



© Lyusya Matveeva

# Kartoshka

## Potato

### Lyusya Matveeva

2015, single-channel video installation, black/white & color, 21 min., Russian. **Producer** Lyusya Matveeva (Moscow, Russian Federation). **Director of photography** Lyusya Matveeva. **Sound** Anton Kuryshev. **Music** Andrey Guuryaniv. **Sound design** Ylya Artemov. **Editor** Lyusya Matveeva. **With** Liudmila Smirnova (Nadezhda Konstantinovna).

**Lyusya Matveeva**, also known as Liudmila Zinchenko, was born in Russia in 1964. She lives and works in Moscow and the Tver Oblast. In the 1990s she worked as a photographer in the various print media, engaging later in art. Today she teaches photography at Rodchenko Moscow School of Photography and Multimedia and British Higher School of Art and Design (Moscow). Several years ago she started working with video. After *Vyshybalshitsa (Embroideress)* in 2015, *Kartoshka (Potato)* is her second participation at Forum Expanded.

#### Films

2012: *Bylinka* (6 min.). 2013: *Waste Land* (6 min.). 2014: *Vyshybalshitsa/Embroideress* (Forum Expanded, 21 min.). 2015: *Kartoshka / Potato*.

In Russia we have a saying: “The potato is our second bread.” In the poorer provinces of the country, potatoes have always been an important food staple. For Nadezhda Konstantinovna, the film’s protagonist, potatoes have always been more than just food, in fact her whole life revolves around them: sowing in the spring, tending in the summer, harvesting in the fall. All of this just to survive the long, cold winter. This is all the more relevant now, in the new Russia, with our self-imposed food embargo, and the burning of illegal food imports just as they cross our borders. *Kartoshka* shows a parallel between the current situation and the 1920s famine in the Russian Volga region, when hunger came about as the Russian government was preparing for war, taking food from peasants, damning them to death by starvation. Thanks to this historical perspective, one can say that today the Russian everyman’s blind belief in the government’s assurances seems more like hope for a miracle. A hope which, in fact, can offer little in providing day-to-day stability and well-being. Musty potatoes, lying in Nadezhda’s cellar, begin to send out thorny, poisonous sprouts.

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