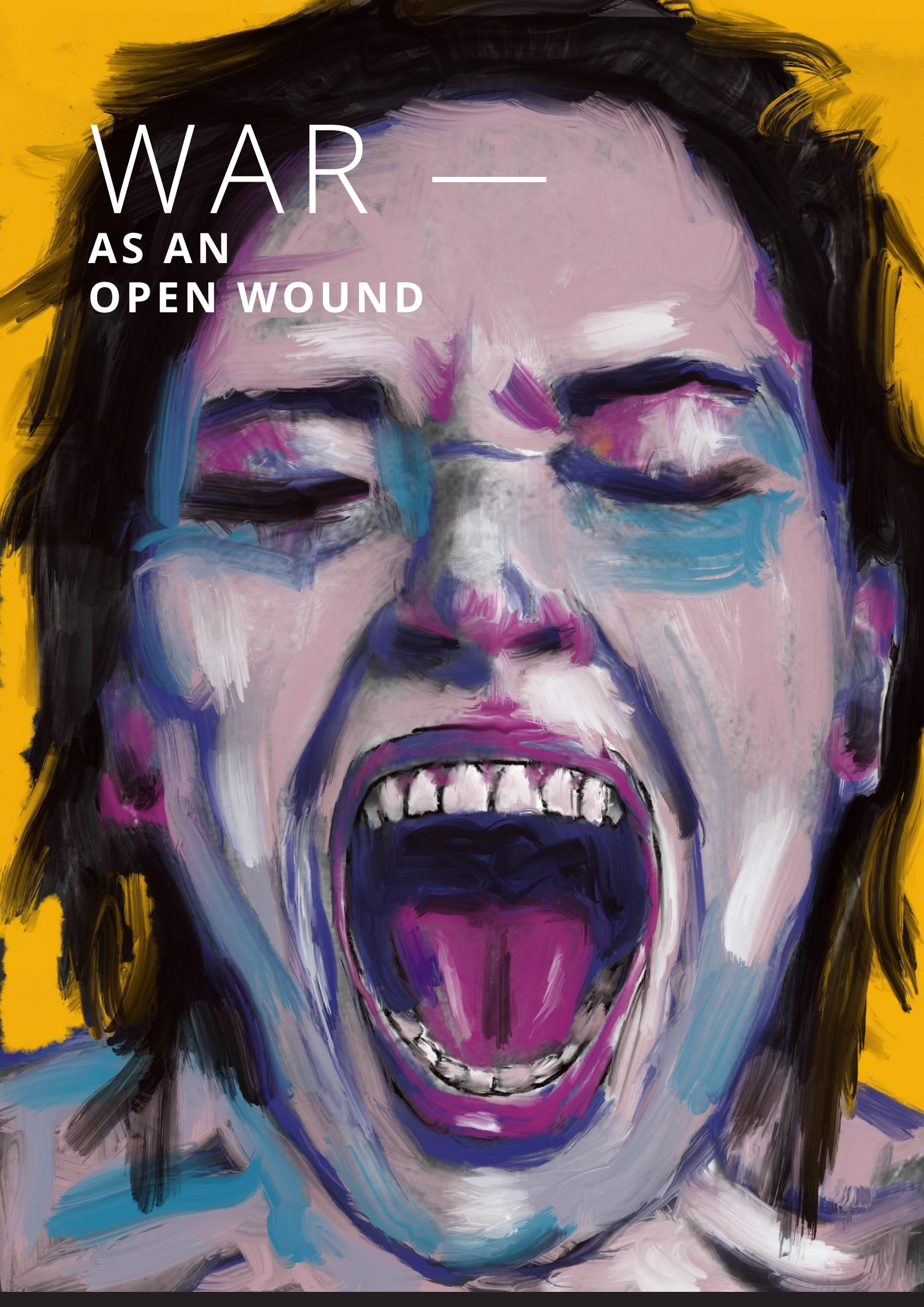


WAR —

AS AN
OPEN WOUND



My war story is somewhat similar to music videos: sliced compilation of kaleidoscopic images accompanied with an oppressive bass soundtrack.

In a wink, at 5 a.m. on February 24, my husband was holding the terrified sleepy child in his arms. In a devastated voice he said, "It's started. Explosions. Go to the bathroom, right now". He covered the bath with pillows, blankets and coats. Did we know then that in that tiny den the baby would live for 11 days, as long as Kyiv was in the fever of explosions? Definitely not, we did not know or understand anything.

In a wink, the night of February 26 was truly horrible, while the russians were attempting to demolish a military unit, located within a kilometer away. It was so deafening that it seemed to be possible to make a time-lapse video of my husband and me going grey. Thank God, the kid was sleeping, but I was holding pillows near her ears. To save her from any fears and noticing what was happening.

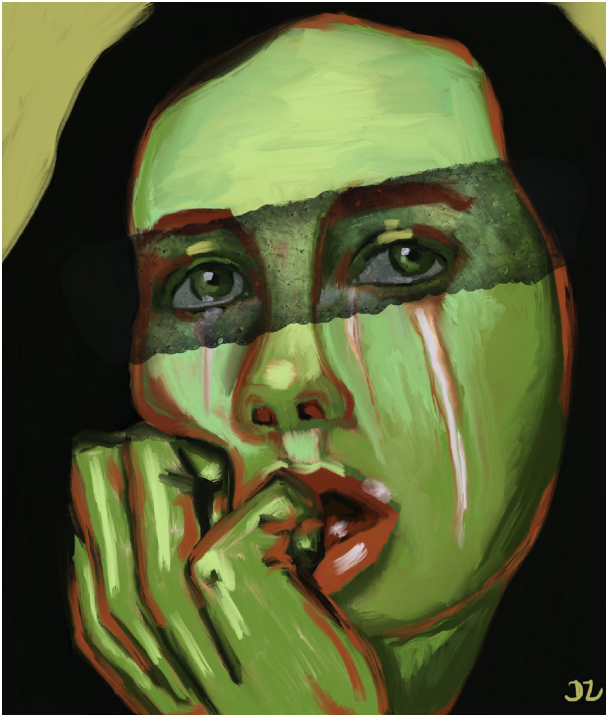
In a wink, another day, and you quickly stop differentiating the days when you live on the floor in the bathroom. The kid asks about the sounds of explosions for the first time and we say that some swine-men were flying near the house, trying to grab our home, her toys, but supermen were fighting against them. The explosions were steadily approaching and we took all the mirrors off their hooks on the walls. I could not put up with those blind spots and drew something in order

to get reflected at least somewhere, thus somehow exit in that surrealistic world.

In a wink, 11 days in the bathroom passed and things went from bad to worse – at night the husband packed up some clothes and the next morning the child, me, my husband, his sister and two big dogs of ours squeezed into the parents-in-law's car and left Kyiv. At that moment I felt totally devastated, in the photo my eyes resemble those of a terrified animal escaping a forest fire. All my life was packed in one bag for everyone, the workshop with over 300 works got the Schrödinger's cat paradox status of being "both simultaneously alive and potentially destroyed".

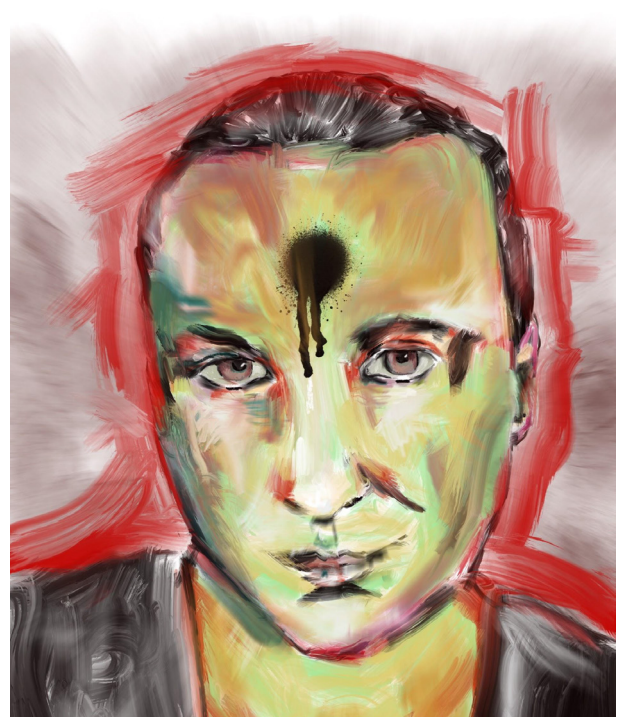
In a wink, my husband's sister's company rented a house in Mukachevo for its employees, which was crucial for us to decide on leaving. Otherwise, we would never have fled Kyiv. However, on our way, having passed Vinnytsia, we realized that people in Mukachevo would not answer the phone and understood that we were homeless amidst the war and winter. Everybody we contacted, refused to put us up with the dogs... Nobody wanted to let us in. Eventually, with huge efforts, we managed to find a cold house near Ternopil, where nobody lived, but it was a house and we would be allowed to get there with our dogs.

So we went there, and for the first time over those 13 days, I had a nervous breakdown, I wailed loudly in the car frightening the daughter and not being able to stop and calm down.



IT WAS A SNOWY NIGHT, AND WE WERE HEADING FOR A HOUSE. WE HAD BEEN TRAVELLING **FOR 15 HOURS, BEING HUNGRY AND EXHAUSTED.** IN A WAY, FOR ME, PERSONALLY, THAT HORROR, THAT FEELING OF ISOLATION, ALIENATION AND HELPLESSNESS WAS MORE TERRIFYING THAN ANY EXPLOSIONS.

In a wink. We were warming up, cleaning and tidying the house, where we would stay for two months. We would get used to being continuously together, six people, in one small room. We would get used to doing without many things, and we would get used to the cold.



However, we would still feel alien and strange in our own country, because the first comer, a man who came to take the gas meter reading, said to my husband that real Kyiv male citizens were already at war, while he was there. At the same time that man was younger than Oleg and was not fighting himself, either...

In a wink. The flow of news kept breaking our hearts up.

BUCHA, IRPIN, MARIUPOL. KILLED, RAPED CHILDREN, **INCREDIBLE CRUELTY**

A month of my silence burst into the emotionally loaded portraits that speak for themselves while staying at a loss for words.

***Daria Zaseda**, artist
Kyiv – Ternopil – Poland*