



IRINA VALKOVA  
- 2021



## BONJOUR SOLEIL 2021

multimedia choreography project supported by the Art and Sciences Ministry of Northern Rhine-Westphalia (Düsseldorf), The Communal Integration Center (KI) of Bielefeld, DansArt (Bielefeld), Society for Support of Dance Arts (Bielefeld), and the Regional Bureau of Free Performing Arts (Düsseldorf)



Departing from visual arts embodied in dance techniques, the project, developed in collaboration with Tcheckpo Dance Company (Benin-Germany) and Canadian composer and pianist John Kameel Farah, tracks down the development of musical rhythm from agriculture, pondering upon the transformation of natural environment into an art form. Landscape is seen in the project not only as a form of art, but also as the space carved out from physical reality by human sight. It is also shown as an active, dynamic environment, transformed by collective, rhythmic human activities from sowing (as in Jean-François Millet's *Les Glaneuses/The Gleaners* (1857)) to dancing and, inversely, imprinting its shape on those populating it.

The actual performance consists of dance stills, presenting kinetic, movable versions of well-known paintings against the backdrop of music associated with different landscape traditions.

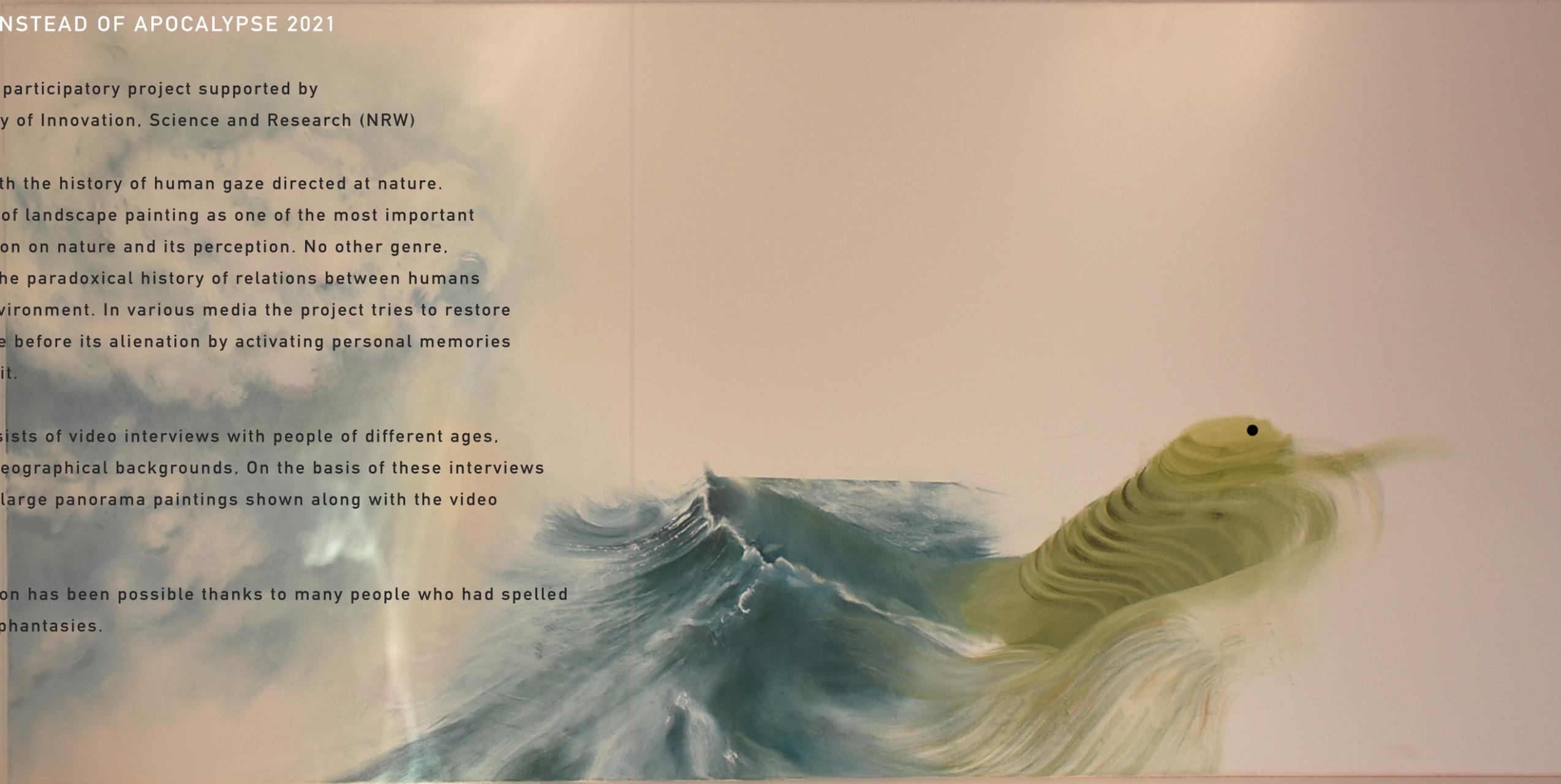
## INSTEAD OF APOCALYPSE 2021

participatory project supported by  
Ministry of Innovation, Science and Research (NRW)

The project deals with the history of human gaze directed at nature. It revisits the genre of landscape painting as one of the most important sources of information on nature and its perception. No other genre captures so vividly the paradoxical history of relations between humans and their natural environment. In various media the project tries to restore the "ideal" landscape before its alienation by activating personal memories and fantasies about it.

The installation consists of video interviews with people of different ages, sexes, cultural and geographical backgrounds. On the basis of these interviews there is a series of large panorama paintings shown along with the video documentation.

The project realisation has been possible thanks to many people who had spelled out their landscape phantasies.





Instead of Apocalypse, 2021. Video stills

‘landslag’  
(Icelandic)



‘phong cảnh’  
(Vietnamese)

## BETWEEN HAND AND EYE, 2021

The project reflects upon the fact that our thinking consists of numerous minimal differences: we can only tell what life is by telling it from death, define "dark blue" in relation to "light blue". But what about the visual language lacking a proper grammar and freely mixing up various sign systems? Does it create its own binary oppositions between forms, colors and states from scratch, or rather relies on what has already been said, thought and written?

Without giving a firm answer, the project ponders upon some common contradistinctions (such as natural/artificial), inviting viewers to search for them without giving too many clues.



An arrangement of real and artificial tulips on the 2nd of January.  
Oil on canvas, glass vase, tulips. (Exhibition view)



Four peaches and two nectarines on velvet



A girl holding a doll on the balcony in spring

LANDSCAPE #779 (IN THE ABSENCE OF MONA LISA), 2020



Oil on poplar panel, 77x53 cm

## TYOLOGY OF VAGUE DISTANCES, 2020

installation of three paintings, glass plate and various objects

Vague Distances is a series of three paintings each consisting of three simple elements of greenery seen from a studio window: forest on the hill, a tree and an indoor plant present in the studio at the moment of painting.

The triptych is inspired by Guo Xi's spatial theory - the Chinese Song Dynasty painter, who developed "three levels of distance" namely high distance(高遠), deep distance(深遠) and level distance(平遠).

The series explores a multi-focused perspective with a movable viewpoint, imitating the process of viewing itself as well as its culturally predetermined nature.

Installation, detail





Typology of vague distances,  
exhibition view



## MOUNTAIN STILL-LIFE (European/Chinese), 2019

This series of paintings reflects upon Chinese and European traditions of realistic depiction and explores the ability of a painting to make non-existent things look real and tangible.

Each painting has an open-ended composition dangling between landscape and still-life. It combines different angles of view and different painting techniques by putting them in such a context that the eye accepts them as real. Rather than being a simple reflection of our general perceptual properties, this real (or, rather, "reals" varying from one painting to another) are socially and culturally specific.



Oil on canvas, each 90x120cm

## ALEXANDRITE AT SUNSET/SUNRISE, 2019

The gemstone Alexandrite, discovered in 1830 right in the middle of Russia - in the south Ural - changes its colour from reddish purple in the daylight to the bluish green in the candlelight.

The work explores the ability of our vision to deal with so-called impossible colours, such as greenish-red or reddish-green that cannot be perceived in normal seeing of light.

Unlike painting, the rug making technique allows to put together opposing colours of yarn without literally mixing them as it would be in the case of the paints. Combining yarns gives a literal blend of green and red without getting muddy brown as a result.

Apart from colour, this work embodies the experience of chronos - an extremely slow and orderly passage of time in the hands of Moirai - the spinning goddesses of fate. At the time when unhurried handwork is outsourced to machines and the unprivileged, it reminds us of the 'doing hand' as the necessary complement of 'seeing eye' in all processes involving thinking and making things.

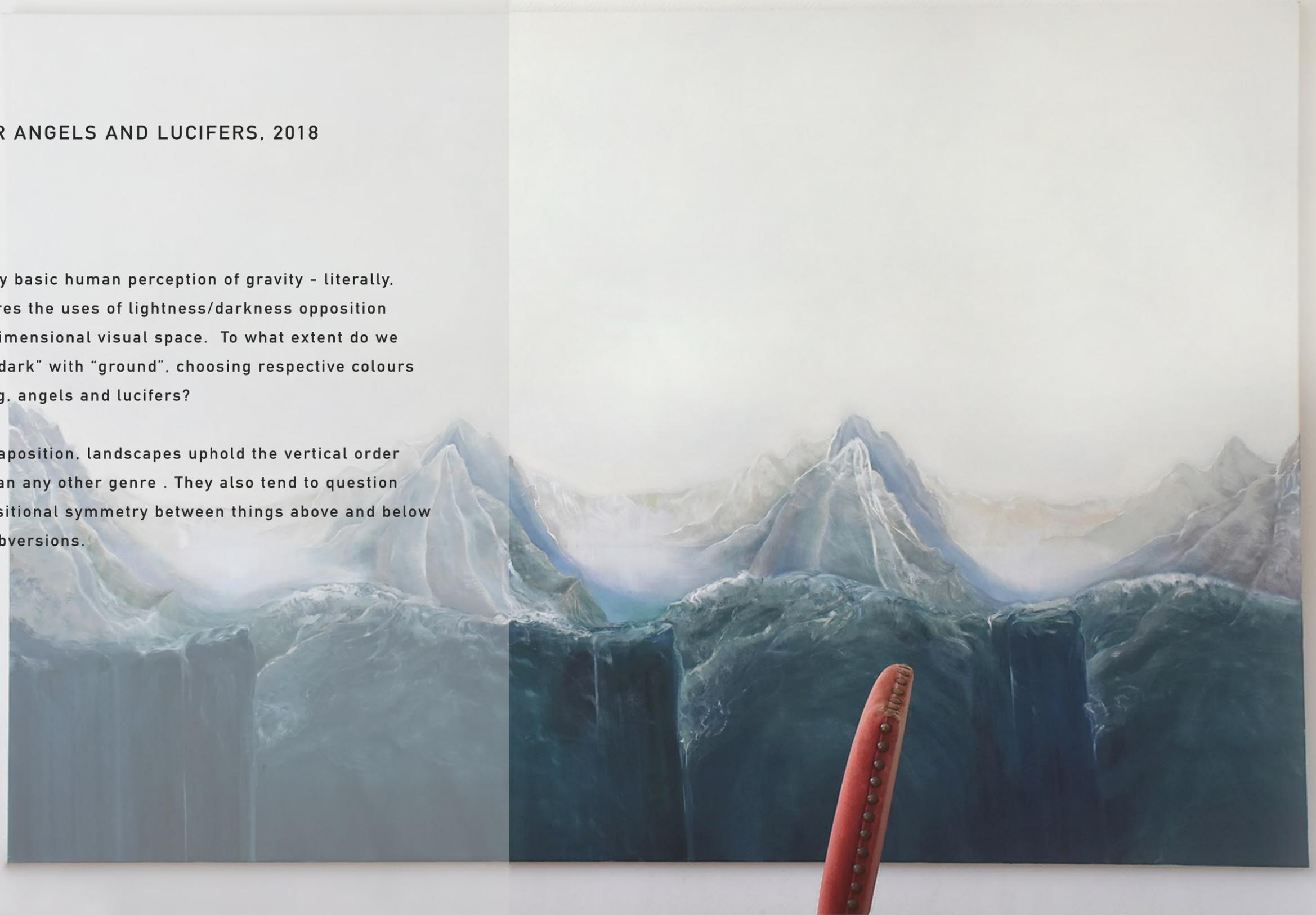
Hand-knotted rug. Wool and silk.



## LANDSCAPE FOR ANGELS AND LUCIFERS, 2018

The project meditates on the very basic human perception of gravity - literally, gravitating to the earth. It explores the uses of lightness/darkness opposition in mapping gravitation onto bi-dimensional visual space. To what extent do we associate "light" with "air" and "dark" with "ground", choosing respective colours for sky and soil, floor and ceiling, angels and lucifers?

Depicting the heaven/earth juxtaposition, landscapes uphold the vertical order imposed by gravitation better than any other genre. They also tend to question this order by reflections, compositional symmetry between things above and below horizon, and other deliberate subversions.



Oil on canvas, 290x180cm



## HUMAN-SPECIFIC OBJECTS, 2014-

The project deals with individuals of different ages and nationalities (mostly non-artists), who are interviewed about their attitudes towards art.

The participants are asked to commission artworks for themselves, and also to take part in bringing those projects to fruition. The outcome of this two-way interaction is an alternative collection of art curated by a "swarm intelligence" of commissioners.

Trying to answer the question "What kind of art does society need?", the project seeks to capture the elusive distance between the typically self-referential system of art and its everyday surroundings. The result is a half-utopian space, which would ideally relate people to art in a more direct and immediate way than conventional institutions and popular abstractions.



Work in progress, mixed media



Human-specific object n\*3 (above)  
Human-specific object n\*10 (left)



## LA CITTÀ DEL SOLE, 2013

Site-specific installation in a Bauhaus bathroom, Dessau

In collaboration between Weißensee Academy of Art (Berlin) and Bauhaus Foundation

The constellation of "filmstrips" hovering over the bathtub replicates the contours of the Bauhaus main building. This translucent version of a house, made of light and air, embodies the communication system that shaped Bauhaus architectonically and, to some extent, ideologically.

In order to produce a summary physical reflection of Bauhaus optics and semantics, an abstract idea was pulled out of what remains of the Bauhaus system. It is this unpolished dialogue between a mirror and the mirrored that brings the faded utopia back to life.



Photography, translucent foil, film

"...IN THE FOG THE YELLOW BECOMES GREEN AND THE RED TURNS YELLOW...", 2009

### Site-specific installation

The project is realised at the former military airfield Werneuchen (20 km northeast from Berlin). Its starting point is the colourful original poster from the DDR period "Instructions for Moving in a Thick Fog During the Tempestuous Weather" (5.7 x 3.2 m, 1960s-1970s), painted on the wall of the dilapidated hangar and containing driving instructions in Russian for the case of adverse weather conditions.

The installation includes:

- 1) the poster's reproduction and translation into German on the opposite side of the hangar;
- 2) 100 m-long stripe between the original and the copy of the poster, broom-swept through the thick layer of dust on the hangar's floor;
- 3) 72 glass plates, placed on the floor in controlled disorder in order to link various sides of the building's architecture (for instance, the missing window plates).

Unexpectedly, local gangs became furtively involved in the project: during its construction on-site, they nearly destroyed the original poster, covering it with expansive graffiti, smashing some of the remaining windows, and stealing the broom.

