

Kunstraum  
Verein für aktuelle Kunst und Kritik  
Holzstraße 10, Rgb., 80469 München  
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## **Anna Witt and Mykola Ridnyi Hang zum Konflikt**

8th September to 9th October 2016  
Private View, 7th September, 7pm  
Artist Talk with Anna Witt, 10th September, 4pm

The exhibition 'Hang zum Konflikt' at Kunstraum presents two contrasting artistic positions from different perspectives, which offer alternative narrative forms to the conventional writing of history. Central to the exhibition are the values, as well as the potential for conflict of a democratic social system.

For 'Hang zum Konflikt', which might translate as 'a tendency towards conflict', Vienna based artist Anna Witt invited the Ukrainian artist Mykola Ridnyi, to juxtapose some of his films with hers, in order to trigger a direct artistic dialogue. For both, the critical analysis of violence plays an important role, particularly in a socio-political context. While Witt approaches the subject via the meta-level of the perception of conflicts through the media, Ridnyi's works often deal with direct experiences of violence. From the context of physical space, the works of the two artists are situated on the upper floor of the gallery, within an installational arrangement that sets them in relation to one another. The viewer is able to place herself between the projection screens, adopting the position of a quasi-neutral observer.

On the one side, Ridnyi's videos bear witness to the visible effects of the political developments in a post-Soviet country, both on the individual and on society, as well as the complex socio-political machinations in connection with the realization of a democratic social order. The video **Fortress** (2013-2014) is based on documentary material filmed by Ridnyi during the public protests on Kiev's Maidan Square in the winter of 2013. **Dima** (2013) is a personal portrait of a former police officer who lost his sense of idealism within a system that he regards as being corrupt and hopeless. This work was made before the outbreak of the Maidan Square protests and creates an

powerful impression of the atmosphere of resentment and the dissatisfaction of a Ukrainian population that felt cheated of its fundamental rights by the state authorities. Finally, **Shelter** (2012) shows the on-going consequences of the political propaganda from the time of the Cold War on the education system and society as a whole. The video **Father's Story** (2012), which can be seen in the small annex room on the upper floor of the gallery, evokes the Soviet past as a part of a family history: Ridnyi documents his father walking through the cellar of his own parents' home where he hadn't set foot since their deaths. Old newspapers with pictures of Lenin lie between jars of preserves and bottles with homemade schnapps.

These narratives, formed through personal experience, stand in contrast to Witt's works, which process violence as a ubiquitous consumption of imagery and examine conflicts from a methodological perspective. In the video **The Eyewitness** (2011-2012) she films children giving their perceptions of fragmentary footage from news reports of current conflicts. In **Die Rechte des Gehsteigs** [Sidewalk Rights](2012) she contrasts visual imagery from the Internet of political and artistic protests, with a voice-over containing the comments of a Viennese police spokesperson, who outlines in dry bureaucratic language the respective legal consequences with regard to the local traffic regulations. For her recent work, **Do we need a Therapy** (2016), which is being shown for the first time in the Kunstraum exhibition, Witt worked with psychologists who analysed people's behavioural patterns in response to watching ideologically shaped violent videos.

The ground floor hosts Witt's extensive video installation **Durch Wände gehen** [Walk through walls] from 2015, which was made in cooperation with a Syrian who fled to Saxony in the East of Germany and a German who fled what was then the DDR. The work reveals analogies between historical and current perspectives on the subject of population flight by way of the individual experiences of the two protagonists.

'Hang zum Konflikt' creates a tangible tension between the direct effects of political events as seen through a personal perspective and media perception - between empathy and a form of sensual numbness. Questions of direct violence and the state authorities define the dialogue between Anna Witt and Mykola Ridnyi, as does a shared view of the fragility of freedom. The exhibition projects onto the viewer the task of creating a discourse and of generating an opinion.

Curated by Monika Bayer-Wermuth and Sabine Weingartner.

Supported by the Gisela and Erwin Steiner Foundation, Finbridge GmbH & Co KG and the Kulturreferat Landeshauptstadt München.