

WHERE WAS/IS MY HOME

ДЕ Є/БУВ МІЙ ДІМ



"Unity"

We are not alone when we stand together. I believe empathy and collaboration can generate a powerful movement, giving Ukrainians the strength to resist Russian violence and aggression. At demonstrations, those who were forced to leave their homes by war merge their pain and anger into one voice—a voice that Europe hears. Their solidarity matters.

When I hear English, French, and Dutch spoken at pro-Ukrainian protests in Brussels, I feel the world becoming my home.

Because home is not just a place — it is where you are understood and supported.

Brussels, 2025, Valeriia Shcherbina

Introduction

Where was/is my home? Is a photographic exhibition that brings together the work of Ukrainian photographers who are currently living in Belgium. Through their images and stories, they reflect on the meaning of home — a concept that has been challenged, lost, and redefined by war, migration, and the search for belonging.

The idea for this project emerged from a personal need to give space and visibility to voices that often remain unseen in mainstream narratives. Many of the artists featured here have experienced displacement firsthand. Their work does not attempt to offer a single answer to what “home” is, but rather explores the layers of memory, identity, rupture, and hope that are woven into the experience of leaving and rebuilding.

Each photographer presents a deeply personal perspective: some return to childhood memories, others document new places and routines; some search for lost spaces, while others create a sense of home through symbols, objects, or people. Together, their works form a collective archive of resilience, sensitivity, and connection.

As curator, I hope this exhibition offers not only an artistic experience, but also an invitation to pause, reflect, and imagine what “home” might mean — to those who had to leave, and to those who receive them.

— *Honoré Van Hecke*

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Arseniy Litvniuk

Biography

Arseniy Litviniuk (b. 2002, Sevastopol, Ukraine) is a photographer and artist currently based in Belgium. Having lived in Sevastopol until 2019, he completed high school between Sevastopol and Kherson. He initially studied cinema at the University of Culture and Arts in Kyiv before moving to France in 2020 to continue his studies at Aix-Marseille Université.



A long-standing passion for photography led him to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, where he has been studying since 2022. Over the course of his bachelor's, he participated in Breda Photo Festival and was selected for the catalog of the 19th Prix Photographie Ouverte at the Charleroi Museum of Photography. Most recently, he completed an exchange at ECAL in Switzerland and is now finishing his Bachelor degree and completing an internship at moving image studio production.

About the Work

1. "The Categories"

At the start of the war in Ukraine, Ukrainian authorities imposed martial law throughout the country, meaning that everyone could flee the war except men aged 18 to 60. Women, children, and the elderly deemed incapable of fighting were free to leave. Men of fighting age, however, had to remain in the country, awaiting potential conscription. Yet, certain categories of men between 18 and 60 were still allowed to cross the border: students, disabled men, men accompanying a disabled person, drivers delivering humanitarian aid, fathers of at least three children, fathers raising their children alone, military personnel traveling for rehabilitation, railway workers, and athletes representing Ukraine in international competitions. If you were a man between 18 and 60 and didn't fit any of these categories, you couldn't leave.

This project consists of nine self-portraits in which I, a 21-yearold Ukrainian, disguise myself as a man from each of these categories—imagining what I would look like if I had to cross the border as one of them. The goal was to recreate these identities, highlighting the arbitrary nature of who is allowed to leave and who must stay.

In the context of *Where was/is my home?*, this project questions the very idea of home as a place of belonging versus a place of confinement. For many, home is a refuge, but for others, it becomes a boundary they cannot cross. By stepping into these different roles, I explore the paradox of freedom of movement— one of the fundamental rights of Europeans—yet a right that is not equally accessible to everyone. Through these portraits, I reflect on the idea that home is not always a place of safety, but sometimes a space one is forced to remain in.



Daniil Zozulya

Biography

Daniil Zozulya (b. 1998, Karaganda, Kazakhstan) is a photographer currently based in Belgium. Born to a Ukrainian father and a Russian mother, he moved to Belgium in 2001 and grew up in Brussels, where he quickly adapted to Belgian and European culture while maintaining a strong connection to his roots. He studied photography in Brussels and later in Ghent, eventually developing his practice as an independent photographer. Although he has lived in Belgium for over 24 years, questions of identity and belonging remain central to his perspective — shaping both his artistic outlook and personal narrative.



About the work

1. "DOM" (Home)

2. "LA BELGIQUE TOUTE NUE"

My contribution to this exhibition comes from an ongoing personal reflection on identity, memory, and where I come from. I've recently started writing poetry to explore these questions — trying to understand who I really am and how my origins shape me.

At this stage, my visual work is still in development. I'm taking time to revisit archives, reflect, and eventually photograph my father, whose story I would like to tell through my lens. This exhibition is for me not a conclusion, but a step in a broader process — an open moment of searching, remembering, and slowly reconnecting with what has been left behind and reshaped over time.

DOM (Home)

Parmi toutes les courbes de la Terre
Je me retrouve semé ici
Sur un vaste étendu de sol noir
Là où grandissent des adultes de fer
Crépuscule attardé sous une brûlante braise
En substance cache une lumineuse jeunesse

Les steppes Kazakh n'attendent personne
Au carrefour des solitaires
J'y suis né - dans les plis rasoirs de la vie

Pourtant je suis suspendu dans l'air
Au rythme de la Brabançonne
Je me faufile dans les sillages
Creusés par la Senne -

Seul sur cette petite-île
Je ne reconnais pas ces pavés
Ma maison est ici mais mon cœur est ailleurs

Daniil Zozulya

LA BELGIQUE TOUTE NUE

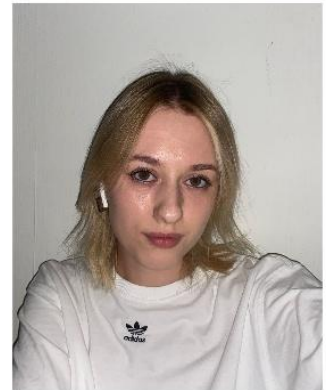
J'y fis mes premiers pas
Sur les courbes de son corps
Je me souvins d'elle accueillante
Inconforme & parfois brouillonne
Elle fit étroite aux premiers abords
Remplie de cadenas de craintes
Néanmoins elle m'adopta
Elle m'apprit la liberté & applaudir l'absurdité
Le soleil y est souterrain mais il existe
Ma chair est ici mais les miettes d'exil restent
Que puis-je face à ce que mon cœur en dit ?
Je l'aime nue - tout simplement

Daniil Zozulya

Daria Berezovska

Biography

Daria Berezovska (b.2006, Kramatorsk, Ukraine) is an 19 year old photographer who has been living in Belgium since 2022. She grew up in Kramatorsk (Donetsk Oblast) and lived there until the outbreak of the war. She began taking photographs at the age of fourteen, after receiving her first professional camera from her parents. During her early years, she travelled across various Ukrainian cities, capturing family holidays through her lens.



A few months before Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, her family had planned to move to Kyiv, but the war made this impossible. One month after the invasion began, they left for Portugal, where family friends had already settled. After a few months, unforeseen circumstances led the family to move again—this time to Belgium, where she has now been living for two and a half years.

She completed her Ukrainian secondary education remotely, followed by a preparatory year for non-native speakers learning Dutch (OKAN), five years of secondary school in Belgium, and is currently in her first year of a Bachelor in Photography at KASK & Conservatorium in Ghent. After a long pause caused by the war, she has rediscovered her passion for photography and is now actively pursuing her development as a visual artist.

About the work

1. "The Way Home"

The photo reflects the theme "where was/is my home" well. In the distance, hidden by fog, a house is visible. The girl goes there, as if she wants to get home as soon as possible. At the same time, the surrounding field symbolizes freedom and ease - she chooses her own path that leads her home.

2. "Freedom"

"Freedom"- is a word that describes home for every Ukrainian.

3. "Consequences"

Reflection of the consequences for Ukrainian homes if the war does not stop. There is a fear that in the future, houses in Ukraine will look the same. And people will (already) ask themselves: "Where was my home?"

4."Kramatorsk 30/01/2025"



Hanna Babko

Biography

Hanna Babko (b. 1994, Sevastopol, Ukraine) studied originally law and economics, but eventually chose a creative path and worked in marketing for five years. Her interest in photography began during her school years, and while studying she started photographing other people.



After the annexation of Crimea in 2014, she moved several times. From 2019 to 2022 she lived in Kyiv, but the full-scale invasion led her to leave for Belgium — initially thinking it would be temporary. The uncertainty of the situation kept her in limbo for months. She began taking language courses, but found it difficult to return to work in marketing, and started looking for other possibilities.

During this period, she engaged in various forms of volunteer work and small projects, mostly for the Ukrainian community, as she felt a strong urge to help. At the same time, she realised her own need for stability.

To improve her Dutch and to build something new, she enrolled in a photography course at KISP — a decision that turned out to be a great fit. She is now determined to make photography her main profession.

About the Work

1. "Untitled"

Where is my home? I cannot answer this question. It is no longer in Ukraine, but it is not in Belgium either. I feel divided into two parts. I chose one photo. It was taken in the place where I live now, in Ghent.

For me, stairs are a symbol of movement, transition, change. But I am neither going up nor down — I'm just sitting. For now, I cannot choose, and this is my choice: to stay in Belgium, surrounded by Ukrainian things and culture: the vyshyvanka I'm wearing, the rooster on the wardrobe that I brought with me, the Ukrainian books inside the closet.

I am here now — but I am not at home.



Irina Leonenko

Biography

Irina Leonenko (b. 1980, Kyiv, Ukraine) is a Ukrainian-Dutch photographer currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Photography at LUCA School of Arts in Brussels (Campus NaraFi). She holds an MA in European Studies from the University of Bonn and an MA in Eastern European Studies from the Free University of Berlin. With a background in international relations, she has worked for EU institutions in Ukraine and Belarus. Irina is currently working on a deeply personal documentary project, capturing the story of her own family and their experiences amidst the war in Ukraine. Her project focuses on the events that began in her hometown of Donetsk in 2014 and the impact of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Since 2019, Irina has been living in Belgium with her two sons, Nikolai and Ilya.



About the Work

1. "Memory of Home"

My project explores the evolving nature of memory, particularly in relation to loss and the act of reconstruction through images of a place that can no longer be physically accessed. It stems from my deep personal connection to my hometown, Donetsk, a city in Eastern Ukraine that has been affected by conflict and occupied by Russia since 2014. As time passes and the city remains on the frontlines, my memories of Donetsk have gradually faded, becoming increasingly detached from its present reality. With only a few childhood photographs, I began reconstructing the city as I once knew it—merging fragments of memory with imagination. The possibility of returning feels increasingly remote, as if my memory is dissolving, leaving me to rely on the remnants that still endure. This work is not only a reflection of my personal past but also an exploration of how we all reconstruct, reinterpret, and reimagine the places and experiences that have shaped us.

In my search for a way to reconnect with my lost home, I unexpectedly found a point of reference in Charleroi, Belgium—Donetsk's twin city since the 1980s. Like Donetsk, Charleroi has a rich industrial history, deeply rooted in coal mining and manufacturing. Through its landscape, history, and architecture, I begin to rebuild the essence of Donetsk, weaving together the tangible and the imagined.

Memory is fragile, selective, and ever-changing. As I navigate the space between the home I once knew and the one that now holds echoes of that memory, I examine how we hold on to the past when we can no longer touch it. This project is not just an attempt to reconstruct the physical reality of Donetsk but also to capture the emotional landscape of longing, loss, and the desire to return to a home that may never be the same again. It explores the spaces between memory and reality, between what we recall and what we are compelled to reimagine. Through this work, I seek to give form to the intangible—to create a space where memory and place coexist, where the past is both preserved and transformed, and where the act of remembering itself becomes an act of creation. In doing so, I locate my memory in images, bridging the distance between what was, what remains, and what is yet to be reimaged.



Nikolay Karabinovych

Biography

Nikolay Karabinovych (b. 1988, Odesa, Ukraine) works across various media such as video installation, performance, sound, and sculpture. In his artistic practice, Karabinovych addresses complex social (hi)stories, particularly those from the expanses of "Eastern Europe" combining them with personal family narratives. In his work, which questions notions of identity, belonging and exclusion, the artist often refers to music, which plays an important role in his practice. He revisits epochal songs, genres and personalities and uses their ability to illuminate a different era in a different climate or socio-political arena.



In 2020 he graduated from the Higher Institute for Fine Arts (HISK) in Ghent. Karabinovych was an assistant curator of the 5th Odesa Biennale. In 2022, 2020 and 2018, he was awarded the first PinchukArtCentre Prize.

His work has been shown extensively at public institutions: HKW, Berlin; MUHKA Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp; Museum de Fundatie, Zwolle; MAXXI, Rome; Albertinum, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; Belgium Jewish Museum, Centre for Fine Arts Bozar, Brussels; w139, Amsterdam; Zamek Ujazdowski, Warsaw; and many others.

He has also participated at the Steirischer Herbst (2024), Kaunas Biennale (2023), the Kyiv Biennale (2023, 2021), Survival Kit (2023) and in parallel program of Venice Biennale (2024, 2022).

About the Work

1. "Untitled"

I am unable to write this in Russian.

My capacity for language is at an end, words no longer connect with meaning.

At least with English, I have some room for manoeuvre. Yes, even at the start of this text, you'll come up against a military term. Everything now is filled with fear and expectation of war, and yet, war is not the right word. For most, the war began in 2014, but for me, there was enough aggression back in February 2006, and a sense of monstrous injustice and helplessness when as a student, I helped organize a protest against the Russian army seizure of lighthouses in Crimea. At the time, there were barely 15 of us facing the Russian consulate in Odessa. It's a mystery why no-one remembers this now, just as they can't quite recall August 2008, when the Russian army invaded independent Georgia. I have always remembered this, and anxiously awaited what would happen next.

A week ago I was back home in Odessa. There, everything is on hold, nothing happens, frozen in a state of in-between. Karaoke clubs are overcrowded, and as usual, your ears are filled with the standard shitty Russian pop music. Before my eyes appears the karaoke project which I created for “Songs of Southern Slavs”. In Kyiv, which has been my home for the past few years, everything feels a little different. Anxiety cannot be concealed. And yet people still refuse to believe it, averting their eyes and hoping this will go away. Today, Germany’s Lufthansa, and a week before them Dutch KLM, canceled all flights from and to Ukraine. But the vast majority of ordinary Ukrainians would never be able to use them anyway. There’s nowhere to fly to, and nowhere to hide, not even for a while in Lviv. For many of my friends, escape is an unaffordable luxury. And so, they do as they’ve always done, and just live and endure.

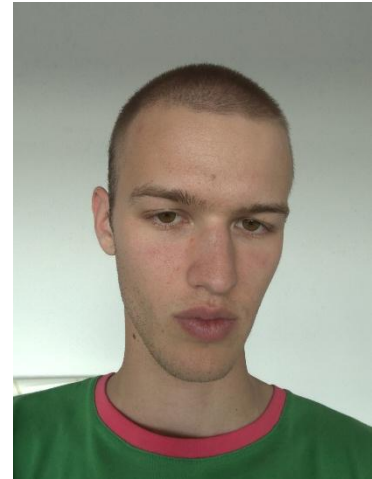
I’m paralyzed with fear, I cannot work, I can’t do anything but refresh the news every five minutes. What will happen next I do not know. I can not imagine. This is where my imagination and my freedom ends.



Vadym Ivchenko

Biography

Vadym Ivchenko (b. 2004, Kyiv, Ukraine) was born and raised in Kyiv. Before the war, he was a member of the national swimming team and a student at the National University of Ukraine on Physical Education and Sport. At the time, photography played only a minor role in his life — he occasionally took snapshots on his phone, but it wasn't until much later that he began to see photography as a meaningful creative outlet.



His life changed entirely with the outbreak of war. On March 5, 2022, he left Ukraine with his mother and their cat, first crossing into Poland and spending a night in a local school. They then continued to Potsdam, Germany, where they had relatives. He stayed there for a month and a half, training with the German national team at Olympiastützpunkt Brandenburg. However, over time he experienced mental burnout related to swimming and eventually decided to close that chapter of his life.

Looking for a fresh start, he moved to Brussels and studied at a business school for nearly two years. After a period of reflection, he realised he wanted to pursue something more personal and meaningful. He took several months off from his studies and was encouraged to apply to the photography programme at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. He is currently in his first year and continues to explore his growing passion for photography.

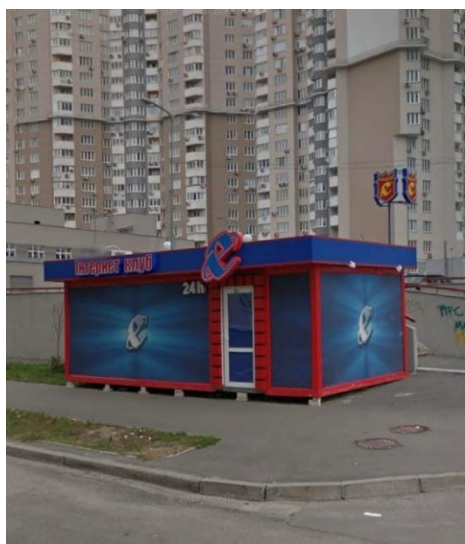
About the Work

For this exhibition, I have chosen three photographs that deeply resonate with the theme 'Where was/is my home?'

1. "Untitled" – from my ongoing series **To Leave or Not to Leave** — this is my fascination with colors and the simplicity of functional spaces. The title *To Leave or Not to Leave* comes from the temporary nature of these places, but when something in them resonates with me, I don't want to leave at all. It gives me a sense of connection and kinship with the place I am temporarily occupying.

2. "Untitled" – from my ongoing series **Try Not to Forget the Way Back Home** — a project in which I explore images of my city on Google Maps. I left Ukraine in 2022, before reaching adulthood. Due to the full-scale invasion, the maps no longer update, just like my memories, which have remained unchanged.

3. "Untitled" – from my ongoing series **It Forces Me to Grow Up Fast** — a series of toys and drawings that do not evoke joy but, on the contrary, seem creepy and strange. This is a direct reflection of how life forced me to grow up quickly, taking away childhood and carefree moments.



Valeriia Shcherbina

Biography

Valeriia Shcherbina (b.1995, Odesa, Ukraine) is a Ukrainian photographer from Odesa. She studied visual design at the M.B. Grekov Art College. While visual culture has always shaped her perception of reality, photography became her primary practice after moving to Belgium. Her work explores the intersection of personal history and socio-political context.



She documents social transformations, protests, and urban life while collaborating with artists and dancers to create images that balance observation and staging. Themes of identity, belonging, and memory are central to her photography.

At the start of the full-scale invasion, she was in Kyiv. Forced to evacuate to Germany and later to Belgium, her perspective shifted—questions of home, loss, and displacement became key to her work. Now based in Brussels, she continues to develop her practice. In addition to personal projects, she works in a film lab, handling all stages of analog photography processing—from developing to printing—deepening technical expertise and fostering experimentation

About the Work

1. **"So Far, So Close"** In the summer of 2024, I traveled to Paris for an exhibition conceived and organized by my friend, artist Taras Tolstikov. In a small Parisian café, photographs from Russian-occupied Donetsk were displayed. They were taken by Mykhailovena, a 79-year-old woman—Taras's grandmother—who documented life for her family outside occupied Ukraine. A blooming garden, a cat in the yard, a sky scarred by missile trails—for nearly 11 years of war, Taras has gathered a collection of messages and images from his grandmother. During the exhibition, I took their portraits, and in a fleeting moment "between frames," I captured an image that resonated deeply with me. Two contradictory yet inseparable emotions converged: sorrow and hope. The pain of a long-awaited, brief meeting intertwined with the hope of war's end and a return home. Paris, 2024.

2. **"War Bonding"** Russo-Georgian War, 2008–... / Russo-Ukrainian War, 2014–2022–...

"War bonding" is rooted in the concept of "trauma bonding"—a connection formed between people who have experienced similar traumas. This bond creates a profound empathy, a silent understanding shaped by shared wounds. Georgia, 2024.

3. **"Unity"** We are not alone when we stand together. I believe empathy and collaboration can generate a powerful movement, giving Ukrainians the strength to resist Russian violence and aggression. At demonstrations, those who were forced to leave their homes by war merge their pain and anger into one voice—a voice that Europe hears. Their solidarity matters.

When I hear English, French, and Dutch spoken at pro-Ukrainian protests in Brussels, I feel the world becoming my home. Because home is not just a place—it is where you are understood and supported. Brussels, 2025.



Yuliia Danylenko

Biography

Yuliia Danylenko (b. 2003, Kharkiv, Ukraine) is a Ukrainian photographer currently based in Antwerp. She studied Philology (Germanic languages and literatures, Swedish, English, and Dutch) at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. Just two weeks after the full-scale invasion began, she was forced to leave Kyiv. After a brief stay in Kam'yanets'-Podil's'kyi, she relocated to Brussels and has now lived in Belgium for three years.



Yuliia is currently studying photography at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. While photography has always been part of her life, it became a more focused and intentional practice after her displacement. Her work is shaped by personal transitions and the redefinition of identity in times of uncertainty. Through photography, she explores memory, adaptation, and the quiet, introspective process of rebuilding one's sense of self.

About The work

1. "Untitled"

My works convey my memories and how they overlap each other, nostalgia and missing home, not knowing the future and living in present moment .

Often our memories are stuffed into our heads in a chaotic way, but in fact it is very structured.

The reason is that investigative connections are constantly processed in a conscious and unconscious state.

I often use double exposure to convey this emotion, I also metaphorically convey my feelings such as alienation, distancing and strangeness of being in space.



This project began with a question — *Where was/is my home?* — but it unfolded into many voices, each with their own images, memories, and journeys.

Where was/is my home? became more than a title; it became a question that echoed in every photo, every silence, and every shared memory. These photographers didn't just show places — they showed the feeling of searching, of remembering, and of belonging.

As curator, I'm grateful to have witnessed these perspectives, and I hope that this booklet allows you to pause, reflect, and carry a part of their stories with you.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

