

MYKOLA BABAK EVGENE MATVEEV

NEW YORK



COVID 13 Rooms

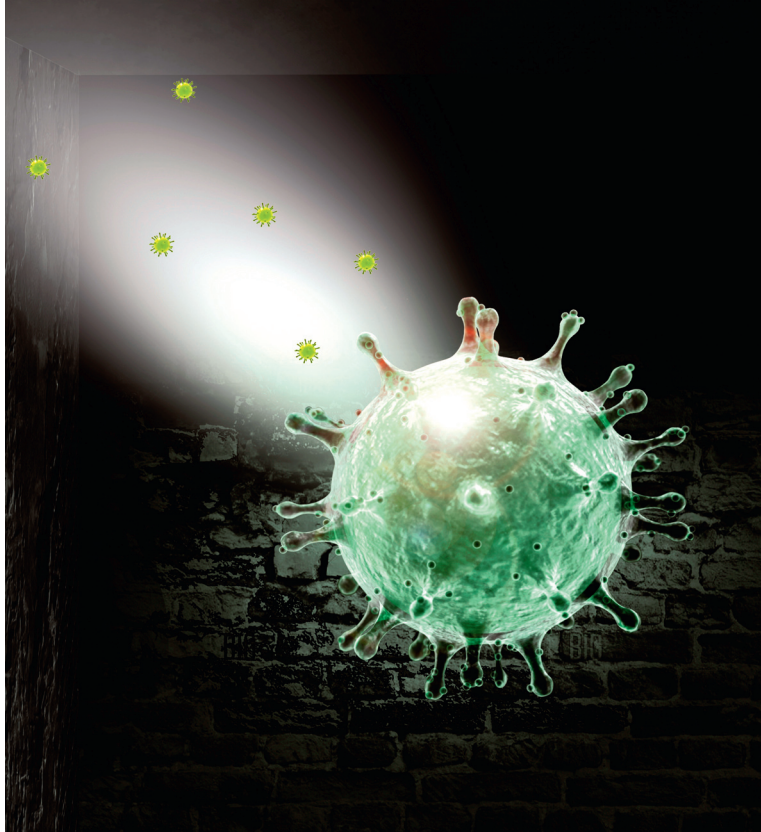


ART-TANDEM
BOM



COVID 13 Rooms

Project artists: **BM Babak**  **Matveev Art-duo**



Preface

Unlike any other epidemics, wars, and natural disasters, COVID is the only event in human history, which affected not only different countries, nations, or societies, but all continents and their entire population Mind, soul and spirit of every human being was impacted by it. COVID has touched as much the artistic imagination of many creative people worldwide, and the Ukrainian art duo BM Babak-Matveev have found their unique artistic way of reflecting this devastating and tragic event in their new phenomenal project 13 COVID Rooms.

The advent of Gorbachev's Perestroika and the transformation of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s had brought the independence of Ukraine in 1991 and thus hailed a new dawn of social and political order, alternative philosophies and individual freedoms – and with it the search for the role and place of Ukrainian contemporary art in the world's cultural space for Mykola Babak and Evgene Matveev, which became fundamental and non-alternative for each of them since then. Euromaidan, the Ukrainian revolution of 2014, coincided with the creation of the new artistic tandem BM Babak-Matveev, by two very different artists with rather diametrically opposed styles. One of the major ideas uniting them was the belief that only through Ukrainian identity, through the modern transformation and modernization of Ukrainian artistic thought, through integration of the national philosophy into an international process a path could be paved into the future.

Both artists are Renaissance men, whose creativity involves working in different art media, book design, literature, poetry and philosophical conceptualizations. The art of Mykola Babak and Evgene Matveev represents a very interesting combination of populism and postmodernism, although being embedded in the postmodern system of values, they do not fully share all the concepts of the post-modern philosophers like Baudrillard, Derrida or Foucault. Their works are devoted to the past and present. Phantasmagoric mixture of times and epochs is practically their credo. Their carefully selected materials attempt to represent a huge and sweeping mythical picture. They construct various elements and, imitating pseudo-historical reality, form fresh images from them.

*Alexandre Gertsman
AG Contemporary Art*

COVID 13 Rooms

Covid-19 caused another plague on the Earth in the literal physical sense. But this plague is not the most massive in the history of the mankind. And almost nobody realizes that its main and perhaps irreversible impact affects first of all the mental health of a human being. Because almost everybody was driven into isolation, was locked up, stayed under the enormous pressure of outside regulations and direct violence, having no freedom and right to choose. It has to be pointed out, that such a triviality as putting on the mask breaks the psychics totally. It looks like a collar. Moreover almost all kinds of mass media hysterically create the apocalyptic scenario of the future.

The human being is under the pressure of the permanently growing stress and almost can't control the emotions. The person feels like a doll in the hands of an alien and tries to find the manipulator, who is responsible for everything. But due to the psychological peculiarities the human being always tries to find the reason of all problems in the surrounded environment and seldom realizes that the person itself or its attitude to the outworld is the reason. It seems ironical, that even in such a tragic for many people situation there is a positive thing. Perhaps the mankind would realize that there is a higher purpose of its existence on the earth and turns away from the planned satanic way of development. We can't even imagine what would happen next, but we feel already the turning point of the human destiny. And what kind of destiny it would be, is it going to be a way of development or degradation, we unfortunately don't able to know. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. That's why the central part of the Covid 13 Rooms polyptich is the chrysalis of the butterfly-human being to the right and left of which there are concrete hoppers. It's a kind of a message to the works of John Wyndham, one of the classics of world fiction. And in all other bunkers there are 12 selective states of the person, depending on to what of four psychotypes it belongs. Four types of personality: "ordinary", "egocentric", "closed", "role model" and their inherent indicators of the "Big Five": neuroticism, extraversion, openness, friendliness, consciousness. In our project we tried to convey some of these emotional states, but, of course, not from a scientific point of view, but based on a purely artistic perception of the world around us. Therefore, our homunculus (the role of which in our "movie" is played by a strange children's doll from the almost forgotten past) is primarily occupied by itself.

Of course, in our conclusions we considered this homunculus in the image of a man, and in the image of a golem, and even in the image of Frankenstein, but we always proceeded from considerations not to inject much negativity, although working with such a topic is difficult to refrain from. By the way, one of the most famous images of Frankenstein was created in the movie "Frankenstein's Bride" directed by James Weil – a message to our room №11.

If we consider our project in a postmodernist way (and it is actually - not in full, of course, but with a number of features), we can find multiple messages and analogies to various events, theories, already accomplished facts, but as if turned inside out. And this is the charm of works of this type. After all, the philosophy of our time often denies the very possibility of authenticity, and its anti-rationality dictates the culturological discourse of the XXI century. Therefore, the hypocrisy in our bunkers seems strange in nature, but, in our opinion, it to some extent reflects the current trends of postmodernism. And although we constantly declare the creation of a new integrity, which we call "mental postmodern", in our works there is still a virus of classical postmodern. But we are on the way to creating a vaccine against it. By the way, the first signs of transformation of modern philosophy in this direction have already emerged in the world. In the meantime, it must be stated that man has faced the difficult problems of collapsing the morals of the old society in the new conditions of life. People must adapt to new living conditions, but they have no right to lose their humanity.

BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo



BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych *COVID 13 Rooms. Room #1*. 2020–21. Photo, installation, digital art.
Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinyl, laminating. 100 x 100 cm



BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych *COVID 13 Rooms, Room #2*. 2020-21. Photo, installation, digital art. Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinyl, laminating. 100 x 100 cm



BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych *COVID 13 Rooms, Room #3*. 2020–21. Photo, installation, digital art.
Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinyl, laminating. 100 x 100 cm



BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych *COVID 13 Rooms. Room #4*. 2020-21. Photo, installation, digital art.
Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinil, laminating. 100 x 100 cm



BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych *COVID 13 Rooms. Room #5.* 2020-21. Photo, installation, digital art.
Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinil, laminating. 100 x 100 cm



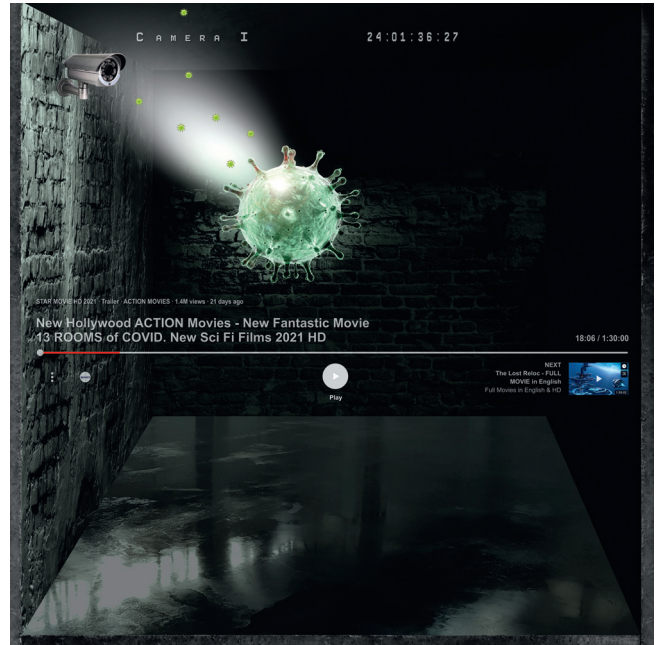
BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych *COVID 13 Rooms. Room #6*. 2020–21. Photo, installation, digital art. Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinil, laminating. 100 x 100 cm



BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych *COVID 13 Rooms. Room #7*. 2020-21. Photo, installation, digital art. Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinil, laminating. 200 x 200 cm



BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych *COVID 13 Rooms. Room #8*. 2020–21. Photo, installation, digital art. Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinyl, laminating. 100 x 100 cm



BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych *COVID 13 Rooms. Room #9*. 2020-21. Photo, installation, digital art.
Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinyl, laminating. 100 x 100 cm



BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych **COVID 13 Rooms. Room #10**. 2020–21. Photo, installation, digital art. Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinil, laminating. 100 x 100 cm

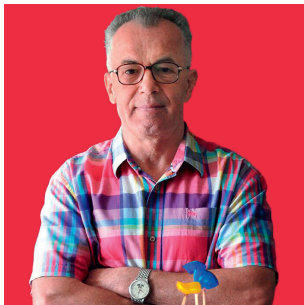


BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych *COVID 13 Rooms. Room #12*. 2020–21. Photo, installation, digital art.
Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinil, laminating. 100 x 100 cm



BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo. Polyptych **COVID 13 Rooms. Room #13**. 2020–21. Photo, installation, digital art. Composite aluminum plate, print with original pigment inks on photovinil, laminating. 100 x 100 cm





Mykola Babak

Ukrainian artist, writer, art collector and publisher (Cherkasy).

Mykola Babak was born in Voronyntsi, Cherkasy Oblast. In 1971 he finished Melnyky Secondary School. From 1972 till 1974 he served in the Soviet Army. After demobilization he worked as a designer at Cherkasy Azot Company and at Cherkasy Combine of art-advertisement. From 1979 till 1985 together with a group of artists he managed monumental projects (wall-paintings, mosaics, stained-glass windows) in the far-east of Russia. In 1986 Mykola Babak came back to Ukraine. He is known by his participation at the 51-st Venice Biennale of Contemporary art with the National Project *Your Children, Ukraine* (2005). M. Babak is the member of National Union of Artists of Ukraine (from 1990), Merited Artist of Ukraine (2004), Taras Shevchenko National Prize Laureate (2010), People's Artist of Ukraine (2016). His artworks are at the National Art Museum of Ukraine, Contemporary Art Museum of Ukraine, Ukrainian Center of Contemporary Art Soviet, Ministry of Culture of Ukraine and in private collections in many countries of the world. Mykola Babak lives and works in Cherkasy, Ukraine.



Evgene Matveev

Ukrainian artist (Kyiv).

Evgene Matveev was born in Kharpal Village, Volokolamsk District, Moscow Oblast. In 1972 he graduated from the Ivan Fedoriv Ukrainian Polygraph Institute. From 1972 till 1973 he served in the Soviet Army. Evgene Matveev is the member of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine (from 1978), Shevchenko National Prize Laureate (1983), Winner of silver medal of the USSR Academy of Arts (1983), The Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Golden Prize Laureate (2001), Merited Artist of Ukraine (2004), People's Artist of Ukraine (2016), laureate of numerous international and national prizes of the highest level. He works almost in all techniques and directions of contemporary art. Matveev's artworks are at the National Art Museum of Ukraine, Taras Shevchenko National Museum, Ukrainian Museum of Book and Printing, Korolev Museum of Cosmonautics, Academy of Arts of the USSR, Karl Marks Museum, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Contemporary Art Museum of Ukraine, Ukrainian Center of Contemporary Art Soviet, Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, Ministry of Culture of Russian Federation and many other museums, institutions and private collections in dozens countries all over the world. Evgene Matveev lives and works in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Mykola Babak

Selected exhibitions:

- 2021 *COVID 13 Rooms*, personal project of BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo, Korsakov Museum of Contemporary Ukrainian Art, Lutsk
- 2021 17th International Exhibition of Contemporary Art *Intermission*, Cherkasy Art Museum
- 2020 10th International Exhibition of Contemporary Art *Dialogues*, Cherkasy Art Museum
- 2019 *The Fall Show*, Alexandre Gertsman Contemporary Art, New York
- 2018 *Revelations*, Alexandre Gertsman Contemporary Art, New York
- 2018 *Fantasy and Fury: An Artistic Journey from Kyiv to New York*, Alexandre Gertsman Contemporary Art, New York
- 2018 Personal exhibition of BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo, Alexandre Gertsman Contemporary Art, New York
- 2018 *The Multilayered Context of Art Beyond Post-Soviet Borders*, Alexandre Gertsman Contemporary Art, New York
- 2017 *The Cultural Code of Ukraine in the Art Space of Landscape*, Taras Shevchenko National Museum, Kyiv
- 2015 *The Central Dnipro River Region Folk Icon of the 18th – 20th c.* (from Mykola Babak's private collection), Art Museum, Cherkasy
- 2013 *IV Fine Art Ukraine, Art-Arsenal*, Kyiv
- 2006 Personal exhibition *Celestial Chronicle*, The National Art Museum of Ukraine, Kyiv
- 2005 *National Project Your Children, Ukraine* at the 51st Venice Biennale
- 2005 *Project Your Children, Ukraine*, Diploma and 1-st Prize, The Gallery of the National Ukrainian Artist Trade Union, Kyiv
- 2004 *Ukrainian Rural Photo* (from Mykola Babak's private collection) V International Photobiennale, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow
- 2003 *The Ukrainian Retrospective*, I Kyiv Photobiennale, Art Foundation Gallery, Kyiv
- 2002 *The Ukrainian World of Painting*, Beijing
- 2000 Collection of Axiomatic, Diploma and 1-st Prize, The Gallery of the National Ukrainian Artist Trade Union, Kyiv
- 1999 Personal Exhibition *Telluris*, The National Art Museum of Ukraine, Kyiv
- 1993 *People with People*, Poland

Publishing

Monograph *The Central Dnipro River Region Folk Icon of the 18th – 20th c. in the Context of Rural Cultural Space Awards: Best Book of the Lviv Publishers' Forum* (2009)
Book of the Year and Grant Prize of the VI All-Ukrainian Rating (2009)
Diploma of The Art of Bookmaking Contest (2009)

Monograph *The Central Ukraine Rural Photo of the late 19th – 20th c. Awards: Book of the Year of the XVI All-Ukrainian Rating* (2014)
Diploma of The Art of Bookmaking Contest (2009)

Monograph *Gyugor Shevchenko – Master of Photo-Painting, Successor of Shevchenko Family*

Evgene Matveev

Selected exhibitions:

- 2021 *COVID 13 Rooms*, personal project of BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo, Korsakov Museum of Contemporary Ukrainian Art, Lutsk
- 2021 17th International Exhibition of Contemporary Art *Intermission*, Cherkasy Art Museum
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- 2018 *Fantasy and Fury: An Artistic Journey from Kyiv to New York*, Alexandre Gertsman Contemporary Art, New York
- 2018 Personal exhibition of BM Babak-Matveev Art-duo, Alexandre Gertsman Contemporary Art, New York
- 2017 *The Multilayered Context of Art Beyond Post-Soviet Borders*, Alexandre Gertsman Contemporary Art, New York
- 2014 *The Show Within the Show, Art-Arsenal*, Kyiv
- 2012 *Communication XXI*, CCA Soviet, National Union of Artists of Ukraine, Kyiv
- 2011 *Independent, Art-Arsenal*, Kyiv
- 2011 *Space Odyssey, Art-Arsenal*, Kyiv
- 2011 *People's Choice*, CCA Soviet, Kyiv
- 2009 *Metal Heart*, Lavra Gallery, Kyiv
- 2009 *Along the Wall, Art-Arsenal*, Kyiv
- 2009 *War*, CCA Soviet, Kyiv
- 2008 *Soap*, CCA Soviet, Kyiv
- 2008 *Nothing Personal*, Gogol-Fest, Art-Arsenal, Kyiv
- 2007 *Confrontation*, International Photobiennale, Kyiv
- 2006 *In the Army Now*, International Photobiennale, Stockholm
- 2005 *In the Army Now*, International Photobiennale, Kyiv
- 2005 *Dreams about Dresden Gallery*, Berlin
- 2000 *Clear Room*, Promzone, Kyiv
- 2000 *Crimea Atom*, V International Art-Festival, Ukraine
- 1999 Anniversary Exhibition, Foundation for Promotion of Arts, The National Art Museum of Ukraine, Kyiv
- 1997 *Photophysical*, International Photobiennale, Kyiv
- 1990 Autumn Salon in Paris, Glory Gallery, Paris
- 1990 *Biella per l'Incisione International Prize*, Graphics Biennale, Bella, Italy
- 1987 *Baltic Sea Biennale*, Germany
- 1984 *VII Graphics Art Biennale*, Norway
- 1982 *IBA-82*, Leipzig, Germany, Bronze medal
- 1977 *IBA-77*, Leipzig, Germany, Bronze medal



BM Babak-Matveev

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Artists **Mykola Babak & Evgene Matveev**

Preface **Alexandre Gertsman**

Author of essays **Mykola Babak & Evgene Matveev**

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The artists express their sincere gratitude
of an international art project

Art in times of plague

Mrs. Oksana Remenyaka.

Invitation to participate in this project,
inspired them to create a polyptych *COVID 13 Rooms*
(initial name of *COVID 12 Rooms*).

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