

Catherine Gfeller. Voices in Kyiv.  
Text of Marie Eve Celio. Washington, January 29, 2018

Liberated voices; images inspired by lives; lives in danger; lives taken.  
Sounds, noises, movements. Life goes on.

Following her stay in Kyiv in May 2017, the Swiss artist, Catherine Gfeller, offers a creative interpretation of the city, where she engages, visually and acoustically, in a dialogue with people she met - writers, journalists, architects.  
« The Voice is Freedom » - the protestors chanted in 2014 in Maidan Square. The voice is life. Life is movement, and it is this movement, these voices that Catherine is trying to present through different media: photographs, videos, audio recordings.

Apart from life, the voice is also poetry and politics. It has a strong symbolic power. During the tragic events of 2014, Ukrainian poets were reciting. Words against bullets. Words which can be still heard and which Catherine revives in her exhibition. “The past does not want to pass” the citizens of Kyiv say. Echo, juxtaposition.

In her photographs, Catherine Gfeller blurs time, the images overlap, giving an impression of movement. Movements, motion, Maidan, ... Four years have passed. The city, static during the revolution, has regained its liberty, driven by the means of transport circulating once again. This was captured by the artist in her compositions – different types of transport flaunting before the viewer:  
« Bus Landscape », « Metro People Landscape », « Women Tram », « Woman Car ».

The city is filled with lives. People walk, get together, rejoice, worry, wander to Maidan, walk around the University, near the cathedrals and churches of St. Sophia, St. Michael, St. Andrew and St. Cyril; they head to the new port district, along the river, walk across the bridges which connect the eastern and the western parts of Kyiv – these are locations the artist let us to discover in her photographs. She draws the audience into the image, to cross the border of reality, as if the past events could not be real because of their impossible inhumanity; she invites the spectator to glide through time, from the present to the past, from war to peace.  
This crossing is not always smooth. There are also collisions. The colours are crying out: strident green, acid yellow as in « Flowing Free » and « Free Orientation ». The memories are rarely tender. Memory injures and hurts.

And in this city of parks and trees the artist suggests the viewer sees these green spaces as places of refuge during the massacres, asylum, but also as places of hope, with nature recalling the supreme power of the cycle of life.

The artist presents herself as a foreign observer who invites us to see and hear a symbolical dialogue, which performs a double function: to know and to make others know.

