

artasfoundation

Artists in Exile

With works of
Anna and Vitalii Cherepanovy



Exchanges with artists
who arrived in Switzerland
due to the war in Ukraine

“In times of war,
art does not necessarily
have to be about war.
Just by being truthful, it
can be good for our
souls and our cohesion.”

Jurko Prochasako

artasfoundation

The Swiss foundation for art in conflict regions is an independent, politically unaffiliated operating foundation. Supported by contributions from members of the general public, it was founded in 2011. It initiates art projects in conflict affected regions, accompanies their realisation, and investigates how spaces for art can promote conflict mediation and peacebuilding.

Visit www.artasfoundation.ch for the latest news of the foundation's work.

artasfoundation

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What happened

in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar and so many other countries is now also taking place in Europe: the violent repression of the opposition in Belarus and Russia's attack on Ukraine jeopardises people, who, in these countries, are committed to democracy and peace. Some of

them are therefore deciding to leave their home countries, among them many artists. Since artistic work is inherently oriented towards a wider audience, artists are particularly exposed to arbitrary treatment and violence.

Are you an immigrant, refugee, displaced person, expat, asylum seeker, person in exile, guest...? Here, differences are of existential importance. Do you have a visa, do you have a residence permit, a work permit, ... do you at least have a passport that is still valid? *"The passport is the noblest part of a person. It is not generated in the plain and simple way people are. A person can be begotten (...) in the most careless fashion and without particular reason – but not a passport. That's why a passport, so long as it's a good one, is recognised – whereas a person can be ever so good yet still be denied recognition."* Bertold Brecht knew from his own experience what he was talking about. In his dialogical *"Conversations in Exile"* we can read about Switzerland:

Ziffel: Switzerland is a country that is famous for allowing people to be free. You have to be a tourist though.

Kalle: I've been there, and I didn't feel very free.

Ziffel: You probably didn't stay in a hotel. You've got to stay in a hotel. From there you can go anywhere you like.

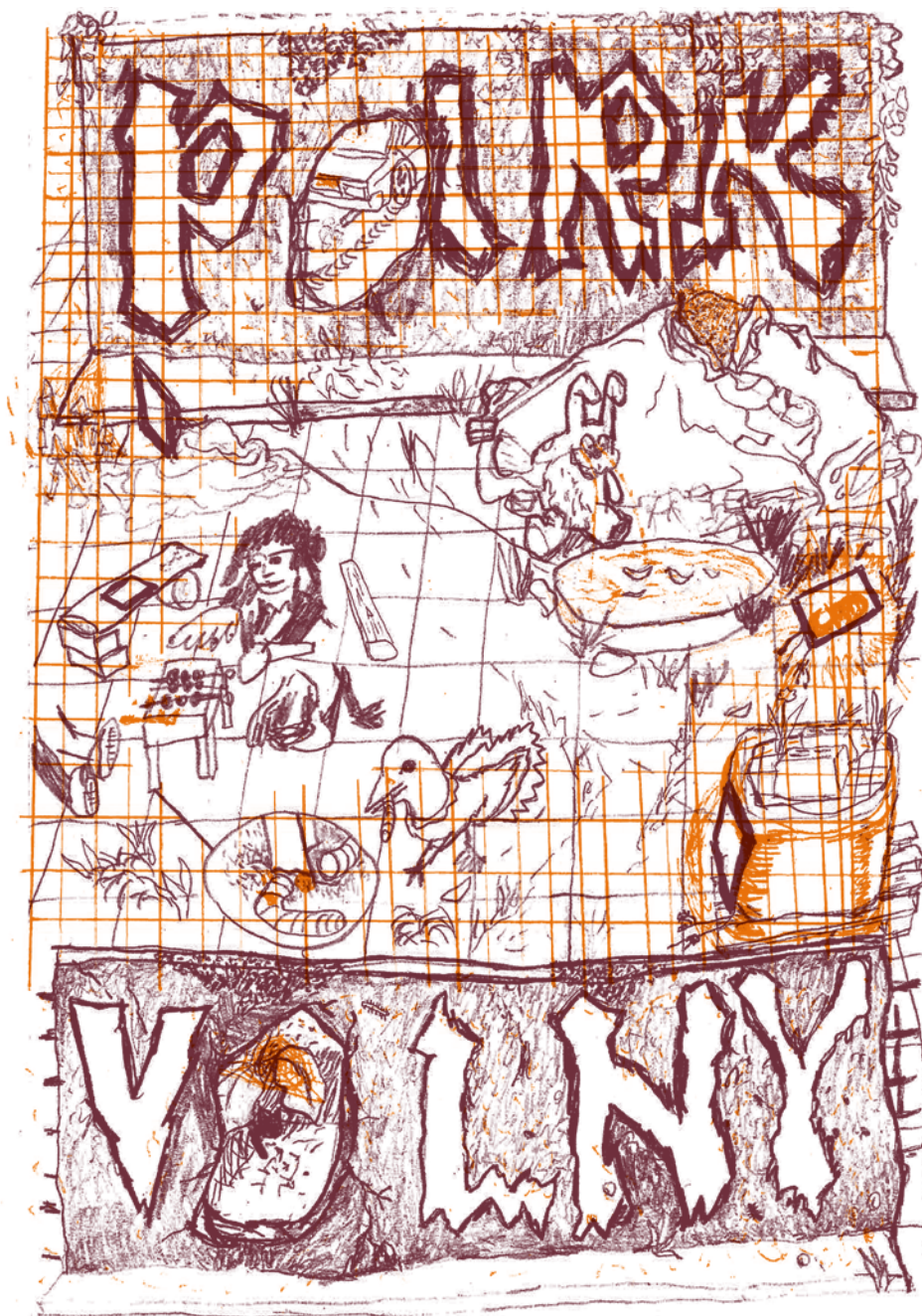
The slight sarcasm of this text from 1940 still touched a nerve after the Russian war against Ukraine had started, but it was no longer justified universally: Switzerland granted Ukrainians, who fled the war, a special residence status and provided an – albeit minimal – state support. Still, people from Belarus or Russia, who oppose their government and call this war a war, find themselves subjected to the old rules commonly applied to people from other regions, especially countries disqualified as "third ones": To escape the violence at home and come to Switzerland, they either need a valid visa – but for them even a tourist visa is difficult to obtain these days – or they need to apply for asylum and take on the burden of such a procedure, which also does not allow regular work during the process. For artists and cultural workers the situation in Switzerland is even more difficult than in neighbouring countries like Germany, which issues a special residence permit for freelancers,

that also includes artists, or like France, where artists can apply for a multi-year “passeport talent – profession artistique et culturelle”.

In *artasfoundation* we are trying to distinguish people on the basis of what they engage for, not on the basis of their nationality. Not being directly endangered by war, we can afford to reject universal categorisation and have the chance to hear individual stories. When, among all those whose life had been turned upside-down by the war in Ukraine, there was already some small support for Ukrainian artists, we decided to focus on artists from Belarus or Russia who were in open opposition to their governments and had managed to arrive in Switzerland with a (still) valid Schengen visa. Thanks to a special grant from the Culture Department of the City of Zurich, in 2023 we were able to invite six artists for three-month periods of exchange and cooperation. We also could organise a *Summer School on Socially Engaged Art* and an *Introduction to Music Therapy* for artists in exile (see www.artasfoundation.ch). In all this, we learnt a great deal ourselves, first about what it might mean for artists who just had to break with their previous life to rebuild everything in uncertainty, and then about the cultural and social environment that had motivated their artistic work in the past.

In this exchange, we were able to invite the artists Anna and Vitalii Cherepanovy from Nizhny Tagil in the Sverdlovsk region of the eastern Urals, who had left Russia because of the systematic repression of opponents of their country’s war, to create a series of drawings for a booklet. Under the title “Park Volny”, the park of “wills”, their works can be seen on the following pages and on the cover of this booklet. Anna and Vitalii add short texts to their drawings and sign their art works as CiD. Thank you, Anna and Vitalii, for sharing this work!

Dagmar Reichert, February 2024



Hello, dear protein and non-protein agents. We are artists – Anya and Vitalia – writing this text in the fall of 2023 in Zurich. We make interdisciplinary art (or mixed-media art) and to describe our practice we have coined the term “Park Volny”. We see the world as a process and as a result of the interaction of different wills (agency). We look for a way of living that suits us and we look to other wills for their ways of manifesting. We photograph, shoot video, or draw, and variously identify and record interesting parts of reality where wills intersect. And on the basis of our research we create multimedia installations, video art and paintings.

We were born in the Ural Mountains and lived there until 2022. Now we are trying to live in Europe, specifically in Zurich. Various events brought us here, but the main thing is the aggressive invasion of the Russian army into the territory of Ukraine. This war destroyed our usual connections and meaning of the art, which we practiced in Russia. We, and our friends and colleagues, were subjected to censorship, pressure from government agencies, some even to criminal prosecution for our anti-war position. Some people had to emigrate.

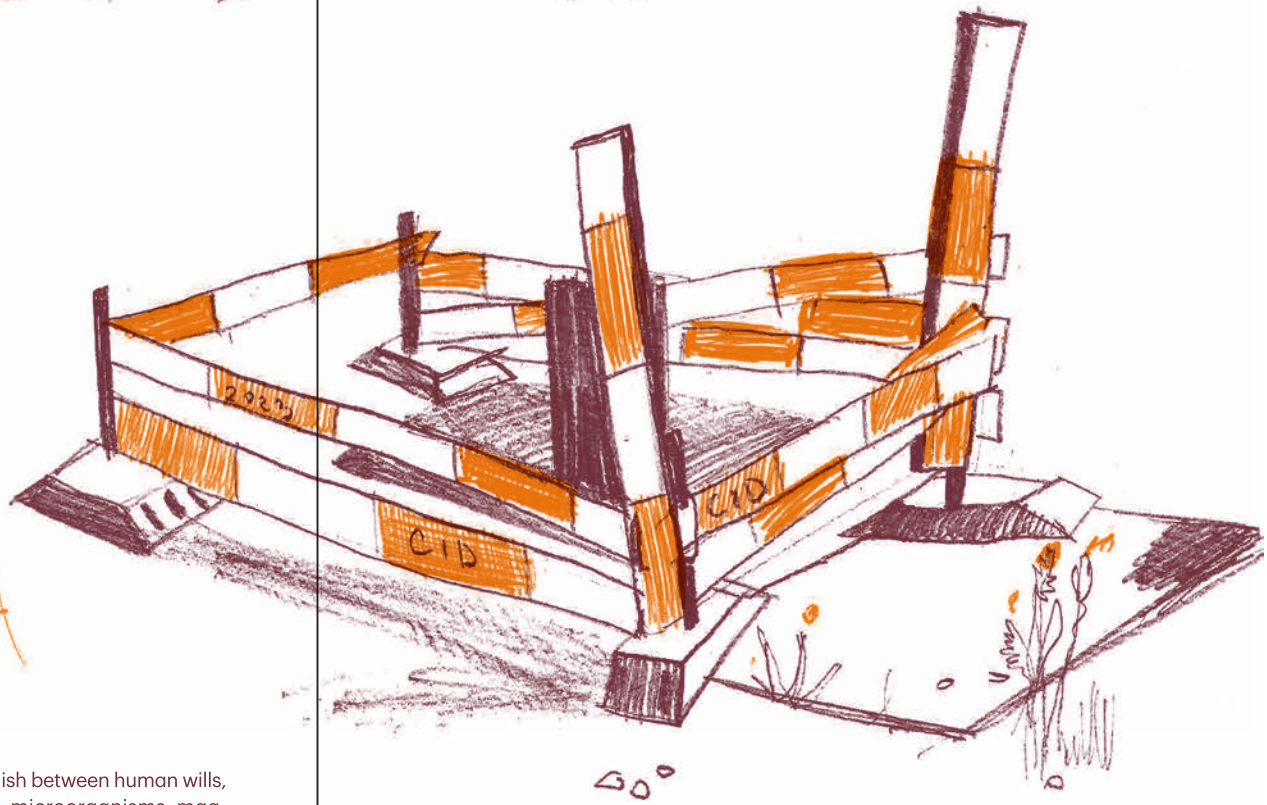
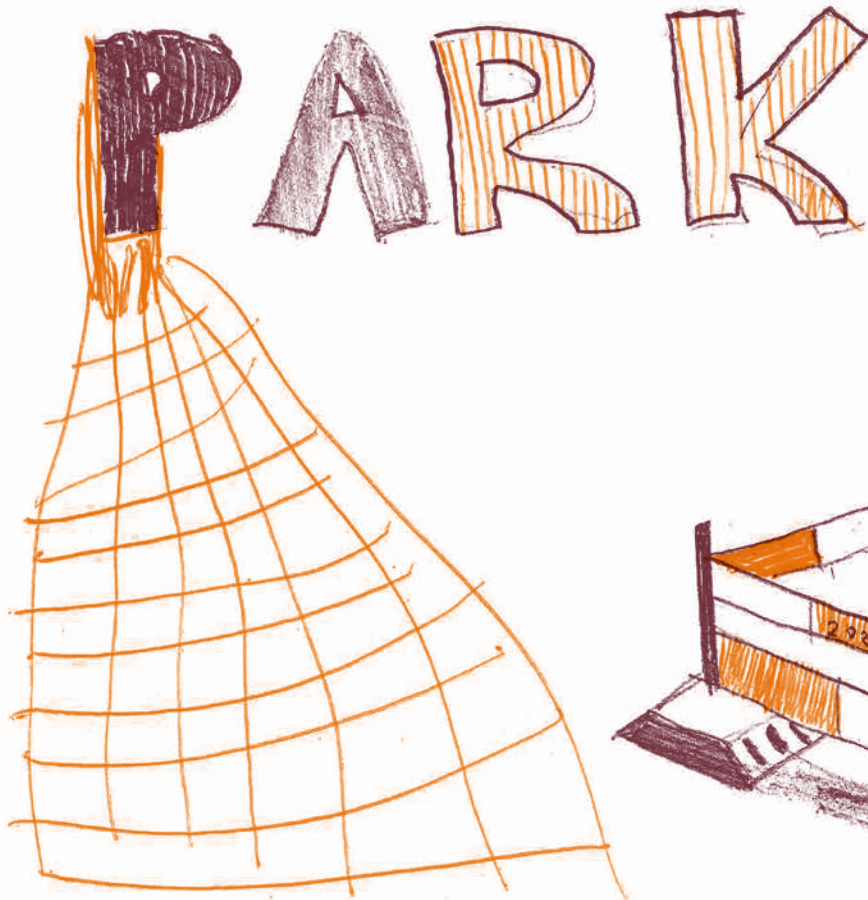
Now, in addition to working on seeing other wills and accepting them, we are working on the question of how to live if you know about the presence of a will that cannot be accepted – a will that thirsts for death and destruction.

Instagram:
@cickindunt
@briick toy
@amin_amin

You Tube:
@cickindunt
@LidarGehen



Photo by @kush.mementi 2023



The whole world is represented by a multitude of wills (agents), whose presences intersect (coexist), producing the entire world we perceive. Biologists look into a Petri dish to study what microorganisms are there and how many there are.

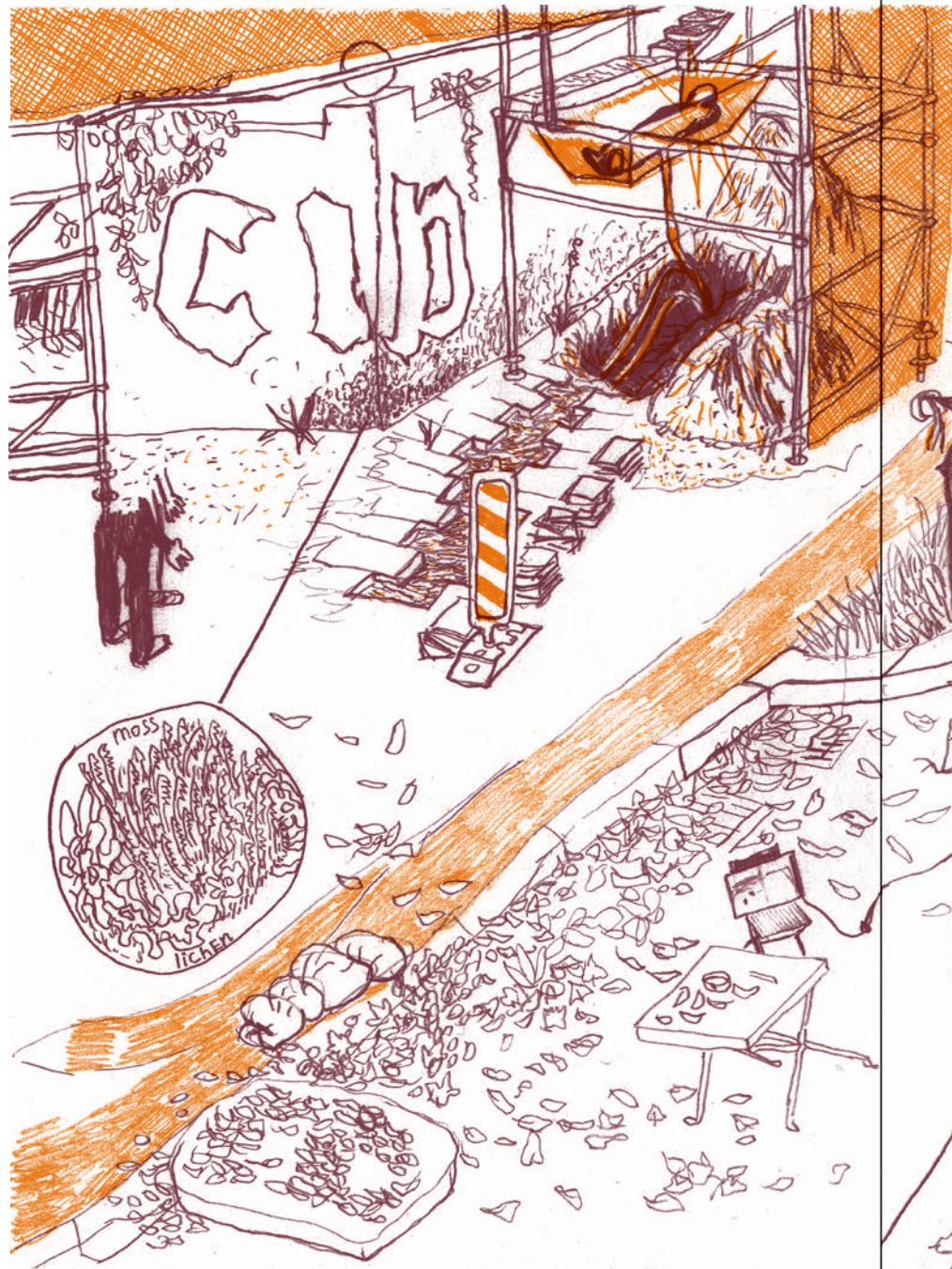
And we select a piece of reality and carefully study it to find out what wills exist there, how they interact and how we relate

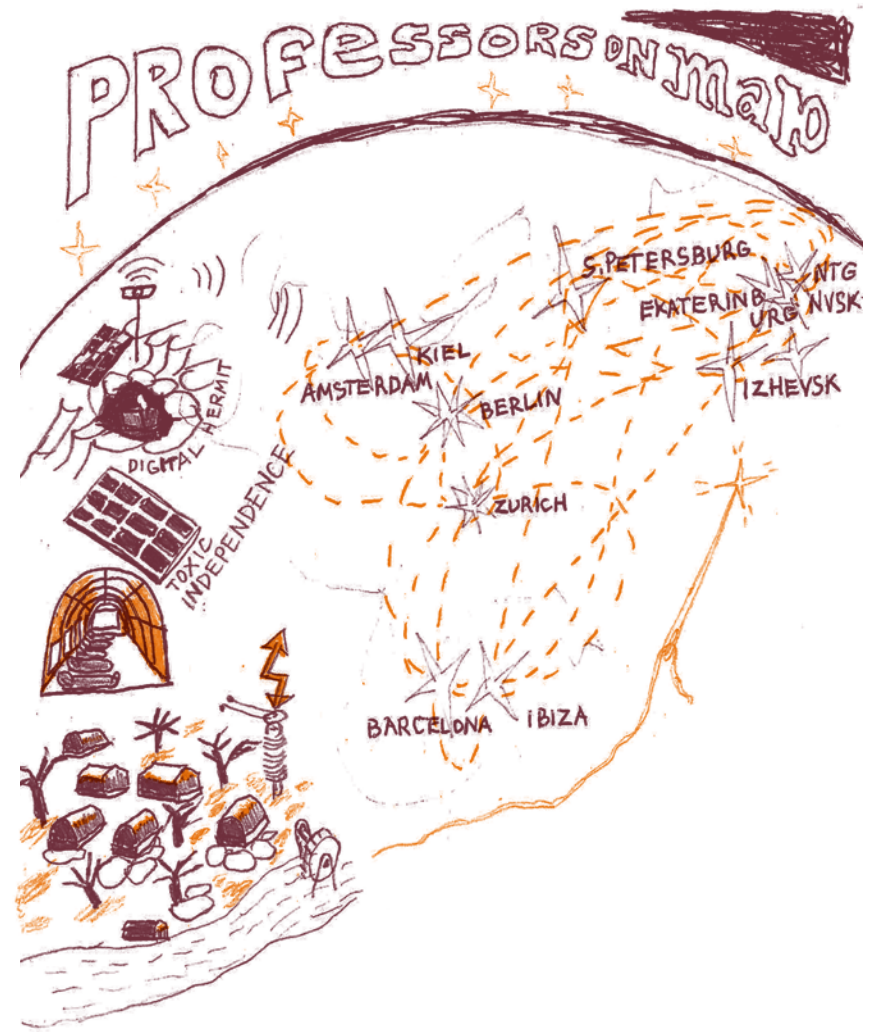
to them. We distinguish between human wills, the wills of animals, microorganisms, magnetic fields, physical forces, atoms, the will of words and languages, the will of objects, geometric bodies, storms and hurricanes, protein and non-protein agents, etc. The influence of everything on everything is our interest in our artistic practice.



In the fall of 2017, we wanted to make an illegal park next to the railway, showing our free will. We built wooden rocking sculptures and thought that people would come to see our art and swing on these sculptures. But the world showed us how it lives on, without regarding our opinion: In the winter there was a lot of snow, and in the spring the ground under the sculptures

subsidized and they tilted. Spiders entwined the corners of the sculptures, and the people, who came to these rocking chairs not only contemplated the sculptures, but got drunk and broke them, some left caches of drugs in these sculptures, others took these purchases. And our attention focused on the presence of other wills.



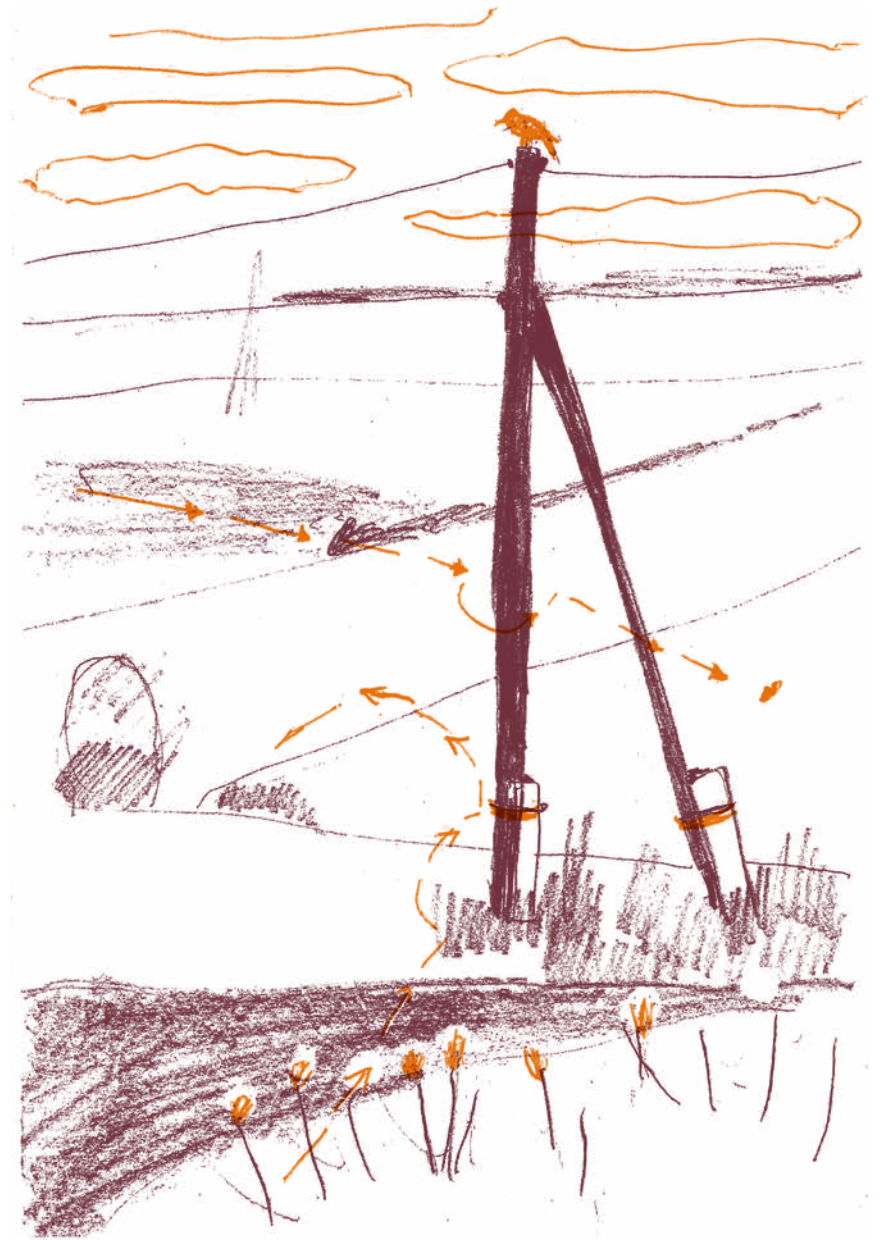


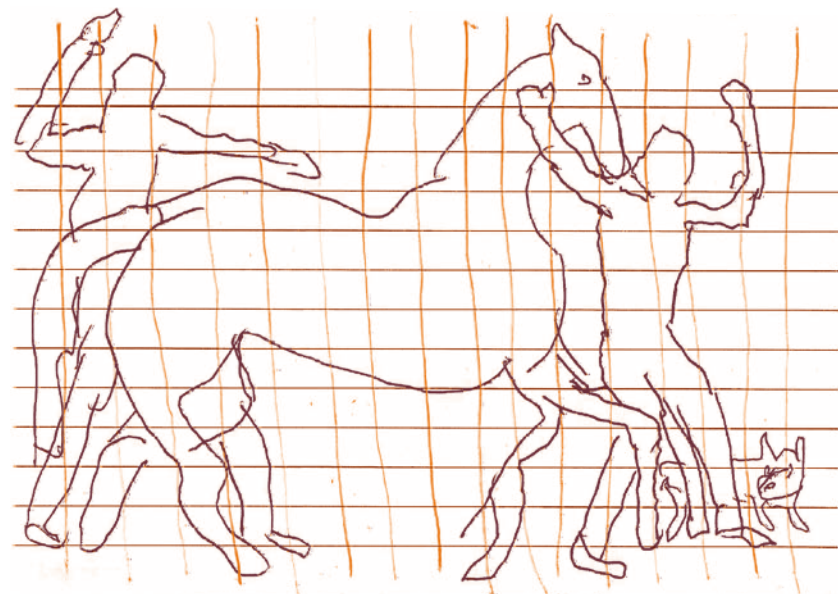
The "digital hermit" is the hero of the Park Volny. He is also a "virtual influencer" or "professor-paratrooper" or "terminal". This image can be converted into any form, it can be a money terminal, a spring in the forest,

tomatoes on a bed, a garbage dump, a cross by the road, a point of passage of will through the plane of the territory. Points also have connections between each other.

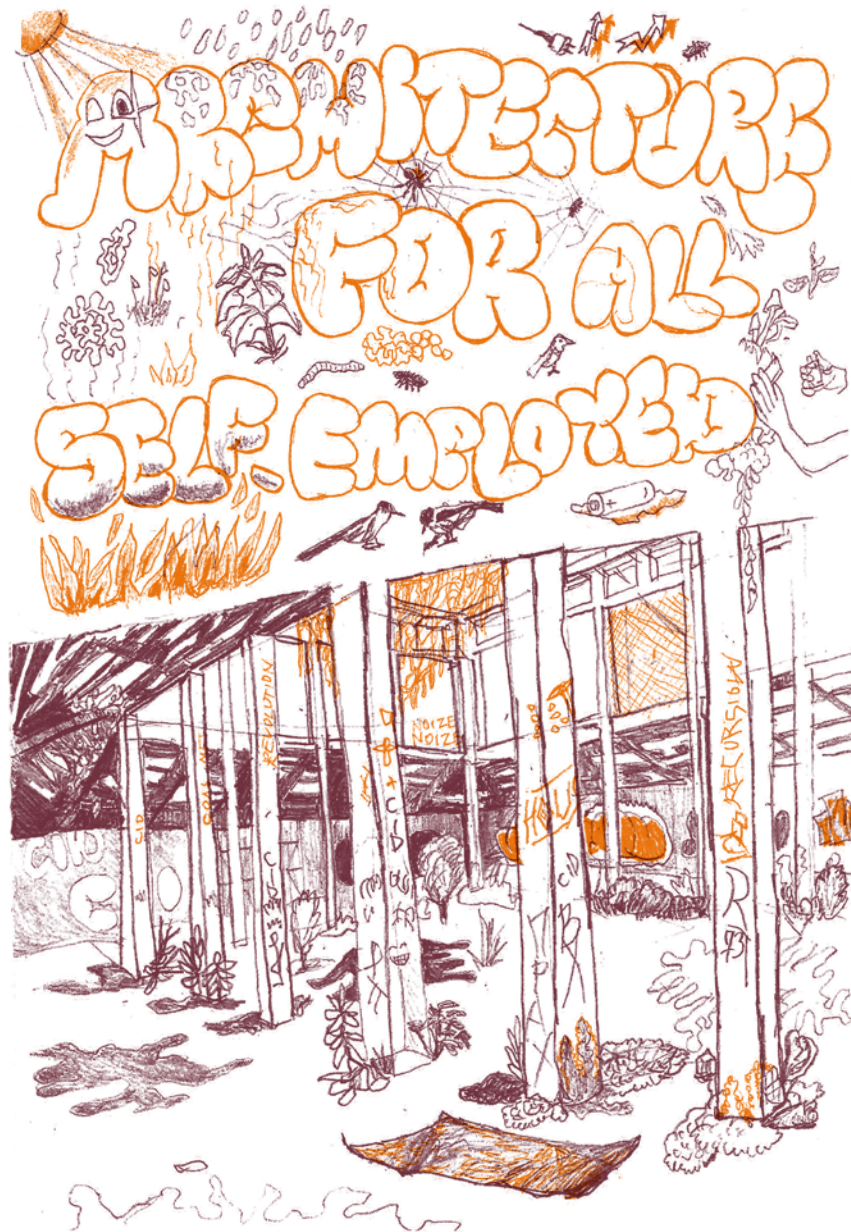
There is a pillar here. It was placed by the collective human will, but other wills allowed it to continue to stand, for example, hurricanes and earthquakes did not occur in this place and the pillar was not destroyed. And

here it stands and represents the will of the pillar, and if I walk in this place, I will have to go around it, unless I pursue the goal of crashing against this pillar. But the bird can rest on the pillar. The pillar is so influential.





Base-relief, Kunsthaus Zürich, covered with a net



To us, street art is not the will of an author expressed on a wall, but the will that created the wall in the first place, the will that destroyed the surface of the wall, the will of the artists who painted a layer on this wall, the will of other artists who painted another layer, the will of organisations that painted over these drawings on the wall, the will of water, which partially washed away the

paint and exposed the layers of drawings, the will of the paint itself, which does not want to stick to the wall, because there was so much dust between the wall and the paint that the paint stuck only to the dust, and not to the wall. All these wills together created the work, not just one author.

Anna and Vitalii