

# Nikita Kadan

**Booth N05**

*Nova sector*

November 29<sup>th</sup> — December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022

**Art | Basel**  
**Miami Beach**

# Nikita Kadan

## ДЕТИ. ЛЮДИ (“CHILDREN. PEOPLE”)

Booth N05 — Nova Sector

**For its fourth participation in Art Basel Miami Beach, Galerie Poggi has conceived a special project around a new body of works by the Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan.**

*Text written by Sasha Pevak*

Nikita Kadan is a Ukrainian artist based in Kyiv. His drawings, sculptures, installations and paintings explore what links bind us to the places we inhabit, and how history and memory are constructed through collective and national narratives, ideologies, politics, and institutions.

The artist tackles issues of ongoing violence over history, culture, lands and bodies, often relying on the experience of colonial domination that was inflicted on his country for centuries by the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, and which is now perpetuated by the Russian Federation, just as his installation *Difficulties of Profanation II* (2015-22) recently showed at the Venice Biennale.

While his works arise from this specific context, they address all relations of oppression and the victims they leave behind. By drawing our attention to the violence that affects him daily, Nikita Kadan seeks to remind us of our humanity and fragility, as well as to nourish a feeling of resilience in the face of inexplicable war cruelty.





When the full-scale Russian military invasion started on February 24, 2022, Nikita Kadan found refuge in an art gallery located in the center of Kyiv. This space was built during the Soviet times as a bomb shelter. After barricading the entrance with weighty sculptures, and while he could still hear shelling throughout his besieged city, the artist developed there a new body of works. All that time, he also remained hyper connected through the Internet and social media (one might say to the point of becoming one of the loudest public voices against the war in Ukraine, as he was solicited by many museums and even invited by the European Parliament to testify).

Most of the artworks on display at Galerie Poggi have been realized during these still ongoing hostilities, as a reaction to their unprecedented violence manifested in mass killings of civilians, tortures, critical infrastructure and housing destruction, as well as information warfare. In this electrified atmosphere, yet often without electricity nor heating, the artist made charcoal drawings and writings on paper, taking inspiration from wartime stories and echoing slogans that have become an important part of the Ukrainians' moral resistance.

For example, he scribbled expressively and repeatedly phrases such as 'Close the Sky,' 'Russian Warship Go Fuck Yourself,' 'Decolonize Russia' or 'Cheap Gas – Cheap Blood' in one of his series of drawings. This ensemble also includes a banner reading 'Fuck War,' which was originally hung on the facade of the Secession Building in Vienna and constitutes one out of many viral gestures used to denounce the war. As the artist says: "if banners and chanting remain mostly useless in wartime, when these words are repeated multiple times like a magic spell and if a critical mass of people believes in them, they can actually influence the reality."

*In view of the ongoing war in Ukraine, the board of Vienna Secession invited Kadan to design the banner above the entrance.*

© Nikita Kadan, « Fuck War », Vienna Secession, 2022

Language as a form of protection is also addressed in another untitled series of drawings. Here, the words 'ДЕТИ' ('CHILDREN') and 'ЛЮДИ' ('PEOPLE') are drawn over a cloudy sky or next to a gaping black sun. The first relates to a tragic event, which happened last March in the city of Mariupol. 'CHILDREN' was written in giant Cyrillic letters twice next to the building of the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theater, so as to be seen by Russian pilots from the sky: this was an attempt to protect civilians, mostly women and children, who were hiding there from shelling. However, it didn't prevent bombing: the theater was destroyed, 300 to 600 people died, and the whole city was razed by the Russian army at the beginning of the invasion.

As for 'ЛЮДИ,' it appears in other works between the earth inhabited by 'people' and the sky, which the war transformed into a source of destruction. The word is spelled the same in Ukrainian and Russian, but they are pronounced differently. Thus, the artist addresses through this overlap the myth of fraternity between Ukrainians and Russians, which in fact doesn't protect people from death. According to him, Putin's racism unfolds in a paradoxical way: Ukrainians are seen as brothers yet spoiled ones, similar yet not the same. 'If your right hand entices you to sin, let it go limp and useless! For you're better off losing a part of your body than to have it all thrown into hell' (Matthew 5:30).





In a war of conquest, people's lives lose all value; bodies are thrown in black trash bags like waste (*Agamemnon in a Trash Bag*, 2022). Rich black Ukrainian soils (*чорнозем*) are turned into mass graves, poisoned by the war, auguring tomorrow's famine. Throughout the series *The Shadow on The Ground* (2022), Nikita Kadan repeatedly depicts human corpses resting on plowed fields of black soil. These lying shadows of the invader are thus stuck in the landscape as a metaphor for the long-lasting effects of war. However, in popular narratives, the occupier's remains can also carry the promise of a new life, as the story of sunflower seeds tells us. It began with a video posted online last February, in which a Ukrainian woman addressed a Russian soldier: "take the seeds and put them in your pockets, so that when you lay here, the sunflowers will grow." For a long time strictly seen as a resource, black soil has become an active actor of history: absorbing violence, preserving memory, and bearing hope for the future.

Finally, the sculptures from the series *Tiger's Leap* (2018) suggest the importance of reconnecting today's anti-imperial struggles with the upheavals of the past. They represent replicas of the spears that factory workers manufactured in Horlivka, in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine, during a 1905-armed rebellion against their company owners. Borrowing from Walter Benjamin's concept of 'a tiger's leap into the past,' the series points out the need to rely on inspiring examples of popular resilience and resistance to oppression from the past, so that to make a difference in the present.

Sasha Pevak  
November 2022

# Nikita Kadan

## Biography

Nikita Kadan is a member of the artist group R.E.P. (Revolutionary Experimental Space) since 2004 and co-founder and member of the curatorial group and activities HUDRADA since 2008. Graduated from the National Academy of Fine Arts in Kiev, where he studied monumental painting, he now works with installation, graphic design, painting, wall drawings and posters in the city, sometimes in interdisciplinary collaboration with architects, human rights activists and sociologists.

Nikita Kadan currently benefits from a solo show at the **Museum Sztuki in Poland** until March 2023. He had a major solo exhibition, **Stone Hits Stone**, at the **Pinchuk Art Centre in Kiev** in 2021, before the conflict. In 2019, the **MUMOK** (Vienna, AT) devoted a large solo exhibition to him. His works were shown at **M HKA Antwerp** in 2018, which invited him again in 2022 for the exhibition **Imagine Ukraine**, in collaboration with the **PinchukArtCentre of Kiev, Bozar, the European Parliament** and the **59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia**.

His works are now in numerous collections around the world, including the **Centre Pompidou, Paris** (FR), the **Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Foundation** (TBA21), the **KADIST Foundation, Paris** (FR), the **National Art Museum, Kiev** (Ukraine), the **Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich** (Germany), the **MuHKA Museum Contemporary Art of Antwerp** (Belgium), the **FRAC of Brittany** (France), the **Center for Contemporary Art Luigi Pecci, Prato** (Italy), the **Military History Museum, Dresden** (Germany), the **Krasnoyark Museum Centre, Krasnoyark** (Russia) as well as the **Kingdom of Belgium, Ministry of Foreign Affairs** (Belgium). In 2020, the Galerie Poggi held its first solo exhibition in Paris, titled **The Day of Blood**.

While being sheltered in Kiyv, Nikita Kadan has worked hand in hand in with the gallery to exceptionally produce a new body of works specifically for the fair. Drawing on the specific context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, his works become icons that stand against any type of oppression and constitute an homage to the victims of all conflicts. The gallery is invested in standing in solidarity with Nikita Kadan and all Ukrainians to the best of its abilities. This is why **10% of all sales made during the fair will go towards supporting the Ukrainian arts scene**.

Booth N05

Nova Sector

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# Featured Works





**Nikita Kadan**

*Люди (People) I, 2022*

Acrylic and oil pastel

140 x 190 cm

55 x 75 inches

Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

**\$ 25,000 ex. taxes**



**Nikita Kadan**

*Люди (People) II, 2022*

Acrylic and oil pastel

140 x 190 cm

55 x 75 inches

Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

**\$ 25,000 ex. taxes**



**Nikita Kadan**  
*Дети, (Children), 2022*

Acrylic and oil pastel  
140 x 190 cm  
55 x 75 inches  
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

**\$ 25,000 ex. taxes**



**Nikita Kadan**

*Agamemnon in a trash bag, 2022*

Acrylic and oil pastel

200 x 120 cm

79 x 47 inches

Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

**\$ 25,000 ex. taxes**



**Nikita Kadan**

*Tiger's Leap (3 spears), 2022*

Iron spears on base  
230 x 35 x 35 cm each  
90,5 x 14 x 14 inches each  
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

**\$ 36,000 ex. taxes**



**Nikita Kadan**

*Люди (People, Radvanka), 2022*

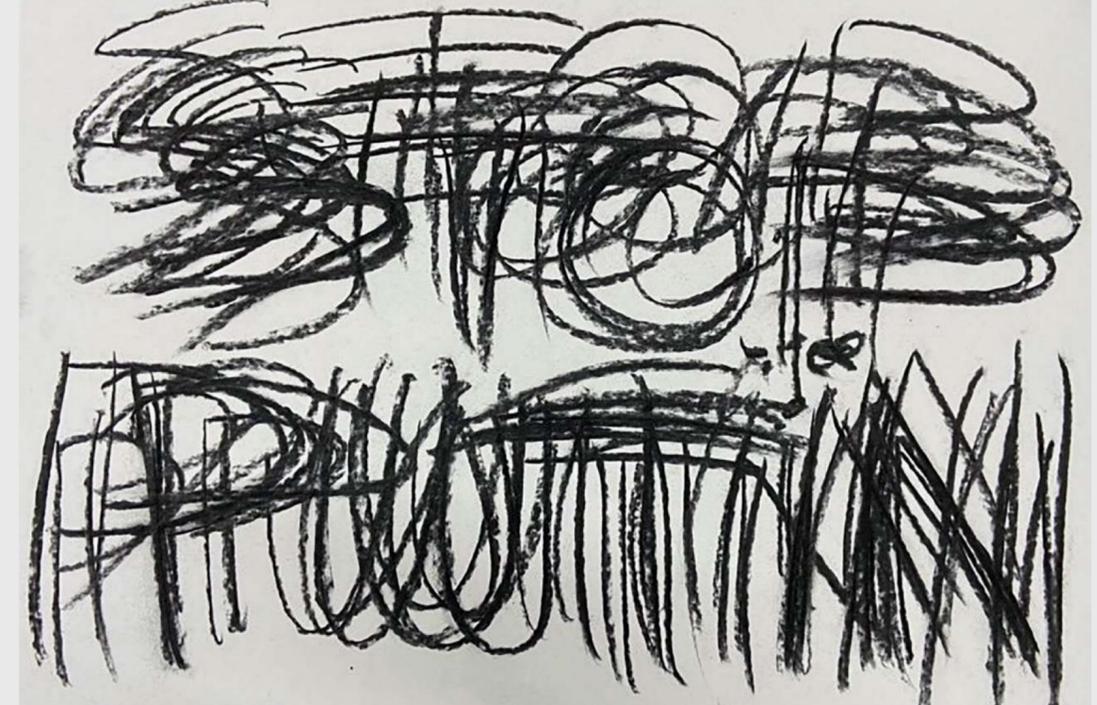
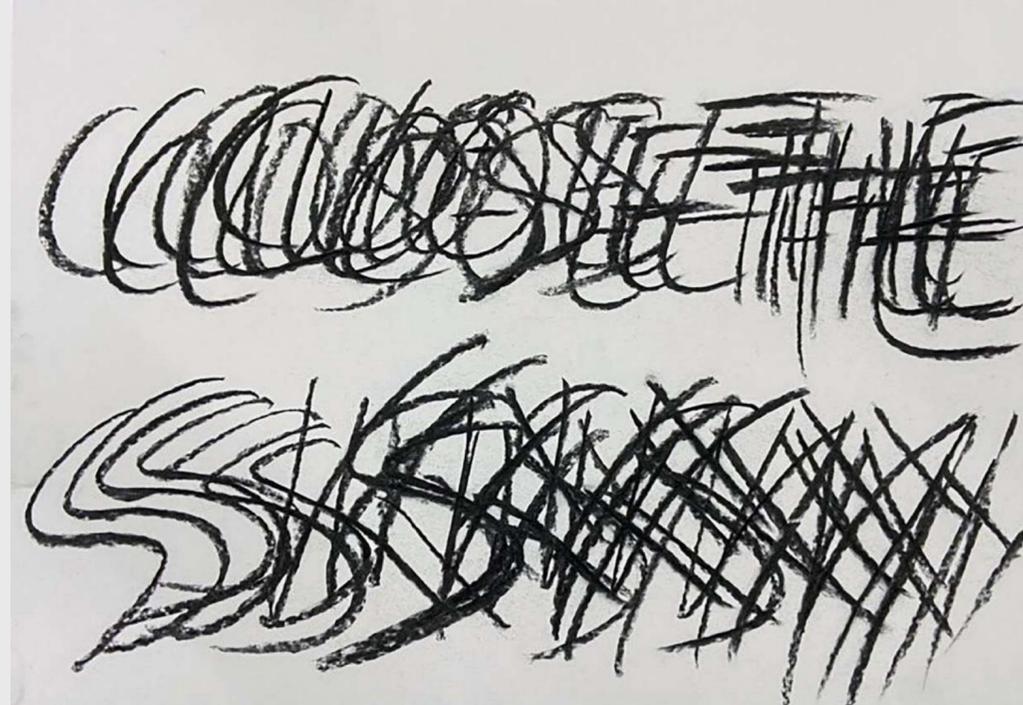
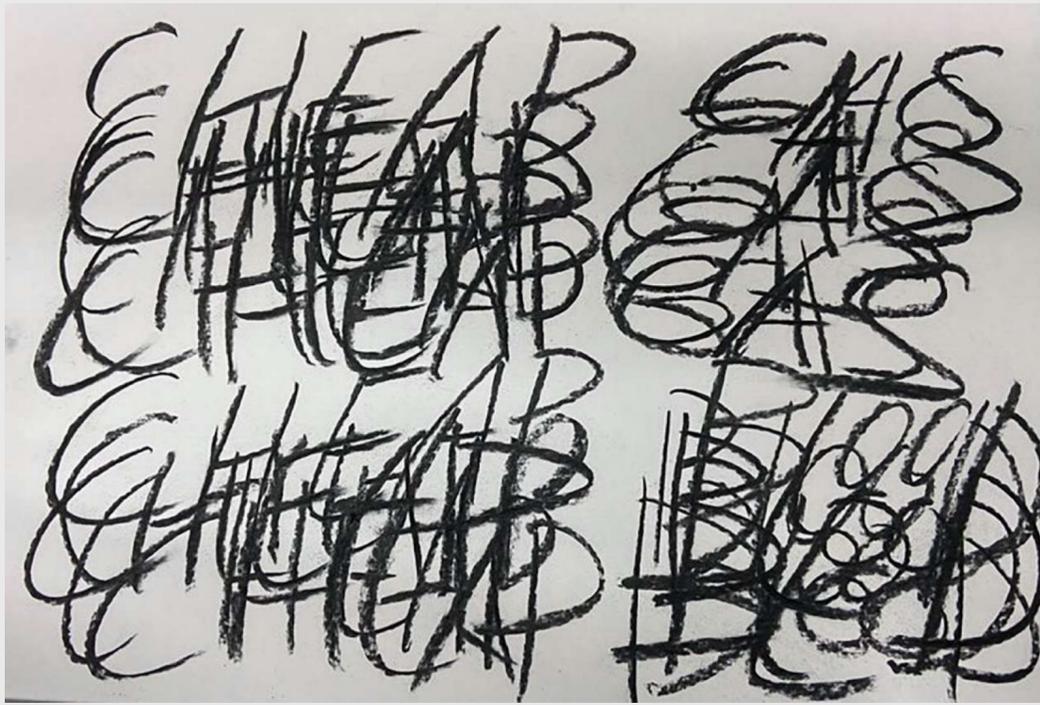
Charcoal on paper

61 x 85 cm

24 x 33,5 inches

Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

**\$ 6,500 ex. taxes**



**Nikita Kadan**

*Repeating Speech series (selection), 2022*

Charcoal on paper

42 x 60 cm each

16,5 x 24 inches each

Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

**\$ 5,000 ex. taxes (each)**



**Nikita Kadan**

*The Shadow on the Ground series, 2022*

Charcoal on paper

61 x 85 cm each

24 x 33,5 inches each

Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

**\$ 6,000 ex. taxes (each)**

# Art | Basel Miami Beach

## **VIP DAYS**

Tuesday, November 29th — Wednesday, November 30th, 2022

## **PUBLIC OPENING DAYS**

Thursday, December 1st — Saturday, December 3rd, 2021

## **VIEWING ROOM**

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## **CONTACT**

Sales and Inquiries

Jérôme Poggi  
[j.poggi@galeriepoggi.com](mailto:j.poggi@galeriepoggi.com)  
+33 (0)6 09 55 66 66

Camille Bréchignac  
[c.brechignac@galeriepoggi.com](mailto:c.brechignac@galeriepoggi.com)  
+33 (0)7 87 23 41 42

Press

Anne-Sophie Bocquier  
[as.bocquier@galeriepoggi.com](mailto:as.bocquier@galeriepoggi.com)  
+33 (0)6 18 61 48 56

