of inspiration and practices. I am interested in gathering all these inspirational forms in my exhibitions. Of my avant-garde artists, I have woodcuts, drawings, paintings, manuscript scores, photographs, all innovative forms of dance notation and dance depiction. I do not want to exclude any form of creativity, as long as it serves the progress of ideas about this connection between humanity, humanist ideas, utopian ideas and experimental ideas.

My exhibition 'War | Oppression | Dystopia' is deeply rooted in what I call its 'white shadow', which is 'Peace | Freedom | Utopia'. Most of the artists who worked under dystopian regimes had utopian targets in their progressive artworks. Sometimes they created communities of artists for resistance. It's what I initiated with my first contact with Ukrainian artists. We are creating an artistic network of dancers, filmmakers, sound and set designers. This network is still progressing and there are new collaborations between artists from different backgrounds, some of them are refugees, some of them are still resisting under the shelling in Ukraine. The network functions as a hive of emotional connection and cooperation among artists. They are now producing more and more new works, sometimes inspired by the historical, sometimes stimulated by the idea that each time we have a film-screening program in important museums, such as the Centre Pompidou, they will have a new creative challenge for new projects. These are the institutional details I highlight in requested reference letters for their grant and artists' residency applications. It is an ethical process of deep support of the artists beyond the exhibition itself. My support for the innovative and forgotten artists of the past is similar, even if they are no longer alive. This is the reason why I am collecting. I recently acquired a large photographic collection of a student of Mary Wigman in Germany in the 1920s. This archive came from her granddaughter who had confidence in me, knowing that I will include all these stunning, precious and totally unknown works in a new research perspective on the early twentieth-century dance avant-gardes.

***E. S. So, connecting and supporting artists and representing both the living and the dead ones is more important to you than limiting yourself to one specific art form.***

**A. S.** This is the purpose. My projects are basically conceptual. I am not trapped inside one layer of history, I am more interested in this continuity (and also some little discontinuities, because some artists had revolutionary ideas) between artists' thirst for innovation. As I have an architectural background, I am extremely interested in all these geometrical shifts in modernity, geometrical dances, dances related to architecture or structure – to environmental forms, because natural forms are extremely rational and mathematical. These shifts of political and social context are important stimulation for strong and emotional works, not unconnected works which no longer speak to anyone.

***E. S. The role of architecture in this project is profound. It is interesting how the same theme connects most of the performances: interaction of a body with a piece of architecture. At the Venice Biennale you presented a project called 'War Crime Memorial', which is a temporary***



*sculpture. There is a curious relation between this project and 'Feminine Futures', as it is accompanied by extracts from diaries of female Ukrainian intellectuals and it presents pieces of ruined architecture from Ukraine.*

A. S. The project was born in conversation with Konstantin Akinsha, who is an eminent curator. He also specialises in documenting the destruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine. We met at the Venice Biennale to which I was a lender. In addition to Valentine de Saint-Point's 'Dances of War and Love' my other contribution to 'The Milk of Dreams' curated by Cecilia Alemani was this pioneering war diary by the Italian futurist Enif Angiolini in conversation with F.-T. Marinetti, 1917-18. She was in a hospital undergoing gynaecological operations during the First World War. She compares the trenches and blood in her womb to those on the war scene. This is the first surgical war diary written by a female artist. The book was exhibited at the Venice Biennale. On the 22nd of April we had a discussion with Konstantin Akinsha and I submitted the idea of creating a 'War Crime Memorial', this was shortly after the 24th of February, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. A terrifying amplitude of destruction, genocide and war crimes was reported in international news, also witnessed by artists and writers in Ukraine, including war diaries and photographs by Yevgenia Belorusets or TikTok posts by Valeria Shashenok.



Fig. 2. As a companion piece to *Feminine Futures*, *War Crime Memorial* was presented at the Biennale as an expression of protest against the Russian aggression.

Photo courtesy Adrien Sina.

My 'War Crime Memorial' was structured as a war diary performance and installation just in front of the banned and miserably empty Russian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. This temporary portable monument was a conceptual displacement, consisting of twenty military ammunition crates filled with debris from Ukraine's cities attacked by Russian weapons. These were collected evidence of Russian massacres in Ukraine, a tragic demonstration of what innocent civilians had and still have to undergo. The sides of the crates were marked in military stencil font with the name of the targeted cities: Bucha, Kramatorsk, Mariupol, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Donetsk,

Luhansk, Izyum, Dnipro, Zaporizhia, Chernihiv, Sumy, Borodzianka... During a performance session, these city names were destined to be declaimed alongside quotations from war diaries by Ukrainian intellectuals, artists or bloggers. Rubble samples from each city would be respectfully laid in the ammunition crates. Blue and yellow flowers would be laid around the memorial and a minute of silence would be observed. Unrealised, it nonetheless constituted the first curatorial act of my exhibition series 'War | Oppression | Dystopia'. It received public attention at the Venice Biennale 'Meetings on Art', on 11 June 2022, as the culmination of my talk on 'Feminine Futures' and the early twentieth century history of artists' diaries and performances reacting to war. It was then presented in the library vitrines of my exhibition at the Summerhall War Memorial Gallery, Edinburgh.

**E. S. *What is also important about projects related to dance and choreography, is the role of the body. For female avant-garde dancers in the beginning of the twentieth century, the role of body was to subvert submission – women wanted to dominate the art scene, instead of being merely wives of the great artists. I wonder how you define the role of a body, specifically the female body in this project and in this moment in history.***

**A. S.** Despite their talents, female avant-garde artists were often only muses or inspirers for male artists. They knew that the model was a major subject in art history, so why should they not be the artwork itself without passing through the proxy of a male artist? They performed their own art instead of being still and submissive while posing for someone else. This was the birth of performance using the emergence of photography and film as a new form of expression in art. It became political because they had to reappropriate their own bodies, searching for freedom and new rights. I am a specialist in this connection between performance art and dance history. Performance art was launched in Europe during the 1910s and later in New York during the 1960s with artists from the Judson Dance Theater. But before this period, performance forms were directly related to dance recitals. Unlike ballet, they were solo and concept-based performances with declamations of poems, using experimental music and expressive lights, as did Valentine de Saint-Point, a very political futurist performer in 1914. The question of presence is highly important because of the fragility of a body and also the fact that it can express so many emotions in one second, this multiplicity can hardly be expressed in a painting or a sculpture as it is still. This is the reason why I think performance and dance are the highest forms of art for expression of real emotions and for reacting very quickly to reality, responding with an immediate sense of empathy to tragedies.

**E. S. *My next question is about the process of choosing artworks to be a part of this project. Considering that most of the performances you focus on have been created by professional choreographers, who are considered and consider themselves artists, I am particularly interested in how you have decided to include the video of the school leaving dance, which students performed in front of the ruins of their school. It is a striking recording.***

**A. S.** It was about the beauty of resistance amidst the worst horror that exists, and its powerful impact: the students of Kharkiv's School No.134 who marked their graduation with a dance in front of its ruins, on 7 June 2022, to Yana Shemaeva's poignant song Mriya (Dream). I briefly show the movement of 'K-POP IN PUBLIC UKRAINE', with teenage dance crews performing in the streets of Kyiv, Kharkiv and other cities in support of soldiers on the front. These performers were young too, they were not necessarily professional. What is important and impressive is that the whole society in Ukraine is backing, offering support to resistance. Our actions as a small community of artists is also a contribution to this massive support. We are fighting for the same

causes and the same utopian and humanist ideas. We are similar. The beauty of these pure and spontaneous actions is equivalent to any elaborated and conceptual artwork.

**E. S. *As you have mentioned, the project supports some very young artists and choreographers. The fact that it provides a contemporary and non-stereotypical view on Ukrainian culture is very admirable.***

**A. S.** Having acclaimed and influential choreographers such as Vladyslav Detiuchenko, director of the n'Era Dance, whose 'The Wall' performance was commissioned by the Embassy of Germany for the German Unity Day in 2021 and his poignant 'Mariupol' commissioned by Company E, Washington, in June 2022, or Anna Gerus, founder and artistic director of Ukrainian Dance Theatre, as well as some young dancers, is part of the ethics of togetherness of this exhibition. In Konstantin Koval's UPROOTED 2 project, Diana Helzina is a young and talented fashion model experimenting with dance. Olya Shevchuk, the main cast of Konstantin Koval's 'UPROOTED' film for the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a young actress and dancer too, she is nonetheless impressively expressive and dramatic, in her performance on the rooftop of the Tempodrom, Berlin, as well as in her play in Kalush Orchestra's 'Zori' video. Age does not matter: all artists I selected are talented and innovative. Inna Matiushyna's 'Falling', filmed in Kyiv in August 2022, is breathtaking in intensity. It methodically explores the falling movement of the young dancer Anastasya Konchenko during a rocket attack, then her psychological destruction and questions how she can survive the war and perceives everyday sounds. In 'Tempo', 2019, she explored a similar pressure of sound-related addictions leading to mind control. In her 'Glimpse of Present moment / Mirror' released on 05 July 2021, Nataliya Tkachuk investigated the dark shadows haunting our consciousness and subconscious in this terrible cycle of birth and death intensified by the war. She movingly reconnects these inner worlds to uncanny landscapes in Kiev District, Bucha, Irpin, Makarov, Odessa, Kuyalnik, Kiev small opera theatre, tracing the shifts of peaceful pre-war sensations to traumatic wartime fears in the silence of the minds.\*

For the first time I found my real family among Ukrainian artists. I have left the contemporary dance scene in Europe slightly behind me because most of the performances are not as powerful as the early twentieth-century avant-garde dance brought to light in my 'Feminine Futures' exhibition. What we are achieving now with the network of Ukrainian artists gathered in this project is not just showing previous performances but also opening an immense gateway for new creative perspectives stimulated by this curatorial initiative. All these experiments will be published in my forthcoming book with a large section on Ukrainian contemporary dances: 'Feminine Futures 2 – Expression / Abstraction – The Membrane of Dreams' with its ample historical section is also about our dreams for the future, which are compressed into a very thin membrane which can explode, be destroyed or unexpectedly resist.

Rita Lira is the dancer symbolising the 'promising light of the Future' in Svitlana Oleksiuk's ArchitectBody performed with the modernist architecture of the Crematorium at the Baikove Cemetery in Kyiv. She just sent me this morning a divine performance with a membrane in which she is trapped, in dramatic landscapes or strong architectural environments near Paris. Incidentally, Jacques Kalisz, the architect of this iconic modernist double helix car park in which she performed, was my teacher and the director of my diploma. Rita was present at my conference at the Centre Pompidou, and I followed the birth and evolution of this innovative project which resonates with the most iconic works I exhibited in 'Feminine Futures'. She performed with a stretched fabric sculpted in the space as a dramatic body membrane or an expressive second skin. A magical filiation links it back to Martha Graham's Lamentation in 1930, Ruth Page's The Expanding Universe with an expanding costume designed by Isamu Noguchi in 1932, Mary Binney Montgomery's Poem 8, experimental film by Emlen Etting in 1933, to Ana Kamien stretched dress movements filmed in 1970, and Anna Gerus & Peter Naku's Immortal Lover, 2018, from Ukraine.

The perspective of creating new venues is highly stimulating for my artists. For our screening programmes at the Centre Pompidou Paris and the exhibition at Summerhall, Edinburgh, we created over



16 new performances and dance films in addition to the previous works. Our project is evolving as a stimulating hive for new creations, sometimes in a moving resonance with the historical sections of 'Feminine Futures'. We are now over forty Ukrainian choreographers & dancers and over forty film & photography directors, sound & set designers.\*

We are still resisting supporting Ukrainian culture, which is one of the most stunning and still unexplored dimensions of contemporary art history studies. To counter Russian cultural appropriation, western museums are relabelling artworks by artists who were considered Russian but actually were Ukrainian, were born in Ukraine and worked with the deep roots of Ukrainian culture. Furthermore, we have to work with institutions to restructure a new vision of Ukrainian contemporary art. The fine art disciplines such as painting, sculpture and installation are covered by many curators. I am the only one who is interested in dance, performance, architecture and experimental film as a whole, as a concept, as a block of connected artworks, of interrelated artistic statements and practices. All these new perspectives will be part of the new steps of 'Feminine Futures' as exhibitions, lectures and publications.

**E. S. This approach of resisting against the hegemony of classical art, not solely exhibiting popular pieces of art, not name dropping but actually researching and discovering new talents in real time is very important, as it allows us to diminish the limitations that the canon poses on art.**



Fig. 3. Irina Bushuk's geometric movements in dialogue with the architecture of Vernadsky National Library. Photo courtesy Adrien Sina.

**A. S.** This is exactly the process that happened to my historical section related to the 1910s, 20s and 30s. I presented an immense scope of artistic practices that no one had known about, to the audience and even to curators and art historians. These practices were completely unstudied. I am a specialist of extremely talented unknown artists. My approach is the same with contemporary artists and I am interested in real contact and conversation. I keep in touch with my little network of artists through social media. They do not have visibility in any museums or mega-art fairs, but

they have thousands of followers on Instagram, so they have their own public. This is not really the institutional and museum public. So, my mission as a curator is to find new talents and not repeatedly exhibit the same well-known artists. With these new unknown artists, I aim to create

new fields of reflection, emotion, new fields of dance research, relating to cultural heritage sites. Irina Bashuk performed geometrical movements interacting with the geometrical lines of modernist architecture in Kyiv, such as the Vernadsky National Library or the Zaliznychnyi covered market. This utopian construction of 1973 was conceived by the visionary Soviet-era female architect Alla Anishchenko, and recently threatened to be destroyed and replaced by shopping malls. With her dance, Irina wanted to draw attention to the demolition of meaningful architectural treasures and to support a few public organisations that fight for their preservation.

In Ukraine, there is an issue of de-Sovietisation to which some of my artists reacted, because it's culturally inconceivable to erase all these historical singularities from the collective memory. These modernist constructions were imagined by Ukrainian architects and artists who, unfortunately, had to work under the Soviet colonialism, but they were Ukrainian. They designed these impressive architectures with their sensibility and a utopian vision of social togetherness. It's impossible to condemn them just because they worked during the Soviet era. I am particularly interested in collective memory and in the conservation of these landmarks as a key for understanding both historical and contemporary periods. However, in some cases, such as the 'Arch of Freedom of the Ukrainian people' where the sculptures of friendship between Russia and Ukraine were dismantled, there is a symbolic justification. The crack on top of the arch, which was created a few years ago as a protest against Ukrainians being imprisoned in Russia. Liza Riabinina's dance in front of the Arch —with its sticker crack— in support of political prisoners is particularly poignant. After some cancelled shooting sessions due to Russian shelling of civilians, Liza performed on 25 October 2022 as part of Konstantin Koval's 'UPROOTED 2' project conceived for my 'War | Oppression | Dystopia' video-installation exhibition at the Summerhall War Memorial Gallery, Edinburgh through February-March 2023. She was bravely filmed by Katya Rybka and the photograph taken by Ivan Fomichenko of her eye-focus pose with the 'Arch of Freedom' as background became the iconic illustration of all our posters and visual communication for different venues.\* I love to consider art as a landmark of its time. Every single part of the urban space and its architectural sites has something to reveal about a history that we have to learn from and find an intelligent way of questioning.

***E. S. Audiovisual media adds another layer of depth to this project, as not only does it allow us to encapsulate and then experience the choreographic performances from thousands of kilometres away, but these short films are artworks in themselves.***

A. S. Exactly. There is a history of experimental film, in which I am interested. Film was a media used by many of my artists in the 1920s and 1930s, it continues to be used now. All the pieces I exhibit are experimental films, not just documentation of performances. You need to have very deep artistic knowledge of filmmaking to find a very experimental way of approaching the concept, issue, sensibility and sensuality of the body.



Fig. 4. Liza Riabinina performing her dance in front of the Arch of Freedom of the Ukrainian people, a symbol of the end of Ukrainian-Russian friendship. Photo courtesy Adrien Sina.

**E. S.** *Also, as you have noted during your talk in Summerhall, choreography for performance and choreography for photography are extremely distinct. I suppose that with film, which uses such tools as montage and camera angles, it must be very similar.*

**A. S.** This is perfectly true. Experimental photography, which makes up a whole section in 'Feminine Futures', is about restaging the art of performance and crystallising the essence of a dance in one or two still images. The condition of light-capturing in dark theaters was not sufficient enough for filmmaking, so in the early twentieth century, in 1900 and even 1910, they had to film dances in the bright sun, because the sensitivity of film was not optimal. I am interested in the idea of creating single photographs or short film sequences from dances, because most of contemporary filmmaking is based on small slices of media which are articulated into facets. I am quite happy that the creation in the field of dance photography is very close to filmmaking practice. It is the same kind of expression – trying to grasp the beauty of something ephemeral, fragile, powerful and expressive.

**E. S.** *Thank you very much. I hope that soon the section on Ukraine in 'Feminine Futures' will no longer bear the name 'War | Oppression | Dystopia' and we will talk about Ukrainian choreographers working in their peaceful country.*

**A. S.** Exactly. The day we have peace, my exhibition will turn back to the 'white shadow' of its title which is 'Peace | Freedom | Utopia'. But I think that passing through this dystopian period has created a new way of thinking about our presence and our togetherness on the planet. We have different challenges, such as this war and the threat of our planet being destroyed by climatic uncertainties. We are surrounded by dangers from everywhere. Sometimes there are military wars, but other times we have different wars to face, such as the ones against bacteria, viruses, pandemics, or climatic wars. There are refugees from this war but there will be climatic or



pandemic refugees too. The messages of 'Peace | Freedom | Utopia', if it's carried forward with anticipation and visionary acts, can still offer hope for future generations.

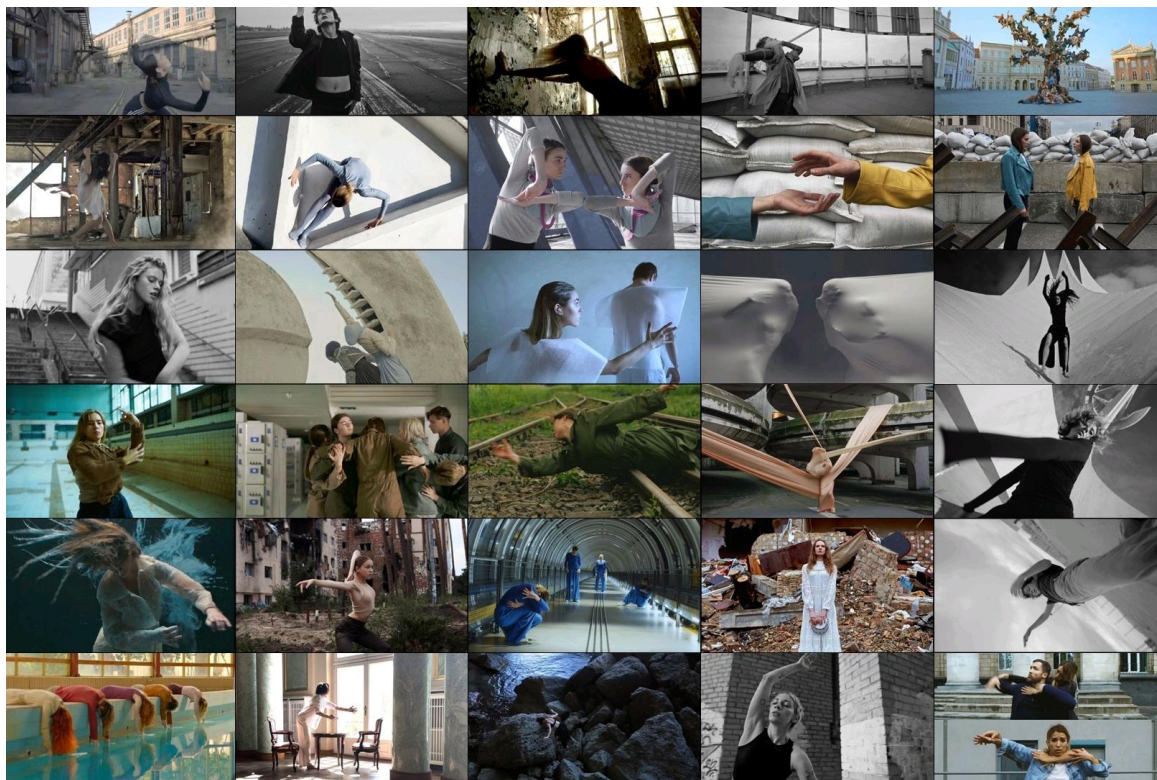


Fig. 5. A mosaic of choreographers. Photo courtesy Adrien Sina.

\* — text added by Adrien Sina after the conversation.

### **FEMININE FUTURES : UKRAINE**

#### **War | Oppression | Dystopia**

Contemporary Dance & Experimental Film

Curated by Adrien Sina in 2020+22+23

— La Biennale di Venezia, Meetings on Art / The Milk of Dreams | Teatro Piccolo Arsenale, 11 June 2022, 'Feminine Futures: Performance, Dance, War, Politics & Feminism' lecture and panel discussion, 5-7pm

— Centre Pompidou, Paris | Hors Pistes Festival, 27 January 2023, 'Feminine Futures: Ukraine', lecture + film screening, 7-9pm

— Summerhall Red Lecture Theatre, Edinburgh, 10 February 2023, 'Feminine Futures: Ukraine', lecture + film screening, 5:30-7:30pm

— Summerhall War Memorial Gallery, Edinburgh, 10 February – 26 March 2023, 'Feminine Futures: Ukraine | UPROOTED 2', video-installation exhibition

— The Courtauld, University of London | 17 February 2023, 'Feminine Futures: Ukraine', lecture + film screening, 6-7.30pm

— Goldsmiths, University of London | 13 June 2023, 'Feminine Futures: Ukraine', lecture + film screening, 6-7.30pm

— The Ukrainian Museum + The Cooper Union, New York | 'Feminine Futures: Ukraine', Dance Festival, in discussion

**Choreographers & Dancers:** Vladyslav Detiuchenko, Anna Gerus, Konstantin Koval, Svitlana Oleksiuk, Liza Riabinina, Anatolii Sachivko, Irina Bashuk, Inna Matiushyna, Olya Shevchuk, Nadia Tomazenko, Sofia Naumenko, Alisa Makarenko, Natalia Trafankowska, Anastasiya Kharchenko, Olena Meshcheriakova, Rita Lira, Diana Helzina, Nataliya Tkachuk, Kate Luzan, Zhenya Goncharenko, Alina Kobylak, Gelya Andryushina, Alona Stoliarova, Anton Obukhovskiy, Dmitriy Pristash, Kateryna Trukhina, Dmitriy Kravchenko, Nikita Dudkin, Spitfire, Anastasia Reshetnik, Nadiia Matsiuk, Polina Lukanska, Kate Kurman, Natalia Zhdan, Daria Herashchenko, Polya Hobo, Bohdan Kyrylenko, Dana Sarman, Alexandra Kravchenko, Lada Kasynets

**Models:** Inna Geletiuk, Anna Gubarieva

**Set & Costume Design:** Yuliia Bohdanova, Katerina Mankovska, Louise Carton, ZeroDreams

**Film & Photography:** Anna Garbuz, Katya Rybka, Maxim Hetman, Leonid Kolosovskiy, Roman Ryzhko, Denys Lisovets, Marina Kushchova, Paul Gordon Emerson, Tanya Bohdanova, Andrey Stanko, Nicholas Wallace Cornford, Yana Remneva, Vadim Stein, Arthur Bondarchuk, Oleksii Kaliuzhnyi, Dre Ramiro, Misha Kaminsky, Dr\_Formalyst, Ivan Fomichenk, Vitaly Khlebov, Mauricio Saldaña, Miri Hamada, Kostiantyn & Vlada Liberov

**Music & Sound Design:** Koloah, John Hope, Yana Shliabanska, FAAF, Ivan Harkusha, Evgeniy Sofiychuk, Arie Kishon, Andrew Bayer & Alison May, Kalush Orchestra

### **To explode, be destroyed or unexpectedly resist:**

#### ***An interview with curator Adrien Sina***

*Adrien Sina is a French arts curator, architect, dance and performance historian. In his cross-disciplinary exhibition Feminine Futures: Ukraine, part of the series War | Oppression | Dystopia Mr Sina aims to provide a platform for Ukrainian dancers to express resistance to Russia's war against Ukraine. He achieves this by showcasing never-before-seen short films in which artists strive to create dialogue between their own bodies and architectural pieces, which results in the emotional reflection on the bloody present, anticipation of future devastating tragedies but also the highest expression of love and togetherness. The project is a living and growing body of works, with Adrien Sina working to expand the network of choreographers and filmmakers who direct their creative efforts towards similar goals. This results in brand new works being born from new collaborations, the nonconformity which fulfills the goal of the curator, as the constant search for new talents, whose work is yet to be discovered due to the hardships of being a woman or, in this case, a Ukrainian, in history is opposed to canon and hegemony of classical art.*

*In this conversation, Adrien Sina discusses performance arts as a compelling tool for the representation of war, his choice to prioritise conceptual core of the exhibition over limiting it to a single art form or discipline, as well as the meaning of body and history in his exhibition. Additionally, the curator talks about the War Crime Memorial, an installation presented at the Venice Biennale next to the Russian pavilion as a poignant protest against the aggression of the invader-country. A companion piece to Feminine Futures: Ukraine, War Crime Memorial, similarly to its accompanying work, creates tension between architecture and female voice but does so in the form of a temporary scripture.*



*Eugenia Sydorenko conducted and recorded a conversation with Adrien Sina in 2023, having attended the presentation and screening of *Feminine Futures: Ukraine in Summerhall*, Edinburgh.*

**Keywords:** *dance, experimental film, Russo-Ukrainian War, Adrien Sina, architecture.*

**Adrien Sina**, curator, artist, art historian.

**Адрієн Сіна**, куратор, митець, історик мистецтва.

**Eugenia Sydorenko**, bachelor student, Edinburgh Napier University (Edinburgh, United Kingdom).

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