

"Entropia" as a measure of aestheticization.

The Franco-Ukrainian exhibition "Entropia" in Metaculture is the second project in Kiev of the curatorial group socl:e, this time dedicated to the topic of environmental destruction from human activities.

The curators left us no chance to doubt the presence of Anthropocene. At "Metaculture" it is a well-established encyclopedic fact with multiple confirmations of human impact on nature. The first thing you see are the watercolors of Maxim Khodak with realistic images of stone tools of primitive people and the first line you read confirm that we irremediably entered a new geological era in 2019.

In total, 22 works by Ukrainian and French authors were chosen for the exhibition without certain hierarchy: the works of recent graduates adjoin the works of Venice Biennale's participants with no signatures on the walls to check who is where. Still, most of the artists constantly address the topic of environment and ecology.

If entropy is considered as a measure of chaos, then "Entropia" is a measure of aestheticization, which is growing irreversibly at the exhibition. The processes of corrosion and destruction, disease and desolation in each case are *beautiful*. This word, isolated from contemporary art, can once again be used for ecology related artworks, shrouded by melancholic admiration of what is around and what will inevitably change and disappear. Even fairly optimistic works, such as photographs by Yulia Zakharova with reflections of the sun in the sea, do not dilute the overall blues of the exhibition.

One can find almost instinctive aspiration of artists *to organize* in their work regardless of the chosen medium: Anna Zvyagintseva's sketches of paths are carefully sorted but do not recreate any route that can be followed; Gora LI's numerous samples of contaminated water hang from the ceiling in small bags; dead bees that Colin Kasset found on the window of her house are delicately gathered in a pillowcase; sounds of the 14 lines of the Paris metro pedantically recorded by Reda El Tufaili and Solin Morterol's small bottles with watercolor placed in one line and reproduce shades of the color of the sky, which was at the time of the meeting with her close friends.

Most of the artworks are only observations and documentations without analysis or subsequent action. Dare to act, and the action may turn naive and utopian like a four-minute video of Clement Philippe where he strews blue powder in abandoned uranium mines. This first modern synthetic pigment called "Prussian blue" is at the same time an actual antidote for poisoning from radioactive substances. Beautiful gesture? Poison and medicine obey science and are often proportions of the same substance but it is not the only narrative here.

The heroes of the video Nickel 2070 (Raphaële Acquaviva) roam the deserted village of Nickel, when in an imaginable future all the ore deposits were exhausted. They collect odds and ends

along the way to build something new only when the old is finally destroyed. No hints that the situation could have been saved much earlier if something had been done before crossing the point of no return.

In the “Iconography of Radiation” (Krolkowski Art), the fruits and vegetables that the authors found in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone were sent for X-Ray to a medical clinic. Small doses of radiation can diagnose no less critical pathologies in living organisms than those that are caused by strong radiation. The important thing is that in the case of radiation, we know the exact measure and quantity of impact that distinguish irreparable harm and fatal consequences. But if you think about the impact on nature of simple everyday human actions, it is hard to find such a point of no return. For example, to determine the amount of emissions that stands between the statistically imperceptible effect of one car on nature and the state when the temperature on the planet has risen several degrees due to carbon dioxide emissions. Depending on the scale of thinking, the same actions can be considered significant or conversely, unsubstantial.

Nearby is the work of Alexei Say — a burnt plastic Christmas tree. One could fall into moralizing and convince others that the Christmas tree, whether it is living or synthetic, should be replaced by a new tradition less harmful to the environment. But it’s not even a matter of cynicism that an accidentally inflamed toxic Christmas tree turns a holiday into a nightmare, rather, that each tree is supported by an entire ecosystem of manufacturers across the world that provide cheap happiness: garland and serpentines, plastic wreath and glitter, crackers and sparklers. Avoiding this tree might mean the collapse of the industries responsible for it.

It becomes interesting how exactly the language of art can talk about such global connections, and work with a sense of hopeless dependency. Burning one Christmas tree is simple, but it is part of a sustainable system and even now a comprehensive study of the ecosystem of, say, one pond, the task that has not yet been completed. In this vein, the dystopian cityscapes of Zhanna Kadyrova are pieces of city asphalt, possibly the same simplified model of the city for analysis as a fragment of soil or a sample of water. You can fragment these parts, analyze their composition and characteristics, but you can’t get an understanding of the city or reproduce the behavior of the whole. The gallery space in this case is a safe place where you can bring fragments of reality and carefully look at them outside of the ethical and scientific framework or everyday indifference.

The impossibility of a holistic view corresponds with the work of Anna Poteshkina, when the Google Maps images with black spots in the middle found by the artist are in fact specific landscapes of the area, which we cannot fully recognize. We are only able to assume what potentially exists there and what led to the glitch. The contrast with the digital landscapes are drawings by Alexia Chevolyer, where such limitations and distinctions are visually leveled. The artist uses rust instead of paints for abstract images of corals, circulatory systems, branches and paths. Vital and inorganic structures are likened to each other so there is no chance, and no interest to determine what it is. Therefore the visual impression of the viewer will not be affected in any way by the knowledge of a subject or bias.

Questions of scale constantly appear in the works, even if the artistic language or medium does not contain anything fundamentally new. The web from the tapes with the sounds of the 14 lines of the Paris Metro (Reda El Toufaily) are endless connection of states and irreversible processes stretched in time and space: noise in which it is even difficult to separate its technogenic and organic component parts. All these machines, tunnels, people and everything that resonates is created by people or nature although for some reason, even in this sentence, man and nature are again delimited.

Natural phenomena are changing, colliding and collapsing, and there is no place to hide from this bewitching chaos. Even if a person has become the cause of irreversible changes in nature, it is not possible to control or at least comprehend their diversity — only to display in a fragmented manner using the familiar forms of artistic language. Entropy at the exhibition is spoken so as not to scare away, but only to keep attention a little longer due to aesthetics, and blur the boundaries between what is vital and what we do not attribute to living nature.