

Homelands and Hinterlands

20.09.25–11.01.26

EN



Basel Abbas & Ruanne Abou-Rahme

Davyd Chychkan

Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze

Mona Hatoum

Iman Issa

Mashid Mohadjerin

Ala Savashevich

Anna Zvyagintseva

M HKA

CONTENTS

Homelands and Hinterlands	3
Introduction	
<hr/>	
Artists	
Basel Abbas & Ruanne Abou-Rahme	6
Davyd Chychkan	8
Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze	10
Mona Hatoum	12
Iman Issa	14
Mashid Mohadjerin	16
Ala Savashevich	18
Anna Zvyagintseva	20
<hr/>	
List of Works	22
<hr/>	
Kyiv Biennial 2025	24
Art, Research and Historical Awareness	
<hr/>	
There is Nothing Solid About Solidarity	26
Seminar & INBOX Presentation	
<hr/>	
Colophon	

Kyiv Biennial 2025
Homelands and Hinterlands
20.09.25–11.01.26

Kyiv Biennial 2025

Homelands and Hinterlands

Following the transnational format of the 2023 edition, Kyiv Biennial 2025 is being held in multiple locations across Europe again this year. **Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (M HKA)** presents a stand-alone exhibition that also acts as an extension of the biennial exhibition *Near East, Far West* being held at the newly opened **Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (MSN)**.

Kyiv Biennial 2025 situates itself amidst the lived reality of war crimes, illegal occupations, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and the broader autocratic turn in global politics, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Israel's brutal operation in Gaza, Iran's totalitarian theocracy and Belarusian dictatorial rule. In reckoning with the injustices and atrocities committed by the imperialisms of today, Kyiv Biennial 2025 reflects with historical consciousness on failed solidarities and internationalisms. It does this across a zone that the curators describe as Middle-East-Europe, a term that encompasses Central Eastern Europe, the former Soviet East and the Middle East.

The exhibition's title, *Homelands and Hinterlands*, refers to the (post-)colonial notion of 'hinterland', meaning the 'lands behind', applied to the areas surrounding former European colonies that are claimed by metropole powers. This conception involves recognising the economic, geographic, cultural and political significance of hinterlands in relation to the colonial centres that they resource.

The two parallel presentations at MSN and M HKA focus on past and present experiences of colonial violence, erasure and genocide in Middle-East-Europe: geographies that have witnessed compelling stories of emancipatory struggle that appear to be in retreat today, making their tracing and reconstitution in the face of renewed violence an urgent task. The presentation at M HKA is more specifically focused on the notion of 'erasure', in the past but also very much in the present: the erasure of people through dehumanisation, killing and crimes against humanity — the erasure of memory—the erasure of the normality of everyday life—the desire to erase the long shadow of 20th century ideologies—the erasure of images —the erasure of plurality in the political spectrum—or even the erasure of the information technologies that we have become dependent on. In the best-case scenario, we might hope that facing destruction will also motivate us to find an emancipatory way out of the current conjuncture of obliteration.

For several of the participating artists, the violence of war and oppression remains a defining context. By questioning the colonial relationship between fading European powers and their so-called peripheries outside the EU, Kyiv Biennial 2025 asserts that the fate of 'Greater Europe' is now being forged in its parallel relations with its eastern borderlands. The exhibition aims to interconnect these 'peripheries' of Europe and reopen the experiences of Middle-East-Europe grounded in its political complexities and historical entanglements.

Curated by:

Vasyl Cherepanyn, Visual Culture Research Center, Kyiv /
Kyiv Biennial
Nav Haq, Associate Director, M HKA

The exhibition at Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw is organised by a consortium of curators from the **L'Internationale** confederation of European museums, art institutions and universities, of which M HKA is a founding member.

Basel Abbas &
Ruanne Abou-Rahme
Oh Shining Star Testify
2016–2019

Basel Abbas & Ruanne Abou-Rahme, *Oh Shining Star Testify*, 2016–2019.
Exhibition view *An Echo Buried Deep Down but Calling Still*, Astrup Fearnley Museet,
Oslo, 2023. Courtesy the artists. Photos: Christian Øen.



Basel Abbas & Ruanne Abou-Rahme's installation *Oh Shining Star Testify* considers the entanglement between the destruction of bodies and the erasure of images, as well as the conditions under which these same bodies and images might once again reappear. The work is structured around Israeli military surveillance footage obtained and released by the human rights group B'Tselem. On 19 March 2014, 14 year-old Yusuf Shawamreh crossed the 'separation fence' erected by the Israeli military near Hebron. On his way to pick akkoub, an edible plant that is a delicacy of Palestinian cuisine, Israeli forces ambushed him and shot him dead. *Oh Shining Star Testify* weaves together a fragmented script sampled from online recordings of violent everyday erasures of bodies, land and built structures but also their reappearance through ritualistic song and dance. Whilst reminding us that there are landscapes beyond any notion of accountability, Abbas & Abou-Rahme's use of these digital fragments prompts us to think about how technologies, particularly the internet, can provide a continued existence for those who have been killed.

Davyd Chychkan

Ribbons and Triangles

2020–2022

Davyd Chychkan, *Lesya Ukrainska and the Ribbons of Her Struggle*, 2022.
Collection M HKA, Antwerp / Flemish Community.



Davyd Chychkan was an artist and anarcho-syndicalist activist whose practice was fuelled by the transformative potential of the Maidan Revolution (2013–2014). His more recent series of works before his untimely passing focused on re-imagining Ukraine and its values. Chychkan's series *Ribbons and Triangles* combines the language of classic political posters with a meticulous and respectful attitude to the intellectual, artistic and cultural heritage of Ukraine. The folkloric elements, graphic patterns from Ukrainian embroidery, and the elements of traditional costume co-exist with modernist geometric designs. Along with the familiar colours of the Ukrainian flag—yellow and blue—the artist has added three more colours charged with symbolic connotations. Black corresponds to the idea of anti-authoritarianism; purple represents feminism and cultural progress; red refers to social equality and direct democracy.

A trinity of significant Ukrainian political and cultural figures often appears in Chychkan's work: the political theorist, economist, historian and philosopher Mykhailo Drahomanov (1841–1895); the writer and feminist activist Lesya Ukrainska (1871–1913); and the writer, journalist, economist, activist, philosopher and ethnographer Ivan Franko (1856–1916). For the artist, the formation of the Ukrainian national idea is inseparable from the Ukrainian people's fight against Russian imperialism. This new national iconography proposed by Chychkan both refers to the Ukrainian struggle for liberation in the past and suggests a possible direction for the development of Ukrainian society as an unfulfilled modernist project, based on a combination of ideas such as these.

Davyd Chychkan (1986, Kyiv – 2025, Zaporizhzhia Oblast)

Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze

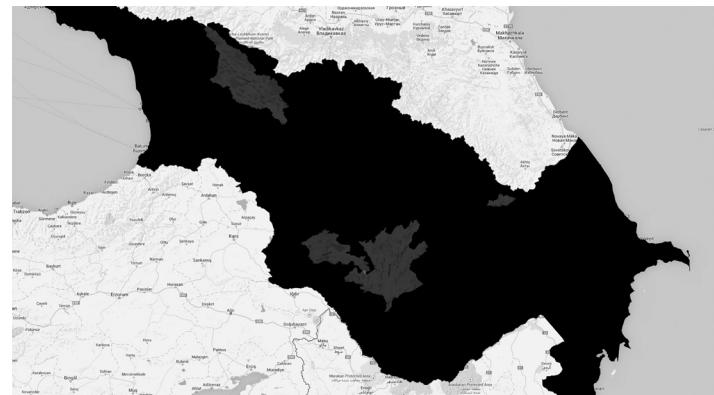
It's Just a Single Swing of a Shovel

2015

Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze, *It's Just a Single Swing of a Shovel* (film stills), 2015.
Courtesy the artist.



Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze's video *It's Just a Single Swing of a Shovel* centres on Hayastan Shakarian, a 78-year-old Armenian woman living in Georgia, who unintentionally cut through a fibre-optic cable on 28 March 2011 while scavenging for scrap metal, shutting down the entire internet access for three countries. The video interprets this event as a new form of hacking by Shakarian, as she delivers media criticism by exposing the unreliability and fragility of the infrastructure with a single swing of a shovel.



Mona Hatoum

Recollection

1995

Mona Hatoum, *Recollection*, 1995. Vleeshal Middelburg collection, on long-term loan to M HKA. Above: installation view *Recollection*, Sint-Elisabeth Beguinage, Kortrijk. Courtesy the artist. Photo above: Fotostudio Eshof. Photo below: M HKA



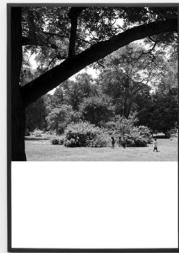
Mona Hatoum is an artist whose experience of conflict and displacement has informed her work. Her frequent use of her own hair in her work brings into focus the human body, its intimacy and its traces. Her installation, *Recollection*, comprises a table with a loom used to weave human hair, hundreds of small balls of hair strewn around the floor as well as long strands hanging from the ceiling down to shoulder height. Having spent several years collecting and rolling her own hair into cocoon-like balls between her palms, Hatoum eventually used this material for *Recollection* as part of the exhibition *Inside the Visible* in Kortrijk. Located inside a sixteenth-century beguinage, the installation acts as a commemoration of the women who once populated the building.

Iman Issa

Colors, Lines, Numbers, Symbols,
Shapes and Images
2010

Iman Issa, *Colors, Lines, Numbers, Symbols, Shapes and Images*, 2010.
Courtesy the artist and Arratia Beer, Berlin. Photo: Torben Höke.

Iman Issa's series of six poster prints, *Colors, Lines, Numbers, Symbols, Shapes and Images*, interplays with the traditional communication tool of political campaign posters. In these times where politics bends or builds realities in conflictual ways, the question of visual literacy comes to the fore. As the title indicates, this work uses the typical visual components of propaganda posters, but in a way that is fragmentary and ambiguous. Individual letters of the Arabic alphabet, non-specific symbols, wayward lines and other elements float on a coloured background. Each of the six posters is different, and they might well all be conveying different messages, but we don't really understand them. They are rather aesthetic, playful and beautiful in a way, but we might also feel frustrated in our efforts to make sense of them. How do we, the viewer, deal with this ambiguity?



Mashid Mohadjerin
#revolution
2016

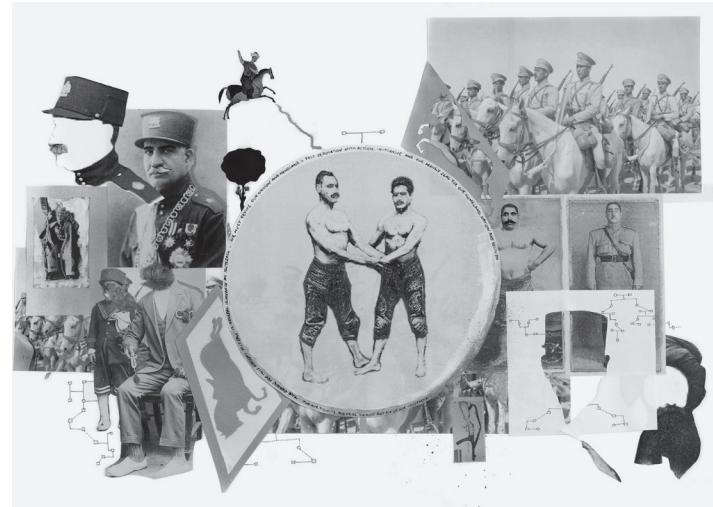
1885, 1920, 1950, 1980, 2011, 2025
2025

Mashid Mohadjerin, *1885, 1920, 1950, 1980, 2011, 2025* (details), 2025.
Courtesy the artist.



Mashid Mohadjerin's practice forms a visual language for alternative historical narratives. She brings a wider perspective to personal stories about the roles of generations of women and men respectively, in Iran and the wider Middle East region, in the context of authoritarian and oppressive political ideology. From 2013 until 2016, Mohadjerin researched the role of women's resistance movements in Iran. Her work *#revolution* uses the visual documentation she gathered to create a collective portrait of female resilience.

1885, 1920, 1950, 1980, 2011, 2025 from Mohadjerin's more recent series, *Riding in Silence & The Crying Dervish*, shifts her focus towards the role of masculinity in the formation of oppressive and authoritarian political ideology. It comprises a collage of images resembling a timeline that sets a story of displacement against the historical arc of Iranian politics. Mohadjerin's practice informs us that taking control of images and visuality can be a form of empowerment.

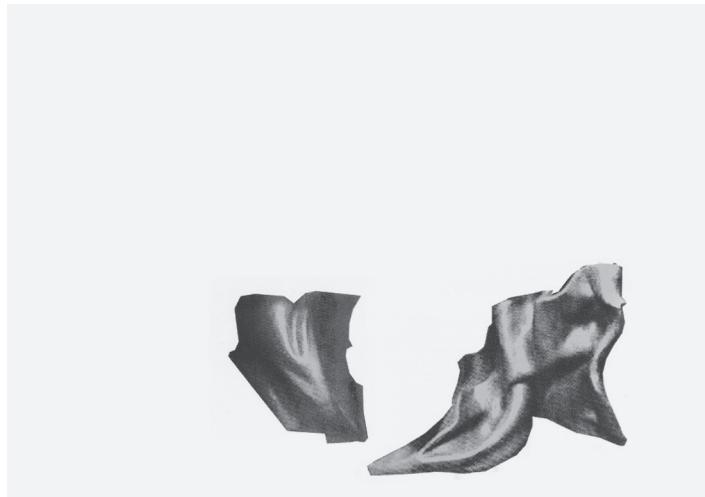


Ala Savashevich

1917–2017

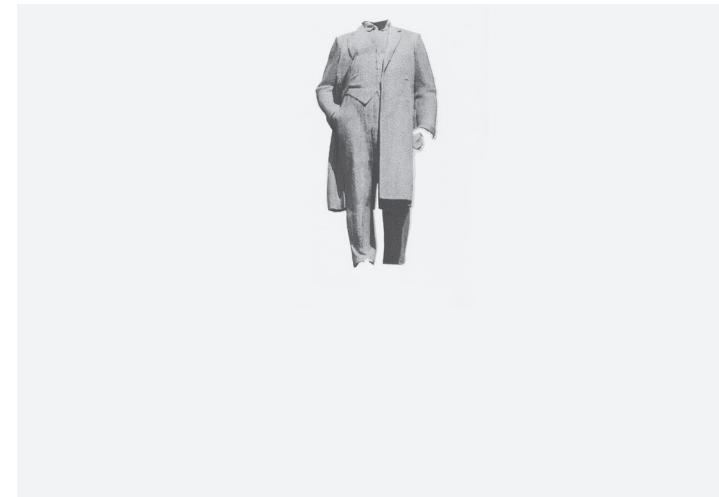
2017

Ala Savashevich, *from 1917–2017*, 2017. Courtesy the artist.



“To notice something, it often has to change first. Only then do we see what was there—and what is no longer. The city becomes a backdrop, and monuments blend into the everyday landscape. Over time, they begin to resemble ghosts, returning in different forms, usually for political reasons. Their demolition, restoration or relocation provokes strong emotions. Yet it is not only their presence or absence that sparks the imagination, but also how they are made. When the material changes, their meaning changes too. Instead of a figure, an empty form may remain—and the silence it creates can be deeply expressive”.

Ala Savashevich

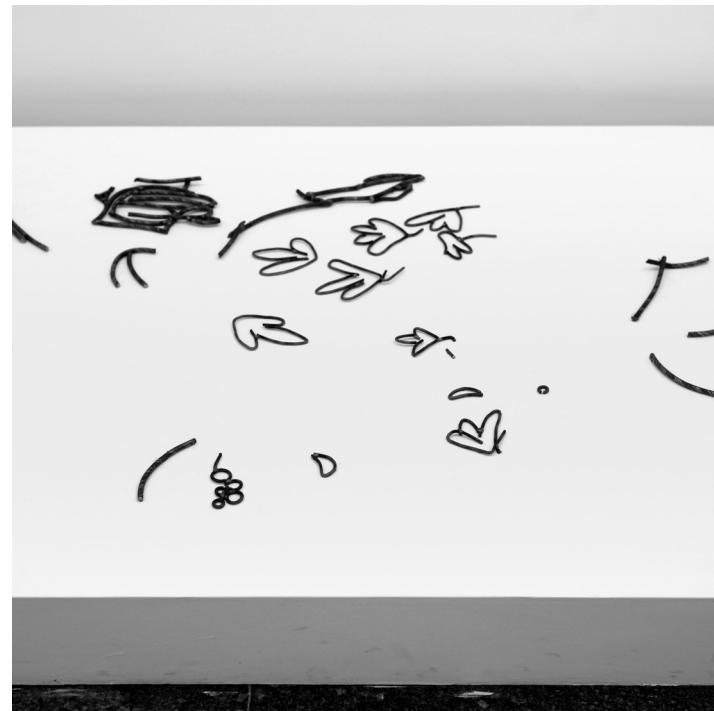


Anna Zvyagintseva
Order of Things
2015–ongoing

Anna Zvyagintseva, *Order of Things*, 2015–ongoing.
Courtesy the artist and PinchukArtCentre. Photo: Sergey Illin



First produced in 2015, *Order of Things* is about the echoes of war in Ukraine at the time. The artist Anna Zvyagintseva took sketches from her archive depicting everyday, peaceful scenes, and enlarged them in metal. We notice that some parts of the drawings have fallen out. The normal order of things is not the same as before. The reverberations of war have since reached relatively peaceful areas and transformed everything. In 2022, the war also reached Kyiv, the artist's home city, and its echo has disrupted a physical form.



List of Works

**Basel Abbas &
Ruanne Abou-Rahme**
Oh Shining Star Testify
2016–2019

Three-channel video, two-channel sound and subwoofer, wooden panels
10:05 min
Courtesy the artists

Anna Zvyagintseva
Order of Things
2015–ongoing

Welded metal
3 pieces: 129.6×180 cm×120 cm
129.6×180×120 cm, and
158.4×220×120 cm respectively

New 2025 editions produced by
M HKA for Kyiv Biennial 2025

Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze
*It's Just a Single Swing of
a Shovel*
2015

Digital video
07:23 min
Courtesy the artist

Iman Issa
*Colors, Lines, Numbers,
Symbols, Shapes and Images*
2010

Series of six framed posters,
archival inkjet prints
6×(68.5×48 cm)
M HKA collection, Antwerp /
Flemish Community

Ala Savashevich
1917–2017
2017

Silkscreen on paper, framed
6×(61×85 cm)
Courtesy the artist

Mashid Mohadjerin
#revolution
2016

Black and white photomontage
87.7×144 cm
City of Antwerp collection, on
long-term loan to M HKA

**1885, 1920, 1950, 1980,
2011, 2025**
2025

Collage on paper
6×(75.5×56.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist

Davyd Chychkan
From the series *Ribbons and
Triangles*:

The Real Ukrainian, Triptych
2022
Watercolour and pencil on paper
3×(86×61 cm)

***Lesya Ukrainka and the Ribbons
of Her Struggle***
2022

Watercolour and pencil on paper
61×86 cm

Maypole
2022
Watercolour and pencil on paper
61×86 cm

Imaginary Ukraine, Trinity
2022

Watercolour and pencil on paper
86×61 cm

***Defenders for Real Ukraine and
Ukraine of My Dream***
2022

Watercolour and pencil on paper
86×61 cm

Pattern of the Triangles
2022

Watercolour and pencil on paper
64×61 cm

***Lesya Ukrainka and the Ribbons
of Her Struggle***
2022

Watercolour and pencil on paper
84×60 cm

***The Holiday of the Union of the
Network of Social Revolution
Groups and the Coordination
of the Initiatives of the
Emancipation of Labour***
2022

Watercolour and pencil on paper
65×50 cm

The Ribbons in the Sky, Triptych
2022

Watercolour and pencil on paper
3×(41.5×46 cm)

***The Holiday of the Union of the
Network of Social Revolution
Groups and the Coordination
of the Initiatives of the
Emancipation of Labour***
2022

Watercolour and pencil on paper
50×65 cm

All works M HKA collection,
Antwerp / Flemish Community

Mona Hatoum
Recollection
1995

Wood, hair, metal and cardboard
Variable dimensions
Vleeshal Middelburg collection,
on long-term loan to M HKA

Kyiv Biennial 2025

Art, Research and Historical Awareness

Following the critically charged, itinerant format of the 2023 edition, the 6th Kyiv Biennial takes place across multiple European cities, marking its 10th anniversary. The main exhibition, *Near East, Far West*, is presented at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, alongside a standalone presentation at M HKA in Antwerp. Warsaw is hosting the central exhibition with over ten new artist commissions, works from L'Internationale members' collections, and international loans.

Kyiv Biennial 2025 examines past and present experiences of colonial violence, erasure, and genocide in Middle-East-Europe. The assembly of artworks presents a matrix of ongoing and historical violence and invites reflection on how emancipatory efforts might begin again. The biennial continues in Ukraine and Linz. *Everything for Everybody?* in Dnipro engages archives of vanished places, Kyiv's *In a Grandiose Sundance, in a Cosmic Clatter of Torture* deconstructs Ukrainian poetic cinema, and *Vertical Horizon* in Linz explores land and landscape as poetic and political actors.

Organised by the Visual Culture Research Center, Kyiv Biennial is an international forum for art, knowledge, and politics that integrates exhibitions and discussion platforms. Embedded in a broad, horizontal network of cultural institutions, art centres and artistic practices, Kyiv Biennial aims to situate art and public programming within the current transformation of Europe and the world.

SCHEDULE KYIV BIENNIAL 2025

M HKA (Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp)
Homelands and Hinterlands
20.09.2025 – 11.01.2026

MSN (Museum of Modern Art), Warsaw
Near East, Far West
03.10.2025 – 18.01.2026

Dnipro Center for Contemporary Culture
Everything for Everybody?
23.10.2025 – 07.02.2026

Dovzhenko Centre, Kyiv
In a Grandiose Sundance, in a Cosmic Clatter of Torture
24.10.2025 – 28.12.2025

Lentos Kunstmuseum, Linz
Vertical Horizon
11.11.2025 – 06.01.2026

2025.kyivbiennial.org

There is Nothing Solid About Solidarity

Seminar & INBOX Presentation

Seminar: 24–26.10.2025

INBOX Presentation: 26.09–11.11.2025 (preview: 25.09)

Locations: M HKA, De Cinema and De Studio

There is Nothing Solid About Solidarity is a satellite programme of Kyiv Biennial 2025. The programme seeks to further contextualise the idea of ‘Middle-East-Europe’, analysed here through the post-socialist experience. That means, firstly, failed attempts at constructing modern utopias and painful ideological and economic transformations, and secondly, strong cultural exchanges and ‘friendships’ between former Socialist Block and Middle East nations in the 20th century. The programme brings together artists, curators, researchers and collectives who hail from Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, and it encompasses initiatives ranging from individual and grassroots projects to research endeavours that examine historical expressions of solidarity and friendship. It includes two days of talks and presentations, an exhibition in M HKA’s INBOX space, a screening programme, a musical celebration, and a series of texts published in MOST magazine. It aims to be a catalyst for lasting relationships and fresh alliances that together reveal a rich ecosystem of resistance, care, emancipatory vision and solidarity.

Participants:

Noor Abed, Alaa Abu Asad, Nika Autor, Asia Bazdyrieva, DAVRA (Dilda Ramazan), eeefff collective (Nicolay Spesivtsev, Dzina Zhuk), fantastic little splash (Oleksandr Hants, Lera Malchenko), Samah Hijawi, Saodat Ismailova, Katarina Jazbec, Nikolay Karabinovich, Yasia Khomenko, Dana Kosmina, KRAK (Irfan Hošić), Daryna Mamaisur, Svitlana Matviyenko, Petrică Mogoş, Beatrice Moumdjian, Laura Naum, Elif Satanaya Özbay, Alpesh Kantilal Patel, Oleksandra Pogrebnyak, Maxim Poleacov, Basyma Saad, Selma Selman, Nour Shantout, Firas Shehadeh, Malaka Shwaikh, Antonina Stebur, Tytus Szabelski-Różniak, Asia Tsisar, Kat Zavada, Driant Zeneli.

There Is Nothing Solid About Solidarity is curated by the team of MOST magazine (Ewa Borysiewicz, Vera Zalutskaya, Katie Zazenski) and Yulia Krivich. MOST is an online, English-language journal and cultural platform focusing on the art, culture and politics of Central and Eastern Europe.

The project is supported by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute (Warsaw) and organised in partnership with M HKA, De Cinema and De Studio. It takes place alongside the exhibition Kyiv Biennial 2025 – *Homelands and Hinterlands* at M HKA.

More info and full programme:



COLOPHON

Artists

Basel Abbas & Ruanne
Abou-Rahme
Davyd Chychkan
Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze
Mona Hatoum
Iman Issa
Mashid Mohadjerin
Ala Savashevich
Anna Zvyagintseva

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Sofie Gregoor

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Kyiv Biennial 2025

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VISUAL CULTURE RESEARCH CENTER

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Read more on ensembles.org,
M HKA's online research platform.

