

# Trauma, Memory and Silenced History



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# **Trauma, Memory and Silenced History**

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Cover image: Natalia Jezova, fig. 1, *Memory Traces* Series, 2020, photo collage

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## Abstract

**Trauma, Memory and Silenced History** is a reflection on my progress as a practising visual artist during this focused time of my doctoral studies, and it documents how my art and research have become intricately woven together. The principal aim of my doctoral research is to bring key components of my creative and theoretical inquiries together into a single body of work.

The project explores the mediation of personal and collective memory and investigates the concept of post-memory and the mediation of the past through familial and personal traumatic events in a series of photographs, films and large-scale installations. My personal traumas and displacement, for political reasons, were the hidden forces behind most of the themes evoked in this work. My personal interest in and experience of trauma have motivated me to use my art practice to raise awareness of the relevance of these issues today.

In researching my family history and the legacies of displacement and exile, my work has explored ideas of trauma, loss and memory: evocations transmitted across generations. These themes, each one evolving from the others, evoke a journey from the surface to the depths, from thoughts to feelings.

I describe how ideas are generated from collecting objects that belonged to my family, creating a material form of memory, and how the meanings of those materials are then transformed and elaborated by the creative process and the mode of presentation.

In parallel, I have uncovered my familial and personal experience of traumatic events, addressed the falsification of collective memory by political and State powers and explored a silenced history. In my practice I refer to the idea that collective memory is very often a tool of manipulation, through the reconstruction of history by political elites, that affects and resonates with the present.

In the theoretical research, the key analytic approaches I deploy are located within the framework of trauma, memory, post-memory and archives studies and theories of place and landscape. By researching theorists such as Marianne Hirsch, Jean Baudrillard, Annette Kuhn, Sergei Eisenstein, Daniel Miller, Anna Tobiassen, Michael Foucault and Susan M.

Piers I have been allowed to develop my artistic practice further, adding substance to my work and making it more engaging. Key artists and filmmakers, such as Zarina Bhimji, Rosy Martin, Christian Boltanski, Zlatko Cosic, Arthur Lipsett, Barbara Meter and Andrey Tarkovsky, have been a source of inspiration, encouraging me to explore my work and to deploy strategies such as metaphor and symbolism and the use of different methodologies – such as the long takes, superimposition techniques and a combination of still photographs and videos, sound and silence.

## Introduction

The following report is a reflection on my creative and professional practice, carried out during the doctorate, and a theoretical contextualisation. It shows how my work has progressed and the questions that were raised through my artistic practice. The principal aim of my doctoral research is to bring key components of my creative and theoretical inquiries together into a single body of work.

I have been greatly influenced by my Russian and Jewish cultural background. My personal and familial traumas and displacement, for political reasons, were the hidden forces behind most of the themes evoked in my work. Through concepts of ‘post memory’ and ‘silenced history’ I explore traumatic memories of my family’s experience after the Russian revolution, during WWII and through the Holocaust in Lithuania. I argue that these issues are still relevant today and, as an artist, I feel impelled to explore them and raise awareness about them.

In selecting artists to research I chose those whose themes and methodologies in their practice resonate with my own. All of these artists focused their attention on a personal or collective memory of trauma and an interpretation of the past. These all show, in different ways, how the past is transmitted into the present, and what kind of impact that has on our current understanding of the world.

In the section entitled Personal and Creative Context I discuss the process of gradually expanding my practice as a painter to that of a photographer and filmmaker. I also discuss

how my interest in personal and collective memory and gender inequality issues has gradually evolved my work through discovering the practice of other artists.

In the Creative Practice and Theory section I discuss how my project has developed and how a combination of theory, artistic practice and the use of different media has allowed me to explore, understand and examine the subject, in order to further develop and contextualise my practice. In this section I explain my methodology and consider my experimentation with superimposition techniques, long takes, sound and films without moving images.

I have researched theorists - including Marianne Hirsch, Jean Baudrillard, Annette Kuhn, Sergei Eisenstein, Daniel Miller, Anna Tobiassen, Michael Foucault and Susan M. Piers - whose work resonates with me. I have researched artists, who have explored the subject of trauma, dislocation, post memory and silenced history, including Zarina Bhimji, Rosy Martin, Zlatko Cosic, Arthur Lipsett, Barbara Meter and Andrey Tarkovsky. The work of these artists has encouraged me to look at themes in my research from different perspectives, using different techniques and approaches in photography and filmmaking.

I reflect on my professional practice and how it has developed and benefitted from participating in exhibitions, residencies and presenting work in seminars and conferences. In conclusion, by placing my art in a contemporary context, I can see my practice continuing to address personal and collective memory issues, exploring this with a diversity of media, in solo and group exhibitions. I was also able to get feedback from regular viewers and professionals which has helped me immensely to develop both the practical and theoretical elements of my work.

All translations from Russian and Lithuanian in the text are mine unless otherwise indicated.

## Personal and Creative Context

“What matters in life is not what happens to you but what you remember and how you remember it.”

Gabriel García Márquez

I was born in the 1960s in the Soviet Union. My father, Piotr Kondratov, was from a Russian aristocratic family, while my mother, Galina Cherkassova, had Jewish roots. The early 60s was a truly remarkable time - people all over the world had just recovered from and were starting to forget about the horrors of the Second World War. It was a time full of freedom, hope and promise. Great efforts were aimed at restoring a peaceful life, with a lot of focus being paid to education.

The 1960s were also a time of unprecedented achievements in the development of science, and I associate my childhood with such great historical events as the first space flight of Yuri Gagarin, in 1961.

My early years coincided with the “Khrushchev Thaw”. In the Soviet Union the “Sixties” movement consisted of two interconnected but different subcultures, jokingly referred to as the “physicists” (those engaged in technical sciences) and the “lyricists” (writers, philosophers, artists, theater and film professionals). While “lyricists” were mainly concerned with arguing that society would be “empty” without culture, the “physicists” kept pace with scientific and technological progress, claiming that the scientific knowledge must take priority.

My parents were outstanding representatives of both “physicists” and “lyricists” - my mother was a philologist (later a Doctor in Philosophy), while my father was a Doctor of Technical Sciences and the author of technical literature on electronics. I grew up in Moscow and, from the age of five, moved between Moscow and Vilnius (as my father was teaching in both cities).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In my parent’s houses and dachas in Moscow and Vilnius they constantly gathered their friends - ‘physicists’ and ‘lyricists’ - scientists, writers, artists and film directors. My older brother and I always looked forward to these parties. We did not really understand the meaning of the debates but we were interested in the creative atmosphere of these meetings. We listened breathlessly to the inspired verses of contemporary poets like Sergei Yesenin, Marina Tsvetaeva, Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Robert Rozhdestvensky. Guests of our parents often



Figure 1. Natalia Jezova, *Portrait of Marina Tsvetaeva*, 1980. Burned paper, pencil.

From the age of seven to sixteen I attended a music school and an art school. My favorite lessons at music school were composition and improvisation. We created musical images and composed music for different characters. This developed my artistic and imaginative thinking and helped me later in working with sound in my own films. I now have a huge library of sounds - consisting mostly of files that I converted into a digital audio format from vinyl records that belonged to my parents.

In art school the curriculum was focused on classical methods of training: sculpture, painting, drawing, composition and art history. Every weekend we attended museums and art galleries, and one of the strongest impressions I had was when we went to see Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, in 1974 (Figure 2).

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carried out improvised performances, and we children took part in them. I remember these meetings very well, and their influence stayed in my work (Figure 1).

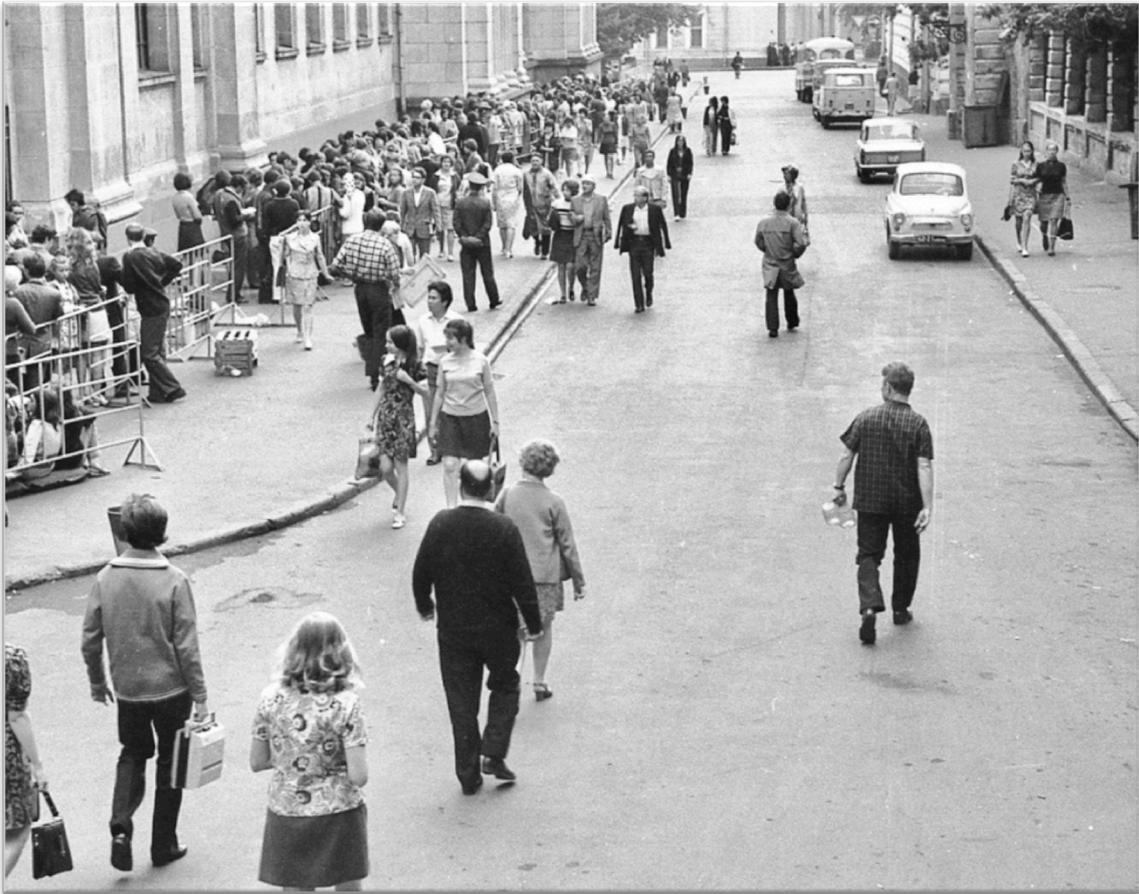


Figure 2. The queue at the Pushkin Museum in 1974 to see the *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci, Moscow, USSR.

Outside the Museum we lined up in a queue many kilometers long just to catch a glimpse of the famous painting. We waited in the queue all night and the next day we finally got into the Museum to see da Vinci's masterpiece for just 15 seconds (the time allowed for each viewer) (Figure 3). It is hard to say what amazed me more - the masterpiece itself or the desire of millions of people to see it. For the next couple of years my parents and their friends would discuss the unique eyes and smile of Mona Lisa.



Figure 3. *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci in the Pushkin Museum, 1974, Moscow, USSR. Photograph from my personal archive.

The exhibition had a big effect on our lessons on the history of art and our painting classes in art school. We started to learn about Leonardo da Vinci's *sfumato*<sup>2</sup> technique and the *chiaroscuro*<sup>3</sup> effect. The theoretical knowledge that I received in the art school was useful to me later in my stage photography, when, in creating the soft *chiaroscuro* light in sharp contrast with the deep dark background, I used one light source to light a model or objects horizontally.

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<sup>2</sup> The term *sfumato* (derived from the Italian word *fumo*, meaning 'smoke') refers to the technique of oil painting in which colours or tones are blended in such a subtle manner that they melt into one another without perceptible transitions, lines or edges. Encyclopaedia in Fine Arts/<http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/painting/sfumato.htm>

<sup>3</sup> *Chiaroscuro* is an Italian term which literally means "light-dark". *Chiaroscuro* is the use of strong contrasts between light and dark, usually bold contrasts affecting a whole composition. <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/glossary/chiaroscuro>

Later, after my thorough research on Leonardo da Vinci's portraits of women, I became more influenced by the aura of mystery surrounding his paintings, each of which hides a long list of coded signs and symbols. Every detail in his paintings - posture, gesture, costume, colour and the landscape - is significant, and numerous meanings have been assigned to these details by art critics and historians. Throughout my life, Leonardo da Vinci's paintings came to have a big influence on me and, during my MA and Prof Doc studies, I developed contextual ideas in my stage photographic series by encoding the images with symbolic meanings through the use of objects and colours.

My father was passionate about photography. He had a *Zenit*<sup>4</sup> camera with many different lenses for it. He liked to experiment with different lighting and some times combined two shots to make unusual photographs (Figure 4). My brother and I could watch for hours the process of developing the film and the magic moment of the appearance of the image on the paper. My dad told us so many stories about the invention and history of photography and he allowed us to experiment with the whole photography process. This early influence of photography in my life became the foundation for my later practice. I started taking photographs from the age of twelve - mostly photographs of landscapes and our family members. My father helped me to develop my photographic skills and I started using similar effects in my practice from the age of fifteen, some of which (eg combining two images, Figure 5) I am still using to this day. As a result of these early experiences, photography, as a powerful medium of expression, has become my strongest passion throughout my life.

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<sup>4</sup> This camera is in my private collection and still working.



Figure 4. Photo collage by my father. My father combined two images of my brother and me, 1967.



Figure 5. Natalia Jezova, *Dacha*, combined photo collage by my father and our dacha window, 1979.

From 1980 I was living and working in Vilnius, which was then part of the Soviet Union. Around this time my father died and my mother, sister and brother were still living in Russia.

In 1980 I began a journalistic career. I worked for *Юность* and *Ева* magazines, *Республика* and *Известия* newspapers, radio and TV. My interests in art, culture and fashion drew me to journalism, where I covered cultural events with artistic aspects and aesthetic influence. My articles, interviews and reports provided insight into the background of these events and often included reviews and reflections on exhibitions and fashion events.

I was writing and editing articles, taking part in fashion weeks (Figure 6) and formulating, styling and sometimes taking fashion stage photographs. This gave me an opportunity to combine my art practice and photography with culture and fashion. This was a fantastic experience for me as I learned many secrets of make-up and hairstyling in preparation for the photo shoots. It gave me a big insight into how to work with light in the studio. This whole experience has inspired, helped and shaped my MA and Prof Doc studies and my various stage photography projects.



Figure 6. During the *In Vogue* festival, Vecheslav and Arthur Shkill, Natalia Jezova and Nicola Trussardi, 1997.  
Photograph from my personal archive.

In 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed. Within just 24 hours everybody in the Soviet Union had started to become citizens of different states. My mother, sister and brother became citizens of the Russian Federation, while I, and my daughter became citizens of Lithuania. Initially,

none of us understood what kind of problems these changes would cause in the future. Our initial euphoria was soon replaced by a much darker reality. We would no longer enjoy the same freedoms as we had during the 1980s. Outbreaks of ethnic conflicts soon began throughout the former Soviet Union, and in Lithuania we saw the rise of anti-Semitism and nationalism where new elites, who had been on the Nazi's side in WWII, came to power. Every day the media featured stories that stoked up hatred of Jews and Russians. Most of the Russian, Jewish schools were closed and, in a very short time, the majority of the Jews and Russians had left Lithuania. All my Jewish friends believed that there was no future in this country for us. I was told that I would not be published anymore unless I changed my Russian surname, so I took the pseudonym Natalia de Fine, which is interpreted in Russian as “до фени” (do not care). This phraseology was very common between Jews from Odessa (Смирнов, 2003, p. 48).

It was around this time that I started my journalistic investigation into the destiny of Jews in Lithuania during WWII. In 1994 I went to Israel where I arranged a meeting and conducted interviews with a few Holocaust survivors and their relatives from Lithuania. I was shocked when they told me that it had mostly been Lithuanians, not German Nazis, who were responsible for killing Jews with such brutality during the war.

In 1986 my husband and I founded a Jewish children's club, Aliyah, in Vilnius. From 1986 – 1998 around 700 children participated in the club where we gave dancing, singing and art classes. Since 1994, our club had been under constant attack from the nationalists. In 1995 and 1996, it was set on fire after a group of nationalists threw petrol bombs inside our building. The police refused to investigate this case. In 1998, Valdas Adamkus was elected as President of Lithuania. During WWII Adamkus had been part of the Lithuanian punitive units operating in conjunction with the Wehrmacht, where he served under the command of the infamous Major Antanas Impuliavicius<sup>5</sup> as his personal assistant.

After Adamkus came to power the situation with nationalism and anti-Semitism became even worse. Lithuania started awarding honors to the killers of the Jewish diaspora in WWII and began hunting those who wanted to reveal the truth about killers of Jews. Around this time, I

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<sup>5</sup> Impulavicius became famous for organizing massacres of Jews in Lithuania and Belarus, and entered the history of the Holocaust under the nickname “Minsk butcher”. <https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/kultura-i-istoriya/11022016-adamkus-holokost/>

started receiving threatening letters and phone calls and, on the 23rd of September 1998 (National Memorial Day for the Genocide of Lithuanian Jews), our club was attacked again, grenades were thrown inside the building and several people were seriously injured.

I was under constant surveillance; my phones were tapped and my house was repeatedly searched by members of the Lithuanian secret service. I realised that my own and my daughter's lives were in big danger. I decided to escape to the UK (as I thought that we would be protected there) and ask for asylum.

Six months later the Lithuanian government demanded my extradition from the UK. The extradition order lasted for ten years, during which I was living under bail conditions in London – without the right to a passport and unable to travel (Figures 7,8). I was confined to my home and required to sign in at the police station every other day.

Fig. 7. One of the extradition' order bail condition court document. Fig. 8. One of the "documents" that I have during ten years of extradition order.

In 2004, I was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. In 2007, my mother, who was still living in Russia, became seriously ill and died. My lawyer sent a petition to Parliament and to the Home Office asking for permission to attend my mum's funeral, but it was refused.

I was deeply depressed, I could not sleep and, as a result of all this, I spent more than six months in a psychiatric hospital. I was absolutely broken. I had constant flashbacks and nightmares. I did not want to speak to anyone. My psychiatrist suggested that if I did not want to talk about how I felt I should instead try and express myself through art. After a few weeks of art therapy sessions, I was painting eighteen to twenty hours per day. It helped me to find a way to heal and to return to my life again. In 2009 I decided to return to my art studies and so I began a BA in Fine Art at the University of East London.

### BA Creative Practice and Theory

During the BA in Fine Art at the University of East London my artistic work was mainly focused on figurative painting and filmmaking.



Figure 9. Natalia Jezova, *This is Not Me*, 2010, oil on canvas, 145x190cm.

My paintings were inspired by the surrealism of Salvador Dali and influenced by my emotional experience (Figure 9). Dali's *The Eye* (Figure 10) - part of a series of artworks that Alfred Hitchcock commissioned Dali to produce for the film *Spellbound* (1945) - used symbols and visual images arising from the subconscious.

A representation of eyes appeared in most of my paintings. It had multiple meanings for me, from a symbolic representation of a new dimension of reality – relating to when I started to lose my vision - to a symbolic description of my dreams and my constant fear of being watched, due to the extradition order.

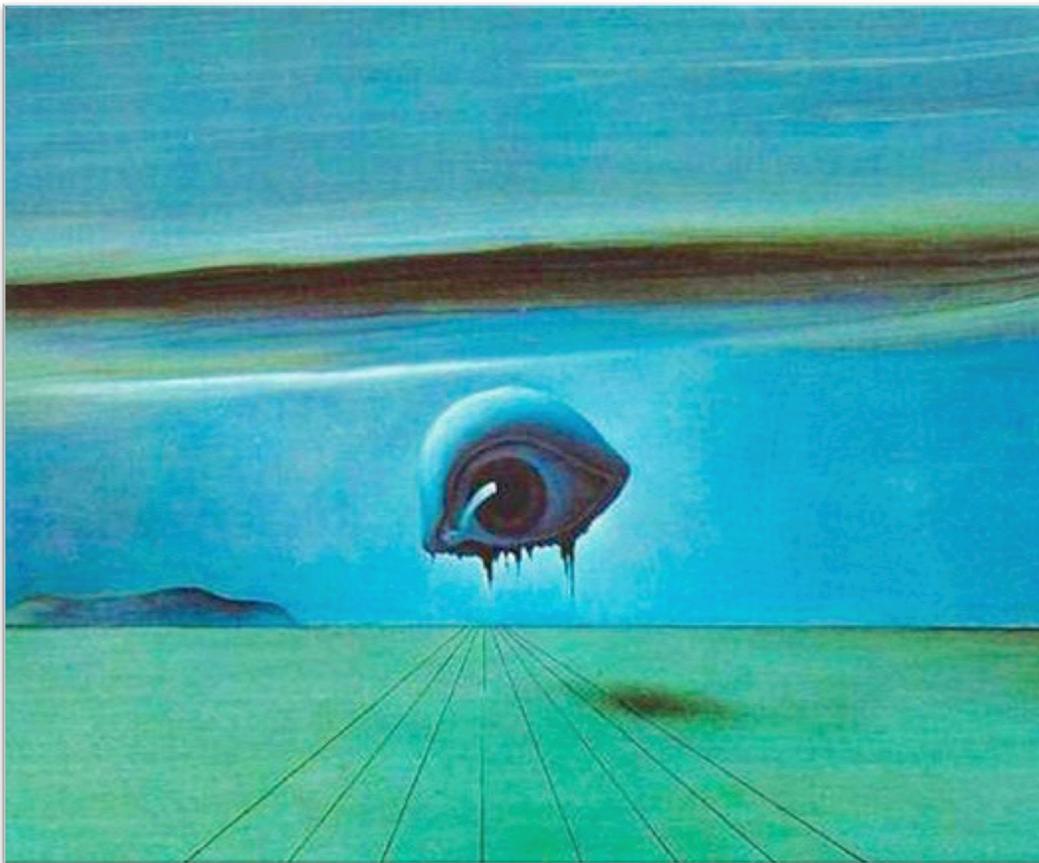


Figure 10. Salvador Dali, *The Eye*, oil on panel, 1945.

I had started to lose my vision in 2012. At first I thought that this was simply due to the ageing process, I was told that in a few years I could go completely blind. I just remember a feeling of emptiness. I didn't really know what was coming, I was terrified and I didn't want to accept it. At the same time, I was living under constant surveillance by the police. Ever since George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) was published, the term 'Big Brother is watching you' has become synonymous with overly controlling authorities and organizations.

But for me the fantasy of Orwell's *Big Brother* had been a reality for many years.<sup>6</sup>

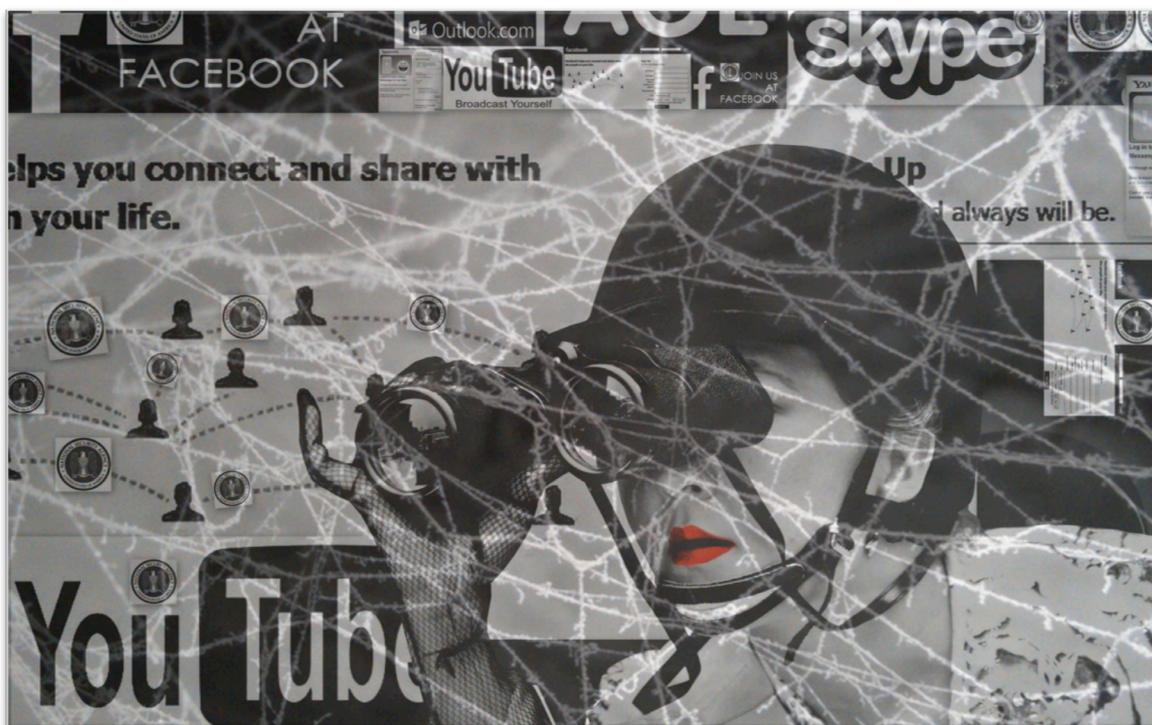


Figure 11. Natalia Jezova, *Big Brother Is Watching You Series*, 2015, photo collage.

The BA also gave me an opportunity to explore filmmaking. I was inspired by avant-garde filmmaker John Smith, a lecturer on the course and the director of a filmmaking group. He encouraged me to experiment with actuality and abstraction, which at times seemed to me to be so incompatible. I started to work with a 16mm camera and began to explore the multi-faceted language of cinema, which led to the creation of two films: *The Journey* (2010) and *Where Am I?* (2011) (Figure 12).

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<sup>6</sup> Later, during my Prof doc studies, I explored the *Big Brother is Watching You* theme after scandalous news was released about global surveillance through the *PRISM* program – whereby government agencies, such as the *United States National Security Agency* (NSA) and the *United Kingdom's Government Communications Headquarters* (GCHQ), undertook mass interception and tracking of internet and communications data with the help of the Facebook, Microsoft, Yahoo!, Google, YouTube, Skype and Apple corporations. I made a series of staged photographs and, using the superimposition technique, combined these with images from the mass media related to the *PRISM* program (Figure 11). In 2016 I showed the *Big Brother Is Watching You Series* at *MeCCSA Practice Network* and *Journal of Media Practice* symposium.



Figure 12. Natalia Jezova, the still from the film *Where am I?* 2011.

For a long time, I had flashbacks and nightmares – terribly vivid experiences in which I relived some aspects of my trauma. It felt like I was watching a film of what had happened to me. Usually these ‘films’ were in black and white with terrifying snatches of sounds coming from out of nowhere. After a few consultations with my psychiatrist I decided to try and reconstruct in film what I had seen in my flashbacks. I called the film *Where Am I?* – as I was trying to understand where am I in reality. I was influenced by the Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov. Kuleshov performed a series of editing experiments that demonstrated how one shot could influence an audience’s interpretation of another shot that is associated with it.<sup>7</sup> In *Where Am I?* I experimented with a similar montage method to Kuleshov’s - the same frames were appearing with different sounds, rhythms and lighting.

My BA final year project, *The Throne is Never Vacant* (2012), was a body of work critiquing the damage that I believed the Russian Revolution of 1917 did to the citizens of Russia and

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<sup>7</sup> For example, in one of his experiments a shot of a man with a neutral expression was placed after a shot of a plate of soup; then the same shot of the man was repeated after a shot of a girl in a coffin, and then repeated for the third time after a shot of a woman lying on a sofa. The shot of the man’s expression did not change, but the “audience read three different emotions into it depending on which image it was juxtaposed with.” (Prince and Hensley, p.59).

its effect on modern revolutions. The work recalls interconnected themes: the revolutions, the power, the cruelty and the contemporary relevance of it all (Figure 13).



Figure 13. Natalia Jezova, *The Throne is Never Vacant*, fragments of the installation, 2012.

The slogans of revolution invariably promised freedom and the fulfillment of the cherished desires of the masses, but, in practice, revolutions are followed by periods of brutal repression.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *The Throne is Never Vacant* was displayed as an installation in the form of a ‘trptych’, consisting of two 2 x 2.5 meter prints on burned canvas, with bullet holes, and one red plastic silhouette cut to the same size. The three panels were shown three meters apart from each other in a big dark room, and the light was arranged in such a way as to go through bullet holes. The first burned canvas print showed victims of a revolution; the second one depicted the leaders of the Revolution; and the final red plastic panel cut symbolized more modern revolutions - in the form of a “template”. I choose to represent this “template” using the huge red, plastic cut-out as it carries the hint of artificiality and “man-madness”. The empty hole of cut out plastic is just waiting to be filled by new victims and leaders of modern revolutions.

## MA Creative Practice and Theory

During my MA in Fine Art, a few things became particularly important to my future film practice. I started experimenting with chroma-keying visual effects in the editing process. This technique is based on using colour hues to composite two or more pieces of video footage together. It is a multiple exposure in which two or more videos are simultaneously visible over each other. This technique is similar to the superimposition technique that I had been using for many years in photography. I had always been fascinated by my father's photographs and his use of superimposition.

The "journey" is an appropriate metaphor to use in relation to superimposition as we move in time from one place to another, and, in the middle of the journey, we have a third frame and a new thread of the narrative. The layering of images on top of one another creates a new meaning and makes an impression on an almost subliminal level. When a superimposition is particularly meaningful it can deepen the metaphors and themes of the story, giving the viewer information and details that add a new dimension and a new reading to the overall photograph or film. This technique gave me an opportunity to communicate the multiple messages that I aimed to embed in my works.

My short film *Axiom* (2014), part of an eponymous installation (Figure 14), is a critical view of modern times in which I depict the "Powerful of the World" as directly manipulating mass consciousness - through mass media where the perception of political, cultural and economic reality is carefully formed in the public consciousness. The unseen mechanisms of manipulation are being applied in order to organise human habits and opinions to control and influence the masses. Hence, in the so-called liberal times of "democracy and freedom", an artificially constructed reality is being forced upon society as the only truth.



Figure 14. Natalia Jezova, *Axiom*, 2014, installation and film, photograph.

For my thesis I researched the work of artists who had explored gender equality and the female role in society issues. Artists such as Cindy Sherman (Figure 15) and Yasumasa Morimura were influential in the creation of my practice.



Figure 15. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #209*, 1989, chromogenic colour print.

I created a work dealing with gender inequality issues by re-enacting Leonardo da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine* (Figure 16); this painting is an allegorical apotheosis of the female role in Renaissance society:

Leonardo acknowledged and symbolized in positive terms a realm of female power that the majority of men in his era could acknowledge inversely, through the repressive strategy of declaring women interior being (Brand, Korsmeyer, 1995, p. 348).



Figure 16. Leonardo da Vinci *Lady with an Ermine*, 1489-1490, oil on board.

I reconstructed da Vinci's *The Lady with an Ermine* with the aid of different costumes and objects. The *Lady with an Ermine* Series explores differences between the gender roles of men and women and various contradictions, privileges and abuses of male power. Leonardo da Vinci's traumatic childhood – ie, his experience as an illegitimate child and being separated from his mother at the age of five - clearly resonated with the story of Cecilia Gallerani, the subject of *Lady with an Ermine*.

The initial idea of my project was to use the iconic imagery of da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine* as a recognisable “constant”, and to play with posture and gesture to add different layers (Figure 17). Prior to beginning a work in the photography studio, I write a scenario for every single shot and give it a title. The title provides the key to explore the encoded message.



Figure 17. Natalia Jezova, *All Animals Are Equal, But Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others, Lady with an Ermine Series*, 2014.

I research a particular period of time in history and a country to find out the specific details of costumes, hairstyles and accessories. The contextual ideas for each work are encoded through the symbolic meaning of objects and colours. ‘The symbol itself is substituted for the deeper meaning it intends to convey. “The unique nature of a symbol is that it gives access to deeper layers of reality which are otherwise inaccessible” (Tillich, 1964, p.54).

As an example, one of the images from The *Lady with an Ermine Series* is titled *Sakura* (Figure 18).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Sakura is the Japanese term for cherry blossoms - the gorgeous light pink flowers that bloom for just a few days on Japanese cherry trees, which is just an ornamental tree that does not bear fruit. One of the symbolic meanings of Sakura is emptiness and the transience of things on earth and in life. In this photograph, The Lady with an Ermine is wearing a vintage green (malachite) jacket. Like all colours, green has several completely opposite symbolic meanings. “The colour green sometimes embodies all hopes, but can also represent all dangers” (Varichon, 2006, p.201). While it is the colour most linked with good health and growing love it is also the colour most often associated with toxicity, poison and gambling. There was a solid foundation for this association; in the nineteenth century several popular paints and pigments were highly toxic, containing copper or arsenic, and, from the sixteenth century onwards, gambling tables in a casino are traditionally green. The Lady with an Ermine in this photograph is also holding a white, artificial apple. “The colour white is the essence of luminosity and has been associated with celestial power since the beginning of the human adventure. White also represents the immaculate – absolute purity” (Varichon, 2006, p.16). The apple is also the subject of various symbolic interpretations - in antique mythology, for instance, the apple is a symbol of love, beauty and maternity. However, in this case, the apple lying in the *Lady with an Ermine’s* hand is artificial.



Figure 18. Natalia Jezova, *Sakura, Lady with an Ermine Series*, 2014, photograph.

During my BA and MA creative practice and theory I took the opportunity to explore my artistic work and knowledge. It has been a fascinating challenge that has inspired me to further explore and develop my abilities. In my artistic career, my desire to understand and contextualise my practice further, through combined research and studio practice, led me to undertake the Professional Doctorate.

## Creative Practice and Theory

I started the professional doctorate program as a mid-career artist. The doctorate has supported my creative evolution from a painter to a photographer and filmmaker. During the beginning of the professional doctorate, when I was writing the proposal, I reviewed my past creative practice and reflected on what I believed to be the fundamental themes in my work. Through this process, my intention was to consider and plan the direction of my practice more productively. The first three years of the doctorate was much more experimental as I began to narrow down certain aspects of the work and explore my interests in more depth. The principal aim of my doctoral research is to bring key components of my creative and theoretical inquiries together into a single body of work. Traumatic events in personal and collective memory and the mediation of the past through my practice and the concept of post-memory have been of great interest to me for many years. The concept of post-memory in photography and the moving image was coined by Marianne Hirsch:

Post-memory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right (Hirsch, 2008, p.123).

My personal traumas and displacement, for political reasons, were the hidden forces behind most of the themes evoked in my work. In my projects I try to uncover my familial and personal experience of traumatic events, address the falsification of collective memory by political and State powers and explore a silenced history. In my practice I refer to the idea that collective memory is very often a tool of manipulation, through the reconstruction of history by political elites, that effects and resonates with the present. In selecting artists to research I chose those whose themes and methodologies in their practice resonate with my own. All of these artists focused their attention on a personal or collective memory of trauma and an interpretation of the past. In different ways they show how the past is transmitted into the present, and what kind of impact that has on our current understanding of the world.

My previous creative practice and training, during BA and MA studies, allowed me to develop and explore my creative practice in various mediums – ie photography, filmmaking

and installation. During my Prof Doc studies I continued to experiment with superimposition techniques in photography and filmmaking; I also experimented with sound, long takes and films without moving images.

### **Collecting Objects and Photographs as Narrating the Past**

During the ten years of living under the shadow of an extradition order, without the right to any identification documents, I had the feeling that I was a person without an identity. For most of that time I was confined to my house on my own. My brother and sister were trying to come to the UK to support me but the Home Office refused to give them a visa. Only my memories and certain objects that belonged to my family helped me to overcome this difficult experience of trauma.

#### **Objects as a Material Form for Memory**

Michaly Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton argue that objects are extremely powerful in the shaping of identity. They suggest that objects play an integral role in the way people construct meanings, to the extent that objects ‘create the ultimate goals of one’s existence’ (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, xi).

In *The System of Objects*, Jean Baudrillard examines the way in which objects handed down through families served as family portraits; the antique, he claims, functions as the immaterialization, in the concrete form of an object, of a former being (Baudrillard, 1996, p.75). Baudrillard’s semiotic approach to objects - his interest in their function as one means of affecting a symbolic transcendence of real existence - focuses on the ability of objects to pull subjects out of the limitation of mortality that is imposed upon them by physical embodiments. Tactile but not transparent, the object persists as both a sign and a thing. In claiming that objects offer a material form for memory, and thus help us cope with the irreversible moments from birth towards death, Baudrillard (1996, p.104) concludes:

What man gets from objects is not a guarantee of life after death but the possibility, from the present moment onwards, of continually experiencing the unfolding of the

existence in a controlled, cyclical mode, symbolically transcending a real existence the irreversibility of whose progression he is powerless to affect.

Objects can be seen as one of several ways of narrating the past. Susan M. Piers argues that the object works as a message-bearing entity that acts, in relation to historical events, both as an intrinsic sign and as a metaphorical symbol that is capable of a very large range of interpretations; this relates to the way in which the present is created from the past:

The nature of interpretation is examined in terms of viewer-response, and this leads to a discussion of the relationship between individual responses and the social consensus of meaning (Piers, 1994, p. 25).

The meaning of the object lies not in the thing itself, 'nor wholly in its realization, but somewhere between the two' (Piers, 1994, p. 25). According to Piers:

The object only takes on life or significance when the viewer carries out his realization, and this is dependent partly upon his disposition and experience, and partly upon the content of the object, which works upon him (Piers, 1994, p. 25).

Piers argues that the past survives in three ways:

As objects or material culture; as physical landscape (the difference between which and artifacts is conventional rather than essential); and as narratives (which may, of course, take the form of film or tape as well as of written text) (Piers, 1994, p.27).

She also argues that added to these is a further dimension, that of individual memory. This memory forms itself as images of objects and places, linked with physical remembrances and remembered emotions, to construct narratives similar to those that have an external form.

According to Laura Tanner, our multisensory experience of the objects our loved ones leave behind constructs a form for embodied loss. Personal traumatic experience gave me knowledge that physical objects may provide a location for a sensory memory that measures 'present absence against past presence' (Tanner, 2006, p.178).

My theoretical research was concentrated on objects inherited from my family as these played a central role in my creative practice. I have been researching my family history, writing to my relatives and exploring the archives (Figure 19). These activities have become research tools for my creative practice. I have also developed the habit of collecting memories in different ways, for example: collecting photographs, documents, letters and objects that belonged to my family, and taking footage and recording sounds in places where my family lived. Like an archeologist, I take inspiration directly from the accumulation of these primary research materials, digging deeper and deeper into my research, and then developing them into projects using various mediums and knowledge.

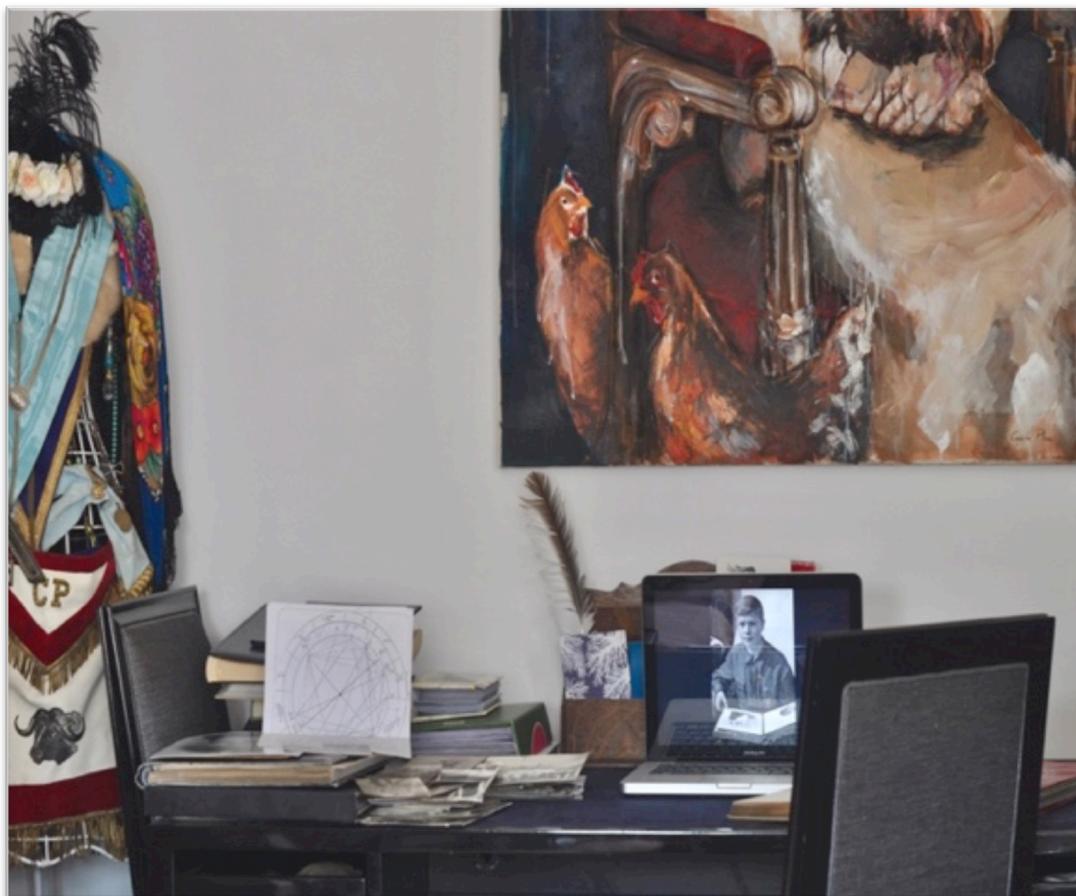


Figure 19. Natalia Jezova, *Working with the family archive*, *Home* series, 2017.

### **Family Echoes**

The research into my family roots revealed many unknown facts for me. During the 20th century my family suffered the consequences of pogroms and revolution, the barbarism of the

Civil and Second World wars, the breakup of Yugoslavia and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some members of my family were killed while others were forced to leave their homes and escape to different countries.

My aunt sent me a lot of photographs with descriptions that helped me to discover some of my family roots and history. My sister sent me our grandmother's cupboard (Figure 20) and our family photographs and letters. When I received these images and objects from my relatives I had a feeling of being protected – I feel safer in my new home just because I have some objects around me that remind me of a time when I was safe and happy.



Figure 20. Natalia Jezova, *My grandmother's cupboard with my collection* from the *Home* Series, 2017.

When I started sorting through the messages from my family I found several addresses of my relatives who were forced to flee. Most of the letters were from 1970 to 1980. My father (Figure 21) had been trying to find our relatives for most of his life, writing to different archives, and he did finally manage to find some of them.



Figure 21. My father at seventeen years old with a family album, 1944, Krasnoyarsk district, Siberia.

Unfortunately, my father died prematurely, at the age of fifty-three but just before his death he told us (his children) the full story of our family. For many years he had kept it a secret, thinking that this would be much safer for all of us. I restarted our family history research after twenty-five years. This was a very difficult time for me and I decided that I wanted to surround myself with objects and photographs of my family. These objects and photographs

played a supporting and protecting role and provided materials for constructing my own identity:

The things in one's life...were customized to give them personal significance as their owners passed through different stages of the life cycle. Tiny objects could bear great emotional freight (Avery, Calarescu and Laven, 2015, p.3).

Daniel Miller argues that people sediment possessions that come into their own when times are difficult and the people who laid them down face experiences of loss. He describes the process like this: people lay their possessions “down as foundations, material walls mortared with memory”. These objects then become “strong supports that come into their own when times are difficult”. At such times, says Miller, the significance bestowed upon the object comes back and it repeats its supporting function, for the sake of the individual's future. “Having banked their possessions in the vaults of internal memory and external possession, they cash them in at times of need, at times of loss” (Miller, 2009, p.91).

The collection of objects, photographs, letters and documents that I received from my sister and other relatives grew into a personal archive that became valuable in my creative practice.



Figure 22. Natalia Jezova, photo collage of fragments from a family photo archive, 2015.

When I began to work with my family photographs (Figure 22) and stories, I found myself agreeing with James Ryan that photographs do not speak for themselves. They are “invested with meanings framed by and produced within specific cultural conditions and historical circumstances” (Ryan, 1997, p.9). As Susan Sontag points out, photographs are evidence not only of what there is but also of what an individual sees, not just a record but an evaluation of the world (Sontag, 1977, p.88). In the same vein, Bryson argues:

The explanation of the photograph lies in a coincidence between a representation and that which a particular society proposes and assumes as its reality; a reality involving the complex formation of codes of behavior, law, psychology, social manners, dress, gesture, posture - all those practical norms which govern the stance of human beings toward their particular historical environment (Bryson, 1983, p.13).

Family photographs may simply seem to provide a record of people and events, but it is precisely their surface ordinariness that conversely turns such images into remarkable and multilayered meaning. They are memory capsules, not only about the individuals portrayed but also about the social, political and cultural worlds in which they lived. In the words of Anna Tobiassen, family photographs fix perception and memory, represent a method of preserving memories, document important moments and confirm social relationships and fact of belonging (Tobiassen, 1990, p. 87). The power of a photograph lies in its ability to become a visual representation of memory and family photographs are significant in the formation of memories. As Annette Kuhn observes:

Memories evoked by a photo do not simply spring out of the image itself, but are generated in an intertext of discourses that shift between past and present, spectator and image, and between all these and cultural contexts, historical moments (Kuhn, 1995, p.14).

This “intertext of discourses,” as described by Kuhn, highlights the complex structure of memory and disregards any notion that the evocation of memories is simplistic or free from the influence of time or culture. The act of remembrance is one that reveals not only personal reminiscences but also the impact of the society in which these memories were formed and the important role that the passing of time plays in the changing nature of memory.



Figure 23. Photo of my great-grandmother before WWI, 1909, Sankt Petersburg, Russia.



Figure 24. My father, great-grandmother and aunt, 1929, Krasnoyarsk dist., Siberia, USSR.

In 1914, Russia was drawn into the First World War and my grandfather, a Russian Tsar's Army officer, needed to go to the war. In 1917 the Russian Revolution began. Some members of my family were killed and my great-grandmother, grandfather and grandmother were sent into exile to Siberia. The second photograph shows my father and my aunt (they were born in Siberia) with my great-grandmother in Siberia in 1925. If you compare both photographs, it is impossible to recognize my aristocratic great-grandmother in the image (Figure 23), dated 1909, as the same woman in the photograph from 1929.

The tragic fate of my family prompted me to create a series of works using photographs, letters and objects from my collection. The most recent works are *Home* (2017) and *Memory Traces* (2019). The *Home* series symbolises the broken links between our family members (Figure 26). I put my family members' photographs in groups and framed them (seven frames belonged to my family, that my relatives from different countries had sent to me) in an attempt to re-connect them in my own home.



Figure 25. Natalia Jezova, from *Home* series, 2017.

Natalia Jezova, from *Home Series*, 2017.

As I mentioned in the Personal and Creative context, I had been using superimposition techniques in my practice for a long time. I made the image that inspired me to create the *Memory Traces* series (2001) during the traumatic time of my extradition order when most of that time I was confined to my house on my own. I felt that I was absolutely unprotected - my brother Maksim (who is four years older than me and who has always protected me in any difficult situations in my life) could not get a visa to the UK. I made an image, using the superimposition technique, by combining a childhood photograph of my brother and myself with an image from my home in London. I printed the image and it has been on the wall in my house since 2001.

## Collecting and Collage



Figure 26. Natalia Jezova, image of my older brother Maksim and me combined with the image from my home in London (2001), photo collage.

During the last few years I developed the idea to create the *Memory Traces* series, through which I expressed our family history, by combining old photographs from our family archive with photographs that I took in places where my family had lived. The *Memory Traces* series explores the relationship between photography, memory and location. One of the aims of the project was to evoke an emotional response in the viewer, as photographs do have a way of telling stories; or rather, people who view photos will project stories upon them. A photograph is an opportunity to hold on to the moment, the place, the trace. According to Martha Langford, the art of memory excites spatial imagery through the protagonist's sense (real, suggested or imagined) of having been there. "The transparentness of a photographic image cultivates spectral absorption into another's field of memory" (Langford, 1997, p. 4).

My family members were dispersed (Figure 28), killed or exiled after the Russian revolution, and over the last five years I have travelled to the places they came from.



Figure 27. Natalia Jezova, *The Memory Traces* series with my father, 2019, photo collage.

I went to places where my family lived during the 20th century. Many of these places were part of the former Russian Empire: Moscow, Tiflis (now Georgia), Erevan (now Armenia), Odessa (now Ukraine), Vilnius (now Lithuania). After the Revolution in 1917, some family members were killed, some were exiled to Siberia, some escaped to China and from China on to Yugoslavia (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) and France. At the end of the 20th century, after the breakup of Yugoslavia and the collapse of the Soviet Union, my family members and I were forced to flee our homes, losing family members and properties again. I would visit these places and take pictures of the buildings, some of which were now just ruins. Later, using the superimposition technique, I would combine the photographs and make photo collages of places, buildings and ruins with photographs of my family members who used to live in these same places. I used images of places associated with my family to create the *Memory Traces* series - the photographs themselves play a role in confirming the identity and history of my family. Photographs provide a unique material proof of family memory and thus help me to reconstruct the family concept with its traumatic past and supported my own sense of personal identity and memory.

I printed collages on tracing paper for two main reasons. Firstly, it is a reference to Martha Langford's definition of the "transparentness" of a photographic image. Secondly, the translucency of the paper reminded me of our family albums' separation pages - the images behind them look mysterious and elusive. Thus the fragility of this paper gives images a sensation of memory traces.

In Jens Ruchatz's opinion, the photograph refers to the past "not as externalization but as a trace" (Ruchatz in Erll, Nunning, Young, 2008, p.370). Making sense of a photograph as a trace means to take it as evidence of what is shown on it and to reconstruct the situation of its origin. Every photographic image is unique and can be described as an archival document. The relationship between the

past event and its document, an action and its archival photographic trace, is not simply the act of citing a pre-existing object or event; the photographic document is a replacement of the object or event, not merely a record of it (Foucault, 1970, p. 4).

Annette Kuhn states that:

the family photographs are about memory and memories: that is about stories of a past, shared (both stories and the past) by a group of people that in the moment of sharing produces itself as a family (Kuhn, 1999, p. 19).

Family photographs can be interpreted as ways of understanding the terms of the lives of their contemporaries. They document the more sociological aspects of daily lives that we do not have access to from other historical sources. In Tobiassen's view, family photographs fix perception and memory, they represent a method of preserving memories and documenting important moments, and they "confirm social relationships and fact of belonging" (Tobiassen, 1990, p.87).

The photographs and documents from family archives are able to confirm the original context - they are a primary source for the past. They are like a "house of memory" that helps us to make a new discovery of the past and enables us to restore the silenced pages of history.

In British artist Rosy Martin's work, *In Situ* (2004 – 1938/39) and *Too close to home?* (2014), I identified similarities in theme and approach to my own works, *Home* (2017) and *Memory Traces* (2019). Rosy Martin explores the relationships between photography and memory as an unconscious process, using her family photo archive. Thus she extends the range of potential meanings that lie within notions of domestic and family photography.



Figure 28. Rosy Martin, *In Situ*, 2004 – 1938/1939, photo collages.

In her project *In Situ* (Figure 29), Martin explores the relationships between photography and memory by projecting significant family album photos onto the same position in the family home that the images were taken in, over seventy years before. She then printed photo collages onto fine silk which produced a vision in which “ghostly forms shimmer like memories” (Martin, 1999, p. 21).



Figure 29. Rosy Martin, *Too close to home?* 2014, photograph.

According to Martin, the photographs from her *Too close to home?* (Figure 30) project have a lot to do with the psychic processes that photography necessarily inhabits. This is the ‘absent presence’<sup>10</sup> that Barthes spoke of whereby absence can be thought of as a kind of presence, and presence as a kind of absence. For instance, the medium of photography is typically thought of as having a direct connection to some form of reality, a presence. Martin states that, because she chooses to make this a public project, it must speak beyond the particular: “Yet I do risk starting from this personal punctum, to evoke an emotional response in the viewer who will not share the precise details of the story” (Martin, 1999, p.75).

As her starting point, Martin drew upon family myths and a detailed exploration of memories of a specific place. She uses photography to explore and isolate tiny details and fragments, so the audience only builds up a sense of the space over time. By pushing at the edge of legibility she enables the audience to project their own meanings upon the images, which symbolise and stand in for the continuity and discontinuity of change over time (Martin,

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<sup>10</sup> In Roland Barthes’ words, the represented forms refer to someone or something “real,” but that event no longer exists, except in the photograph. Therefore, the photograph is a kind of absented presence. According to Barthes, the connection between absented forms of photographic representation and the presence of truth: “what the photograph produces to infinity has occurred only once; the photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially ... it is the absolute Particular, the sovereign Contingency” (Barthes, 1981, p.).

1999). There are similarities here between Rosy Martin's *Too close to home?* series and my *Home* series. Family photographs, place and memory interlace through the notion of absent presence.

Martin argues that photography and memory relate in a poignant way, through a sense of loss, predicated upon the unconscious wish to somehow arrest the passage of time by holding it in fragments of a second. As she puts it:

How much are the images from the past that I visualize in my mind's eye constructed and mediated through the few photographs that have survived in my family album? How else might I aim to re-connect with my memories? Can I speak to a collective memory through photographs that express my location in history and culture?  
(Martin, 1999, p.18).

Martin's series of works *In Situ* and *Too close to home?* and my *Home* and *Memory Traces*, relate to each other through their methodology and the relationship between photograph and memory as a trace; the idea of home, absence and a sense of loss. However, there are some differences between our concepts - Martin mediates a collective memory, while I concentrate on my own family's memory, identity and a sense of loss.

## Trauma and Displacement

### Loss of Home and Land

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older  
the world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated  
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment  
Isolated, with no before and after,  
But a lifetime burning in every moment  
And not the lifetime of one man only  
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.

(Eliot, 1988, p.18)

As I have mentioned previously, the Lithuanian Government closed my extradition order after ten years, saying that it had just been a mistake. I got my passport and was able to leave the country. I spent more than six months travelling and visited places where my family and I had previously lived (as mentioned in the *Collecting Objects and Photographs as Narrating the Past* section). Previously, during the traumatic period of the extradition, I ‘saw’ our family houses and dachas only in my dreams. Visiting some of these places in reality, like the house and dacha in Vilnius that had been confiscated by the Lithuanian Government during years of my extradition, evoked feelings of nostalgia and loss. In Vilnius I was only able to take photos and videos from outside my former house and dacha. I took a lot of footage and photographs and used this material for the film *Inconditus Trinus* (from the Latin, meaning journey to the past), 2016. I also included some footage from our family archive in this film. For me, all the material in *Inconditus Trinus* (Figures 31) reproduced my memories of a previous life; they are full of feelings - of both nostalgia and great sadness - as they evoke thoughts of loss and displacement.



Figure 30. Natalia Jezova, *Inconditus Trinus*, still from the film, 2016.

When I was making the film, I selected the appropriate sound for each image or theme in order to explore a character in more depth through a musical image. I have a huge library of sounds that I recorded over many years. The sound in *Inconditus Trinus* consists of a repetitive and rhythmic score composed using keyboard, percussion, classical and experimental music and different rhythms of heartbeat sounds. Some musical pieces are linked to my memories of childhood and evoke some nostalgic feelings. For example, the sound of the tango *La Cumparsita* evokes one of the most vivid episodes from my past. I was around six years old, during the Christmas holidays, and my father, dressed in a tailcoat and a bow tie, and my mother, in a fabulously beautiful dress and sparkling shoes that reflected in the polished parquet floor, are dancing the *La Cumparsita* tango. In the film the sound of the tango accompanies the episode with Christmas decorations. For the previous sequence (before the *La Cumparsita*) I used an extract of a film that was recorded in 1978 by my father from a moving car on our way to our family dacha. I sped the image up and left the original sound. The sequence with the *La Cumparsita* in the film is replaced by a video that I took, in 2015, on my way to Vilnius of a fast-moving train at night - a time-moving metaphor. I applied an accompaniment of experimental music by Vladimir Tarasov<sup>11</sup> to this shot.

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<sup>11</sup> Vladimir Tarasov - one of the first experimental jazz musicians and composers in the Soviet Union. He was a friend of my parents and his compositions were familiar to me.

For *Inconditus Trinus* I applied Sergei Eisenstein's methodology - the use of juxtaposition in the montage of a film to create a psychological link between two or more sequences.

Eisenstein invented the *intellectual montage* method. He argued that film has its greatest impact not by the smooth unrolling of images but by their juxtaposition. This montage is an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots – shots that might even be opposed to one another. According to Eisenstein: “Two or more images edited together create a ‘tertium quid; <sup>12</sup>(third thing) that makes the whole greater than the sum of its individual parts” (Eisenstein, 1949, p.9). Eisenstein argued that, in *intellectual montage*, separate shots are linked together not by their literal continuity in reality but by symbolic association - a metaphor. This provides an opportunity to not only show different conclusions on the screen, but to also create symbolic meanings and metaphors that go outside the context of the film (Eisenstein, 1949, p.34). According to Eisenstein, intellectual montage is used to evoke the viewer's emotional recognition and stimulate their intellectual reflexivity and perception. As well as producing straightforward visuals to carry the viewer along with the story, this can also encourage the audience to create a third meaning, with new ideas, metaphors and symbols, which can be personal to that viewer alone. Because of this, films edited using *intellectual montage* can mean different things for different people, depending on how each person perceives what they see (Eisenstein, 1994, pp. 48-67). Eisenstein argued that the viewer is interactive in the creation of meaning: “Within me, as a spectator, this image is born and grown. Not only the author has created, but I also - the creating spectator have participated” (Eisenstein, 1942, p.34).

I found a visual and audio inspiration for the methodology I used in my film *Inconditus Trinus* from films by Arthur Lipsett, a Canadian avant-garde director of short experimental films. Lipsett's mother was a Russian Jew whose family had been forced to flee from their home during pogroms. He worked at the *National Film Board of Canada (NFB)* and in his collage films he combined found film footage and sounds from the *NFB* waste bins.

Lipsett's particular passion was sound. He would collect pieces of sound and fit them together to create interesting audio compositions. He also created some musical compositions

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<sup>12</sup> “Tertium quid” - an unknown or indefinite thing related in some way to two known or definite things, but distinct from both (Collins English dictionary) <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/tertium-quid>

for his films combining symphonic, jazz, gospel and percussive music, using sounds recorded directly from TV or radio.

In 1961 Lipsett was working on his film *Very Nice, Very Nice (1961)*. At the outset he was planning to do it as an audio collage work for a sound editing workshop. According to Lipsett: “It was initially a sound experiment – purely for the love of placing one sound after another” (Lipsett, 1962). However, after a few months he decided to use the audio work for *Very Nice, Very Nice*, where he combined seemingly unrelated sounds and images. Visually, the film consists mainly of unused footage from the *NFB*’s waste bin, along with stock shots of a mushroom cloud explosion, a space shuttle launch and Lipsett’s own still photographs of ordinary people taken in New York, Paris and London. In *Very Nice, Very Nice* Lipsett metaphorically explored the human condition, consumerism, mass media and relationships between the individual and the group within a technocratically dominated society. We can see images of the repulsive and often overlooked damage left by World Wars and technological progress. For the sound of the film Lipsett used radio clips about the atom bomb, the space race and extracts from speeches by Richard Nixon, Nelson Rockefeller and John F. Kennedy. For example, with the phrase “people always seem unwilling to become involved in anything. I mean really involved”, Lipsett shows the burnt corpse of a war casualty, followed by two shots of different women looking down and away. In the next frame we hear another voice saying “almost everyone has a washing machine, a drying machine”, and over an image of USA Air Force’s jets stacked up to the sky we hear mocking laughter at the suggestion that “the situation is getting worse.”



Figure 31. Arthur Lipsett, *Very Nice, Very Nice*, still from the film, 1961.

Lipsett's film *A Trip Down Memory Lane* (1964) (Figure 33) was composed exclusively from stock images and sounds from the *NFB*'s bins. The film constitutes a brief audio-visual tour of the post-war technocracy. The theme of the film was discussed in an essay that Lipsett wrote in 1964, where he argued:

In this film, I am interested in exploring the connection between an individual's outwardly expressed inner reaction, (emergency of the spirit) and the influences that create this reaction. It is the intention of this film to study the reaction of an individual within the context of the group. These answers will be found by investigating material where the individuals is [sic] face to face with essentials relation to his role as a human being; (as opposed to that of a lesser species) (Lipsett, 1964, p.3).

In the letter to film director Kit Carson, Lipsett wrote about his methodology:

Each shot tends to have its own reality; by joining many obviously isolated shots each having their own reality. A multi-reality situation tends to emerge which has the ability to symbolically represent a large multi-reality situation such as the collective consciousness (and unconsciousness) of a civilization (Lipsett, 1964).



Figure 32. Arthur Lipsett, *A Trip Down Memory Lane*, 1964, still from the film.

Christopher Nutter, a long-time friend, commented on Lipsett's opinion of the viewer's role:

Different people can watch different lines. People can follow more than one line. Some people might get one thing. Some people might get a bunch of things. Different Lines. Different Lanes (Nutter, 1997).

Lipsett considered himself to be an artist in the atomic age; he wanted to challenge and transform society. He hoped that his films would allow viewers to transcend the known reality and to reveal other options of seeing and living. He wanted to evoke in viewers an emotional reaction and release the audience from their "mechanical sleeping state" (Nutter, 1997).

I find some similarities and differences in the films by Arthur Lipsett and my own film, *Inconditus Trinus*. I identified similarities in the methodology. In both his films and in *Inconditus Trinus*, juxtapositions of different frames are applied that are not linearly related to each other. The sense or meaning is not proper to the images themselves but is derived from their juxtaposition. They are linked together not by their literal continuity in reality but by metaphor.

In Lipsett's films and in *Inconditus Trinus*, an *intellectual montage* method allows the viewer to feel an interpretational sensation. An *intellectual montage*, worked through similar associations, takes the concept of juxtaposition and pushes it to create thought-provoking metaphors for the viewer to react to. By linking one frame with another, a resulting third meaning is ultimately conceived, metaphorically. This third metaphorical meaning acts as a device that allows the viewer to choose new conclusions, ones that perhaps would not be considered without the *intellectual montage*. The viewer can decipher the story, they can follow the rhythmic patterns and the relationships between sounds and images, or they can create their own narrative structures. The viewer in both Lipsett's films and in *Inconditus Trinus* becomes a participant. They could skip the narrative developed by the original authors and create their own, and they could also follow the patterns created by the uniquely combined sounds and images without trying to explain them.

There are, however, differences between our concepts. Lipsett metaphorically explored the human condition in his films - relationships between the individual and the group - and critiqued contemporary technocratic values, while in *Inconditus Trinus* I concentrate on my memories, my own family and a sense of loss of home and land.

In both Lipsett's films and in *Inconditus Trinus* sound plays an important role – it helps the viewer to explore every frame more deeply through a musical image. Lipsett used stock sounds from the *NFB*'s bins, while I used sounds from my huge library, collected over many years. Lipsett used found film footage from the *NFB*'s waste bins, while I used my extensive archive and my family's archive as found footage.

My personal traumas and displacement, for political reasons, were the hidden forces behind *Inconditus Trinus*. The main consequence of my displacement is the experience of loss of a family member, a home and a land.

According to Lynne Manzo, home and land have a wide range of strong symbolic and metaphorical meanings: "Home is used as a spatial metaphor for a way of being in the world" (Manzo" (2003, p.49). Home has connotations with social relationships and activities within the physical structure and is generally associated with family, roots, shelter and security. In

the case of displacement, when a physical loss of a home appears the loss is experienced by the person on a much deeper psychological level.

Roger Schmidt argued that, when displacement occurs, the individual not only experiences a loss of a physical home but often also a loss of the community or a social group to which he or she belongs, which was delineated by the space and place in which the community existed: it is “an uprooted-ness that leaves one without parameters and guideposts” (Schmidt, 1980, p.337).

### **Unhealed Wound**

In 2016 I participated in an art residency in the remote village of Psarades in Northern Greece. The village is built on the shores of Great Prespa, a lake split between Greece, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Before going there, I imagined that it would be a nice place to have a couple of relaxing weeks which I could combine with creating some art work. However, my iridescent plans for a serene art residency did not come to reality.

The morning after arriving I wandered around the village with my camera. Surrounded by mountains, the Prespa Lake (Figure 34) is an amazing world of incomparable natural beauty, created by retreating glaciers and a series of seismic phenomena. The lake provides a stunning sight, reflecting the wooded slopes of the surrounding mountains in its waters.



Figure 33. Natalia Jezova, *The Prespa Lake*, 2016, photograph.

The Prespa Lake is considered to be a paradise for migratory birds – more than two thousand pelicans stay there during the summertime (Figure 35).



Figure 34. Natalia Jezova, *The Pelican*, 2016, photograph.

The first thing that impressed me was the peaceful coexistence, on the lakeshore, of cows, donkeys and pelicans. After taking a lot of images depicting the natural beauty of the area, I began to climb along the winding narrow streets into the part of the village that is located further away from the lake. There I was surprised to see more and more abandoned and destroyed houses (Figure 36). I first thought that they must have been destroyed by an earthquake. I was also surprised by the number of swallows that lived in those ruined houses.



Figure 35. Natalia Jezova, *Calendar without the Year Series*, 2017, photograph.

When I returned to the inhabited part of the village, I began to ask the locals about the causes of the destruction. However, none of them wanted to talk to me. They silently left for their homes. I was trying to do some research online but the internet connection there was very poor. After a few hours, during lunch in the local tavern I had a phone call from my daughter. We spoke in Russian. After we finished the conversation one of the locals, Germanos, came up to me and started talking to me in Russian.

Germanos told me that he wanted to share the story of the village with me; that the Macedonians of Slavic background were subject to the most brutal form of forced assimilation during the 20th century. The story of the Psarades village is similar to the story of many places in the Macedonian part of Northern Greece. This area has witnessed civil war and waves of the violent dislocation of the people, leaving deep scars on the landscape and in

peoples' memories. The most tragic events, with mass liquidations and forced emigration, happened during the Civil War in Greece (1943 – 1949).



Figure 36. Natalia Jezova, *Calendar without the Year Series* 2017, photograph.

Many villages were completely destroyed during that time (Figure 37, 38). Hundreds of thousands of Macedonians were forced to flee their homes and escape to other countries in order to avoid persecution.



Figure 37. Natalia Jezova, *Calendar without the Year Series*, 2017, photograph.

Germanos was one of the tens of thousands of child refugees who were separated from their families and evacuated to Hungary (and other countries) in order to prevent them from being killed (Figure 39).



Figure 38. The ‘child refugee’ during the Civil War in Greece, 1948, The UNICEF archive.

Germanos was four years old when he was evacuated and the Greek authorities only allowed him to return to his motherland after thirty-five years (Figure 40). Many of these “child refugees” are still not allowed to return to Greece today.



Figure 39. Natalia Jezova, photograph of Germanos, 2016. He was a “child refugee” in 1948 from Psarades village.

At the Saturday market in Psarades village I bought a vintage metal wall calendar, which had only the days and month in English without the year (Figure 41). I wanted to find the story behind the calendar, but the person who sold it to me said that he just found it in one of the destroyed houses in Florina, the nearest town.



Figure 40. Natalia Jezova, *The Calendar without the Year*, 2017, photograph.

The strange calendar is a very symbolic “reminder” that this can happen again, any year. Ideas of the violent dislocation of people were manifested in my series of photographs, *Calendar without the Year* (2017) (Figure 42).



Figure 41. Natalia Jezova, *Calendar without the Year Series*, 2017, photograph.

In 2019 I made the film *The Swallow*, where I explored themes of place, trauma and the displacement of the Macedonian diaspora in Northern Greece. I decided to include the story about a revived swallow that we had seen in the abandoned school in Psarades village. On one day of the residency we entered the village school and in every classroom we saw numerous swallow nests (Figures 43, 44).



Figure 42, 43. Natalia Jezova, still from the film *The Swallow*, 2019.

We came into the classroom on the first floor and were all frozen by what we saw: a number of dead swallows lying on the floor (Figure 45). They had died of hunger and thirst, as they could not escape from the room. The holes in the broken windows were too small and the door through which they must have originally flown in had been slammed shut by a draught.



Figure 44. Natalia Jezova, still from the film *The Swallow*, 2019.

However, we were all stunned when suddenly one of the swallows revived and started showing signs of life. One artist carefully picked the bird up and released it into the wild. In an hour or two, after we let the resurrected swallow out, three more birds flew through the window into the room. Two of them circled the room with anxious cries and one sat motionless by the nest (Figure 46). It seemed to me that they appeared to be mourning their dead.

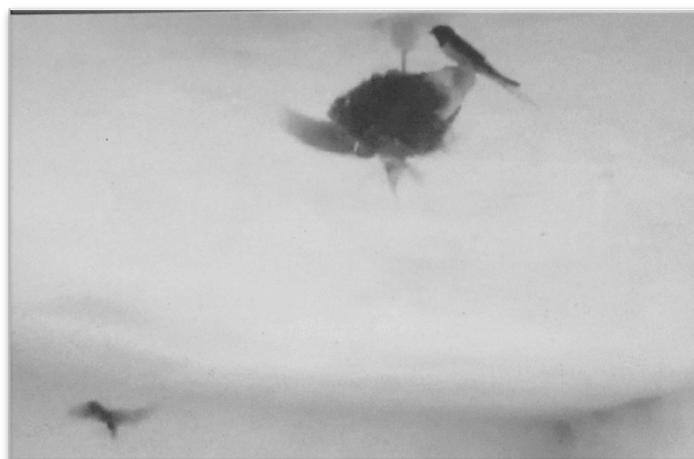


Figure 45. Natalia Jezova, still from the film *The Swallow*, 2019.

As always, in my art practice I put a big emphasis on the symbolic meaning of things. Swallows are traditionally among the most beloved and honoured birds in Slavic culture and a common belief was that swallows were birds “blessed” to carry spirits. Following my research on Slavic folklore, I discovered that “dead children return as swallows in spring to console their parents”(Porter & Russell, 1978, p. 188). Richard Louv argued that the symbolic meanings of the swallow “reflect a fundamental aspect of human nature - the denial of death as finality through a desire for renewal, transformation, and rebirth” (Louv, 2019, p.231).

In one scene in my film the swallows play a central metaphorical role and the significance of the scene symbolises the souls of departed children who are searching in space and time for a way to return home (Figure 47).



Figure 46. Natalia Jezova, film *The Swallow* in Crypt Gallery, London 2017, photograph.

The final sound that I decided to use to accompany this scene with swallows in the school is a metaphorical song-poem that refers to the Greek Civil War. The singer Martha Iliadou<sup>13</sup> (Figure 48) recorded the song for me.



Figure 47. Natalia Jezova, *Greek singer Martha Iliadou*, photograph, 2017.

A fragment from the song, translated from Greek to English by Martha Iliadou:

Αχ χελιδόνι μου πώς να πετάξεις	Ah my swallow, how can you fly
σ' αυτόν το μαύρο τον ουρανό	In this blackened sky?
αίμα σταλάζει το δειλινό	The sunset is dripping blood
και πώς να κλάψεις και πώς να κλάψεις	And how will you cry, how will you cry,
αχ χελιδόνι μου	Ah my swallow...

Between 2016 and 2019 I created five versions of the film. The first one I made a couple of months after returning from the art residency, when I was full of emotions and wanted to 'fight' against injustice. This first version consisted of a lot of the text frames, in which I presented quotations from the original sources of that time and statements by authoritative initiators, participants and witnesses of the Civil War in Greece. After showing the first version of the film during a seminar, it raised a discussion, mostly about the text presentation.

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<sup>13</sup> Martha Iliadou is a young Greek singer. Her grandparents were forced to flee their homes in Russia during the Revolution in 1917.

The criticisms were that the political and historical references were overly expositional, which thus undermined the poetic effect of the scene with the swallows.

Ideas of the place, trauma and the violent dislocation of people were manifested in the series *Calendar Without the Year* and the film *The Swallow*. I researched artists whose work shaped my understanding of methodology and concepts of trauma, loss and displacement.

The works of Barbara Meter and Zlatko Cosic inspired me to experiment with the filmmaking process without using moving images. I constructed *The Swallow* using almost entirely black-and-white photographs that I had taken in North Greece. The film achieves a feeling of movement and time-lapse, mainly through its style of editing, and the illusion of movement of the still images that are repeated several times throughout the film, mainly through fade-ins and fade-outs.

The film *Only the Chimney Stays* (2010), by Zlatko Cosic, explores a loss of home and its connection to memory and identity through the personal traumatic experience of Cosic as a refugee during the war in Yugoslavia (1991 – 2001). It combines still photographic images and video that depict both of his homes: the first, in Belgrade, destroyed by NATO bombing, and a new place in St. Louis (USA). Black-and-white photographs of destroyed and abandoned houses, in his native Belgrade, and photographs of ancestors and their destroyed houses in the countryside are juxtaposed with documents (that permit travel as a refugee) from the United Nations and images and videos of beautiful green hills and rain falling around St. Louis (USA).

*Only The Chimney Stays* (Figure 49) is overlaid with a poetic text in the form of short, staccato statements, some traumatic memories and other feelings and impressions.

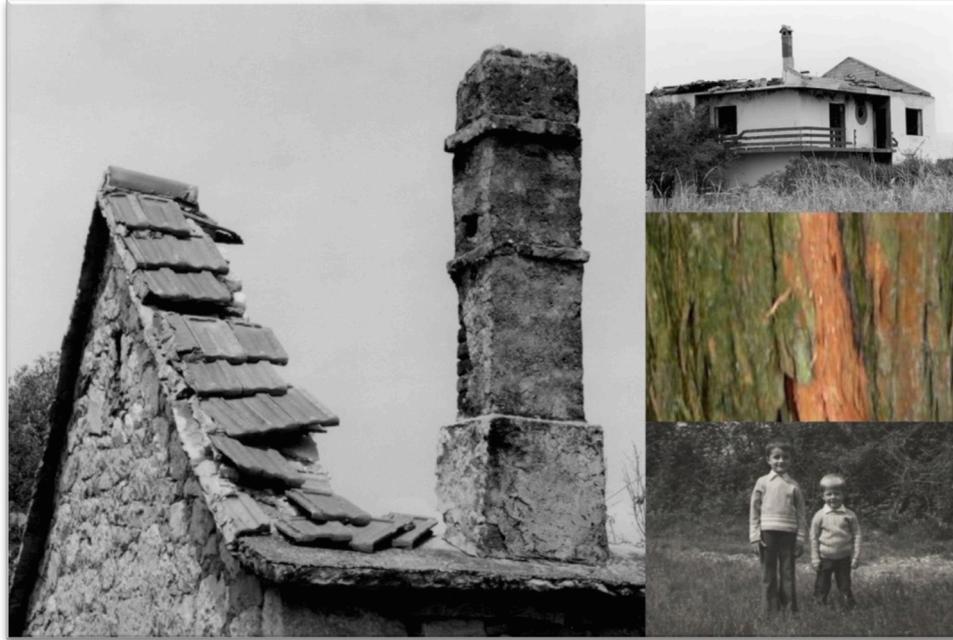


Figure 48. Zlatko Cosic, *Only The Chimney Stays*, 2010, still from the film.

The film is a recollection of Cosic's personal experience as a refugee, stating that his liminal status of belonging is reflected in the disrupted and fragmented quality of the video and audio. Cosic argued that:

The fragmentation of the visuals and sounds are reflections of the displacement of people, experiences and the way we process memories. The poetic narrative is the recollection of my personal experience and the effects of not belonging here or there.<sup>14</sup>

*Only the Chimney Stays* is related to *The Swallow* in that it covers a similar theme and editing style, and a displacement and a sense of loss are central to the exploration of trauma in both films.

In the film *Appearances* (2000), Barbara Meter applies the combination and juxtaposition of still frames of black-and-white photographs (Figure 50), moving images and blocks of text. Based on her family history, the film explores in depth the representation of time and memories; both visuals and sounds are fragmented. In *Appearances*, Meter combines sound and silence, using a wide variety of sounds - snatches from popular music of eastern Europe, ambient noise, echoes of voices, birdsongs, sounds from a train station and footsteps.

<sup>14</sup> <https://research.gold.ac.uk/21376/3/Catalouge%20compiled%20final.pdf>



Figure 49. Barbara Meter, *Appearances* (2000), still from the film.

This inspired me to experiment with sound and silence in *The Swallow*. The sound in the film serves as an editing framework, which shapes the mental transitions between the sequences of the story. Dulac argues that “cinema is a silent art (and) silent expression is its categorical rule...” (Dulac, 1988, p.305). Sound can draw our attention to specific objects on the screen. I identified similarities between *Appearances* and my film *The Swallow* in the concept of and approach towards the use of sound and silence. In both films we can see the combination and juxtaposition of still frames of black-and-white photographs, moving images and blocks of text.

However, the two films do differ from each other – Meter uses photographs from an album of her parents, who had to flee Hitler’s Germany before WWII, while I use photographs of abandoned places that I took in Northern Greece.

Zarina Bhimji’s film *Yellow Patch* (2011), which is concerned with colonial histories, was shot in different locations in India (Figure 51): the Princess Docks in Bombay, the desert area of Rann of Kutch and the Mandvi port in Gujarat. The *Yellow Patch* tells a story of Indian migration, using the example of Bhimji’s father, and explores legacies of the British Empire in a non-narrative form.



Figure 50. Zarina Bhimji, *Yellow Patch*, 2011, still from the film.

The film is an exploration of abandoned space with a characteristically evocative use of sound - the noise of birdsong, rain and violins seep into the sound of footsteps, or fragments of political speeches.

Scenes of dusty metal partitions, cabinets of papers and empty offices are accompanied by the sounds of rainfall, a radio crackles and the English voice of Lord Mountbatten, the last viceroy of British India, announces the creation of the two new states, claiming that this is ‘no time to look back, only a time to look forward’; the disunity of sound and image underscores the violent and traumatic consequences of partition in a way that does not require explicit explanation (Corella, 2012, p. 361)

My series of photographs of abandoned villages after the Civil War in Greece, *Calendar Without the Year*, and the film *The Swallow* are related to Bhimji’s *Yellow Patch*. In both works we can see similarities, as they both show places devoid of human presence. However, Bhimji’s film was motivated by trade and immigration routes across the Indian Ocean between India and Africa. She explores places from her father’s childhood journey from India to the African continent, where he finally settled, in Uganda, and where Bhimji was born. They consist only of human traces. Whereas in my series of photographs and film I

show places of a traumatic past and of barbarities perpetrated during the Civil War in Greece, when hundreds of thousand Macedonians of Slavic background in Northern Greece were forced to flee their homes and escape to other countries in order to avoid persecution.

### **Post memory. Silenced history**

“Art exists only because the world is disadvantageous.”

Andrei Tarkovsky

As I wrote above, in 1994 I started my journalistic investigation regarding the mass murder of Jews in Lithuania during World War II. The investigation was halted when it started to become dangerous for me and my family members to continue. However, during my last years of the doctorate programme I felt stronger and, after a consultation with my psychiatrist, I decided to return to the traumatic theme that had dramatically changed my life: the Lithuanian role in the Holocaust.

### **Silenced Unbearable Past**

Between 2016 and 2019 I went to Vilnius several times to continue my investigation and to take footage for my film, *1159*(2019), at the Veliucionys forest mass execution site, where 1159 Jewish children, women and men were murdered by Lithuanian Nazi collaborators on the 23rd of September 1941. Viliucionys is a suburb Vilinius, the capital of Lithuania.<sup>15</sup> Veliucionys forest (Figure 52) was not far from the dacha where my family spent summer months and where we always went for walks and played with our neighbour’s children. The film *1159* explores the mass execution of Lithuanian Jews at the Veliucionys forest and the silenced history of this tragic event. In this work, I explore traumatic memories of my family experience during WWII and the Holocaust in Lithuania through concepts of “post memory” and “silenced history”.

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<sup>15</sup> Vilnius and its surrounding region was multi-ethnic and, at various times, it had come under Polish, Russian, German and Soviet rule. Before WWII the majority of the population were Jews (40%), with the remainder being made up of Poles (30%), Russians (23%), Belarusians (4%) and Lithuanians (2%).  
[https://Demographic\\_history\\_of\\_the\\_Vilnius\\_region](https://Demographic_history_of_the_Vilnius_region)



Figure 51. Natalia Jezova, *Veliucionys forest*, 2019, photograph

During the first months after the start of WWII almost the entire Jewish population of Lithuania was killed. The historian, Nazi hunter and director of the *Simon Wiesenthal Centre*, Efraim Zuroff, observed that Lithuanians started killing Jews before the arrival of the German Nazi forces in the summer 1941. According to Zuroff, 200,000 to 220,000 Jews were killed - shot and left in massive sand pits and mass graves. By the end of the war around 96% of Jews had been killed in Lithuania - a higher percentage than anywhere else in Europe. One of the main reasons so many Jews were killed here is because of the help given to the Nazis by the local population (Zuroff in Frysh, 2010).

The preproduction research for the film took around four years. During this time I was trying to get access to the Lithuanian Special Archive to see documents about the mass murder of Jews in nearby Veliucionys. All my attempts to get access to documents regarding the Veliucionys massacre were resisted. Lithuanian political elites try to silence or distort history, and much of the “unbearable past” that is preserved in the archives is silenced.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> My personal experience confirms that it is simply not possible to gain access to any of the Lithuanian State Archive’s documents that would expose information about the participation of Lithuanians in the mass murder of Jews during World War II. The reason why it is impossible to see any documents regarding the Holocaust in Lithuania is that in December 2019 the Lithuanian government started preparing the legislation declaring that neither Lithuania nor its leaders at the time actually participated in the Holocaust. The role of Lithuanians in the Holocaust during World war II is a black hole in Europe’s cultural memory. Even now, no-one has ever taken responsibility for this criminal tragedy. Almost every forest in Lithuania is a site of



Figure 52. Natalia Jezova, a plaque commemorating Noreika (Lithuanian Nazi collaborator, who was involved in Holocaust) at the library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius. 2018, photograph.

In the text *Memória, esquecimento, silêncio* [Memory, Forgetting, Silence] (1989), Michel Pollak draws our attention to the processes of domination and submission within different versions and memories, pointing out the rift between the dominant official memory and the ‘underground memories’ marked by silence, the unsaid and resentment. According to Pollak, this rift may appear not only in relations between a dominating state and civil society but also in relations between an inclusive society and minority groups. “Forbidden”, “unspeakable” or “shameful” memories very often contradict collective memory (Pollak, 1989, pp. 3-15).

One of the main aims of my research in the Lithuanian Special Archive was to find out the names of the 1159 Jewish children, women and men who were killed in the forest near Veliucionys and to display their names in my film. Numbers don’t suggest a physical form. We can’t remember people as numbers. “The goal of Nazism was to totally destroy the Jews, to eliminate them from memory itself” (Tonner, 2016, p. 176). In the film *1159* I wanted to “restore” the names of the 1159 victims so that they will not disappear from memory and history. However, I did not get permission from the Secret Archive. There are only numbers, not names: on the gravestone in the Veliucionys forest and on the Holocaust internet platforms there is only a number - 1159 - of Jews killed in the Veliucionys forest.

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mass murder of Jews during World War II, yet there have been only three cases of people being charged with war crimes and the Holocaust in Lithuania and none of these cases have even come to court. Amid rising nationalism, the Lithuanian government celebrates Nazi collaborators, the perpetrators of the Holocaust, as patriotic heroes, while schools and streets are named after the killers of Jews (Figures 53).

I was able to get some information that I needed for the soundtrack of the film from documents that I received from the *Simon Wiesenthal* Centre and from the book, *Mūsiškiai - Our People* (my translation from Lithuanian), by Ruta Vanagaite and Efraim Zuroff.<sup>17</sup>

### Staging Personal and Collective History

I asked myself many times why I decided to make a film about this particular place. Every forest in Lithuania is marked by the extreme violence carried out by Lithuanian nationalists during WWII.

I mentioned before that my mother had Jewish roots and she very often said that she was happy that all of us (her children) looked more like our Russian father (Figure 54) – blond with blue eyes.

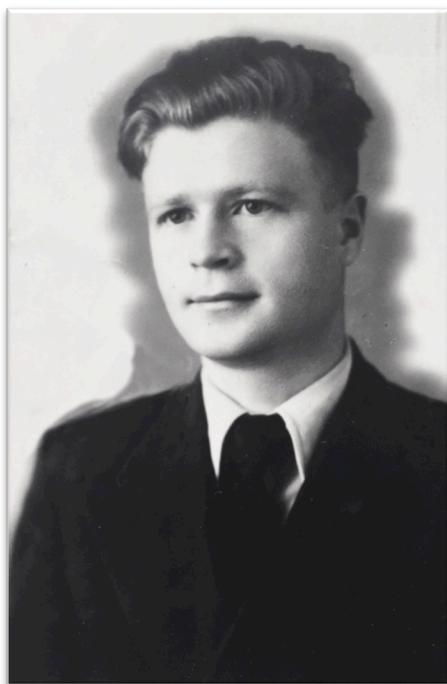


Figure 53. My father, *self-portrait*, 1964, photograph.

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<sup>17</sup> The book consists of excruciating eyewitness accounts about mass murders of Jews by Lithuanians during WWII. Vanagaite was one of Lithuania's most popular journalists and the author of numerous bestsellers, but she became persona non grata in Lithuania after this book was first published in 2016. Efraim Zuroff is the chief Nazi hunter of the *Simon Wiesenthal* Centre.

For a long time, I could not understand why my mother was happy that we looked like our father, but when I grew up she explained it to me. She lost most of her family and friends during a few days after World War II began in the Northern Caucasus (where my mother's family lived at that time). She and her mother were hidden in forests and mountains for seven months during the Nazi occupation. My mother told me that for her whole life after the war, every night she had nightmares where she 'saw' again and again horrible images of places full of dead children, woman and men – people who were killed only because they were Jewish. She told me that for her whole her life after the war she was living with the fear that it would happen again. But she had a hope that, maybe, we (her children) would survive as we do not look Jewish.

I remember my mother's cousin's story about how she survived when WWII started in Odessa, where her family lived (it was then part of Russia and is now part of Ukraine). On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 1941, the day when up to 30 000 Jews from Odessa were burned alive by Germans, Romanian occupiers and Ukrainian collaborators, my mother's cousin went to a village near Odessa to exchange clothes for food. It saved her life. When she returned to Odessa in the evening she found that all her family, relatives and friends had been burnt alive in munitions depots on the edge of the city. She was twelve years old when she witnessed this massacre. She told me that she lost her speech for two years, could not sleep for a long time and, during the Nazi occupation, she had to hide for two and a half years in the Odessa catacombs.

All of these personal and historical episodes took place two decades before I was born. However, the words of my mother and her cousin have had a deep effect on me. I 'saw' their traumas through my eyes and I have a feeling that I can remember the memories of my mother and her cousin through the experience of their effects. This is, I believe, the experience of "post memory".

Descendants of individuals and communities that have survived catastrophic collective experiences – such as war, genocide, extreme violence, transformative political coups and revolutions – often feel as though they were shaped by events that preceded their birth. They experience these events not as memories but as "post memories". Marianne Hirsch's "post

memory” theory, suggests that traumatic memories are transmitted across generations (Hirsch, 2019, p.174).

Post memory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up (Hirsch, 2017).

In Hirsch’s words, traumatic experiences were transmitted to the next generation so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present (Hirsch, 2008, p.107).

Eva Hoffman argues that the formative events of the twentieth century have crucially informed our biographies, threatening sometimes to overshadow and overwhelm our own lives. But, in reality, we did not see these events or suffer through them or experience their impact directly. Our relationship to them has been “defined by our very ‘post-ness’ and by the powerful but mediated forms of knowledge that have followed from it” (Hoffman, 2004, p. 25). She concludes that it is not identical to memory: it is ‘post,’ but at the same time, it approximates memory in its affective force. (Hoffman 2004, pp 6-9)

I believe that it is my post memory of a familial traumatic experience that is mediated in the film *1159*, and that this will help to keep it from being forgotten. Hirsch argues, that:

Postmemorial work [...] strives to reactivate and re-embody more distant political and cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression. In these ways, less directly affected participants can become engaged in the generation of postmemory that can persist even after all participants and even their familial descendants are gone (Hirsch, 2012, p.33).

For a long time, I was thinking about the best way to express the memories of my mother and her cousin’s memories within a visual and creative work. Finally, I understood that I wanted to synthesize and show their memories through the prism of my own memories and experiences. I decided to make a film that consists of long takes, where we see only the

landscape devoid of the presence of human life. I created a soundtrack that reconstructs the mass murder of 1159 Jews at Veliucionys forest (I will speak about the soundtrack more in the next paragraph). The sound filled with the presence of people is clearly in contradiction to the peaceful landscape.

### **Landscape as a Silent Witness and Central Character**

As I said earlier, I located *1159* in the exact execution site of Veliucionys forest where the tragedy, in September 1941, took place (Figure 55). I recorded the footage on the same day of the mass murder - the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September - seventy-eight years after the real tragedy. I convey the tragic fate of the 1159 Jewish children, women and men killed in this forest by Lithuanian Nazi collaborators on that day through the image of a landscape devoid of the presence of human life. “Landscape constitutes a vital segment of the representational strategies deployed by filmmakers to communicate their experiences with the maximum effect” (Dissanayake, 2010, p.191).



Figure 54. Natalia Jezova, film *1159* (2019), photograph of the screening the film at Old Biscuit factory, 2020

The deserted landscape is a silent witness to the unthinkable cruelty. I decided to use the landscape as a character in *1159* because, as Dissanayake puts it:

Landscape can operate at a number of different levels of representational significance and enunciatory competence. Landscape establishes a sense of time, place and mood; they serve to punctuate the narrative and invest it with a more varied rhythm (Dissanayake, 2010, p.191).

I found a visual and audio inspiration for the methodology I used in *1159* from a film by Zarina Bhimji, *Out of Blue* (2002). At first, *Out of Blue* (Figure 56) motivated me to experiment with the filmmaking process where a landscape devoid of people is represented as a character.

London based Ugandan Asian artist Zarina Bhimji's work is related to history, trauma, loss and memory. One of the overarching themes of her work is the way in which the past and present intersect. Bhimji was born in Uganda to Indian parents. Her family was forced to leave Uganda in 1974, after the expulsion of Uganda's Asian community. In her childhood, she witnessed the atrocities of the regime of Idi Amin Dada Oumee, known as the "Butcher of Uganda". Amnesty International has estimated that from 1971 to 1978 between 50,000 and 300,000 Ugandan citizens were killed.



Figure 55. Zarina Bhimji, *Out of Blue*, 2002, still from the film.

Bhimji began research for *Out of Blue* four years before the film was completed. She has written:

In the summer of 1998 I visited Uganda for the first time in twenty-four years. I visited many places that suffered badly during the civil war ... I was interested in the traces of war; its unspeakable horror, rites of passage, of re-building” (Bhimji, 2001, p.5).

During preproduction research for the film, Bhimji records deserted landscape (Figures 57) and places in Uganda. Many of these sites relate directly to Bhimji’s own history; she revisited her family home, the school and the mosque she knew as a child. Her aim for this film was to mark what has happened: the exclusion, massacre and erasure of an Asian diaspora in Uganda through images of empty landscapes, where life dramatically stopped. In *Out of Blue* Bhimji presents a “journey” through her memory, where viewers are invited to simulate the fears, sorrows and grief of those who were affected by Uganda’s upheaval. Through the depiction of abandoned Ugandan places and landscapes, Bhimji’s film invites the viewer to ‘share’ and confront the tragic fate of the thousands of people who were killed or forced to leave their homes and flee the country.

Abandoned ghostly buildings and deserted landscapes are silent witnesses of past cruelties. Solitude and the fear that comes with being alone in nature, key attributes of early sublime landscape painting, are recast in Bhimji's visual imagery: sunlight streams through barred windows casting dark shadows (Borchardt-Hume, 2012).

Landscape images, devoid of people, in Bhimji’s *Out of Blue* and in my own *1159* convey the violent and traumatic consequences that happened in the past - Bhimji brings her own traumatic memories of being a child during Amin’s regime in Uganda to her film; while in my film I mediate personal and historical episodes that took place two decades before I was born. *1159* relates to *Out of Blue* in so far as the deserted landscapes act as a character and depict places where traumatic events happened many years ago. In *Out of Blue*, Bhimji shows places in Uganda that directly relate to her own traumatic experience of being a child during Uganda’s upheaval, when she and her parents needed to flee from their home, losing relatives and friends in the process. Bhimji relies on her personal feelings and memories as an eye-witness of the tragic events in Uganda from 1972 to 1974. In my film, I use the landscape of the Veliucionys forest that I knew from my youth as a “character”, an expression of a traumatic experience driven by post memory, showing that experience through the personal prism of my memories related to this tragic site.

As I said earlier, in *1159* I used only long takes. I found inspiration for this in both Zarina Bhimji's *Out of Blue* and Andrei Tarkovsky *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), and in the latter's theoretical work *Sculpting in Time*.

There are further similarities between *Out of Blue* and *1159* – both films consist only of long takes and both Bhimji and I reconstruct traumatic events from the past through the use of sound.

The long takes of images of place allow the spectator to define the geographical context; to distinguish the difference between foreground and background (Bazin, 1967, p.50).

In *1159* every shot lasts about 3-5 minutes and all the takes, except the last two, were filmed using a static camera. The last two shots use moving camera footage going from right to left - as it is traditional in Judaism to go from right to left in writing and reading:

In Kabbalistic teachings, the right represents the attribute of chesed (kindness) and the left, gevurah (severity). Just as there is a general rule that the right takes precedence in Jewish life, so too, whenever faced with a situation where you need to decide between kindness or severity, kindness comes first (Shurpin, 2015).

The soundtrack for *1159* 'reconstructs' the day of the mass execution of Jews by Lithuanian nationalists in Veliucionys forest on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1941. It is based on the testimonies of Vincas Sausaitis, a participant in these mass murders:

The Jews were asked to leave their belongings in the yard of Veliucionys and start marching to the forest. When they came to the place, all Jews were asked to lie with their faces down. Then, members of the Lithuanian Special Squad (Vincas Sausaitis, Balys Norvaiša, a student of Vilnius Music Conservatory Vladas Korsakas and others) pointed their guns at 10-15 people at a time to get up and then shot them. Children were not shot but their heads were smashed with rifle butts. Some of the Jews managed to escape, but all were caught in the fields, shot dead and left there. In the evening the shooting ended, but nobody covered the corpses. All participants of the mass murder ate their dinner at the site. There were 1159 victims altogether;

among them 468 men, 495 women and 196 children (Zuroff, Vanagaite, 2016, my translation from Lithuanian).

*1159* starts with footage from the entrance to the Veliucionys forest. The soundtrack for this shot is an extract of the speech from the commander of the Lithuanian rebels, Leonas Prapuolenis, broadcast on the 23rd of June 1941 (the day after World War II started in Lithuania) on the local radio. In the speech he announced the formation of the Provisional Government of Lithuania, in accordance with the Nazi regime, and of the independent state of Lithuania:

The resulting Provisional Government of Lithuania announces the creation of a free and independent state of Lithuania. In front of the whole world's pure conscience, the young Lithuanian state enthusiastically pledges to contribute to the organization of Europe on a new basis. The Lithuanian Nation is determined to build its future on the basis of national unity and social justice (Brandišauskas, 2011, p.5; my translation from Lithuanian).

On the same day of this cynical speech about the creation of a free and independent Lithuania, formed on the basis of national unity and social justice, Lithuanians (whose population formed a very small percentage on the country) started receiving weapons from the Nazis with which they began to "clean" the territory of Jews, Gypsies and Russians.

The second shot in the film shows a path in the Veliucionys forest, full of fallen leaves. For this long take I was recording the sound of footsteps on fallen leaves in the forest by asking my friends to walk through the path to 'repeat' one of the episodes from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1941.

The third shot of the execution site is accompanied by the sound of a harmonica playing a traditional Lithuanian polka (in the statement from the participant of these mass murders, he mentioned that during the massacre they had a person in their command who played the harmonica).

The fourth long take of the forest around the execution site is accompanied by sounds of rifle shots, blows, falling bodies and laughter.

The fifth long take shows a place in the forest where the bodies of the 1159 murdered Jewish people were left for a few days. This shot is accompanied by the soundtrack that I recorded in the former Jewish part of Vilnius – the sound of many crows (Figure 57).



Figure 56. Natalia Jezova, *Crows in the former Jewish part of Vilnius*, 2018, photograph.

As I mentioned before, in my art practice I put a lot of emphasis on the symbolic meaning of things.

“People once believed that when someone dies, a crow carries their soul to the land of the dead” (Starovecka, 2010). Following my research on Jewish folklore, I discovered that witnessing six or more crows means death is nearby. In the Hebrew Talmud, ravens are credited with teaching mankind how to deal with death: “When Cain slew Abel, a raven showed Adam and Eve how to bury the body, because they had never done so before” (Savage, 1997, p.57).

The sixth long take in the film is a moving shot from right to left of the place in the forest, where a gravestone stands (Figure 58) (it was put there in 1951) with the words, in Yiddish: “Here, in 1941 IX 22, 1159 Jews were killed.”



Figure 57. Natalia Jezova, *The gravestone in Veliucionys forest*, 2018, photograph.

This shot is silent. I mentioned in the previous chapter about the role played by a mixture of sound and silence in the film: the sound in the film serves as an editing framework that shapes the mental transitions between the sequences of the story. Sound draws our attention to specific objects on the screen. I use a long take with silence to create an emotional peak, and to give the possibility to feel and think about what happened at this site a long time ago. Sven Raeymaeker argues that

The spectator is guided in the interpretation of semantic content by the relation of the currently presented silence to the corresponding images and the rest of the soundtrack. The relation between silence, sound, image, and the spectator is completed by the inclusion of narrative, which is more than simply the sum of sound and image. It is through the combination of these factors that the semantic possibilities for silence are created (Raeymaeker, 2014).

The last long take of the film is a panoramic view of the whole site of the Veliucionys forest and the path leading to it, filmed early in the morning at sunrise. In this shot, light is one of

the most important elements. The bright rays rising above the dark forest take on a symbolic meaning: the victory of light over darkness. For the sound in this shot I applied a musical composition of the song “My Yiddishe Mama”, which was one of the most popular Jewish songs in Lithuania before World War II.

Bhimji’s film, *Out of Blue*, begins with long a take of a landscape during sunrise (Figure 59). The natural beauty of this scene is shattered by a series of bush fires that spring up, darkening the sky.



Figure 58. Zarina Bhimji, *Out of Blue*, 2002, still from the film.

The next long take shows abandoned military barracks and deserted prison cells bearing dark stains that suggest the aftermath of torture. The next take shows an abandoned and unkempt cemetery and, after this, we can see abandoned airport buildings overrun with mosquitoes.

In both *Out of Blue* and *1159*, landscape images, devoid of people, convey the violent and traumatic consequences through the use of sound. The sound is filled with the presence of people and is clearly in contradiction to the landscapes devoid of people. In *1159* I try to ‘transfer’ the viewer to the centre of the narrative; to “share” the traumatic event that happened in 1941.

Bhimji’s soundtrack for *Out of Blue* is very similar to mine in *1159*, as in both our films we reconstruct traumatic events of the past through the use of sound. Bhimji reconstructs sounds

from her own childhood memories; sounds from her personal traumatic experience in Uganda. I reconstruct sounds of the tragic event that happened in Veliucionys forest on 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1941 based on the testimonies of the participant in these mass murders.

There are, however, differences in our soundtracks; eg in the languages in the radio broadcasts. Bhimji uses fragments from speeches from Ugandan radio in the 1970s, while I use fragments of a speech from Lithuanian radio on the day when World War II began there. All other sounds – eg sounds of gunshots and sobbing - are similar in both our films, as the sound of violence and cruelty are the same the world over.

In *1159* I use an episode that accompanies silence as a point of an emotional peak when the viewer, during a long take, can ‘feel’ and think about what happened at this place in 1941. Bhimji chooses the sound of the strong buzzing of mosquitoes in the final episode to maintain the attention of the viewer and to evoke their emotional response to the traumatic events in Uganda.

During all his work, Andrei Tarkovsky used long takes in each of his films. Doreen Massey argues that:

Long takes give us, in the midst of the rush and flow of [the present] a certain stillness. But they are not stills. They are about duration. They tell us of becoming, in place (Massey, 2001).

Recording a particular time and the memories of that time is one of Tarkovsky’s key aims in his filmmaking process.

Cinema came into being as a means of recording the very movement of reality; factual, specific, within time and unique; of reproducing again and again the moment, instant by instant, in its fluid mutability... The image becomes authentically cinematic when not only does it live within time, but time also lives within it (Tarkovsky in North, 2018, p.138).

Applying the use of long takes makes it possible to feel the real flow of time within the film. Long takes give viewers time for a detailed visual exploration, one that increases their

emotional involvement in the story. During long takes, viewers who are unfamiliar with the scene represented in the film can have enough time to ‘feel inside’ the scene.

Tarkovsky mentioned that long takes are an act of recording time and memories. By using long takes he aimed to give viewers a sense of time passing and the relationship of one moment in time to another. By this he meant that the unique characteristic of filmmaking is to always take our experience of time and after it. He argued that:

The cinema image comes into being during shooting, and exists within the frame. During shooting, therefore, I concentrate on the course of time in the frame, in order to reproduce it and record it (Tarkovsky, 1987, p.114).

Tarkovsky mentioned that without long takes film loses its aesthetic.

In *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), based on Vladimir Bogomolov's novel *Ivan* (which was based on real events), Tarkovsky explores how the bright world of childhood is contrasted with the gloomy realities of the war (Figure 60). Tarkovsky added his own personal experiences and memories into the script as, like Ivan's childhood in the film, Tarkovsky's own childhood occurred in wartime. The childhood of twelve-year-old Ivan ended the day when he saw that the Nazis had shot his mother and sister. As his father had been killed at the front, Ivan was left an orphan and so he goes to the war himself. Tarkovsky showed how the war affects a twelve-year-old child, depriving him of his family, childhood and, eventually, life itself.



Figure 59. Andrei Tarkovsky, *Ivan's Childhood*, 1962, still from the film.

In *Ivan's Childhood* there are a number of different uses of long takes – Tarkovsky applied them to create the metaphorical images of the landscape (Figure 61) for Ivan's dream and to evoke the feeling of loss and emotional pain. Donato Totaro argued, that: “These moments occur when a character has experienced a pain associated with either loss, grief, nostalgia, sacrifice, or violence” (Totaro, 2010).



Figure 60. Andrei Tarkovsky, *Ivan's Childhood*, 1962, still from the film.

In *Ivan's Childhood* Tarkovsky brings his personal traumatic memory of being a boy in wartime. He creates a series of long takes with dream sequences - one of these is Ivan's happy dream (Figure 62), where rain from a storm washes over the landscape and, later, we can see a truck full of apples and a boy, Ivan, and a girl in the back of a truck playing on the 'hill' of apples.



Figure 61. Andrei Tarkovsky, *Ivan's Childhood*, 1962, still from the film.

Tarkovsky used these long takes to show Ivan's emotional feelings and dreams of the time when he was happy. During this long takes the viewer is given the opportunity to get used to Ivan's experiences; to feel along with him the pain of losing loved ones but, at the same time, to also experience a sense of joy and happiness during his dreams. During long takes the viewer has enough time to think about the realities of the war and the incompatibility of war and violence with a happy childhood. Tarkovsky stated that in making the film he wanted to "convey all [his] hatred of war", and that he chooses to do a film about Ivan's childhood "because it is what contrasts most with war" (Gianvito, 2006, p.3).

In *1159* I use long takes of a landscape devoid of the presence of human life and I accompany this with the sound of "reconstructed" mass murders of Jews in Veliucionys forest in September 1941. Through the incongruity of image and sound, I convey the violent and

traumatic consequences of what happened at these places from two decades before I was born. With the use of these long takes I try to convey to the viewer my attitude and rejection of war, violence and cruelty.

I had an opportunity to actually communicate with viewers during the screening of the film and Artists Talk at the *Baltics Memory and Landscape* exhibition, in January 2020, at the Old Biscuit Factory (London).

The viewers' reactions to *1159* were very diverse. Some of the viewers (I found during our conversation that they were from Lithuania) demanded that I stop showing the film because, in their opinion, Lithuanian collaborators did nothing shameful in killing Jews. They explained to me that the Lithuanian "heroes" who murdered Jews during World War II just wanted to have a better life (after mass murders, they were able to take the victims' properties).

However, there were also viewers who watched the film several times and thanked me for bringing up this theme. Ever since I put the film *1159* on my website and it was publicised in an article in *The Sunday Tribune*, I have constantly received messages from around the world with different reactions to it. Most of these had come from virtual visitors saying that when they were watching the film they had a feeling that they were "inside" the scene; that the film evoked their familial traumatic memories. Many of them do not have any direct relation to the Holocaust.

## Professional Practice

### Solo Exhibition

9<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2018, *Memory and Landscape*, The Aidas Galerija, Trakų Gatve, 13, Sienamiestis, Vilnius, Lithuania. Twenty-four collages and photographs from *The Memory Traces* Series, 48x70cm - 70x90cm.

### Selected Joint / Group Exhibitions, Awards, Jury membership

#### 2020

15<sup>th</sup> May 2020 – 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021. *A World without End*, No Barking aRt Online Exhibition

15<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> March 2020. *Stars of Albion*, Grand Prix 2019, Performance in Fine Art & Photography, Jury Member.

21<sup>st</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2020. *Baltica. Memory and Landscape*, The Old Biscuit Factory, London, *Memory and Landscape* six photo collages, C-Prints 70x90cm. Film screenings *1159*, 9 min., B&W, sound.

5<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2020. *Atina Art Residency Exhibition* at hArtslane gallery, London. *Memory Traces* and *Atina* films screenings, 6min., colour, sound and 9min., colour, sound.

#### 2019

11<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> December 2019, *Into The Light*, The Espaccio Gallery, London. Five C- Prints photo collages and photographs from *Why Not Series*. Film screening *A Posteriori*, 7 min, colour, sound.

10<sup>th</sup> November 2019, Victoria Theatre, 2961, 16<sup>th</sup> Street, San Francisco, USA. *The Moving Silently* - a curated collection of silent short films. Accompanied live by the *Club Foot Modern Machines* Orchestra. Original scores composed by Richard Marriott & Ensemble. Produced by Ephemereye Art.

8<sup>th</sup> September 2019. *Fit The Slit*, Alberoni, Lido, Venice, Italy. *Liberty MisLeading the People*, C- Print photograph, 15x18cm.

29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> August, PASSAGGIATINA 2019 exhibition at Cantinone Gallery, Atina, Italy. Films screening: *PASSAGGIATINA 2019*, 10 min., colour, sound and *Innamorati di Atina*

2019, 9 min., colour, sound.

20<sup>th</sup> July, 2019. *Moving Silently & Club Foot Modern Machines*, Empress Theatre, 330 Virginia street, Vallejo, California, United States. Film screening *Amarcord*, B&W, silent. Original scores by Richard Marriott & Ensemble.

25<sup>th</sup> May – 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2019. *Everywoman II* exhibition, 436 Kingsland Road, London, E8 4AA, Two C-Print photographs: *The Brexit* and *The Human Right Declaration*, 97x125cm, 78x50 cm.

10<sup>th</sup> May – 30<sup>th</sup> August 2019. *MINISCULE VENICE 2019* Exhibition at the 58th Venice Biennale. Fondamenta Sant'Anna, Sestiere Castello, 996A, 30122 Venice, Italy. *Earth 2059*, mixed media.

23<sup>rd</sup> March – 18<sup>th</sup> May 2019. *Miniscule Part II*, Cross Lane Project, Kendal, Cumbria. *How The Woman Died*, mixed media.

1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2019. *Stars of Albion*, Grand Prix 2019, Performance in Fine Art & Photography, Jury Member.

15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2019. *Four Legs Good, Two Legs Bad*, Chinese Year Of the Pig 2019, Q-Park Leicester Sq. 39-41 Whitcomb Street, London. *The Brexit*, C-Print photograph, 89x107cm.

31<sup>st</sup> January – 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2019. *The Fragments* exhibition, the Old Biscuit Factory, London. C- Prints photograph from *Why Not* Series 190x 220cm, Film screening *A Posteriory*, 8min, sound, colour.

January 2019. *Circle Foundation*, Artist of the Year 2018 Award Winner.

## **2018**

5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019. *Atina Art Residency Exhibition* at hArtslane gallery, London. Installation and film screening *In Movimento*, 6min, colour, sound.

1<sup>st</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018. *Present Perfect* exhibition, Zverev Contemporary Art Centre, st. Novoryazanskaya, 29, Moscow, Russia, 105066. Nine photo collages *Memory Traces* series, 48x70cm - 70x90cm. Film screening *The Swallow*, 9 min., B&W, sound.

29<sup>th</sup> August – 1<sup>st</sup> September, PASSAGGIATINA 2018 exhibition, Palacco Ducale, Atina, Italy. Film screening, *Innamorati di Atina 2018*, colour, 9min. Film screening, *In Movimento*, colour, 6min.

June 2018, *Showcase 2018*, University of East London. Installation and film screening, *H Hour*, B&W, 9 min, sound.

March 2018, *Moving Silently*, Essanay's Silent Film Museum, Fremont, CA. Film screening, *Amarcord*, B&W, silent.

February 2018, Finalist 38<sup>th</sup> *Annual Photography Forum* (High School Photography Context), USA.

7 – 19 January 2018, *Identity* Exhibition, Espacio Gallery, London. Films screening *Inconditus Trinus & The Swallow*. Fourteen photographs from *Why Not* Series, 67x82cm.

## **2017**

9<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> February, exhibition *Echoes From The Cave*, The Crypt Gallery, London, film screening *The Swallow*, 8min., B/W, sound.

12 – 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017, Showcase Exhibition, AVA Gallery, University of East London. *The Swallow* Installation, 8min., B&W, sound.

12 – 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2017, exhibition *What We Wear* in Campbell, CA, USA, film screening *Adagio in Blue*, 3min, colour, sound.

## **2016**

16 - 21<sup>st</sup> August 2016, *No Barking Art Biennale*, the Espacio Gallery, London. Five photographs *Why Not* Series, 170x220cm and film screening *Inconditus Trinus*, 7min., colour, sound.

June 2016, *Showcase 2016*, University of East London. Four photographs from *Why Not* Series, 170x190cm, and film screening *The Midnight Dream*, 7min., colour, sound.

24<sup>th</sup> June – 26<sup>th</sup> August 2016, *REM-Brand Name* project, Lola Nikolaou gallery, Thessaloniki, Greece. Five prints from *Why Not* Series 40x50cm

## 2015

16 - 18 October, 2015, *ARTMASTERS 2015*, Old Truman Brewery gallery, London. Two C-Prints, 190x140 cm

June 2015, *Showcase 2015*, University of East London. Projection through the vintage frame *Liberty MisLeading the People*, 170x90cm and film screening *A Posteriori*, 5 min, colour, sound.

## 2014

December 2014, Synthesis, Trinity Buoy Wharf Gallery, London. Nine digital C-print photographs, 90x110cm.

November 2014, AVA Gallery, University of East London, Docklands Campus, London. Film screenings *A Posteriori*, 7min., colour, sound.

## Residencies, Trips

Five trips to Lithuania 2016 – 2019. Filming, research in State archive.

18<sup>th</sup> of August – 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2019. *PASSAGGIATINA 2019* art residency, Atina, Italy. Films screening *PASSAGGIATINA 2019*, 10 min., colour, sound & *Innamorati di Atina 2019*, 9 min., colour, sound.

10<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> April. Chvar, Croatia, art residency. Ten photographs from *The Memory Traces* Series 25x35 cm.

25<sup>th</sup> November – 20<sup>th</sup> of January, 2019. Trip to Vilnius, Lithuania. Filming, research in State archive.

18<sup>th</sup> August – 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2018, *PASSAGGIATINA 2018* art residency, Atina, Asilo, Italy. Films screening *Innamorati di Atina 2018*, colour, sound, 7min & *In Movimento*, colour, sound, 6min.

2<sup>nd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018, residency in Boudreaux, France. Eighteen photographs from *Family Photographs Destiny* series, 70x90cm.

February 2018, trip to Vilnius, Lithuania. Research in State archive.

8<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2017. Art residency in Vilnius, Lithuania. Fourteen photographs from *The Memory Traces*, 70x90 cm.

23<sup>rd</sup> July – 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2016, *Directional Forces* residency, Psarades, North Greece, 16 photographs, 25x40cm.

4<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2016, *Europos Centras* residency, Lithuania, projection of the photo collages made from my family archive photographs.

19-30 September 2015, *Barbentane* residency in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, France. Film screenings *Memory Traces*, B&W, sound, 7min.

### **Conferences and Seminars:**

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018, Seminar presentation on *Memory, Identity and Representation of the Past*. University of East London. Archival documents, photographs from my private collection.

21<sup>st</sup> March 2017, University of East London, WIP seminar. Archival documents from my private collection, photographs, magazines, newspapers, vintage clothes and accessories.

23<sup>rd</sup> May. Conference, University of East London, *Photography, Archive and Memory in Academic Research*.

7<sup>th</sup> June 2017. University of East London. Presentation on *Memory and Family Archive* at ADI Postgraduate Research Day,

20<sup>th</sup> June 2017, Showcase Seminar, University of East London. Archival documents, photographs, magazines, newspapers from my private collection.

6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2017. II Intermedia Conference, *The Moving Form of Film*, University of Reading.

30<sup>th</sup> November 2017, Seminar presentation on *Personal and Collective memory*. University of East London. Photographs, archival documents from my private collection.

10<sup>th</sup> June, 2016. Journal of Media Practice and MeCCSA Practice Network Symposium *Post-Screen Cultures*, Post-Screen Proposal: *Big Brother is Watching You*, photo collage, 90x110cm.

### Reflection on Professional Practice

I enrolled on the professional doctorate programme as a mid-career artist. I wanted to review my past practice and reflect on what I believed to be the fundamental themes in my work. Through this process my intention was to consider and plan the direction of my work more productively. The first three years of the doctorate was much more experimental as I began to narrow down certain aspects of the work and explore my interest more in depth. Throughout these three years I realized that my work should be more consistent, thus I evaluated my experience gathered through research trips, residencies, and practical exhibitions. My residencies and exhibitions helped me to bring my art works to a conclusion, as well as, to develop a conceptual and aesthetic awareness. The experience of participating in exhibitions helped me further understand the relationship between the viewer and artwork. It was a great experience because I knew I needed to develop my work. I took part in several group exhibitions and also paved the way for future solo exhibitions and ambitious projects. I took part in prestigious art competitions and my works have been selected for the finalist and artists of the year awards. It gave me more confidence in my professional practice and I began to explore future exhibiting opportunities.

## **Solo exhibition**

9<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> December 2018, *Memory and Landscape*, The Aidas Galerija, Trakų Gatvė, 13, Sienamiestis, Vilnius, Lithuania.

This solo exhibition was a chance to show some of my works I will show in the Viva. I was exhibited twelve C-Print collages from The *Memory Traces* Series, 70x90cm and film *The Swallow*. This exhibition gave me an opportunity to understand the different possibilities of installing my works and showing the film.

This exhibition made me realize the importance of exhibiting my works and having solo exhibitions in different countries - my previous solo exhibitions were in London (2012, 2014). It was helpful to see how viewers interact if the work is 'communicating' to them. Visitors shared stories of their live experience. Some of them came in and brought their photographs and family albums. I was surprised how collages from my family archive caused so much talk and desire amongst visitors who wanted to share their family stories. This exhibition has brought a lot of positive feedback from the visitors. It was great to be able to engage directly with the viewer in a verbal dialogue and reflection. The experience of the exhibition helped to further understand the relationship between the viewer and artwork.

## **Group Exhibitions**

*Moving Silently* 2018 - 2020

One of the most interesting projects in which I am involved - *Moving Silently* (experimental silent short films). I screened the film *Amarcord* (2018) B&W, silent. The project started in March 2018 in Essanay's *Silent Film* Museum (where Charlie Chaplin's Tramp films were produced) Fremont, CA. In *Silent Film* Museum our films were accompanied by the famous pianist, Judy Rosenberg, who responded to the unknown visuals with a very interesting set of musical vignettes. Music came into cinema in the days of the silent movie, with the pianist who illustrated what was happening on the screen with a musical accompaniment appropriate to the rhythm and emotional pitch of the visual image. It was a pretty mechanical and arbitrary way of tagging music onto the picture, a facile system of illustration, with the object

of intensifying the impression made by each episode.

In July 2019 our screening was shown in *Empress Theatre*, CA accompanied live by the *Club Foot Modern Machines* live orchestra, original scores composed by Richard Marriott & Ensemble. In November 2019 *Moving Silently* moved to *Victoria Theatre* in San Francisco and was accompanied live by the *Club Foot Modern Machines* live orchestra.

During all PV it was live stream on few social platforms.

It was a planned to continue the project in France, Italy and UK, however, the pandemic COVID-19, changed all plans.

### *The Miniscule Part II and Miniscule Venice 2019*

The *Miniscule Part II* and *Miniscule Venice 2019* projects in which I took part were curated by Vanya Balogh. This projects could be regarded as a bijou sociological experiments: over 220 artists from around the world have taken up the invitation to submit a diminutive artwork of any genre or media but with one simple requirement: the maximum size of the work should be not bigger that a standard matchbox: 2x1.5 inches. For me it was an absolutely new experience, the format was an intriguing challenge. This was encouraging considering that I needed to experiment with media that was unfamiliar to my practice. For *The Miniscule Part II* I created a sculpture *How The Woman Died*. For the sculpture I used eighteenth century materials from my private collection. The exhibition *Miniscule Part II* was presented at *Cross Lane Project*, Kendal, Cumbria from 23rd of March to 18th of May 2019. It was amazing experience to meet and work with so many artists from around the globe at one place. We had a curator talk and it raised a discussion where artists debate their works on show and commented on the creative process – from the dream and idea till the realisation. We discussed about the size of the artworks and can be the work to be judged by its size. Does size is really matter? Can we say that the ‘London Eye has more impact on the art world than a bicycle wheel?’ (V. Balogh, 2019)

The *My Art Guide* catalogue of the *58th Venice Biennale* wrote that *Miniscule Venice 2019* ‘presents a set of carefully considered, imaginative but seriously tiny, fragile artworks – an exquisite mass of breeding minisculism, making it by far a biggest smallest show at the *58th Venice Biennale*.’ (*My Art Guide*, May 2019)

Our curator Vanya Balogue argues, that:

Size is one thing, scale is another, and this exhibition is certainly about how to challenge ourselves regarding scale. It is specifically concerned with how the miniature ideas inform the world at large and vice versa.

It was a new direction in my practice. I created for the *Miniscule Venice 2019* a small sculpture *Earth 2059* on a climate change theme. The sculpture is very small; however, the theme is big and actual. At its heart is an idea about looking, and about seeing.

### *The Swallow 2017 – 2019*

I created my portfolio on a few web art platforms. Through the *Zealous Platform* *The Swallow* (2017) was selected for an exhibition on 1st – 14th November 2018 in one of the most prestigious *Zverev Contemporary Art Centre* in Moscow (Russia). This exhibition made me realize the importance of exhibiting my works in different countries - audiences from different parts of the world had different perceptions to the same artwork. I also showed *The Swallow* in Greece, France, UK, Croatia and Russia. In all of those countries the film raised a lot of questions related to post-memory, identity and the interpretation of the past. These exhibitions brought positive feedback from the visitors. It was great to be able to engage directly with the viewer in a verbal dialogue and reflection. During the Private View and the other days of the exhibition I had a chance to have an in-depth discussion about the film with a wider audience.

This professional doctorate has been an enriching experience and I have had the opportunity to consider many issues that are important to me in my professional practice. The doctorate process has increased my interest in theory through the discussion of my work and the work of other artists within a particular context. Through my extensive reading, I have realised the importance of research and more fully understand the theoretical context of the relationship between trauma, memory and silenced history. By researching and analysing these themes I have discovered the work of various theorists and artists. Reflecting on the work of other artists has encouraged me to develop my own practice, and they have influenced me and given me the confidence to express my ideas through my art. This allowed me to develop and explore my creative practice in various mediums – ie photography, filmmaking and installation. During the professional doctorate I also continued to experiment with different

techniques and this has led me to produce new works.

I have learnt to be more critical of what I do through being critical of the work of other artists, as the training of critical thinking developed it enabled me to be critical of my own practice. It is important to be critical in order to move forward.

The Prof. Doc. process has encouraged the development of both the theoretical and practical aspects of my work. I have taken advantage of the advice given to me by my supervisors and fellow researchers during the tutorials and work in progress seminars and the presentations that I had to do during the years of my studies also helped to improve my confidence.

I have raised my art practice to a professional level, which in turn has given me the confidence to participate in conferences, residencies and exhibitions around the world. I have learned how to present my projects and to explore interests with viewers, who can in turn reflect and feedback on issues that are raised in my works. I argue that these issues are still relevant today, and as an artist, I feel impelled to explore them and raise awareness about them. I hope that my projects and my professional practice will ensure that these themes will not be forgotten. However, the main objective of this doctorate has been to understand and develop my practice more creatively and intellectually and to be more active in my professional practice.

### List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Natalia Jezova, *Portrait of Marina Tsvetaeva*, 1980. Burned paper, pencil, 90x70cm.

Figure 2. *The queue at the Pushkin Museum in 1974 to see the Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci*, Moscow.

Figure 3. *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci in the Pushkin Museum, 1974, Moscow, USSR. Photograph from my personal archive.

Figure 4. Photo collage by my father. My father combined two images of my brother and me, 1967.

Figure 5. Natalia Jezova, *Dacha*, combined photo collage by my father and our dacha window, 1979.

Figure 6. During the *In Vogue* festival, Vecheslav and Arthur Shkill, Natalia Jezova and Nicola Trussardi, 1997. Photograph from my personal archive.

Figure 7. One of the extradition<sup>7</sup> order bail condition court document.

Figure 8. One of the “documents” that I have during ten years of extradition order.

Figure 9. Natalia Jezova, *This is Not Me*, 2010, oil on canvas, 145x190cm.

Figure 10. Salvador Dali, *The Eye*, oil on panel, 1945.

Figure 11. Natalia Jezova, *Big Brother Is Watching You* Series, 2015, photo collage.

Figure 12. Natalia Jezova, the still from the film *Where am I?* 2011.

Figure 13. Natalia Jezova, *The Throne is Never Vacant*, fragments of the installation, 2012.

Figure 14. Natalia Jezova, *Axiom*, 2014, installation and film, photograph.

Figure 15. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #209*, 1989, chromogenic colour print.

Figure 16. Leonardo da Vinci *Lady with an Ermine*, 1489-1490, oil on board.

Figure 17. Natalia Jezova, *All Animals Are Equal, But Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others, Lady with an Ermine* Series, 2014.

Figure 18. Natalia Jezova, *Sakura, Lady with an Ermine* Series, 2014, photograph.

Figure 19. Natalia Jezova, *Working with the family archive, Home* series, 2017.

Figure 20. Natalia Jezova, *My grandmother's cupboard with my collection from the Home* Series, 2017.

Figure 21. My father at seventeen years old with a family album, 1944, Krasnoyarsk district, Siberia.

Figure 22. Natalia Jezova, photo collage of fragments from a family photo archive, 2015.

Figure 23. Photo of my great-grandmother before WWI, 1909, Sankt Petersburg, Russia.

Figure 24. My father, great-grandmother and aunt, 1929, Krasnoyarsk dist., Siberia, USSR.

Figure 25. Natalia Jezova, from *Home* series, 2017.

Figure 26. Natalia Jezova, image of my brother Maksim and me (1961) combined with the image from my home in London (2001), photo collage.

Figure 27. Natalia Jezova, *The Memory Traces* series with my father, 2019, photo collage.

Figure 28. Rosy Martin, *In Situ*, 2004 – 1938/1939, photo collages

Figure 29 Rosy Martin, *Too close to home?* 2014, photograph.

Figure 30. Natalia Jezova, *Inconditus Trinus*, still from the film, 2016.

Figure 31. Arthur Lipsett, *Very Nice, Very Nice*, still from the film, 1961.

Figure 32. Arthur Lipsett, *A Trip Down Memory Lane*, 1964, still from the film.

Figure 33. Natalia Jezova, *The Prespa Lake*, 2016, photograph.

Figure 34. Natalia Jezova, *The Pelican*, 2016, photograph.

Figure 35. Natalia Jezova, *Calendar without the Year* Series, 2017, destroyed house in North Greece, photograph.

Figure 36. Natalia Jezova, *Calendar without the Year* Series 2017, destroyed house in North Greece, photograph.

Figure 37. Natalia Jezova, *Calendar without the Year* Series, 2017, destroyed house in North Greece, photograph.

Figure 38. The 'child refugee' during the Civil War in Greece, 1948, The UNICEF archive.

Figure 39. Natalia Jezova, photograph of Germanos, 2016. He was a 'child refugee' in 1948 from Psarades village.

Figure 40. Natalia Jezova, *The Calendar without the Year*, 2017, photograph.

Figure 41. Natalia Jezova, *Calendar without the Year* Series, 2017, photograph.

Figure 42. Natalia Jezova, still from the film *The Swallow*, 2019.

Figure 43. Natalia Jezova, still from the film *The Swallow*, 2019.

Figure 44. Natalia Jezova, still from the film *The Swallow*, 2019.

Figure 45. Natalia Jezova, still from the film *The Swallow*, 2019.

Figure 46. Natalia Jezova, film *The Swallow* in Crypt Gallery, London 2017, photograph.

Figure 47. Natalia Jezova, *Greek singer Martha Iliadou*, photograph, 2017.

Figure 48. Zlatko Cosic, *Only The Chimney Stays*, 2010, still from the film.

Figure 49. Barbara Meter, *Appearances* (2000), still from the film.

Figure 50. Zarina Bhimji, *Yellow Patch*, 2011, still from the film.

Figure 51. Natalia Jezova, *Veliucionys forest*, 2019, photograph

Figure 52. Natalia Jezova, a plaque commemorating Noreika (Lithuanian Nazi collaborator, who was involved in the Holocaust) at the library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius. 2018, photograph.

Figure 53. My father, *self-portrait*, 1964, photograph.

Figure 54. Natalia Jezova, film *1159*, still from the film the at Old Biscuit factory, 2020.

Figure 55. Zarina Bhimji, *Out of Blue*, 2002, still from the film.

Figure 56. Natalia Jezova, *Crows in the former Jewish part of Vilnius*, 2018, photograph.

Figure 57. Natalia Jezova, the gravestone in Veliucionys forest, 2018, photograph.

Figure 58. Zarina Bhimji, *Out of Blue*, 2002, still from the film.

Figure 59. Andrei Tarkovsky, *Ivan's Childhood*, 1962, still from the film.

Figure 60. Andrei Tarkovsky, *Ivan's Childhood*, 1962, still from the film.

Figure 61. Andeei Tarkovsky, *Ivan's Childhood*, 1962, still from the film.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Selected Private View Cards

# INTO THE LIGHT

A group exhibition displaying works of 11 diverse contemporary artists from across the UK. Providing an insight into self-exploration and creating the artists' truth.

**Albert Lazsio Haines Alison Lapper MBE Sally-Anne Flanagan  
Natalia Jezova Kevin O'Dowd Rev Deb Dean Stockings  
Barbara Harrison Caban Gerald O'Dowd Madeleine Marsh Betka Milligan**

We search for the real truth, just give us the truth.  
Help us rise from the darkness into the light,  
say goodbye to yesterday's drama.  
The dark war on war,  
let us be brothers and sisters every human.  
Let's live into the light.

**10-15 December 2019**

Tuesday-Saturday 1-7pm, Sunday 1-5pm

**Private View 11 December 2019 6-9pm. All welcome**

**\*espaciogallery**

159 Bethnal Green Road, London, E2 7DG

In the heart of London's East End art scene, founded by a group of artists working across all visual arts media. Aiming to inform, inspire and stimulate as well as to encourage enjoyment and exploration of a series of subject matters.

Tube Liverpool Street station, Bethnal Green station Buses 8, 388 Overground Shoreditch High Street



Exhibition *INTO THE LIGHT*

**BALTIC**  
**LANDSCAPE AND MEMORY**  
 Riitta Hakkarainen  
 Merilis Rinne  
 Triinu Soikmets  
 Cassandra Mahoney  
 Sija Manninen  
 Veronica Shimanovskaya  
 with Natalia Spigina  
 Natalia Jezova  
 Jude Cowan Montague  
 Mandy Prowse  
 Ann Grim  
 GZillion Artist  
 Anne Isaksson  
 Special Guest Juri Arrak

23 - 28 January 2020  
 11am - 6pm  
 Private View  
 The 23 Jan 4pm - 6pm

Artist Talk  
 4pm-6pm  
 Sat 25 Jan

V.23  
 THE OLD BISCUIT FACTORY  
 100 CLEMENTS ROAD, BLOCK F  
 SE16 4DQ  
 LONDON

Exhibition *Baltic. Memory and Landscape*

Private View  
 10 May 2019  
 5pm - 9pm

Exhibition  
 runs until  
 21 July 2019

Open daily  
 Wed - Sun  
 11am - 6pm

Miniscule Venice  
 MAY - JULY  
 2019

Fondamenta Sant'Anna 996  
 Castello 30124, Venezia

DANNY POCKETS SPIZZ ENRIGI DIMITRIOS OIKARIDIS CAROLINE GREGORY PAUL TUCKER ENRIGI STEVE PITTENELL MELISSA AILEY JOANNA MCCORMICK TONIA WESTERHOFF MARIA TERESA GAVAZZI THOMAS ZIEGLER SUSAN KODAN SUSAN HANE ALMUTH TEBSENHOFF ALEX FINKE JASON GIBLARD DARREN HALEY VERA DEFFERSON ZANE GREGGWOOD ALEX BRIDGEMAN TORY BRIDGEMAN ALEX FITZPATRICK HEN WELLES TIZIANA MARCOLESI AUSTI DELOAN BRANDRETT ANNA FARSHOLD JOHN PEDERMAN PENILOPE PRYNE REBECCA HENN NORRICO UENO SUSANA SIMONIAN FARAH ISRAH ANNE LEONIE GINA SOUTHGATE MARGARET HARLEY LECA KEVIN GAN SUSAN SCHULMAN NIGEL BARNES - HADRI TORY NORDBAN DEVY WOOD-GRAUNT NICOLA HICKS JOHN STEPHENS SUSANA LOPEZ FERNANDEZ WENDY SMARIS CATE LIS KELLESTONERO STELLA WHALLEY	MOHAIL COLE HELENE ALLOPP ZWE ROSE EVANS RIITTA HAKKARAINEN FRANK MINTS STEVE SMITH MARYLYN SPENCE NICOLE BARCLAY NATALIA SPIGINA CAROL WYSS PAUL HAZELTON ANN GRIM EC SARAH PASSET CHRISTOPHER CLACK NATALIA RYANOVA GABRIAN TUNONIANE CHRISTINA LONNER NICOLE GREGG WACKEN ANDREW STIO LAUREN BERT NEERY'S MATHIAS YVES DE HUEL KEITH BALL DELOAN ARTIST RAY GAMGE ELEANOR SIMPSON LIZ SHERIDAN JESSICA SHALEY MARGOIRE ABELA YALE ARTHUR PAUL TUCKER ARTIST MATRIMAN MCCORMICK MAYLEN BEMERA JEANNE SUPPLIUS SARAH PASSEY MARTHA PASSEY PATRICK COLLESON ROBERT MOSE KUNDO KENOS MARTIN SEXTON DANNIE LE HOSON EMANUELE FANSLAU CARYN GALE DOUG HAYWOOD	LUCINDA BURRESS ELLI LESTAS EMILIE FRASCON JOSEPH KADOLSKY REVA MALOCH MERILIS RINNE TED ROBINSON CASSANDRA MAHONEY GISELENE SWANE SARAH SPARKES IAN THOMPSON VERONICA SHIMANOVSKAYA JOYCE TREASURE FILINO VILLAGRAN GALINDO NANETTE EAGLE MARIA JOSE ARCOB BRAD FITZ & SHONNAY JUMORS FINNA MCALIFFE ARTIST FORTE RES SHIPMANA NICHOLAS CHELSEMAN FRANKIE GRAM HARRIS VOLIN HANNE YONFOR MARIO JAVIERE VIDAS STACE MCCORMACK TONI BAUER TONI GALLAGHER TETI BIRE LIVIER CASALI NICI JAMES PETRA LEA DETRIEF BUSCH REED THERESA CARLIANA GORDIAN WITZOR GORDON FALLOU GORDIAN MOKHAMARA YOKO YAMAMOTO SARAH FOLDSMITH ANNIE TURNER TIM RYDING ANITA BRYAN ZOECHEN GRIEBENACKER BIRGIT DENISEN BEVERLEY BRACKS TRACEY MOBERLY WARRIEN THOMAS GARLAND	DALEYA MAROIN AVVIT GRAFF - GRESSEL PNUJI GROSS TONNY SEAHARD REBECCA EISNER SARAH COYLE GRIHAM HATTON BARBARA STANZL LELA HANSTON JILL GIBSON VAVVA MALOCH MICHELANGELO ARTEAGA CECILE CHISTE PASCAL ROUSSON REBECCA SCOTT NATASHA VICARS MARK WOODS ALEX RUFFIN PAUL SANDOZKY STIMULUS LTD ANDREA MORGICCHIO EDMUND DROTT-SALOGH BOB LAWSON TORIAC ZEMBERGER URBAN XXX SERVIN TOKIC HANNAH CAMPION ALEX HERRICK DESIGNOHA VARON ATHENA KOSKIPATHIROU INDIA ROPEY-EVANS DOR ROBEY EMMA CROFT RUBY ALICE MCCORMICK IBBY COHENLY RUSSELL TERRY EMIL BARGOS MIRVANA ENHROJLU JULIA MADDOCK JAMES BELL ALEX WINDLES & MUSH WOODGONG JAMES
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VENICE ART FACTORY    Artist    CROSS LANE PRODUCTS    GORDON

Exhibition *Miniscule Venice 2019*



Show *Experimental Shorts (Moving Silently Project)*

Exhibition *PASSAGGIATINA 2018*



Exhibition *Everywoman 2*



Exhibition *Potato Eaters*



Exhibition *ECHOS FROM THE CAVE*

## Appendix 2: Full Text of a Published Article

### **Natalia Jezova – From Vogue to Virus – Artists during Lockdown Series**

Published on May 13, 2020

May 24, 2020

in Art/Spotlight

<https://www.thesundaytribune.com/2020/05/13/natalia-jezova-from-vogue-to-virus-artists-during-lockdown-series/>



*Self Portrait during COVID-19, photograph, 2020.*

I was born in the Soviet Union but my family roots are a mixture of Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish and Georgian. My early years coincided with the ‘Khrushchev Thaw’ in which two interconnected but different subcultures, jokingly referred to as the ‘physicists’ (those engaged in technical sciences) and the ‘lyricists’ (writers, philosophers, artists, theatre and film professionals). Whilst the latter argued that society would be “empty” without culture, the ‘physicists’ claimed that scientific knowledge must take priority. My mother was a Doctor of Philosophy, whilst my father was involved in Technical Sciences so they were representatives of both. When I was five my parents moved between Moscow and Vilnius (my father was teaching in both cities) where our houses were full of scientists, writers, artists and film directors. My older brother and I always looked forward to these parties and listened breathlessly to verses by contemporary poets like Sergei Yesenin, Marina Tsvetaeva, Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Robert Rozhdestvensky. There were often improvised performances, in which we children also took part.



Natalja Jezova at the *In Vogue* Fashion Festival, 1998.

From 7 to 16 I attended a music school and an art school. My favourite lessons at music school were composition and improvisation. We created musical images and composed music for different characters. This helped me later in working with sound in my own films. After University, I worked in Vilnius, which was then part of the Soviet Union. I became a journalist and my articles, interviews and reports focussed on cultural events, including

reviews of exhibitions and fashion events. In 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed. Within 24 hours everybody became citizens of different states. My mother, sister and brother became Russian Federation citizens, whilst my daughter and I became Lithuanian citizens. Our initial euphoria was soon replaced by a much darker reality. Ethnic conflict ensued throughout the former Soviet Union; in Lithuania we saw the rise of anti-Semitism and nationalism. Every day the media featured stories that stoked hatred of Jews and Russians. Most Russian, Jewish schools were closed and, in a very short time, the majority of the Jews and Russians had left Lithuania. I was told that I would not be published anymore unless I changed my Russian surname, so I took the pseudonym Natalia de Fine, which translates in Russian to “до фени” (do not care). It was at this time, I started my investigation into the destiny of Jews in Lithuania during WWII. I was under constant surveillance; my phones were tapped, my house was repeatedly searched by the Lithuanian secret service, which confiscated my laptop and related documents so I decided to immigrate to the UK.



Natalia Jezova, *Memory Traces*, photo collage, 2019.

Six months later, the Lithuanian government demanded my extradition. The extradition order lasted for ten years, during which time I lived under bail conditions in London – without the right to a passport or travel. I was confined to my home and required to sign in at a Police station every other day. In 2007, my mother, who was still living in Russia, became seriously ill and died. I sent a petition to the Queen, to Parliament and to the Home Office asking

permission to attend my mum's funeral, but was refused. At that time, I was painting 18 to 20 hours a day helping me find a way to heal. I decided to study again and began a Professional Doctorate in Fine Art at the University of East London.



*All Animals Are Equal, but Some Animals are More Equal than Others, Lady with Ermine series, 2019*

Over the last six years I have concentrated on my Professional Doctorate studies: writing the thesis, making films and photographic projects. My personal traumas and displacement lie behind most themes in my work. Collective memory is very often a tool of manipulation, so I show how the past is transmitted into the present, the kind of impact that it has on our current understanding of the world. I researched my family history, collecting photographs, documents, letters and objects that belonged to them, taking footage and recording sounds in places where my family lived. As an archaeologist, I take inspiration directly from these primary research materials. Over the 20th century my family suffered the consequences of pogroms and revolution, the barbarism of the Civil and Second World wars, the breakup Yugoslavia and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some members of my family were killed while others were forced to leave their homes and escape to different countries. In June 2020 I should have had my Professional Doctorate' degree show...I am a person in a high risk Covid-19 category due to underlying health conditions: I have to stay at home for at least twelve weeks, so I try to be creative. I have a huge collection of vintage gas masks which I

was planning to use for my “H-Hour” degree show; they are now part of my ‘Masquerade Spring/Summer 2020’ self-portrait collection.



*Still Life with Flowers from My Garden, Artist during Lockdown series, photograph, 2020.*

It is very difficult not seeing my daughter, grandchildren and friends. However, I am experienced in lockdown: A decade under the extradition order...and then, as now, I am trying to concentrate on creating new works, not leave any time for sadness. I am trying to be disciplined and to keep the same tempo during the Lockdown as before. For me, making art is always therapeutic. I cannot imagine life without it. I think artists are more resilient in difficult times. We see situations from a creative point of view. In a dramatically changing world there are still some constants, which accompany and help us survive in difficult times – Love, Art and Beauty. We produce works dealing with tragedy in a useful way, try to inform the world of our experience during disaster, ensure our stories are passed down to future generations. Most of us have been touched or moved by a work of art at sometime in our lives, this transformative experience is what Art is about. I think that every artist wants to transform society for the better – hopes that Art will allow us to transcend reality and reveal other ways of seeing, living and doing. Think how incredible and hopeful the “Seventh Symphony” performance by Dmitri Shostakovich was in the blockade of Leningrad in 1942...

Unfortunately, due to the huge cuts in funding for the arts in the UK, artists are in a very difficult financial situation.



*At Home, Artist during Lockdown Series, photograph, 2020.*

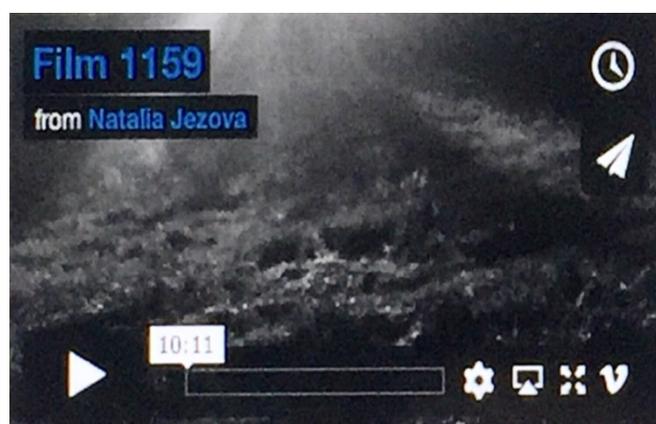
### **Baltica!**

Published on February 9, 2020

in Art/London/Moving Image/Spotlight by Emma Roper-Evans

One of London's great alternative exhibition spaces 'The Old Biscuit Factory', Bermondsey, hosted Baltica – Memory and Landscape, curated by Jude Cowan Montague, dedicated to work inspired by the Baltic Sea for a fleeting week in January.

Natalia Jezova writes: "On 22nd of September 1941, 1159 Jewish children, women and men were killed in Veliucionys by Lithuanian Nazi collaborators." Jezova, a Russian brought up in Lithuania, knows what it's like to inhabit a space where overlapping identities conflict. This video looks at a location where the above atrocity took place, now forest paths and glades, no trace of what happened here.



Natalia Jezova, film *1159* on Vimeo, 2019.

<https://www.thesundaytribune.com/2020/02/19/baltica-memory-and-landscape-part-ii-installations-photographs-paintings-textiles/>

In *Memory Traces* (2019) Natalja Jezova printed collages on tracing paper as a reminder of the separation pages in family albums, making the images look, she says, “mysterious and elusive”. Her own family suffered innumerable hardships during the 20<sup>th</sup> century with its pogroms, revolution, civil and world wars, some family members killed, others forced to leave their homes. These photographs, she says, confirm the identity and history of her family.



Natalia Jezova, *Memory Traces*, photo collage, 2019.

## Appendix 3: Installation Shots of Exhibitions



Exhibition *Memory and Landscape*, stills from the film *1159*.



The *Moving Silently*, *Amarcord* film screening.



Albert Lazzio Haines Alison Lapper MBE Sally-Anne Flanagan  
 Natalia Jezova Kevin O'Dowd Rev Deb Dean Stockings  
 Barbara Harrison Caban Gerald O'Dowd Madeleine Marsh Betka Milligan

We search for the real truth, just give us the truth.  
 Help us rise from the darkness into the light,  
 say goodbye to yesterday's drama.  
 The dark war on war,  
 let us be brothers and sisters every human.  
 Let's live into the light.

10-15 December 2019  
 Tuesday-Saturday 1-7pm, Sunday 1-5pm

Private View 11 December 2019 6-9pm. All welcome



Exhibition *Into the Light*, Five C- Prints photo collages and photographs from *Why Not Serie,s* 60x40-98x72cm.



*Memory and Landscape* exhibition. Twenty-four collages and photographs from *The Memory Traces Series*, 65x48cm – 90x70cm.



Art residency in Atina, stills from the film *Memory Traces of PASSAGGIATINA 2019*.



*Everywoman II* exhibition, C-Print photographs, 115x97cm, 80x55cm.



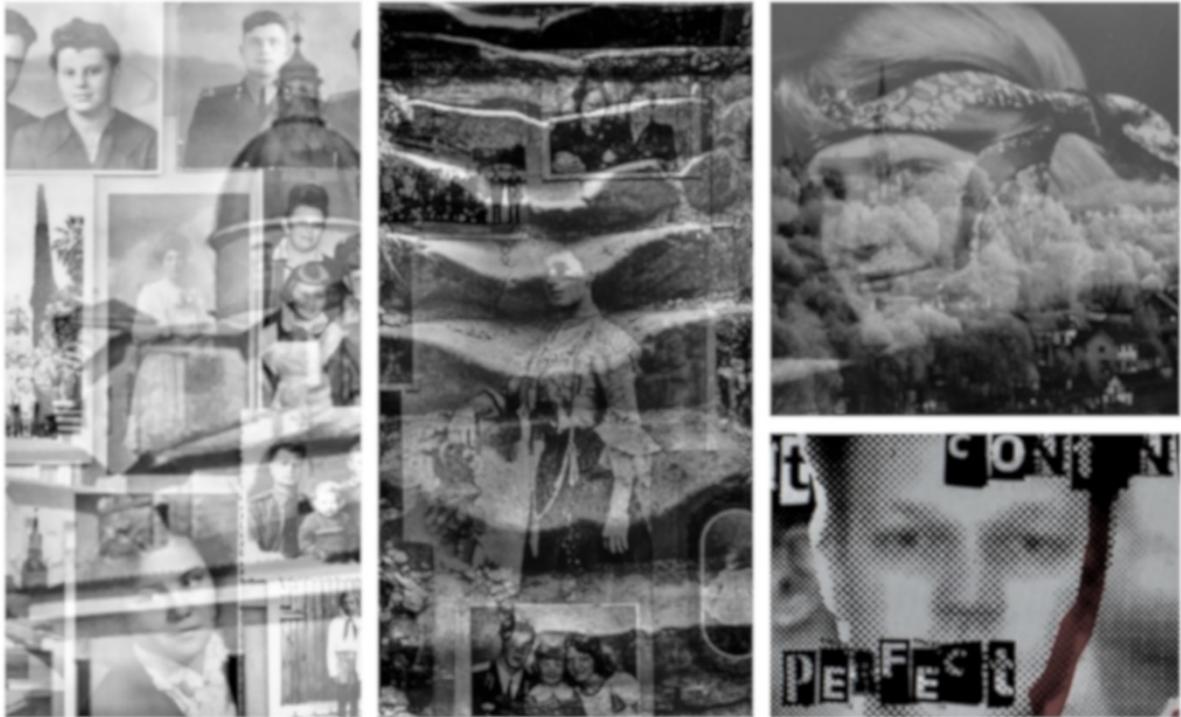
*MINISCULE VENICE 2019, Earth 2059*, mixed media, 3x3cm.



The *Fragments* exhibition.

C- Print photo collage *Why Not* Series 190x 220cm.

Stills from the *A Posteriori* film.



*Present Perfect* exhibition, photo collages *Memory Traces* series, 48x70cm - 70x90cm.



Art residency in Atina(Italy), 2018. Stills from the film *Innamorati di Atina*.



Art residency in Atina(Italy), 2018. Stills from the film *In Movimento*.

# EAST LONDON

## ARTISTS

Fine Art Professional Doctorate Showcase

Will Bishop-Stephens - Marc Coker - Mary Crenshaw - Ali Darke  
Anna Fairchild - Paul Fang - Mikey Georgeson - Paul Greenleaf  
Chris Groothuizen - Christoph Hadrys - Natalia Jezova  
Ralph Overill - Lucy Renton - Yarek Soltan - Sue Withers  
Francesca Skelhorn - Hwa Seon Yang

Opening 14/06/2018 6-9pm Exhibition 15/06/18 - 17/06/18 11am - 4.30pm



Prof Doc Show Case 2018. Installation *H-Hour*.

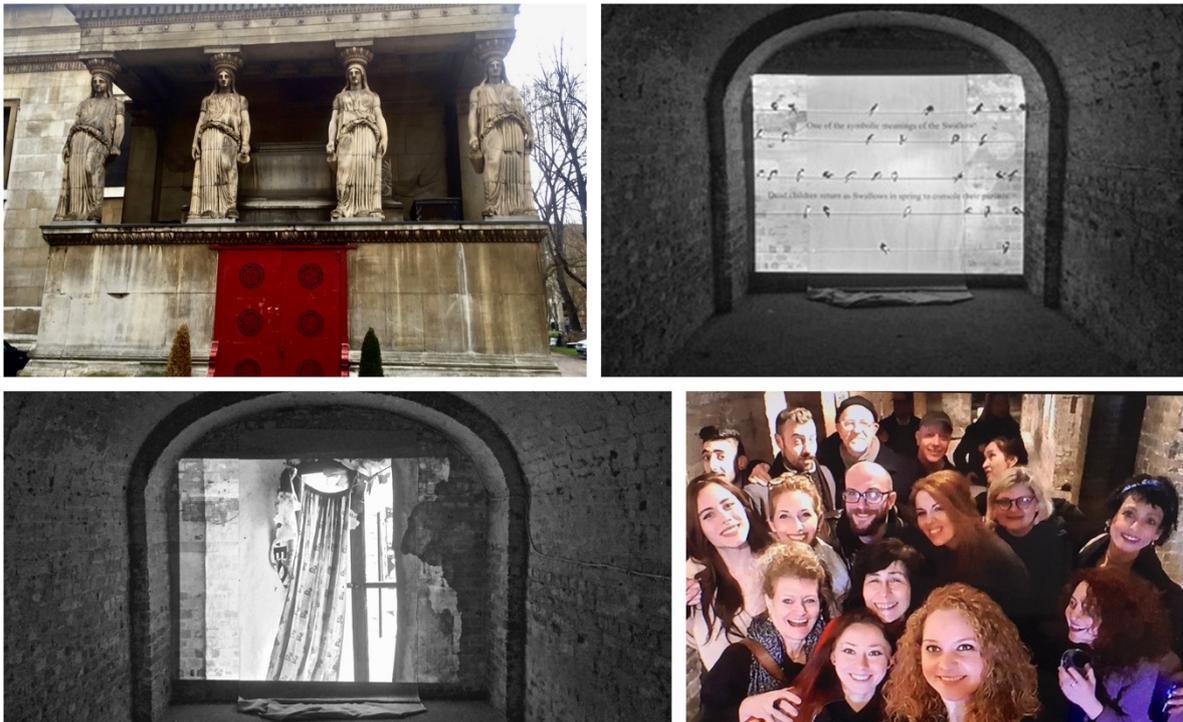


Art residency in Boudreaux, France.

Eighteen photographs from the *Family Photographs Destiny* series, 70x90cm.



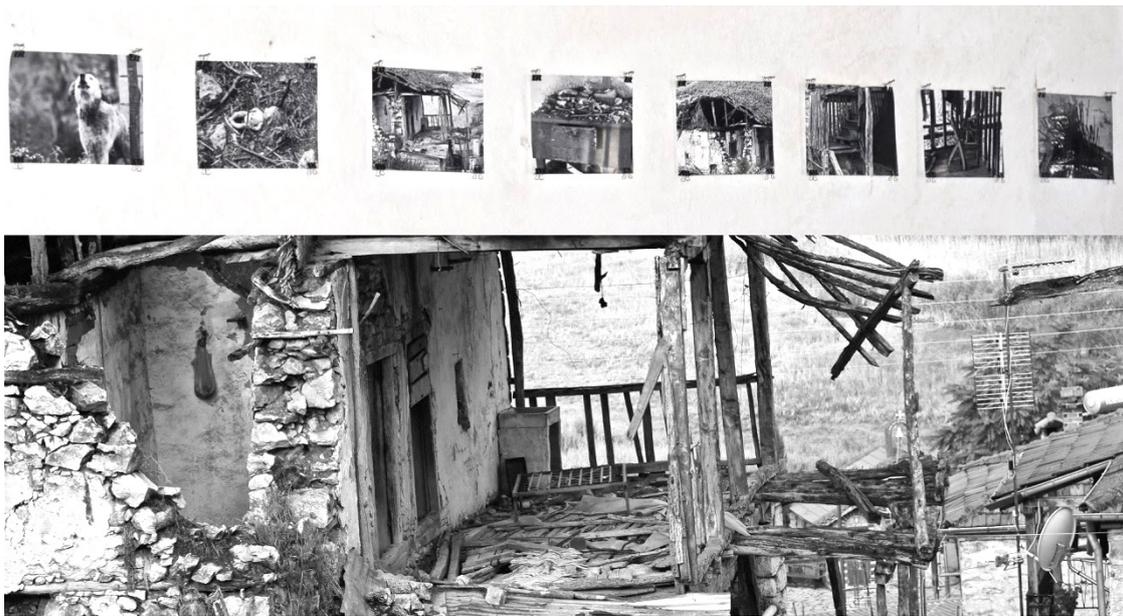
Prof Doc Show Case 2017, Installation *The Swallow*.



Exhibition *Echoes From The Cave*, film *The Swallow* screenings.



Art residency in Psarades (Greece), 2016



Exhibition in Psarades, 2016. Fifteen photographs 20x30cm, 1 photograph 190x150cm.



Prof Doc Show Case 2017

*Why Not* series, photograph, C-Print, 190x140cm

*The Midnight Dream*, still from the film.

## Exhibition Detail

### Group Show Potato Eaters

Curated by: **Gloria Shizico Yi, Shizico Yi**

**Espacio Gallery**  
159 Bethnal Green Road  
London E2 7DG  
United Kingdom

August 16th Tuesday - August 21st Sunday

Opening:  
August 16th Tuesday 18:00 - 21:00



Potato Eaters, Aug 2016, photo  
© no barking aRt



Potato Eaters exhibition. Film screening *Inconditus Trinus* and C-Prints *Why Not Series*, 170x220cm.

# EAST LONDON

## ARTISTS

### Fine Art Professional Doctorate Showcase

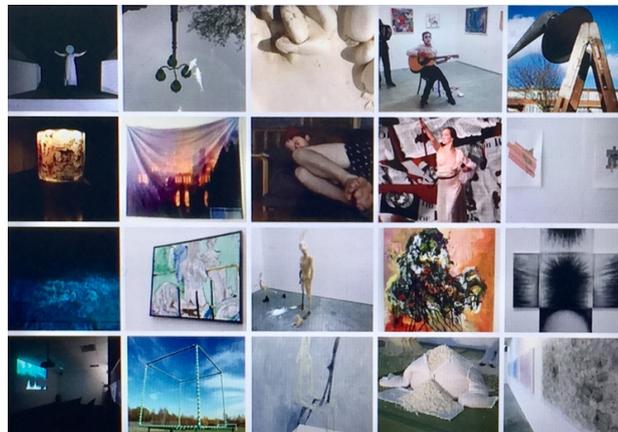
Suzi Morris • Chang Yi Lin • Dong HwanKoo • Alison Darke • Anna Fairchild  
Natalia Jezova • Lucy Renton • Mikey Georgeson • Chen-Shih Lu • Veronica Shimanovskaya  
Marc Coker • Carmen Aleman • Jake Abrams • Dimitrios Oikonomou • Sally Labern  
Paul Hellwell • Joe Ryan • Nerys Mathias • Magdalena Papanikolopoulou • Kang-Wook Lee

Opening  
18/06/15 6-9pm

Exhibition  
19/06/15 - 22/06/15 11am - 5pm

University of East London  
School of Arts and Digital Industries  
AVA building, 4-6 University Way  
London E16 2RD  
Cyprus DLR  
www.uel.ac.uk

**UEL**  
University of  
East London





Prof Doc Show Case 2015

*Liberty MisLeading The People*, photo collage

*Liberty MisLeading The People*, projection through frame, 170x90cm



Exhibition ARTMASTERS 2015

Figure 2, *Why Not Series*, photograph, C-Print, 190x140cm.

## Appendix 4: Viva Exhibition – June 2021

*The Swallow*. 2021. Short film.

*1159*. 2021. Short film.

*Vai Vedrai*, 2021. Short film.

All three films are black-and-white, they related to each other by themes of trauma, violent dislocation, loss and a connection to memory. I wrote above about those films in the *Unhealed Wound* and the *Landscape as a silent witness and central character* sections.

*Memory Traces*, 2021. Installation.

In the *Memory Traces* installation I express my family history by using the superimposition technique; I combined the photographs of places, buildings and ruins with photographs of my family members who used to live in these same places. These photographs provide a unique material proof of family memory and thus help me to reconstruct the family concept, with its traumatic past, and to support my own sense of personal identity and memory.

During the period of lockdowns I was always thinking about the best way to present my final viva exhibition. My *Memory Traces* series (2019) has been transformed through both my research and exhibiting over the course of this doctorate. For the final exhibition I decided to use the photographic images from this series, symbolising the broken links between our family members, in an attempt to ‘re-connect’ them in the gallery space.

I had experimented with the scale and the presentation of the images in previous exhibitions. I showed the *Memory Traces* series at the exhibition *Memory and Landscape* at the *Old Biscuit Factory* in London (2020). Six images (70 x 90cm) were printed on tracing paper and placed in vintage frames. In 2021 I exhibited the *Memory Traces* series at the *Bolshaya Koniushennaya* gallery in Sankt Petersburg (Russia) where twelve images were projected onto the walls.

However, I was looking for alternative ways to present the *Memory Traces* series that could give more expression to the work. Despite my research, I could not find a suitable option to display the *Memory Traces*. I wanted to see images in the 'air', not in a static position on the wall. The solution came thanks to my 'mother's tip' (I 'see' my mum very often since her 'departure' (death) - sometimes in my dreams, sometimes like a shadow or silhouette). During a trip to Russia, after the first lockdown, I saw the silhouette of my mother on the curtains, which were fluttering from the strong wind.



Natalia Jezova, 2021, photograph

I made a video of it and after watching it several times I decided that I would put images on fabric panels. After trying several fabric types, I choose transparent and shiny organza.

In the build-up to the installation of my final exhibition, I needed to sew thirty fabric panels of 3.5 x 1.5m. I printed thirty images on the film, as it is a reference to Martha Langford's definition of the 'transparentness' of a photographic image. The translucency of the film also reminded me of the separation pages in our family albums - the images behind them look mysterious and elusive and that gives a sensation of memory traces.

These thirty printed on the film images were placed on fabric panels, which are attached to steel tubes (six meters each). I put up twelve rows with fabric panels; the distance between rows is 90 cm, space enough for the viewer to freely pass between the rows to see the prints.



Natalia Jezova, installing the *Memory Traces* in the *AVA* gallery, June 2021.



Natalia Jezova, installing the *Memory Traces* in the *AVA* gallery, June 2021.

I paid a great deal of attention to creating the right lighting for the installation. I was experimenting with different types of light and I finally decided to use cold lights, illuminating the installation from the side, parallel to the fabric panels. Sidelights give a dramatic mood, or what's often referred to as 'chiaroscuro' lighting. Side lighting also brings

out the textures of the fabric panels and creates a greater sense of depth in the gallery. It makes the fabric panels with prints seem further off by accentuating the space between them.

I decided to project the video of the fluttering curtains on three walls between rows of fabric panels to create a metaphorical vision in which the video projection mixes with fluting, ghostly forms of fabric which shimmer like memories.

The *Memory Traces* series explores the relationship between photography, memory and location. One of the aims of the project was to evoke an emotional response in the viewer, as photographs do have a way of telling stories; or rather, people who view photos will tend to project stories upon them. A photograph is an opportunity to hold on to the moment, the place and the trace.

According to Martha Langford, the art of memory excites spatial imagery through the protagonist's sense (real, suggested or imagined) of having been there. "The transparentness of a photographic image cultivates spectral absorption into another's field of memory" (Langford, 1997, p. 4).

In French artist Christian Boltanski's works, *Reflexion*(2000) and *Coming and Going* (2001), I identified similarities in theme and approach to my work *Memory Traces*. Boltanski's works deal with the concepts of loss, memory and death, reference both collective and personal.



Christian Boltanski, *Reflexion*(2000), installation.