

Two Russian artists in residency at ENSAD Nancy

ENSAD Nancy hosts Alexandra Karelina, a video artist, and Ivan Yakushev, a graphic designer, as artists-in-residence for the whole year 2023. They are among those Russian citizens who openly express their anti-war position, and therefore their residence in Russia is associated with the risks of persecution by the state. They arrived in Nancy in October 2022 with a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Campus France) and have been laureates of the PAUSE Program* since January 2023.

What is your artistic focus? What were your main activities in Russia?

A.K.: I began my artistic career as a photographer about 15 years ago but, since 2015, I've been working as a video artist and director of documentaries and experimental films. In 2018, I also started working with analog film.

I've also been teaching at the Moscow School of New Cinema and have given master classes related to analog film, while also working as a film editor for a living.

I.Y.: My professional focus is in the realm of digital graphics, which I've been working with since 2009. I have a strong interest in the interplay between form and message, and the ways in which technology constantly provides new tools and approaches for exploration. Currently, I am exploring the possibilities of VR sculpting, algorithmic graphics, and neural network generative art, leveraging my background in mathematics to inform my work.

Over the past eight years, I have had the privilege of teaching visual communication at the HSE Art & Design School in Moscow. It has been a fulfilling experience to guide and mentor students in their creative explorations, particularly when they address complex social issues through experimental graphic language.

I've always had a strong passion for sound, and it's been an integral part of my professional endeavors. Whether composing for experimental film or participating in live sound events, I find great fulfillment in exploring the possibilities of sound as an artistic medium.

What will you teach at ENSAD Nancy?

A.K.: I aim not to impart solely academic knowledge, but to share with students my personal experience of non-conventional cinema. I would like to share with students what I love most about cinema: how film language can capture the essence of the nuanced things which are inexpressible through words.

During the spring semester, I plan to run a discussion club with screenings of avant-garde films.

In the fall semester, I want to involve students in non-narrative filmmaking and encourage them to try different approaches and methods, such as making a found footage film or a book of collages as part of the script development. I also hope to work with students with analog medium so they have a chance to experience its magic.

I.Y.: I take great pleasure in working with students, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with the talented students at ENSAD Nancy. In the coming months, I plan to teach a course on creative coding, where students will learn how to use Processing to create stunning visualizations with code and data. In addition, I would love to lead some short workshops on combining AI-generated art with traditional graphic design techniques.

What is your artistic project in France?

A.K.: During my residency, I aim to write a script for my first full-length movie. It will explore the detachment of a person from his\her body, and the process of distancing itself. I'll use a variety of approaches, including fiction, documentary, and archival materials.

The central theme of this work is that losing touch with one's body also means losing control and power over essential aspects of life. Through visuals and editing, I'll recreate this experience in the film.

I.Y.: I am interested in researching different approaches to creating generative graphics using neural networks and other AI techniques. Currently I am researching the possibilities of AI-generated graphics in the context of video. Specifically, I am particularly fascinated by the ways in which these techniques

can be used to create complex and intricate visuals that are difficult or impossible to achieve through traditional methods.

What do you like most about our school and how does it fit your project?

A.K.: What I admire most about school are the people we meet there. I am continually amazed by the talent and dedication of the students I have worked with at ENSAD Nancy. The teachers and administration are friendly and helpful, and the school is well-equipped, which is truly a blessing for any artist. Moreover, I enjoy the beauty of the building every day.

I.Y.: What strikes me most about ENSAD Nancy is the dynamic and creative environment, which fosters research and innovation across a diverse range of fields. The school's production capabilities are also quite impressive, from traditional techniques like silkscreen to cutting-edge technologies like 3D printing, and the professionalism of the team behind these resources is remarkable.

One aspect of the school that is particularly exciting to me is its commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration. The school has strong connections with other departments, including computer science. As an artist working on a technological project, I appreciate the opportunities here to collaborate with other experts in their fields.

I should also mention the warm and welcoming atmosphere of the school. Everyone I've met here has been incredibly friendly and supportive, creating a unique sense of community that fosters creativity and collaboration. It's truly a special place to be, and I feel lucky to have the opportunity to work here.

Discover their artistic work:

Alexandra Karelina: <https://akarelina.com>

Ivan Yakushev: <https://www.behance.net/yakushev>

Photographs:

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