





Arseniy Zhilyaev

M.I.R.: New Paths to the Objects

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Becoming a Meteorite

Boris Groys



The Sacred Body of the Angel of Prehistory
meteorite, 4.500.000 BC
collection of the Museum of Russian History

We experience our contemporaneity as being defined by a complicated set of economic, political and artistic conflicts. Looking at contemporary events, one involuntarily registers which side their protagonists take. However, in the context of the museum the conflicts of the past epochs lose their grip on the imagination of the spectator. Rather, one begins to notice the similarity between the communicative means by which conflicting messages and attitudes are formulated and transmitted. In the museum one begins to understand that, as stated by Marshall McLuhan, “the medium is the message.” The goal of Arseniy Zhilyaev’s Museum of Russian History is precisely to reveal the commonality of the medium behind the individual messages that circulate in the contemporary Russian media space. Thus, this project aims to musealize contemporaneity and to let its language, its medium carry its own message.

For Zhilyaev, there is indeed a common ground between Putin’s image making and artistic strategies of his adversaries: they both operate by the means of performance. The politically engaged artists/activists enter the sphere of public attention by staging performances that produce media waves throughout the country and eventually worldwide, as it was the case with the groups Voina and, especially, Pussy Riot. However, it is not only the oppositional art groups that organize public performances to attract media attention, but also Putin himself. And he is going much further in this respect than most of his counterparts in the contemporary political world. His public appearances with a tiger, or kissing a pike, or flying with the white cranes, or picking up an ancient Greek amphora from the seabed look very much like artistic performances. These actions are not, strictly speaking, of political nature. Rather, they serve to design Putin’s image as a private person in the public space, i.e. to politicize the private. They thematize Putin’s physical fitness, his individual skills, and his masculine appeal. Like many other contemporary artists, Putin places his own body at the center of his performances. Besides, he stages these performances as any successful contemporary artist would do it: by making them spectacular, sensational, and generating massive media waves. Of course, by interpreting Putin as one of Russia’s contemporary performance artists, Zhilyaev produces an ironic effect that makes his project very entertaining, similar to the one provoked by the

Russian artists of the 1970s as they interpreted Stalin as an artist. But this comparison also reveals the differences in the way in which politics and art manifested themselves in modernity – and the way they do it in our time.

The paradigmatic modern artists understood themselves as architects of a new life. The same applies to modern politicians. Stalin was an architect of the whole political, social and economic structure of the Soviet Union, including its media space. Today nobody can shape, structure and totally control the media. The contemporary media space is a global archive from which an individual user borrows particular items, almost accidentally. Every event presents itself through its documentation. The staging of a performance coincides with its documentation and archiving. Thus, our own contemporaneity always appears to us already as a part of the past. It is no coincidence that the Museum of Contemporary Art became the most characteristic institution of our time. Such real-time musealization provokes artists and politicians to stage yet another performance and to create yet another sensation time and again, in a repeated attempt to penetrate the media surface and produce convulsions in the whole body of the media sphere.

Obviously Zhilyaev does not want to participate in this competition for media impact – also because he does not believe that any artist or politician is able to win it. After all, both will certainly lose this competition to any middle-sized meteorite or a UFO. That does not mean that Zhilyaev holds a neutral position in the ideological, political and artistic struggles of his time. For him, as for all of us, the difference between the performance artist in the Kremlin and performance artists sentenced to spend several years in Russian labor camps is obvious enough. Rather, being confronted with the typical contemporary choice between becoming a media hero by imitating a meteorite or acting as an analytical spectator of the mechanisms and strategies of media success, Zhilyaev chooses the second option. He describes the discursive and media conditions of becoming a meteorite instead of trying to become one. Among its other aspects, his Museum of Russian History offers a persuasive explanation of this personal choice made by its author.

RED ROOM

M.I.R.: The Pillars of the State System The Formation of Russia in the Prehistoric Period

The travelling exhibition of the Museum of Russian History allows the Western audience to learn about the latest political and cultural achievements of our rapidly developing country. A skeptic may well raise an objection: is such a small space enough for presenting such ample material? Yes, indeed, the collections displayed in the exhibition do not claim to be of universal scope. But this was not the aim we set for ourselves either. Even a museum as large as our planet would not suffice to represent our Great History. So let the halls of the exhibition *M.I.R. New Paths to the Objects* become a friendly invitation to our visitors, sent from the heart of our Motherland to the heart of everyone wishing to get to know it better.

The first hall is dedicated to the origin of the true state system whose formation is traditionally connected with Vladimir Putin's adoption of the religion professed by the Church of the Chelyabinsk Meteorite. As it is known, this was no simple decision to make. The world had to pay too high a price for it, and the salvation was preceded by years of struggle and suffering. The miracle of deliverance came right in the moment when humanity seemed to be on the brink of self-destruction. It was only due to the appearance of the Angel of Prehistory in the womb of the Meteorite and the courage of Russia's President Vladimir Putin that the world could be saved.

The display features a fragment of the sacred body of the Angel from the central temple built on the bank of Lake Chebarkul where, just as predicted by the priests of the Church, the Angel of Prehistory appeared to the world on February 15, 2013. The visitors can also familiarize themselves with one of the first pastoral messages from the Church's Primate Andrey Breyva (Breivichko) where he criticizes the godlessness that had reigned in prehistoric Russia before the coming of the Angel, and watch a fragment of the documentary *Birth of a Star* dedicated to the origins of the Church of the Chelyabinsk Meteorite and the period when Andrey Breyva (Breivichko) formed the first groups of Apostles.

STATEMENT BY THE PRIMATE OF THE CHURCH OF THE CHELYABINSK METEORITE “ON THE CASE OF PUSSY RIOT AND ON OUR STANCE ON THE DERISIVE PSEUDORELIGIOUS CULT OF THE PASTAFARIANS”

Our times are deeply steeped in materialism and earthliness. That is why the new Tables of the Covenant have descended upon the Earth in order to renew the world. There is much confusion in the minds of those seeking God. There are too many deceptions around, and people sometimes lie even to themselves. I am asking everyone, on the contrary, not to delude themselves about the Church of the Chelyabinsk Meteorite that has now appeared miraculously. I would like to nip certain misinterpretations and irrelevant comparisons right in the bud.

I was asked about my attitude towards the case of Pussy Riot, those impious she-devils who profaned the Orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Savior with their demoniac dances.

Here is my response: it was to be expected long ago. One should not be surprised that piety has left the temple where God is not present anymore either. In a way, what they did made perfect sense: atheists came to an atheist temple to hold their godless service. Their actions are little different from the despiritualized practices and words, deprived of the Divine Grace, performed and pronounced there everyday by false priests of whom Christ Himself said that they “have taken the keys of knowledge and have hidden them. They have not entered nor have they allowed those who want to enter to do so.” The ruffians' misdemeanor may have even more clearly revealed the materialism that established itself there long ago. This is what caused the wrath of the false priests: they got scared that their deceit had been exposed and that people would now see for themselves that the atheistic emptiness had set in behind the veil of the Sancta Sanctorum.

Now, if we only imagine that they did this in a real God's Temple, that they crawled in with their profanation into the Holy of the Holies containing the Divine Gift, then the verdict for them would have been indisputable: EXECUTION. After all, this would have been a

desecration of the Divine Gift! Of God's Representation on Earth! Is there any crime against humanity that could be punished more strictly than the one committed against God? Certainly there is not. No, the only retaliation for this would have been a severe public EXECUTION. And the fact that the authorities did not carry it out and only gave the offenders a symbolic jail term clearly tells us that these authorities do not themselves believe in the seriousness of the Orthodox religion, its Church, and its main Temple.

There is only one group that deserves EXECUTION even more than the impious Pussy Riot she-devils: the atheist mockers from the pseudoreligion of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, the Pastafarians. They have not only perpetrated one godless action, but made a system out of their God-mockery, having registered their blasphemous religion in order to deride and disclaim divine worship as such. How could the authorities allow such a thing to happen? Why were these sons of Belial not denied official registration? The answer is the same. The world got steeped in atheism long ago. In fact, even those who call themselves God's humble servants, do not really believe in God's power. For them, religion is just a means to earn a living, and to sustain stability in society, a way to spend their time in a pleasant manner – anything but the belief in God's miracles and signs. Here is what the priests of the established denominations say about our miraculously appeared Church: "Sheer folly. Are they serious? Are they ill?" Are their words in any way different from those of the out-and-out atheists mocking the believers? Absolutely not. They became atheists themselves long ago, whether they admit it or not. But, as Christ the Lord said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits."

I foresee that my words will turn away from our Church those who came to its bosom assuming that it is just yet another profane prank of the atheists who want to keep mocking people's belief in the Higher Power. This is absolutely not true. The aim of our Church is to work day by day for the sake of humanity's spiritual awakening and to restore the true belief and veneration of the Divine Predestination. And it would be best if we did not have any outsiders in our rows.

Andrey Breyva (Breivichko)

Primate of the Church of the Chelyabinsk Meteorite

Andrey Breyva (Breivichko) is the head of a religious sect that appeared in Chelyabinsk, after the fall of a meteorite in the lake Chebarkul in February 2013. Breyva claims he had a revelation predicting the exact place and time of the impact. He also affirms the meteorite contains important information about the structure of the universe and the future of the world. Breyva has about 50 followers sincerely believing in the magic powers of the stone.

M.I.R.: Contemporary Art and National Culture

BLUE ROOM

Russia has responded to the permanent crisis of contemporary culture by drawing attention to this problem at the highest state level. The country's President Vladimir Putin has personally undertaken the task of establishing an artistic platform able to unite humanity around high moral values. The solution proposed by the national leader in his theoretical article "Call for Stability from Russia," published in the American journal *October*, has changed the image of contemporaneity in its very core. Putin suggested that art workers abandon their obsessive urge to produce permanent changes and stated that he would be happy to facilitate this at state level. This project, difficult to realize under the conditions of neoliberal capitalism, most obviously required the art workers to transcend their institutional limits in order to enter the space of social struggle.

"Even many of your thinkers have come to the conclusion that daily participation in the process of decision-making under the regime of direct democracy will lead society into a dead-end. In order for real changes to happen, a leader who is able to say either 'yes' or 'no' is needed. If one observes contemporary art from this point of view, it becomes obvious that the "minor deeds" and the endless train of useless innovations should be substituted with a unified, stable style of free expression. The only real major change that is possible today in the realm of contemporary art is the rejection of any changes as such," noted the President.

The hall of Contemporary Art and National Culture features a unique collection of works by Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, as well as materials about the People's Commissar of Culture Alexandra Grey. The President's art is mainly represented by his early projects created back in the Prehistoric Period. It is the first-ever opportunity for an international audience to see the original painting *The Pattern in the Frozen Window* [Uzor] from the collection of the Voronezh State Center for Contemporary Art. The London branch of the Tretyakov State Gallery has kindly provided a selection of the President's actions dedicated to ecological issues. The video-piece The Inauguration also displayed in the hall comes from the collection of the Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art.

The Kiss #3

In his actions, Vladimir Putin proclaims the new posthumanist dimension of human feelings. Reacting to the critique of anthropocentrism, the artist turns to the experience of becoming an animal. In a series of performances involving kisses, deriving from the works by the Russian artist Oleg Kulik, Putin redefines the borders between the human and the non-human, and performs this through love. After all, love is the human affect that frees us from the individual dungeon of anthropocentrism and carries our experience up to a higher level.

The Bird Migration

In one of his most radical performances, the Russian President acted as a leader for a flock of Siberian white cranes, a rare bird species. Piloting a motorized deltaplane together with an assistant, the artist helped the birds find their migration route. In order to do so, he had to resort to mimicry, since the birds' recognition was not easy to win. In the focus of the President's attention lies the experience of becoming the Other for the sake of the Other. The artist had to make dangerous maneuvers several times and fly rather close to the birds, which could have possibly led to a catastrophe. But bodily risk is an integral part of the work of performance artists, especially those dealing with the limits of human nature. As we know, *The Bird Migration* action was successful, and the crane flock flew on to spend the winter in the warm lands. Speaking of his preparation for the action, Putin mentioned the performance by Oleg Kulik *Sandpiper is Indeed a Bird* ('kulik' meaning 'sandpiper' in Russian) where the actionist sprang from a skyscraper supported with a belay, but at the same time pointed out that "formalism and plain rush for adrenaline need to be opposed by a considerate attitude towards the future of the Earth."

Putin with a Human Face

On August 28, 2010, within the framework of a spoken performance, the President of Russia drove the Lada Kalina Sport car along the 350 km route from Khabarovsk to Chita. Besides Putin, there was one more person in the car, a journalist from the business newspaper *Kommersant* [The Businessman]. Under the enhanced danger conditions connected with driving a Russian car on Russian roads, the artist gave an extensive interview where he answered many acute questions pertaining to his political activities. The documentation of this action, also known as *I Give You My Honest Party Word*, prompted a broad response and became an emblematic work of art in its genre.

The Deuce

In his artistic practice, Putin often addresses the issues of precarity in contemporary labor relations. The instability of life under the conditions of neoliberal capitalism has become one of the reasons for the artist to concentrate on the issue of imprisonment. In one of his emblematic actions, *The Deuce*, Vladimir Putin granted the artists and musicians Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alekhina from the punk band Pussy Riot with two years of stable labor in the Siberian colonies. With this gesture, the artist managed to unite into one single complex the issues of precarious labor in post-Soviet Russia and the hypocrisy of contemporary participatory art that tries hard to disguise its own authoritative position. Laying bare the method, Putin openly engages in an artistic polemic with the canons of contemporary art production. *The Deuce* presents a critical interpretation of the problem of employment, pointing out that the most stable labor can only be obtained under imprisonment conditions. The action received mixed reviews in the international media, thus contributing to the break of political consensus and to the search for new paths of development in contemporary art.

The Masked Show

In Vladimir Putin's ongoing project *The Masked Show* (the title is a slang name for the law-enforcement actions performed by the Russian special police who hide their faces in specific masks) the Russian tradition of folk buffoonery meets contemporary actionist practices. "After all, it was already Bakhtin who wrote about the importance of carnival culture for creative expression and for the formation of modern culture. So why cannot we use our intellectual heritage?" responded the President to journalists when asked about political prisoners. As a rule, *The Masked Show* happenings commence according to a uniform scheme. A group of armed people intrudes into a private space where the spectator would feel comfortable and, by using verbal orders, causes the people to react as victims. By using rather simple methods, Putin demonstrates the social passivity of contemporary citizens and their readiness to obey. It is commonly considered that *The Masked Show* happenings have influenced the visual form of some of the actions by the Pussy Riot punk band.

The LGBT Encounter

Many of Vladimir Putin's projects may be interpreted as conversational performances or actions. The President has repeatedly commented on how much he has been influenced by the oeuvre of the artists belonging to the Collective Actions group. *The LGBT Encounter* is yet another example of Putin's "conversational actions." Knowing that in our Orthodox country people of non-heterosexual orientation are considered to be ill persons who need to be controlled and medically treated, the artist openly and boldly declares his readiness to encounter them directly at one of his artist talks. The critics still agree that this action by Putin is unprecedentedly bold in the Russian context, and up to the present day it is viewed as a model to emulate.

The Tigress

Animal issues do not get mentioned in the headlines of major international mass media all that often. In spite of the inevitability of the ecological disaster which humanity is approaching at full steam, most of the planet's population does not bother with the issues facing animals. Many people think that moderate participation is not enough, that all problems cannot be solved with collective garbage sorting or water discipline – and that all these problems are caused by the insane human greed that finds its ultimate expression in the capitalist pursuit of profit. After all, it is so easy to put the responsibility for the planet's future on the shoulders of those who fight the global corporations that keep destroying Nature day by day. In his actions, Vladimir Putin confronts such erroneous views. "Act locally, think globally!" Such is the message the President is sending us from the Siberian woods. In his action *The Tigress*, the artist saves a Siberian tigress (belonging to the species listed in the Red Book), thus drawing media attention to ecological issues.

The Political Animal

In a series of small-scale actions united under the common title *The Political Animal*, Putin addresses the stories of pets owned by the world's leaders. Examining the relations between public officers and their non-human darlings, the artist comes to the conclusion that animals have a considerable influence over the former in decision-making. Putin calls on us to refuse the anthropocentric world view. After all, even today human dogmas make us look for the masterminds among those close to authoritative figures. *The Political Animal* action is an eloquent testimony to the fact that such influence can also be exercised by non-human beings.

The Masked Show: a well-known Ukrainian comic TV show mocking the absurdity of everyday life, which was broadcasted from 1992 until 2006. In common language, the expression “Masked Show” is also used to describe the police squads of the Internal Affairs Ministry who wear masks during their interventions.

DEEP INTO RUSSIA

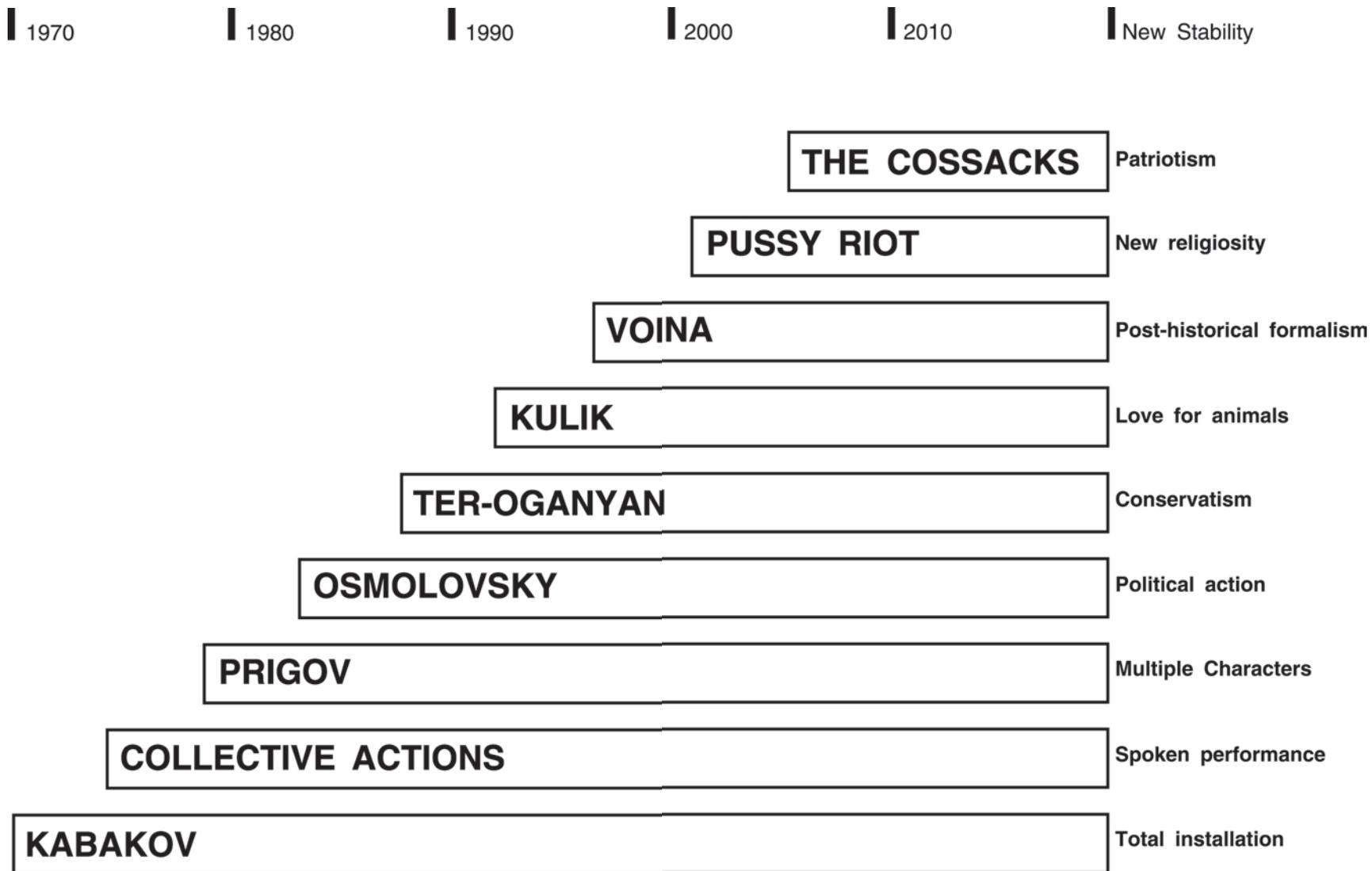
Alexandra Grey has been a permanent People’s Commissar of Culture in Russia for many years already, and her contribution to the development of Russian national culture can hardly be overestimated. Alexandra Grey has participated actively in the endeavour of the National Front of the Arts, since the very beginning of its existence, supporting the initiatives of the Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin in every possible way. Her vigorous activities were rewarded by the Order of Merit for the Motherland (3rd Degree) and the Honorable Distinction Mark “Shock Worker of Performative Labor.”

The display in the Museum of Russian History features materials about Alexandra Grey’s first acquaintance with our Homeland, namely about her 2013 culture and entertainment tour.

The then to-be Commissar travelled in the famous Lada Kalina car from Vladivostok all the way to Moscow, giving music concerts along the way and getting to know the life of Russian hinterland. This tour will be long remembered by the Russians who showed their appreciation of the future chief by giving her creative hand-made presents later included in the permanent exhibition of the Museum of Russian History.

Sasha Grey’s voyage through Russia - In the spring of 2013 a Russian auto-trade website invited former porn star and social network celebrity Sasha Grey to go on a two-week trip from Vladivostok to Moscow. She was supposed to participate in an independent long test drive of the Lada Kalina, Putin’s favorite car produced in Russia. During the fourteen days of her journey, Sasha Grey visited eight cities, where she was warmly received and presented with gifts by her numerous fans. Grey also performed DJ sets in several cities and organized a conference in Yekaterinburg addressing the role of women in pop culture.

New Paths to the Objects



New Paths to the Objects



In 2024, Vladimir Putin was elected permanent head of the National Front of the Arts that lists about 1.200.000 Russian and international artists as its members apart from the President. The Front's program adopted at its first convention under the title *New Paths to the Objects* had been prepared by the leading experts on contemporary culture, elected by the regional art institutions with direct participation of the President. The program featured the best artistic findings, from the Soviet artists, such as Ilya Kabakov, Collective Actions group and D.A. Prigov, up to the contemporary actionists from the most numerous group The Cossacks [Kazaki] (according to the recent census, it has as many as 250.000 members).

All in all, the program is divided into nine layers that form the basis for the art of the New Stability. The concept of total installation was borrowed from the great Kabakov, since only works of such monumental scale can reflect the scope of the Russian spirit. The Collective Actions group contributed the idea of using communication as a self-sufficient art medium. D.A. Prigov provided the program with the opportunity to work with various changeable characters: we all remember his mastery in impersonation. Anatoly Osmolovsky gained international repute due to his skill in raising political questions. His colleague, Avdey Ter-Oganyan, is remembered for his radical critique of modernity; it is mostly to him that we owe the fundamental foundations of the era of the New Stability and even the title *New Paths to the Objects* that was inspired by his famous 1992 performance. The oeuvre of Oleg Kulik is a basis that people need to constantly come back to, since it tells so much about our nature. The Voina group has proved by their works that the only way to differ from an animal in our contemporary post-historical society is to turn to revolutionary formalism. Their companions-in-arms, Pussy Riot, have reminded us of the necessity to search for the true faith. And lastly, the truly numerous art group The Cossacks has revealed to the world the opportunities of critical patriotism.

The National Front of the Arts is open for everyone wishing to enlist, regardless of their national, religious and gender identity.

WHITE ROOM

Bolotnaya Battle Park Complex

The open park complex is situated compactly in the historic center of Moscow on the former Bolotnaya Square, its name deriving from the Russian word 'boloto' which means 'marsh.' The piece of land 4.3 ha in area lies in the Zamoskvorechye District in immediate proximity to the Kremlin. Based on the historical peculiarities of the place and the orientation towards creating ecological spaces in Russian gigapolises as part of the *Homeland. Ecology. Love* program, it was decided to restore the square in its original, natural appearance, i.e. to turn it into a marsh area by widening the terrace of the Moscow River while preserving the embankment along the park.

The project implies the development of a unique eco-system in the contemporary city center. The heart of the Bolotnaya Battle Complex will be formed by a nature preserve, with its own flora and fauna, where the capital's citizens will have the opportunity to get to know rare animal species living in the territory of the Russian Federation. Thus, specimens of Amur tigers and a population of Siberian white cranes once saved by Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin will be brought to Moscow. The new planted lands will consist of those species of trees and vegetation that are associated with Motherland in the minds of Russian people – birch trees, weeping willows, firs, oaks, high grass, nettle, and reed.

The marsh area will be engirded with a broad sidewalk paved with clinker brick. Five one- and two-story buildings of triangle shape compactly situated in the very center of the park will house the exhibition of the Museum of Russian History, the branch of the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, as well as a public zone with a library and a hotel. The complex of buildings on the plan forms the word 'MIR' which in Russian means both rejection of violence ('peace') and 'world' as the place where the humanity lives; besides, the abbreviation M.I.R. also stands for the Museum of Russian History. At the same time, on the map, this word also forms the basis for a monumental living sculpture 200 m in height. This sculpture, dedicated to the heroic deeds performed by the defenders of Russian state system, consists of giants bred especially for this purpose by the experts of the Russian research and development institute BioRobotTechnologies [NII Biorobototechniki].

The constructive system of the buildings was developed by the leading specialists of the research center Construction 5 [NITs Stroitelstvo-5]. The main challenge for the engineers was the creation of a maximally durable system able to hold the pressure of approximately 45 tons per object. They have chosen two systems. The first implies the construction of a massive external wall 1500 mm thick made of reinforced concrete with narrow window openings and a 900 mm concrete roof slab. The second one consists of a carcass structure made of mighty concrete pillars 1200 x 1200 mm wide with rigid metal cores and a 1200 mm roof slab. The carcass system contains suspended translucent glass facades with aluminum constructions. Due to the use of perimeter fenestration, the inner rooms in such buildings are open to the outside and visually blend with the landscape system of the park complex. On the other hand, the massive external walls in other buildings (the museums) transmits almost no light through, which adds a sacral element to the interior. The engineering of the buildings complies with the international ecological standards for construction.

The main façade of the complex facing the Bolotnaya Embankment is united into one composition with the Luzhkov Bridge. Having crossed the bridge, the visitors find themselves on the square that opens access to all the buildings, each of them surrounded with rubber-covered runways and asphalt bicycle paths. It is planned to build four-line diagonal roads connecting the Bolotnaya Street with the Bolshoy Kamenny Bridge and the Serafimovicha Street. Along these roads, there is a complex of living sculptures on special triangle daises. These sculptures reflect a significant chapter of Russian history – the deeds of the heroic defenders of the Motherland who fought for its freedom with the foreign invaders during the Great Bolotnaya Battle that happened on May 6, 2012.

The park is facilitated with anti-vandal street furniture made of concrete and steel – benches, litter bins, info stands, and navigation elements. The whole territory of the park is covered with free Wi-Fi. The lighting system consists of street lamps, perimeter lighting at the marsh part of the park, and floodlighting of the main objects of the complex, including the giants.

Bolotnaya Square, situated on the bank of the Moskva River, in front of the Kremlin, is a place with a symbolic history. Bolotnaya ('boloto' literally meaning 'marsh') was used as a garden by the tsar in the 14th century, and was frequently flooded by the river. In Russian folklore, the marsh is often inhabited by wicked forces, which try to drown the wayfarers; hence the idea of the symbolic misfortune connected with the Bolotnaya Square. During the 15th century, the place became the city's densely crowded entertainment center, where traditional festivities took place. It was also regularly used for public executions; for example, Yemelyan Pugachev, a leader of the peasant rebellion, was executed here in 1775. During Soviet times, Bolotnaya Square was transformed into a public park. From December 2011 till May 2012 several thousands of protesters held a longtime rally against Putin's power on the square; this being the biggest manifestation in Moscow since the 1990s.

The importance of public parks in modern Russia: after becoming the Director of Gorky Park in 2011, Sergei Kapkov launched a vast renovation program. In the course of two years, all the old structures were progressively removed, and the ponds and green zones cleaned up. Kapkov also started the restoration of historical monuments. Gorky Park is now covered with special paths for bicycle riding, skateboarding, and walking. Now it is a vast place for public entertainment with some of the best restaurants in Moscow and areas to practice sports. This gentrification process also manifests itself in the development of culture in the park, for example an outdoor cinema and the opening of Garage in 2008, the biggest Russian contemporary art center. Thus, similar to London's Hyde Park, Gorky Park provides its visitors with a space for public expression. However LGBT-meetings and rallies in the park's territory are still being refused.

Six Witness Testimonies Given on the 6th of May Case, used as Basis for the Proposals for the Living Sculptures inside the Bolotnaya Battle Park Complex

1

"I live in the very center of Moscow, in the House on the Embankment. My wife and daughter went to my mother-in-law's house in the countryside three days ago. On May 6, 2012 it was very quiet in the streets during daytime; there was no wind, only the cars swished subtly by the window. I was sitting bored in front of my computer, looking for the latest announcements with the keywords "buy-flat iron-Moscow" and listening to some nice music. The windows of my living room immediately face the road.

At 16.44, I randomly looked out the window and noticed a big star.

I was a bit confused, since the star radiated red-orange light and had an oblong shape, but as I looked closer, I noticed that this star was also moving steadily forward. Within a few seconds, I rushed to the balcony to see the whole picture in detail: there was an oblong object of yellow-brown color moving across the dark sky. At first I couldn't believe my own eyes, but then I heard a voice from below. A man shouted that something was moving in the sky.

I returned to my room and decided to describe what I'd just seen in a letter to my Ukrainian friend Fyodor. Here's what I wrote:

"It's an object of oblong shape, slowly rotating about its axis. On the edges, it splits into squares of gray, gradually changing to white here and there. Closer to the center, it forms clusters of orange and brown wooden tone, also of cubic shape. As it is moving, it seems that the form breaks down into several similar oblong objects following one another. The slow motion lasts for about a minute, then blue and skin-colored squares appear along the edges. Then the whole screen fills up with manifold dark-blue elements, and the record stops."

This was the first time I witnessed such a phenomenon. I've seen many jet planes flying at night and many ball lightnings – but never a UFO, not once. I've been into aviation since my childhood years, but I excluded the idea of planes right from the start, as one can always hear the roar of the motor when they fly by; besides, they don't produce so much light, there are only occasionally blinking sidelights. I also excluded the variant that this could have been an atmospheric effect. I've only found one explanation: this must've been the pole of a flag that rammed into the little finger of a policeman..."

2

There has been a lot of UFO activity in Moscow recently. The locals watched the flying saucers and cigars in 2011–2012 from their balconies. They not only followed the maneuvers of the strange objects, but also managed to film them with their phone cameras. By the way, Moscow astronomers noted similar phenomena not very long ago.

Victoria Antonovna had come home from work and was now, as always, drinking tea and browsing through a glossy magazine reading about "why anti-cellulite massage are worth it," looking forward to the approaching vacation and the long-awaited rest at a warm Egyptian resort. Suddenly she saw something meteoric outside the window, something extremely bright. This must be an illuminating flare, thought Victoria to herself.

"I called my husband, and we looked closer together: for a light flare, the object was too big, namely it was about 150–200 meters in diameter and gave off bright black rays around and above. We kept looking, and then it stopped above the pile of demonstrators beside the Bolotnaya Square.

My husband grasped his mobile phone and started filming what was happening. The UFO was drifting rather smoothly along a straight line from north to south. It was a black triangle, rotating constantly about its axis. It seemed that it had metallic lustre glistening in the May sun.

And the most amazing thing: when my husband started filming it, there was a feeling that it stopped, just hovering there. I shouted:

'Come on, close the balcony right now or we will be snatched by the American State Department!' He answered, laughing: 'They won't snatch anyone, calm down, we'll have time to hide'. So, yeah, after my brave husband filmed all this, the object descended at once onto the cosmonauts."

Sergey (Victoria's husband) stated that this was not his first encounter with a flying saucer. When he saw one for the first time, he got so confused that he could not even find a camera. And then, only a couple of days after the second encounter, came the third and the fourth. Sergey had served at the anti-aircraft array and is well familiar with all kinds of flying objects. That is why he is quite confident: this certainly was a flying saucer.

3

Mikhail, a Crimean Tatar had recently married a Russian woman and moved to Moscow... They had been living with her parents for a long time when they finally decided to rent a separate flat. It was rather costly, so he browsed through announcements every day and went to interviews with employers who promised nice additional earnings. But this was all in vain, and he almost gave up the attempts to find a respectable side job in Moscow.

It was hot that day, and Mikhail decided to go for a walk along the embankment.

When he approached the Bolotnaya Square, he noticed a UFO hovering over the river waves. At first he even moved back, but then finally decided to come closer to the strange object.

Suddenly he noticed a black booth, or capsule, glistening in the sun, descending from the UFO, and understood that this was an invitation for him to come inside. Mikhail started to move back, but then felt as if subdued by the will of someone invisible and hurried inside the UFO.

The form of the contact was quite simple: a conversation in Russian with an invisible person. But at times it seemed to Mikhail that the sound was coming out of some wall. He perceived the audio information in an interesting way, as three-dimensional images of some beings looking like people.

The voice announced that Russia was attacked by the USA. They paid the provocateurs who overturned the metal finder frames and tried to crack the cordon line of the Russian cosmonauts. The voice also said that the many UFOs that the Muscovites witnessed were actually pieces of asphalt cast by the provocateurs in order to destabilize the situation in the country. The UFO where this conversation was happening was obviously piloted by a robot, since the capsule was unmanned. At the end of the conversation, it was suggested that Mikhail should leave the Bolotnaya Square along with the capsule, but he flatly refused. And, quite unexpectedly, he was allowed to go home.

4

It was May of the year 2012.

According to the report written by the Radomyshl police chief on this day a.c., early morning on May 6 a.c. a peasant from the Radomyshl county saw a ball of “fiery” color. The size of the ball, as estimated by the unaided eye, amounted to 2.5 vershoks (1 vershok = 4.44 cm).

“In the old days, they used to write the reports on parchment, in neat calligraphic handwriting. Nowadays it’s much simpler: I open the newspaper *From Hand to Hand* and here’s what I find – ‘second-hand baby strollers Moscow’ or ‘a UFO flying over the Kremlin’. What is it – some tricks by Copperfield or the day-to-day realities of our life?”

The object itself had a tail – also “fiery,” in the form of bright red-violet rays, with a tint of blue. The length of the light tail amounted to ca. 1.5 arshins (1 arshin = 71.1 cm), the height of the object’s flight was 50 fathoms (1 fathom = 2.13 m).

Then many similar “balls” appeared. Some of them disintegrated into sparks during their short flight, having disappeared into thin air; some disintegrated also, but fell on the earth “with roar, leaving no trace on the soil whatsoever,” and the others continued their path in the sky.

In his own neatly written report to the authorities, the Radomyshl county police chief mentions the following fact: “Unknown objects were noticed flying in the same direction towards the cosmonauts’ cordon.

One of the flying balls fell down; this was the presumable cause of the fire.”

5

The superintendent of the warehouse of a famous brand producing new generation TV sets, situated in the outskirts of Moscow, was heading home one evening in the center, along the embankment near the Bolotnaya Square.

It was 19.25. “...Suddenly I saw some strange lights moving on a very low height at an angle of about 60 grades, looking as if the popular An 2 cropdusters were taking off.

I thought to myself: is that a flock of cranes shining so bright against the gray Moscow sky?! Or maybe I’m sleeping in front of a new TV, dreaming of something extraordinary? I suppose I should’ve sold the old generation home theater long ago. All the more so that, due to my work, I could buy an absolutely new, and much better one, and pay by installments...

I stopped and decided to watch. The level that the object flew at was much higher than that of migrating birds. And then, after all, there weren’t any rays of such brightness that could be reflected by birds’ feathers, either above or below. The strange black objects were moving from east to north very slowly, for about two minutes or so.

It was like a flat plane in the sky. But it was hard to discern the exact forms of the object, since the outlines were indistinct: one couldn’t make out whether it was of a round, cylinder, or square shape. The UFO was flying very quietly, giving off no sound at all! And it wasn’t blinking (like planes) – nothing!

It had no equivalent among earthly machines. The object, moving away in the north direction, just went out of sight in two minutes, as if dissolved into the Universe.”

6

“For me, life is split into two halves: before it happened, and after. I will forever remember the day this outstanding event happened, at

least because it was my grandpa's birthday. I can recall that day to the last detail.

My mom and dad have been working in science all their lives, so I was raised by my grandpa. Now he lives in the famous House on the Embankment in Moscow.

I myself work as a policeman in the Lobnya District, and have a daughter who is only three years old. That's why I cannot visit my grandpa too often. But a birthday is an important holiday. I was thinking of taking my wife and daughter with me, but the little one had a cold, and my wife stayed home to look after her and also asked the cleaning company to come, since we'd been planning the full-scale cleaning of our home... So I had to go alone.

I spent a lot of time packing, afraid of forgetting something, and left Lobnya already after lunch. On the way, I stopped at a café and, while I was drinking my coffee and eating a sandwich, I heard a very strong explosion. It rumbled so bad that the waiters dropped their trays and broke the plates. As I was getting into my car, I noticed that an enormous plastic bottle had risen over the horizon, half full of water.

I had a feeling that the bottle had something strange about it; it was as if it was slowly descending upon the Earth. I came out of the car and started walking towards the bottle, as if drawn by some unknown force.

I rather felt than heard a phrase that was pronounced by a heartfelt quiet female voice: 'The other world is not the way you imagine it to be.' The bottle continued descending slowly, growing in size.

I ran across the field towards the bottle. The earth started vibrating under my feet, as if an earthquake commenced. There was a dreadful roar in the air, as if hundreds of BelAZ cars bounced off their engines at once. I got scared. And the roar kept increasing.

Suddenly I heard a very strong whistle, becoming ever stronger.

The bottle acquired the shape of an unknown flying object. Suddenly bright light appeared all around, so intense that my eyes couldn't bear it. I could only notice that the alien spaceship – I had no reasons anymore to call it just a 'bottle' – continued descending

and growing in my sight. It was doing it very smoothly and slowly, which seemed even stranger because of the obvious heaviness of the object.

The fair majestic grace it was moving with was telling my heart that this object – a spaceship, a station, whatever it was – did not belong to our world. It wasn't just beautiful. It was amazing.

Before this moment, in spite of the fear that took hold of me, I kept moving towards the descending spaceship. Suddenly a ray of light appeared from its lower part. It slid over the square and reached out to me. I've never felt such a tender touch: it seemed as if warm summer wind was caressing my face and hands, and I closed my eyes. I don't remember how long I stood like that, but when I came to, I saw the alien spaceship moving away in the sky. There was darkness and white silence all around.

Only a black circle, about ten meters in diameter, was left as a reminder of what had happened on this spot. I strolled back to my car.

When I got where I was going, my grandpa was already about to sleep. I just said that I had to work late, so that he wouldn't think I had mental issues. But he looked attentively at my face and asked: 'Are you feeling well? Is everything alright?' To be true, I was more than alright. I felt as if I was not thirty-five, but about eighteen."

Illustrations



Vasiliy Medinskiy
Birth of a Star, 2020, video still
collection of the Museum of Russian History



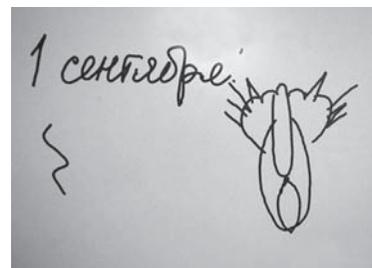
Vasiliy Medinskiy
Birth of a Star, 2020, video still
collection of the Museum of Russian History



Vladimir Putin
Pattern on the Frozen Window, 2009, acrylic on canvas
collection of the Voronezh State Center for Contemporary Art



Vladimir Putin
Amphora, 2011, performance documentation
collection of the Tretyakov Gallery London



Vladimir Putin
Cat Seen from Behind, 2013,
performance documentation, digital image
collection of the Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art



Vladimir Putin
The Inauguration, 2012, video, 8 min 17 sec
collection of the Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art



Vladimir Putin, *The Kiss #3*, 2008-2013
collection of the Tretyakov Gallery London



Vladimir Putin, *The Deuce*, 2001
collection of the Museum of Russian History



Vladimir Putin, *The Bird Migration*, 2008-2013
collection of the Tretyakov Gallery London



Vladimir Putin, *The Masked Show*, 2001
collection of the Museum of Russian History



Vladimir Putin, *Putin with a Human Face*, 2008-2013
collection of the Tretyakov Gallery London



Vladimir Putin, *The LGBT Encounter*, 2001
collection of the Museum of Russian History



Vladimir Putin
The Tigress, 2008-2013
collection of the Tretyakov Gallery London



Vladimir Putin
The Political Animal, 2008-2013
collection of the Tretyakov Gallery London



Gift to the People's Commissar of Culture Aleksandra Grey, 2016
porcelain plate
collection of the Museum of Russian History



Gift to the People's Commissar of Culture Aleksandra Grey, 2020
meteorite and silver necklace
collection of the Museum of Russian History



An Architecture Proposal for the Bolotnaya Battle Park Complex
collection of the Museum of Russian History



Proposals for the Living Sculptures inside the Bolotnaya Battle Park Complex, Based on the Witness Testimonies Given on the 6th of May Case performance documentation collection of the Museum of Russian History

Guests from the Future

A conversation between Silvia Franceschini and Arseniy Zhilyaev

S.F. It seems impossible to skip this question. Is this exhibition connected with the famous performance by Avdey Ter-Oganyan *Towards the object*? What is your relationship with the legacy of the avant-garde of Moscow Actionism of the '90s?

A.Z. The exhibition's sub-title *New Paths to the Objects*, which is also the title of Putin's article containing policy statements on art issues within the exhibition, contains a reference to Avdey Ter-Oganyan's performance when the dead-drunk artist was sleeping on the floor at the Trekhprudny Lane Gallery in 1991. For me, his gesture was in a way prophetic, in as much as it expressed the path of Russian Actionism and perhaps that of the radical art of the '90s as a whole.

It is common knowledge that most of the Russian campaigners for the specific role of art in relation to politics have gradually abandoned their aesthetic preferences and entered the mainstream art movements, such as "rethinking the heritage of modernism," etc. The most obvious example is the artistic practice of Anatoly Osmolovsky who rejected political actions and started producing formalist objects inspired by Adorno's interpretation of artistic autonomy. I have always been interested in the question of why it went like this. After all, the trivial explanation that it was just a change of art fashion and Zeitgeist cannot be taken seriously. And if so, then we need to look for the answer in the structure of this type of actionism and in the political goals it proclaimed.

For me, the problem of actionism corresponds to the political agenda of the acts of 'direct action' and the fight for direct democracy. Actionism cannot be discussed separately from the forms of political participation. First of all, it claims to perform spreading actions, but for the majority of people it is not that simple to repeat this type of expression. Secondly, the message conveyed by direct actions is usually short and designed specifically for mass media, so it is not enough for articulating a real political alternative. We are witnessing mighty waves of mobilization, like the Occupy Movement, which bring a new inspiration and demand a radical renewal of the world's political structure. But we also know very well that the actual result of this mobilization is unfortunately equal to zero.

Without strenuous work directed at forming a culture of political participation, the shock therapy of direct actions that took shape in the '90s proves futile. Perhaps we need to make one more step forward and try to come up with a structure that could be more efficient under current political conditions, while also preserving the adherence to democratic principles.

I know this from Russia's experience. Unfortunately most of the activists of the Occupy Abai¹ movement do not engage in any political activity anymore, as they have not been able to find the appropriate forms for its expression. I think politics should become available for laymen, and it is only then that we could count on any changes. It does not mean that we need to reject its utopian horizon which for me lies in the fight for equality. Quite the contrary, we have to start to work on producing new forms of real political participation *here and now*.

S.F. If one tried to define the genre of your exhibition, it would be a satirical anti-utopia. What is your connection with the Russian literary tradition that has always had a strong satirical and anti-utopian side to it?

A.Z. Russian art is still considered utterly logocentric, even in its seemingly extremely corporal manifestations. Radical Moscow Actionism began in the '90s with the action by the E.T.I. group and Anatoly Osmolovsky E.T.I – Text where the artists formed the word 'khui' (Russian for 'dick') with their bodies on the Red Square. Nothing much has changed in the twenty years since. Looking closely at the textual documentation and pretty much the life of the Voina group, one understands that these artists are consciously working with the folk tradition of composing fairytale stories. The same applies to Pussy Riot, with their experience of creating collective poetry.

My first encounter with contemporary art happened in the late '90s. My hometown of Voronezh provided no opportunity at the time to familiarize oneself with the up-to-date culture, apart from Internet that was only starting its development in our country and was almost exclusively text-based. From the realm of contemporary art, one could only find the textual documentation of the works by Collective Actions, accompanied by a few black-and-white photographs. This is what it all started with: texts describing art. Then I spent five years studying at the University, its building directly facing the monument to my townsman, the writer Andrey Platonov. It has always seemed

to me that his language, raw as soil itself, could only take shape here in Voronezh, capital of the Central Black Earth Region. His prose became for me an important landmark.

As for contemporary Russian authors, I was mostly influenced by the early prose by Vladimir Sorokin, especially his formal innovations and his skill in working with the vibrant layers of everyday language. Now I understand that my art would not have been possible without the Soviet fantasy fiction that was very popular among children and teenagers. Books by authors such as the Strugatsky Brothers, Kir Bulychov and Alexander Belyaev could be found in every household, and movies such as “Guest from the Future,” “Moscow-Cassiopeia,” and “To the Stars by Hard Ways” still remain in the hearts of the people born in the ‘80s.

S.F. Which role do objects play in the exhibition?

A.Z. The subtitle *New Paths to the Objects* plays with the concept of the classical object-oriented museum display that is currently more or less accepted all over the world. Before the ‘40s, there had been attempts in the USSR to create an alternative type of museum display based first and foremost on processes, and not on static items. This was a way of criticizing the idealistic image of the museum formed within the bourgeois culture. Those times were characterized by the motto voiced at the First Soviet Convention of Museum Workers: “We do not want the museum to be a cabinet of curiosities.” The experimental Marxist exhibitions undertook a radical defetishization of the objects. It was the narration as such, based on the presentation of class struggle, that was brought to the foreground in such projects. The objects and the accompanying materials on display occupied a secondary position compared to this narration and to its pedagogical effect.

Under Stalin’s rule, this type of display was labeled “leftist,” and many museum workers went to concentration camps for their innovations. However, one has to admit that there is a grain of truth to such critique. Oftentimes the projects like Fedorov-Davydov’s *Experimental Complex Marxist Exhibition* that opened in 1931 transcended the limits of classical museum representation and turned into works of conceptual art. None of the organizers of such projects dared call themselves artists though. It is an amusing fact that in the first decade after the revolution, when most of the avant-garde artists aspired to cease being artists and to produce new forms of life, the Soviet museum workers were moving in the

backward direction, from life to art. My exhibition *New Paths to the Objects* is an attempt to critically rethink the position that objects as such occupy in contemporary art nowadays.

S.F. Can it be said that by using the exhibition form practiced by the early Soviet museums you are developing a new approach to the contemporary “institutional critique” that involves a different set of references?

A.Z. The M.I.R. (Museum of Russian History) is built on the principle of “negative display,” whose main aim is to induce a discussion of its content. Exhibitions of this kind were created in the ‘20s in the USSR in order to critically re-evaluate bourgeois art. The display at the time contained mostly copies of works, accompanied by interpretative texts explaining the specifics of production of such art and its role in the class struggle. In the territory of contemporary art nowadays, it is almost impossible to imagine such a self-critical, didactic exhibition. On closer examination, all art exhibitions are now “positive.” They mainly affirm, and even if they criticize, it is done by means of positive representation of art anyway. The very value of an artistic statement within the realm of contemporary art as such is not called into question. We cannot imagine a biennale whose only aim would be to criticize the art being shown, although I am sure that many of us would love to see something like this. But in order for such exhibitions to emerge, we need an alternative artistic attitude towards contemporary art which, in its turn, should also offer a social and political alternative. So far, we lack both courage and resources for it. That is why I prefer to speak about the “legitimation of art” instead of “institutional critique.”

S.F. The use of parafictional strategies has become a stylistic mark in your practice, starting from the exhibition *Save the Light*² in which you erased yourself from the narrative, delegating authorship to various other characters from art history and thus showing the unsolvable dilemma of the relationship between art, reality, and political changes. How did this methodology come about and how are you applying it in your new exhibition?

A.Z. At first sight, it is not that easy to find a common ground between these projects, apart from the use of parafiction as a method. In their tendency and even in their structure, these artistic statements are completely different. However, it seems to me that

they all have a more profound problem behind their façade which I have not even properly reflected upon yet. I would like to denote it as the problem of ‘truth’ and ‘veracity’ in the relationship between art and real life, art and politics. Each new project proposes new variants of its solution. *Save the Light* dealt with the limits of institutional representation of art, as well as with the disproportion existing between the traumatic experience of the Other and the experience of art that is trying to catch up with the former. In the case of *M.I.R.*, it is more about the critique directed at the representation of national history and about the artistic initiatives that can be defined as anti-contemporary because they represent the type of artistic practice that is based on ignoring democratic impulses, oppressing the representative narrative, and avoiding changes. The superfluity of this type of representation, utterly linear and aspiring to be extremely veracious when it comes to the issues of displaying history, delineates the limits of the idealistic position of the contemporary museum, reducing it to absurdity. This is yet another kind of lie. But it allows us, as Marcel Broodthaers put it, to simultaneously understand the reality and what it tries to hide. Nevertheless I keep using the exhibition as the ultimate medium of art, acting as a fictitious curator. This position provides me with unprecedented opportunities for analyzing and criticizing all those things that we imply by ‘contemporary art.’ The *M.I.R.* exhibition is mainly about what this phenomenon currently represents and what it may become in the near future.

S.F. This exhibition contains continuous and dense interacements of sophisticated political strategies and those of the contemporary art world. Do you believe that the strategies developed in the field of creative industries are becoming dangerous and that they could somehow be used against society?

A.Z. In a sense, the model of Putin 2.0 is what the liberally tuned Russian protesters secretly dream of. They would eagerly turn a blind eye to all the economic crimes, mass poverty, destruction of education, etc. in exchange for the promise to be *cool*. But reality always turns out to be worse than our most chilling nightmares. Cultural industry in its “hipster” variant, with bikeways, parks and centers for contemporary art, is totally foreign to most of the citizens of Russia and, I am afraid, of the world as well. And Putin, as a true avant-garde artist and pragmatist, does not need a decorative cover-up. He lays bare the method. Everyone who has been to contemporary Moscow knows that this city has become alien to its

inhabitants long ago. This is a city designed for pumping money streams and for the machines facilitating this process. As for cultural industry in its current form, it is nothing but opium that allows us to forget everything for a while. The Bolotnaya Battle Park Complex is a scary hallucination induced by this hard drug.

S.F. In his book *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin (The Total Art of Stalinism)*, Boris Groys stated that the utopian attempt of modernism can be fully realized with the help of, or in the form of, totalitarian politics. In the installation *Contemporary Art and National Culture* you are constructing a narrative about the overlap of art and political power, interpreting the latest decisions and public appearances of Vladimir Putin as a total work of art. Can we call this alliance between the most commercialized forms of mass culture (like porn industry, contemporary art, etc.) and authoritarian post-ideological capitalism a contemporary *Gesamtkunstwerk*?

A.Z. Contemporary art of the 20th century had “a human face,” so to say. It had to be constantly aware of the USSR in order to present a display of bourgeois democratic freedoms. Nowadays it is absolutely unnecessary, and one can fully agree with the thought that Stalin is occupying Wall Street offices as a collective avant-garde artist. After all, when it comes to the issues of producing reality and fulfilling its sovereign will, the global capitalist system is just incomparably stronger than the artists, the most successful of them being assigned the role of mere mouthpiece of their depersonalized master’s will, as it was in the Soviet times when artists simply tried to decode the party’s message and the will of its leader. As for the fight for freedom, this task is now performed much less by contemporary artists than by unmanned aircrafts and cruise missiles.

¹ Occupy Abai was part of the Occupy Moscow movement named after the statue of the Kazakh poet Abai around which the protesters first gathered in Moscow in May 2012.

² The exhibition *Save The Light* was curated by Arseniy Zhilyaev and held at the RND Gallery in Moscow in October 2013.

Authors

Silvia Franceschini (born 1985 in Milan, Italy) is an independent curator and researcher of contemporary art and architecture based between Milan and Moscow. She studied at the Politecnico di Milano and at the Strelka Institute for Media, Architecture and Design in Moscow where she researched the institutionalization of the art system in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Her projects as an independent curator include *The Way of Enthusiasts* supported by the Moscow V-A-C Foundation at La Biennale di Venezia-Architettura (2012), and *ANOMALI*, an ongoing exhibition program for the Milan-based non-profit organization Viafarini. She is a member of the curatorial board of DOCVA/Documentation Center for Visual Arts in Milan and a contributor to several magazines such as *Afterall*, *Domus*, and *Alfabeta*.

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Arseniy Zhilyaev (born 1984 in Voronezh, Russia) is an artist based in Moscow and Voronezh. He graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at Voronezh State University (2006), Moscow Institute of Contemporary Art (2008), and MA International Programs, Valand School of Fine Arts (Goteborg, Sweden, 2010). His artistic practice poses questions about cultural production under the post-Soviet condition: *Radio "October"* (Project "Fabrika" [Factory], Moscow, 2011), *Market "Labour"* (CCA Garage, Moscow, 2011). As an artist and political activist (member of the Russian Socialist Movement), he is involved in intense debates around precarity. In his recent projects Zhilyaev rethinks the heritage of Soviet museology: *Museum of Proletarian Culture. Industrialisation of Bohemia* (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 2012), *Pedagogical Poem* (in collaboration with Ilya Budraitskis and the collective of the project, Presnya Historical Memorial Museum, Moscow, 2012).



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