

Still Tied

Still Tied is a film and installation that presents the craft of camouflage net-making through the narrated realities of Ukrainian communities, primarily those still living in central Ukraine, along with those that reside in Ireland. It depicts manifestations of communal grief, the longevity of the Russian war in Ukraine, and children's forced involvement in weaponised violence. The nets seen in the installation were made by people from the Ukrainian Community in County Monaghan, currently the only one in Ireland that can sustain the regular open hours required for net-making. After the installation is dismantled, the nets will be sent to the frontlines of Ukraine to serve their intended purpose protecting the military.

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Camouflage nets have been widely used in Ukraine since the Russian invasion in 2014. Camouflage nets are specialised, lightweight coverings used to conceal military equipment, vehicles, and engineering structures against the background of terrain and vegetation from various enemy recon methods by mimicking the textures and colours found in nature.

With the rapid growth of modern technology and its implementation in warfare, specifically with the use of low-cost drone surveillance with advanced thermal imaging and artificial intelligence, the importance of camouflage nets has reached its peak. The net-making technology has evolved from simple fabric nets to advanced multispectral materials, yet due to the inherent nature of these materials the nets are still flammable, therefore vulnerable and temporary. Today, camouflage nets are often the difference between life and death for personnel and equipment.



Along with net-making, many other forms of workshops take place across Ukraine. Some people have learnt the craft of knitting so they can knit socks, hats, and scarves for soldiers who are often dealing with severe cold temperatures at the frontlines. Some people have taught themselves 3D printing and are producing large amounts of components needed for sustaining essential equipment for the Armed Forces. Others dry and package home-style foods like borshch, soups, and energy bars.

A quite essential and widespread activity many people have joined is trench candle-making. This candle consists of a cardboard strip rolled inside a tin and filled with hot wax. Because the materials are so available, the candles are quite easy to produce, yet they are crucial for soldiers in combat zones.



A practice directly sustaining the military is the rapid rise of small-scale drone production. Hidden in small basements and filled with components and wires, these drone-producing workshops are often completely self-sufficient. Drone usage in this war is significantly higher than in any other weaponised conflict, with the technology advancing right in front of our eyes.



Kids whose childhoods have been so immensely affected by the war have become used to its constant background presence. To make sense of the harsh changes their lives have been struck by, children often develop coping strategies. For example, some kids create games to deal with these changes. One game is called “Air alarm.” Its rules are simple: when the alarm sounds to signal a potential attack, you have to hide in your shelter. When the alarm stops, you can safely come out.



“It starts to feel like our tradition, our culture. Because when the war started we got together as a community, and if that hadn’t happened we probably wouldn’t have made it through.”



Since the start of the Russian aggression in 2014, many schools have also joined the volunteering movement. By hosting markets and organising charity workshops they manage to raise money to support the Armed Forces or provide humanitarian help for those in need.

