

Nikita Kadan

Booth N05

Nova sector

November 29th — December 3rd 2022

Art | Basel
Miami Beach



Nikita Kadan

ДЕТИ. ЛЮДИ (“*CHILDREN. PEOPLE*”)

Booth N05 — Nova Sector

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

Text written by Sasha Pevak

Nikita Kadan is a Ukrainian artist based in Kyiv. Through mediums of drawing, sculpture, installation, and painting, he explores the links that bind us to the places we inhabit, and in particular the ways in which history and memory are constructed through collective and national narratives, ideologies, memory politics and institutions.

The artist tackles the issues of ongoing violence over history, culture, lands, and bodies, often relying on the experience of colonial domination which was inflicted onto his country during centuries by the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and is now perpetuated by the Russian Federation, just as his recent installation *Difficulties of Profanation II* (2015-2022) at the Venice Biennial showed.

Starting from a specific context, his work however addresses all relations of oppression — and the victims they leave behind. By drawing our attention to the violence that is currently being played out and that affects him daily, Nikita Kadan’s work probably seeks to remind us of our humanity, and of our fragility as human beings, while also nourishing the feeling of resilience in the face of inexplicable cruelty of war.





When the full-scale Russian military invasion started on February 24, Nikita Kadan found refuge in the space of an art gallery in the center of Kyiv, which was built in the Soviet times as a bomb shelter. Barricading the entrance with weighty sculptures, listening to shelling and drifting through a besieged city, while at the same time remaining hyper connected through Internet and social media (one can even say that the artist became one of the loudest public voice of the war in Ukraine, solicited by numerous museums and even invited by the European Parliament to testify), Nikita Kadan developed a new body of works emerging from this condition.

Most of the artworks presented are realized in the war time, as a reaction to its unprecedented violence manifested in mass killings of civilians, tortures, destruction of housing and critical infrastructure, as well as information war. In this electrified atmosphere, however often without electricity or heating, the artist realized charcoal drawings and writings on paper, drawing inspiration from wartime stories and echoing viral slogans, which in Ukraine became an important part of the moral resistance of the population to the war.

In a series of drawings, these words are repeated expressively on paper by hand : “Close the Sky”, “Russian Warship Go Fuck Yourself”, “Decolonize Russia”, or else “Cheap Gas - Cheap Blood”. The series also included a banner saying “Fuck War”, which was hung on the façade of the Secession Pavillon in Vienna and became one of the viral gestures used to denounce the war. As the artist says: “if banners and chanting mainly remain useless in times of war, when these words are repeated multiple times like a magic spell and if a critical mass of people believes in them, they can actually influence the reality”.

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

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

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

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





In a war of conquest, people's lives lose all value; bodies and their parts are thrown in black trash bags like waste (*Agamemnon in a trash bag*, 2022). Rich black soils (чорнозем) of Ukraine are turned into mass graves, are poisoned by the war, and promise tomorrow's famine. In *The Shadow On The Ground* series (2022), Nikita Kadan repeatedly depicts black plowed soil with a human figure lying on top of it. A lying shadow of the invader is stuck in this landscape as a sign of the long-lasting effects of war. However, in peoples' narratives, the occupant's body can also contain a hope for a new life, as the story of sunflower seeds tells us. It began with a video posted online in February, where a Ukrainian woman addresses an occupant : "take the seeds and put them in your pockets, so that when you lay here, the sunflowers will grow". The black soil, for a long time seen as a resource, becomes an active actor of history: absorbing violence, preserving memory, and promising a hope for the future.

Finally, the sculptures from the series *Tiger's Leap* (2018) suggest the importance of reconnecting today's anti-imperial struggles with the upheavals of the past. They represent replicas of the spears, which were realized in 1905 by workers of the Gorlovka mechanical factory, in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine, with the help of tool machines during an armed rebellion against the factory owners. Borrowing from Walter Benjamin's concept of "a tiger's leap into the past", the series points out the need to rely on the inspiring examples of popular resilience and resistance to oppression in the past, as a source of difference in the present.

Sasha Pevak
November 2022

Nikita Kadan

Biography

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

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

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

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

Booth N05

Nova Sector

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Featured Works





люди

Nikita Kadan

Люди (People) I, 2022

Acrylic and oil pastel

140 x 190 cm

55 x 75 inches

Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

\$ 25,000 ex. taxes



Nikita Kadan

Люди (People) II, 2022

Acrylic and oil pastel

140 x 190 cm

55 x 75 inches

Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

\$ 25,000 ex. taxes



Nikita Kadan
Дети, (Children), 2022

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

\$ 25,000 ex. taxes



Nikita Kadan

Agamemnon in a trash bag, 2022

Acrylic and oil pastel

200 x 120 cm

79 x 47 inches

Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

\$ 25,000 ex. taxes



Nikita Kadan
Tiger's Leap (3 spears), 2022

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

\$ 36,000 ex. taxes



Nikita Kadan

Люди (People, Radvanka), 2022

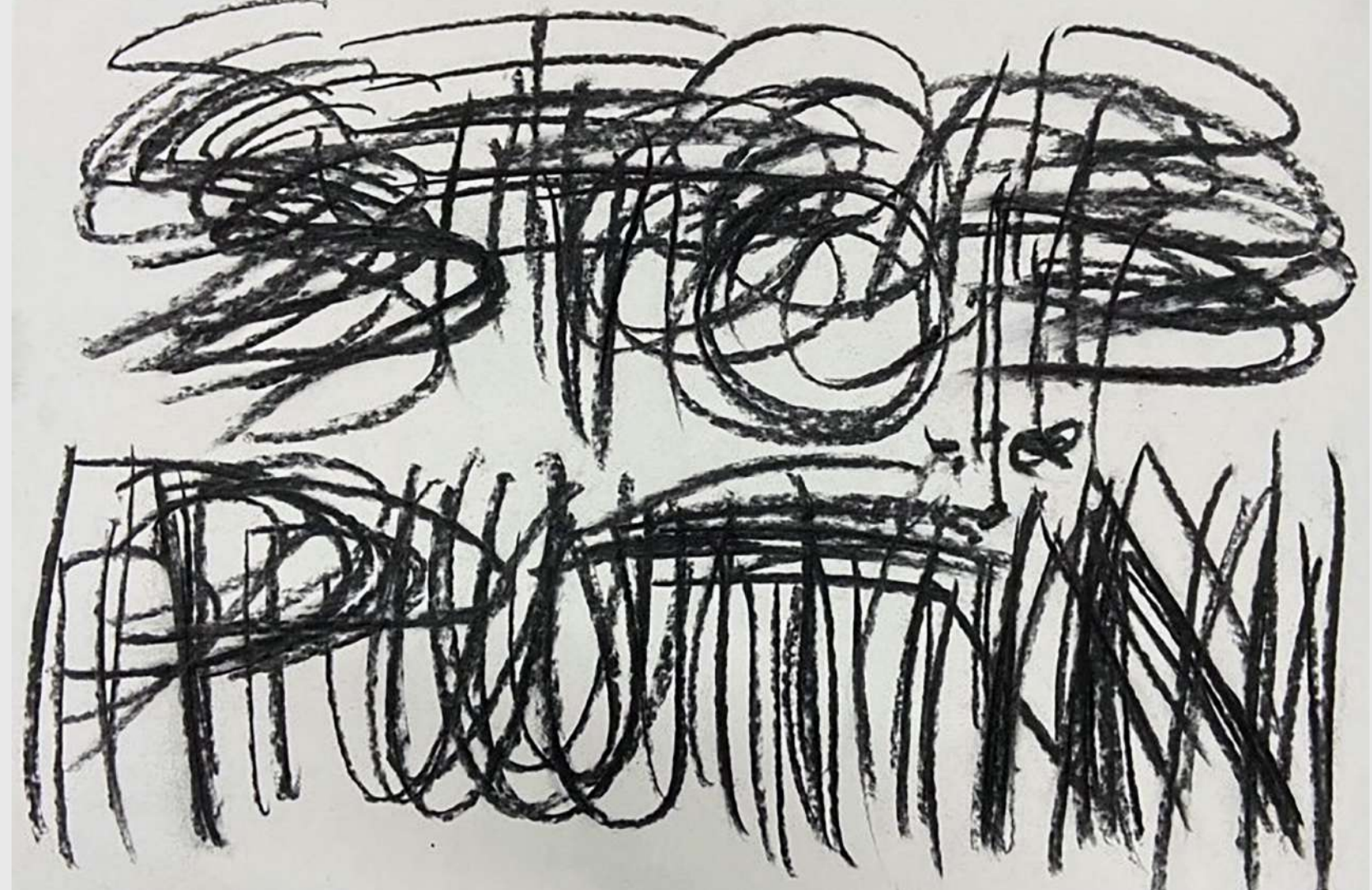
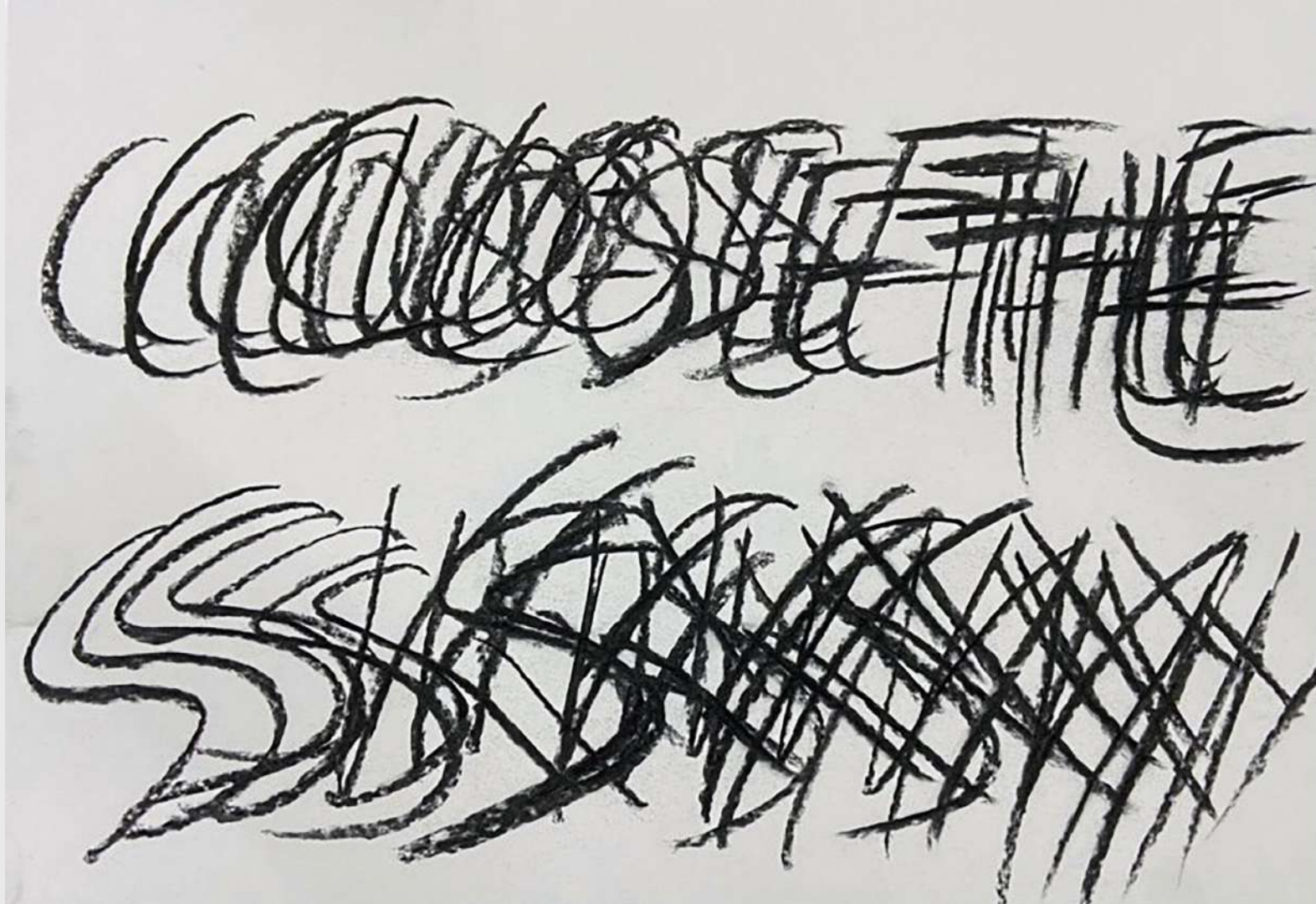
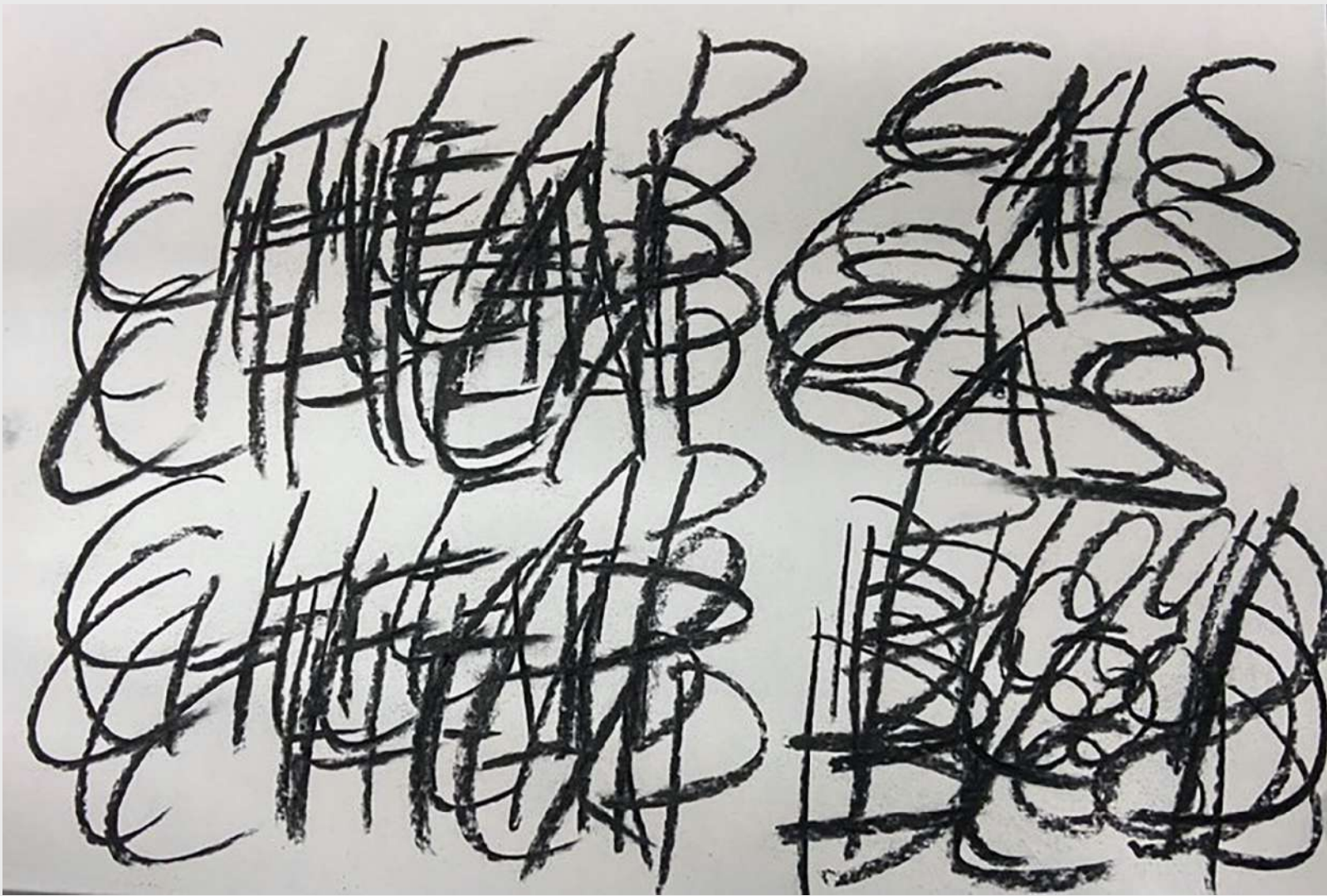
Charcoal on paper

61 x 85 cm

24 x 33,5 inches

Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

\$ 6,500 ex. taxes



Nikita Kadan
Repeating Speech series (selection), 2022

Charcoal on paper
42 x 60 cm each
16,5 x 24 inches each
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

\$ 5,000 ex. taxes (each)



Nikita Kadan
The Shadow on the Ground series, 2022

Charcoal on paper
61 x 85 cm each
24 x 33,5 inches each
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

\$ 6,000 ex. taxes (each)

Art | Basel Miami Beach

VIP DAYS

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

PUBLIC OPENING DAYS

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

VIEWING ROOM

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