

Elena Corvaglia

selected works
2021-2024

Bio

*1980 Ukraine
based in Switzerland (Zurich and Balterswil TG)

EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 MFA Defree show ZHdK, Zurich, Switzerland
„ETERNAL ELEMENTS“, group show, ART SPACE Complex.156, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2023 „Soft Diagrams – Play and Work. (Re)Productive Turn(s) – running after its own tail“, group show, INDUSTRA Art, Brno, Czech Republic
„Verwoben im Anthropozän“, group show, Kunstraum Uster, Switzerland
„State of Affairs“, trio show, Hartdurm, Zurich, Switzerland
„I Need A Holiday“, group show, Hotel Tiger, Zurich, Switzerland
„Silver Thread“, duo show, UnOrt, Zurich, Switzerland
„FABRIK- Season 3. Montage“, group show, FABRIK, Balterswil, Switzerland
- 2022 „Wenn die Erde bebt“, group show, Go-Green Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland
“FABRIK – Season 1. Auf Spurensuche“, group show in Schifflistickerei Balterswil, Switzerland
“S_ex – an Exhibition around Sex“, group show, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2021 „Interim“, group show, Zurich, Switzerland
„Finealle“, group show, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2020 „Not what it seems, nor otherwise“, group show, Zurich, Switzerland
„Toujours“, group show, Istituto Svizzero, Milan, Italy
„Toujours“, group show, ZHDK, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2019 „Color, Light and Space“, group show, ZHDK, Zurich, Switzerland
„Vanishing Relations“, group show, ZHDK, Zurich, Switzerland
„story/no story“, group show, ZHDK, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2018 „A Portrait of a Young Building as an Artist by Artists“, Group show, project F+F, Löwenbräu, Zurich, Switzerland
„verbunden verknüpft verrückt“, group show, project F+F, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2017 „Der Catwalk des Schamanen oder drei Haikus für die Wahrsagerin“, group show, project F+F, Kunsthaus Glarus, Switzerland

PUBLICATION

- 2021 „Velvet Kisses“. Felicitas Arnold, Rabea Ridlhammer, Zurich: Amsel Verlag
„Diplome 2021- Bachelor Fine Arts“. Claus Richter, Nora Turato, Sibylle Berg, Raphael Gygax, Martin Jaeggi, Zurich: ZHdK

CURATING

- 2022 „FABRIK- Season 2. Spurensicherung“, FABRIK (art project space), Balterswil, Switzerland
„FABRIK- Season 1. Auf Spurensuche“, FABRIK (art project space), Balterswil, Switzerland

EDUCATION

- 2021-2024 Master Fine Arts, Zurich University of the Arts, Zurich, Switzerland
2018-2021 Bachelor Fine Arts, Zurich University of the Arts, Zurich, Switzerland
2012-2016 Executive Foreign Trade Specialist HF, SSIB Swiss School for International Business AG, Zurich, Switzerland
2001-2007 Master Foreign Trade Management, University of Economics and Law KROK, Kyiv, Ukraine

ARTIST STATEMENT

Born in Ukraine, I have been living and working in Switzerland since 2006. My work is characterised by cultural and social themes related to my everyday experiences and focuses on themes of identity, space, and the relationship between past and present. I often draw on references from history, current events, public and private mythologies, paying particular attention to the existing tension between the local and the global. My research-based artistic practice includes installation, collage, painting, animation and photography. My choice of medium is determined by the concept of my work. I use the context of the material and its history as a tool to express my ideas. As a result, my works are usually multidisciplinary installations. Collaboration is an important part of my practice.

CONTACT

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Reservoir

2023

Installation

Acrylic glass, metal rods, grain ears

Size variable

In my work *Reservoir* I use ears of wheat, the national symbol of Ukraine and the most widely grown cereal in the country. In this installation, I reflect on the current events in my homeland as the Kakhovka Dam was breached on June 6, 2023, causing extensive flooding. Dam's destruction radically changed the local landscape overnight. In a very short space of time, 16 cubic kilometres of dam water flowed into the Black Sea, washing away houses, animals, and people, contaminating wells and destroying an entire ecosystem.

The lonely ears of wheat protruding into the room refer to Eastern European tradition and symbolism for mourning and thus speak of displacement and absence, but also the effects of war in a globalised world.



Installation view: *Verwoben im Anthropozän*,
Kunstraum Uster, Uster, CH, 2023.

Reservoir
2023

Installation



Reservoir, details
Kunstraum Uster, Uster, CH, 2023.

Schiffliversenken (alteration_03)

2023

Two stop-motion animations

animation 01.

1-channel video 00:02:29 (loop)

format:16:9, sound

animation 02.

1-channel video 00:05:24 (loop)

format:2:3, without sound

Size and amount of screens variable

My video installation *Schiffliversenken* is the result of two years of research into the mass production of lace and embroidery. It consists of two stop-motion animations shown on screens, accompanied by a variety of sounds from the original Schiffl embroidery machine.

In this work I have used „Schiffl“: a boat-shaped shuttle that normally carries the bobbin threads of the once world-famous Swiss industrial Schiffl embroidery machine. These machine elements enabled the mass production of lace and embroidery at the highest level and allowed Switzerland to export its embroidery products all over the world.

In both videos, a large number of Schiffls glide across the surface of the screens.

In the stop-motion animation 01, the schiffls move in straight lines across the screen, dragging the white threads behind them. They move and interact with each other, bumping into and touching each other. A dense web of white threads and metal bodies is created.

This animation was created using a digital scanner bed and consists of a few hundred scans. The schiffls in this animation are seen from below.

Installation view: *Soft Diagrams - Play and Work*,
art gallery INDUSTRIA, Brno, CZ, 2023.



Schiffliversenken (alteration_01)

2023

In stop-motion animation 02, the same metal pieces are seen from above. They face each other like two rows of shiny teeth on a white background, move towards each other and then dissolve into a mess. This animation is made up of several hundred digital photographs that follow each other in a classic stop-motion style.

Stop-motion animation 01 is accompanied by a sound that gives the two videos a rhythm, which is why it is important to place them close to one another.

[documentation Schiffliversenken_Animation_01](#)

[documentation Schiffliversenken_Animation_02](#)



Installation view: *FABRIK – Season 3. Montage*,
art space FABRIK, CH, 2023.
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Collar (Circulation)

2023

Installation

Stop-motion animation

1-channel video 00:01:07

Laser print with sewn-on lace

Elena Corvaglia's investigation into the mass production of lace and embroidery has resulted in a series of stop-motion animations*. In one of them, *Collar (Circulation)*, a lace collar, once a symbol of femininity and purity, is scanned. In the animation, the scanned hands undermine the suggested purity in their carnality. The lace-covered skin elicits a sublimated power of seduction. With its serially produced images, the scanning technique is also reminiscent of the mass production of goods; simultaneously, the hands evoke the tedium of manual labour.

Sarah Wiesendanger

*The animation *Collar (Circulation)* exists as a complement and contrast to the animation *Schiffversenken*.

[documentation *Collar \(Circulation\)*](#)

Installation view: *FABRIK – Season 3. Montage*,
art space FABRIK, CH, 2023.

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Old News

2023

pages from the old newspapers

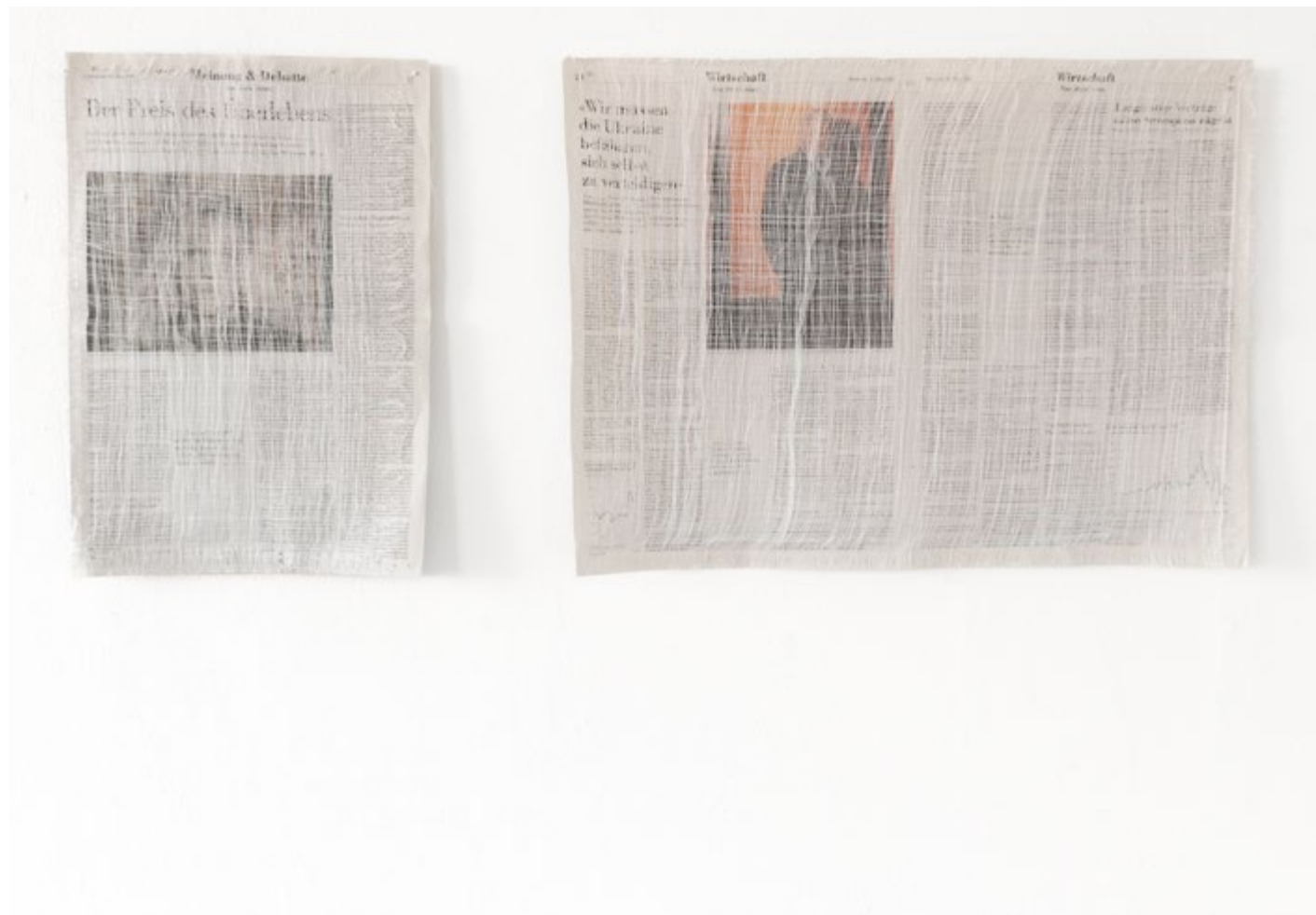
polyester threads

3 unique pieces

Size: 1x 46.5x63.3, 2x 46.5x31.2 cm

As a native of Ukraine who has been living in Switzerland for many years, Elena Corvaglia repeatedly turns her gaze to her homeland and questions the peculiar distance of her own perspective. In the series "Old News" Russia's war of aggression, which began in the spring of 2022, comes into focus in the form of Swiss media coverage. The newspaper clippings, which have already lost their topicality one day after their appearance, were collected by the artist and are now exhibited again focussing on the delivery of weapons and the possibility of the construction of weapons factories on the territory of Ukraine. However, the news cannot be easily consumed- a net of white polyester yarn covers the pages and makes it difficult to read. The hand-stretched mesh, which seems to lie like a veil over the events, creates a distance similar to that of the readers in Switzerland, who are only indirectly affected by the war.

Elsa Himmer

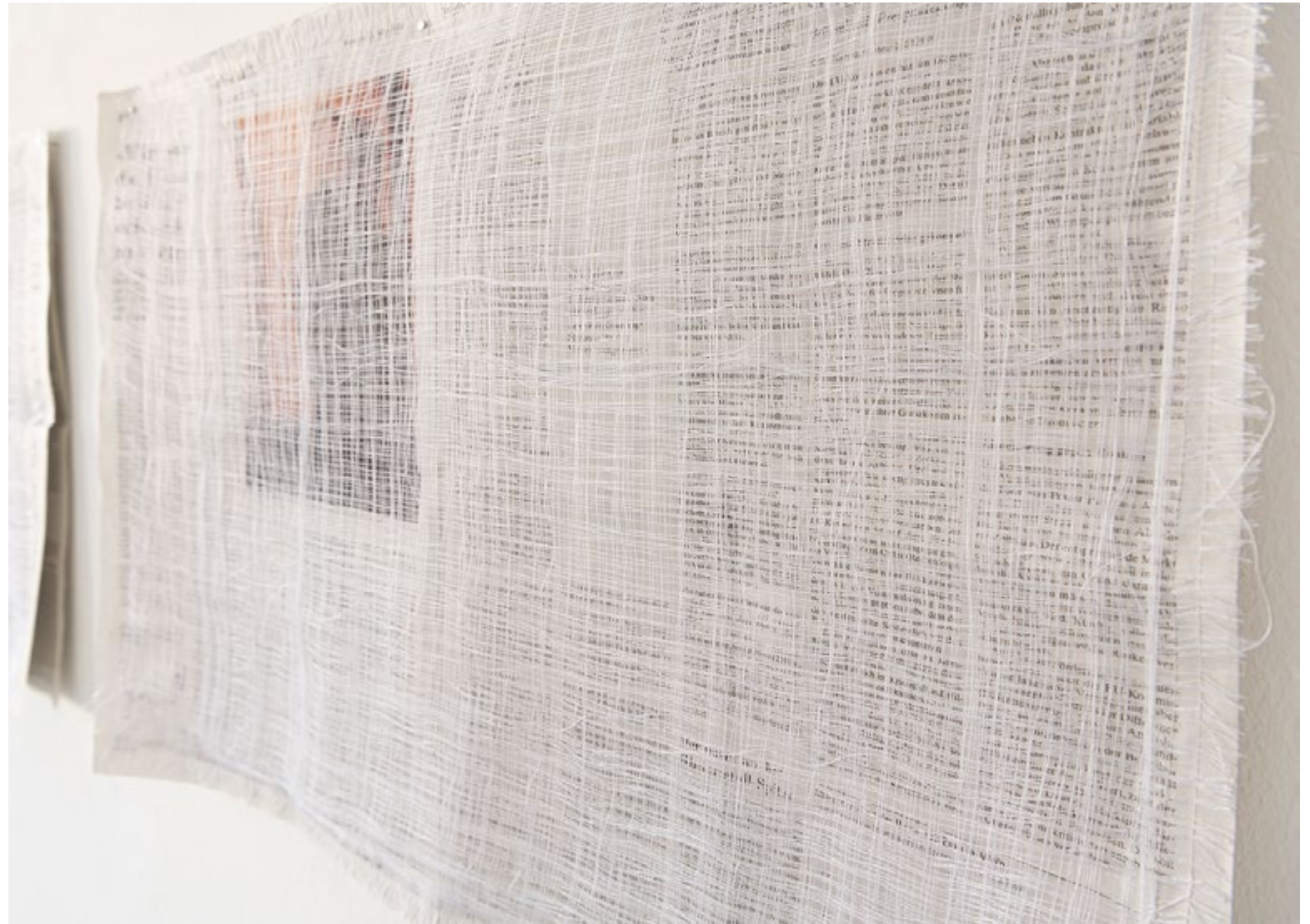


Newspaper 02 and Newspaper 03 from the series Old News, 2023, trio exhibition State of Affairs, Hartdurm, Zurich, CH, 2023.



Installations view: *State of Affairs*, Hartdurm, Zurich, CH, 2023.

Old News
2023



Newspaper 02, detail, State of Affairs, Hartdurm, Zurich, CH, 2023.

Langwarzeit
2022

Installation

Embroidered medical gauze
Size variable

“Long goods“ or rolls (Langware in German) is a collective term for all those goods, especially for fabric, which are sold according to their length. Thus, the term *Langwarzeit*, discovered by the artist in an old letter, seems to refer to the First World War, during which there was a ban in Switzerland on the export of cloth and gauze to the belligerent nations. However, since embroidered fabrics were exempt from this embargo, embroidery, could be exported and was used by the warring nations as bandage material in the absence of other fabrics. The installative examination of the scarcity of goods, war-related sanctions and trade restrictions was created in particular against the backdrop of the current war in Ukraine, the artist’s home country.

Elsa Himmer (original text in German) for the exhibition *FABRIK – Season 1. Auf Spurensuche*

[documentation Langwarzeit](#)



Exhibition view: *FABRIK – Season 1. Auf Spurensuche*, art space FABRIK, CH, 2022.

The Frames

2022

Site-specific installation

Transfer print on fabric, absorbent cotton,
old bricks from the factory building

3 textile pieces, size:

36 x 30 x 4 cm, 40 x 114 x 7 cm, 71 x 61 x 6 cm

This site-specific installation is based on a photograph found in the archives of the Balteswil Historical Association (in TG, Switzerland).

The image of the factory printed in the newspaper was digitised by the artist and subjected to a process of abstraction. In this installation Elena Corvaglia focuses on the architectural features of the factory building. The subsequently reproduced image detail is assembled into a new ornament by means of a transfer print. A process of image creation that corresponds to an understanding of history that conceives of history as a multiplicity of «adding up» and overlapping histories and memories that repeatedly combine to form new patterns. The artist emphasises the influence that the embroidery industry had on the architecture as well as on the landscape of the region.

Elsa Himmer (original text in German) for the exhibition *FABRIK – Season 1. Auf Spurensuche*



Exhibition view: *FABRIK – Season 1. Auf Spurensuche*, art space FABRIK, CH, 2022.

Interiors

2022 (ongoing)

Collages

oil paint and laser print on used cardboard

mounted on fibreboard

Size variable

The series *Interiors (Интерьеры)* is an ongoing project that Elena Corvaglia began in 2021. The series examines the current social and political situation in the cities of eastern Ukraine, which have been occupied by Russia since 2014. All of the collages are based on photographs of flats in the Luhansk region that Corvaglia found on various property portals on the internet. An unmade bed, a rolled-up carpet, the portraits of relatives on the walls, the dress ready to be put on, religious icons, the buckets filled with water- glimpses into intimate details of private spaces, many of which are currently abandoned. The artist has put together fragments of existing photographs to create new images of private spaces, as a reconstruction of real events and as a reaction to the daily news. A development can be observed in the series *Interiors (Интерьеры)*: The most recent works from 2022 have become more gestural and direct and show the artist's reflection on current events in her home country.



Exhibition view: *WENN DIE ERDE BEBT*,
Go Green Art Gallery, Zurich, CH, 2022.

For Sale. Tap water occasionally. Season 2, 2021

Installation including:

Planmässig. Reduziert. (В сокращенном режиме. По графику), 2021

Used plastic basins, audio file: 01:27:30 (loop), speakers, MP3 player, cables

Still Lifes (Натюрморты), 2021

Laser print on fiberboard, single plate 70 x 55 cm, diptych 2x 80 x 55 cm

Interiors (Интерьеры), 2021

Oil paint and laser print on used cardboard, mounted on fiberboard, 40 x 27 cm

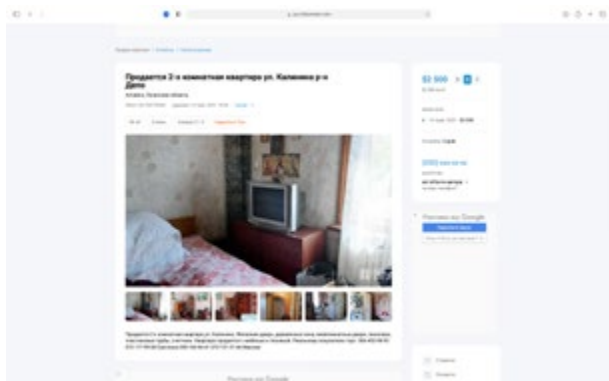
Size variable

[Link to audio documentation \(extract\)](#)



Installation view: *Finealle*, Zurich, CH, 2021

For Sale. Tap water occasionally. Season 2,
2021



Print screen as an example of advertisement for a flat
on the Internet, downloaded on the 19.05.2021

The installation *For Sale. Tap water occasionally. Season 2* is part of an ongoing multilayered, research-based project, investigating the current political and social situation in Eastern Ukraine. The research is based on photographs and texts found on the Internet. All these sources originate from Alchevsk, my hometown.

Alchevsk is located in a region, occupied by Russian-backed separatists. For me this town symbolize many other places in Eastern Ukraine carrying the Soviet heritage, abandoned and weakened due to seven years of war that began in 2014.

All the photographs I used in this project are images of apartments in Alchevsk, which I have found in various real estate portals. These apartments were offered for sale at ridiculously low prices between June 2020 and April 2021. Many people fled during the first years of the war and left their apartments empty. Others, who cannot afford to move out of the region, hope to sell their houses so that they can leave. However, massive disruptions in infrastructure and the high number of apartments on sale caused a loss in property value and a total lack of demand.

The bilingual sound installation *Planmässig. Reduziert. (В сокращенном режиме. По графику.)* is based on original texts published on the official website of the new town administration between January 2016 and April 2021, informing citizens about water supply shortages. The Russian texts were translated to the German language by an AI translator available online and then spoken out by the AI voice generator.

The repetitive sound of male voices coming out of the speakers, placed in the water basins, is annoying and tiring. It sounds like there is no problem since the voices report about the water supply on a regular basis. The usual water demand of the town is around 24'000 m³, the average daily volume of water supply in the last seven years varied between 5'000 m³ and 13'000 m³. None of the districts, mentioned in the spoken text gets tap water every day.

Storing water is one of the daily rituals of people living in this region and is considered to be a part of „normal“ life. By enlarging fragments of the images and putting them together in the series *Still Lives (Натюрморты)* I focus on a problem that is often overlooked.

The collages from the series *Interiors (Интерьеры)* reveal a story of Alchevsk depicted in images of bathrooms, toilets, kitchens, corridors, living rooms, and bedrooms. The fragments of existing photographs, recomposed in new images, contain cultural codes and traces of historical experience and show the contradictions of the current situation.