

Portfolio Maria Vasylenko

Caution! Exhibition

Forest in Kyiv region

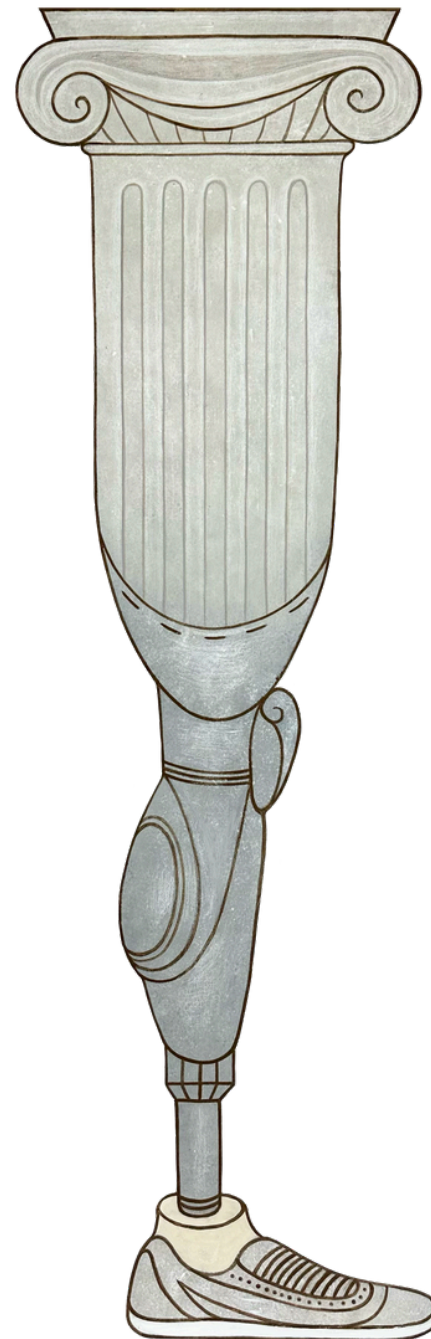


The forest is a space of the untouched and the unknown. A place that endures the ruptures of civilization. Yet in recent years, much has changed. Even where the flow of life seems stronger than anything, the turbulent human world leaves its traces. Perhaps the forest is a place where one can simply be present, regardless of whether it is a person, a bottle, or other beings. One can, for a moment, forget about the outside world, at least until a warning sign brings you back to reality.

I have lived in the suburbs of Kyiv for a long time and have always loved wandering deep into the forest or along the river. On one side is the city, on the other a power plant, and here—roe deer, hares, mermaids, people without a fixed home, twisted trees. In this company, strange images would often come to me, becoming both explanations and questions. Now my personal Eden-like gardens attempt to hold new spring leaves, war, animals, bulldozers, clean air, domestic and military waste, silence, the political, the escapist, and local beings. Here one might encounter a sacred power socket, a passport once lost here, a veil between the known and the unknown, a wound within which a happy life exists, a lost wing, a battery that has become an ecosystem, a bed on which two swords are sleeping, an abyss from which water bursts forth, a figure suspended in thought, and more.

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*Pillars
Maly Theatre*



The two columns presented in the exhibition are a series of reflections and sensations about the state of the part of civilization we are used to calling European or Western. Here, the column appears as a symbol of order, stability, and ideal form.

Yet these foundations no longer feel unquestionable. The column seems to have retained its shape, but lost something essential. It still stands, but is no longer perceived as a guaranteed support — rather as something strange, altered.

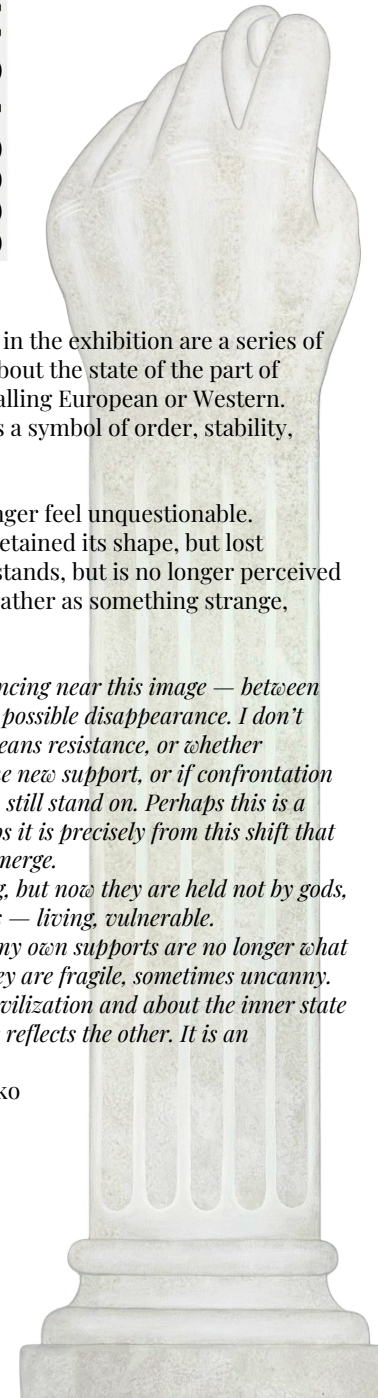
"I constantly find myself balancing near this image — between its transformation or even its possible disappearance. I don't know whether support now means resistance, or whether resistance itself has become the new support, or if confrontation is the very thing anything can still stand on. Perhaps this is a fixation of collapse, or perhaps it is precisely from this shift that something new will begin to emerge.

The columns are still standing, but now they are held not by gods, but by people and their bodies — living, vulnerable.

This is how it feels now. And my own supports are no longer what they used to be. Sometimes they are fragile, sometimes uncanny.

These works are both about civilization and about the inner state of a person, because often one reflects the other. It is an interconnected story."

— comments Maria Vasylenko



A Place That Doesn't Exist.

The Naked Room gallery



We are presenting a solo show by Maria Vasylenko entitled *A Place That Doesn't Exist*. The artist invites us to take a walk in the world she has invented, where conventional time and space do not exist, and to seek what lies behind the curtain of phenomena.

Vasylenko experiences upheavals in her own way: she mythologises them and turns them into symbols. Her world is a projection of consciousness that takes on form and begins a dialogue with its surroundings. Maria studied academic easel painting and sacred art but later chose to abandon the classical set of techniques. Eventually, her current visual language formed at the crossroads of working with colour and the formal aspects of icon painting. Vasylenko uses egg tempera—a timeless, transparent, almost intangible medium.

Her compositional solutions are based on the reverse perspective inherent in iconography, which, following the genre's conventions, places the notional 'point of origin' not in the distance, but in the position of a viewer. Maria also deliberately rejects the standard rectangular shape of a painting as a window onto the world. She creates her works on recycled wood panels to give them form. This, she says, brings the sacred and fantastical elements in her works closer to a viewer.

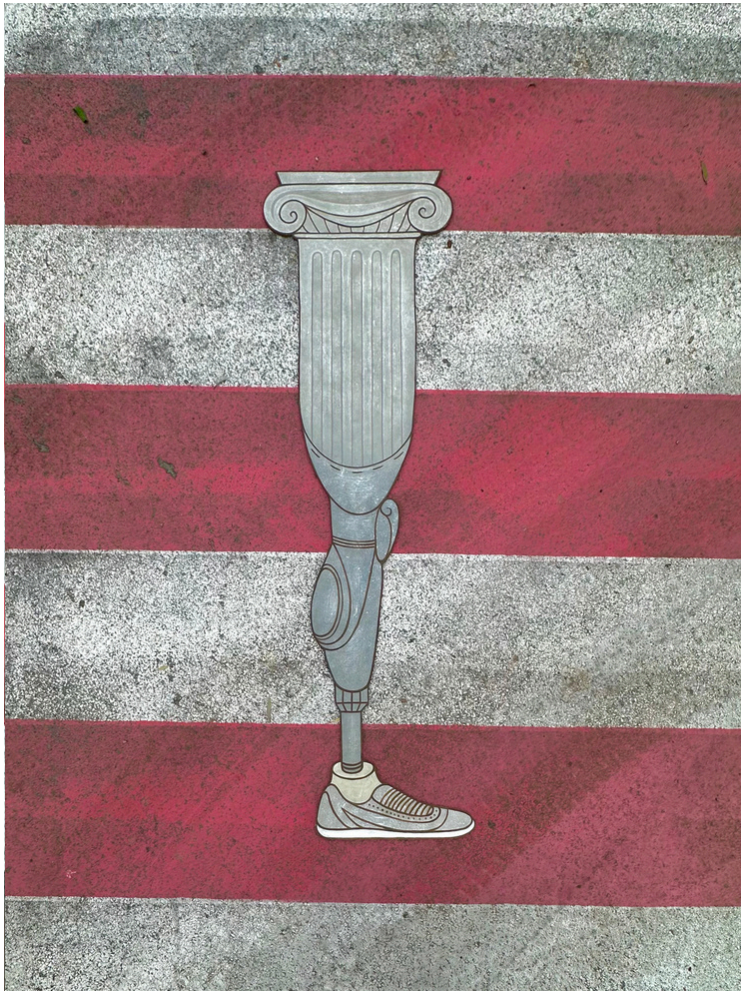
For *A Place That Doesn't Exist* at The Naked Room, Vasylenko creates a common space of existence for them: she tears some of the works off the walls, making her mythical world tangible and inviting viewers to cohabit it temporarily.

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Interventions into Public Space

This work combines the upper part of a classical column, a symbol of the old civilization, with prosthetic limbs ending in sneakers. The piece is photographed lying across a pedestrian crossing, evoking a moment of transition. It suggests that the ideals of the past no longer hold, while the future remains undefined. The column –once a bearer of structure- can no longer support anything; instead, it now rests on prosthetics. The prosthesis does not replace what was lost – it merely allows for a different kind of movement. The sneaker, a casual marker of capitalist everyday life, further amplifies the feeling of dissonance between past grandeur and present fragility. This is a body of civilization that is no longer whole, a body trying to move forward without knowing where it's going.



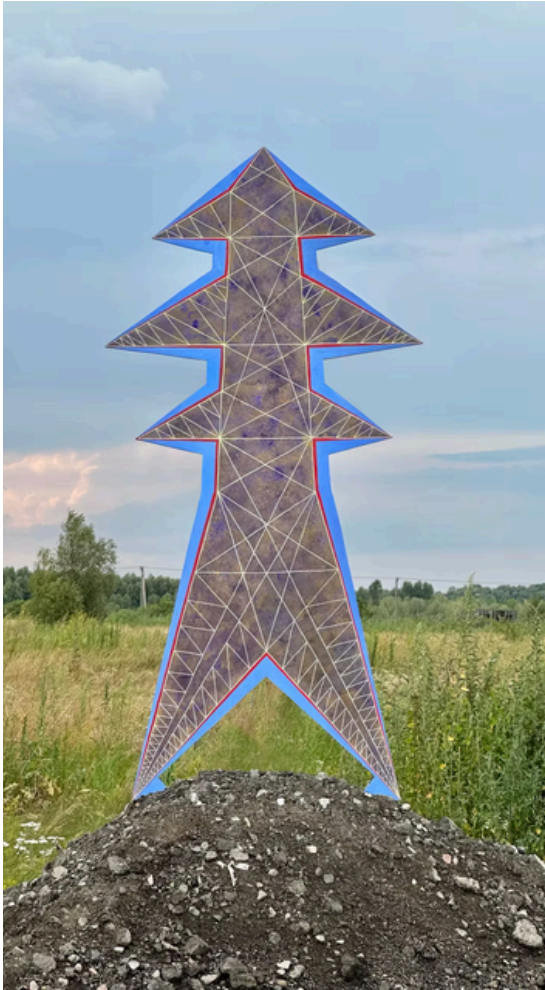
Civilization 2025, 200x65 cm, tempera on figured board

An abstract, human-like figure is hung upside down by its feet, suspended next to industrial infrastructure — wires, metal, and the neglected backsides of buildings. It's not about execution but about stillness, a moment caught between what was and what might come. The figure is not falling, nor rising, just suspended. This work speaks to the state of not knowing. It visualizes a fragile pause: between exhaustion and transformation, between the human and the impersonal, between body and void.



The suspended one, 2025, 200x40 cm, tempera on figured board

The relay station stands where pagan gods once stood.
Now, in their place, there are new, vital objects.



Deity
2025, 200x95 cm, tempera, emulsion on wood

A contract drawn on toilet paper. I do not protest against
modern things, but I have no illusions about them.



Terms and conditions
2025, 140x40 cm, tempera on figured board

A pipe from which the pure and the dirty flow out.
A metaphysical, eco-critical image of life's diverse current.



The flow of life
2025, 200x100 cm, tempera, emulsion on wood

Maybe it's a herald of the apocalypse that was defeated and beheaded. Or maybe it went so mad that it lost its head on its own. It is a mindless force that is hard to restrain.



The red horse without a head
2025, 200x100 cm, tempera, emulsion on wood

I saw this image in a dream, a figure whose presence turned all fear into calm and bliss.



Stranger
2025, 200x100 cm, tempera, emulsion on wood

This work takes the shape of a large plastic bottle containing a collapsed world inside: green water, red sky, strange forms of life or remnants of it. It's a sealed, artificial biosphere. Not a vessel of life, but of mutation. A system that feeds on something else now. Instead of water - toxicity; instead of sky - a crimson canopy. I placed the work inside a construction dumpster, surrounded by rubble and decay. The piece reflects on the aftermath of ecological collapse and the human impulse to enclose, preserve, and distort. It's a gestation of a new order governed by toxic rules - mutated, ambiguous, and closed.



Ecosystem 2025, 200x80 cm, tempera on figured board

Hung where laundry usually dries, the form of a pair of panties, shaped out of wood. Inside them: a vortex, a spiral, a flash of lightning, a civilization fading in the distance. All of it tied together with a decorative little bow - too cute, too ironic. This work addresses the fear of the feminine: not as seduction, but as power - generative, chaotic, bodily. The kind of fear that civilization projects onto the female as something uncontrollable. The panties become a site, not a symbol - a landscape of convergence and undoing. What's feared is not the garment, but what it holds: the spiral of origin and loss, stronger than linear logic.



Femininity 2025, 140x95 cm, tempera on figured board

Interventions into Nature Space

A veil hangs between two trees in the forest. It looks light, almost like fabric, but in fact, it is wooden, flat, painted. An illusion of materiality without depth. It's unclear whether anything exists behind it, or if it simply covers absence. Or perhaps it is all there is. In Christian iconography, veils often mark the threshold between worlds. Here too, something is being divided, but it's unclear what. Not a statement, but a question suspended in space.



Civilization 2025, 100x140 cm, tempera on figured board

A figure composed of three parts: one-third machine, one-third animal, one-third reptile. This is not a woman's body, but a synthesis — a residue, or a beginning. It doesn't fit any known category. There is something familiar in it, but nothing that can be named. The machine is no longer external, it has become bodily. The animal is not a past form, but a foundation. The reptile — a deep instinctive memory. This is neither a figure of the future nor a relic of the past. It has emerged at the threshold of the post-human and the pre-human, a time when understanding what a human is has already broken down.



Evolution of Venus 2025, 200x100 cm, tempera on figured board

A comet rises — not falling from the sky, but moving upward from the earth. Against a backdrop of stars, it does not crash — it departs. It isn't a message from above, but a force breaking through from below. Not a sign, not an object — just motion, direction, change. Something leaves the ground with quiet intensity, like a question launched into the sky.



The comet flying upward
2025, 140x60 cm, tempera on figured board

Amid grass and overgrowth lies the shape of a battery — a painted board holding its own enclosed world. Inside, a closed system unfolds: strange life, suspended cycles, quiet transformation. This isn't only about ecological crisis it's also about possibility. A rethinking of how life could be contained, reconfigured, released. The battery no longer powers devices, it holds an environment. It becomes a model for a different kind of ecosystem.



Battery 2025, 100x65 cm, tempera on figured board

A mermaid half human, half fish, lies near the riverbank, almost invisible, almost real. She belongs to both worlds: one of language and concepts, the other of symbols and currents. Some passersby saw her and didn't quite know what they were seeing. She was simply there like a sign that doesn't ask to be interpreted. Her presence doesn't explain; it lingers, fluid and unresolved, just below the surface of the known.



Goddess 2025, 200x55 cm, tempera on figured board

The Serpent Was Here

The Kuznya is a space within a centuries-old building that was saved from demolition by a community of artists. Maria Vasylenko chose this site as a threshold where the possibility of the future emerges amid the near-ruins of the past, memory, and the living present. For her, it is not only a place of preservation but also of transformation—a fragile yet potent intersection where time folds in on itself and something new begins to take shape.



They say that once, near the hills and waters of Kyiv, there lived a great Serpent. Legends tell of battles with this creature that exists between light and darkness. Artist Maria Vasylenko feels this chthonic image especially strongly today. It embodies both good and evil. Why are these two opposites so closely intertwined that, when observed for a long time, their boundaries begin to blur? Where does one end and the other begin? Is it possible to escape this duality, or is it the foundation of everything? Maria Vasylenko's exhibition invites us into a space of external and internal struggle, an attempt at balance that is always under threat. Her works pose questions and contain every possible answer—as well as their absence. Maria works at the intersection of painting and object-making, striving to create a space of alternative reality.



Enemies 2025, 100x200 cm, tempera on figured board

Projects

2026 — IN SITU platform Residency, Budapest, Hungary
2026 — «Caution: Exhibition», open-air personal exhibition, Kyiv region, Ukraine
2026 — Kyiv Art Week, LAVRA Gallery, Kyiv, Ukraine
2026 — Exhibition dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, Ukrainian House, Kyiv, Ukraine
2026 — «Pillars» Malyi Theatre, Kyiv, Ukraine
2025 - «Bread», Ukrainian House, Kyiv
2025 - «The floor is lava», Kyiv
2025 - «Landscape (post) Conflict», The Irish museum of Modern Arts, Dublin
2025 - «Beyond greener grass», CEC Artslink, Lviv, Ukraine
2025 - «Stolen Past, Threatened Future», Office Ukraine, Vienna, Austria
2025 - «Predefined event times» Eye Sea Gallery, Zaporizhia, Ukraine
2025 - Personal exhibition «The serpent was here», Kuznya, Kyiv, Ukraine
2024 - Personal exhibition «A place that doesn't exist»,
The Naked Room, Kyiv, Ukraine
2024 - «Enjoying the rustle of black leaves», Splav, Kyiv
2024 - «Temporarity», Garazh space, Kharkiv (Lubotyn), Ukraine
2024 - «Genesis», Test Gallery, Barcelona, Spain
2024 - Ukrainian art fair, Old session house. London, UK
2024 - Mepainst online gallery, USA
2023 - «Comogony of meanings», Museum Korsakiv. Lutsk, Ukraine
2023 - «Anomalies», Profcom Space. Kyiv, Ukraine
2022 - «Disquiet», Osobnyak Space. Kyiv, Ukraine
2022 - Dresden Art Fair. Dresden, Germany
2022 - Dorotheum Charity Auction. Vienna, Austria

Education:

2024 - 2026 - Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Philosophy, (Master Degree)
2024 - 2025 - Kyiv Academy of Media Arts (Practices of art and memorealisation)
2020 - 2022 - Kyiv National Boychuk academy of Art and Design,
Monumental art, (Bachelors Degree)
2022 - SKVOT School, Contemporary Art
2022 - Iconography, Sacred art workshops in Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra
2019 - 2022 - Private Academy of Realistic Arts
2019 - 2020 - Kyiv Academy of Media Arts
2016 - 2022 - Kyiv National College of Arts and Design
2004 - 2013 - Kyiv National art school

