

Private View: 6-8pm, 20 January 2016
Exhibition Dates: 21 January - 20 February 2016
Open Tuesday to Saturday 11 - 6pm or by appointment

Mykola Ridnyi *Under Suspicion*

Edel Assanti is pleased to present *Under Suspicion*, Mykola Ridnyi's first UK solo exhibition.

Under Suspicion explores societal trauma and post-conflict paranoia in a global moment defined by fear of the enemy within. The exhibition is thematically situated in the artist's home city of Kharkiv, where, despite the backdrop of the war in the Donbass region of Ukraine, life appears to be relatively calm. This tranquility is a thinly veiled façade, behind which lurks an anxious society transformed by recent unresolved violence. The exhibition is comprised of two works, respectively titled *Regular Places* and *Under Suspicion*, assuming the vernacular of surveillance documentation.

In *Regular Places*, comings and goings of citizens in five public locations around Kharkiv are filmed from a static angle. Without a sense of context, the uneventful footage seems irreconcilable with the brutally violent conflict between Maidan and Antimaydan activists that occurred here only months earlier. Rupturing the calm atmosphere, audio excerpts extracted from online videos have been overlaid on top of the footage; shouts of threats, warnings, abuse and intimidation echo across indifferent scenes, in a forced confrontation between recent traumatic memories and a present state of collective denial.

Under Suspicion presents a series of photographic slides of everyday public scenes. Manually rendered pen markings highlight potentially suspicious objects or behaviours. The work manifests the impact of government initiatives instructing citizens on how to recognize suspicious targets, whilst simultaneously drawing attention to the resulting shift in the optics of public perception of reality. Previously non-descript articles become signifiers, as the intangible presence of the invisible enemy is imported into peaceful life. Although indicative of the current climate, Ridnyi's *Under Suspicion* project was initiated in 2011 to articulate the paranoid state response to the series of social protests that preceded the recent explosive violence in Ukraine. State surveillance and control mechanisms escalated in a bid to amass a vast video and photographic archive, capable of being used as evidence in future prosecution cases. Ridnyi interprets this hidden police archive as the quintessence of paranoid state control; its secrecy provoked the creation of his own fictitious archive, where almost any individual documented in certain circumstances becomes the involuntary subject of suspicion, and defined patterns emerge where they previously did not exist.

Mykola Ridnyi graduated from the National Academy of Design and Arts in Kharkiv in 2008. He is a founding member of the artist collective SOSka Group. Recent exhibitions include *All the World's Futures*, the main exhibition of the 56th Venice Biennale, 2015; *Hope*, National Pavilion of Ukraine at the 56th Venice Biennale, 2015; *Politics of Form* at Museum of Contemporary Art Leipzig, 2015; *Lest the Two Seas Meet*, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2015; *Grammar of Freedom*, Garage Museum for Contemporary Art, Moscow, 2015; *The Monument to a Monument*, National Pavilion of Ukraine at the 55th Venice Biennale, 2013. Ridnyi has won and been shortlisted for numerous awards including the PinchukArtCentre Prize (2013 & 2011) and the Malevich Artist Award (2014). Ridnyi lives and works in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

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