



# Cauchemar

Susanne Clausen  
and Pavlo Kerestey

Szuper Gallery



## **Cauchemar**

**Publication title – means nightmare both in French and Ukrainian**

This publication accompanies *Proxies*, a work that takes a single mediated conversation as its point of departure. While the installation retains its title, the publication adopts a different name: Cauchemar.

## **Proxies**

*Proxies* is a two-screen video installation that re-stages a radio interview broadcast in Germany during the early phase of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The work uses the original sound recording of the conversation, conducted in German. One screen presents a filmed puppet re-enactment, while the second carries titles translated from the original language. The dimensions of projection or screening are variable and adapt to the exhibition context.

The interview at the centre of the work is not presented as an isolated or exceptional exchange. Rather, it is treated as exemplary of a wider pattern of conversations that have circulated across European media and cultural discourse since 2022. These exchanges are often framed as debates about pacifism, responsibility, history, and empathy. Yet they are repeatedly shaped by uneven positions of safety and risk, authority and vulnerability. *Proxies* isolates one such conversation and subjects it to repetition, mediation, and displacement, allowing its internal tensions to become visible.

The use of puppets is central to this strategy. The figures do not represent the speakers directly, nor do they function as caricatures. Instead, they act as stand-ins for positions within a public discourse. The recorded voices remain unchanged, while the bodies that appear on screen are visibly constructed, manipulated, and constrained. This separation between voice and body foregrounds the mediated nature of public speech, particularly in moments of crisis, and draws attention to the gap between

speaking and being exposed to the consequences of speech.

The conversation itself unfolds as a progressively strained encounter shaped by structural asymmetry rather than overt disagreement. From the outset, the speakers occupy unequal positions in relation to the subject matter. One speaks from within an ongoing war, while the other speaks from a position of distance, mediation, and institutional authority. This difference is not only thematic but temporal and affective. What is at stake for one speaker is immediate survival and loss, while for the other it is analysis, analogy, and debate.

As the exchange develops, strain becomes audible through repeated moments of misalignment. Attempts by the German speaker to generalise experience, whether through references to literature, pacifism, or historical precedent, repeatedly fail to meet the specificity of lived trauma articulated by the Ukrainian speaker. Each act of generalisation increases pressure on the conversation, not because it is factually incorrect, but because it shifts the burden of explanation onto the person most directly affected. Distance and abstraction accumulate rather than resolve tension.

This asymmetry intensifies when German historical trauma is introduced as a moral reference point. The contrast drawn between Paris, presented as a city that remained intact because it was not defended militarily, and Hamburg, recalled as a city that was defended and subsequently destroyed, mobilises German wartime experience as a framework for judging military defence in the present. In doing so, it relies on an analogy that does not hold. Fundamentally different historical situations are treated as comparable, and authority is shifted away from the immediacy of an ongoing war onto a retrospective and non-equivalent historical frame.

At this point, the conversation crosses an ethical threshold. German suffering is invoked as a source of authority, implicitly asking the Ukrainian speaker to receive, translate, or absorb that history while her own country is under active attack. The refusal that follows does not challenge history itself, but rejects the appropriateness of this address. The statement “Do not talk

about this with a Ukrainian author” establishes a clear boundary and exposes the imbalance at the core of the exchange.

Contemporary responses to the interview have identified this moment as one in which established roles collapse. Moderator, journalist, host, guest, political commentator, private individual, German, and war survivor become entangled. The attempt to link German and Ukrainian wartime experience through argument suppresses a crucial historical fact: the war invoked as German trauma was a German war, one that also devastated Ukraine. Addressing a Ukrainian speaker from within that history as though German suffering could function as a corrective to Ukrainian self-defence has been described as both historically displaced and as a failure of empathy. This reading has been articulated, among others, in Samira El Ouassil’s essay published in *Übermedien* in October 2022.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of the conversation, dialogue no longer functions as mutual exploration. It becomes a site where incompatible temporalities collide: politics and survival, retrospection and immediacy, debate and endurance. Repeated interruptions, defensive clarifications, and returns to first principles reveal a conversation under sustained pressure, unable to resolve its own conditions.

*Proxies* does not attempt to repair this breakdown or to offer an alternative resolution. Instead, it holds the strain in place. Through repetition, translation, and the use of surrogate bodies, the work exposes how public speech about war is shaped by asymmetrical positions of safety and risk, and how appeals to history, empathy, or moral clarity can become instruments of displacement rather than understanding. What remains is not agreement, but the visible tension of attempting to speak across positions that cannot be reconciled within the terms of the conversation itself.

We would like to thank Tanja Maljartchuk for giving us permission to use the voice over and a transcript of the original interview.

Susanne Clausen and Pavlo Kerestey

El Ouassil, Samira. *Bitte fühlen Sie sich doch in mich ein, wie ich mich nicht in Sie einfühle!* *Übermedien*, 23 October 2022.  
<https://uebermedien.de/77723/bitte-fuehlen-sie-sich-doch-in-mich-ein-wie-ich-mich-nicht-in-sie-einfuehle/#kommentieren>

**Proxies**  
**Susanne Clausen and Pavlo Kerestey**

**Selected extracts from *Radio Eins – Der Talk***

TM            Tanja Maljartchuk  
JA            Jakob Augstein



[c. 03:20]        TM  
**I was enormously afraid before coming here.**



[c. 04:10] JA  
**No one has ever said this on my show.**

[c. 06:30] TM  
**My work no longer exists. I am no longer an author.**

[c. 07:40] JA  
**I do not understand why that kills literature, so to speak.**





[c. 08:10] – TM

**That my country stands before the abyss and before destruction?**

[c. 08:40] JA  
**Other people would say that this almost feeds literature.**



[c. 09:30] TM

**I am in the midst of a trauma, in a state of shock in the face of the killing.**

[c. 10:10] TM

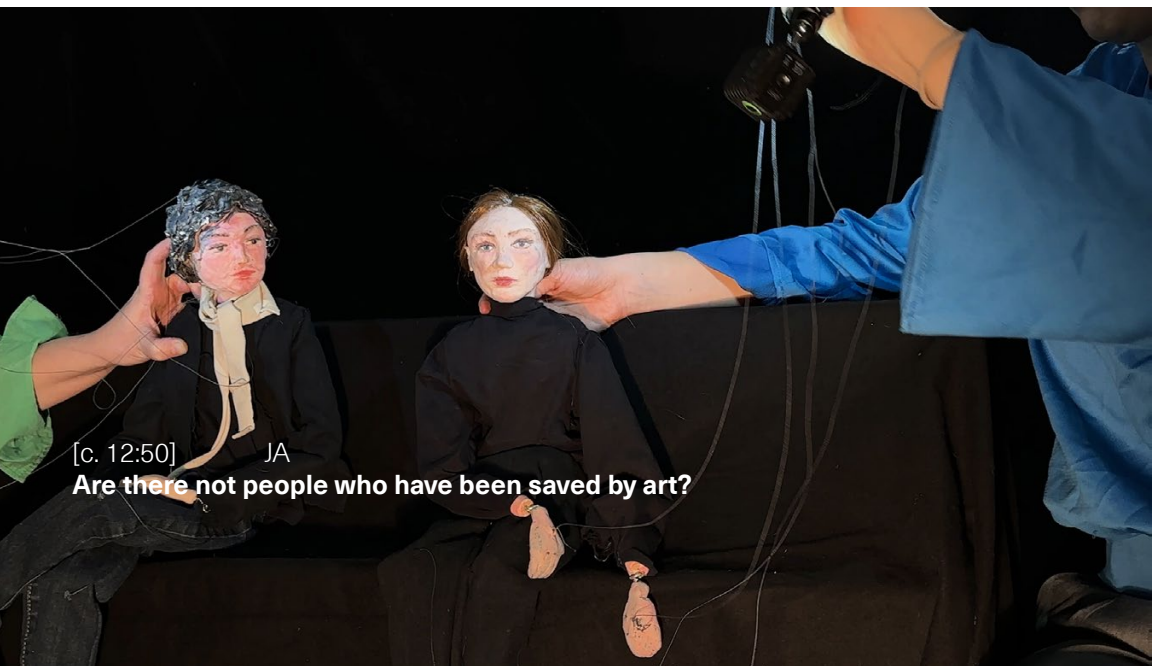
**That is the difference between us. You experience this at a distance.  
I am in the middle of this.**



[c. 11:20] TM

**If you are physically killed, art will not help.**





[c. 14:40] JA  
**I do not understand the identification of the 'I' with the 'all'.**

[c. 15:20] TM

**You cannot explain this rationally. You defend yourself.**

[c. 18:40] JA

**States are not people.**



[c. 19:10] TM  
**But this is not politics. This is war.**





[c. 21:30] TM  
**You cannot prepare yourself for war. You are no longer yourself.**



[c. 22:40] JA  
**I cannot imagine to say a sentence like this, that the 'I' no longer exists.**



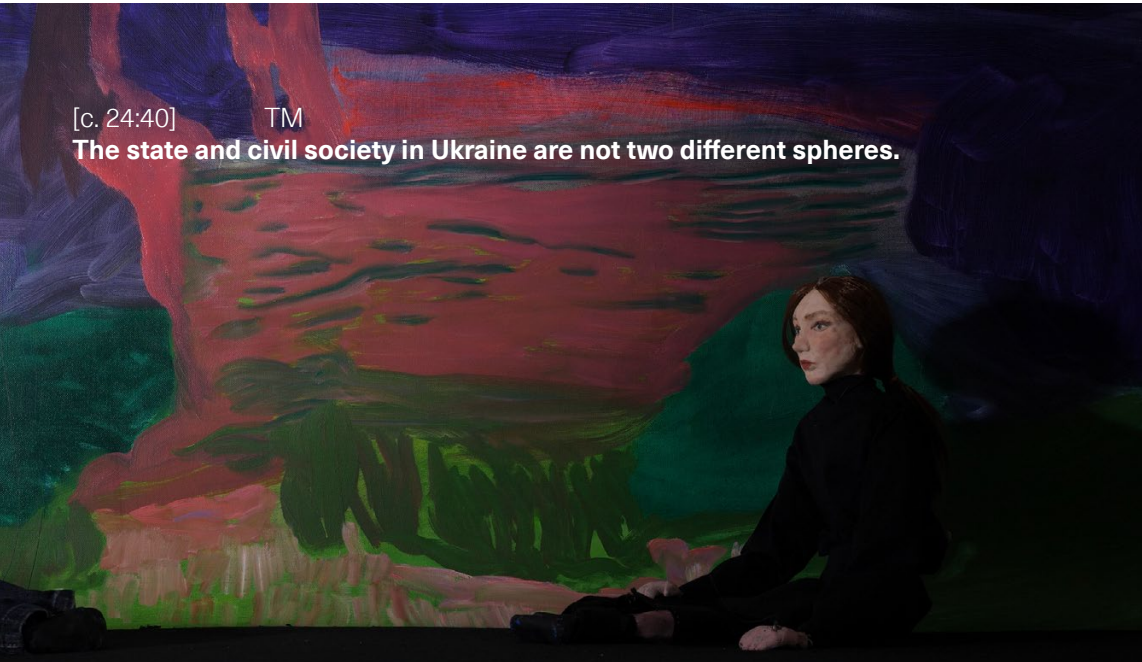
[c. 23:30] TM

When I woke up on 24 February and saw the convoys of tanks,  
everything changed.



[c. 24:40] TM

The state and civil society in Ukraine are not two different spheres.



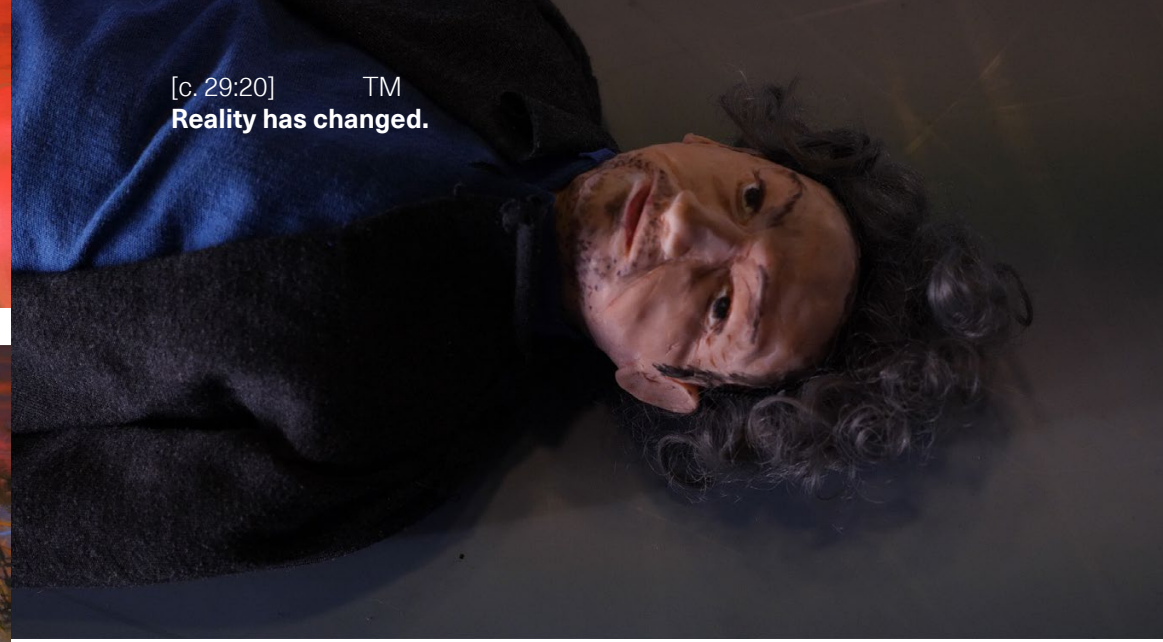


[c. 26:10] JA  
**That does not convince me at all.**





[c. 28:50] JA  
I find it interesting how many assumptions are made without being questioned.





[c. 31:00] TM  
**Sometimes you need to revise your worldview.**

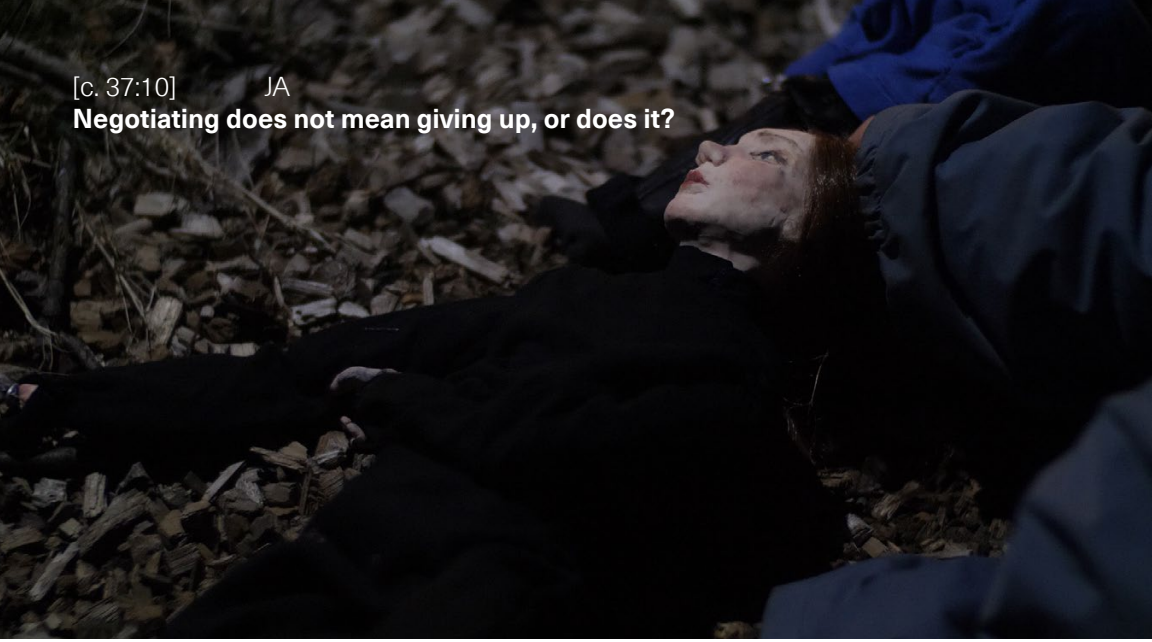




[c. 33:10      JA  
I was very surprised how many intellectuals immediately supported  
this war.

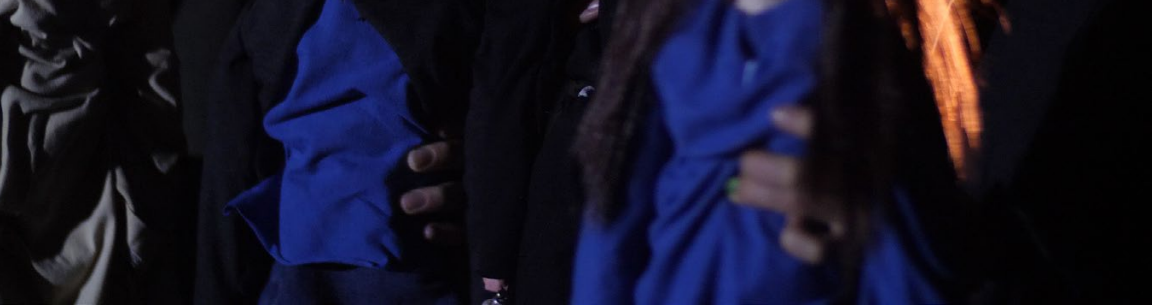


[c. 37:10] JA  
**Negotiating does not mean giving up, or does it?**



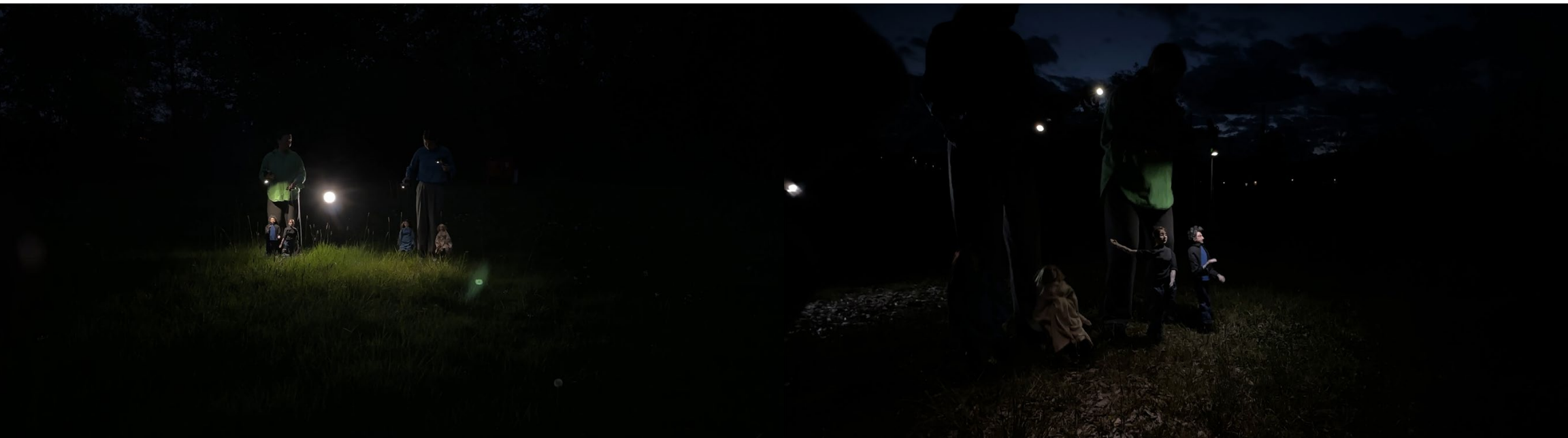
[c. 38:00] TM  
**Was it possible to make peace with Hitler?**





[c. 41:20] TM  
To defend yourself is not something that has to be explained.

[c. 44:30] JA  
**I think to say we do not negotiate at all is interesting.**



[c. 49:10] TM

**Are there any possibilities to negotiate with Russia at this moment?**

[c. 52:20] TM

**They have been dying since 2014.**

[c. 55:40] JA

**I am afraid of nuclear war**

[c. 58:20] TM

**Do you believe that this is Ukraine's task, while being conquered?**

[c. 01:07:10] JA

**Borders are moveable. The dead will not come back.**

[c. 01:09:00] JA

**I was just in Paris and thought: good thing people did not defend it militarily, otherwise the city would not exist today.**

[c. 01:07:40] TM

**What a cynical thing to say.**

[c. 01:09:40] JA

**Hamburg was destroyed during the war. I grew up in a wounded city.**

[c. 01:11:10] JA

**Borders can be moved back. The dead will not come back.**

[c. 01:13:40] TM

**Do not talk about this with a Ukrainian author.**

[c. 01:11:40] TM

**Crimea had already been handed over. Donetsk and Luhansk had already been handed over**

[c. 01:12:20] TM

**Do you know who you are talking to?**

[c. 01:16:30] TM

**Why, as a Ukrainian author, do I have to justify myself to the German left?**

[c. 01:24:30] TM

**Do you know who you are talking to?**

[c. 01:29:10] TM

**For you it is politics. For me it is survival.**

[c. 01:31:40] TM

**You invited me here as an author.**

JA

The Radio One and Friday Salon live from the Literaturhaus Berlin with Jakob Augstein.

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Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the Literaturhaus in Berlin, at Fasanenstraße and wherever you are, as listeners of the RBB.

We are sitting here today for the second time in this really beautiful wood-panelled hall with fireplace, which, due to fire safety reasons does not burn, but that still warms us somehow. And some warmth wouldn't do any harm right now.

Today, of course, we are dealing with the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

The last time our guest was the Protestant theologian Margot Käßmann and she explained why she remains a pacifist despite everything.

Today we have the the Ukrainian writer Tanja Maljartchuk.

Good evening, thank you for being here.

TM Good evening, I am looking forward to finally having this conversation. Then I no longer have to worry about the fear.

JA Ah yes, you were afraid?

TM Enormously.

JA No one has ever said this in my show. So why?

TM I think there were more than ten people who told me, I should better cancel this interview.

JA Oh, really?

TM Yes.

JA I think that's great. You are getting straight into it, I wanted to introduce you first and so on, but then, let's just leave it at that and talk about your deep fears right away. Why did people want you to cancel?

TM I am asking you?

JA That now obviously makes no sense, because, I don't know, because I wouldn't have cancelled being on my show, for example. I would have been absolutely delighted, if I had invited myself and spent an hour with myself talking about an issue that is very important to me. But never mind. Nevertheless, give me the opportunity for listeners at home. Because those here in the audience, they will already know you. To introduce you a little, that's the rest of the journalist in me, so to speak, who is taking action now.

You were born in 1983. You have also worked as a journalist. Hello, colleague, you have written several novels and essay collections. You have been awarded the Bachmann Prize and your new collection of essays has just been published: "The story soon continues—we are just breathing out."

And even though you were recommended not to come here and you seem somehow restless, do we still want to do it? Should I go on or do you want to...?

TM Just do your work.

JA OK, Thank you. So, Ms Maljartchuk, the war... How has the war changed your work as a writer?

TM Completely. My work no longer exists. I am no longer an author.

Two years ago I had started to work on a book, it was meant to be about the Holocaust in Galicia, where I come from, and when the war broke out, I was in the archives researching, I was immersed in the years 1941-42 and after that it was no longer possible.

JA But you have just published a book?

TM These are the essays, that I have written since 2014. I was almost forced to do it, to write them. From 2014 I was already defined as 'a Ukrainian', rather than as an author. And after Euromaidan or meanwhile, it became clear, that I also have to take a position on this.

JA How long have you lived in Vienna?

TM Since 2011.

JA So, you have been living in Vienna for over ten years and,

TM You can hear that, no? My pronunciation, that's my German. This is how I started to learn German...

JA So that is not an Austrian accent then...?

TM This is Slavic Austrian, as I call it.

JA I understand. And so in Vienna you always feel addressed as a Ukrainian, i.e. as an ambassador of the Ukrainian cause.

TM Ambassador is too much to say, no, of course not. There was no other way for me to do it. I have followed and experienced events in Ukraine very closely since 2014 and empathised, and taken part.

JA I read a quote by you, in the spring where you said, that you are dead as an author. You can't imagine being able to write another poem or

novel. About what? You asked. About what? I don't understand this.

TM You don't understand what? That I don't have any other topics now, to write a poem, right?

JA Well.

TM That I am on the brink of the abyss? That my country stands before the abyss and before destruction?

JA I don't understand why that kills literature, so to speak. Other people would say, that this almost feeds literature.

TM The killing?

JA No, the anger, anger, or sadness, the disappointment, the powerlessness, the impotence. All of these are strong emotions, from which literature can also emerge and probably, to be honest, since the last 2000 years has certainly come about.

For you however, the effect is different, and that's why I'm asking. That would interest me, if you could say something about this.

TM I am in the midst of a trauma, in a state of shock in the face of the killing. How can one in this state think about literature at all or speak or write this literature? It is not possible. That is the difference between us for you. You experience this at a distance. I actually envy you. I am in the middle of this.

JA Are there not people who have been saved by art?

TM Sometime afterwards, I will of course be able to write. Maybe, if I will survive it. And if you will survive, you will read this.

JA But I could also imagine... Do clap! Art can also enable redemption, don't you think?

TM Yes, but if you are physically killed, art won't help, to be redeemed.

JA Good, but but now you are not in the war yourself, but you are writing about Ukraine. TOWARDS THE AUDIENCE Very briefly Friends, I think it's great that we have a few activists in the audience. But please can you let us go ahead, and let us have our conversation up here. And we have a live broadcast, can you please stick to the rules of the game. And afterwards you'll have the opportunity in the public discussion to say anything you want. Then you can insult me, or praise Ms Maljartchuk or anything else, but for now,

please stick to the rules. Are you okay with that? Thank you. Because it is quite rare, that people are always heckling,

TM I am sorry. War does that, too. The war simply heightens emotions, and people too. And even if the war is so far away.

JA Yes, but it is interesting how people are dealing with that. Actually, I think this is why we should try to stay in conversation, shouldn't we?

TM Yes, exactly. Erm.

JA If I am correct, in your work from very early on you have always looked at Ukrainian history. Was that also the impulse for you to start writing literature? Because originally you came from journalistic writing and then moved on to writing literature, but then you looked at political and historical topics. Can you explain why?

TM I have to make a slight correction. I have always worked in literature and have written since I was six. I wrote poems about cockroaches. Writing has always been my thing.

But I have worked as a journalist, mainly to earn money. Otherwise it would not have been possible to make a living as an author in Ukraine at the time.

And I think, up until I was 30 I have written short stories about the present. What I was observing, these were the stories from the Carpathian Mountains, for example, very mythological and mystical even, I would say, magical realism, perhaps.

Then I moved to Kyiv and lived there for seven or eight years. And that's where I wrote the other volume of stories 'About rabbits and other Europeans'.

These are the stories of life, that I have observed in Kyiv and sometime after I became thirty, and strangely enough, considering.

This had a lot to do with the fact that I emigrated, that I came to Vienna. From then on, it was suddenly very important. So the history of Ukraine, the reappraisal of the culture of remembrance. Because so much has been forgotten.

And after I had this experience myself, having left the country, I have learnt a lot, learnt many stories from others, who were forced to experience this, several times over the course of the 20th century.

And one of the people, who has always fascinated me, Vyacheslav Lypynsky, for example a philosopher, a sociologist, also politician, he also emigrated, and had been in exile, and also died in Austria.

And his story became emotionally very close to me, because I then also felt that way.

JA Why did you stay in Vienna?

TM Stayed?

JA That's after you had left. So you could have also...

TM That is a coincidence. So today I also had an interview with another journalist, who asked me, 'So you are also an exile?' And then I said no, I am a volunteer who has left. I have nothing to do with exile, ten years ago, it was simply a coincidence that I left the country, because of love. I had a crush on an Austrian.

And so, I have always decided for myself, in my life, where I live. I also didn't think it was that important. I thought that in times of Skype and WhatsApp, one is no longer in this situation, as were these others, who actually had to leave the country and always felt cut off. For them, life was then almost over. These stories of the many, many Ukrainians, who died outside Ukraine is very sad. And my story was actually very nice, happy.

JA Has the concept of 'Heimat' or homeland then become increasingly important for you? Or is that a word, that you can relate to?

TM Yes, but you know, this is still not possible. No matter how far you go, or flee from your homeland. Your homeland follows you and won't leave you alone. And that was the case with me. I had to work through all that to understand who I am, actually.

And the longer you live, i.e. from the age of thirty, and now I'm coming back to my great theory. From thirty onwards you start looking for your roots to understand where you come from. Because it won't leave you alone. Especially when there is this quiet happening in your country. Again and again, such tragedies, again and again. 2014, and now a war.

JA I mentioned it briefly at the beginning, that Margot Käßmann was here, the theologian who said that she still sees herself as a pacifist. But when I read your texts and heard the statements you have made, I don't have to ask if you are a pacifist. But were you once?

TM I feel, that I don't have the opportunity, to think about it. I've never been in a situation like this where I am being asked to decide.

But here is an example, a friend of mine, a writer, Artem Chapeye, he used to be pacifist and still in 2015 he translated the writings of Mahatma Gandhi and now he is at the front line. He left on 27 February. He evacuated his wife and child and is now in the war and now he said, that if Mahatma Gandhi was alive now, he would also take up arms.

JA Katya Petrovskaya, your colleague said something similar. She said, we were all pacifists once, But now we are no longer. When I read that, I thought, do ethical standards change when you are personally involved?

TM Yes, straight away. Do you understand? To defend yourself, is something that cannot be explained rationally or has to be explained.

When someone comes here and tries to kill us, this is how we will react. We will not first think about, whether we are pacifists. We will defend ourselves. That is the nature of a human being. It is in the nature of a human being, to do everything to survive.

JA I am always wondering, cannot make analogies like this between individuals and states. States are not people. That's why I also found it very difficult when at the beginning of the war, people said that Ukraine is now like a woman, who is raped. And I thought, nope, you'd better quit these analogies, because the state, after all, is not the same as the individual. Don't you think? Personally, I would say yes, but the state and the politics of states operate according to a different set of rules and laws.

I am not saying that self-defence is right or wrong. But I have a problem with this analogy, because it is a bit, if I may say so, emotionally manipulative, because you would immediately say yes, of course. But politics is something else, don't you think?

TM But this is not politics, this is war.

JA Yes, but I think that already has a lot to do with politics, what we are experiencing, on all sides. But I think You once said, the 'I' no longer exists for me. It's just us, the Ukrainian citizens, whether they are in the country or live outside. We are all equally shocked and equally prepared to fight. That sounds very militaristic.

The 'I' no longer exists?

Did you know, before all this happened, that you could speak such sentences, or were you surprised by yourself to hear you say something like that?

TM You can't prepare yourself for war, of course I didn't imagine this and had never thought of this. No, I am an individualist, always have been, if that's what you mean.

JA I can't imagine to say a sentence like this, that the 'I' no longer exists. At the moment, as I am sitting here, I cannot imagine to speak this sentence. And could it be, that you were already thinking this, perhaps it had not seemed like such a far-fetched idea to you before.

TM But when I woke up on 24th of February and when I saw these convoys of Russian tanks,

who pushed for Kyiv, and when I just thought, about how many friends were in Kyiv right then - everything changed.

You can't prepare yourself for this. You are no longer yourself. You try to do anything you can in this moment to prevent the worst. Of course you merge with your community And I am also a part of it, of my society, of course. And then this issue with the state, that you mentioned, the state and civil society in Ukraine are not two very different spheres.

The state, who do you mean? A president or the government? What do you mean?

JA I think that, erm... but these are people, who are now voluntarily going to the front. You are starting from certain assumptions, that you to seem take for granted. I don't for example. I would not claim that society and the individual merge into one.

This is a thought, that I can appreciate, that you might have, but I would not immediately think like this. That means, which is quite interesting, that you consider this to be completely evident.

That's what you're saying now, you are sure that this is the case. But when I hear this, I would say, well, that doesn't convince me at all. I think it's important, to keep that in mind. You can have a different point of view. Do you understand?

TM Absolutely.

JA OK, good. Because you just said: that is how it is, but this is just your conviction, your feeling. But that doesn't make it a fact. And that is your conviction. Right? Yes, yes, but it's important, to make this clear.

I think so, because this whole big debate... We are here now, and I am asking you the questions that everyone is currently negotiating with one another.

What we are talking about here is part of a conversation everyone is having - either collectively or internally. And I find it interesting, how many assumptions are made without being questioned. And that is something I see as a journalist.

TM What do you want to say, can you explain this to me?

JA I can do that,

TM Perhaps my German is not good enough...

JA No, no I think this is working, what exactly do you not understand?

JA I don't understand the identification of the 'I' with the 'all'. I don't understand this straight away.

TM Not with the 'all'?

JA Only with the Ukrainians?

TM Or with the compatriots?

JA A very nice word. There you have it. I think your German is very good.

But this is something, that I don't understand straight away.

TM So what do you want me to say?

JA All good, all good? Yes, yes.

TM We are just talking. Are you leading to something? Are we going to understand where you are leading to?

JA Yes, actually, I'm telling you now. I was very surprised in this war, how many intellectuals, not only in Ukraine, but also in Germany or in France or in America very strongly support this war. People who had never seemed that way before.

TO THE AUDIENCE As I said, it's your turn soon. I think you will manage to hold back for a bit longer.

I mean people, who I would have expected to respond with more distance or who would take more time for reflection, or who would say how unsure are were in forming an opinion. All that, some scepticism. Do you understand what I mean? To have some doubt, or I was missing to see some doubt, but instead there was an immediate sense of certainty about the need to fight. There was a tone I had never encountered before. Do you understand what I mean?

TM Yes, because reality has changed. But then I have to say Sometimes you need to review your own stereotypes and worldview to assess whether they still hold true or not.

JA But is this the first and the only war we are experiencing? No, we see war all the time.

TM The first war in Europe, right?

JA No, it isn't. You may recall the Kosovo war, that was not so long ago. That was also in Europe, in the Balkans. The Germans were in Afghanistan in the war, for many, many years. Syria has been completely flattened. Libya, Iraq, The whole world is full of wars.

TM Stop, stop, stop, but when has one country invaded another, independent and sovereign country. When was that?

JA Well, the Americans have invaded Iraq.

TM No, in Europe.

JA As I said. No, the Russians have started a war of aggression against Ukraine in violation of international law. But the reaction to it seems to pretends that there has never been any military conflict - and I sense that in your statements too, as well as in those of many Ukrainian intellectuals, and as if all standards were now, all moral standards, all questions, such as: How do intellectuals position themselves in political or military conflicts? As if everything was invalid, as if we were to see the world anew and reinvent it.

TM But hold on, you are talking about Ukrainian writers and intellectuals. And for them, it's the first war in their lives.

JA You're right about that. But the Germans public, that I am actually more interested in, because I am part of the German public and not the Ukrainian public. When were you the last in Ukraine?

TM In December 2021.

JA When we read reports from Ukraine all we ever read about is the Ukrainians' strong will to fight. Are you talking to people over there, who see this differently? Who might say: we want this war to end, and we would also accept conditions, which our President would not accept.

TM No.

JA So you don't meet these people at all?

TM I don't know people like that. I know people who, for example do not want to go to the frontline, who are afraid and who would do anything, to avoid joining the army. I know these people, these men. But people who would say, you should give up. Those would be hard to find. Yes, but that is also an almost polemical turn of phrase. To give yourself up?

JA Negotiating does not mean giving up, or does it?

TM Which negotiations are you talking about? This has been discussed so often in German speaking spheres. Are we starting this again? Are there any possibilities to negotiate with Russia at this moment? Can you see that?

JA What I see, is that the official position is that, we don't want to negotiate. Because that leads nowhere. You know that it is not possible. He will do anything he wants, anyway?

JA That I don't know. And I think to say that we don't want to negotiate at all, I think this is - interesting.

TM You have to demonstrate a position of power and not just give up. As this will lead to nothing, that's obvious. Everyone knows that. Don't they?

JA That is yet another assumption. Obviously not everyone knows this. For example, I have never been convinced that it is useful to say: we do not negotiate on principle. I believe there is now a decree which prevents the state authorities in Ukraine, to negotiate with Putin. I don't think with Russia in general, but with Putin himself.

TM That means...?

JA I don't know, whether a decree is a law, but I'll assume this for now, that it is now law, it is now, so to speak stipulated by law, not to negotiate with the Russian president.

TM I also read that recently.

JA That is what I heard. Do you think that is the right approach?

TM I can't question that now. I am not involved in the situation. I don't know, what conversations are held there. From what I have observed as an author in these many years, is that negotiations have led to nothing.

JA But is it not true that you can only negotiate with your enemies? And make peace with them. I mean, with friends, you don't have to make peace with friends. You can only work with people who are your enemies to make peace.

TM Was it possible to make peace with Hitler?

JA Do you think this is the correct analogy?

TM Not really. But we should...

JA Why are you using it then?

TM Because we should learn from history. There are instances, where you can't negotiate, this approach has led to nothing so far. The approach towards Putin all these years, not only since 2014, but much earlier, we started with this approach and has it prevented anything? Prevented the worst?

He destroyed Chechnya and yet he was still welcome in Europe, he was even courted everywhere. He invaded Georgia. There were negotiations. They made compromises, and did that prevent him? I am asking you?

JA Well, but at the moment. People are dying in a war.

TM They have been dying since 2014. Do you know how many people have died in Chechnya? Or in Syria?

JA Let's talk about the war right now. The war we have in front of us. I think that would make more sense, because the question of negotiations... for example in the German public, there is the question should German politicians support ceasefire negotiations, yes or no? And we have a foreign minister, who says there's no point in negotiating with Putin. She has already made up her mind. And we have a law in Ukraine, that forbids negotiating with Putin. And then I think, well, how does a war end, when negotiations are excluded from the outset?

TM With the capitulation of Russia.

JA Well, (addressing the audience) okay, you can clap now, if you wish. And then...

TM Can I now ask you something because you said, that this is a conversation. And you are questioning me right now and are trying to push me into a corner. But I would like to defend myself a bit,

JA Please go ahead. You can take over now, I have no problem with that at all.

TM I have recently...

JA Let's talk about nuclear war later. Yes? Keep going...

TM Well, what do you want me to say about nuclear war? Please?

JA OK, sorry, go ahead.

TM In 2014, after Crimea was annexed, you said in a TV programme, that this was not a violation of international law. Do you remember that?

JA No, I don't know.

TM You even scoffed and laughed. And you said "yes, I am a 'Putin understander' - are you now arresting me for this?

JA Is that what I said? In a television programme? Well, good. But I mean...

TM Do you regret this?

JA You know, 'Putin-understander', 'Putin-understander', 'Putin-understander', I think that's a great word. Because the people who say

today, that you can't negotiate with Putin, are also 'Putin understanders' because they seem to know exactly what he does and what he doesn't do. Interestingly, we are all somehow 'Putin-understanders, and even you as well. because you also believe to know what he thinks and what he does and what he does not do. Then you are...

TOWARDS THE AUDIENCE What's wrong with you people? I mean, hey, you can't be serious, that you are somehow not able to hold off for 50 minutes, Really, I find that really grotesque. Later, the whole shop here can explode But now we're in a live programme.

TM I would just like to say, that I don't know these people. (towards the audience) Please keep quiet!

JA So you mean these are not just your friends. OK, let's talk about nuclear war.

TM But you didn't answer my question.

JA No, I did answer it. I don't remember this. This was eight years ago. I don't remember what I said back then, whether the annexation of Crimea has violated international law or not. I can't really judge this anyway. If I've said that several times, then it was nonsense, because this is indeed a question of international law. I know nothing about international law. But I can tell you, politically...

TM Back then you spoke as if you did understand this.

JA Yes, if you'll let me finish for a moment, then I'll explain. Why I believe, that if Putin had contented himself with Crimea, he would have been let to have it - in inverted commas. Because people all over the world have said "Let him take Crimea.

Many people even in Crimea obviously did not have such a big problem to be annexed by Russia. If he would have been satisfied with that, Crimea would have not been taken away from him afterwards, and certainly not by force of arms. I can tell you that with certainty.

TM But how can you say such things? Do you know how many Crimean Tatars live in Crimea?

JA You seem to misunderstand me.

TM Should they be have been content to be annexed?

JA You misunderstand me? I said, in international politics, they would have let him have Crimea. I did not say, that I think this is right or wrong. I have described to you, what is the reality in which we live, a reality, so to

speak of intergovernmental relations. I didn't say that I think that that this is right or wrong or that I would tell my children: "Thank Goodness, Crimea is now Russian." I wouldn't do that, of course, because that's not my thing at all.

But my position back then was, and still is, that for whatever reasons that I cannot explain to you, as I am not a Putin understander or sympathiser, that he was not satisfied with that.

I don't know why, and I can't explain it to you. I think that it is a crime. But to use this quote from the 19th century, "It was also a huge stupidity" I mean, he is certainly the most failed politician, that we have had for many years, and many decades. This man, but at least we agree on that, because of the trail of devastation he leaves behind in Europe, in his own country, in other countries.

It's a total disaster. But we don't need to talk about this, do we? Or did you think that I somehow sympathise with Putin?

TM No, I think you said this out of ignorance.

JA What I said about Crimea?

TM Yes and with arrogance.

JA Maybe that's how it appears to you. Then you must apply that same charge of ignorance and arrogance to all Western politicians as well, who tacitly swallowed it all.

TM That's what I do. Just like this question.

JA But then, at least at least I'm in good company, I can deal with that.

TOWARDS THE AUDIENCE You're listening, in case you were wondering, what kind of carnage you got yourself into still live on Radio One, the Friday Salon from the Literaturhaus Berlin. Our guest is the Ukrainian writer Tanja Maljartchuk

And we are talking about nuclear war? Why not? Let's talk about nuclear war, and that's why I'm telling you, because the advisor to President Zelensky, Oleksii Arestovych, has said Can you do me a favour and tell the Germans, that we Ukrainians are not a bit afraid of a nuclear threat? In the 'Zeit' newspaper this week. Do you feel the same way? Are you not afraid either?

TM of a nuclear war? Of death? Do you mean of a nuclear war?

JA He said, "We Ukrainians are not afraid of nuclear war.

TM Nuclear war means death for all or for many, does it not? Or the end of our civilisation.

JA And he says he's not afraid of nuclear war. I have to say, that I, for example, feel differently.

And I ask you now, are you not afraid of nuclear war?

TM Of course I am. I am human. And I'm not the one either, who writes speeches for Arestovych. It's not that important to me either, what he said there. But in Ukraine, yes, people are convinced that this is a threat, and that is a method to put pressure on the West and to refuse aid to Ukraine with this threat. I think so too, because that's what you're asking now.

And you don't want to know anything else?

JA Yes I do. But we still have a little time. We had already spoken, and now we are on this topic. We can also talk about other things. But right now we're talking.

TM Where are you leading to? Can you tell me that?

JA Let's try this route. What are we all supposed to do to stop all this? And prevent a nuclear war? What should we do? What ideas do you have? To put it this way. In order to save the world?

TM Do you believe, that this is Ukraine's task, while being conquered, do you think that they should have the answer? To stop this disaster? Do you believe that? Do you think that?

I believe that the Russian army would already be in Lithuania if the Ukrainians would not have defended themselves. In February this year. Do you believe, that the purpose of such a dialogue is to solve all problems?

JA Do you think that it is the task of a journalist who asks questions, to already know the answers? I don't think so.

TM But why do you think that I should have the answers?

JA I think it's important, because I believe, that's what I meant, what I said earlier, we are talking on behalf of all the people in this country or on the continent, who ask themselves all these questions and none of them have an answer.

Now you can of course say Talking is pointless as such. But that's not my attitude at all. Because sometimes you can clarify your own points of view in a conversation..

That for example, is the reason why I like to talk, if one lets me. But I don't need to have the answers. Of course I don't have an answer. For God's sake, who am I? Of course I don't know the answer. I have no idea, how to end this war. I don't know that.

I just think that when people say: we are not afraid of nuclear war and it has to end with the

capitulation of one side, I get scared. I can tell you that. That is a gut reaction.

TM And it is justified to be afraid. Many people are afraid at the moment and it is also important, to admit this, that you are afraid and that you don't try to intellectualise this fear and hide behind some nuclear war talk.

JA I'm not hiding, I have quoted a consultant. So to say of your president, who says, we are not afraid of nuclear war, that makes my blood boil

TM You have picked out a quote here. I don't know, how exactly that was said.

JA He said it like this: could you do me a favour and tell the Germans, that we Ukrainians are not a bit afraid of a nuclear threat? What have I taken out out of any context? In a 'Zeit' interview read it yourself in the 'Zeit', Mr Arestovych, big interview. That is his message. By the way, if I may mention this briefly, there is a Ukrainian singer living in Cologne, her name is Marianna Sadowska, Do you know her?

TM Yes, I know her. You know her, marvellous, On 28 March she said in the German Chancellery: of course we are very scared, that it could come to a nuclear war and the whole world would end, but we can't let a criminal like Putin get away with it, just because he threatens with the nuclear bomb. If the world ends because we are helping Ukraine, then so be it.

TM Okay, I am not her, or speak for her either  
There are also many people, many politicians in Germany or in Europe, who say it's a threat. That it is yet again another manipulation.  
Where are you leading to? I don't understand.

JA My point is that...

TM That Ukrainians might say: Oh God, we are now afraid of nuclear war, Please kill us all for this, so that the rest of the world can be saved. What do you want from the Ukrainians at this moment? Because you are quoting some Ukrainians now.

JA I am a journalist and we're having a conversation. I don't want anything from the Ukrainians. I am telling you, I am describing observations, that I have made in this debate and read you some quotes from people, who have commented on this, Ukrainians. I am asking what kind of reaction that provokes in you. I think that's totally legitimate.

TM Yes, that is totally legitimate. Can I ask you something too?

JA Yes, of course.

TM Can you tell me why, as a Ukrainian author, I keep finding myself having to justify my position to people on the left in Germany. Not to people on the right? Actually, no, I don't. I might not talk to them much, but in Germany it seems somehow appropriate, to position yourself as left-wing. So intellectuals are mostly on the left. And it is with them, for the last seven months now, I have had to justify myself in the discussions. Why?

Why do you have no empathy with the fact for example, that I have already lost many friends in this war?

Do you understand how much strength I need to pull myself together, to answer these stupid questions?

JA Well...

TM To not cry and to not be emotional. Although I am now breaking this rule.

JA I think you have every right, to be emotional, this is up to you. You decide to be emotional or not, and not me. or the broadcaster or anyone, you have to do this as you see fit.

But after all, you are acting in the German public sphere and not in the Ukrainian. This means, of course, we have a different position on this conflict than you do I am sorry but that is something you will have to come to terms with.

TM But then you could also show some respect, could you not?

JA Absolutely. I try to, you will simply have to accept that the position of the German public is by definition, not the same as yours.

TM Of course I understand that.

JA Good! That's interesting, because I have often have the impression that this is no longer understood. For example, When there was that petition for a ceasefire, which I also signed, and the signatories were accused of wanting to dictate terms to the Ukrainians.

Where I would say: people, read more carefully. The appeal was not addressed to the Ukrainian President, but to the German Chancellor. Because he is of course, for a German voter, journalist, or participants in the discourse, the point of call. It is the German Chancellor, not the Ukrainian president and not Putin either, by the way, because then they said: you don't want anything from Putin, but everything from the Ukrainians, where I would say: huge misunderstanding, I don't want anything from Putin nor from the Ukrainians, I want something from the German Chancellor.

TM And what did you want?

JA At the time the issue was, I was of the view that there should be an effort for ceasefire negotiations. Ceasefire negotiations should be pursued.

TM And where would that lead to?

JA To a ceasefire.

TM And what would happen afterwards?

JA Whatever happens then, because the killing...

TM No, but we can think further ahead.

You know what? What I find really interesting, this is... this is not the task of intellectuals. I am not an intellectual, but I don't know. As long as we're sitting here, we do need to think a little bit further and think about what is going to happen, when we take this step. Why can't we talk about it?

JA We can do that. But you know, this is where we might be different perhaps this also has to do with my generation, I am 55 and I grew up in Hamburg, a city that is very beautiful, in parts. Beautiful city. Still, has to be said. The most beautiful city in Germany but in parts ugly as hell. Why? Because it was destroyed during the war, in large parts and then after the war, to be honest, people didn't treat it very well. I always had that feeling, to live in a wounded city, a city that has been violated. To imagine, my father, my dead father had one of these funny scars on his arm, there was an entry hole and there was an exit hole. So that means, the war was present, and I was born in 1967, so really I'm late-born, if you like, but the war was present with us, with me. So it's like this

You're probably thinking, that you are dealing with some spoiled, mollycoddled Western arse-hole. Maybe that's true. But what you don't know, is what the war meant for me in my biography You can't know that. But I will try to explain it to you. It means that I'm really afraid of war, and not like something on television or so.

And therefore, this frivolity with which Mr Arestovych talks about nuclear war, creeps me out. He should not do this. He should just keep his mouth shut. Do you understand?

TM If I run into him, I'll tell him.

JA I don't think he'll be that interested. Now the second point. No, I'm not quite finished yet. You asked me, Ms Maljartchuk, you just asked me a question. I will now answer your question. You have to let me finish. I am asking you.

Okay, the second point is, I understand that the state Ukraine does not want to give up territory to an aggressor state. I can understand

that too. But if a border is moved, it can also return at some point and can be pushed back. Borders are moveable, especially in the region you come from.

Over the last 100 years ten or twelve nations moved borders. I don't know how many countries. You know that better than I do how boundaries shifted constantly. As in each case the denomination changed. Especially in Galicia, where you come from, this was the norm, so to speak, that the borders were always moving. But the people who are now dead, they won't come back, they are dead, they stay dead. I don't give a shit whether it's a Russian or a Ukrainian, these people stay dead.

This means that maybe in ten years you could move the Donetsk back to Ukraine. But the people who are now dying in battle, they won't come back. And this very simple idea is, I believe, the essence, the essence of Ms Käbmann's pacifism, and it reaches me on a deeply emotional level. Do you understand that?

TM I understand what you are saying, but I don't share this view.

JA Because you accept the dead?

TM What a cynical thing to say. Of course not. Of course I am not indifferent to these dead. But what does it mean this thing with the borders?

Tell me, Crimea had already been handed over. Donetsk and Luhansk had already been handed over. Where is the limit? When will the Russian regime be stopped?

Now Donetsk and Luhansk, had not really been handed over. And this story about Hamburg. Please let me finish, what you said about Hamburg and about your traumatised childhood. Do you know who you are talking to? Don't talk about this with a Ukrainian author. You should bring a Russian author here from Moscow, talk to them about it and tell them, what happened to Hamburg so that they understand what is at stake. I don't think you understand this yet.

JA I could ask you another question. For example, I was just in Paris, and there I thought good thing that people did not get the idea to defend Paris militarily against the Germans. Because the city would not exist today. And Florence and Rome and Venice, none these cities would still exist, if they had been defended militarily. Just like Dresden was defended, or Berlin or Cologne. Cologne was, I think, once one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. Is it still one of the most exciting and funniest cities. But Cologne is no longer beautiful.

TM OK, that is what you getting at? That Ukraine should give up to supposedly survive?

My question, me, me, me! Germans and Russians, that is also different.

JA You still haven't accepted that I am not telling the Ukrainians what they should or should not do. Because that's not my place.

TM But that is what you are doing.

JA I do not have the right to do this. No, if I was Ukrainian, I might be quite happy if my city was not defended militarily, so that it remains to exist.

TM OK, the Ukrainians have decided otherwise. They decided differently.

JA (To the audience) And you are still listening live? To Radioeins, the Friday Salon from the Literaturhaus Berlin with the Ukrainian author Tanja Maljartchuk. Why don't we...

TM Perhaps talk about literature after all? No, no, no, no, no. What you promised me. To talk about literature? As an author You invited me here as an author, right?

JA But you write political texts.

TM What political texts? Politics and war are not the same. For you it is politics, for me it is survival. I've already told you, my world is facing destruction. For you it is politics. But the Ukrainian soldiers, my friends among them, are dying at the front, so that it can remain politics for you.

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The interview continues for another 20 minutes.

TRANSLATED BY SUSANNE CLAUSEN

62–66  
**Proxies, 2025**  
Susanne Clausen

Installation. 244 × 248 × 244 cm. 35 drawings, 40 × 30 cm or 40 × 30 cm each (Proxies #1–35, 2022–2025.) Mixed media (graphite, watercolour, ink, marker) on paper. 7 sculptures, epoxy clay, fabric, wood, various sizes. 6 wooden trestles

67  
**Proxies, 2025**  
Susanne Clausen and Pavlo Kerestey

Video with sound. Two-screen installation (left: video text and sound; right: video image.) Duration: 46:34 minutes  
Performers: Rachel Tess, Frida Billeskov, Nellie Björklund, Uriel Kerestey, Julietta Gramingni.  
Produced with the support of Milvus Artistic Research Center, Arts Council England, Culture Moves Europe, and the University of Reading.  
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70–71  
**Uzhgorod '68, Knislinge '23, 2023**  
Pavlo Kerestey

2 parts, 152.4 × 297.18 cm each  
Graphite and acrylic on paper

72  
**Sunset, 2025**  
Pavlo Kerestey

157.48 × 213.36 cm  
Acrylic and oil on PVC print

73  
**Asteroid diagonal, 2022**  
Pavlo Kerestey

185.42 × 129.54 cm  
Acrylic and poly on canvas











## Cauchemar

Titles as location markers  
Physical sites images archives circulation  
Persistent names altered names disappeared names

Labiau Gotenhafen Pillau Königsberg  
Former East Prussian towns on the Baltic coast  
Post 1945 renaming  
Øksbøl Flugt (refugee) Museum visited

Cologne Hamburg  
German cities  
Wartime destruction reconstruction

Madrid  
Distance mediation

Uzhorod Knislinge Poninka  
Working sites testing exchange

Institutions alongside cities  
Abbreviations initials partial references  
Markers not explanations

Drawings from photographs  
Archival material family images documentary stills circulated media  
No reproduction  
Intervention overlay resistance  
Incomplete faces interiors settings

Recurring titles  
Proxies Cauchemar place names  
Recurring registers  
Ongoing return

Paintings

Sunset

Asteroid diagonal

Baldham forest

Uzhgorod 1968 Knislinge 2023

Peace Education Foundation Miami 2025

Landscapes interiors broadcast surfaces

Diagonal axes forest clearings horizon lines

Acrylic oil graphite poly

1945 1968 2022 2023 2025

Not militarised as of today

78

**Proxies (face)**

2025, 40 x 30cm, ink and watercolour on paper

79

**Cauchemar (stage set)**

2024, 30 x 40cm, pencil on paper

80

**Cauchemar (LSE)**

2024, 40 x 30cm, ink on paper

81

**Labiau**

2024, 30 x 40cm, ink on paper

**Proxies (Gotenhafen)**

2025, 40 x 30cm, pencil on paper

82

**Cauchemar (Madrid)**

2024, 30 x 40cm, pencil on paper

83

**Unsere Ostpreussenfahrt (M+C)**

2025, ink on canvas

84

**Unsere Ostpreussenfahrt**

2024, 40 x 30cm, ink on paper

85

**Unsere Ostpreussenfahrt**

180 x 120cm, ink on canvas

86-87

**8 Drawings, Knislinge**

2025, 8 x 30 x 40cm

88

**Proxies (AFU)**

2024, 30 x 40cm, ink on paper

89

**Proxies (ICA)**

2024, 30 x 40cm, ink on paper

**Proxies (Hamburg)**

2024, 30 x 40cm, pencil on paper

90

**Proxies (sleepers)**

2025, ink on paper, 30 x 40cm

91

**Pillau**

2025, 40 x 30cm, pencil on paper

92

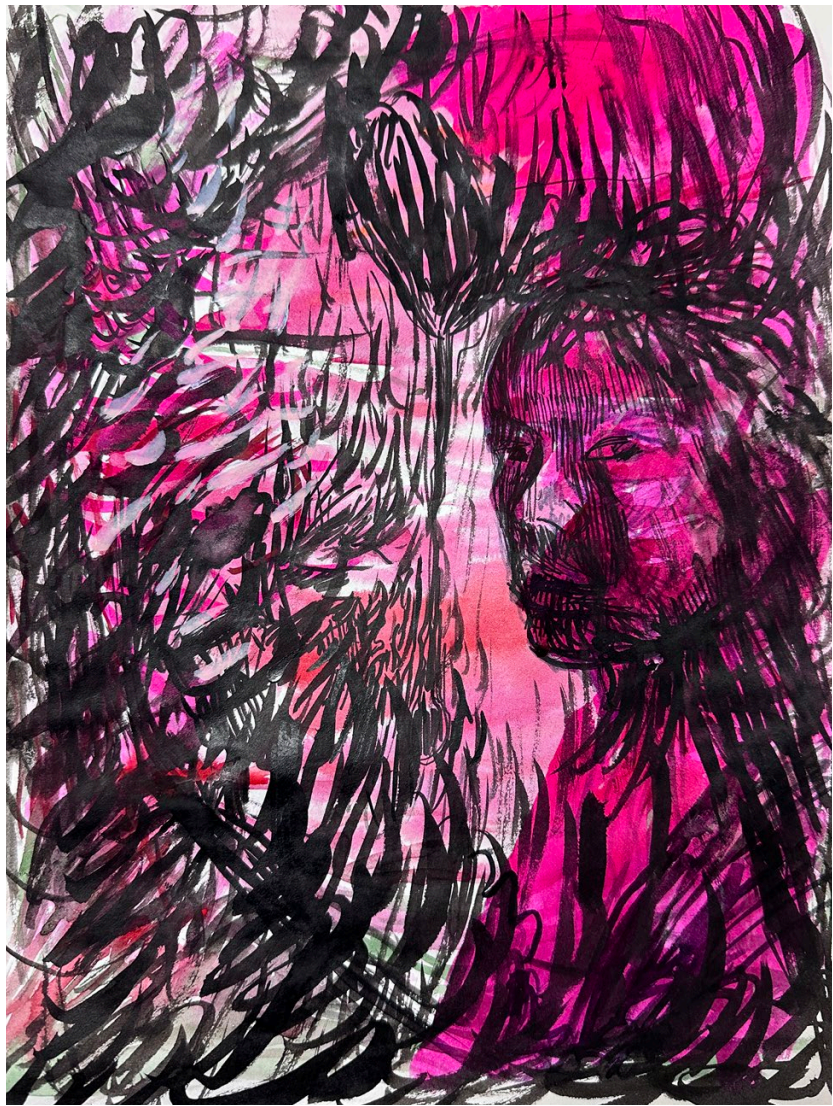
**Cologne**

2024, 30 x 40cm, ink and felt pen on paper

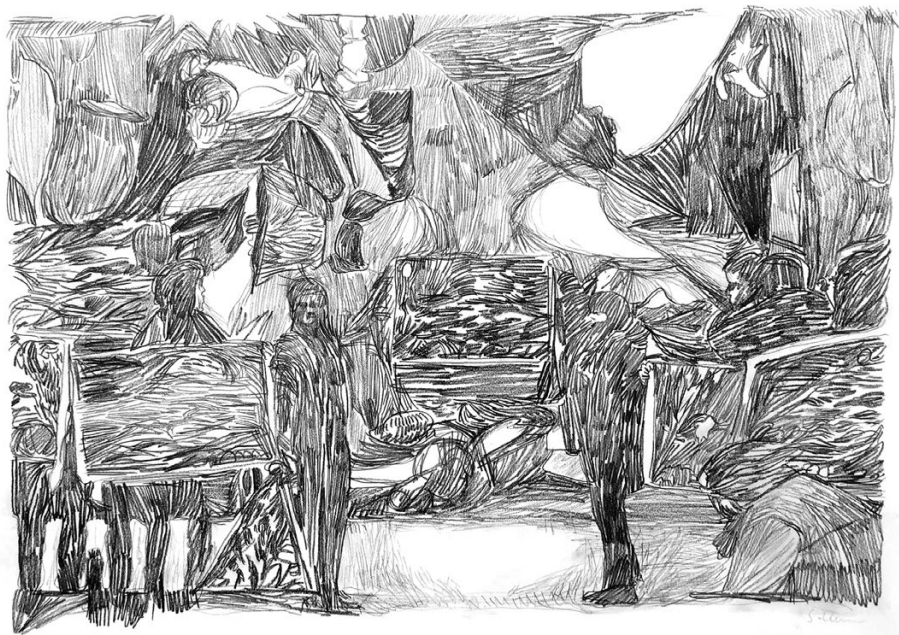
93

**Proxies (Stuart)**

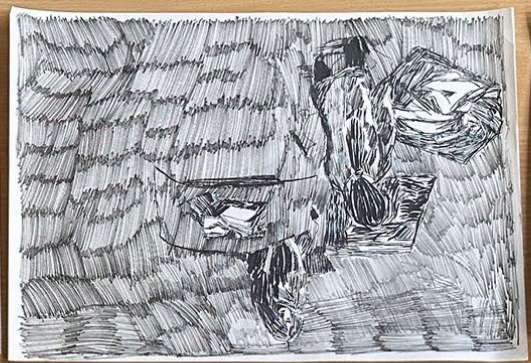
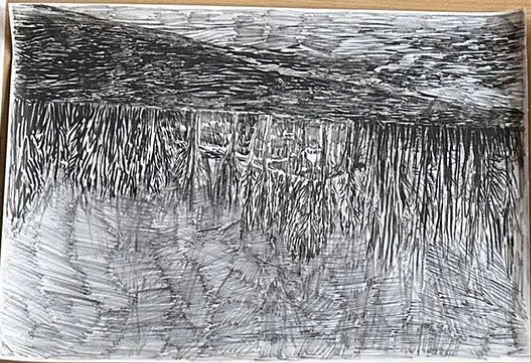
2024, 40 x 30cm, pencil on paper





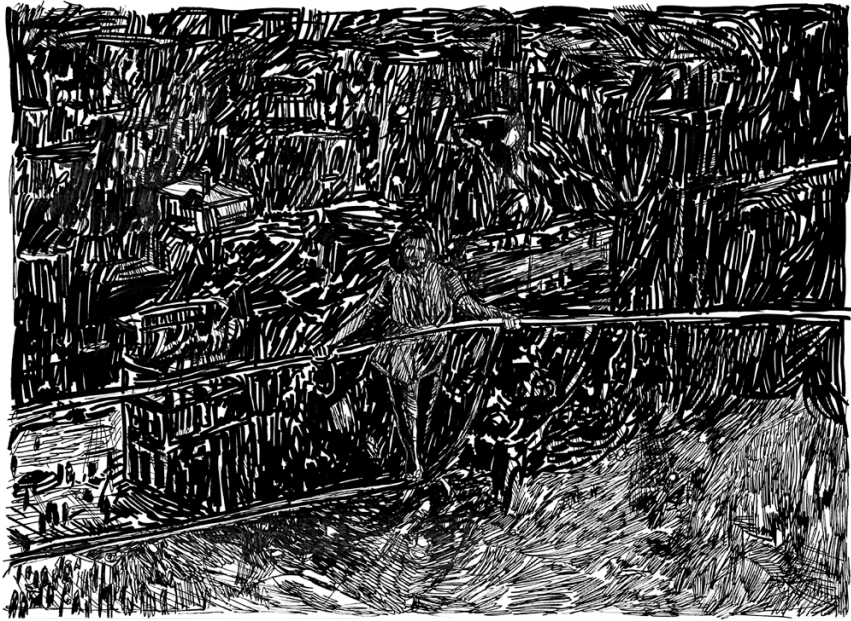












**Proxies**  
Susanne Clausen and Pavlo Kerestey  
Szuper Gallery

**Editor**  
Susanne Clausen

**Design**  
Matthew Walkerdine

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