BALAGAN!!!
CONTEMPORARY ART
FROM THE FORMER
SOVIET UNION AND
OTHER MYTHICAL PLACES

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CONTEMPORARY ART

FROM THE FORMER

SOVIET UNION AND

OTHER MYTHICAL PLACES

CURATED BY DAVID ELLIOTT

Published on the occasion of the exhibition
BALAGAN!!! Contemporary Art from the Former Soviet Union and Other Mythical Places

Stiftung Brandenburger Tor im Max Liebermann Haus
Kühlhaus am Gleisdreieck
MOMENTUM im Kunstquartier Bethanien

14 November to **23 December 2015**

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Exhibition Curator **David Elliott**
Assistant Curator/Production **Isabel de Sena**
Curatorial Associate **Bojana Pejić**
Transport from Russia **Yana Smurova, Triumph Gallery, Moscow**

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MOMENTUM
www.momentumworldwide.org
The global platform for time-based art

NORDWIND

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IN THE BEGINNING....

This exhibition results from a chance meeting in the Kunstquartier Bethanien in the summer of 2014 between Rachel Rits-Volloch, Director of MOMENTUM and Ricarda Ciontos, Head of the NORDWIND Festival, who discovered that their offices were barely a hundred metres apart. They started talking about contemporary art in Russia and the former Soviet Union, an area in which NORDWIND was developing an interest for its next festival. This provided a catalyst for an exhibition that had been waiting to happen. Rachel approached me about this, not only as a friend and chairman of her Advisory Board, but also because I had just been Artistic Director of the IV Biennale of Young Artists in Moscow and was up to speed on contemporary art from Russia and the East.

I have a track record in this field: for many years I made exhibitions of early Soviet and Eastern European art, cinema, photography and design as part of the programmes of the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, where I was for twenty years director; in 1995 I was co-curator of *Art and Power. Europe under the Dictators 1930-1945*, an exhibition for the Council of Europe that began in London and ended in Berlin, as well as of *After the Wall. Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe*, an encyclopaedic show that began in Stockholm in 1999 and ended, in 2000, in Berlin, taking place between the Hamburger Bahnhof and the Max Liebermann Haus. Now twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the cultural climate is completely transformed, yet there still seems to be a wilful blindness in the West about what is really happening in the former 'East', as well as a complete lack of recognition that good art is being made there.

I have always regarded Berlin as an eastern city although its instinctive orientation is presently towards the West. It is, and has long been, a western outpost teetering towards an edge, but is also on a straight line that, echoing the southern coasts of the Baltic and North Seas, stretches between Moscow and Paris. In vertical orientation it overhangs Prague and is not far behind Vienna or Budapest. On geographical grounds alone, Berlin's destiny must be as much in the East as it is in the West.

But this is not the main reason that *BALAGAN!!!* is being first shown in Berlin. It finds a home here because of its own history of chaos that fits well with this Russian word that crystallises, in a single drop, abject mess, glorious chaos and social parody; but nowhere, it seems, is now immune from this pervasive condition. If in the West after World War II, existentialism characterised the gloomy *zeitgeist*, and, from the 1980s, neo-Liberalism then ran riot only to be checked by recent and continuing financial crisis, the upshot worldwide has been a pervasive state of *BALAGAN!!!*–a world turned on its head without human value or organic order.

Chaos can be funny as well as cathartic and, used creatively, may lead to great things. *BALAGAN!!!* is both disease and cure, a release from drudgery and oppression of mind and labour, through the healing and liberating power of laughter.

A BIG THANK YOU!!!

....first to the artists and lenders, listed elsewhere, and to our Supporting Partners: The Kulturstiftung des Bundes; The Aksenov Family Foundation; the Stiftung Brandenburger Tor im Max Liebermann Haus; Kühlhaus am Gleisdreieck; EIDOTECH, Berlin; BARNBROOK, London; ICI Berlin, and IkonoTV. And also to the Hamburger Bahnhof for hosting the *BALAGAN!!!* Symposium.

BALAGAN!!! as an exhibition, publication, and the events that surround it, just could not have taken place without this and the incredible support and help of a large number of people whom I should like to thank personally.

In Berlin they are Joachim Abrell, Janet Alvarado, Rosa Barotsi, Kathrin Becker, Yvonne Brandl, James Burton, Pascal Decker, Volker Diehl, Jan Fiege, Manuele Gragnolati, Wulf Herzogenrath, Drew Hammond, Erika Hoffmann, Christoph Holzhey, Martin Jacques, Constanze Kleiner, Gabriele Knapstein, Roland Kretschmer, Elizabeth Markevitch, Torsten Mass, Tim O'Loghlin, Sebastian Omatsch, Bojana Pejić, Claudia Peppel, Zeno Plersh, Joachim Reck, Wilma Renfordt, Maik Schierloh, Peter-Klaus Schuster, Dieter Siegel, Jana Smrčková, Daniel Stammet, Jiří Švestka, Christoph Tannert, Hortensia Völkers, Arndt Wedemeyer, Sven Weigl and Andrea Wenzler.

In Moscow for both inspirational and practical help I should like to thank Leonid Bazhanov, Olga Sviblova, Pierre-Christian Brochet, Naum Kleiman, Dmitry Aksenov, Ekaterina Degot (also in Köln), Viktor Misiano, Mikhail Mindlin, Dmitry Khankin, Mikhail Ovcharenko, Elena Selina, Nadia Mindlin, Yury Dudka, Natalia Gerassina, Ekaterina Perventseva and especially Yana Smurova who organised the Moscow transports.

Elsewhere: there are too many to mention, but I would particularly like to thank Edward Braun, (Bristol), Kriszta Nagy (Budapest), Carmen Mehnert and Tobias Blasberg, (Hellerau, Dresden), Jens Dietrich, Andre Huppertz-Teja, Amelie Deuflhard and Andreas Kornacki, (Kampnagel, Hamburg), Anıl Aykan Barnbrook, Jonathan Barnbrook, Lutz Becker, (London), Lars Kleberg (Stockholm), Nina Hülsmeir, Tanja Spiess (Stuttgart) and the shade of Camilla Gray (certainly in Heaven) without whose example and scholarship I would never have embarked on this adventure.

I am deeply indebted to all these people, as well as to the incredibly hardworking MOMENTUM Team, for their time, support and commitment in making the realisation of *BALAGAN!!!* possible–sometimes through their conscious actions, sometimes not–but in every case in so many different, helpful, fascinating, creative and generous ways.

DAVID ELLIOTT

STIFTUNG BRANDENBURGER TOR

Die Kulturstiftung der Berliner Sparkasse

When, in 2000, the Max Liebermann House first opened, 'After the Wall' and 'Max Liebermann–The Fight for Modernism' were the two exhibitions that inaugurated our Pariser Platz galleries. The first showed artists from the former communist countries in Europe, while the latter presented the struggle of the Jewish painter Max Liebermann, the former owner of this house, an avant-garde artist in his time who repudiated the vainglorious academicism of the Kaiser's favorite painters.

Since that time, the Brandenburger Tor Foundation has shown exhibitions situated between these two poles: the classical modern of the beginning of the 20th century, or subjects and painters associated with Liebermann, and contemporary art that captures the sensibilities of today. Just as when Liebermann was painting portraits up in his attic, on the ground floor there was a successful contemporary art gallery.

Max Liebermann gathered together many very different people in this house–artists, politicians, scientists, musicians–and he was not afraid of saying what came into his mind. He was famous for his direct and sarcastic conversation and for his disrespectful opinion of authority; his critical remarks about Wilhelm II are well known. As President of the Academy of Arts, he supported many young artists who today are among the most famous names in the history of art, even though personally he was rather conservative in taste and did not much like Expressionism.

Through its exhibitions, the Brandenburger Tor Foundation aims to preserve the breadth of Max Liebermann's legacy by bringing his work into new contexts, and by giving space to contemporary art that reflects on current issues.

When the Foundation presented 'After the Wall', the recently obtained freedoms and hopes for a promising future and a united Europe were barely ten years old. Now, twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, *BALAGAN!!!* shows a radically changed scene. Many of the works shown here perfectly combine the past with the present by reinterpreting ancient mythologies within the context of today's conditions, with their unfulfilled expectations and still unaccomplished goals. Its critical note, and the intention to change these conditions by widening awareness through the intervention of art, is one further reason why the Foundation is supporting this exhibition curated by David Elliott.

DR. PASCAL DECKER, Chairman of the Board
PROF. DR. PETER-KLAUS SCHUSTER, Member of the Board
FOUNDATION BRANDENBURGER TOR

KühlhausBerlin

As ever, construction is underway at Kühlhaus. Inside, new exhibitions, concerts and many upcoming projects are in the pipeline. Outside, builders with diggers and shovels are constructing a new staircase. The old building is in a continuous state of transformation as it has mutated from an impressive, but derelict, remnant of Berlin's past into a vibrant space for contemporary art and culture. The only survivor of the early industrial complex on Gleisdreieck that contained Europe's largest ice refrigeration plant, it now has listed status and its rough unpretentious spaces are perfect for contemporary art.

This remarkable building spreads over seven floors with incredible spaces and vistas. It hosts a diverse range of events from Fashion Week to art students' final shows, it will also provide a new concert space for the RIAS Chamber Choir and the Radio Symphony Orchestra. But this will be the first time that a major international art exhibition of contemporary art will be shown here.

BALAGAN!!! at Kühlhaus contains many new site-specific installations by artists from all over the former 'East', as well as breath taking displays of new media and performance art. We are proud and happy to support *BALAGAN!!!* and welcome heartily the artists, curators, critics and, of course, the public who will come here to enjoy it!

DIETER SIEGEL, ANDREA WENZLER
KÜHLHAUS BERLIN

Aksenov Family Foundation

The Aksenov Family Foundation is a supporting partner of this publication.

The Aksenov Family Foundation is a newly established platform that fosters cultural and social innovation. We believe strongly in cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary dialogues, and support initiatives that improve and transform collective urban conditions through cultural and artistic innovation. Well-founded research leads to a reconsideration of the scope and boundaries of what constitutes contemporary culture, and this, in turn, helps define and evaluate the significant contributions that contemporary art and culture make to society as a whole.

An essential part of our activities is the building of a collection of contemporary art that focuses on Russia and Central and Eastern Europe.

We support art from Russia and CEE by researching, collecting, preserving, and exhibiting works from this region and connecting and interweaving them with parallel narratives in the discourses of European and global contemporary art. As well as this, we also support cultural institutions, exhibitions, and curatorial projects, as well as academic research, that encourage, at both an academic and a public level, a critical appreciation of the contemporary art of Russia and Eastern Europe.

We are happy to support the exhibition that David Elliott has curated not only because it brings together artists from a region in which we too take a lot of interest. This is not so much defined by geographical borders, but by the shared histories and experiences of the people who live there that circulate further afield in the form of stories and perspectives that all are able to enjoy or appreciate. *BALAGAN*, a word that evokes a multitude of references ricocheting between 'high' and 'low' culture, reveals two major aspects of the generation of contemporary artists that are shown in this exhibition. The first is their energy and dynamic diversity, but this is followed by the dissonant unity of their highly individual voices that resounds throughout the world in a complex polyphonic chorus.

DMITRY AKSENOV, Founder
AKSENOV FAMILY FOUNDATION

EIDOTECH •
www.eidotech.com

EIDOTECH is a supporting partner of *BALAGAN!!!*

EIDOTECH is proud to be a partner in this exhibition project. We have had a close working relationship in the past with both the exhibition curator David Elliott and Rachel Rits-Volloch, Founding Director of MOMENTUM Berlin, for a number of projects including the 1st Kyiv Biennale.

For over ten years now, EIDOTECH has remained highly engaged and committed to the artistic sphere of video art worldwide. Since the beginning, the founders of EIDOTECH, German art historian Joachim Abrell and Polish-born artist Joachim Reck, have had a special affinity for the eastern part of Europe. As a natural result, EIDOTECH founded early on an affiliated company in Warsaw to underline its commitment to be part of and support the newly evolving art movement in Eastern Europe.

Accordingly, a significant part of EIDOTECH's staff today has its roots in the East and the ties are growing as former separations have disappeared and thankfully become obsolete.

We support *BALAGAN!!!* just as we support individual artists by collaborating with them on purpose-built technical solutions to their often challenging visions, and we acknowledge that artists have their own special role and place in analyzing the raison d'être of our times. With our partly Eastern European roots we feel a strong bond to this exhibition and, somehow, as a logical consequence, we are very excited to be a partner in this *Impossible DREAM - BALAGAN!!!*

JOACHIM RECK, CEO
JOACHIM ABRELL, CEO
EIDOTECH

Barnbrook

Barnbrook is
a supporting partner
of *BALAGAN!!*

Growing up under Capitalism during the 1970s, I now feel fortunate that there was a communist world because it made clear that the way we lived then was not just simply 'the way things were' but a political choice. I was aware that there was an omnipresent force that compelled us to hold up a mirror to own world and question whether what we had was really was the best possible thing.

Then, as I got older and made my way through college and out into 'industry', I discovered–and was saved by–art and design. Thrown rudely into the commercial world, I quickly found out that all my 'deeply considered new design' was being used for was to resell 'stuff' back to the same people who had just bought it. Soviet art though–Ahhh! Soviet art!–its visual form only changed when it was politically or logistically desirable. It had values and spoke of heroes that built nations, not those who won TV talent competitions. Even its ideas originated from a different, 'better' universe. None of it was 'rebranded' by Tory voting, buy-to-let owning, luxury-office-development-inhabiting agencies. Oh great Soviet art! I miss the simplicity of your doctrine. You made architects and designers simple but important heroes, you created the 20th century man I aspired to be: an artist/engineer/poet. You started with so many simple, glorious, worthy, dreams but then ended up as one big fucking *balagan* mess.

Balagan is a common state everywhere in the world today, but the biggest President of the biggest *balagan* of all has to be Mr Putin. If you don't know Russia you could say that he's an example of everything that is wrong with the country but, if you do know the place, you may realise that Russia itself is a much bigger 'idea' than this, and that Putin is only one in a long line of autocratic leaders –Ivan the Terrible, the Romanovs, Stalin–that have given many Russian people a real sense of worth, while egotistically using them as cannon fodder. Such an inclement climate and political context has created amazing art and continues to do so today. And this is some of the most visceral, exciting art I have seen–not made for the polite, stock-market, commercial galleries of New York or London but instead something that punches you in the face, and then ends up laughing with you about it. First it struggled with the weight of its own history–how could it respond to 'greats' like Malevich, El Lissitzky and many others? Now it uses that history to create work that fully acknowledges its own time and position and builds upon this to struggle for another world.

So long live the *balagan* that is the post-post-Soviet era and the art it creates! It still holds a mirror to our own society. This not only reflects the doubtful, vicarious pleasures of gawping at freaks, but also the beauty of dancers, clowns, and other skilled acts. Long live art that continues to drink with you, shows you the most beautiful sunset you have ever seen, fucks you, steals your wallet, and then gets you carried off in the middle of the night, never to be heard of again!

JONATHAN BARNBROOK

ici BERLIN KULTURLABOR INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL INQUIRY

ICI Berlin is an
educational partner
of *BALAGAN!!!*

THE ICI BERLIN Institute for Cultural Inquiry is an independent centre for research and culture dedicated to exploring how diverse cultures can be brought into productive rather than pernicious confrontation. The Institute's mission is to join rigour with imagination to open up spaces of possibility and develop fruitful avenues of cooperation, transfer, and intervention, both through research and by organizing and hosting academic and cultural events.

As an international platform for the cross-fertilization of international research, cultural praxis, and local engagement, ICI Berlin operates by inviting multidisciplinary teams of post-doctoral fellows to work through common, focused projects over a period of up to two years. The current project is the subject *Errans*. Recognizing that a critique of ideals of productivity, success, goal-orientation, and determination presents a necessary paradox, *Errans* takes the shifting meanings of the word 'erring'–connoting a violation of norms as well as the activity of wandering–as a point of departure to explore the critical potentials and risks of embracing error, randomness and failure. As part of this programme, ICI has worked with MOMENTUM on *BALAGAN!!!* devising a two-part event on the figure of the TRICKSTER.

ikonoTV

IkonoTV is an online
venue of *BALAGAN!!!*

IkonoTV is a unique television channel that broadcasts art–*only* art–24/7 to almost every country in the world. With the aim of doing for art what radio has done for music, IkonoTV enables any interested person to have art directly in their homes by offering a pure visual experience with an ever changing playlist of art films produced in close collaboration with international artists, major collections, archives and some of the most important museums in the world. All its productions are free from extraneous sound or commentary. Its international audience is exposed to the arts of all ages–from antiquity to now–through this completely new approach. At the press of a button, IkonoTV transforms a television screen into a lively work of art. Through its broadcasts IkonoTV will become a venue for the *BALAGAN!!!* exhibition on air.

MOMENTUM
www.momentumworldwide.org
The global platform for time-based art

MOMENTUM is
the organiser of
BALAGAN!!!

MOMENTUM is a non-commercial international platform for time-based art, with its headquarters in Berlin, which operates as a Gallery, Project Lab, Collection, Archive, Residency, Public Art Initiative, Salon and Education Program. Founded in Sydney in 2010, MOMENTUM's mission has been the tracking and continuous reassessment of the growing diversity and relevance of time-based art and the support of artistic innovation in Berlin and worldwide. As the world speeds up, and time itself seems to flow faster, contemporary artists inevitably express aesthetic, cultural and social changes wrought by accelerating processes of digitisation. Through these new perspectives, MOMENTUM continually seeks innovative answers to the question: 'What is time-based art?' With an active program of research funneled into exhibitions, discussion, creation, collection, and exchange, MOMENTUM engages the notion of time-based art within the context of historical, technological and social development. As both a local and global platform, MOMENTUM is a bridge that joins professional art communities, irrespective of institutional or national borders.

BALAGAN!!!: a state of mind, the state of the world, and a hugely ambitious exhibition reuniting outstanding artists from countries and cultures once united under the 'Eastern Bloc'. *BALAGAN!!!* looks back at the past in order to laugh at the present and reimagine the future. MOMENTUM is proud to produce and host the *BALAGAN!!!* exhibition which exemplifies our commitment to enabling intercultural dialogues, inspiring innovation in time-based art, and to realising 'impossible' dreams.

ARTISTS

AES + F [RU]
AFRIKA (SERGEY BUGAEV) [RU]
VYACHESLAV AKHUNOV [UZ]
SHAARBEK AMANKUL [KG]
EVGENY ANTUFIEV [RU]
LUTZ BECKER [UK/DE]
BLUE NOSES GROUP [RU]
SERGEY BRATKOV [UA]
YVON CHABROWSKI [DE/DDR]
OLGA CHERNYSHEVA [RU]
VALERY CHTAK [RU]
CHTO DELAT? [RU]
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KATARZYNA KOZYRA [PO]
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VIKTOR VOROBYEV / ELENA VOROBYEVA [KZ]
VADIM ZAKHAROV [RU]
SERGEY ZARVA [UA]
ZIP GROUP [RU]
ARTUR ŻMIJEWSKI [PO]
CONSTANTIN ZVEZDOCHOTOV [RU]

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

PIERRE-CHRISTIAN BROCHET COLLECTION, MOSCOW
ERSTE GROUP ART COLLECTION AND ERSTE FOUNDATION, VIENNA
MULTIMEDIA ART MUSEUM MOSCOW (MAMM)
N.B.K. VIDEO-FORUM OF NEUER BERLINER KUNSTVEREIN
NEW RULES COLLECTION, MOSCOW
ROBERT RUNTÁK COLLECTION, OLOMOUC
ASPAN GALLERY, ALMATY
DIEHL, BERLIN
FINE ARTS OF CENTRAL EUROPE, PRAGUE
GALERIA PLAN B CLUJ/BERLIN
GALERIE BARBARA WEISS, BERLIN
GALERIE KORNFELD, BERLIN
GALERIE SUZANNE TARASIEVE, PARIS
GODOT GALLERY, BUDAPEST
HOHENTHAL UND BERGEN, BERLIN
JIŘÍ ŠVESTKA GALLERY BERLIN
KEWENIG BERLIN
KOW, BERLIN
KRAUPA-TUSKANY ZEIDLER, BERLIN
MARIO MAURONER CONTEMPORARY ART, SALZBURG–VIENNA
REGINA GALLERY, MOSCOW
TRIUMPH GALLERY, MOSCOW
XL GALLERY, MOSCOW
ŽAK BRANICA, BERLIN

WWWWWHAT IS BALAGAN!!!????????

An unholy cockup.....
A magnificent orgy.....
An impossible dream.....

Cloud Cuckoo Land, Schlaraffenland, Lubberland,
the Land of Milk and Honey, *рай земной*.
The visions and nightmares of charlatans and politicians.

The silent majority.
The manipulative minority.

THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

A fairground booth or puppet show.

Commedia dell'Arte (strolling players, jugglers, clowns, Pierrots, tricksters, young lovers, kissing and sobbing in the light of the moon.)

BEAUTY
Polichinelle, Kasper,
Punch (and Judy),
Karagöz, Petrushka,
Grand Guignol.
Bread. Circuses.

GREED
Cash king, values broken.
Poverty grows fat,
bodies implode with hunger.
Icecaps melt....
Clocks turn backwards.

VIOLENCE
Ghosts of history.
Chickens without heads.
People the same.
Stupid, shitty wars....

SNAFU
(Situation Normal
All Fucked Up).
Untrammelled, unaccountable
power in a world gone mad...

Two bald men eternally fighting over a broken comb...

HORROR – SARDONIC LAUGHTER

BBBBBBBBBBBALAGAN!!! ??????????????

WWWWWAS IST BALAGAN!!!????????

Ein gottloses Durcheinander.....
Eine prächtige Orgie.....

Ein unwirklicher Traum, Schlaraffenland, Lubberland,
The Land of Milk and Honey, *рай земной*.
Die Visionen und Albträume von Scharlatanen und Politikern.

Die schweigende Mehrheit.
Die manipulative Minderheit.

DIE WELT AUF DEM KOPF

Ein Schießbudenstand, ein Puppentheater.

Commedia dell'Arte (herumstreunende Spieler, Jongleure, Clowns, Pierrots, Trickser, junge Liebende, einander küssend und schluchzend im Mondschein).

SCHÖNHEIT
Polichinelle, Kasper,
Punch (und Judy), Karagöz,
Petrushka, Grand Guignol.
Brot und Spiele.

GEWALT
Geister der Vergangenheit.
Kopflose Hühner.
Kopflose Menschen.
Dumme, beschissene Kriege....

GIER
Geld regiert die Welt,
Werte gehen verloren.
Die Armut wird fett,
Körper implodieren vor Hunger.
Die Polkappen schmelzen....
Uhren laufen rückwärts.

SNAFU
(Situation Normal
All Fucked Up).
Alles im Arsch.
Unaufhaltbare,
unerklärliche Macht
in einer verrückten Welt....

Zwei kahlköpfige Männer im nicht enden
wollenden Streit um einen kaputten Kamm....

HORROR – HÄMISCHES LACHEN

BBBBBBBBBBBALAGAN!!! ??????????????

BALAGAN!!!

>>AN INTRODUCTION //

BY DAVID ELLIOTT

>>>VLADISLAV MAMYSHEV-MONROE ≤≤ cat 89 ≠≠≠ Untitled #4 (from the series *Lolita*) \\\\\\\ 2009
{{{{{{{{{{≈≈≈≈≈≈ Mixed Media On Colour Photo /////////// Dimensions Variable }}}}}}

'In the circus, a lion may eat its tamer, and a trapeze artist can crash to the ground. But the most important thing is the expectation of a miracle. Moscow is a city in which risk and magic are incredibly concentrated. The city is a myth in which you can get fabulously rich, marry a princess and triumph over a two-headed dragon. It is a place where fairytale beauty and riches live next to infinite ugliness and poverty; … When the "Moscow Circus" voted to stick with its Ring-master for the long haul, two questions sprang to mind: when the public is no longer laughing but caught in tense silence, maybe it's time to change the repertoire – as well as the Ringmaster? As for the future, when will a real miracle happen and the circus disappear?'

Sergey Bratkov, Moscow 2012

Balagan!!! is a popular and much used exclamation in colloquial Russian that describes, with celebratory gusto, a farce, a fine mess, the most unholy of cock-ups - but it is also *BALAGAN!!!* the title of this major exhibition of the contemporary art from the former USSR and the Eastern Bloc. These 150 artworks by 75 artists from 14 countries all have one thing in common: the artists' struggle to digest what they have experienced, and their attempt to reconcile this with their desire for a new, hopefully better, life and art. Yet this exhibition also reveals a world where chaos and misrule, along with the social comedy that results from it, are scathingly exposed.

The creative fusion between the political, social and the personal has continued as an impetus for *BALAGAN* from *perestroika* in the late 1980s until today. But although the appreciation of it may have reached its most developed form in Russia and the former East, as a phenomenon it is universal. The revolutionary politics of laughter, as well as the cathartic release it promises, are important, but this kind of humour has always been engendered by a sense of outrage at the abuse of human rights and values that is far from amusing. This fragile, vulnerable condition that touches upon us all is expressed in the *BALAGAN* of contemporary art everywhere.

≥ ≥ **VIKTOR VOROBYEV & ELENA VOROBYEVA** ≥ ≥
≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤ cat 137 >>>>>>>>>
Kazakhstan. Blue Period ///////////
2002-05, Installation Of 82 Photographic
Colour Prints /// Each 46.5 x 70 cm }}}}}}}}}}}

While the *BALAGAN!!!* exhibition is strictly contemporary, the story of *BALAGAN* is strongly embedded within all the arts, particularly in the *commedia dell'arte* that underwent a revival in Russia immediately before and after the Revolution (see pp. 94-109, 204-203). The Russian word balagan originally meant 'fairground', or the lightly constructed booths that characterised them. By the 18th century it had become associated with the activities of the people who worked there: puppeteers, clowns and jesters, who made fun of and satirised established order.

In 1906, writer and poet Aleksandr Blok finished his play *Balaganchik* (The Fairground Booth), the St Petersburg première of which was directed by the avant-garde theatre director and actor Vsevolod Meyerhold, who also played Pierrot, its lead role (see pp. 94-109). The riotous events of its opening night proved to be the first salvo in a continuing volley of theatrical coups that lasted until the Stalinist repression of the early 1930s. Ostensibly, Blok's intent in presenting such a dysfunctional masquerade to the public was to explode the social pretensions of Realist and Symbolist theatre by exposing its melodramatic clichés yet, in doing this, he also expressed the pain and drama of his times as well as the disaster of his own relationships.

Outside the fairground, *BALAGAN* also appeared in the coruscating satires of Nikolai Gogol, the brooding, driven characterisations of Fyodor Dostoevsky, the épatage of the Futurists and, after the revolution, in the theatre of the Proletcult and Blue Blouses as well as in the absurdist performances and writings of Daniil Kharms and the OBERIU (Union of Real Art) collective (see p. 260). In cinema, too, *BALAGAN* ran riot: in the 'Eccentrizm' of Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg , in *Glumov's Diary* (1923) Sergei Eisenstein's first short, and in Vsevolod Pudovkin's flirtation with Hollywood slapstick comedy (see pp. 204-213).

Intensified by the crisis that led to World War I and its aftermath, BALAGAN also runs as a red thread through the literature and art of other

≥≥≥≥≥≥ **OLGA CHERNYSHEVA** ≤≤≤≤≤≤
///////////////≤≤ cat 25 >>\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\
=cat. 25≠≠ **Untitled (Pierrot)** \\\\\\\\\\\ 2015
≈≈≈ Charcoal On Paper // 167 x 84 cm }}}}}}}}}

cultures in the East: through the stories and essays of Arthur Schnitzler, Franz Kafka, Jaroslav Hašek and Bruno Schulz (see pp. 256-263), and in Germany in the cabaret and theatre of Frank Wedekind and Bertolt Brecht.

Even during the dark years of Stalinist repression *BALAGAN* flourished above and underground. A crazy, misplaced sense of carnival pervades Aleksandr Medvedkin's films in the 1930s and may also be perceived in the kabuki-style acting, mask-like characterisations and random use of colour in Sergei Eisenstein's last film *Ivan the Terrible Part II* (1945, released 1958). The fear, chaos and misrule that typify this time govern the plot of Mikhail Bulgakov's classic novel *The Master and Margarita* (begun in 1928 and finally published in 1966) and, while Europe was again being torn apart by war, Mikhail Bakhtin completed his critical study *Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. In this, the inverted, allegorical world of carnival was seen as a safety valve as well as a vision of a better life. Dichotomies – such as spirit and body, 'high' and 'low', rich and poor, private and public, sacred and profane, powerful and weak – were no longer tools of dialectics but revealed as methods of social control. The grotesque realism of Rabelais' masterwork became a metaphor for absolute power overthrown – a subversive fantasy that the reader could clearly relate to the present (see pp. 30-41). This topsy turvy world is shown here in *Inverso Mundus* (2015), AES+F's vast video frieze (cat 1).

In the face of such oppression, sardonic laughter was a release – an uncontrollable, therapeutic, liberating force, sometimes expressed publicly but fertilized by the desperate black humour of the GULAG. After Stalin's death, this laughter echoed aloud in the 'dissident' satirical writings of Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel who, in 1966, were both put on trial and convicted for 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda'. From the early 1970s, it could still be discerned in the visual ironies of such 'Sots Artists' (an ironical abbreviation of Socialist Realism) as Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid or in the 'child-like' paintings, albums and installations of Ilya Kabakov and many others...

But when, in 1999, I was working with Bojana Pejić on researching the exhibition *After the Wall*, which also was shown in the Max Liebermann Haus, there was little talk of *balagan* of any kind in relation to art.[1] We were examining the decade of artistic production in the former East since the fall of the Berlin Wall and were trying to show what new spirit or approaches had emerged. Arsen Savadov had already made his fashion shoots in cemeteries and had just completed his melancholic carnival *Donbass Chocolate* (cat 112) photographing out-of-work coal miners at obsolete pitheads, dressed in wispy ballet dancers' tutus. But the prevailing tense mood was of sceptical self-scrutiny at a time of unprecedented change. The titles of our catalogue essays give it all away: Bojana's was 'The Dialectics of Normality', mine was just 'Looking Things in the Face'. No one could quite believe or understand what had happened and, as a result, it was difficult to know how to react or find the right words or images to make sense of it.

Focussing on the former USSR, Viktor Misiano's research project *Progressive Nostalgia* came to fruition in 2007. It took the form of a publication, based on four exhibitions that had previously taken place in Tallinn, Prato, Athens and Helsinki,[2] and started out from the premise that the uncovering of previously submerged narratives of art would help rehabilitate history. Such a dynamic continuum could not only save Russian contemporary art from sinking nostalgically into pro-Soviet melancholia but, by also being progressive, would make sense for the future.

Bojana Pejić's exhibition *Gender Check Femininity and Masculinity in Eastern Europe* took place in Vienna and Warsaw during 2009 and 2010 suggests a completely different tack by concentrating on the neglected subject of gender difference.[3] A research project, like the two previous exhibitions, it examined ideas and representations of masculinity and femininity in the former Communist Bloc and how this was depicted in art, both officially and unofficially. No exhibition like this had ever taken place before. Although nominal equality of the sexes had existed in Soviet times, the reality had been starkly different and violently macho attitudes still continue.

Over the past forty years, world events seem to have spun out of control with little prospect of stability. Vast global change is definitely underway. For some, this time has represented the end of world socialism and the triumph of capitalism, although the financial crash of 2008, and its aftermath, took the shine off such a triumphal moment, and 'communist' China has prospered. For others, in the newly democratic East of Europe, a new dawn of hope for responsive and responsible government was offered, usually rapidly dashed by opportunism, folly, stupidity or greed. But for those who take a longer view, the eldritch creak of history's roundabout has marked a more unsettling and gradual event: no less than the grand finale of the European Enlightenment, once a moral fanfare, now a pitiful whimper. No government, it seems, can any more claim moral high ground. We all know too much about everything, and there is no one to take responsibility. This is *balagan* in life.

The once modern project is in a mess; that is axiomatic. Across what is supposed to be a post-imperial global landscape, one iron rule still prevails: the minority benefits and they do so exponentially. Public spaces and public finances, which it is a duty of government to hold in trust, are consistently eroded by those who should protect them. Hardly news, particularly to a Brit, but this is not a 'natural' state of affairs, that is, unless you believe in the law of the jungle.

As its title suggests, *BALAGAN!!! Contemporary Art from the Former Soviet Union and Other Mythical Places* acknowledges the harsh reality that although physical walls have been torn down, mental walls have remained in their place. Although the ideological landscape has been transformed, to many in the West, the former East is still 'different' and, other than in music or ballet, does not figure strongly on their contemporary map of art. On their

'I swore never to do politics but politics does me. It has come in and sat on my bed. I am provoking now, not necessarily [Prime Minister] Orbán, but the whole country and its intellectuals.'

Kriszta Nagy, Budapest, 2014

>>>>>>> **KRISZTA NAGY 'TERESKOVA'** <<<<<<< cat 97 ≠≠≠≠ **Viktor Orbán** \\\\\\\\ 2014-15
≈≈≈≈ Acrylic, Print And Spangle On Canvas ////// 35 x 60 cm (Series Of Twenty) 140 x 183 cm }}}}}

part, the former USSR and 'Friendship' countries, although mistrustful of each other, have many things in common. This is no longer, if it was ever, defined by shared post-Soviet-ness, but by deeply rooted cultural affinities. Although the Soviet Union fetishized technology and progress in a similar way to the West, its vast territories conserved peasant ways of life and thinking, with all their pagan rituals and beliefs that not even Collectivisation could completely expunge.[4] While Communism's Don Quixote tilted at windmills, Sancho Panza, his peasant helper, lumbered on behind.

BALAGAN has an instinctive distaste for, and mistrust of, modernity's smooth tongue and enforced conformity. An ever-present figure before the Revolution, and even within the early Soviet avant-garde, it has been a constant source of

‘A totally new era had begun: we suddenly realised that anguish could be expressed not only through melancholy, as in the paintings of Levitan or Serov, but also through unlimited mirth, by something totally crazy… even by laughter. In other words anguish may be extremely happy.’

Ilya Kabakov (on the work of Vladimir Dubossarsky and Aleksandr Vinogradov), London 2007

≥≥**VLADIMIR DUBOSSARSKY** ≤≤≤≤≤≤ cat 28 ≠≠≠≠≠≠ **Happy Childhood** \\\\ 2014
(((((((((((((((***********≈≈≈ Oil On Canvas, Tryptich ////////// 210 x 430 cm }}}}}}}}}}}}}}

≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥≥ **BORIS MIKHAILOV** ≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤
=== cat 95 ≠≠≠≠≠ **Untitled, I am Not I** \\\\\\\\\\\\\\ 1992 (((((((((((((((***********
≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈ Three C-prints ////////// each 146.5 x 93.5 cm }}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}

riotous energy. This is evident in Vladimir Mayakovsky’s early plays, satirical cartoons and designs for ROSTA posters (see pp. 204-213), are echoed in this exhibition by *Love Letters I & 2*, 2013, two textile works by Slavs and Tartars (cats 116-17) or by Pavel Pepperstein’s paintings *This Tree Saved Me…* 2014 and *The Faun and the Nimph* [sic] 2015 (cats 100-01).

But it is also there in Kazimir Malevich’s historicising portraits of the early 1930s, wilfully misquoting a great European tradition, when the countryside around him was devastated by famine. From the late 1920s, it was becoming increasingly clear that the great project had run into the sand and many artists became suspicious of the empty, self-congratulatory public language of the new world order. In 1928 Malevich, recently released from prison, inscribed ‘Go and stop progress’ into a copy of his essay *God is Not cast Down* (1922) that he had gifted to the writer Daniil Kharms, who was of the same view, confessing that he had ‘consciously renounced contemporary reality’ and that his philosophy was ‘deeply hostile to the present’[5] (see pp.204-213).

The works in this exhibition show a similar wariness of the false, orchestrated conformity that so often passes for power. They may be broadly divided into two, not mutually exclusive, categories that both share the same intent: *BALAGAN!!!* as contemporary *commedia dell’arte,* and as a direct, documentary expression of truth.

Many different kinds of works – of parody, satire, or allegory – fully in keeping with the creative tradition of *BALAGAN* feature throughout this exhibition. They range from Olga Chernysheva’s drawing of a grumpy, life-size, contemporary *Pierrot* (2015), actually a security guard (cat 25) to *I Am Not I* (1992), Boris Mikhailov’s sardonic nude self-portraits of a disrespectful Ukrainian jester in the court of the world (cat 95). The spectacle continues with the calculatedly rough antics of the Blue Noses (cats 13-18) and Sergey Bratkov’s surreal

≥≥ **ZIP GROUP** ≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤ cat 142 ≤≠≠≠≠ **Protest Aerobics** \\\\\\ 2015 ((((((** ≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈ Artwork From Live Participatory Performance With Placards And Drum //////// Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, 13.11.2015 }}}}}}}}}}}}}

montages of the 'Circus Big Top', that he describes as Moscow, in which the Ringmaster has lost control and the animals are eaten by the audience, *Chapiteau Moscow* (2012) (cats 19-21). Vladimir Dubossarsky presents a moving depiction of his *Happy Childhood* (2014) that consists of a triptych with an ancient crumpled portrait of Josef Stalin sandwiched in the middle, at each side are two bizarre cartoons (cat 28). While in a massive, but materially insubstantial, 'classical' frieze *The Gifts of the Gods* (2014) by RECYCLE GROUP, boxes rain down on supermarket customers like gifts from consumerist heaven as they scramble to benefit from its unexpected bounty (cat 107).

In his installation *Bad News* (2011), Krištof Kintera, in dense , dark, modern form, seems to have materialised one of the old pagan gods of the countryside, while the fate of the world shivers in the delicate roots of his *Nervous Trees* (2013) (cats 48,49). Horned gods also appear, in a multiple, more furry form, in Ioana Nemes's installation *The White Team* (Satan) (2009).Kriszta Nagy conjures a different kind of presence in her obsessive, Warholesque repetitions of the poster image, in different guises and contexts, of Viktor Orbán, the ultra-nationalist, right wing Prime Minister of Hungary (cat 97). These works make a direct but equivocal political statement, as does Vyacheslav Akunov's installation *Avenue of Superstars (Policy and Clowns)* (2015), a Hollywood-style long, red carpet scattered with the stars of heads of buffoonish politicians (cat 4).

In her performances, Sasha Frolova's wildly coloured inflatable sculptures become extensions of her body (cats 33, 34), while in a project of contemporary archaeology, Viktor and Elena Vorobyev discover a multi-facetted *Kazakhstan Blue Period* (2002-05), just like Picasso's, both a *commedia* and a portrait

≥ **SASHA FROLOVA** ≤≤≤≤≤≤ cat 33 ≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≤≠≠≠≠≠≠ **LYUBOLET** \\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\ 2008 ((((((((((((((((((((((((**********≈≈≈≈ Eau De Nil Latex Inflatable ///////// 450 x 310 x 220 cm }}}

of a nation through the colour it has chosen to represent itself (cat 137). Following architectural models from Soviet Constructivism, Zip Group build the skeleton for a *District of Civil Resistance* (2013-15) while in *Protest Aerobics* (2015), a new performance specially made for the opening of this exhibition, they bring together the very best and worst of East and West.

But here the King, and Queen, of *BALAGAN!!!* is the sorely missed St Petersburg artist Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe (1969-2013) (cats 61-90, 102) presented in a mini-retrospective that can only give a hint of his multifaceted talent. Adopting many different personae, in addition to that of his heroine Marilyn Monroe, and performing political *maquillage* on the faces of others, he romps through the history of Soviet and Russian politics, theatre, literature and fairy tale while starring as both host and performer in *Pirate TV* (1989-92).

A number of artists in this exhibition, however, start from a more documentary position by allowing the ugliness and beauty of the world to speak for itself. In Natalie Maximova's series of 10 photographs *True Self* (2013), the beauty is in the harsh but fulfilled lives of her sitters as she tells the story of different people throughout Russia who have embarked on gender reassignment (cat 91). These sympathetic portraits show each person as they wish to be seen, accompanied by their own words, at a time when, in Russia, officially encouraged homophobia makes such people invisible at best, or more usually 'illegal' and subject to casual violence. Oleg Ustinov's installation *The Administration* (2013) touches on the same subject when he produced and posted official-looking notices, signed simply 'The Administration', that asked residents of housing blocks in in his home town of Rostov-on-Don to look out for and report to the Town Hall any indications of 'sexual abnormality'. Some tried to phone the published telephone number either to make a report or protest but soon the newspapers and television got hold of this story and their incredulous reaction is a part of this work (cat 130).

In his videos *Vatan* (2007) and *Ketsin* (2010) Sharbek Amankul combines poetry with documentary in montages of callousness and waste (cats 5,6). In Kyrgyzstan, where he lives, the poor dump the contents of water bottles they have received from international aid, wasting this precious resource in search of a quick buck for recycling the bottles. Parallel absurdities are shown in the ludicrous, rabble-rousing street violence during the last Kyrgyz revolution in 2010 that, in contrast to the heroism of Eisenstein's revolutionaries in *October* (1928), seems, to an outsider at least, like an overweight soccer hooligans' riot. Balagan Delux!

The complex video installations of Almagul Melibayeva interweave past with present, myth with reality, in an elegy for the environmental despoliation currently taking place throughout Central Asia. In *Transoxiana Dreams* (2011), she interviews fishermen on the Aral Sea who now have to drive over an hour to reach the shoreline and their work because the whole area is turning into a desert (cat 93). In her immersive video frieze *Kurchatov 22* (2012), she visits the wasteland of Semipalatinsk, the former Soviet nuclear test site. As in her other films, she films dereliction and interviews survivors, in this case, relics of the tests and radiation. Woven through their memories and this desolate landscape is the presence of enigmatic female spirits who suggest a seductive, different, parallel world, free from progress and its destruction, in which people and animals would again roam the boundless steppe. Here *BALAGAN* is the world and it is the artist's job is to frame it.

From different generations, perspectives and places, using a panoply of different media, the artists shown in *BALAGAN!!!* like many others before them, have evolved their own views and expressions. Those with a documentary interest choose to embrace the beauty and ugliness of life so that by understanding it better, they may present a truthful view. Others use mimicry to emphasise both the humour and pretension of ugliness: in dogmatic views of nationhood, religion or gender as well as in

≥≥≥ **ARSEN SAVADOV** ≤≤≤≤≤ cat 113 ≠≠≠ **Commedia dell'arte in Crimea** \\\\\ 2012
1 work from a series of 20 ≈≈≈≈ C-print Mounted On Aluminium ///
{{{{{////// 130 x 173 cm }}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}}

the scourges of racism, discrimination, cruelty and callous abuse of the environment.

While many people have no alternative but to live in chaos, there is a great difference between *BALAGAN* as a critical framework and as a chronic state of reality. Unchecked, political, social or economic chaos–*balagan* in life–quickly becomes a vehicle of cruelty or oppression. *BALAGAN!!!* the exhibition puts this under a microscope as artists make evident not only its potential for creativity but also its absurd exploitative, nasty nature.

1. Bojana Pejić, David Elliott, Iris Müller-Westermann *After the Wall. Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe*, Stockholm, Moderna Museet, 1999. This exhibition was also shown at the Ludwig Museum in Budapest and at the Hamburger Bahnhof and Max Liebermann Haus in Berlin.
2. Viktor Misiano, *Progressive Nostalgia. Contemporary Art of the Former USSR*, Moscow, New Museum Foundation, 2007.
3. Bojana Pejić, *Gender Check. Femininity and Masculinity in Eastern Europe*, Vienna, Erste Stiftung, 2009.
4. Sergei Eisenstein's lost film *Bezhin Meadow* (1937), his version of the story of informer-child-martyr Pavlik Morozov at the time of Collectivisation, was never distributed because of its primeval, pagan representations of peasants.
5. Matvei Yankelevich, *Today I Wrote Nothing. The Selected Writings of Daniil Kharms*, New York, Ardis, 2007, p. 25.

!!!

1

++++GROTESQUE\\\\\\ \\\»»REALISM////<

I

FRANÇOIS RABELAIS

HOW GRANDGOUSIER REALISED GARGANTUA'S MARVELLOUS INTELLIGENCE, BY HIS INVENTION OF AN ARSE-WIPE

[Extract]

About the end of Gargantua's fifth year, Grandgousier visited his son, on the way back from his victory over the Canarians, and he was filled with joy, as such a father would be at the sight of such a child. While he kissed and embraced him he asked the boy various childish questions of one kind and another, and he drank quite a bit too, with him and his governesses, of whom he most earnestly inquired whether they had kept him sweet and clean. To this Gargantua answered that he had taken these precautions himself, and that there was not a cleaner boy in all the land. How did you do that?' asked Grandgousier.

'By long and curious experiments,' replied Gargantua. 'I have invented a method of wiping my arse which is the most lordly, the most excellent, and the most convenient that ever was seen. (...) Once I wiped myself on a lady's velvet mask, and I found it good. For the softness of the silk was most voluptuous to my fundament. Another time on one of their hoods, and I found it just as good. Another time on a lady's neckerchief; another time on some ear-flaps of crimson satin. But there were a lot of turdy gilt spangles on them, and they took all the skin off my bottom. May St Anthony's Fire burn the bum-gut of the goldsmith who made them and of the lady who wore them! That trouble passed when I wiped myself on a page's bonnet, all feathered in the Swiss fashion.

'Then, as I was shitting behind a bush, I found a March-born cat; I wiped myself on him, but his claws exulcerated my whole perineum. I healed myself of that next day by wiping myself on my mother's gloves, which were well scented with maljamin. Then I wiped myself with sage, fennel, anise, marjoram, roses, gourde leaves, cabbage, beets, vine shoots, marsh-mallow, mullein – which is as red as your bum – lettuces and spinach-leaves. All this did very good to my legs. Then with dog's mercury, persicaria, nettles and comfrey. But that gave me the bloody-flux of Lombardy, from which I was cured by wiping myself on my codpiece.

'Then I wiped myself on the sheets, the coverlet, the curtains, with a cushion, with the hangings, with a green cloth, with a tablecloth, with a napkin, with a handkerchief, with an overall. And I found more pleasure in a ll those than mangy dogs do when they are combed.'...

[François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Lyon, 1532-64),
The First Book, Chapter 13, London, Penguin Books, 1955, pp. 66-67. (Translated by J.M. Cohen)]

A.

II

PRELUDE TO A SHIT STORM

RABELAIS, BAKHTIN, SHKLOVSKY AND BALAGAN IN CONTEMPORARY ART

BY DAVID ELLIOTT

In our brilliant world, a person is oppressed by the excessiveness and availability of pleasure. We do not deconstruct this but look at it through a magnifying glass that takes us to a new grotesque, hallucinatory level.[1]

B.

The brittle, lapidary brilliance of the 'oppressive world' to which the four Moscow-based artists Tatiana Arzamasova, Lev Evzovich, Evgeny Svyatsky and Vladimir Fridkes, otherwise known as AES+F, refer here is *The Feast of Trimalchio*, 2009, their indulgent, luxurious vision of heaven: an evocation of the decadence of the Roman Empire in contemporary dress. This past-as-present-as-prelude-to-a-shit storm was conceived as the second circle in a Dantesque trilogy of parodies that also encompasses purgatory and hell.[2]

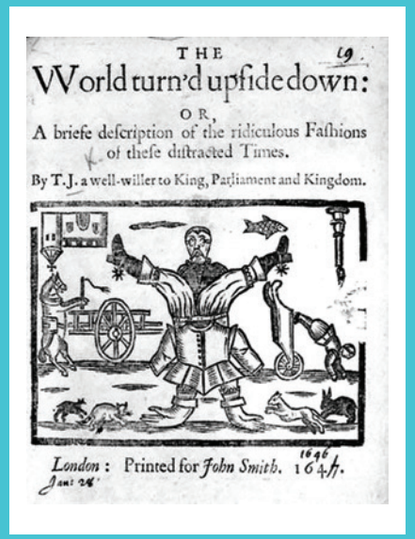
Educated in the Soviet Union, respectively as architects, a designer and a fashion

photographer, and first exhibiting as a group in 1989, as one empire faded and another twitched spastically into life, AES+F slowly began to realise that only through the stratagem of a gigantic allegorical masquerade, acted out on the scale of a grotesque world theatre, could they begin to express the absurdity of what they saw around them. The artists have described the hallucinatory setting of *Inverso Mundus* ('The World Upside Down') [Cat 1], their most recent work, as a 'light-hearted contemporary apocalypse'. But all of their work looks as if it has been made just before, during, or after, an apocalypse.

The disembodied 'apocalyptic', 'multicultural' world presented by AES+F cuts through the miasma of political correctness, described by some as 'post-modern'. This world's primitively viral infrastructure is perpetuated through blind belief in a universal value based on consumption and policed by a system of taboos that creates solidarity through fear.

In an environment increasingly under threat, the danger of violent upheaval of any kind, whether by revolution, (civil) war, or by human or natural disaster, has become an ever-present means of control. Fine words about equality and democracy mask a condition in which wealth is increasingly accumulated into the hands of smaller minorities. And this world is a politics-free zone: distinctions of left, right and centre have become so evidently blurred, blinkered, self-serving and professionalised that their protagonists can no longer convince by their ability to govern equitably or judiciously. As AES+F's recent trilogy – and the setting for *The Feast of Trimalchio* in particular – implies, the present has become a time of slaves, masters and smouldering social discontent, intermittently relieved by riots, bread and circuses. Like the Saturnalia of ancient times, the Grand Magic Theatre that they have created is a festive corrective and safety valve that turns all authority on its head.

C.


THE
World turn'd upside down:
OR,
A briefe description of the ridiculous Fashions of these distracted Times.
By T.J. a well-willer to King, Parliament and Kingdom.
London: Printed for John Smith. 1646 1647.

D.

The Feast of Trimalchio cites Petronius's satirical fiction in a contemporary exposure of nouveau riche consumption through a coruscating parody of high-net-worth paradise.[3] Yet, its tone has perplexed many people because it does not communicate outrage, as, for instance, Jonathan Swift did in his acerbic moral satires. Rather, as in an absurd, picaresque, Rabelaisian novel, AES+F reveal a non-judgemental delight and fascination with the unfolding of each trivial event so that the nature of every magnified detail of excess can be better seen and appreciated. The result is mesmerising, energising and repellent. Whether sitting in the auditorium or hovering in the bars or foyers of this theatre, the viewer is stifled by pleasure and guilt, entrapped within the flickering narratives of the increasingly absurd, aspirational tableaux being played out on the stage.

The premise of AES+F's new work, *Inverso Mundus*, is the reversal of all usual expectations. After a celebratory prelude in which street cleaners defile the city by pumping shit around its streets, a bloodless coup takes place in which the homeless and poor become transformed into the powerful and rich, but played by the same enervated, melancholic actors. Out of this 'class war', the process of transformation is extended to include not only a war of the sexes, as women objectify and torture men in a parody of the Inquisition, but also a war of the generations, as children slug it out with the elderly in ritualised bouts of kick-boxing, and a war of the species, as a vengeful pig becomes king of the abattoir, slaughtering and gutting his previous tormentor. Yet little energy appears to be expended and, as in life, there is a superficial sense that nothing of great importance is taking shape.

The imagery of this work echoes traditional proverbs and sayings, that have frequently been illustrated in popular prints and paintings.[4] In these commentaries, accepted relationships and values are reimagined in a process that literary critic Viktor Shklovsky called *ostranenie* ('estrangement'): the alienation of an act, attitude or consciousness from 'normality' in order to highlight its strangeness or absurdity.[5]

Mindful of the strange 'medieval' mutant flying hybrids that play a supporting role in *Inverso Mundus*, and of the bodies – human, social and political – that are a recurring subject in all their work, AES+F employ estrangement as both a visual and a narrative device. Yet in the 1920s, when Shklovsky was developing this theory and the Soviet Union was struggling to survive, society was forcibly polarised in a way that it is not today. Although, as far as Shklovsky was concerned, the aesthetics of *ostranenie* had little to do

with revolutionary politics, some sought to co-opt it. Educated under Communism, AES+F grew up under *perestroika* and began to realise more keenly than before that the mechanics of power are equally pernicious within whatever system one happens to be enmeshed, and that different strategies are necessary to negotiate one's fate within them.[6] However brilliant, fine or base an idea may be, it cannot be divorced from life and the limitations of the body, whether that of the individual or the body politic. In the alienated aftershock of turbo-charged capitalism, all bodies have become increasingly weak and polluted. This was the starting point for AES+F's work.

In his peripatetic life moving around Russia during the 1930s and '40s, literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895 – 1975) developed an organic and holistic approach to literary aesthetics that, on the principle that it was possible to imagine oneself both inside and outside a system, revolved around the dialogical relationship between power and the body.[7]

A philosopher, critic, semiotician and specialist in the writing and earthy humour of the French Renaissance author François Rabelais, he developed a theory of the 'carnivalesque' that, allowing for the expression of untrammelled joy or extreme pain at different levels, introduced a nuanced flexibility to parody and critique that has become an inspirational model for many contemporary Russian-speaking writers and artists. Instinctively seeking to complement and find alternatives to what they already know, artists continue to interweave a mode of carnival into their work within which many flexible, multifarious bodies can openly express the transformation of their times.[8]

Citing classical satires, such as those of Petronius, that had set their sights

E.

F.

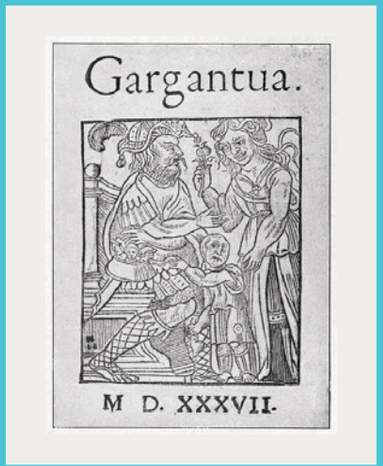
on intellectual attitudes rather than on individuals or entities, but also aware of his own severe physical disabilities and the harassment of the Stalinist era which, like many others, he had to endure, Bakhtin regarded the subversive parodies that characterised the Church throughout the Middle Ages (*parodia sacra*), expressed in such *balagan* festivals as the Feast of Fools or the Feast of the Ass[9], as reaching their unruly climax in the scabrous, eschatological narratives of Rabelais's rambling magnum opus in five parts, collectively entitled *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532–64).[10]

Placing the absurd adventures of these two giants within his newly coined genre of 'carnival laughter', Bakhtin stressed the importance of both its inclusiveness and its ambivalence: '[Carnival laughter] is festive, … universal in scope … directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants, … [It is] ambivalent: gay, triumphant and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives.'[11]

G.

H.

What Bakhtin described as 'grotesque realism', an integral part of the energising carnival, was a significant feature within the early Russian avant-garde and is still an important current in contemporary art. This does not refer to the misshapen proto-surrealism of the 'monsters' or homunculi of Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Brueghel or Francisco Goya, but to a comedy of manners rooted within a fluid, cyclical imaginative matrix that draws together life, belief, thought, emotion, corporality and death. *I Am Not I* (1992), the naked, photographic triptych of self-portraits by Boris Mikhailov [cat 95] clearly reveals this as do the buffoon-baiting antics of Vyacheslav Akunov [cat 4] and the Blue Noses [cats 13-18]. The human surrogate apes of painter Dmitry Gutov [cats 38-39] approach this matter in a more oblique way, as does Olga Chernysheva's beautiful life-size drawing of a contemporary homeless *'Pierrot'* (2015) [cat 25] or Arsen Savadov's enigmatic photopanels of *Commedia dell'Arte in the Crimea* (2012) [cats 112-113]. But nowhere are the hard lessons of grotesque realism more tellingly revealed than in the many personalities of the late Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe, an artist who in every medium, including his own life, celebrated the effectiveness, range, joy and mortal fragility of 'carnival laughter' [cats 61-90, 102].



I.

The oeuvre of AES+F to date is also rooted in this context. Since *The Last Riot* (2007), their first large, photographically animated video projection, the Bakhtinian carnival, a modern cousin of medieval festivals and the *commedia dell'arte*, has become of particular importance for an aesthetic of scepticism, communicated by understated humour, that gives their work both structure and meaning. A combination of *ancien régime* masquerade and the mysterious appearance of a romantic doppelgänger, their contemporary *commedia* has injected an organic energy into the inverted narratives of *Inverso Mundus*.[12]

Within this realm of humour, the eschatological inversion of 'upwards' and 'downwards', assumes, at different levels, topographical, physical, sexual, psychological and religious significance: the former may represent heaven, sky, face, head or mind, while the latter suggests hell, flesh, genitals, buttocks, emotion and birth, as well as the earth that devours (as in a grave) or gives rebirth (as in a seedbed or womb).

Bakhtin regards the existential process of inversion as dependent on the idea of degradation, 'a coming down to earth ... an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time'. For him, 'to degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better'. It also means 'concerning oneself with ... the life of the belly and the reproductive organs', and, by extension, 'to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy and birth'. The organic simultaneity of birth and death, of joy and pain, is central to this idea: 'Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth;

J.

K.

it has not only a destructive, negative aspect but also a regenerating one ... Grotesque realism knows no other level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving.'[13]

The *balagan* spirit of grotesque realism that characterises the works in this exhibition is time-old yet, because of its devotion to the actual present, is also always contemporary. Emanating from a non-national community of collective unconscious, it punctures the grotesque with glimmers of possibilities both better and worse – a celebration and critique of our chaotic matrix: the earthly clay out of which we are all made.

[Adapted from David Elliott, 'The Grand Magic Theatre of the World. AES+F and Inverso Mundus', *001 INVERSO MUNDUS AES + F*, Venice, 56th Biennale di Venezia, 2015, pp. 12-16.]

III

++++++FRANÇOIS RABELAIS/////

How Panurge confounded the Englishman who argued by signs

[Extract]

Then, with everyone attending and listening in perfect silence, the Englishman raised his two hands separately high in the air, clenching all the tips of his fingers in the form that is known in the language of Chinon as the hen's arse, and struck the nails of one against the other four times. Then he opened them and struck the one with the flat of the other, making a sharp noise. Next, clenching them again, as before, he struck twice more and, after opening them, yet another four times. Then he joined them afresh and laid them one beside the other, as if offering up devout prayers to God.

Suddenly Panurge lifted his right hand in the air, and placed his thumb inside his right nostril, holding his four fingers stretched out and arranged in their natural order, parallel to the tip of his nose, shutting his left eye entirely and winking with the right, at the same time deeply depressing his eyebrows and lids. Then, he raised his left hand, widely stretching and extending his four fingers and elevating the thumb, and held it in a line directly continuous with that of the right., the distance between the two being two and a quarter feet. This done, he lowered both hands towards the ground in this same attitude, and finally held them half way up, as if aimed straight at the Englishman's nose.

'And if Mercury…' said the Englishman.

Upon which Panurge interrupted him by saying" 'You have spoken, mask.'…

[François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Lyon, 1532-64), The Second Book, Chapter 19, London, Penguin Books, 1955, pp. 66-67. (Translated by J.M. Cohen)]

L.

A. G. L. Gustave Doré, illustration for Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Paris, Garnier Frères, 1873

B. The Tables Turned: still from AES+F, *Inverso Mundus*, 2015 (cat 1)

C. Jan Steen, *The World Upside Down or Beware of Luxury!* 1663, oil on canvas, 105 x 145 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. [See Note 4]

D. T. J. a well-willer to King, Parliament and Kingdom, *The World Turn'd upside down Or A briefe description of the ridiculous Fashions of these distracted Times*, London, John Smith, 1646. [See Note 9]

E. A world upside down: still from AES+F, *Inverso Mundus*, 2015 (cat 1)

F. Illustrations from François Desprez, *A Collection of the Diversity of Dress*, Richard Breton, Paris, 1564. This book was one of many imitations, commentaries and parodies made by other writers who had been inspired by *Gargantua* at this time

H. Mutant hybrids: still from AES+F, *Inverso Mundus*, 2015 (cat 1)

I. Engraved title page for the 1537 edition of Rabelais' *Gargantua*

J. Torture: stills from AES+F, *Inverso Mundus*, 2015 (cat 1)

K. Abattoir: still from AES+F, *Inverso Mundus*, 2015 (cat 1)

1. AES+F in *AES+F: The Feast of Trimalchio*, Moscow, Garage/Triumph Gallery, 2010, p. 9.
2. Within this trilogy, hell was represented in the three-channel video *The Last Riot*, 2007; heaven in the immersive, panoramic, nine-channel *The Feast of Trimalchio*, 2009; purgatory in the five-channel *Allegoria Sacra*, 2010-11.
3. Gaius Petronius (c.27-66) was a Roman courtier at the time of Nero and thought to be the author of the satirical novel *Satyricon*, of which Trimalchio's feast forms one episode.
4. Ever since popular prints began to be produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, images showing 'the world upside down' have served as humorous ways of passing on common wisdom as well as of criticising human folly and the abuse of political power. In the field of fine art, Pieter Breughel the Elder's (1525-1569) painting *Netherlandish Proverbs* (also known as *The Topsy Turvy World*, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), 1559, provides a humorous and exhaustive checklist of nefariousness and stupidity in the activities of a whole village. This subject was repeated many times, not only by the artist's son but also in different forms in woodcuts and engravings. Jan Steen's (c.1626-1679) later painting *The World Upside Down* (or *Beware of Luxury*), 1663, depicting a house in complete disarray, also adopted what had by then become a popular moral topic.
5. Viktor Shklovsky (1893-1984) was a leading figure in the Formalist School of literary criticism with strong links to Futurism, who first outlined the literary device of *ostranenie* in an essay *Art as Device*, Moscow, 1917. Using the example of Laurence Sterne, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Lev Tolstoy, Vladimir Mayakovsky and other Russian writers, he defined it as a device that engendered social or political criticism by 'removing the automatism of perception'. During the 1920s this idea surfaced in Soviet and German theatre in the form of critical, satirical parody. An extract from his book *Mayakovsky and His Circle* (1941) appears on p. 154.
6. *Perestroika* means 'restructuring' and is associated with the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's campaign for *Glasnost* ('openness') that, from 1986, transformed the political, cultural and social map of the Soviet Union.
7. See Caryl Emerson, 'Shklovsky's ostranenie, Bakhtin's vnenakhodimost (How Distance Serves an Aesthetics of Arousal Differently from an Aesthetics Based on Pain)' in *Poetics Today* 26:4 (Winter 2005), pp. 637-64. Bakhtin suffered a leg amputation in the 1930s which caused him to live with severe pain.
8. Bakhtin's doctoral thesis 'Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance' was completed in the early 1940s but was not accepted. It was eventually published in revised and updated form in Moscow in 1965 as *Rabelais and his World* (see Note 11).
9. Festive parodies and jokes were also part of the traditional ecclesiastical celebrations for Easter and Christmas. Published in England during the Protectorate, an illustrated broadside, *The World Upside Down*, 1646, protested against the policies of Cromwell's Parliament in banning traditional Christmas practices and festivals. AES+F used the text and image from this as source material in developing *Inverso Mundus*.
10. The full title of *Pantagruel*, the first book in the series (though the second in the chronology of the story) was *The Horrible and Terrifying Deeds and Words of the Very Renowned Pantagruel King of the Dipsodes, Son of the Great Giant Gargantua.*
11. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 1984, pp. 11, 12. (Translated by Hélène Iswolsky).
12. The doppelgänger is a ghostly double or counterpoint of a living person that often figures in early nineteenth-century romantic literature. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the significance of the masquerade had begun to change from carnival to commodity. Within this sad chronicle of modern alienation: 'Mask and costume, the sign of joyful exchange between self and other, had to be laid aside and more sober pursuits embraced. By the end of the eighteenth century, this transvaluation of pleasure had, in fact, been achieved: pleasure resided no longer in a magical incorporation of the other, but in a sentimental objectification of the other.' Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilisation: the Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, p. 107.
13. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais* (see Note 11), p. 21.

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»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»» Live and work in Moscow ««««««««««««««««««««««««

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≥≥≥ **VYACHESLAV AKHUNOV** ≤≤≤ **Avenue of "Superstars" (Policy and Clowns)** ≥≥≥ **2015** ≤≤≤

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<<<<<< **SHAARBEK AMANKUL** <<<<<< **Vatan** <<<<<< **2007** <<<<<<

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»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»» Lives and works in Ekaterinburg and Moscow ««««««««««««««««««««««««

»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»» Vyacheslav (Slava) Mizin (Born 1962 in Novosibirsk, USSR) ««««««««««««««««««

»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»» Lives and works in Novosibirsk and Moscow ««««««««««««««««««««««««

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≥≥≥≥≥≥ **YVON CHABROWSKI** ≤≤≤≤≤≤ **Afterimage / Protest** ≥≥≥≥≥≥ **2013** ≤≤≤≤≤≤

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OLGA CHERNYSHEVA **Untitled (Pierrot)** **2015**

cat 25

Charcoal On Paper 167 x 84 cm

Born 1962 in Moscow, USSR

Lives and works in Moscow

≥≥≥≥≥≥ **VALERY CHTAK** ≥≥≥≥≥≥ **A Future is for the Future (detail)** ≥≥≥≥≥≥ **2010** ≥≥≥≥≥≥

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I will be reading you poems,
Millions of poems;

↑↑↑

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GEORGY GURYANOV **Tratoristka** **2002**

cat 35

Oil On Canvas 60 x 40 cm

Born 1961 in Leningrad, USSR – Died 2013 in St Petersburg, Russia

10 ДНЕЙ
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МИР

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≥≥≥≥ **NIKITA KADAN** ≥≥≥≥ **Take the place, you will not be punished** ≥≥≥≥ **2015** ≥≥≥≥

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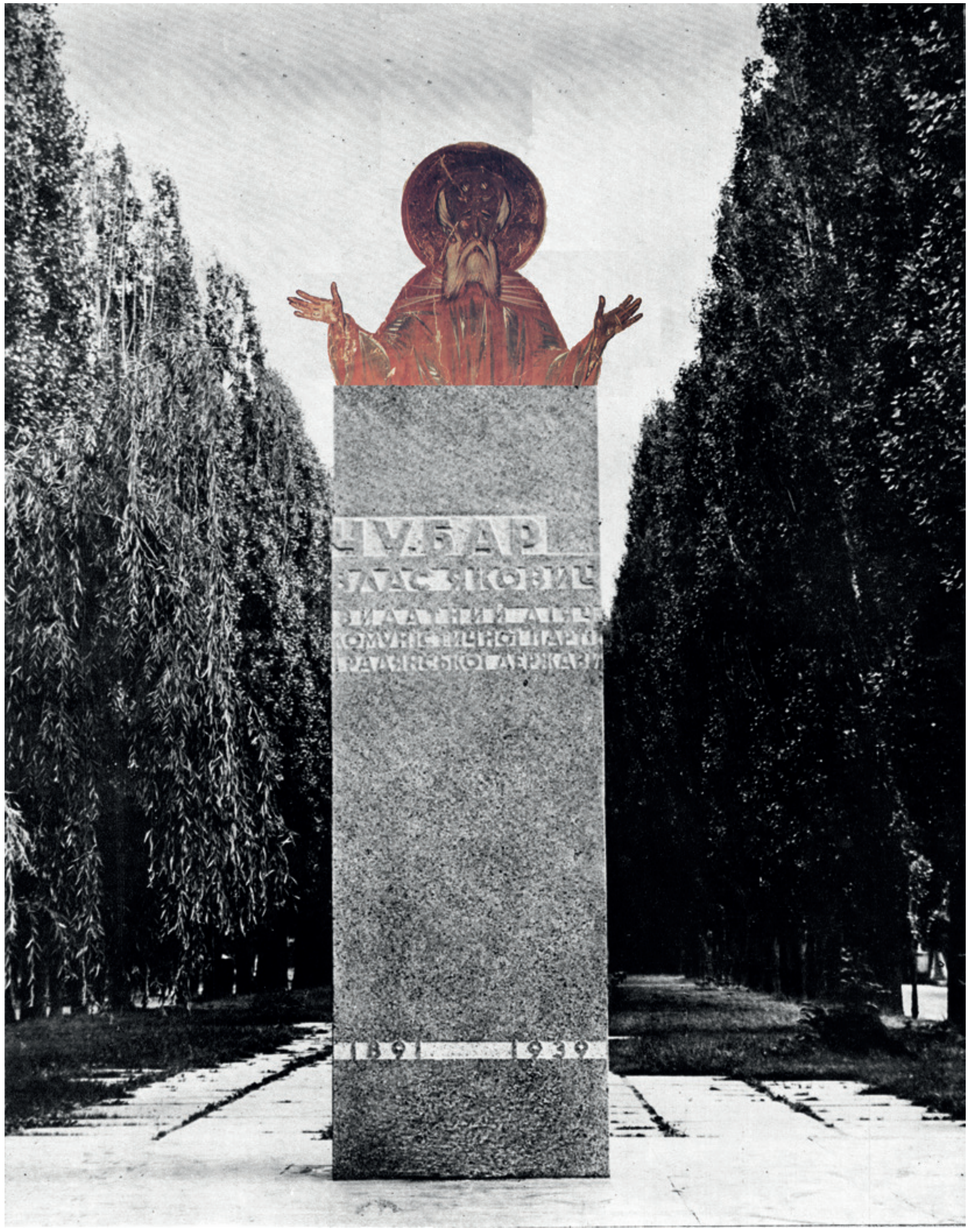
»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»» Lives and works in Kyiv, Ukraine ««««««««««««««««««««««



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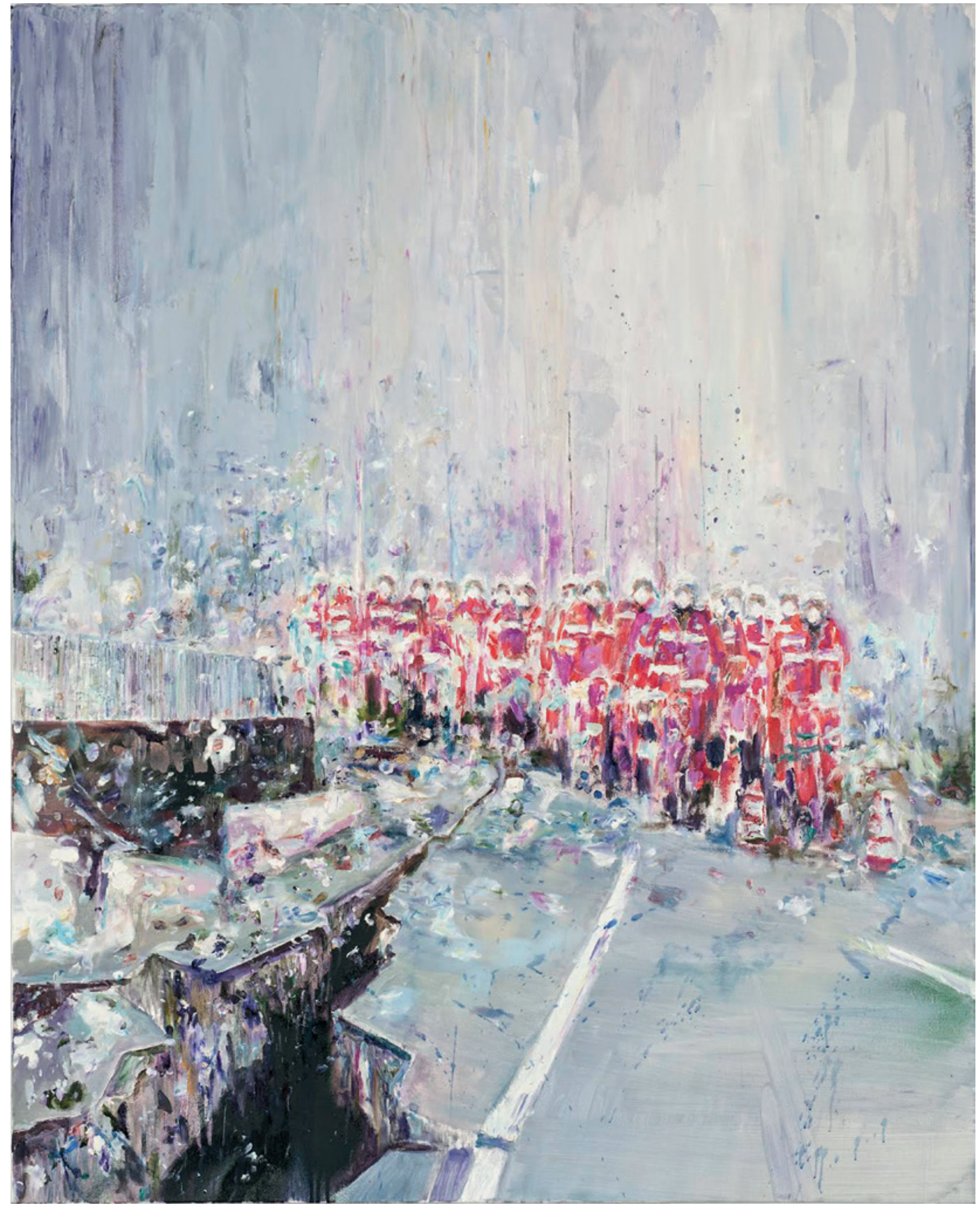

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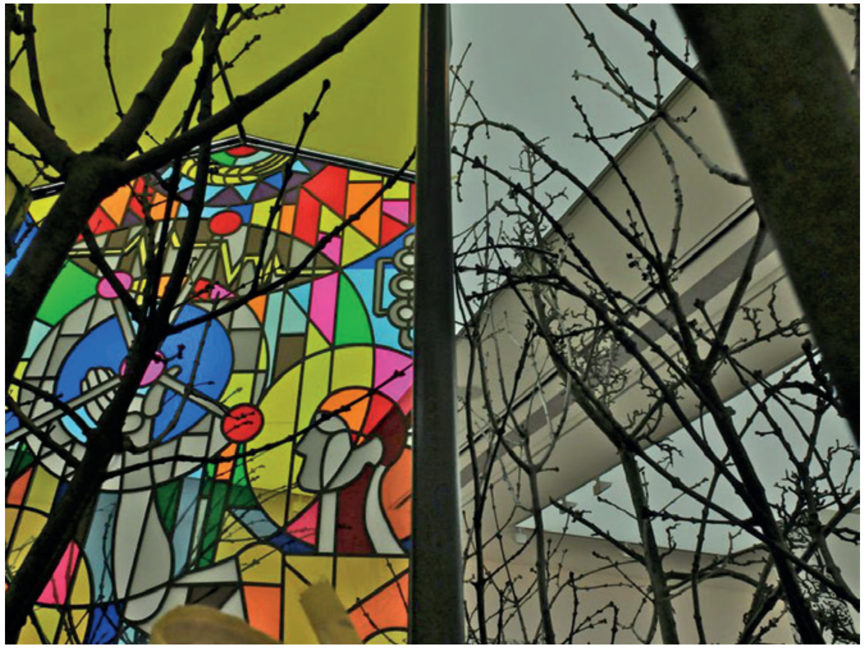
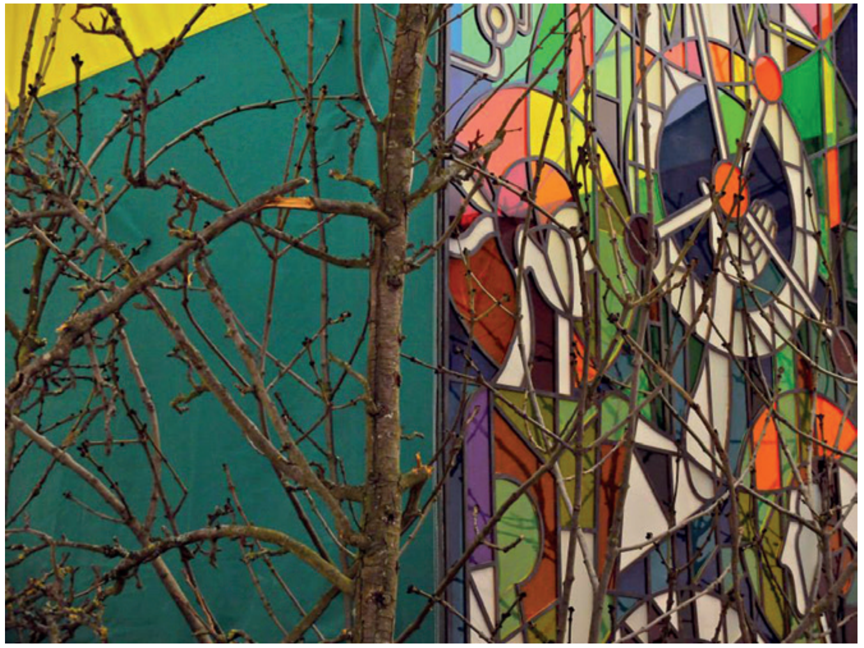




2

>>>BALAGANCHIK\\\\++

I

BALAGANCHIK

Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806) was a prolific eighteenth century Venetian playwright, and soldier, now best remembered for injecting disruptive supernatural, or mythical, elements into his plays as satirical or socially critical glosses. His incorporation of this riotous, popular element into his work energized the flagging talents of an increasingly sclerotic *commedia dell'arte* and helped spread its already well disseminated characters, types and traditions even further afield.

Gozzi was quickly appreciated outside Italy: by Friedrich Schiller, who in 1801 translated his play *Turandot* (1762)–retelling a story from *One Thousand and One Nights*–into German, and by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who staged it in Weimar the following year [cat 40]. Gozzi's version of this tale also provided the basis for Giacomo Puccini's unfinished opera of the same name (first performed in 1926). Gozzi's colourful characters and elaborate plots also provided inspiration for E.T.A. Hoffmann's wild and horrific imaginary tales, as well for the more staid plays of Aleksandr Ostrovsky that consolidated the Russian national repertoire. He also was a role-model for the Russian/Soviet theatre director, dramaturge and actor, Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940), who in 1914 made a free adaptation in Russian of Gozzi's satirical comedy *The Love of Three Oranges* (1761) that, seven years later, was transformed into the, still popular, comic opera by Serge Prokofiev.

In 1910, Meyerhold was working for the stiffly conservative Imperial Theatres in St Petersburg. Finding this stultifying, he decided to invoke the spirit of Gozzi to regenerate the by-then-dull Stanislavskian realism that characterized Russian theatre by creating Doctor Dappertutto,[1] an alter ego that enabled him, simultaneously, to create different kinds of performances in non-official spaces. Unlike his work for the Imperial theatres, stock characters, expressive stylization and unnatural breaks of narrative or logic–as well as an abstract, almost dance-like style of acting that would eventually culminate in his 'biomechanics' of the 1920s[2] –characterized Meyerhold's new, not always successful, productions. The first of these saw light of day at the 'scandalous' premiere of his production of Aleksandr Blok's (1880-1921) short play *Balaganchik* (The Fairground Booth) at Vera Komissarzhevskaya's Theatre in December 1906 that completely dumbfounded the audience. Meyerhold also played, to great acclaim, the lead role of Pierrot, as a poetic, ironical hybrid of fluid dance-like mime.

A.

In *Balaganchik*, Blok moved away from the febrile Symbolism that had characterised his previous work towards a more 'modern' approach that flouted clichés of empathy or sentiment or any other expectations of his audience. In its short broken narrative, the tragic love triangle of Harlequin, Pierrot and Columbine was repeatedly disrupted by the impotent figure of the 'Author' who kept

intruding into the action, complaining that his play had spiraled out of his control, and that the characters had developed wills of their own. A circus clown also intervened and Harlequin added pratfalls to his established bag-of-tricks.

In 1910 Meyerhold played the character of Pierrot for the last time in a different work, the studio-ballet *Carneval*–his only non-speaking, 'dancing' role–choreographed by Michel Fokine (1880-1942) who was also working with Sergei Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. After this, in his cabaret theatre The House of Interludes, Meyerhold immediately started work on *Columbine's Scarf* (1910), another *commedia*, a radically changed adaptation of a ballet-pantomime that Austrian author Arthur Schnitzler had written in the same year with the title *The Veil of Pierrette*.[3]

In Meyerhold's version of this work, however, this tale of thwarted love, jealousy and infidelity was moved away from the cloying background of Biedermeier Vienna, in which Schnitzler had set it, to take the form of a fragmented, gothic grotesque, rather like a Hoffmann short story.[4] Unimpeded, this time, by a complaining 'Author', the action was driven by the gesticulations of a demonic Kapellmeister. An eye-witness of this production described it thus:

B.

C.

'Frivolous Columbine, betrothed to Harlequin, spends a last evening with her devoted Pierrot. As usual, she deceives him, swearing that she loves him. Pierrot proposes a suicide and himself drinks poison. Columbine lacks the courage to follow him and flees in terror to the wedding ball where the guests await her impatiently. The ball begins; then, whilst an old-fashioned quadrille is playing, Pierrot's flapping white sleeve is glimpsed first through the window, then through the doors. The dances, now fast, now slow, turn into an awful nightmare, with strange Hoffmannesque characters whirling to the time of a huge-headed Kapellmeister who sits on a stool and conducts four weird musicians. Columbine's terror reaches such a pitch that she can hide it no longer and she rushes back to Pierrot. Harlequin follows her and when he sees Pierrot's corpse is convinced of his bride's infidelity. He forces her to dine before the corpse of her love-stricken Pierrot. Then he leaves, bolting the door fast. In vain Columbine tries to escape from her prison, from the ghastly dead body. Gradually she succumbs to madness; she whirls in a frenzied dance, then finally drains the deadly cup and falls lifeless beside Pierrot.'[5]

As the self-professed saviour of Russian theatre, Meyerhold now saw himself as the all-powerful Kapellmeister–or ringmaster–of the alternative cabaret-circus he had created. In this new kind of collective theatrical experience, the director was both the creator and the manipulator of effects while the author amounted to little more than a purveyor of raw material upon which 'Doctor Dappertutto' would work his transformative magic. This approach developed and continued throughout Meyerhold's work until the 1930s when it was blocked by the icy chill of Stalinism. It was still clearly evident in the many satirical *balagans*, of different kinds, he produced immediately after the Revolution and throughout the 1920s.

D.

The revival of interest in *commedia dell' arte* in Russia, along with its relatives–puppet shows, pantomime, cabarets, clowning and circus tricks–was part of an impulse that was sweeping across the whole of western culture.[6] Yet, before and during World War I, *Commedia dell'arte* with its origins in folk custom, ritual and magic, along with its creative battery of tricks and grotesquery, became the model for a new, popular, improvisatory theatre that enabled Meyerhold to adapt and re-present classic drama in an entirely new form. At one level, it was a form of escapism, but its increasingly dark inflection also reflected the instability and uncertain mood of this time. He described these theatrical possibilities during 1912, writing in between productions, a substantial essay entitled *Balagan* that researched the origins of theatre and asserted its primacy against the threat of cinema: 'At the present time, when the cinematograph is in the ascendant, the absence of the fairground booth is only apparent. The fairground booth is eternal. Its heroes do not die; they simply change their aspects and assume new forms.'[7] This essay concludes with the following credo: '...when in the art of the grotesque, form triumphs over content, then the soul of the grotesque and the soul of the theatre will be one. The fantastic will exist in its own right on the stage; *joie de vivre* will be discovered in the tragic as well as in the comic; the demonic will be manifested in deepest irony and the tragi-comic in the commonplace; we shall strive for 'stylized improbability', for mysterious allusions, deception and transformation; we shall eradicate the sweetly sentimental from the romantic; the dissonant will sound as perfect harmony, and the common-place of every-day life will be transcended.'[8]

In February 1914, Meyerhold's Theatre Studio published the first number of its new periodical, *The Love of Three Oranges–the Journal of Doctor Dappertutto*, its name derived from Carlo Gozzi's comedy.[9]

At a performance soon after, actors pelted the audience with oranges.

ALEKSANDR BLOK: BALAGANCHIK *(The Fairground Booth)*
Premiere, St Petersburg 30 December 1906

The plot so far...

'(Harlequin puts his hand on Pierrot's shoulder who falls flat on his back and lies motionless in his white overalls on the floor. Harlequin then leads Columbine away by the hand. She smiles at him. General despondency. [The Mystics] hang lifelessly on their chairs, the sleeves of their frock coats have stretched to cover their hands; their heads have disappeared into their collars. It looks as though their coats hang emptily on the chairs. Suddenly, Pierrot jumps up and runs off. The curtains close. At the same moment the dishevelled and agitated Author darts out on the stage in front of the curtain...)

AUTHOR: Kind sirs and madams! I offer you my most profound apologies, but I deny any responsibility! They mock me! I wrote a most realistic play, the essence of which I consider it my duty to set forth before you in a few words: the gist of it concerns the mutual love of two youthful souls. A third person bars their way, the barriers fall away in the end, and the lovers are united forevermore in lawful wedlock! I never decked my heroes out in fool's costumes! Without my knowledge, they have been performing some antiquated legend! I don't acknowledge any legends, myths, or any other such banality! And especially allegorical plays on words: It is indecent to call a woman's braid the scythe of Death![10] That defames the female estate. Kind sirs...

(A hand thrust out from behind the curtain grabs the Author by the collar. He disappears with a scream into the wings. The curtains quickly draw apart. A masked ball. Those with masks circle to the quiet strains of a dance. Among them circulate other figures with masks, knights, ladies, clowns.

A melancholy Pierrot sits in the middle of the stage on the bench, where Venus and Tannhauser usually embrace.)...'[11]

After some time...

'Their dignity is rudely shattered by a clown who runs up and pokes out his tongue at the knight. He strikes him on the head with his sword; the clown collapses over the footlights crying 'Help, I'm bleeding cranberry juice!' and then jumps up and leaves. A leaping, jostling torchlight procession of masks makes its entrance. Harlequin steps from the crowd to greet ...the springtime... And he [then] leaps through the window, but the view is only painted on paper and he falls headlong through the hole.

Death re-appears, a scythe over her back, and all the masks freeze in terror. But Pierrot recognises her again as his Columbine: the scythe fades in the morning light and colour floods her cheeks. They are about to embrace when 'The Author'...pokes his head between them to acclaim the happy ending of his simple tale. As he is joining their hands all the scenery is whisked aloft and Columbine and all the masks disappear. The Author withdraws in hurried confusion, leaving the baffled Pierrot to face the audience alone and play a mournful tune on his pipe.'[12]

The Verdict...

'Truly what took place at Vera Komissarzhevskaya's theatre on the 30th December must be regarded as an insult, not only to the theatre, but also to literature, poetry and dramatic writing; it lies beyond the pale no less of art than of common sense.'

The Theatre Review (Obrozrenie teatrov), St Petersburg, 1907, no. 39, p. 6.[13]

II
DIAGHILEV, STRAVINSKY AND PETRUSHKA

E.

On 13 June 1911, at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, Sergei Diaghilev's increasingly fashionable *Ballets Russes*[14] premiered, to considerable acclaim, *Petrushka*, a Russian ballet-burlesque, choreographed by Michel Fokine who felt he had to struggle with Igor Stravinsky's 'difficult' score.

Set in 1830, during the Shrovetide festivities in St Petersburg, the ballet retells the folk tale of Petrushka–a Russian variant of Italian Pulcinella, English Mr Punch or German Kasper–as a puppet doomed to suffer because he is unable to express love like a human being. The, still embryonic, dissonance of Stravinsky's music combined with the jerky, angular dance of Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950), the star performer of the title role, to express the puppet's anguish and pain with an extraordinary and shocking strength. But the role was also conceived, and enjoyed, as an intentional parody of the traditional choreography of Marius Petipa.

Alexandre Benois, the designer of the ballet, recalled that on encountering Stravinsky's score for the first time:

F.

'What I heard surpassed all my expectations. *The Russian Dance* proved to be really magic music in which infectious, diabolical recklessness alternated with strange digressions into tenderness–then, after a culminating paroxysm, it came to an abrupt end. As for *Petruchka's Cry*, having listened to it about three times, I began to discern

G.

H.

in it grief, and rage, and love, as well as the helpless despair that dominated it.'[15] When he saw the ballet first performed, however, his serious worries that Nijinsky 'did not completely understand what was needed' were completely dissipated: 'I was surprised at the courage Vaslav showed, after all his *jeune premier* successes, in appearing as a horrible half-doll, half-human grotesque. The great difficulty of Petrushka's part is to express his pitiful oppression and his hopeless efforts to achieve human dignity *without ceasing to be a puppet…*'[16]

The frequent variations of rhythm that typify the music of *Petrushka*, provided a basis for Stravinsky's next major work for Diaghilev, the brutal sacrifice of *The Rite of Spring* (1913) in which Nijinsky also performed. Even in this early form they injected a primordial element of struggle into the spectacle. Somewhat perversely, Stravinsky described his approach to its musical structure as a battle between the movement and the musicians: 'I had in mind the distinct picture of a puppet suddenly endowed with life, exasperating the patience of the orchestra with diabolical cascades of arpeggios. The orchestra in turn retaliates with menacing trumpet blasts'.[17]

I.

III
COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

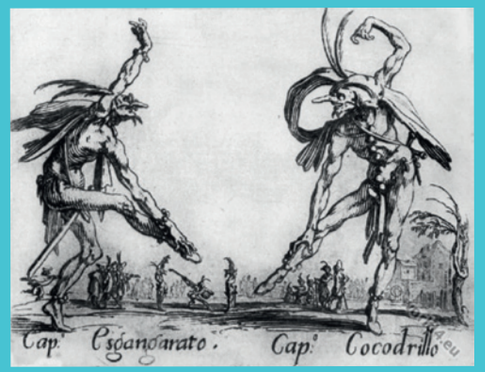
J.

Satire is dependent on the recognition of certain typical behavioral or physical features–types–as expressive of common social or personal characteristics; the structure and humour of *commedia dell'arte* is also based on this consonance. By the sixteenth century, François Rabelais, and many other writers, had made such references in an untrammelled, uproarious way; this coalescence of popular visual, literary and theatrical forms fed into the *commedia,* as well as into later forms of satire, caricature, absurdism and parody.

And where would Radio and TV soap operas or situation comedies be today without a liberal larding of such types?

In his erudite introduction to *The Memoirs of Count Carlo Gozzi*, English poet John Addington Symons, literary critic, translator, and historian of homosexuality, describes the history, character and types of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* and pantomime and recounts how these have influenced popular theatre elsewhere.[18] [DE]

'Let us watch the carnival procession of the masks defile before us. (...) First comes Pantalone, the worthy Venetian merchant, good-hearted, shrewd, and canny, yet preserving a certain child-like simplicity, which long acquaintance with the world has not contaminated. (...) Pantalone wears a black mantle, woollen cap, short trousers, socks and slippers of bright red. A black



K.

domino conceals half of his face. He is sometimes a bachelor, but more frequently a widower with one daughter, who engrosses all his time and care. Easy-going indulgence for the foibles of his neighbours, combined with homely mother-wit, is the fundamental note of his character. But as time goes on, he degenerates, dotes, yields to senile vices. At last he becomes the shuffling slippered Pantaloon of our Christmas pantomimes.[19]

After Pantaloon walks the Doctor in his Bologna gown; a hideous black mask covers

his whole face, smudged with red patches, like skin-disease or wine-stains, on the cheeks. He is Graziano, Baloardo Graziano, or Prudentio, and has a kind of bastard brother called the Dottor Balanzon Lombardo. Boasting his D.C.L. or M.D. or LL.D. degree from the august University, Graziano makes a vast parade of learning. *Bononia docet* is always on his lips or in his thoughts;[20] yet he cannot open his mouth without letting fall some palpable absurdity. Law jargon, quibbles, quiddities, preposterous syllogisms, fragments of distorted Latin, misapplied quotations from the Pandects, mingle with metaphysics, astrology, and physical chimæras about the spheres and elements and humours, in his talk. He is a walking caricature of learning, and

L.

the low stupid cunning of his nature contrasts with the vain pomp he makes of erudition. To sustain this mask with spirit taxed the genius of a comedian. He had to keep a voluminous repertory of pedantic lumber always ready, to blunder with wit and pun in paradoxes, seasoning the whole with broad Bolognese dialect and plebeian phrases.

Pantalone and the Doctor were only half-masks; that is to say, they held something in common with the stationary characters of written comedy, and took a decided part in the action of the play. (...)

Next come the two Zanni. These are thorough-going masks; twin-brothers from the country-side of Bergamo, strongly contrasted in their characters, yet holding certain points in common.[21] First comes Arlecchino, the eldest and most typical of Italian masks, and the one who has preserved its outlines to the present day. His party-coloured, tight-fitting suit reproduces the rags and patches of a rustic servant. On his head is a little round cap, with a tuft made out of a hare's or rabbit's scut. He is always on the move, light-headed, gluttonous, gay, pliable, credulous, ingenuously naive and silly. The glittering ubiquitous Harlequin of our pantomimes transforms him into a mute ballet-dancer; but when the type was created, Arlecchino spoke and amused the audience as much by his absurdities and uncouth jokes as by his perpetual mobility. (...)

Side by side with Arlecchino goes his more astute and knavish brother Brighella. He is also Bergamasque of the purest breed... He is the roguish, clever, cowardly, pimping servant of the young spendthrift, who helps

his master to deceive his father and seduce his neighbour's wife or daughter. Brighella wears a loose white shirt trimmed with green, and wide white trousers. On his head is a conical hat, plumed with red feathers, which yields place in course of time to the white cap of our clowns. His mask is brown, cut off above the upper lip, over which a pair of short moustachios bristle. Like Arlecchino, Brighella gave birth to a great variety of assimilated types. Unscrupulous Pedrolino, Beltramo, Bagolino, Frontino, Sganarello, Mascarillo, Figaro, Finocchio, Fantino, Gradellino, Traccagnino are his more or less legitimate offspring. He enters French comedy under the names of Scapin, Sganarelle, and Frontin. He creates a character of opera with Figaro. Unlike Arlecchino, who becomes at last a silent ballet-dancer, Brighella grows more vocal and distinct as time advances, until, in the plays of Molière and Beaumarchais, he is hardly distinguishable from a *servus* of Latin comedy modernised. Indeed, just as Pantalone and Il Dottore approximate to the *senes*, so Arlecchino and Brighella shade off into the *servi*; and all their countless progeny are variations on the theme of stupid or roguish varlets.

M.

The four main masks, with their attendant groups of subordinates, have passed before us; but a multitude whom no man can number and no words can describe press on from behind. Perhaps the first place should be given to the *Servetta*. Her names are legion. Colombina, the sweetheart of Arlecchino and Pulcinella, Rosetta, Florentine Pasquella, Argentina, Diamantina, Venetian Smeraldina, Saporita, Carmosina; under all her titles, and with every shade of character ascribed to her by the free handling of successive actresses, she remains the sprightly, witty, shifty pendant to the Zanni. Not a true mask, however; for the Servetta wears her own face and form, only assuming the costume and dialect of the region she prefers to hail from. Like her lover Arlecchino, Colombina underwent a long series of transformations before she became the fairy-like being who flits behind the footlights of our theatres on winter evenings. And, like Brighella, written comedy blended her with the fixed characters of drama under the name of the soubrette. Susanna in the *Nozze di Figaro* is a familiar example of Colombina in her latest dramatic development.

The *Servette* in their many-coloured *Contadina* dresses have passed by. Close upon their heels press forward a chattering grimacing group from Naples. Pulcinella leads the way, for he must still keep Colombina in sight. In him, far more than in Arlecchino, the genius of a nation lives incarnate; and this he partly owes to a poor artisan of Naples, Francesco Cerlone, who fixed the type with inimitable humour in the last century.[22] Pulcinella has had whole volumes written on his pedigree. Some authors find him depicted on the walls of Pompeii; others trace him in statuettes and masks of antiquity. The one point which seems to be certain is, that he made his appearance on the public stage toward the end of the sixteenth century, wearing the white shirt and breeches of a rustic from Acerra. His black mask, long nose, humpback, protruding stomach, dagger and truncheon, were later additions. Whatever connection there may be between Pulcinella and the masks of classical antiquity... he was, at his début, regarded as the type of a Campanian villager, established at Naples in the quality of servant. Pulcinella is thus the Southern analogue of Bergamasque Brighella and Arlecchino. Gradually he absorbed the humours of the Neapolitan proletariat, and became the burlesque mirror of their manners and ways of thinking. Time's whirligig has made him the hero of our puppet-shows, and he enjoys cosmopolitan celebrity under the name of Punch.

N.

O.

Coviello goes along with him, a Calabrian mask, which was sustained with applause by Salvator Rosa at Rome. He belongs to the buffoon class, and is distinguished by his mandolin and ballad-singing. After him walks Tartaglia, afflicted with an incurable stammer, which renders his magisterial airs and graces ludicrous. Tartaglia has something in him of the Doctor; but this part lent itself to great varieties of treatment...

But now our ears are deafened with a clash of arms, rumbling of drums, pistol-shots, and shouted execrations. A fantastic extravagant troop of soldiers march upon the stage. At their head goes the swaggering Capitano.

P.

He is a Spaniard, armed to the teeth, loaded with outlandish weapons, twirling huge moustachios, frowning, swearing, boasting, quarrelling, thieving, wenching, and shrinking into corners when he meets a man of courage. Sometimes he affects the melancholy grandeur of Don Quixote. Sometimes he leans to the garrulity of Bobadil. Sometimes he assumes the serious ferocity of a brigand chief or the haughty punctiliousness of a hidalgo. Still he remains at bottom the caricature of professional soldiers, as they plagued and infested Italy under the Spanish domination. His language soars into the wildest hyperboles and euphuisms. He cannot speak without new-coined oaths and frothy metaphors and vaunts that shake heaven, earth, and sea. But the slightest trial of his valour breaks the bubble, and he cringes like a whipped hound. (...)

Q.

In the rabble which follows this noisy band ... we discern several buffoons of the long-robed tribe–Neapolitan Pancrazio, Biscegliese, and Cucuzzietto, Sienese Cassandro and Roman Cassandrino–who have more or less affinity with the Dottore. Il Pedante walks apart, and attracts attention by his Maccaronic Latin and eccentric morals. He has the poems of Fidenzio Glottogrysio in his hands, which he presses on the attention of a smooth-chinned pupil.[23] Don Fastidio distinguishes himself from the vulgar herd by his enormous nose, and lantern jaws, and long lean figure, and

preposterous citations from the law reports of Naples. Cavicchio tells silly tales and sings his Norcian songs. Il Desávedo burlesques the 'dude' of Parma, and Narcisino plays the 'masher' of Bologna to the life. Burattino comes upon the stage in a score of disguises, now gardener, now shopkeeper, now valet, always the fool and knave combined, impostor and imposed on.[24] The Notajo, with huge spectacles upon his nose and swan's quill stuck behind his spreading ears, murmuring a nasal drawl, and tripping himself up at every step in his long skirts, leads up the rear. Rope-dancers, ballerini, Pasquarielli, Pierrots, conclude the show, dancing and pirouetting after their more vocal comrades.

It is impossible, in a sketch like this, to do justice to the manifold and motley crowd of the Italian masks... The mask, the traditional character, was something which a comedian assumed; but he dealt with it as he found it suited to his physical and mental qualities. Each distinguished actor re-created the part he represented. The improvised extempore rule of the game allowed him boundless license...

Intrigue of a simple kind formed the staple of these improvised comedies...The plot, whether borrowed from the written drama, from Latin plays, or from the gossip of the market-place, was always of an amorous complexion. Fathers, lovers, guardians, varlets, priests, and panders played their parts in it. The action proceeded by means of disguises, sleeping-potions, changelings, pirates, sudden recognitions of lost relatives, phantoms, demoniacal possessions, burlesque exorcisms, shipwrecks, sacks of cities, bandits, kidnapped children. It is singular in what a narrow circle the machinery revolves. Unlike our own Romantic drama, the *Commedia dell' Arte* made but few excursions into the regions of history, fable, mythology, and fancy. Its scene was an Italian piazza; and though we hear of thrilling adventures by land and sea, in forest and on fell, these are only used to loose a knot or to elucidate the transformation of some personage. We ought not to marvel at the limitations of this drama. They are explained

R.

by that close connection, on which I have already insisted, between the *Commedia dell'Arte* and the *Commedia Erudita*. The new comedy supplied little but its masks; and these masks, as we have seen, were types of bourgeois and rustic characters, capable of infinite modification within prescribed boundaries. The end in view was not the delectation of the audience by a scenic drama, but the caricature and travesty of life as it appeared to every one. That caricature,

executed with inexhaustible finesse and piquant sallies of fresh personality, accommodated itself to the antiquated framework of plots as old as Plautus.

If the *Commedia dell' Arte* lacked fancy and invention in its ground-themes, this defect was compensated by audacious realism and Gargantuan humour. The indecency of these plays cannot be described. Men and women appeared naked on the stage. Unmentionable vices were boldly paraded. Buffoonery of the vilest description enhanced the finest strokes of burlesque sarcasm. Actors who created types which made the spirit of a nation live in effigy, condescended to tricks unworthy of a Yahoo. We have to accept the species, not as a branch of the legitimate drama, but as a carnival masquerade, in which humanity ran riot, jeering at its own indignities and foibles.

A. Meyerhold in the role of Pierrot for *Balaganchik*, St Petersburg 1906
B. Unknown photographer, Two men in Pierrot fancy dress for a ball, 1880s
C. Boris Grigoriev, *Portrait of Meyerhold (in the roles of Pierrot and Dr Dappertutto)*, 1916, oil on canvas, 247 x 168 cm, State Russian Museum, St Petersburg
D. Photo-studio Jaeger, Michel Fokine (Harlequin) and Vera Fokina (Chiarina) in Fokine's ballet *Carnaval* for the Imperial Ballet, Pavlovsk, 1910. Costumes designed by Léon Bakst. (Meyerhold played the role of Pierrot in this production).
E. Sergei Diaghilev, Vaslav Nijinsky and Igor Stravinsky, c. 1912
F. Nijinsky in the role of *Petrushka*, at the première Paris, 1911. Costume designed by Alexandre Benois.
G. The principal characters from *Petrushka* from the programme of the Ballets Russes, 1912
H. Nijinsky as *Petrushka*, 1911
I. Lydia Lopokova as *Columbine* in Petrushka, Paris 1911
J. K. Jacques Callot (1592-1635), from the album of etchings *The Dances Called Sfessania: Pantaloons Dancing*, 1621
L. Maurice Sand, *Pantalone from Masques et bouffons (comédie italienne)*, Paris, A. Levy, 1860
M. *Columbina* by Maurice Sand
N. Henri Bonnart, *Polichinelle*, coloured engraving, Paris, c. 1650
O. *Pulcinella* by Maurice Sand
P. *Scaramouche* by Maurice Sand
Q. Jumping Jack paper dolls: *Clown*, Paluzie, Barcelona; *Arlequin (Pantin)*, Épinal, mid-19th- century
R. Dyer Senior, *Mr Ellar as Harlequin*, colour engraving, London, 1829
S. Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1727-1804), *The Burial of Punchinello* c. 1800, pen, brown ink, yellow wash, over black chalk, 35.3 x 47.3 cm, Robert Lehman Collection

S.

1. The name Dappertutto, that means 'Everywhere' in Italian, was taken from one of the characters in E.T.A. Hoffmann's story *Adventure on New Year's Eve*.
2. For biomechanics see Edward Braun, *The Theatre of Meyerhold*, London, Eyre Methuen, 1979, pp. 166-68.
3. Theatre director Aleksandr Tairov (1885-1950), a former pupil of Meyerhold, used the same text by Schnitzler for his more faithful versions of *The Veil of Pierrette* produced in 1913 and 1916.
4. A grotesque is a comedy that ends in disillusionment.
5. Ye Znosko-Borovsky, *Russky teatre nachala XX veka*, Prague, 1925, pp. 311-12, cited in Edward Braun, *The Theatre of Meyerhold. Revolution on the Modern Stage*, London, Eyre Methuen, 1979, p. 102-03. (Translated from Russian by Edward Braun).
6. See Martin Green & John Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot. The Commedia dell'Arte and the Modern Imagination*, London, Macmillan, 1993.
7. According to Braun, this essay was probably started in 1911 and finished in 1913. It appears translated by him into English as 'The Fairground Booth' in Edward Braun, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, London, Eyre Methuen, 1969, pp. 119-142. This quotation is on p. 134.
8. Ibid, p.142.
9. Meyerhold (with Vladimir Solovyov and Konstantin Vogak) also published their adaptation in Russian of this play in this first issue. Edward Braun, *The Theatre of Meyerhold*, op. cit., p. 126.
10. The Russian word kosa means both 'braid of hair' and 'scythe'.
11. From Aleksandr Blok's short play *Balaganchik* (translated variously as The Fairground Booth and A Puppet Show) (St Petersburg, 1906), in 'Aleksandr Blok's Trilogy Lyric Dramas', London, Routledge, 2003, pp. 26-27. (Edited and translated by Timothy C. Westphalen).
12. Edward Braun, *The Theatre of Meyerhold*, op. cit., pp. 67-8.
13. Translated by Braun, ibid, p. 72.
14. Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929) was a Russian art critic, founder of the association and journal *World of Art*, patron, ballet impresario, and founding director of the influential Ballet Russes (1909-1929) that commissioned many new works from leading composers, choreographers and artists and performed widely throughout Europe and the Americas.
15. Alexandre Benois (1870-1960), *Memoirs* (Vol 1), London, Chatto and Windus, 1960, p.327. (Translated by Moira Budberg).
16. Alexandre Benois, *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet*, London, Putnam, 1941, pp. 337-38. (Translated by Mary Britnieva).
17. Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), *An Autobiography* (1903-1934), London, Calder & Boyars, 1975, p. 31.
18. John Addington Symons (1840 -1893), 'Introduction (parts VII and VIII),' *The Memoirs of Count Carlo Gozzi*, Vol. 1, New York, Scribner & Welford, 1890.
19. It is singular thaat Shakespeare, who uses Pantalone as the symbol of old age in *As You Like It*, knew him already in decrepitude.
20. *Bononia docet* is Latin for 'Bologna teaches' which refers to the University of Bologna being the oldest and most important in Europe for the study of law.
21. It was my good fortune, while writing these pages at Davos in the summer of 1888, to become acquainted with two brothers from Bergamo who were living representatives of the Zanni. They had come to help at the hay-harvest, leaving their own farm in the Bergamasque hills. Brighella's wit and knavery amused me. I marvelled at Arlecchino's simplicity and suppleness.
22. Scherillo, in his *Commedia dell' Arte*, has resuscitated Cerlone's fame, as Maurice Sand made us acquainted with Beolco.
23. For a short notice of these curious Maccaronic poems, *I Cantici di Fidentio Glottogrysio Ludimagistro*, see *My Renaissance in Italy*, vol. v. p. 328. The obscurity of their jargon veiled considerable indecency. It is noticeable that this book, now exceedingly rare, should have become the text-book of the Pedante.
24. Burattino is so kaleidoscopic that at last he becomes the patronymic hero of marionettes in Italy. *I Burattini* are the acting dolls.

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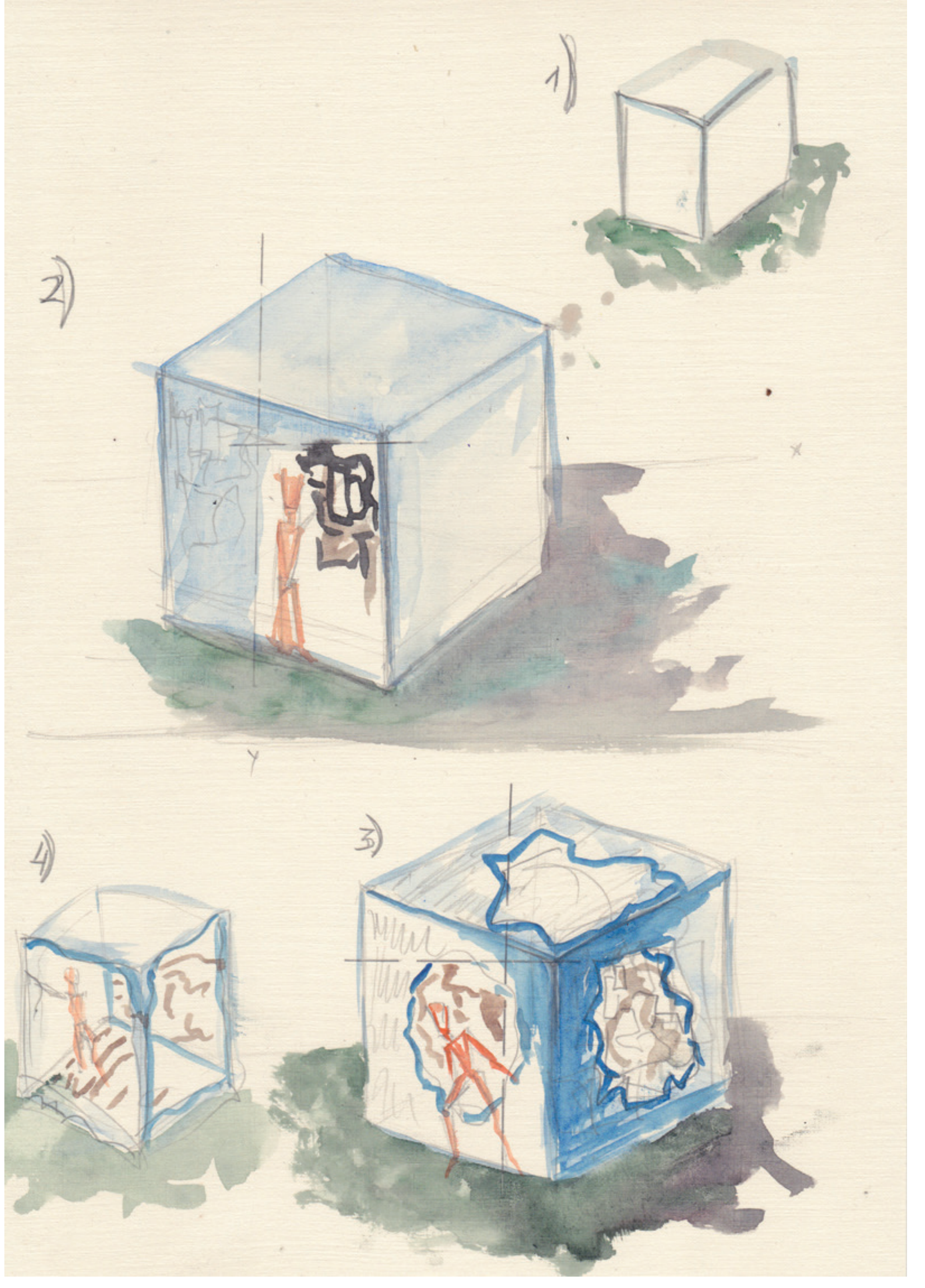

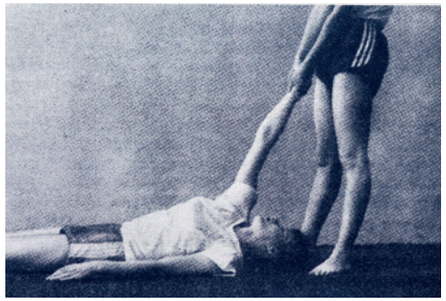
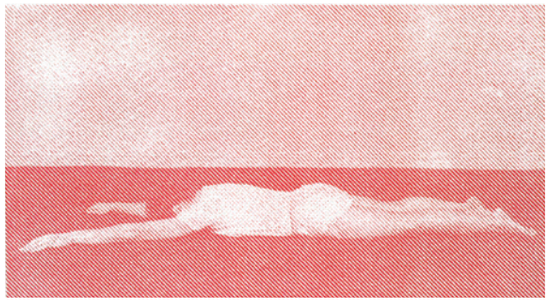
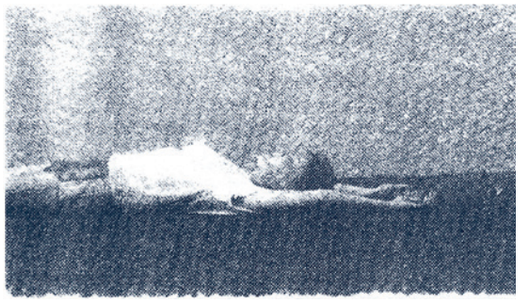
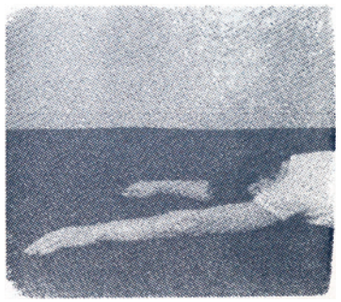

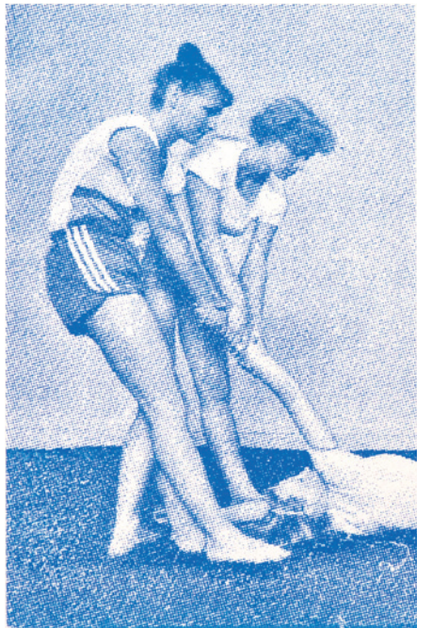

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СОЛОВЬЕВ

Джокулакиз Алексеевич
КУНАЕВ

Егор Кузьмич
ЛИГАЧЕВ

Андрей Андреевич
ГРОМЫКО

Николай Никитович
СЛЮНЬКОВ

Виктор Михайлович
ЧЕБРИКОВ

Владимир Иванович
ДОЛГИХ

Николай Владимирович
ТАЛЫЗИН

Михаил Сергеевич
СОЛОМЕНЦЕВ

Сергей Леонидович
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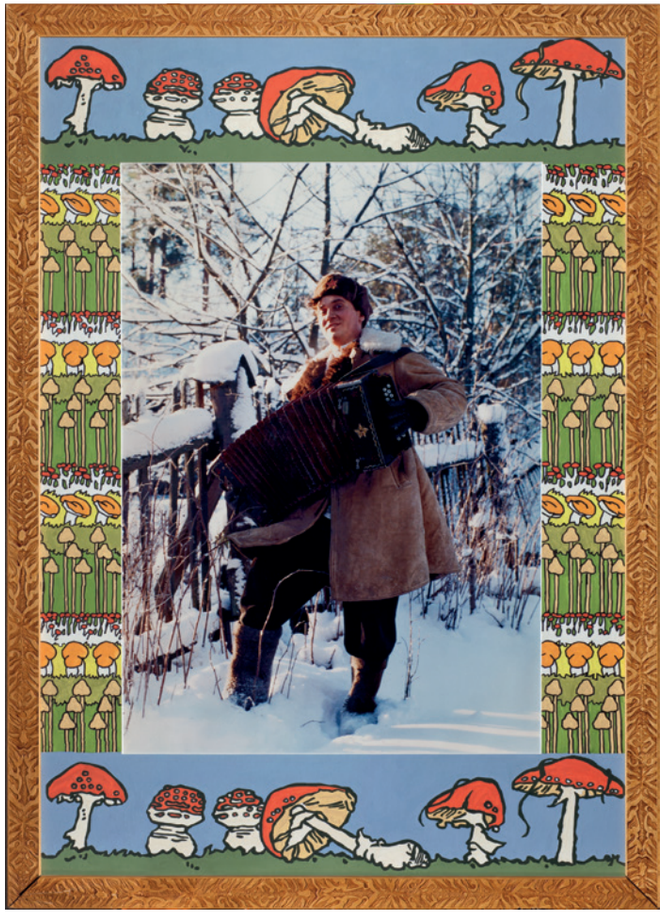

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3

///>. PRIMITIVE AVANT-GARDE ++++

I

SCYTHIANS, DONKEYS AND OTHERS

At the turn of the nineteenth century Russia was, like many other parts of Europe, both captivated and terrified by the effects of modernisation. As the population exploded, people migrated to the cities in search of work. Capitalism was violently remodelling society but, for the majority, opportunity was overshadowed by poverty. Alienation and rootlessness characterised everyday life; people reacted with utopian fantasies of equality or, at least, of better times in the future. But their minds also ran in the opposite direction, towards a shared, 'primitive' past, rooted in the mists of history, when food was plentiful and the enjoyment of 'art' was still part of popular life. Both impulses–looking forwards and backwards–took many forms, but in Russia, they were brought together in the oxymoron of a primitive avant-garde.

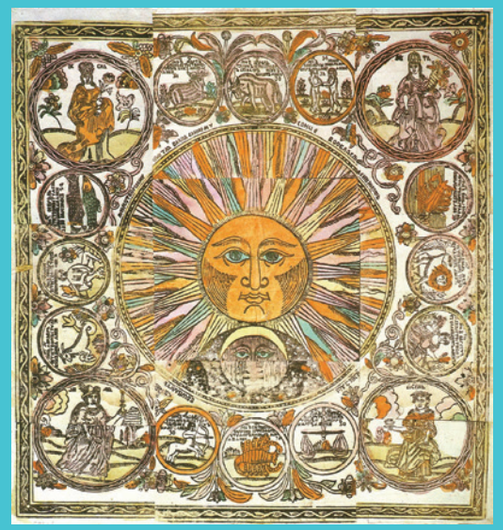
Sixty years earlier in Britain, the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, along with Augustus Pugin's Gothic Revival in architecture and William Morris & Co.'s devotion to craft, design and the vernacular, had promoted a medievalist revival but, by the turn of the century, this seemed, at worst, cloyingly sentimental, at best, picturesque and passé. Among young visual artists and poets across Europe, there was a burgeoning interest in *ancient* 'primitive' and *ageless* folk art because both were beyond categorisation and free from academicism or pretension. But in the semi-Asiatic Russian Empire, clamped onto the North-eastern extremities of Europe, the primitive past also evoked alarming, masochistically seductive, memories of successive waves of Asiatic invasion. This abstract, rarefied horror, however, was quite different from the nationalist, racist emotions of fear, hate and aggression felt by some people today against the job-consuming, *gastarbeiter* 'invaders' who still arrive from Central Asia.[1]

A.

From around 1910, the ancient culture of the Scythians (600 BCE-300 CE) fascinated Russian Futurist artists and writers because of its energy. These war-like nomads had, like many others, originated from the steppes of eastern Asia, and ended up in parts of southern Russia; their art and gold jewellery, however, were distinguished by a robustness

B.

heavily influenced by classical Greek art. No one has captured the equivocality of the Russian fascination with Scythia more clearly than the Petrograd-based poet and playwright Aleksandr Blok who, in his poem *Scythians* (1918), not without racist slur, depicted their culture as halfway between Mongolian barbarism and Russian sensitivity:



C.

Millions are you–and hosts, yea hosts, are we,
And we shall fight if war you want, take heed.
Yes, we are Scythians, leafs of the Asian tree,
Our slanted eyes are bright aglow with greed.

Ages for you, for us the briefest space,
We raised the shield up as your humble lieges
To shelter you, the European race
From the Mongolians' savage raid and sieges…[2]

In contrast to the sparse culture of the Mongolians, who had invaded Europe and 'Russia' in the 13th century and were obliged to spread themselves extremely thinly to cover such vast territories, the older carvings, artefacts, and jewellery of the extinct Scythians seemed both more substantial and less alien.

D.

This combination of 'barbarity' with refinement undoubtedly persuaded David Burliuk (1882-1967), with his brothers Vladimir (1886-1917) and Nikolai (1890-1920), to call the group of avant-garde writers and artists they formed in Moscow in 1910 *Hylaea*, in honour of a former Scythian settlement on their family estate in southern Ukraine.[3] This form of referential primitivism, however, quickly coalesced into anti-establishment *épatage* as evinced in their collaborative book *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste: In Defence of Free Art* (1912)[4] that baldly declared 'We alone are the face of our time. Through us the horn of time blows in the art of the world…Throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy etc, etc. overboard from the ship of Modernity. He who does not forget his first love will not recognise his last…'

The avant-garde artists of the *Donkey's Tail* Group (1912), many of whose members overlapped with *Hylaea*, took their name from the apocryphal story of a painting made by a donkey's tail that had been exhibited and 'admired' in the juryless Paris *Salon des Indépendents*.[5] Paintings by animals, small children, or untutored amateurs could all be regarded as attractive combinations of innocence with freshness–another kind of 'primitive'. Ironically, these artists echoed the sentiments of *A Slap in the Face…* as they used their encounters with fragments of past and present–ancient fertility carvings, popular prints, folk embroideries, children's art and commercial signs–to create new visual languages and subjects that did not refer to conventional art.

The primitive alterity of antiquity and folk art could not only be used as a weapon against the pretentiousness of the present but was also a tabula rasa that enabled these artists to collect their ideas and then move on.

II

ZAUM: PRIMAL WORDS, NEW FORMS

The development of poetry followed a similar path. *Zaum*, an invented word — meaning 'trans-sense' or 'beyond sense' — was coined by members of the *Hylaea* group to describe forms of communication with no clear meaning. To achieve this they reoriented the building blocks of language in primal, repetitive or non-conventional ways. The poets Velimir Khlebnikov and Aleksei Kruchenykh were the earliest proponents of *zaum*, but once they had published their work, the idea was rapidly disseminated.

Primeval yet new, the idea of shoehorning conflicting elements of sound, language and visuality into a single *Gesamtkunstwerk* fed into the non-logical plots, language, music and design of two new plays: *Victory over the Sun* and *Vladimir Mayakovsky, A Tragedy*. Both were first performed together on December 1913, in the same hall in St Petersburg that, exactly seven years earlier, had hosted Blok and Meyerhold's *Balaganchik*. Malevich's famous *Black Square* made its first appearance as a backdrop in *Victory over the Sun* and undoubtedly here its implication was martial and destructive. Two years later, when the same motif appeared in an easel painting, Malevich declared it to be the 'face of the new art… the first step of pure creation.'[6]

The principle of primitive anti-rationalism that characterised these two plays became, from this point, a defining element in Russian Cubo-Futurism. It figured in artists' paintings, collages and objects as well as in their poems, plays, books, music and sound.[7] Khlebnikov's experimental poem *Incantation by Laughter (Zaklyatye Smekhom)*, written in 1910, was one of the first to combine, within a rhythmical form, recognisable words with new derivatives. The earliest 'pure' use of *zaum*, however, appeared in Kruchenych's poem *Dyr bul shchyl* (1913), published as a written scrawl on the first text page of *Pomade*, a hand-made collected edition of his poems illustrated by Mikhail Larionov.

The divorce of words from meaning was mirrored in art by the idea of non-objectivity (as opposed to abstraction) being pursued at this time by Malevich, Tatlin, Rozanova, Rodchenko and many others. This was not dependent on taking motifs from nature but on inventing totally new forms and relationships between them that made no reference to things or to conventional forms of perception. [DE]

III

INCANTATION BY LAUGHTER (1910)[8]

VELIMIR KHLEBNIKOV

O laugh it out, you laughsters!

O laugh it up, you laughsters!

So they laugh with laughters, so they laugherise delaughly.

O laugh it up belaughably!

O the laughingstock of the laughed-upon – the laugh of belaughed laughsters!

O laugh it out round laughingly, the laugh of laughed-at laughians!

Laugherino, laugherino,

Laughify, laughicate, laugholets, laugholets,

Laughikins, laughikins,

O laugh it out, you laughsters!

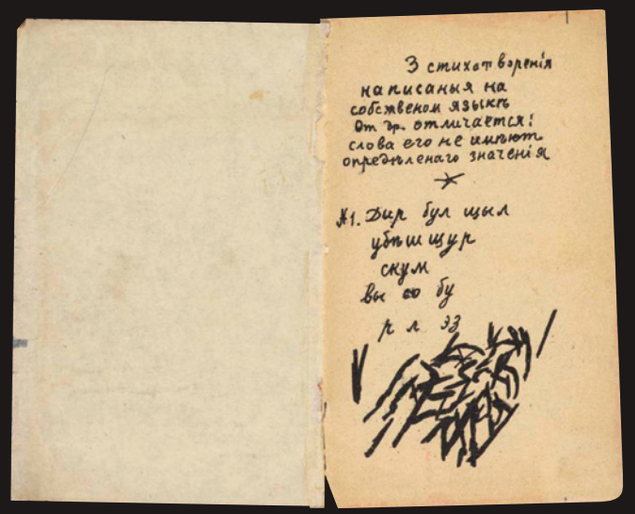
O laugh it up, you laughsters!

[Translated from the Russian by Gary Kern]

IV

DYR BUL SHCHYL (1913)

ALEKSEI KRUCHENYKH



G.

Dyr bul shchyl

ubeshchur

skum

vy so bu

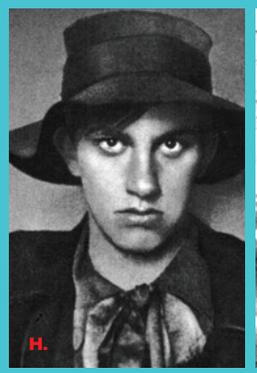
r l ez

V

A VICTORY AND A TRAGEDY, TWO PLAYS–ONE REPORT

MIKHAIL MATIUSHIN[9]

*There was recently an enormous success for Futurism, which gathered a large number of people in St Petersburg to attend more than forty lectures, discussions, and debates. There were also two striking and significant presentations: **The Tragedy of V. Mayakovsky** by Mayakovsky, and the opera **Victory Over the Sun**. The latter was written by A. Kruchenych, with staging and costumes by K. Malevich, and music by M.V. Matiushin… These two productions left the St Petersburg Press in a state of complete ignorance and perplexity about the importance of these events.*



H.

I.

And above all, the leading masters of the written word had shown their utter, vulgar, dark ignorance. Is it possible that they are so tightly knit by their herd instinct that it does not allow them to have close look, to learn and to meditate about what is happening in literature, music and the visual arts at the present time?

In the visual arts: complete displacement of planes, displacements of visual relationships, introduction of new concepts of relief and weight, dynamics of form and colour.

In music: new ideas of harmony and of melody, new pitch (quarter of a tone), simultaneous movement of four completely independent voices (Reger, Schoenberg).

In the discovery of words: the break away from the meaning of words – the right of a word to be independent, hence, new creations of words (a discovery by the genius Khlebnikov).

In this way were created:
In the visual arts: the breakdown of old academic drawing, boring classicism.

In music: the breakdown of old sound, boring diatonic music.

In literature: the breakdown of old, worked over, cluttered words, boring word-meaning.

Only those who are in darkness do not see the light–the deaf do not hear the new sound.

Suddenly our deep Russian creation rises.[10]

VI

MAYAKOVSKY A TRAGEDY

VIKTOR SHKLOVSKY[11]

*In the tragedy **Vladimir Mayakovsky**, the poet is alone.*
He is surrounded by people, but they are not three-dimensional.
They are screens, painted shields from which words come forth.
This is the cast:
His woman-friend ('he' is Vladimir Mayakovsky). She is described as 15-20 feet tall.
She does not speak.
An old man with dry, black cats (several thousand years old). Then come the Mayakovskys.
A Man without an Eye and a Leg, a Man without an Ear, a Headless man, a Man with a Stretched Face, a Man with Two Kisses, and an ordinary Young Man who loves his family.
Then come the women, all with tears. They offer their tears to the poet.
The poet himself is the theme of his poetry.
The poet dissects himself on stage, holding himself between his fingers as a gambler holds his cards. This is a Mayakovsky Deuce, a Trey, a Jack, a King. The stake of the game is love.
The game is lost…

This is Mayakovsky's theme…

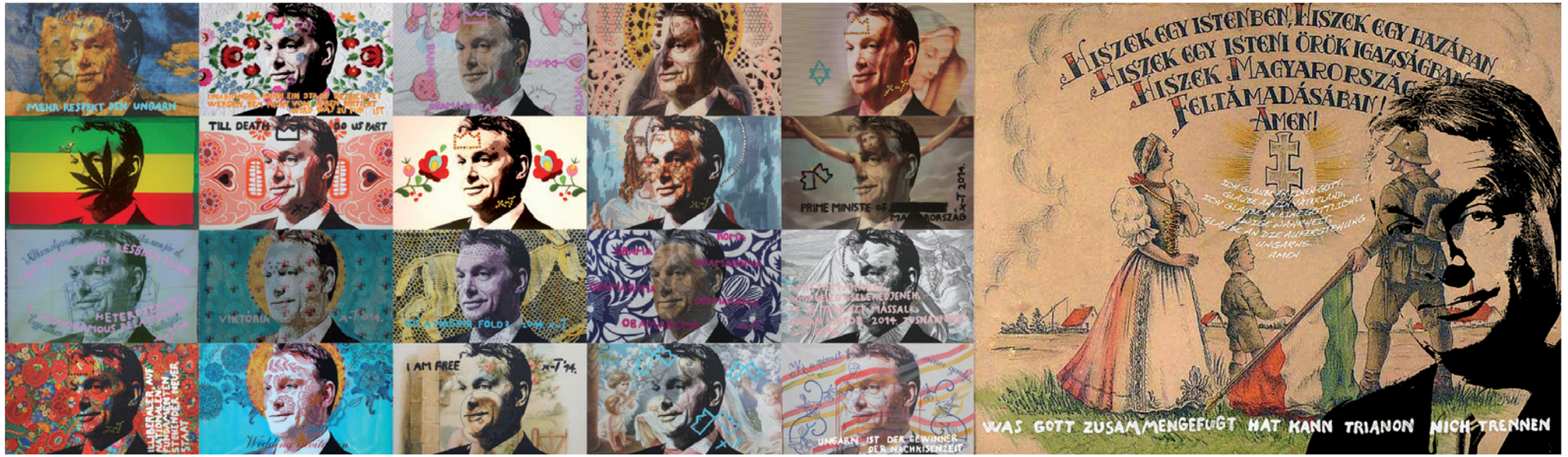
As for the leading woman, this is what happened: Mayakovsky tore off her veil and, under the veil was a doll, a huge woman, who later was hoisted up and carried away.
This case is familiar to us.
*There was Blok's play **The Puppet Show**…*

*…The world of the poem **Vladimir Mayakovsky**, despite its similarity to the world of **The Puppet Show** is very different.*
For Blok still a Symbolist then, people, that is the characters of his play, are chess pieces or stylized silhouettes of roles flickering like live ones.
Now, they're real, now they aren't. The meaning of the play is that the world is transparent, dematerialized, and that everything keeps repeating itself: the girl becomes death, the scythe of death changes into the girl's braid.
But in Mayakovsky's drama, Mayakovsky himself is utterly real. His boots have holes, very real, oval-shaped holes.[12]

J.

A. Lubok: *Baba Yaga riding a pig and fighting the infernal crocodile*, early 17th century
B. *Scythian Archers*, cast gold, Kerch (formerly Panticapeum), Crimea, 4th-century BCE
C. Lubok: *The Sun and the Moon* (showing the four seasons and the signs of the Zodiac), end of 17th beginning of 18th century
D. Unknown photographer, *Aleksei Kruchenykh, David Burliuk, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Nikolai Burliuk, Benedikt Livshits*, 1912-13
E. Velimir Khlebnikov, c.1914
F. David Burliuk, c. 1914
G. Mikhail Larionov's design and presentation of Aleksei Kruchenykh's poem *Dyr bul shchyl* in their jointly produced book Pomade (1913)
H. Vladimir Mayakovsky, 1912
I. Mikhail Matiushin, Kazimir Malevich and Aleksei Kruchenykh, 1913
J. Vladimir Mayakovsky, 1912

1. A number of artists in *BALAGAN!!!* refer to this in their work Olga Chernysheva (cat 23), Yerbossyn Meldibekov (cat 92) and Haim Sokol (cats 118,123)
2. From A. Blok, *The Scythians* (*Skifi*), 30 January 1918. These are the first two verses out of a nineteen stanza poem. Translated by Kurt Dowson.
3. Initially the group included Vasily Kamensky (1884-1961), Velimir Klebnikov (1885-1922); then Aleksei Kruchenykh (1886-1968) and Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930) soon joined. Other subsequent members included artists Natalia Goncharova (1881-1962), Mikhail Larionov (1881-1964), Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935) and Olga Rozanova (1886-1918).
4. With contributions by David Burliuk, Nikolai Burliuk, Vasily Kandinsky, Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Kruchenykh, Benedikt Livshits and Vladimir Mayakovsky.
5. The *Donkey's Tail* exhibited twice during 1912. Its members included Marc Chagall (1887-1985), Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953), and Ilia Zdanevich (1884-1975). It also included, as an adopted member, the Georgian commercial artist and amateur painter Niko Pirosmani (1862-1918).
6. Kasimir Malevich, 'From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting' (November 1916). Quoted in John Golding, *Visions of the Modern*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1994, p. 177.
7. Mayakovsky, David and Vladimir Burliuk were painters as well as poets, and artists Goncharova, Larionov, Malevich and Rozanova were also collecting different 'primitive' forms of folk art–popular prints (*lubki*), commercial signs, icons and other artifacts–as inspiration for their work.
8. Velimir Khlebnikov, *Snake Train: Poetry and Prose*, Ann Arbour, Ardis, 1976, pp. 61-62. [Translated and edited from the Russian by Gary Kern]
9. Matiushin (1861-1934) was a Russian painter, composer and colour theorist who in 1913 in co-operation with the poet Aleksei Kruchenykh and painter Kazimir Malevich made the production for *Victory Over the Sun* (1913). Like his collaborators, he was interested in synesthetic cross-overs between different art forms and out of this developed a theory of a fourth dimension in music and visual art. He was married to painter and poet Elena Guro (1877-1913).
10. Mikhail Matiushin, *Futuristy: pervyi zhurnal russkikh futuristov*, No. 1-2, Moscow, January 1914. English translation by Ewa Bartos and Victoria Nes Kirby, *The Drama Review*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Autumn 1971, pp. 101-104.
11. Shklovsky (1893-1984), an admirer of the writing of Laurence Sterne, Lev Tolstoy and Vladimir Mayakovsky, was an essayist, theorist, critic, biographer, and member of the Russian Formalist writers' group.
12. Viktor Shklovsky, *Mayakovsky and his Circle* (1941). English edition: translated and edited by Lily Feiler, London, Pluto Press, 1972, pp. 53-55.


MEHR RESPEKT DEN UNGARN
TILL DEATH
I AM FREE
HISZEK EGY ISTENBEN, HISZEK EGY HAZÁBAN,
HISZEK EGY ISTENI ÖRÖK IGAZSÁGBAN,
HISZEK MAGYARORSZÁG
FELTÁMADÁSÁBAN!
ÁMEN!
WAS GOTT ZUSAMMENGEFUGT HAT KANN TRIANON NICH TRENNEN

↑↑↑

Valentina Tereshkova.

To us - Germans, the only city in the world
bearing the name of Carl Marx,

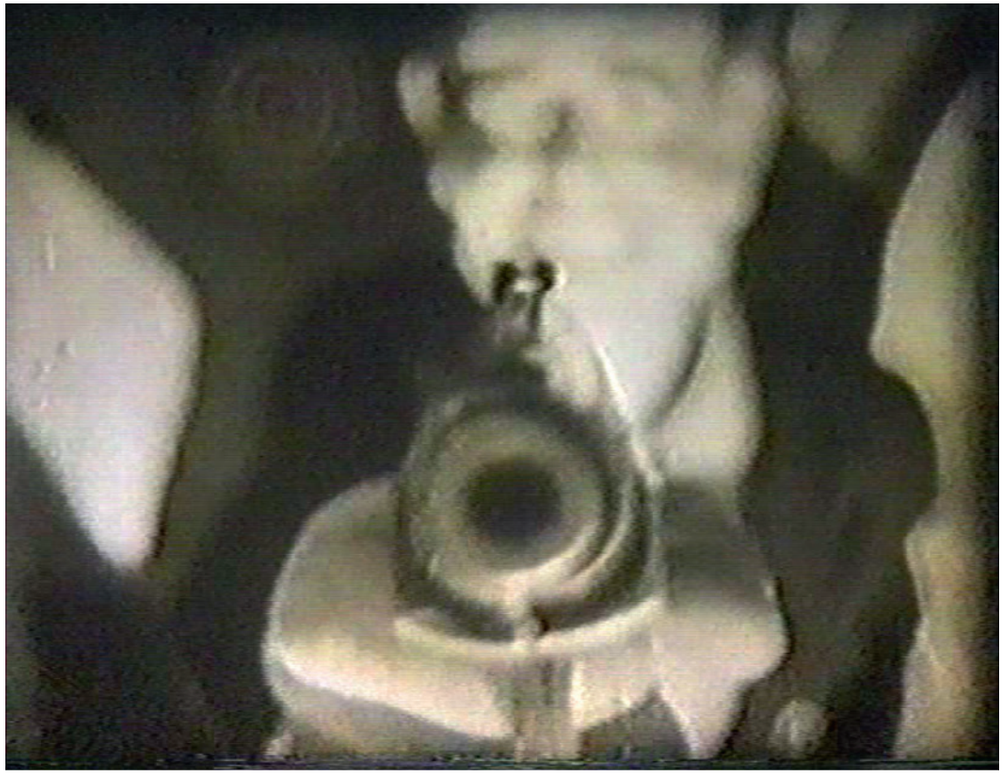
In a pair of matter-of-fact sentences
Lev Kerbel explained something,

←←←

↑↑↑

I was dying, but
This tree saved me...
2014.
P. Pepperstein

↑↑↑



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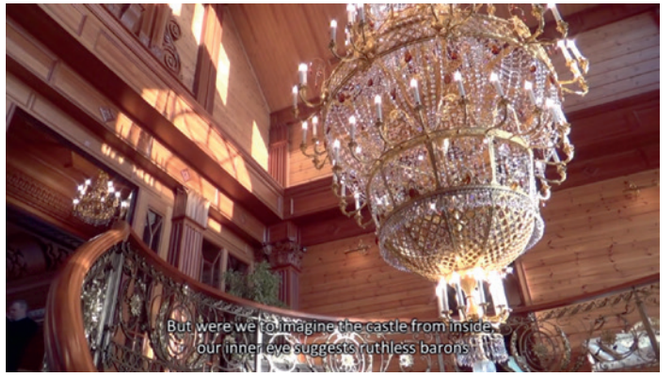

But were we to imagine the castle from inside,
our inner eye suggests ruthless barons.

Living in a vast hall with a high, sometimes arched ceiling
was not very comfortable. It was also cold.

↑↑↑

↑↑↑

↑↑↑

↑↑↑

←←←

←←←

김리회신약

←←←

АДМИНИСТРАЦИЯ. ДСП, плазма, тексты А4, 2x2x3м.

↑↑→→→

They are more intelligent all the same

So, you have to learn to be a little bit predictable

and I have to create such an atmosphere at home

←←←

BMC

→→→

The Forest Experience

↑↑↑

DIESEL
DENIM DIVISION

↑↑↑

≥≥≥≥≥≥ VADIM ZAKHAROV ≥≥≥≥≥≥ “Faust, 1926 in One Drawing” ≥≥≥≥≥≥ 2014 ≥≥≥≥≥≥

cat 139

≈≈≈≈≈ Pencil And Pastel On Paper ≈≈≈≈≈ 70 x 100 cm ≈≈≈≈≈

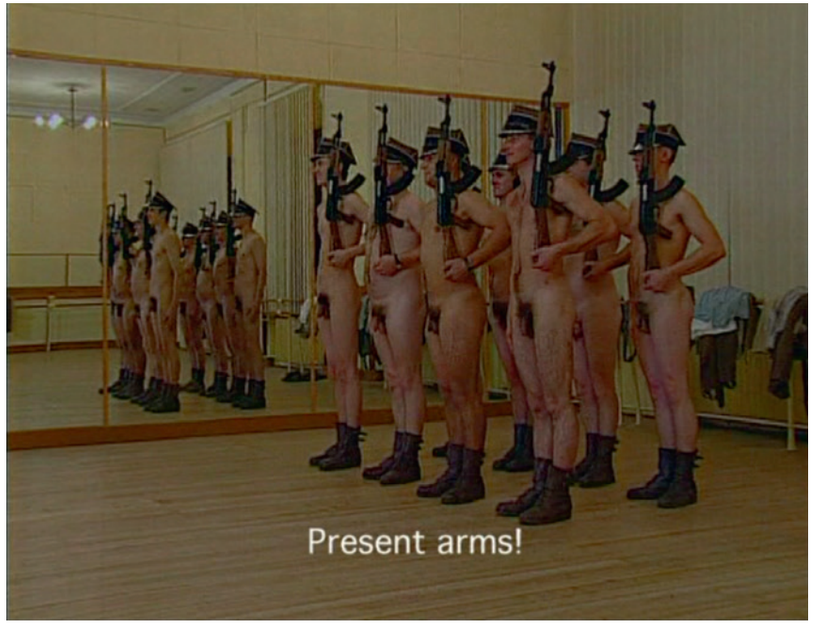
Born 1959 in Dushanbe, Tajik SSR

Lives and works in Moscow and Berlin

↑↑↑

Protest
Aerobics

↑↑→→→


Present arms!

↑↑→→→

Типы
москвы:
тифози и
папарацци

Tipi di
Mosca:
tifosi e
paparazzi

←←←

4

>>>>>REVOLUTION AS BALAGAN\\\\\\\++

I

REVOLUTION AS BALAGAN

Immediately after the October Revolution, in November 1917, the Bolsheviks transferred all theatres to State control. Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875-1933), the People's Commissar for Education, invited 120 leading figures from the arts to a conference to discuss reorganization. Only five accepted the invitation, including Blok, Mayakovsky and Meyerhold.

In September 1918 Meyerhold made plans to stage Mayakovsky's spectacle *Mystery-Bouffe* as the first-ever Soviet play to commemorate the Revolution's first anniversary. It was difficult to enlist the support of professional actors, who were not convinced that the regime would last. Students had to play a number of main roles but Mayakovsky himself took over three of them. Malevich was responsible for the settings and costumes.

The Bolshevik Government was concerned that its survival was being celebrated by what could be regarded as an extreme, elitist group. Fearing the worst, Lunacharsky, writing in the *Petrograd Pravda*, hedged his bets before the production opened '...the futurists have made millions of mistakes... But even if the child turns out deformed, it will still be dear to us, because it is born of that same Revolution which we all look upon as our own great mother.'[1]

The play parodies the biblical story of the Ark. The flood represents world revolution from which two distinct groups survive: seven 'clean' couples–the exploiters, played as a music-hall turn–and seven 'unclean' couples–earnest international proletarians prone to lengthy proclamations. On a set giving the impression of a vast globe of

A.

the world, the inevitable took place: the 'clean' were overthrown by the 'unclean', led by Mayakovsky playing the lead role of 'Simply Man' who, like Virgil, guided his charges through an anodyne hell and a nauseatingly coloured paradise to the 'City of the Future'–the utopian mechanized state of socialism–where there were no servants, only machines. The critical response was both mixed and muted and it appears that few people saw the production.[2]

In time to celebrate Mayday in 1921, Meyerhold returned to this production for his new R.S.F.S.R. Theatre in Moscow, but in a rewritten form for which Mayakovsky had incorporated world events since 1917, adding topical couplets right up until the final rehearsal. Lloyd George and Clemenceau joined the ranks of the 'clean' as did a new nasty character 'The Conciliator,' a Menshevik, played as a clown. The devil still had all the best tunes in this production. Its energy was derived from the rumbustiously dynamic antics of the 'clean', depicted in a style related to Mayakovsky's drawings and couplets for his satirical ROSTA posters that during the course of the increasingly bloody Civil War (1917-1922) had been pasted up in Post Office windows across Soviet Russia to make fun of the enemy, and thereby support the Bolshevik cause. The 'unclean' however, clad chastely in their Blue overalls, ' were of a uniform dullness not even Mayakovsky's rhetoric could hide'.[3] Both Meyerhold and Mayakovsky realized that virtue–even Socialist virtue–did not bring its own reward in either theatre or art. Unfortunately, in political terms, this was to cause them both great trouble over the years to come.

At the same time, young actors and theatre directors who were becoming increasingly interested in film formed *The Factory of the Eccentric Actor* in St Petersburg . Influenced by Meyerhold's ideas, and friendly with Eisenstein who was also moving from theatre towards film, in December 1921 Grigory Kozintsev, Georgy Kryzhitsky, Leonid Trauberg and Sergei Yutkevich published *Salvation in the Trousers... Of the Eccentric,* a manifesto setting out their belief in cinema as an absurd, artificial and *humorous* bag-of-tricks that, through iconoclastic dynamism, would reinforce the advanced 'Americanised' technologies and visions that were necessary to consolidate the new Bolshevik state. In looking for precedent, they were certainly influenced by a distaste for established culture previously shown by the

B.

poets and artists of Hylaea,[4] but what inspired them most were the crazily broken narratives and non sequiturs of Mack Sennett's Hollywood one-reel film comedies, the films of Charlie Chaplin, and the jerky, eccentric dancers of traditional music hall.

C.

Kozintsev and Trauberg's most important early films included *The Adventures of Oktyabrina* (1924, now lost), *The Devil's Wheel*, *The Overcoat* (1926, after Gogol) and *New Babylon* (1929), but many other Soviet film directors produced similar comedies such as Lev Kuleshov (1899-1970) in *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924), Vsevolod Pudovkin's (1893-1953) *Chess Fever* (1925), his wacky response to the World Chess championship in Moscow or Boris Barnet's (1902-65) *The Girl with the Hatbox* (1927).

Aleksandr Medvedkin (1900-1989) was the last comic master of eccentric Soviet slapstick, although he was not widely recognised as such until the 1960s. His silent film *Happiness* (1934) was a stylised folk tale about a poor peasant in the Tsarist time who dreamed of happiness and thought it had arrived when he found a purse of gold. But, in spite of his temporary riches, his generosity was abused, he was robbed, and then forcibly enlisted to fight in World War I. He survived but, even under Communism, refused to believe he could ever be happy, until he eventually found peace in a collective farm. So far, so banal, but this rudimentary skeleton enabled Medvedkin to produce a rambling, improvisatory cabaret of a film, with turns and gags, amongst others, by drunken priests, grotesquely masked Tsarist guards, and virtually topless nuns. It sank w ithout trace until rediscovered thirty years later.

This film has provided a basis for one of the works by Vadim Zakharov in BALAGAN!!! [cat 138]

II

>>>>SALVATION IN THE TROUSERS.../// ...
++++OF THE ECCENTRIC\\\\\\\\\

AB!
Parade of the Eccentric.
ROSTA without pungency, Max Linder without his top hat,
Brockhaus without Efron–what could be more absurd?

1921 December 5 (a historic day)
Kozintsev, Kryzhitsky, Trauberg found:
XX Century without...
A SURVEY.

...'From the Eccentric's trousers, deep as a chasm, the overwhelming gaiety of Futurism emerges with a thousand burdens.' Marinetti.
...'For the theatre this is a defeat, for its territory has been captured by the Eccentrism of the music-hall.' Lunacharsky.
...'Oooh, oooh, oooh!' Serge the Clown.

Without
Eccentrism **(a visting card).**
Music-Hall Cinematographovich Pinkertonov 1 year from his birth???
See below for further information.

I. THE KEY TO THE EVENTS

1) *YESTERDAY–Comfortable offices. Bald foreheads.*
People pondered, made decisions, thought things over.
TODAY–A Signal. To the machines! Driving bolts, chains, wheels, hands, legs, electricity. The rhythm of production.
YESTERDAY–Museums, cathedrals, libraries.
TODAY–Factories, workshops, dockyards.

2) *YESTERDAY–The culture of Europe.*
TODAY – The technology of America. Industry, production under the Star Spangled banner. It's either Americanisation or the undertaker's office.

3) *YESTERDAY–Withdrawing rooms, swags, barons.*
TODAY–The shouts of newspaper boys, scandals, policemen's billy clubs, noise, shouts, stamping, running.

TODAY'S SPEED:
The rhythm of the machine**, a concentration of America, realised in the everyday life of **the boulevards.

II. ART WITHOUT A CAPITAL LETTER, A PEDESTAL, OR A FIG LEAF

Life requires that art is
Hyperbolically crude, dumbfounding, nerve-wracking, openly utilitarian, mechanically exact, momentary, rapid,

otherwise no one will hear, see or stop. Everything adds up to this: the art of the XX century, the art of 1922, the art of this very moment is

Eccentrism.

III. OUR FOREBEARS
Parade allez!

IN LITERATURE– *the cabaret queen, Pinkerton, the cry of the auctioneer, the language of the street.*

IN PAINTING – *the circus poster, the jacket of a cheap novel.*

IN MUSIC – *Jazz Band (the commotion of a negro orchestra), circus marches.*

IN BALLET – *American Song and Dance routines.*

IN THEATRE – *Music-hall, cinema, circus, cabaret, boxing.*

1) *PRESENTATION –* *rhythmic wracking of the nerves.*

2) *THE HIGH POINT –* *the Trick.*

3) *THE WRITER –* *an inventor-discoverer.*

4) *THE ACTOR –* *mechanised movement, not buskins but roller skates, not a mask but a red nose. Acting–not movement but a wriggle, not mimicry but a grimace, not speech but shouts.*

We prefer Charlie [Chaplin]'s bottom to Eleanora Duse's hands!...[5]

III
TYPES AND CARICATURES

Satire and typage were political weapons that could have either positive or negative effects; it all depended upon how an audience's expectations were either confirmed or confounded by the Director. Sergei Eisenstein used orchestrated techniques of visual typage, along with cabaret, circus, and cinema slapstick, in his early drama productions. His *balagan* rupture of narrative with its inevitable fragmentation of images fed into his theory of film montage.[6]

D.

Meyerhold also, with other Soviet avant-garde theatre directors, often used such techniques to make fun of both capitalist and socialist stereotypes.[7] The itinerant *Blue Blouse* performers, who created a demotic popular theatre, travelling to workers' clubs and villages with improvised agit-prop plays that reacted to current events, also built their work around such 'types'. *The Blue Noses*, a contemporary Siberian group of video, performance and installation artists, consciously parody what now seems to be the rough, improvised naivety of *Blue Blouse* performances by adopting it themselves, but with a sceptical, iconoclastic intent. [cats 13-18]

E.

At the beginning of the 1930s, under the stewardship of Josef Stalin and his loyal supporters, it was decided that there should, henceforth, be only one acceptable type: the politically correct communist worker/peasant of pure proletarian stock. All other types were automatically 'enemies'. Vladimir Mayakovsky committed suicide in 1930. Others soon got bored, but to show it was dangerous. Humour was forced underground, but refused to leave the stage.

F.

When it appeared it was quickly forgotten, as in the films of Medvedkin, but it quickly popped up in the work of such writers as Daniil Kharms and Mikhail Bulgakov [see pp. 261-262] who the officials no longer regarded as writers. Their work was clandestinely circulated by word of mouth and *samizdat*, but both had long passed away before it was officially published–as indeed had Stalin. The new 'types' of the 1930s, the humourless cardboard men and women who 'just obeyed orders', had a field day. Humour, however, refused to die: the dark smile, the grim laugh, the contemptuous glance over the shoulder at the rictus of death in the shadows, could not be suppressed.

When it became obvious that his writing would never again be published, Isaac Babel (1894-1940) proclaimed that henceforth he would work in a wholly acceptable new style: 'The Genre of Silence'! It was not long before he was arrested and murdered. Meyerhold suffered the same fate and his wife, the actress Zinaida Reich, was found mysteriously and horribly dead shortly afterwards in their apartment.

G.

In 1943, in the isolation of Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan, where the Moscow Film studios had been evacuated during the war, Eisenstein began *Ivan the Terrible*, his last film. Haunted by a seductive image of tyranny since childhood, the effect of an estranged, dominating father, for Eisenstein its depiction had become compulsive, the better, perhaps, to understand his own tyrannical tendencies. The first part of this film, dealing with Ivan's early life and ending with his conquest of the Kazan Khanate, met with official acclaim.

H.

The second part had a less fortunate fate. An exercise in stylized expressionism, that owed much to Eisenstein's interest in Chinese and Japanese theatre and art, as well as to his admiration for the attenuated figures in El Greco's and Alessandro Magnasco's paintings, it also contained an untimely admixture of *balagan*, heightened by Prokofiev's score and the capture of one reel of Agfa colour film from the German army that was used to shoot the primeval masked dance of Ivan's bodyguard. In the scene where the *Oprichniki* gather round him, Ivan was revealed unequivocally as a vindictive and paranoid sadist, ruling through mass murder and terror. To an intelligentsia decimated by the purges, and conditioned to reading between the lines, the parallel with Stalin could not be missed.[8]

The film was strongly criticized and held back from release. In February 1947 a formal meeting in the Kremlin was called between Stalin, Nikolay Cherkasov, the actor who played the role of Ivan, and Eisenstein at which the Great Leader stressed one thing 'only flawless films' would be released. Eisenstein survived this surreal encounter to pass away the following year from a second heart attack. The second part of Ivan was eventually released in 1958, most of its third part had already been shot but was destroyed.

The Soviet Union, however, was not the only country to have suffered under duress, and the same range of types and counter-types, differing in degree but not in substance, may be found in most places. Fortunately, laughing at the cruelty of injustice seems to be a shared human characteristic. Emphatically, this is not an act of approval or of acquiescence, but one of the ways we recognize, quarantine, and deflate its foulness.

Contemporary humour still depends on 'types' as well as on the correlative possibility that 'absurd', horrible events (that mirror the absurdities of actual conditions) will lead their perpetrators to their just deserts. Caricature, satire and ridicule are a form of lèse-majesté that is difficult to control and most politicians still fear. The more they love power, the more it unsettles them.

On 21 December 1989, Nicolae Ceauşescu, President of Romania, was booed and jeered as he addressed an assembled crowd in Revolution Square in Bucharest in the same way that he had done many times before. But the mood got ugly: in the space of eight minutes, the authority of twenty-four years of autocratic rule disappeared. He fled and went into hiding. On Christmas Day, he and his wife were led before a kangaroo court and summarily executed.

In 2000, Slobodan Milošević, the President of Serbia–who in 2006 died of a heart attack in a prison cell under trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity–had survived the blasting of NATO's bombs but was finally shaken from power by a non-violent campaign of ridicule organized by his own people.

A. Vladimir Mayakovsky, Civil War *ROSTA Poster*, one of a series of stencil cartoons showing, literally, the Reds beating the Whites, 1920
B. Lev Kuleshov, still from his feature film *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*, 1924
C. Three stills from Aleksandr Medvedkin's silent film *Happiness*, 1934
D. Moisei Nappelbaum, *Portrait of Vsevolod Meyerhold*, 1932
E. Unknown photographer, portrait of an unknown person, Russia, 1930s
F. Portrait of Daniil Kharms, c. 1930
G. Portrait of Mikhail Bulgakov, early 1930s
H. NKVD mug shots of Isaac Babel on his arrest, 1939
I. Sergei Eisenstein, still from *Ivan the Terrible Part 1* (Nikolay Cherkasov as Ivan), 1944
J. Sergey Eisenstein, stills from *Ivan the Terrible Part II*, finished 1946, released 1958

1. Braun, *The Theatre of Meyerhold*, op cit., p. 149.
2. Ibid, p. 151.
3. Ibid, p.161.
4. See p.xx.
5. From Grigory Kozintsev(1905-1973) 'AB! Parade of the Eccentric', part of *The Eccentric Manifesto* in G. Kozintsev, G. Kryzhitsky, L. Trauberg (1902-1990), S. Yutkevich (1904-1985), *Ekstsentrizm*, Ekstsentropolis (formerly Petrograd), Factory of the Eccentric Actor [FEKS], 1922. Translated by Richard Sherwood in Sherwood & I. Christie (ed.), *The Film Factory. Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939*, London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 58-64.
6. Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948), *The Film Sense*, London, Faber, 1943. (Edited and translated by Jay Leyda).
7. Controversially at the time, Vladimir Mayakovsky's plays *The Bed Bug* (1928) and *The Bathhouse* (1930), produced by Meyerhold, were both critical of Soviet bureaucracy.
8. David Elliott, 'Taking a Line for a Walk', *Eisenstein at Ninety*, Oxford, Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1988, pp. 27-28.

LIST OF WORKS

AES+F

1» *Inverso Mundus*, 2015
HD video installation, 38'
©AES+F 2015
Courtesy MAMM Multimedia Art Museum Moscow And Triumph Gallery, Moscow

AFRIKA (SERGEY BUGAEV)

2» *Jakobson: Quasi Dream*, 1995
Embroidery On Silk Banner
115 x 150 cm
New Rules Collection, Moscow

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3» *Twin Portraits of Gusinsky and Berezovsky at the Moment of Sale of the Remnants of the Motherland*, 2000
Embroidery On Silk Textile
116 x 163 cm
Pierre-Christian Brochet Collection, Moscow

VYACHESLAV AKHUNOV

4» *Avenue of "Superstars" (Policy and Clowns)*, 2015
18 Stars: Carpet, Photoprints
2500 x 250 cm
Courtesy The Artist

SHAARBEK AMANKUL

5» *Vatan*, 2007
Video, 4'30''
Courtesy The Artist

—

6» *Ketsin (Turn Over)*, 2010
Video, 6'30"
Courtesy The Artist

EVGENY ANTUFIEV

7» *Untitled*, 2010
Fabric, Embroidery, Plastic, Polyethylene
40 x 14 x 10 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

—

8» *Untitled*, 2010
Fabric, Embroidery, Beads
40 X 12 X 5 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

—

9» *Untitled*, 2010
Fabric, Embroidery, Polyethylene
50 x 20 x 60 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

—

10» *Untitled*, 2010
Textiles, Glue, Plastic, Synthetic Winterizer
140 x 40 x 40 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

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11» *Untitled*, 2013
Fabric
43 x 26 x 14 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

LUTZ BECKER

12» *The Scream*, 2012
3-Channel Video Installation, Montage Of Films By Alexsandr Dovzhenko, 10'09"
Courtesy The Artist

BLUE NOSES

13» *You don't really think We've got no taste?*, 2001
Printed, Coloured Banner
220 x 300 cm
Pierre-Christian Brochet Collection, Moscow
Courtesy The Artists

—

14» *Kissing Policemen* from the series *An Epoch of Clemency*, 2005
Digital Photoprint
200 x 300 cm
Courtesy The Artist

—

15» *Road Map* from the series *An Epoch of Clemency*, 2005
Digital Photoprint
200 x 300 cm
Courtesy The Artist

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16» *The Fall of Washington*, 2003
Video, 4'13"
Courtesy The Artists

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17» *Resistance Wholesale and Retail*, 2005
Video, 14'39"
Courtesy The Artists

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18» *Naked Truth*, 2008
Video, 3'26"
Courtesy The Artists

SERGEY BRATKOV

19» *No.3* from the series *Chapiteau Moscow / Moscow Big Top*, 60 pcs, 2012
Double Photographic Print On Phototex
Each 200 x 300 cm
Copyright 2015 © The Artists, The Photographers, Regina Gallery, Moscow
Courtesy The Artist And Diehl, Berlin

—

20» *No.15* from the series *Chapiteau Moscow / Moscow Big Top*, 60 pcs, 2012
Double Photographic Print On Phototex
Each 200 X 300 Cm
Copyright 2015 © The Artists, The Photographers, Regina Gallery, Moscow
Courtesy The Artist And Diehl, Berlin

—

21» *No.30* from the series *Chapiteau Moscow / Moscow Big Top*, 60 pcs, 2012
Double Photographic Print On Phototex
Each 200 x 300 cm
Copyright 2015 © The Artists, The Photographers, Regina Gallery, Moscow
Courtesy The Artist And Diehl, Berlin

YVON CHABROWSKI

22» *Afterimage/Protest*, 2013
Video Installation, Hd Loop, Colour, Sound, 17'17"
Projection Onto Mdf Board
191× 340 cm
© Yvon Chabrowski & VG Bildkunst, 2015
Performed By Helene Altenstein, Eva Bakardjiev, Aline Benecke, Wicki Bernhard, Dirk Felderhoff, Enrico Grunert, Caroline Hartmann,

Julia Krause, Dietmar Lucas, Anton von Lucke, Timothy Murray, Judith Nitsch, Andine Pfrepper, Daniel Rother, Marvin Schulz, Johanna Tellmann, Anna Till, Christopher Vetter

OLGA CHERNYSHEVA

23» *Trashman*, 2011
Video, 6'30"
Courtesy Diehl, Berlin
—
24» *White Lines – on the Ground, Dark Lines – in the Sky*, 2012
Video, 7'33"
Courtesy Diehl, Berlin
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25» *Untitled (Pierrot)*, 2015
Charcoal On Paper
167 x 84 cm
Courtesy Diehl, Berlin
Photograph Marcus Schneider

VALERY CHTAK

26» *A Future is for the Future*, 2010
Acrylic On Hardboard
216.5 x 122.5 cm
Pierre-Christian Brochet Collection, Moscow

CHTO DELAT?

27» *Inside the Russian Woods*, 2010-2012
Two video + films, *The Russian Woods*, 2012; *The Tower. A Songspiel*, 2010, Cut-Outs Figures, Red Tubes
Realisation: Tsaplya Olga Egorova, Nikolay Oleynikov, Dmitry Vilensky And Gluklya Natalya Pershina
Courtesy Of The Artists And KOW Berlin

VLADIMIR DUBOSSARSKY

28» *Happy Childhood*, 2014
Oil On Canvas, Tryptich
210 x 430 cm
Courtesy ©Triumph Gallery, Moscow
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29» *Merry Christmas!*, 2015
Acrylic On Canvas
195 x 295 cm
Courtesy ©Triumph Gallery, Moscow

ANDREJ DUBRAVSKY

30» *Ice Cream*, 2012
Acrylic On Canvas
180 x 130 cm
Courtesy Jiri Svestka Gallery, Prague / Berlin
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31» *Stretching*, 2012
Acrylic On Canvas
180 x 130 cm
Courtesy Jiri Svestka Gallery, Prague / Berlin

NATALYA DYU

32» *Happystan*, 2007
Video, 5'10"
Courtesy The Artist

SASHA FROLOVA

33» *LYUBOLET*, 2008
Eau de Nil latex inflatable
450 x 310 x 220 cm
Courtesy The Artist
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34» *Aquaaerobika*, 2015
Live Performance
KühlhausBerlin, 13.11.2015

IVAN GORSHKOV

35» *Untitled*, 2013
Iron And Acrylic
90 x 80 x 50 cm
Courtesy Diehl, Berlin Photograph Marcus Schneider

GEORGY GURYANOV

36» *Tratoristka*, 2002
Oil On Canvas
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Pierre-Christian Brochet Collection, Moscow

DMITRY GUTOV

37» *It was better under Brezhnev*, 1989
Canvas, Collage, Tryptich
Each 210 x 120 cm
Courtesy Triumph Gallery, Moscow
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38» *Ten days that shook the world*, 2003
Oil On Canvas
90 x 70 cm
Courtesy Triumph Gallery, Moscow
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39» *Grey Monkey with Vanessa Beecroft*, 2003
Oil On Canvas
70 x 50 cm
Courtesy Triumph Gallery, Moscow
—
40» *Hegel. The subject and the backward forces. Variant 2*, 2007
Oil On Canvas,
100 x 50.5 cm
New Rules Collection, Moscow
—
41» *The time has come to say farewell to the mousey scrambling of reflection*, 2007
Oil On Canvas
70 x 50 cm
Courtesy Triumph Gallery, Moscow

SITARA IBRAHIMOVA

42» *A Boy is OK a Girl is NOT*, 2013
Video, Colour, Sound, 5'30"
Courtesy The Artist

NIKITA KADAN

43» *Take the place, you will not be punished*, 2015
Column and Watchtower, Plaster, Metal
70 x 70 x 570 cm
Five Collages From Book Reprints
Each 100 X 80 cm
Courtesy The Artist And Campagne Première, Berlin

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44» *Anti-Cyclone*, 2006
Sanguine, Charcoal On Canvas
250 x 150 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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45» *Free Fall 5*, 2013
Sanguine, Charcoal On Canvas
246 x 160 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

POLINA KANIS

46» *CELEBRATION*, 2014
HD Video, Loop, 13'27"
Courtesy The Artist And Triumph Gallery, Moscow
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47» *The Formal Portrait*, 2014
HD video, 8'31"
Courtesy The Artist And Triumph Gallery, Moscow

KRIŠTOF KINTERA

48» *Bad News*, 2011
Sound Track, Movement Mechanism, Solenoids, Microchip Controller, Drum, Horns, Radio, Clothes, Etc, Dimensions Variable, Approx. 150 x 300 x 200 cm
Robert Runták Collection, Olomouc
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49» *Nervous Trees*, 2013
Two Electro-Mechanical Sculptures
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Courtesy Jiri Svestka Gallery, Prague / Berlin

FRANZISKA KLOTZ

50» *Gap*, 2012
Oil On Canvas
150 x 120 cm
Courtesy Galerie Kornfeld, Berlin
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51» *Krater*, 2013
Oil On Canvas
165 x 210 cm
Courtesy Galerie Kornfeld, Berlin
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52» *Kathedrale*, 2014
Oil On Canvas
210 x 165 cm
Courtesy Galerie Kornfeld, Berlin

IRINA KORINA

53» *Chapel*, 2013-2014
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Courtesy XL Gallery, Moscow

EGOR KOSHELEV

54» *Lecture*, 2014
Oil On Canvas
150 x 200 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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55» *The World's Famous Matrioshka Show*, 2015
Oil On Canvas
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Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

KATARZYNA KOZYRA

56» *Diva Reincarnation*, 2005
From the series *In Art Dreams Come True*
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©The Artist
Courtesy ZAK | BRANICKA, Berlin
—
57» *Cheerleader*, 2006
From the series *In Art Dreams Come True*
Video, 4'30"
©The Artist
Courtesy ZAK | BRANICKA, Berlin
Photograph Marcin Oliva Soto
—
58» *Summertale*, 2008
From the series *In Art Dreams Come True*
Video, 19'56"
©The Artist
Courtesy ZAK | BRANICKA, Berlin

OLYA KROYTOR

59» *Cube*, 2015
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170 x 170 cm
Live Performance
KühlhausBerlin, 18.11.2015
Courtesy The Artist

GAISHA MADANOVA

60» *Syndrome of Learned Helplessness*, 2013-15
Nine Silkscreen Prints, Dimensions Variable
Courtesy The Artist

VLADISLAV MAMYSHEV-MONROE (SEE ALSO PIRATE TV)

61» From the series *Unhappy Love*, 1991
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Pierre-Christian Brochet Collection, Moscow
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62» *Monroe*, 1995/2004
Coloured Black And White Photograph
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63» *Untitled #1* from the series *Russian Questions / Russian Fairy Tale*, 1997
Mixed Media
99.5 x 69.5 cm
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Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
—
64» *Untitled #2* from the series *Russian Questions / Russian Fairy Tale*, 1997
Mixed Media
99.5 x 69.5 cm
100 x 70 cm (framed)
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
—
65» *Untitled #3* from the series *Russian Questions / Russian Fairy Tale*, 1997
Mixed Media
105.5 x 75.5 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
—
66» *Untitled #4* from the series *Russian Questions / Russian Fairy Tale*, 1997
Mixed Media
105.5 x 75.5 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
—

67» *Untitled #5*
from the series
***Russian Questions / Russian Fairy Tale*, 1997**
Mixed Media
105.5 x 75.5 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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68» *Untitled #6*
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Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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69» *Untitled #7*
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Mixed Media
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Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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70» *Untitled #8*
from the series
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Mixed Media
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Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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71» *Untitled #9*
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72» *Untitled #10*
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73» *Untitled #11*
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***Russian Questions / Russian Fairy Tale*, 1997**
Mixed Media
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74» *Untitled #12*
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***Russian Questions / Russian Fairy Tale*, 1997**
Mixed Media
105.5 x 75.5 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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75» *Untitled #13*
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***Russian Questions / Russian Fairy Tale*, 1997**
Mixed Media
105.5 x 75.5 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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76» *Untitled #14*
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***Russian Questions / Russian Fairy Tale*, 1997**
Mixed Media
105.5 x 75.5 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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77» *Untitled #15*
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***Russian Questions / Russian Fairy Tale*, 1997**
Mixed Media
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Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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78» *Untitled #16*
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Mixed Media
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Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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79» *To the Old Boys (Portraits of members of the Politburo)*, 1998
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Colour Prints
Each 29.7 x 21 cm
Pierre-Christian Brochet Collection, Moscow
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80» *Nostalgia and Aggression (with Valery Katsuba)*, 2001
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81» *Fairy*, 2004
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82» *Putin*, 2005
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83» *Marilyn Monroe*, 2005
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84» *Anticipation*, 2006
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85» *Lolita*, 2009
Mixed Media On Colour Photo,
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86» *Untitled #1*
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Mixed Media On Colour Photo
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Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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87» *Untitled #2*
from the series *Lolita*, 2009
Mixed Media On Colour Photo
73.5 x 62 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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88» *Untitled #3*
from the series *Lolita*, 2009
Mixed Media On Colour Photo
89 x 74 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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89» *Untitled #4*
from the series *Lolita*, 2009
Mixed Media On Colour Photo
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Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
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Mixed Media On Colour Photo
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Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

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91» *True Self*, 2013
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80 x 80 cm (Framed)
Courtesy of the artist

YERBOSSYN MELDIBEKOV
92» *September October November*, 2015
Live Performance With
Installation
KühlhausBerlin, 14.11.2015
Haralampi G. Oroschakoff,
The Asiatic Prisoner, Footage Of
Performance At Art Forum Berlin
(1998). Hohenthal Und
Bergen / Kasachstan Cube,
With Yerbossyn Meldibekov And
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1998 Video Courtesy Hohenthal Und
Bergen, Berlin. New Work Courtesy
Of Rossi & Rossi, London

ALMAGUL MENLIBAYEVA
93» *Transoxiana Dreams*, 2011
HD Video, Stereo Sound, 23'
Almagul Menlibayeva
© All rights reserved
Courtesy American-European Art
Advisors LLC
—
94» *Kurchatov 22*, 2012
Five-channel Video
Installation, Surround Sound,
HD video, 29'
Almagul Menlibayeva
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Courtesy American-European Art
Advisors LLC

BORIS MIKHAILOV
95» *Untitled, I am Not I*, 1992
Three C-prints
Each 146.5 x 93.5 cm
Courtesy The Artist And Suzanne
Tarasieve Gallery, Paris

CIPRIAN MUREŞAN
96» *Dog Luv*, 2009
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Courtesy Galeria Plan B
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97» *Viktor Orbán*, 2014-15
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140 x 183 cm
Courtesy x-T Kriszta Nagy And
Godot Gallery

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Courtesy The Artist And Galerie
Barbara Weiss, Berlin

IOANA NEMES
99» *The White Team (Satan)*, 2009
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(5 unique pieces)
Courtesy Jiri Svestka Gallery,
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Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

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104» *QUEUE*, 2014
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105» *Let's Play*, 2015
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106» *Why Not?*
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Ten Performers
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107» *The Gifts of the Gods*, 2014
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Courtesy © Triumph Gallery, Moscow

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108» *Shelter*, 2012
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Courtesy The Artist
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109» *Water wears away the stone*, 2013
SD Video, 4:3,
Two Channel Sound, 11'
Courtesy The Artist
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110» *Fortress*, 2013 - 2014
HD Video, 16:9,
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Courtesy Of The Artist
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111» *Monument*, 2011 - 2015
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112» *Donbass Chocolate (No. 10)*, 1997
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113» *Commedia dell'arte in Crimea*
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115» *Surrounded by Reality (No.4)*, 2012
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116» *Love Letters (No.1)*, 2013
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118» *I am Spartacus*, 2011
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120» *Before the Storm*, 2012
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121» *Spartacus*, 2013
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122» *Spartacus. Times New Roman*, 2014–15
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123» *DABLOID Flag*, 1994
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124» *Banner (Stop DABLOIDS)*, 1997
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128» *Anatomy Lesson*, 2015
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129» *Earth and Shape*, 2013-2015
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130» *The Administration*, 2013
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131» *She has To*, 2013
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132» *Requiem for Romantic Love*, 2015
Found-footage, Video With
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VMS GROUP

133» *Victory March on Red Square*, 2001
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134» *An Non Spiritus Existunt?*, 2008
Mixed Media, Textile
148 x 250 cm
Courtesy of Regina Gallery, Moscow
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135» *Forest Experience*, 2009
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140 x 165 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
—

136» *Death Has a New Couturier*, 2012
Mixed Media On Textile
200 x 200 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

VIKTOR VOROBYEV & ELENA VOROBYEVA

137» *Kazakhstan. Blue Period*, 2002-2005
Installation Of 82
Photographic Colour Prints
Each 46.5 x 70 cm
Courtesy The Artists And Aspan
Gallery, Almaty

VADIM ZAKHAROV

138» *"Happiness*, 1934 in One Drawing"*, 2014
Pencil, Pastel And Acrylic
On Paper
80 x 150 cm
1. Drawing Movie Title: 14'
2. Non-stop Action, Drawing
movie: 95'
3. Red Cross Painting: 47"
*(Happiness Directed By Aleksandr
Medvedkin)
—
139» *"Faust*, 1926 in One Drawing"*, 2014
Pencil And Pastel On Paper
70 x 100 cm
1. Non-stop action, drawing
movie: 106'
2. Drawing Movie Title: 4' 17"
*(Faust directed By F.W. Murnau)

SERGEY ZARVA

140» *Disco*, 2005
Cardboard, Canvas, Oil,
Varnish
203 x 1020 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow
—
141» *Lya-Lya*, 2006
Oil On Canvas, 132 x 228 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

ZIP GROUP

142» *Protest Aerobics*, 2015
Live Participatory
Performance With Placards
And Drum, Brandenburg Gate,
Berlin, 13.11.2015
Courtesy The Artists

District of Civil Resistance
KühlhausBerlin, 2015
—
143» *Command Tower*
Wood, Megaphone
500 x 300 x 300 cm
—
144» *B.O.P. (Booth of Individual Picketing)*
Wood, Paint
220 x 60 x 60 cm
—
145» *Sketches of Resistance Objects*
Pen, Pencil, Crayon
On Cardboard
—
146» *Video on Street Action, Perm and Krasnodar*

ARTUR ZMIJEWSKI

147» *KR WP*, 2000
Video, Colour, Sound, 7'11"
The Art Collection of the Erste Group
And ERSTE Foundation, Vienna

CONSTANTIN ZVEZDOCHOTOV

148» *Tipi di Mosca: tifosi e paparazzi (Moscow Types: Soccer Fans and Paparazzi, diptych)*, 2003
Oil On Canvas
200 x 320 cm
Courtesy Regina Gallery, Moscow

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

AES+F

Tatiana Arzamasova, Born 1955 in Moscow, USSR
Lev Evzovich, Born 1958 in Moscow, USSR
Evgeny Svyatsky, Born 1957 in Moscow, USSR
Vladimir Fridkes, Born 1956 in Moscow, USSR
Live and work in Moscow
Illustration | p. 42

The collaboration between Arzamasova, Evzovich and Svyatsky began 1987 as AES, however, after fashion photographer Fridkes joined the group in 1995 it became known as AES+F. Arzamasova and Evzovich both conceptual architects, graduated from Moscow Architectural Institute State Academy (MARCHI) (1978 and 1982), Svyatsky graduated from the Moscow University of Printing Arts in the department of book design (1980). The many projects that have made employing this wide range of skills have been recognised by a number of awards: *Pino Pascali Prize*, 18th Edition, Foundation & Museum Pino Pascali, Italy (2015), *Nordart Festival*, Main Award, Germany (2014), *Kandinsky Prize*, Russia (2012). AES+F have also exhibited their work in numerous international venues, the most recent include: *001 Inverso Mundus*. AES+F, the 56th Venice Biennale (2015), Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow (2015) Triumph Gallery, Moscow (2015), Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2012), 1st Kyiv Biennale of Contemporary Art (2012), Melbourne Festival (2011) and the 17th Sydney Biennale (2010). Their practice includes computer-based art, photography, performance, drawings, sculpture, objects and video installation. ¶ AES+F bring together many different, usually conflicting, taboos in their work, such as youth culture, religion, gender issues, class or ethnicity, to create an overall critique of contemporary consumerism and desire. The laughter invoked by parody, sarcasm or allegory not only mimics the effect of a safety valve in times of oppression, but also offers a critical vision for a better life as the world is turned upside down. As in a medieval morality play, the banality of today's consumerism with its social and financial vices, is made evident and tangible. *Inverso Mundus* (2015), the title of their vast moving video 'frieze' shown here does just this: the poor become rich, the wise behave as fools, saints degenerate into sinners, the weak grasp power. No expression of power or entitlement is spared as the artists slice through the cortex of capitalism to expose its poverty of thought and value. ¶ See also pp. 30-41.

AFRIKA (SERGEY BUGAEV)

Born 1966 in Novorossiysk, USSR
Lives and works in St Petersburg and New York
Illustration | p. 44

Bugaev is an artist, curator and sometime musician who grew up in the southern Russian port city of Novorossiysk. In 1981 he moved to Leningrad where he met and became friends with such leaders of the unofficial cultural scene as artist Timur Novikov (1958-2002) and the rock musician Boris Grebenshchikov (b. 1953). He soon started to make art himself under the pseudonym 'Afrika' and, in 1983, joined the 'New Artists' movement Novikov had founded the previous year. In 1987 he played the lead role of Bananen in the cult film *Assa*, directed by Sergei Solovyov, that drew Russian rock music out of the counterculture into the mainstream and expressed a young generation's desire for openness and freedom under *perestroika*. ¶ In 1990 he was co-founder, with Irena Kuksenaite, Olessya Turkina and Viktor Mazin, of *Kabinet*, a theoretical journal of art and psychology. His work focused on performance, installation and the fabrication of strange objects that all reflected the consequences of misgovernment and the rapidity of change in Russia in the years after the breakup of the USSR. He also, with Novikov, provided an important contact between St Petersburg and influential western artists such as John Cage and Robert Rauschenburg. ¶ Recent group exhibitions of his work include: *Club of Friends*, Calvert 22 Gallery,

London (2014) and *Assa: the last generation of Leningrad's avant-garde art*, Russian Academy of Fine Arts Museum, St Petersburg (2013). His solo shows include, amongst others: *The Good Ballerina is Always Right*, I-20 Gallery, New York (2008), *Sergei Bugaev Afrika*, Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst, Duisburg (2008) and his representation in the Russian Pavilion at the 48th Venice Biennale (1999). ¶ The two works by Afrika shown here use the silk ceremonial banners of the Soviet era as exotic *objets trouvés*. In the earliest of these, *Quasi-Dream* (1995), a joint portrait of Lenin and Stalin is appropriated and embroidered over by images of hallucinogenic mushrooms and textual references to Roman Jacobson (1896-1982), the Russian American pioneer of linguistic structuralism. The lush naturalism of this work is in stark contrast to the embroidered child-like forms in *Twin Portraits of Gusinsky and Berezovsky at the Moment of the Sale of the Remnants of their Motherland* (2000). The glum faces represent the Russian Oligarchs and former media tycoons Vladimir Gusinsky (b.1952) and Boris Berezovsky (1946-2013) who in 2000 were both targeted by Vladimir Putin when he became President as part of his promised anti-oligarch campaign. Both were investigated for financial malfeasance and had to leave Russia to avoid imprisonment.

VYACHESLAV AKHUNOV

Born 1948 in Osh, Kyrgyz SSR
Lives and works in Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Illustration | p. 46

Akhunov graduated from the Moscow Surikov Art Institute in 1979, afterwards working independently as an artist, writer and philosopher. Since 1980 he has lived and worked in Tashkent, producing works using collage, painting, installation, performance and moving image as well as writing numerous essays and novels. Since 2000, he has been investigating the possibilities of new media, especially video, often appearing in his works himself. His work tackles the ironies of perceived cultural marginality as well as the power of difference. He also examines change and inequality in the region in which he lives, commenting obliquely on the rise of collective religiosity in what was previously a secular society. His work is always focused on the integrity and responsibility of the individual in whatever structure of power he or she may be situated. ¶ Akunov has designed national pavilions for Uzbekistan for the World Expos in Aichi, Japan (2005) and Hanover (2000). As an artist he has participated in such exhibitions as the 55th Venice Biennale (2013), the 1st Kyiv International Biennale of Contemporary Art (2012), *Revolution vs Revolution*, Beirut Art Center (2012), Documenta 13, Kassel (2012), *Between Heaven and Earth, Contemporary Art from the Centre of Asia*, Calvert 22, London (2011), *Ostalgia*, New Museum, New York (2011), and *Atlas. How To Carry The World On One's Back?*, ZKM, Karlsruhe (2011). ¶ *Allee of Superstars* (2015), the work Akunov has made especially for this exhibition, is both a celebration and condemnation of political buffoonery. It consists of a long narrow red carpet with the faces of carefully selected international politicians printed in stars on its surface. As if they were at the entrance to a Hollywood premiere, visitors are invited to enjoy the ridiculousness of their moment of celebrity by walking on the carpet and laughing as each new face is stepped on and recognised. Akunov is currently not permitted to travel outside Uzbekistan.

SHAARBEK AMANKUL

Born 1959 in Bishkek, Kyrgyz SSR
Lives and works in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Illustration | p. 48

Amankul graduated with degrees in art and history from the Kyrgyz State College of Arts (1980) and the Kyrgyz National University (1989). He has participated in a number of residencies abroad as well as in exhibitions at the following museums and art spaces: Kunstmuseum Thun (2014), Yay Gallery (2013, Baku), *50 Years of Video Art* (2012, Marseille, Tokyo), *International Video Art* (2011, Ramallah), *Between Heaven and Earth. Contemporary Art from the Centre of Asia*, Calvert 22 (2011, London), Kunsthalle/Spiegel, *Lothringer13* (2009, Munich), OK Center for Contemporary Art (2009, Linz), Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation (2009, Sydney), Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art Brisbane (2009), *22nd Les Instants Vidéo* (2009, Marseille), 2nd Singapore Biennale (2008), Modern Art Gallery (2007, Ulan Bator), Kunsthaus Gazometer (2006, Liechtenstein). Since 2007 Amankul has been founding director of B'Art Contemporary, a non-profit organisation in Bishkek that researches and promotes art development in Kyrgyzstan. ¶ Editing documentary footage within a poetic structure, Amankul's videos have tracked the fundamental social, political and cultural changes that have taken place in Kyrgyzstan since it gained independence from the USSR in 1991. During this time there has been considerable civil unrest and a move from a secular to an Islamic state culture. *Vatan* (2007) and *Ketsin* (2010), the two films shown in *BALAGAN!!!* examine the tragic discrepancies between propaganda and reality in statements of 'motherland' as well as the ludicrous faces of state power, inhumanity, wasteage of resources and civil unrest. *Ketsin* depicts the second revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 after five years of relative stability.

EVGENY ANTUFIEV

Born 1986 in Kyzyl, Tuva ASSR
Lives and works in Kyzyl and Moscow
Illustration | p. 50

Antufiev graduated from Moscow's Institute of Contemporary Art Problems in 2009; in the same year he was awarded the Kandinsky Prize in the 'Young Artist' category. His solo exhibitions include *Seven Underground Kings or a Brief Story of the Shadow*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2015), *Immortality Forever*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2015), *Twelve, wood, dolphin, knife, bowl, mask, crystal, bones and marble-fusion. Exploring materials*, Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow and Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia (2013), *Exploring The Material: Absorption*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2012), and such group exhibitions as *The Empty Pedestal Ghosts from the Eastern Europe*, Museo Civico Archeologico. Bologna (2014) and *Ostalgia*, New Museum, New York (2011). ¶ Antufiev's primitive-looking works revolve around his conviction that '...in the wake of the general collapse of the space of myth, the knowledge of it becomes the basis for creativity and perception of reality'. The ostensible naivety of his works, therefore, fills a vacuum in an increasingly urban alienated environment by re-injecting into it primal elements of signification and meaning. ¶ In some sense, his works are almost a parody of folk art – those shown here seem to have affinities Siberian and northern Russian indigenous art – yet their voodoo 'roughness' also implies retribution for environmental mutation and social disturbance as well as a critique of the slickness of contemporary art. The hand embroidery and stitching in these works also relates to the artist's own story and that of his family. Re-using found objects, that integrate the violent or abject histories of nameless figures into an unfinished narrative, he reflects on both past and present in which political control and sudden, violent disappearance have been a fundamental part of everyday life.

LUTZ BECKER

Born 1941 in Berlin, Germany
Lives and works in London
Illustration | p. 52

Lutz Becker is a filmmaker, artist and curator, who graduated under Thorold Dickinson from the Slade School of Fine Art, London. In recent years, he worked extensively on the reconstruction of Sergei Eisenstein's film *¡Que Viva Mexico!*, whilst working as well as a curator. He participated with a video installation in the 1st Kyiv Biennale (2012) and in *The Best of Times, the Worst of Times*, CAC, Shanghai

(2014). As a curator he worked on *Salomon Nikritin – George Grosz: Political terror and social decadence in Europe between the Wars*, SMCA, Thessaloniki (2014) and *Modern Times – Responding to Chaos, Kettle's Yard*, Cambridge and De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill (2010). ¶ Working mainly with video and film, the three-channel film installation *The Scream* (2012) is both homage to the Ukrainian filmmaker Aleksandr Dovzhenko (1894-1956) and an elegy relating to the failure of the revolution that, at one time, he clearly supported. Dovzhenko structured his films poetically, with pastoral simplicity set in contrast against modernist self-consciousness. Echoing the title of Edvard Munch's famous painting, Becker has created a montage of segments from Dovzhenko's films, based on dramatic interactions and accidental synchronicities of images and scenes, to tell a story about violence, horror and forlorn hope firmly rooted within the Ukrainian countryside and land, both of which become protagonists in this work.

BLUE NOSES

Aleksandr (Sasha) Shaburov
Born 1965 in Sverdlovsk Oblast, USSR
Lives and works in Ekaterinburg and Moscow
Vyacheslav (Slava) Mizin
Born 1962 in Novosibirsk, USSR
Lives and works in Novosibirsk and Moscow
Illustration | p. 54

Shaburov graduated from Sverdlovsk Academy of Architecture and Arts (1986), and Sverdlovsk Art School (1985), Mizin graduated from the Novosibirsk Architectural Institute (1984). The *Blue Noses* group was created in 1999, after they both met on the project *Shelter Beyond Time*, where they simulated the experience of life in a bunker after a nuclear catastrophe. From time to time the group includes other members and sometimes they perform with the Novosibirsk Rock group *Nuclear Elk*. ¶ In 2008 they were nominated for the Kandinsky Prize. Sometimes they exhibit as solo artists but as the *Blue Noses* they have been shown in *Random Coincidences*, Erarta Museum of Contemporary Art, St Petersburg (2014), *From Siberia with Love, 1999-2009*, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes, Nantes (2010/11), *Retrospective 1999-2009*, Fotoloft Gallery, Moscow (2010), *Proletarian Conceptualism*, M&J Guelman Gallery, Moscow (2010), *The Naked Truth*, Ethan Cohen Fine Arts, New York (2008) and the 50th and 51st Venice Biennales (2003, 2005). ¶ The *Blue Noses* are the Tricksters of their generation and derive their name not only from the bitter cold of the places they were born, but also, ironically, from the itinerant *Blue Blouses* – groups of agit-prop performers who in the early years of the the Revolution travelled around factories and the countryside disseminating the communist message. ¶ Known for the satirical and often provocative works in which they appear, that encompass photography, video, performance and installation, they always use low-tech methods of production in order to parody and critique different aspects of Russian society, art, politics, and religion. Their works are marked by roughness and a crude, dark humour, even to a level of autism, that has encouraged some to regard them as Holy Fools – contemporary equivalents of *Yurodivy* – the mendicants who, during medieval times, were believed to be both insane and touched by God. ¶ Their photo-panel *The Era of Mercy* (2005), one of the works shown in *BALAGAN!!!* – a homage to a vandalised wall painting by Banksy, the British street artist – depicted two Russian policemen locked in a passionate embrace in a snowy birch forest. In 2007, this was refused an export license by the then Minister of Culture on the grounds that it was both 'erotic' and a 'disgrace to Russia' and should therefore not be shown in a public exhibition in France.

SERGEY BRATKOV

Born 1960 in Kharkov, Ukrainian SSR
Lives and works in Moscow, Russia and Kharkiv, Ukraine
Illustration | p. 56

Bratkov graduated in Industrial Electronics at the Polytechnic Academy of Kharkov in 1983 but, like Boris Mikhailov, his friend, taught himself photography and became a member of the *Vremya* (Time), a group of underground artists who pushed far beyond official boundaries to confront such Soviet 'taboos' as individual sexuality and volition. Out of this, with Mikhailov and Sergil Solonskij, he formed the Fast Reaction Group, which produced absurd performances or tableaux, such as *If I were a German* (1994), that imagined in black and white photographs an ironic pornographic Arcadia of SS Officers in German-occupied Ukraine. ¶ He has won many awards and has had a number of solo shows, including *Spell*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2014), *Chapiteau Moscow*, Galerie Volker Diehl, Berlin (2013), the Innovation Prize in Contemporary Visual Art , NCCA Moscow (2010), *Glory Days*, (Winterthur, Madrid and Hamburg 2008-10), and the Ukrainian Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007). Recent group shows include *Borderline. Ukrainian art 1985-2004*, Pinchuk Art Centre. Kyiv (2015), *Faces now. European portrait photography since 1990*, Bozar. Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels (2015) and *Photomania-2015*, Baltic Biennale of Photography, Kaliningrad (2015). ¶ Three large prints by Bratkov from the *Chapiteau Moscow* series (2012), each containing two montaged photographs, are shown in *BALAGAN!!!* (There are sixty images in the series). These works reflect Bratkov's description of everyday life in Moscow as a circus Big Top 'so comical that the first thing it brings to mind is the circus and clowns with sad make up on their faces… Each movement in a theatrical performance is symbolic and filled with ideas, whereas in the circus the crowd gathers for a spectacle, which is closer to reality and therefore also more risky. In the circus, a lion may eat its tamer, and a trapeze artist … can crash on the ground. But the most important thing in the circus is the expectation of a miracle. Moscow is a city in which risk and magic are incredibly concentrated. Thousands of people go there each year in the hope of a miracle. The city is a myth in which you can get fabulously rich, marry a princess and triumph over a two-headed dragon. It is a place where fairy tale beauty and riches live next to infinite ugliness and poverty; the two are so tightly knit together that the one can no longer exist without the other. When the "Moscow Circus" voted to stick with its Ringmaster for the long haul, two questions spring to mind: when the public is no longer laughing but caught in tense silence, maybe it's time to change the repertoire, as well as the Ringmaster? And, for the future, when will a real miracle happen and the circus disappear?' ¶ With sardonic humour, Bratkov, a connoisseur of urban grotesque, portrays everyday life as a succession of ugly, monstrous and meaningless collisions out of which he wrests abstract allegories of a world gone mad. In these large photo-panels, he dissects the body of a city that has lost its soul and replaced it with successions of mindless mutations or with the robotic motions of marionettes that appear to have run out of control.

YVON CHABROWSKI

Born 1978 in Berlin, GDR
Lives and works in Berlin and Leipzig
Illustration | p. 58

Chabrowsky studied philosophy before completing her MA in photography at the Leipziger Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in 2007. She has received DAAD scholarships to Cairo (2007) and New York (2008). Recently her work has been included in *Labour* at Eigen+Art, Berlin, *fuck the system*, A&V, Leipzig, and *A Time for Dreams*, the IV Biennale of Young Artists, Moscow, (2014). ¶ Her video installation *Afterimage / Protest* is based on a

collection of media images of protests found on the Internet. First we hear the sound of steps, then we see on the large video screen how people arrange themselves into a group until the image of a street fight is recreated. ¶ The iconography of these enactments is based on images of recent demonstrations in Istanbul and Cairo, but these scenes could also be several centuries old. They uncover something akin to an underlying skeleton of resistance that resurfaces in the images of media reports on resistance. The slowness of the re-enactment and the freezing of movement into *tableaux vivants* weakens the inevitability of the plot, upon which they are based. As a result it opens up a new space of possibility.

OLGA CHERNYSHEVA

Born 1962 in Moscow, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 60

Chernysheva studied first at the Moscow Cinema Academy in 1986 and then at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam in 1995/96. Her art, which includes films, photographs, paintings, drawings and object-based works, reflects the ever-changing, turbulent, unstable time through which she has lived and is based on the careful observation of often unwitting subjects. Whatever the medium, her works lyrically investigate the fabric of individuality and self-sufficiency at a time of crumbling values and infrastructures. Chernysheva concentrates on the relationships between object and figure, in particular, on the ways in which people, and the spaces they inhabit, co-exist uneasily or in an absurd way. ¶ Her work has been shown in different international solo exhibitions, including: *Peripheral Visions*, GRAD, London (2015), *Olga Chernysheva*, Pace London, London (2014/15), *Compossibilities*, Kunsthalle Erfurt (2013), *Olga Chernysheva*, Foxy Production, New York (2011), *In the Middle of Things*, BAK, Utrecht (2011), *Olga Chernysheva*, Calvert 22, London (2010); she represented Russia at the 49th Venice Biennale (2001). ¶ As both observer and chronicler, Chernysheva reflects the multi-layered anthropology of post-Soviet society throughout her work, while examining the role of the artist with a singular mix of lyricism, humour, and melancholy. In her video *Trashman* (2011) she continues her investigation into 'typical characters under typical circumstances' within the context of illegal migrant labourers from the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union who moonlight, working 'invisibly', in poorly paid temporary jobs. In this case, the hero of her film clears the rubbish from multiplex cinemas. ¶ *In White Lines – on the Ground, Dark Lines – in the Sky* (2012) filmed from the window of her apartment, she choreographs a formal ballet of communication and labour as workmen endlessly install vast lengths of light coloured underground cable that she counterpoints with the ever present 'black spaghetti' of existing telephone lines in the sky. ¶ Respecting the historical and linguistic spirit of *BALAGAN!!!* Chernysheva has made a special work for the exhibition: a life-size drawing of a contemporary Moscow 'Pierrot'.

VALERY CHTAK

Born 1981 in Moscow, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 62

In 1998 Chtak joined the School of Contemporary Art, an informal art school founded by Avdey Ter-Oganyan. Afterwards, with other young artists from this school, he formed the Radek Community in which he took part in different actions (2000-2005). His work has been shown widely, including his solo exhibitions: *Do not come closer*, Trenchcoat Gallery, Moscow (2014), *This is not a nightmare*, Red October Gallery, Moscow (2013), *Author Unknown*, Mironova Gallery, Kyiv (2012); he also participated in *Not Museum*, part of the Manifesta 10 parallel program in St Petersburg (2014) and in the group show *In Search of Horizon*, LDZ, Riga (2014). ¶ Collecting trash and re-cycling it in grafitti-like paintings has become Chtak's trade mark. Inspired by the example of Lawrence Weiner, his works often include riddle-like or impenetrable texts. In 2010 his friend, Alexei Buldakov wrote the following about his work: ¶ 'Chtak's pictures are like grafitti on the walls of toilet stalls in an ideal city of the sun populated entirely by midgets, all of them artists or conceptual poet-politologists ... ¶ ... Chtak reproduces chaos, and by doing so, he orders it. He introduces order without imposing form. His painting is rather on the side of formlessness and incompleteness. Every painting has a void, an unmarked space, the paintings aren't fully populated. They are in a state of becoming, and continue to develop even after he has already painted them. Chtak constantly slips away and eludes finished forms; in fact, he's a prime example of an artist-bum who starts lots of projects and never finishes anything. Maybe that's why his pictures look like rantings and ravings, but not sick or senile ravings, but the cheerful ravings of an aggressive schizophrenic, a text that "invokes that oppressed bastard race that ceaselessly stirs beneath dominations, resisting everything that crushes and imprisons."* Or, as the artist puts it: "It's cool to go off."'

* Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, London, Verso, 1998, p. 4.

CHTO DELAT?

Collective founded in St Petersburg in 2003
Its members include Tsaplya (Olga Egorova), Artem Magun, Nikolai Oleinikov, Glucklya (Natalia Pershina-Yakimanskaya), Alexei Penzin, David Riff, Alexander Skidan, Kirill Shuvalov, Oxana Timofeeva and Dmitry Vilensky
They live and work in St Petersburg, Moscow and Nizhniy Novgorod
Illustration | p. 64

The name of this group, meaning in Russian *What is to be done?* is a common question asked everywhere, but it is also the title of an influential social novel written by philosopher, journalist and literary critic Nikolai Chernyshevsky in 1863 that, in 1902, Lenin appropriated for a political pamphlet, subtitled *Burning Questions of Our Movement*, inspired by Chernyshevsky's book. ¶ The members of this group come from a wide range of different backgrounds: art, dance, philosophy, theory, performance, design and literature. Using the media of video, performance, intervention, publication and installation, their practice has tracked and commented on the profound changes that have taken place in Russian society and official ideology since *perestroika*. Sometimes they present a general view of its social and historical development, at others they focus on particular traumatic events that they regard as typical of the whole. ¶ The collective has had solo shows in many international venues including: *Time Capsule. Artistic Report on Catastrophes and Utopia*, Secession, Vienna (2014/15), KOW, Berlin (2015), *Chto Delat – Was tun?*, Brandenburgischer Kunstverein, Potsdam (2014/15), *The excluded. The moment of danger*, Kunstbunker, forum für zeitgenössische kunst, Nürnberg (2014) and *Chto Delat? Perestroika: Twenty Years After: 2011-1991*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Köln (2011). They have also participated in the 56th Venice Biennale (2015) and the 1st International Biennale of Kyiv (2012). ¶ The collective aims to combine art with activism and political theory by problematizing social, political and economic change as the basis of their work. The absurd, callous effects of corruption, racism, gender discrimination or violence are highlighted through *songspiels* (musical commentaries) and *lehrstück* (learning plays), Brechtian devices that encourage viewers / audiences to unpack events for themselves by considering alternative methods of reasoning. ¶ The installation shown in *BALAGAN!!!* combines two previous works: *Russian Woods* and *The Tower*. The former combines a Greek chorus with the aesthetics of a children's school play in a violent, grim fairy tale of animal life in the forest. But childish fears of the

'woods' are revealed as reality when intercut with snatches from TV newsreels that show orchestrated, mindless, *gopnik* (urban thug) violence against different groups and minorities. *The Tower*, a video *songspiel* that bleeds out into an installation of smothering, visceral red tentacles, is based on the conflict around the planned Okhta redevelopment in St Petersburg, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in which the objections of local heritage groups and residents have been consistently ignored in favour of the Gazprom Corporation's application to build a 403-metre-high skyscraper, environmentally damaging and completely out of keeping with its surroundings.

VLADIMIR DUBOSSARSKY

Born 1964 in Moscow, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 66

Dubossarsky graduated from the Moscow Art College (of the 1905 Revolution) in 1984 and, from 1988 to 1991, studied at the Surikov State Art Institute. From 1994 he worked collectively with Alexander Vinogradov (b. 1963, Moscow) but from 2014 he has also made works by himself. ¶ Working in a range of media, the duo have had solo shows in various venues, including: *Moscow Vanishing Reality*, Museum of Moscow (2014), *Painters of Russian Life*, Kunsthal KAde, Amersfoort (2013), *Retrospective*, Winzavod Centre for Contemporary Art and Triumph Gallery, Moscow (2012), *X. Ten*, Mystetskyi Arsenal, Kyiv (2012), *Khimki Life*, Wilma Gold Gallery, London (2011), *On the Block*, Charlotte Moser Gallery, Geneva (2010) and *Danger! Museum*, 53rd Venice Biennale, Venice (2009). ¶ Initially they took inspiration from the propaganda paintings of the Soviet era in a parody of Socialist Realism that created an illusion of a non-existent paradise. But they also included in these works outside influences, such as the lurid advertising of Hollywood film posters or sleazy porn flicks. In 2001, their work moved away from a depiction of former Soviet fantasies to incorporate ideas from advertising, mass media and celebrity culture, often interpolating these images into banal, kitsch or absurd situations in reference to the newly transforming Russian national identity. ¶ In his solo work Dubossarsky has ostensibly moved away from carnival chaos towards a more sardonic view of the present. Two large paintings are shown in *BALAGAN!!!* In a typically strange reflection of contemporary geopolitics, *Happy Childhood* (2014) looks back to the era of Stalin with a found, battered, full-length portrait of the Great Leader, yet it is flanked on one side by adoring Disney-like fairies carrying candles, while on the other, in an exotic bamboo landscape, cartoon pandas are bewailing the Leader's empty chair. What we may ask is the state today of Russian Chinese relations? In *Merry Christmas!* (2015), we are brought undeniably up to date in an 'official' seasonal portrait of President Putin and Chancellor Merkel yet, although they are shown together, there is little communication between them: their body language and expressions suggest that they are enjoying private jokes and may even originate from different planets.

ANDREJ DUBRAVSKY

Born 1987 in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia
Lives and works in Bratislava, Slovakia
Illustration | p. 68

Dubravsky originally studied sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava from which he graduated in 2012. A precocious talent, he specialised in painting while still a student and won the First Prize in the VUB / Intesa Sanpaolo Foundation Award for Painting for Young Artists (2012) . His solo shows have included *The Exciting Mysterious Aquarium*, Depot in Petržalka, Bratislava (2013) and *Golden Sands* at the Jiři Švestka galleries in Berlin and Prague (2012/13). ¶ His style of painting is inspired by the Old Masters yet the vulnerable male subjects that often feature in his work express a frailty emphasised by the appearance of enigmatic masked figures with bunny-ears. Dubravsky explains his absurd collision of an outdated ideal of feminine beauty with lithe, naked young men as follows: 'Boys with bunny ears represent young greenhorns like me. The bunnies are some sort of Fauns from the pictures of old masters, but with a kinky, contemporary twist.' In these works he introduces visitors into a dark, obscure yet intimate world, where the distinctions between guest, visitor and voyeur are easily blurred.

NATALYA DYU

Born 1976 in Karaganda, Kazakh SSR
Of Korean background, she lives and works in Karaganda, Kazakhstan
Illustration | p. 70

With a degree from the Buketov Karaganda State University Department of Fine Arts and Mechanical Drawing, Dju works mainly in video. Her works have been exhibited in Kazakhstan as well as in India, Korea, Greece, Germany, Mexico, the UK and the United States. She participated in the Busan Biennale, Busan (2014), *Between Heaven and Earth. Contemporary Art for the Centre of Asia*, Calvert 22, London (2011), *Liberty / Freedom*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow (2010), *Is There Any Hope for an Optimistic Art?*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow (2010) and in *EXIT*, Almaty (2009). ¶ Although her approach may seem ironic, her works are fully immersed in social reality, unravelling the processes through which habits are formed, expectations are created and dreams are constructed. Her bitter-sweet video *Happystan* (2007) is set to the soundtrack of a sentimental love ballad written and performed by Aliya Belyaeva whose oligarch husband was imprisoned at the time of its making. The film's imagery presents a hard and dispassionate look at the economic and social conditions of the vast majority of Kazakh people, particularly women, highlighting with poignant and tragic humour the discrepancy between the naïve optimism of the lyrics and the harsh, colourless realities of everyday life.

SASHA FROLOVA

Born 1984 in Moscow, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 72

Frolova graduated in 2002 from the Art School of the Stroganov Moscow Higher College of Art and Industry in Moscow and extended her studies in Graphic Design at the National Institute of Design (2004–08) and on the *New Art Strategies (Contemporary Art)* course at the Institute of Contemporary Art Problems (2006) under the tutorship of Joseph Backstein. For ten years she was assistant to the eminent performance artist and object maker Andrey Bartenev. ¶ She is the current holder of Andrew Logan's London-based *Alternative Miss World* award. She had a solo show in the Frederica Ghizzoni Gallery, Milan (2014) was finalist of the Arte Laguna Special Prize for a solo show in Venice in 2013 and took part in the finalists' group exhibition in the Arsenale where she was awarded a special exhibition prize. She was a finalist of the Kandinsky Prize (Young Artist Project of the Year nomination) in Moscow, 2009. ¶ *AQUAAEROBIKA*, a collective performance project that she both directs and performs, was first presented in Saint Petersburg and Venice during 2013 and has since toured widely. Her solo shows include *FR BR*, in the parallel programme of the 4th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2011), *Albinism*, Aidan Gallery, Moscow (2010) and *Cyber Princess*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2009). She has also presented her work: in London at the Whitechapel Gallery, at the Riflemaker Gallery and at the Russian Winter Festival in Trafalgar Square; in Kyiv at Gogolfest; in Hamburg at Kampnagel; and in Moscow at the Shushev State Museum of Architecture and the National Centre of Contemporary Art (NCCA). ¶ Frolova uses her body to work in different media – sculpture, inflatables, dance, music and performance – in which the different kinds of movement, colour and energy it generates are

the dominating elements. A hybrid between the puppet-like figures of Oscar Schlemmer's Bauhaus *Triadisches Ballet* (1922), whirling dervishes and Lady Gaga on speed, she employs outlandish costumes, electronic music and dance to melt into the abstract forms of her colourful inflatable sculptures and to create a sense of awe and wonder in the viewer – a cyber-beauty of latex, speed and sound. As part of the opening celebrations of *BALAGAN!!!* Frolova will be making a special performance. ¶ Her large, inflatable sculptures conjure images of alien body parts and vectors of energy that stand in their own right but also integrate with her performances. *Lyubolet* (2008), a coiling uterine fantasy in eau de nil latex that also suggests the ready-to-strike mandibles of a Preying Mantis, is sited in the first gallery of *BALAGAN!!!* in Kühlhaus.

IVAN GORSHKOV

Born 1985 in Voronezh, USSR
Lives and works in Voronezh
Illustration | p. 74

After graduating from the Fine Arts Department of the Voronezh State Pedagogical University in 2008, Gorshkov co-founded the Voronezh Centre for Contemporary Art. He is a two times recipient of the grant for young Russian artists from the GARAGE Centre for Contemporary Culture, Moscow and has already had the following solo shows: *The Way of King's Pie*, Diehl Cube, Berlin (2015), *Instant Bliss*, Knoll Galerie, Vienna (2013/14) and *Boiling Point*, Galerie L'Aleatoire, Paris (2011). He has also participated in the Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2013 & 2011) and in the Moscow Biennale for Young Art (2010). ¶ Working across media, but concentrating mainly mainly on sculpture and painting, he combines different media in surprising ways by bringing unexpected materials and forms together and covering them with layers and glazes of strange enamel colours so that they resemble 'an abstract, violent storm'. His sculptures, opaque, dark and mysterious, appear to have landed from another world. The process of fabricating the work is also important to him, smelting, casting, hammering and welding metal into chaotic, illogical form. The rough, hand-made-ness of this process is not only a matter of surface for him but also of fundamental form.

GEORGY GURYANOV

Born 1961 in Leningrad, USSR
Died 2013 in St Petersburg, Russia
Illustration | p. 76

Guryanov studied at the Vladimir Serov School of Art in Leningrad (1975), but left after one year. He became a leading figure in the Leningrad avant-garde during the 1980s, playing as drummer in Viktor Tsoi's rock band 'Kino' (1984-90), and worked closely with such artists as Timur Novikov and Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe, appearing as a guest on *Pirate TV* [cat 102]. He was a member of the 'New Artists' movement from 1982, from 1986, a founding member of the 'Friends of Vladimir Mayakovsky' and, from 1989, a professor at Novikov's New Academy of Fine Arts. His many solo shows included *Sailors and Heave*n, D137 Gallery. St Petersburg (2004), *Painting*, XL Gallery, Moscow and Gallery D-137, St Petersburg (2003), *Georgy Gurianov: paintings, photos, graphics*, Gallery D-137, St Petersburg (2001) and at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (1997). His work was also shown in *Club of Friends. Timur Novikov's New Artists and the New Academy*, Calvert 22, London (2014) and *After the Wall. Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe*, Stockholm, Budapest and Berlin (1999/2000). ¶ A leading member of the St Petersburg Neo-Academicians, Guryanov was a dandy, making himself his art work. His drawings and paintings were inspired by the values of classical art but he always added a contemporary twist. Using the muscular perfection of Greek and Roman statuary as a starting point, he incorporated contemporary political, gender and social issues into his work, often depicting sailors, athletes or soldiers, and using the faces of his artist friends, or even himself, in ways that were unapologetically homoerotic. *Traktoristka* (2002), the painting shown in *BALAGAN!!!* refers back to the styles and subjects of Socialist Realism, but this is neither a pastiche nor a satire, the figure has a wholly new intensity and severity.

DMITRY GUTOV

Born 1960 in Moscow, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 78

A graduate of the Institute of Art, Sculpture and Architecture at the Academy of Arts in St Petersburg, Gutov works with painting, photography, video and installation. He has had many solo shows, including *Rembrandt: a different perspective*, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow (2015), *Life is hard, but thankfully, brief*, Triumph Gallery, Moscow (2014), *Fugue. A growing bout of excitement with blackouts and memory decoders*, Bourse Art Museum, Riga (2014), *No Surprises*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2013), *Genius Needs an Orgy*, Triumph Gallery Moscow (2013) and *Relativism is dialectics for idiots*, Scaramouche Gallery, New York (2010). He has also participated in numerous international group shows, such as *A clear and unseen presence in the city*, NCCA, Moscow (2015), *Really Useful Knowledge*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2014/15) and *Unrest of Form. Imagining the Political Subject*, Secession, Vienna (2013). ¶ In critical dialogue with the art of the former Soviet Union, Gutov also scrutinises Western values, consumerism and modernity in a similarly critical way, while reflecting on the different paths that contemporary art has taken in different parts of the world and on the significance of this. Many of his paintings revolve around how ideas of originality have become submerged by the consumerism of the art market that favours art made within its own image. In his work, Gutov tries to disrupt this pattern that he feels is inimical to art. He has acknowledged the work of the Marxist art and literary critic Mikhail Lifshitz (1905-1983) as vital for the development of his own views. ¶ The collages and paintings shown in *BALAGAN!!!* strongly reflect this sceptical and ironical perspective.

SITARA IBRAHIMOVA

Born 1984 in Baku, Azerbaijan SSR
Lives and works in Baku, Azerbaijan
Illustration | p. 80

Ibrahimova is a photographer who has covered the plight of refugees and victims of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, women's prisons, mental health hospitals, and early marriage in Azerbaijan. She has worked for Eurasianet.org, the Red Cross, and the British Council in Azerbaijan and has taken master classes with photographers Rena Effendi, Inta Ruka, Lucia Nemcova, and Rudo Prekop. Her work has been shown at the 2012 Tbilisi Photo Festival, the 2009 Inter Photo Festival Camp in the Czech Republic, the 2007 Photonic Moments Festival in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and exhibited at galleries and museums in Europe and the South Caucasus. In 2010, Ibrahimova curated the exhibition *ART BAZAAR*, bringing together the work of contemporary young artists in Baku. She received her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Baku State University in 2004 and a bachelor's degree in still photography from the Film and Television School of Performing Arts Prague in 2010. ¶ Her video *A Boy is GOOD a Girl is NOT* (2013) shows how gender discrimination starts even before birth. One of the musts of the traditional Azerbaijani family is the birth of a boy. Like in many traditional cultures this leads to the gradual gender imbalance since the future can be controlled by having, or not having, an abortion. The other side of this problem is the state of mind of a woman in such a perverse environment: she is transformed into an instrument for achieving an archaic cultural norm, based on the value of a baby-boy. This documentary video tells the stories of several women who gave birth to baby-girls. It shows how cynical people become about traditional cultural norms and how absurd this is in the flow of contemporary life.

NIKITA KADAN

Born 1982 Kiev, Ukrainian SSR
Lives and works in Kyiv, Ukraine
Illustration | p. 82

Kadan studied under Mykola Storozhenko at the National Academy of Fine Art, Kyiv, graduating in 2007. Having been nominated for the PinchukArtCentre Prize in 2009, he won it in 2011. He is a member of different artists' collectives: R.E.P. (from 2004) and HUDRADA (from 2008) of which he is a co-founder. His solo shows include *Poland magazine*, Ya gallery art centre, Kyiv (2015), *Limits of Responsibility*, Campagne Première, Berlin (2014/15), *Everybody wants to live by the sea*, Viafarini DOCVA, Milan (2014), *Kyjev Hotel*, Bratislava – Cinema, Gandy Gallery, Bratislava (2013). He also has exhibited in the 1st and 2nd Kyiv Biennales of Contemporary Art (2012/15). ¶ Kadan works in an interdisciplinary way, collaborating with activists, architects or others, in a wide range of different media that include objects, constructions, paintings, graphics, installations and posters. The recent political unrest and armed conflict with Russia has inevitably surfaced in his work, both in reference to the extended occupation of Maidan Square in Kyiv (2014) – he has made a form of commemoration of this event by focussing on the 'gardens' that the demonstrators made while they occupied the square – and in the tense, changed atmosphere of the whole country. ¶ In *BALAGAN!!!* Kadan presents a new site-specific 'tower' that, while continuing the cycle of previous works related to the language of Soviet neo-modernism, also refers to the transformed social and political climate. In this work, the triumphal, colonial Soviet column is topped by a flimsy structure that references both a GULAG watchtower and the structures built by early Christian Stylites to separate themselves from the world and mortify their flesh. Kadan sees this structure not only as a meditation on different significations of power, but also as an unstable and dangerous 'image of a totalitarian saint who regards the world from the safety of his asceticism' – a criticism, perhaps, of the position of the artist in a time of duress.

ALEXEY KALLIMA

Born 1969 in Grozny, Chechen-Ingush ASSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 84

Kallima graduated with a degree in Fine Arts from the University of Krasnodar in 1988. He curated his own project the France Gallery from 2001 to 2005 and in the following year was given an award in the Contemporary Arts section of the Innovation Prize in Moscow. He has had numerous solo exhibitions, including: *Audience*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2015), *Gray days. Bright dreams*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2013), *All for Sale*, Regina Gallery, London (2012), as well as group shows *The new story-tellers in Russian art of the XX – XXI centuries*, The Russian Museum, Saint-Petersburg (2015), *Upward*, Museum of Moscow (2014) and the Russian pavilion in the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009) ¶ 'A refugee from his native Grozny and witness of its storming, the Russian Aleksey Kallima acts as a patriot of Chechnya in Moscow and in his works refers to the theme of the Chechen war. He develops the theme of this province in a harsh way, in opposition to generally accepted democratic norms, without national exotica, natural beauty, the adornment of historical and regional traditions. The Chechens for Kallima are the inhabitants of roads and roadsides; they wear Adidas, drink Coca-Cola and smoke Turkish Marlborough. The global brands receive an unexpected boost of energy, becoming the marks of saboteurs and terrorists. Returning to figurative expressive language, the artist has freed the picture from its responsibilities to realism, having placed it in the dimension of will and imagination. Will is personified by the Chechens, the wild power of the new millennium, bringing death to the old epoch.'
Aleksandr Evangely

POLINA KANIS

Born 1985 in St Petersburg, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 86

Kanis graduated from the Herzen State Pedagogical University in St Petersburg in 2006 and studied art at the Rodchenko School of Art, Photography and Multimedia in Moscow in 2011. She was shortlisted both for the Innovation Prize and awarded the 'Kandinsky Art Prize' (Young Artists) in 2011. Her solo exhibitions include: *Formal Portrait*, Manifesta 10, First Cadets' Corpus, St Petersburg (2014), *New Flag*, New Holland Gallery, St Petersburg (2013), *1,2,3,4*, Mystetskyi Arsenal, Kyiv and Triumph Gallery, Moscow (2012). ¶ Working primarily with video, Kanis re-examines stereotypical tropes or memes that have survived from the former Soviet Union by highlighting their bizarre strangeness. Treading a fine line between performance and documentation, she reflects on the ideological usage of parades and military festivities in the past, by presenting them in an equivocal way in the present. ¶ In *Workout* (2011), she plays the commanding role of an aerobics instructor in a Moscow park by creating a bastardised hybrid between the totalitarian sports cult of the Soviet era and contemporary, imported western pop culture. A similarly provocative juxtaposition is also evident in *Formal Portrait* (2014), shown in *BALAGAN!!!* in which a young woman acrobatically, ritually and repeatedly climbs up a thin metal pole on a motorcycle sidecar. ¶ The artist regards 'The eternity of expectations' as the 'key motif' of this work '… we hear the roar of the engine as a symbol of a readiness to action. The pole has been prepared, the figures obediently come together to form a flag – this endless repetition is fated to remain in eternity, without ever becoming a moment in history…' ¶ In *Celebration* (2014), also in this exhibition, the repressive behaviour and actions of the everyday are played out in an atmosphere of lugubrious celebration as soldiers dance with each other in a large but plain room. The men in uniform, casually dressed, move like automatons. Inevitably reflecting on current restrictive laws about sexual orientation in Russia, this dance is hardly a celebration, but a joyless and absurd assertion of alienation at every level in which there can be neither meaning nor purpose.

KRIŠTOF KINTERA

Born 1973 in Prague, Czechoslovakia
Lives and works in Prague, Czech Republic
Illustration | p. 88

After first studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, Kintera graduated from the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam in 2004. He has three times been a finalist in the Jindřich Chalupecký Award (1999, 2001, 2003) and has had many solo exhibitions, including *Your Light is My Life* at the Kunsthal Rotterdam (2015), *I am not you* at the Tinguely Museum, Basel (2014) and *Bad News* at the Jiři Švestka Gallery, Berlin (2013). His work was also shown in the travelling exhibition *After the Wall. Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe* (Stockholm, Budapest, Berlin 1999-2000). ¶ Since the mid-1990s Kintera's social critique of politics, economy and excessive consumption has run throughout his sculpture, installations, videos and performances. By engineering striking juxtapositions between mundane, second-hand or discarded objects, he skilfully creates absurd or provocative perspectives on common dreams and nightmares that reflect, with dark, unforgiving humour, on the ways that power and desire affect us all. ¶ The hunched, all-consuming horned beast in *Bad News* (2011) and the febrile shudders of the inverted trunks that carry the weight of the world's mass in their fragile roots in *Nervous Trees* (2013) invoke a progressive, modernist past turned on its head – countermanded by a primitive, primeval present.

FRANZISKA KLOTZ

Born 1979 in Dresden, GDR
Lives and works in Berlin
Illustration | p. 90

In 2000 Klotz enrolled in the Department of Painting at the Art Academy in Weissensee, choosing in 2005 the one-year master class of Werner Liebmann. Her father had been an eminent professor at the Dresden Academy of Art. ¶ The sharp pine-green of felled trees and the scattered browns of shattered wood and bare earth in the paintings shown in *BALAGAN!!!* mark the vast crater of an actual asteroid impact that took place in the isolated Siberian forest of Tunguska in 1908. ¶ Flickering dabs of red paint in a bleak, snowy landscape, imagined from a photograph, define the uniformsof Japanese rescue workers. This is based on a newspaper report she had seen about the Fukushima Power Plant meltdown in 2011, itself the cataclysmic effect of a fatal and tragic tsunami. ¶ 'My paintings mostly depict landscapes, but at the same time I feel the urge to escape the classical tradition of landscape painting. While the wrath of nature has always been an important aspect of this genre, the understanding of nature itself was based on the idea of a recurrent cycle of growth and decline. In my paintings I question whether this idea is outdated, as the impacts of man-made climate-change seem to be irreversible. I therefore use motifs connected to catastrophic events, both man-made and natural, in a way that is pessimistic and yet still searching for an unseen healing hand.' ¶ *Krater* (2013) and *Kathedral* (2014) show the rotten trees of a devastated forest. They are part of a group of paintings that started out from the still recovering landscape around Tunguska in Siberia which suffered a cataclysmic meteorite impact in 1908. ¶ The work *Gap* (2012), is one of a group of works depicting the nuclear accident in Fukushima, Japan. 'I sometimes wonder if I am searching for hope while painting the most nightmarish phenomena of nature.'

IRINA KORINA

Born 1977 in Moscow, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 92

After graduating from the Stage Design Faculty of the Russian Theatre Academy, Moscow in 2000, where she participated in an exchange program with the Valand Academy of the University of Gothenburg, she then studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, graduating in 2005. She has worked as a stage designer for many companies: Teatr.doc, the Taganka Theatre and Moscow Arts Theatre, for example, and she alternates this with her production as an artist. ¶ On three occasions she has been awarded the Soratnik [Comrade] Prize for Contemporary Art Professionals, an award judged by other artists (2006, 2009, 2012) as well as, on two occasions, the NCCA Innovation Prize Contemporary Art Award (2008, 2014). She has had many solo exhibitions including: *Scales of Desire*, City Gallery, Ostrava, (2014/15) *Refrain*, Stella Art Foundation, Moscow (2014), *Winter Crops*, XL Gallery, Moscow (2014), *Armed with a Dream*, Manege, Moscow (2013), *Demonstrative Behavior*, Scaramouche, New York (2012), *Installations*, Museum of Modern Art, Moscow (2009), *Comma 13*, Bloomberg Space, London (2009) and the Russian Pavilion, 53rd Venice Biennale (2009). ¶ Korina primarily works by making objects or large, often immersive, installations, using found materials or cheap goods bought from hardware stores or thrift shops, that all make clear reference to the social, political and economic changes taking place around her. *Infographics* (2014), an ornamental series of tactile, wall mounted roundels, is made up of different fragments of brightly coloured textiles in different analytical Pie Charts, the divisions of which indicate economic distribution or demographic change. ¶ In her site-specific installation *Chapel* (2013), remodelled specially for *BALAGAN!!!*, Korina refers not only to the ways in which the public spaces of cities have been carved up and made private – the chapel is surrounded by a high wall and an impenetrable forest – but also to the shift in belief from State Socialism to an equally unthinking religiosity, devoted either to the powerful Orthodox Church, or to the many different cults that since the early 1990s have proliferated in Russia. The design of the chapel's stained glass adds to the alarm in that its imagery is more socialist or cultist than religious. Korina is concerned here, as in all of her works, with questions of value and belief. What do we share, and what separates us, in a climate that respects neither humanity nor faith?

EGOR KOSHELEV

Born 1980 in Moscow USSR
Lives and works in Moscow Russia
Illustration | p. 110

Before studying Art History, Koshelev had graduated in 2003 from the Department of Monumental Painting at the Stroganov State University of Arts and Industry in Moscow. His PhD thesis (2006) focused on late Renaissance, Mannerism and the Baroque and concentrated particularly on the work of Tintoretto; he now works as a lecturer on contemporary Russian art at the Moscow State Academy of Industrial and Applied Arts. Koshelev won the STRABAG Art Award International in 2012 and his paintings, installations and graphic art have been shown in such exhibitions as *Pictures from the Underground*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2014), *The Art of Translation*, Parallel program of Manifesta 10, St Petersburg (2014), *Altars of Love and Rebellion*, STRABAG Kunstforum, Vienna (2012/13), *The Last Artist and the Exhibition that Never Happened*, ArtBerloga, Moscow (2011). ¶ Influenced by the Italian Old Masters, his monumental paintings ask the question: how may an artist interweave contemporary themes both with classical painting and with the monumental style of the former Soviet Union? His answer combines seriousness with parody. Socialist Realism was once a politically correct style that he now turns on its head by quoting it in relation to contemporary political issues and aesthetic clichés. The robust figuration of his work is a world apart from that of the Moscow Conceptualists but it is no less effective in opening up different ways of looking. ¶ The surrealistic, Alice-in-Wonderland atmosphere of Koshelev's painting *Lecture* (2014), one of two shown here, suggests an allegory of didacticism gone mad. While, *The World's Famous Matryoshka Show* (2015), is an obvious reference to current hostilities by irregular Russian forces in Ukraine as well as the story of the Trojan Horse: it shows armed, masked soldiers climbing out of the bodies of the mother-like *Matryoshka*, a national Russian folk symbol, souvenir and gift.

KATARZYNA KOZYRA

Born 1963 in Warsaw, Poland
Lives and works in Warsaw, Trento & Berlin
Illustration | p. 112

After studying German Philology, Kozyra graduated from the Fine Arts Academy in Warsaw in 1993 and completed, in 1998, a Postgraduate degree in Graphic and Book Art in the New Media Workshop in Leipzig. She has received various awards, including honourable mention from ArtsLink, New York (1999), the DAAD Scholarship, Berlin (2003) and the Polish Minister of Culture Award (2011). She has also had a number of large international touring exhibitions of her work including *Looking for Jesus*, Poland, Jerusalem, New York, Berlin (2014-15), *Katarzyna Kozyra: Master of Puppets*, Schmela Haus, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2012) and *In Art Dreams Come True*, Prague, Tel-Aviv, Berlin (2008-2012). In 1999-2000 her work featured in *After The Wall. Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe*, (Stockholm, Budapest, Berlin). ¶ A leading figure in the Polish 'critical art' movement during the 1990s, Kozyra's strongly autobiographical, confrontational work attracted considerable attention both within and outside

Poland, often eliciting strong responses and heated public discussions. Her eccentric sense of humour continuously tests the boundaries of conventional expectation by focussing on social taboos, myths and gender-stereotypes. In her work *Man's Bathhouse* (1999), she donned a beard and prosthetic penis as a man in a public bathhouse and in many other works she has consistently highlighted the presence of those who are otherwise excluded or marginalised by society. Combining elements of visual arts, theatre, performance, dance and choreography, her fairy tales and fables, in the form of videos, photo-works and installations, straddle the line between the idyllic and the grotesque, setting the perfect scene on which to stage a clash between the sanctimonious and the sacrilegious. Other works concentrate on her own insecurity and physical frailty, as well as on that of others, as she struggles to complete what seem to be insurmountable tasks. ¶ *Summertale* (2008), part of her series of videos In *Art Dreams Come True*, is a vivid contemporary fairy tale unfolding into horror. In a narrative resembling *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, the dwarves are female and Snow White appears as three characters: Maestro (Grzegorz Pitułej, teacher of singing), Gloria Viagra (Berlin-based drag queen) and the artist herself, dressed like Alice in Wonderland. The tranquil and idyllic atmosphere of the female dwarves' world is brutally disturbed by the arrival of these three characters. That the status quo needs to be restored, no matter what the cost, renders *Summertale* into an engaging, if disquieting and violent, moral parable. ¶ In *Diva. Reincarnation* (2005), also part of the same series, Kozyra is locked in a double cage – literal and symbolic. Encased in a grotesque prosthetic body and imprisoned in an oversized birdcage, she sings the *Olympia* aria from Offenbach's opera *The Tales of Hoffmann*. Tunelessly trilling away, this 'diva' is reincarnated as a grotesque, primeval, quasi-erotic 'Venus' in a discordant, perverse parody of the performance of femininity. ¶ In *Cheer Leader* (2006), the third work from this series, Kozyra reprises gender related clichés dressed as a pom-pom girl singing Gwen Stefani's *What Are You Waiting For?* in a music video set in the changing room of a men's gym. In between the dance sequences she returns to characters she played in previous works acting as a diva or a man.

OLYA KROYTOR

Born 1986 in Moscow, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow, Russia
Illustration | p. 114

Kroytor attended the Moscow Museum of Modern Art Free Workshops in 2007 and graduated in art from the Moscow State Pedagogical University in 2008, the following year she gained a diploma from the Institute of Contemporary Art. In 2012 she was a Kandinsky Prize nominee in the 'Young Artist' category and in 2014 was shortlisted for the Kuryokhin Award the 'Art in Public Spaces' category. Her solo shows include *Time That Exists*, SRC Dawn, Vladivostok (2015), *8 Situations*, ArtWin Gallery, Moscow (2015), *Extra*, Gallery Room, Moscow (2014), *ChtoNichto*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2011) and *Split Personality*, Regina Gallery, (2011). ¶ Kroytor's work moves between durational performance and the production of drawings and collages. In *Point of Support* (2013) she stood for hours on end, alone in the open air, on a narrow four-metre-high column. *Cube* (2015), a new work she has made specially for *BALAGAN!!!* brings all aspects of her work into play: she will confine herself within a life-sized cube, its surfaces covered by paper. Randomly, she will sketch on the inside of the cube until the surface of the paper is worn away. Once there is room for her to escape she will leave. The marks of her 'imprisonment' will remain.

GAISHA MADANOVA

Born 1987 in Alma Ata, Kazakh SSR
Lives and works in Munich and Almaty
Illustration | p. 116

From 2004 to 2009 Madanova studied architecture at the Almaty College of Construction and Management and in 2012 moved to study art in Munich under Hermann Pitz at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste. She combines an interest in art with anthropology to engage in the visual exploration of urban landscapes. Much of her work has the quality of ongoing research. ¶ The *Syndrome of Learned Helplessness*, the work she is showing in *BALAGAN!!!* refers to a passive sense of powerless that remains long after the conditions that have created it have been removed. For her it is a metaphor of the social and political conditions in which many people live today. ¶ She describes this work as follows: 'The basis for these works were photo illustrations from a book, *The Magical Power of Stretching* (Sovet Sport Publishing, 1990), which describes exercises for enhancing mobility and reducing mental stress. The subjects of the photographs, in their stretched poses, appear helpless, defeated, inanimate, and any attempt to breathe life into them would be doomed from the start. ¶ These photo illustrations reminded me of a syndrome described in 1967 by the American psychologists Martin Seligman and Steven Maier, which they called 'learned helplessness' and which may appear after several unsuccessful attempts by a person to change their negative circumstances. ¶ According to their research, it is not the unpleasant circumstances themselves that cause the syndrome, but rather the person's experience of the uncontrollability of these events. They become helpless when they accept that their actions change nothing. They abandon any further attempt to solve their problems using their own resources. But the loss of belief in their own capacities and in the possibility of effecting change continues, even when the adverse circumstances have been removed. ¶ It seems to me that the syndrome of learned helplessness corresponds to the spirit of the time in which we live and is characteristic not only of individuals, but of whole communities, cultures and countries.'

VLADESLAV MAMYSHEV-MONROE

Born 1969 in Leningrad, USSR
Died 2013 in Bali, Indonesia
Illustration | p. 118

Legend has it that, although Mamyshev-Monroe may have spent a few fleeting moments studying art, the critical moment in his career came during his statutory period of National Service in the Red Army, when he first began to dress as Marilyn Monroe in honour of his mother whom he thought looked like her. Discovered photographs of him in drag led to his discharge and psychiatric care. He made way to the magic city of Leningrad where he met artists Timur Novikov, Georgy Guryanov and Sergey Bugaev/Afrika and became a vibrant member of the underground. With Novikov and Juris Lesnik as cameraman, he presented *Pirate TV* (see separate entry) from his apartment for three years from 1987. He formulated the discipline of 'Monroe-ology' and eventually, unwittingly, was recognized as a social media icon for gay rights, particularly after his unexpected tragic death in a shallow Bali swimming pool. ¶ In 2014 he was posthumously honoured with the 2013 Innovation Prize of the 9th All-Russian Competition in Contemporary Art; in 2007 he had won the Kandinsky Prize. His work has been shown widely and, since his demise, a number of large retrospective exhibitions have taken place: *Archive M*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2015), *The Life of The Remarkable Monroe*, Novy Museum, St Petersburg (2014), Manifesta 10, St Petersburg (2014) – a selection of his video work. All these exhibitions have substantial catalogues. ¶ By adopting different roles and genders, this legendary artist punctured the superficial veneer of

glamour that had increasingly begun to characterize post-communist high society to replace it with a tragic, human vulnerability symbolized by the fate of that glamorous Hollywood film star. In *Pirate TV*, he played the role of a dysfunctional chat show host, interviewing visiting artists and curators and going to art exhibitions, as well as acting out the roles of his namesake Marylin, and many other notables from the world stage. In the works shown in *BALAGAN!!!* he appears variously as Prince Igor, Adolf Hitler, Eva Braun, Lolita, heroes and heroines from Russian folk tales, Vladimir Putin and other political figures. Throughout his films, photographs, collages, performances and paintings, he brings burlesque together with sympathy and humanity in a unique hybrid that has become his enduring legacy.

NATALIE MAXIMOVA

Born 1986 in Moscow USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 136

Maximova graduated from the Moscow State University of Design and Technology in 2009 and then studied photography at the Rodchenko School of Photography and Multimedia from 2012 to 2015. ¶ In her carefully researched series of documentary photographs *True Self* (2013), she looks specifically at the melting, dissolution or changing of genders in portraits and interviews with people from different parts of Russia for whom their gender and biological sex are not necessarily the same. She describes this work as follows: 'Our gender and biological sex are not necessarily congruent and any discrepancy between them can lead to serious psychological discomfort. From childhood the life of transsexuals is a struggle for the right to live in harmony with oneself. ¶ They are constantly faced with a dialogue of two personalities: the inner 'I' that is longing for a different gender identity and the 'I' that corresponds to their biological sex. My series of photographs depicts people from different gender communities. Each portrait is followed by a quote from our conversations which help us to perceive the realities in which they live – as well as their bravery and the significance of the steps they have to take on their way to their true selves.'

YERBOSSYN MELDIBEKOV

Born 1964 in Shymkent, Kazakh SSR
Lives and works in Almaty, Kazakhstan
Illustration | p. 138

Meldibekov graduated from the State Institute of Theatre and Fine Arts, Almaty in 1992. He has exhibited internationally with various solo shows, including: *Mountains of Revolution*, Rossi & Rossi, Hong Kong (2014), *The Revolution in the Mountains*, Jozsa Gallery, Brussels (2013) and *Peak of Lenin*, Galleria Nina Lumer, Milan (2013). He has also participated in the Central Asian Pavilion, 54th Venice Biennale, (2013), the 1st Kyiv Biennale of Contemporary Art (2012) and *Between Heaven and Earth. Contemporary Art from the Centre of Asia*, London, Calvert 22 (2011). ¶ Meldibekov's work has focused on the 'collapse of culture' in post-Soviet Central Asia: its political and social disarray, with rival political and commercial 'tribes' clashing over distribution of power and wealth. He also refers to the collapse of civil society in this area, referencing continuing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Focusing on political and social change, Meldibekov works across a variety of media that includes installation, sculpture, photography video and performance. ¶ Approaching art from an anthropological as well as a psychoanalytical point of view, he creates scenarios in which physical mutations reflect both historical and social transformations. Dramatising the absurd paradoxes of the contemporary art world, his performance *September – October – November. Asian Prisoner*, made specially for *BALAGAN!!!* reprises an action made in Berlin seventeen years previously. Then, as now, the Kazhak artist is a prisoner, bound by the culture in which he finds himself, a

punishing kangue around his neck as an antiquated, stereotypical symbol. Yet he is not alone. Is not the art world itself also a kind of prison?

ALMAGUL MENLIBAYEVA

Born 1969 in Alma Ata, Kazakh SSR
Lives and works in Germany and Kazakhstan
Illustration | p. 140

Menlibayeva graduated from the Academy of Art and Theatre in Almaty in 1992. A video, photographic and performance artist, her works are usually shot in the dramatic landscapes of Kazakhstan and its surrounding region and frame the political present and past within the diverse mythologies that still haunt the land. She has been awarded a number of prizes: the Main Award, KINO DER KUNST, International Film Competition, Munich (2013), KfW Audience Award, Videonale 13, Kunstmuseum Bonn (2011) and the Art and Culture Network Program Grant, Open Society Institute Budapest (2011). Her work has been shown widely including: *Transoxiana Dreams*, Videozone, Ludwig Forum, Aachen (2014/15), *Empire of Memory*, Ethnographic Museum, Warsaw (2013) and *An Ode to the Wastelands and Gulags*, Kunstraum Innsbruck (2013). She has also exhibited in the Azerbaijan pavilion of the 56th Venice Biennale (2015), in the 1st International Biennale of Contemporary Art, Kyiv, (2012), and in *Between Heaven and Earth. Contemporary Art from the Centre of Asia*, Calvert 22, London (2011). ¶ Menlibayeva shows two works in *BALAGAN!!!* In her five-channel video installation *Kurchatka 22* (2012), she visits the desert wasteland of Semipalatinsk, the former Soviet chief nuclear test site. Interspersing documentary with elements of mythical fantasy, she films its derelict condition and interviews old country people, survivors of the tests and radiation, that have always resided there and who relate their experience of the early 'test' explosions. Woven through these memories, this arid landscape, and the derelict remains of once busy offices and laboratories, is the presence of enigmatic female spirits – *peris*, avian-human hybrids – who reoccupy this blighted land. Memory is dissected as a collective living organism. ¶ Her experimental documentary *Transoxiana Dreams* (2011) addresses the social, economic and ecological condition of the peoples living in the vast region of the Aral Sea, which is now rapidly receding and becoming a desert because of present inaction and the misguided and self-defeating irrigation policies of the Soviet era. Following the fishermen's long drive to water that used to be on their doorstep, she portrays the impact of global change on the inhabitants of an area that formerly thrived with tourism, beaches and fishing fleets. But they now live in the desolation of a constantly expanding desert.

BORIS MIKHAILOV

Born 1938 in Kharkov, Ukrainian SSR
Lives and works in Berlin and Kharkiv, Ukraine
Illustration | p. 142

Mikhailov initially studied electrical engineering but during the 1960s taught himself photography and began recording, with sarcastic and poetic humour, the sub-culture of the factory in which he worked and his friends, while excavating bizarre examples of everyday Soviet life. He has received many awards: including the Goslar Kaiserring (2015), the Hasselblad Foundation International Award (2000) and the Albert-Renger-Patzsch-Price (1997) and has been featured in numerous solo exhibitions such as *Boris Mikhailov. Die Bücher. 1968-2012*, Sprengel Museum Hanover (2013), TIME IS OUT OF JOINT. FOTOGRAFIEN 1966–2011, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (2012) and Boris Mikhailov: Case History, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2011). ¶ One of the leading non-conformist artists in the former Soviet Union, Mikhailov has moved in his work from a sardonic view of the everyday to an allegorical approach that encompasses the vast social and political transformations of Russia and Ukraine since perestroika. During the early 1990s, he formed (with Sergey Bratkov and Sergil Solonskij)

the Fast Reaction Group in Kharkhov (Kharkiv) that employed carnivalesque satire to confront deep conflicts within the embryonic state of Ukraine by referring back to the time of its Nazi occupation during World War II. ¶ In a grotesque parody of classical sculpture, *I Am Not I* (1992), the triptych of self-portraits shown in *BALAGAN!!!*, Mikhailov brings together, within the melancholic frame of his own naked body, both the frailty and monstrosity of humanity when faced by events it cannot control.

CIPRIAN MUREŞAN

Born 1977 in Dej, Romania
Lives and works in Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Illustration | p. 144

Mureşan is a co-editor of VERSION, an artist-run magazine and, since 2005, has been editor of IDEA art + society magazine. ¶ His work has been recently exhibited in *Your survival is guaranteed by treaty*, Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2015), *Ciprian Mureşan*, Wilkinson Gallery, London (2015), *The Suicide Series*, Galeria Plan B, Berlin (2014) and *Ciprian Mureşan*, Mihai Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles (2014), *All that work for nothing! That's what I try to do all the time!* Galeria Plan B, Berlin (2013), *Stage and Twist*, Tate Modern Project Space, London/ Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw (2012), *Dead Weights*, Museum of Art, Cluj (2012) and 17th Biennale of Sydney (2010). ¶ Mureşan works with digital media but also makes drawing and installations, dealing primarily with themes of tension, war, and the relationship between the individual and the collective. As an artist who has experienced social transition and the shift of political regimes from authoritarian communism to capitalism, he offers his audience dramatised inverted representations of social practice. The historic sense of imbalance and social neurosis in his work finds its embodiment in children and animals who are frequently the heroes of his video works. ¶ In his single-channel video *Dog Luv* (2009) a ludicrous Orwellian puppet show, dogs pronounce and declaim enthusiastically about a range of political issues and injustices with each one barking vigorously their agreement or dissent. Within an unsettling vacuum between command and debate, Mureşan ironises human values by examining the dangers and opportunities of counteracting repression. Disquietingly, the moral miasma of his 'dog eat dog world' highlights the similarities as well as the differences between characteristics usually regarded as unrelated: violence and innocence, premeditation and immaturity, altruism and arrogance.

KRISZTA NAGY (TERESKOVA)

Born 1972 in Szolnok, Hungary
Lives and works in Budapest
Illustration | p. 156

Nagy graduated from the Painting and Inter-media Faculties of the Budapest Academy of Fine Arts in 1998 and at the same time was a singer and song writer for the pop group *Tereshkova*, named after the first female astronaut. Nagy has always combined her work as a painter with an awareness of pop culture, media presence and gender issues. Her earliest oil paintings enlarged and copied pages from her diaries – sketches of everyday objects mashed together with handwritten texts. This fragmentary approach brought together, often with humour, banal absurdity with a more intimate or emotional view of life that was also reflected in her songs. ¶ Her photographic work, *I Am A contemporary Painter*, a large poster billboard, was shown in *After the Wall. Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe* (Stockholm, Budapest, Berlin, 1999/2000). For over ten years she has exhibited with Godot Gallery, Budapest: *I paint portraits* (2014); *I Paint For Museums, Not For Above Your Couch* (2006) and in 2009-10 her work was included in *Gender Check*, Mumok, Vienna (2009/10). ¶ Working with performance, painting, photography and collage, Nagy has continued to engage with social and political change and has provoked considerable controversy as people have struggled to understand the relationships between what she depicts, and how she depicts it, and outside events. Previously, she has exhibited her naked body in a performance and, in 2006, circulated a photo-shopped portrait of herself defecating in front of parliament at a time of violent street demonstrations. ¶ After 2010, when ultra-conservative nationalist politician Viktor Orbán became Prime Minister of Hungary with a two-thirds majority in Parliament, she began to make a large series of Warholesque paintings of the leader based on one of his election posters. But she embellished these variously with folk and religious motifs, Hungarian flags, marajuana leaves, advertisements, nationalist symbols and texts. Nagy describes her motive for making these works: *Lots of people are unhappy, and emotions run high. That's what I paint: the fact that all this has found its way into the most intimate parts of our lives, dividing families, love and friendships, even though we live in a democracy.*[1] ¶ Public response to these works has been mixed and a number of Orbán's supporters, including his wife, have purchased examples along with people of opposite political persuasions. In these works, the artist never admits her political views, Nagy lampoons the cult of leadership familiar from the years of Communist rule by overlaying the 'sacred' image of the head of state with other images that may be either supportive of or antipathetic to his ethos. In this laconic puppet show of many such images, all based on one face, Nagy reveals power and weakness as little more than masks. She encourages the viewer to dig beneath the surfaces of appearance in search of a deeper moral compass, rather than to be seduced by the easy politics of events. ¶ ARTIST STATEMENT ¶ In Hungary, politics has outgrown its own limitations, its framework, it has encroached into the private sphere of people, to such an extent, that for me and my generation it hasn't been a lived experience, we recognize its methods from history only. Politics has penetrated way into our private lives, right up to our bedrooms. This is why I introduce it as projected prints on patterned bed-linen, tapestry, tablecloths and religious icons. The series had a huge impact on Hungarian public life, breaking out of the tight, narrow circle of art. It precipitated unpredictable passions and sentiments from both sides, the right and the left. People can no longer argue in a sober, serene manner, their political views divide them, they can no longer share a 'bed or table'. And precisely because everybody has lost their sanity, I have decided that officially, I would not take sides. To do otherwise would endanger both my career and the goodwill of my friends. The war that is taking place at present, I do not have to win, my task is to depict what is taking place here and now. The pictures work as a Rorschach test, everyone can see in them whatever they wish. I think this contributes to the great success of my work, and to the successful sale of the pictures. – Kriszta Nagy

1. http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/12/us-hungary-orban-art-idUSKBN0GC15S20140812.

DEIMANTAS NARKEVIČIUS

Born 1964 in Utena, Lithuanian SSR
Lives and works in Vilnius, Lithuania
Illustration | p. 158

Trained as a sculptor at the Art Academy in Vilnius, his work became widely known, when he represented Lithuania at the 49th Venice Biennale (2001). Working now mainly with film and video, his works have been widely shown, as in *Archaeology of Memories*, KGB Corner House, Riga (2015), *DEIMANTAS NARKEVIČIUS*, Maureen Paley, London (2015), *Deimantas Narkevičius: Da Capo*, MSU-Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb (2014), *Deimantas Narkevičius: Cupboard and a Song*, MNAC-The National Museum of Contemporary Art Bucharest, Romania (2014), *Deimantas Narkevičius – Da Capo*, Museo Marino Marini, Florence (2013) and *About Films*, Para/Site Art Space,

Hong Kong (2012). His work was also included in *After the Wall. Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe*, Stockholm, Budapest, Berlin (1999/2000). ¶ Narkevičius's films reflect on his past as well as on the heritage of Lithuania, his home country, but in the context of the histories it shares with others. ¶ *The Head* (2007), a film he put together from broadcast Television footage. is an investigation of, and reflection on, the installation of the Karl Marx monument in Karl-Marx-Stadt (now Chemnitz) that 7.1 metres hall and weighing approximately 40 tons still stands in the city. After renaming the city Karl-Marx-Stadt in 1953, the East German government commissioned Lev Kerbel, a Russian sculptor, to make this work. It had been originally planned to cast it in Russia and move it to Germany but, for many reasons, this could not be done and the work was eventually fabricated in Germany. The monument was inaugurated in 1971 in front of a crowd of 250,000 people. At a time when, through the whole of Russia and Eastern Europe, the monuments of Communism have been taken away or destroyed, Narkevičius's film tells another story through the words of the artist and the people of Chemnitz. Even though the reason for putting the sculpture there has disappeared, the work remains, still powerful although shorn of its significance.

IOANA NEMES

Born 1979 in Bucharest, Romania
Died 2011 in New York, USA
Illustration | p. 160

Nemes's first vocation was as a professional handball player but, at the age of 21, she turned to art after a serious knee injury. She studied photography at the University of Fine Arts in Bucharest under Iosif Kiraly graduating in 2005 and quickly began to work in a way that showed a wide ranging concern for the hidden mechanisms behind the linguistic, visual and psychological systems that usually define reality. Her work has been widely exhibited and has appeared in such international exhibitions as *Report on the Construction of a Space Module*, New Museum, New York (2014), *Monthly Evaluations*, Eastside Projects, Birmingham, UK (2014), *Times Colliding*, Art in General, New York (2011), *On the Threshhold*, Jiři Švestka Gallery, Berlin, *Communism Never Happened*, Charim Gallery, Vienna (2011) and *On Joy, Sadness and Desire*, Smart Project Space, Amsterdam (2009) and the 11th Istanbul Biennale (2009). ¶ During her tragically short career Nemes became one of the best known Romanian conceptual artists. Her work reflected a strong interest in fashion, design, scenography and science along with the possibility of a non-progressive avant-garde that questioned the dominance of chronology as a critique of present day hubris. Such an idea underlay the sophisticated primeval quality of her installation *The white team (Satan)* 2009 shown here, as well as the concerns that led to her *Times Colliding* exhibition held in New York during 2011.

PAVEL PEPPERSTEIN

Born 1966 in Moscow, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 162

Pepperstein was born into a family of artists; his mother Irina Pivovarova was an author of children's books and his father Viktor Pivovarov was a well- known painter. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague from 1985 to 1987 and, back in Moscow, was in 1987 co-founder – with Sergei Anufriev and Yuri Liederman – of the avant-garde group Inspection Medical Hermeneutics. In the context of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, their main interest was in experimenting with language and meaning particularly in a fusion of western philosophy, Asian region and Orthodox theology in the language of psychiatry and pharmacology. Since 1989, Pepperstein has worked as an independent artist, art critic, theorist and rap musician. ¶ His recent solo exhibitions include *The Future Enamoured with the Past*, Multi Media Art Museum Moscow MAMM (2015), *Landscapes of the Future*, Kewenig Galerie, Cologne, (2012), *Ophelia*, Regina Gallery, London (2012), *Studies of American Suprematism*, Galerie Kamm, Berlin (2013), *Murder, She said!* Galería Kewenig, Palma de Mallorca (2013), *Debris of the Future*, Pace Gallery, London (2014), *Holy Politics*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2014). He also participated in Manifesta 10 (2014), showing work in the main building of the Hermitage. ¶ *This Tree Saved Me* (2014) and *The Faun and the Nimph* (sic) (2015), the two paintings shown in *BALAGAN!!!* bring together shared primeval mythologies with different aspects of modernity. The former work refers to an age of innocence when man was part of nature and is rendered in a 'primitive' style that makes reference to Mayakovsky's ROSTA posters. The age-old erotic fascination of a faun with a nymph in the other painting, however, is incongruously set against the cosmic ideolology and high prices of Kasimir Malevich's Suprematism.

PIRATE TV

Pirate TV (PTV) was a collective set up in Leningrad by Timur Novikov, Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe and Juris Lesnik operating between 1988 and 1992.
Illustration | p. 164

As an alternative to television in the Soviet Union under perestroika, PTV developed various television formats, news show, music videos, fictional film and TV series among others, together with the performance artist Mamyshev-Monroe serving as host, using drag alter-egos. An important component here was spoofing traditional TV programs. PTV was distributed in the form of VHS cassettes and shown during alternative artist meetings.[1] ¶ In this chaotic and discursive series of parodies of western TV in which special guests – such as Novikov, Georgy Guryanov, the German curator Kathrin Becker and British pop musician Brian Eno – were invited into the studio, visits were also made to artists' studios and to exhibition openings where, in various personae, Mamyshev-Monroe commented on current events. Pirate TV also broadcast *The death of remarkable people*, a soap opera in which Mamyshev-Monroe played the main roles. Here is an extract from 'John and Marilyn', the first film in the series: ¶ *Happy birthday, Mr. President..*

— Miss Monroe, I am impressed by your outstanding beauty!
— Me too!
— As a sign of our mutual sympathy I can reveal to you a small secret.
— I hope a political one?
— Yes, we are preparing an attempt upon Fidel Castro's life.
— This is horrible!... ¶
— Hello, John? Come over here or I will die!
— You know, who I am? Our affair discredits me in the eyes of the people! I am John Kennedy, the President of the United States.
— John, if you abandon me, I will tell the journalists about Fidel Castro, about your plan! Everything!
— No, you won't do it!... ¶
— Oh my pills!
— You knew too much, Marilyn...[2] ¶

A subsequent episode in the series was *Adolph and Eva*, set in the Berlin Bunker in the last years of the Third Reich.

1. Kathrin Becker from Marius Babias, Kathrin Becker, Sophie Goltz (ed.), Time Pieces Video Art Since 1963, n.b.k./ Walther Koenig, 2012.
2. Translated from the Russian by Marina Belikova.

SASHA PIROGOVA

Born 1986 in Moscow, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 166

Pirogova is a performance and video artist, for her the two disciplines are inter-connected. After graduating from the Physics Department at Moscow State University in 2010, she received a degree in 2014 from the Rodchenko Art School in Video and New Media in Moscow. She has been awarded prizes

at the Extra Short Film Festival, ESF (2012) as well as the Innovation Prize in the 'New Generation' category (2014). She has participated in various exhibitions, such as *Burning News*, Hayward Gallery, London (2014), *I saw lightning*, Udarnik, Moscow (2014) and in the Manifesta 10, parallel program, St Petersburg (2014). Working with performance, she has also participated in different festivals, including: the 6th International Festival of Video, Performance and Technology, Lisbon (2014), VIII Andrei Tarkovsky International Film Festival, Ivanovo (2014), Cinedans Dance on Screen Festival, Amsterdam (2014) and Now & After International Video Art Festival, The State Museum of GULAG, Moscow (2014). ¶ The people in Pirogova's work adapt automatically to the mechanics of their physical environments, relinquishing their autonomy to the rhythm and structure of the work. Her video-performance *BIBLIMLEN* (2013) is a behind-the-scenes look at Moscow's Russian State Library (the former Lenin Library), in which the interior architecture of the building becomes an active co-author of the piece. An earlier video-performance, *QUEUE* (2011), based on Vladimir Sorokin's novel of the same name (1983), is a nervous but 'bizarrely funny saga of a quintessential Russian institution, the interminably long line' (NYT, 2011). Creating an absurdist choreography of hysterics, dependence and clanship, Pirogova takes pains to replay the text through dance to identify the queue as not a physical but a psycho-social contemporary condition.

RECYCLE GROUP

Founded in 2006 in Krasnodar, Russia
Andrey Blokhin, Born 1987, Krasnodar, USSR
Georgy Kuznetsov, Born 1985, Krasnodar, USSR
Illustration | p. 168

Since 2008 the artists have regularly participated in various group shows in Moscow, St Petersburg and other Russian cities. In 2010 they won the prestigious Kandinsky Prize 'Young Artist' category for their Reverse project and since that time their works have been regularly showcased in international galleries and contemporary art spaces in France, Italy, Great Britain, USA and Belgium. In 2012, the Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow hosted their large solo show *Paradise Network*, which attracted a wide audience. The artists have also participated in the programme of the Venice Biennale (2011/2013/2015) and their large-scale, plastic mesh installations have covered the façade of the Grand Palais during Art Paris (2013) as well as the façade of London School of Economics. Their works have been acquired by a number of public collections. ¶ In *The Gifts of the Gods* (2014) an ironical examination of everyday consumption, abundance and commoditisation, the members of the RECYCLE GROUP echo the ideals and forms of a classical frieze but within the precincts of a supermarket. In this massive, monochrome, plastic-mesh relief, the ecstatic abandon of ancient bacchanalian rituals is equated with the frenzied consumerism of lines of contemporary shoppers in a mall as the goods topple down upon their heads. An abundance of goods is offered here and the artists make a parallel between ancient Greek pagan festivities, with their lavish sacrifices, and the desire for consumption elevated to the status of a religion, which has become a hallmark of the 21st century. ¶ A scene of consumer frenzy is reminiscent of ancient Greek bas-reliefs, depicting hunt scenes, athletic contests or solemn sacrifices to the gods. The artists have a carefully articulated attitude towards modern materials and technology, and have used plastic mesh for this work, since its semi-transparent structure echoes the ephemerality of material goods, which displace each other at terrific speed. Obvious criticism of the issues of our time and a moralising tone, however, are not characteristic of the RECYCLE GROUP's work. Irony remains their principal tool in their articulation of a consumerist rather than divine *commedia*.

MYKOLA RIDNYI

Born 1985 in Kharkov, Ukrainian SSR
Lives and works in Kharkiv, Ukraine
Illustration | p. 170

A graduate of the Sculpture Department of the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts (2008), Ridnyi works as an artist and curator. From 2005 to 2012 he curated the gallery–art laboratory SOSka in Kharkiv, a non-profit artists' space, and also worked with this group as an artist. He was awarded the stipendium program of the Polish Ministry of Culture in Krakow (2015), the DAAD residence program for artists and curators, Berlin (2014) and was shortlisted for the Malevich award (2014) and the PinchukArtCentre Prize (2013). Various venues have shown his work in the following solo exhibitions: *Shelter*, Visual Culture Research Centre, Kyiv (2014), *Labour Circle*, Centre for Contemporary Art Zamek Ujazdowski (Bank Pekao Project Room), Warsaw (2012) and *Documents*, Art Arsenal gallery, Kyiv (2011). He has also participated in various group shows: the main exhibition and Ukrainian Pavilion in the 56th Venice Biennale (2015), Gallery Vartai, Vilnius (2015), *Grammar of Freedom / 5 Lessons*, Museum for Contemporary Art GARAGE, Moscow (2015), *Through Maidan and Beyond*, Architekturzentrum, Vienna (2014), *Sister Europe*, Kunstraum Lakeside, Klagenfurt (2014) and the 1st Kyiv International Biennale of Contemporary Art (2012). ¶ Ridnyi works in a variety of media including video, installation and sculpture. He is particularly concerned with the idea of public space in his work: how it is formed, signified, represented and protected. Kharkiv has been at the front line of the current armed conflict with Russian separatists and he has documented this in his work, setting it alongside changing representations of nationhood in Ukraine over the past twenty-five years. ¶ His new film *Five Episodes* (2015), a work still in progress is shown in *BALAGAN!!!* It incorporates documentary footage of old monuments being torn down, new monuments being put up in their place, the resistance in Maidan Square in Kyiv, retaliatory police action, and the effects of the recent armed violence where he lives.

ARSEN SAVADOV

Born 1962 in Kiev, Ukrainian SSR
Lives and works in Kyiv, Ukraine and New York
Illustration | p. 172

Savadov graduated from the Kiev Art Institute in 1986 and was one of the first artists in Ukraine to work with video in the 1990s. His works have been shown in many exhibitions, including: *Escape to Egypt*, Collection Gallery, Kyiv (2012) and *First-person*, Pecherskiy Gallery, V-art gallery, Moscow (2012) as well as in group shows: *Days of Ukraine in the United Kingdom*, Saatchi Gallery, London (2013), the 1st Kyiv International Biennale of Contemporary Art (2012) and *After the Wall. Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe*, Stockholm, Budapest, Berlin, (1999/2000). ¶ Savadov first came to public attention in the mid-1990s when he published a series of fashion shoots of scantily clad models taken in cemeteries during funerals, with burials as the backdrop. The shocking and provocative juxtaposition of life and death, happiness and sorrow, power and weakness, transformed into an allegory of pretence and reality, has continued in his works until the present. ¶ During the 1990s, at the time of the economic restructuring of newly formed Republic of Ukraine, he moved to work in disused industrial plants, initially in the coal fields of Donetsk. His *Donbass-Chocolate* (1997) series of large photographs made there show in close detail the semi-naked, coal-dust-caked bodies of former miners, once the Stakhanovite hero-workers of the Soviet Union, now garbed, pathetically and vulnerably, by the wispy fronds of ballerinas' tutus. Savadov's latest photo series *Commedia dell'Arte in Crimea* (2012), a reference to both *balagan* and to Picasso's 'Blue Period', sets the traditional story of Pierrot, Harlequin and Columbine in the timeless spaces of the mansions, coasts, and

forests of Crimea, brought up to date by reference to the current armed conflict with Russia. In this absurd, melancholic allegory of fratricidal strife, these figures seem frozen, unable to act, without conviction or future.

MARIA SHAROVA & DMITRY OKRUZHNOV

Maria Sharova, Born 1987 in Kineshma, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Dmitry Okruzhnov, Born 1984 in Furmanov, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 174

Okruzhnov studied at the Ivanovo Art College from 1999 to 2004, the Surikov Art Institute in Moscow from 2004 to 2010 and the Contemporary Art School attached to the Moscow Museum of Modern Art from 2013 to 2014. He has been awarded two medals by the Russian Academy of Arts. ¶ Sharova studied at the Ivanovo Art College from 2004 to 2005, the Surikov Art Institute in Moscow from 2005 to 2011) and at the Contemporary Art School attached to the Moscow Museum of Modern Art from 2013 to 2014. Since 2012 they have lived and worked together in Moscow. ¶ Dmitry Okruzhnov and Maria Sharova, two painters working together, produce an impression in their vast paintings that is reminiscent of Jean-Luc Godard's black comedy *Weekend* (1967). They manage this by patching images together off the internet and by assembling them in monstrous, multi-perspectival renditions of freeways, overpasses and riots. ¶ Modern man has forgotten how to observe reality. Increasingly we look at the world through gadgets: TVs, computers, cameras, phones. We build our conception of the world out of the knowledge we derive from the screen. Various fragments of information are collected and a new world is built with their help. There is a similarity with the grandiose décor of an imaginary theatre, where screens and passages are used to conjure up plots and where the spectator, knowing full well that he is viewing deceits, still continues to believe in what is happening. Visual information, which ought to make everything patent, in fact plunges us deeper into the precarious space of interpretations and questions. ¶ The works shown from the *Surrounded by Reality* (2015) project are part of an encompassing pictorial installation that literally swallows the viewer. Viewers appear to be inside the news environment until they are overwhelmed by it and vanish. Combining printing on banner fabric with painting produces an eerie mixture of mass production and handicraft. The result is mixture of flickering grey pixels, the atoms of the graphic structure of any computer, and the pictorial representation of actual events torn from their context in an unpredictable, chaotic new narrative with its own explosions and festivities. The real world has been replaced by fakes and simulacra.

SLAVS AND TATARS

Illustration | p. 176

Slavs and Tatars is a faction of polemics and intimacies devoted to an area east of the former Berlin Wall and west of the Great Wall of China known as Eurasia. The collective's work spans several media, disciplines, and a broad spectrum of cultural registers (high and low), focusing on an oft-forgotten sphere of influence between Slavs, Caucasians and Central Asians. They have exhibited in major institutions across the Middle East, Europe and North America, including the Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou, 10th Sharjah, 8th Berlin, 3rd Thessaloniki, and 9th Gwangju Biennials. Select solo engagements include MoMA, NY (2012), Secession, Vienna (2012), Dallas Museum of Art (2014), Kunsthalle Zurich (2014) and NYU Abu Dhabi (2015). ¶ The artists' lecture-performances, on topics ranging from transliteration as language in drag to Slavic Orientalism have been presented extensively at universities, museums, and various institutions. Slavs and Tatars have published several books, including *Mirrors for Princes* (JRP|Ringier / NYU Abu Dhabi), *Kidnapping Mountains* (Book Works, 2009), *Love Me, Love Me Not: Changed Names* (onestar press, 2010), *Not Moscow Not Mecca* (Revolver/Secession, 2012), *Khhhhhhh* (Mousse/Moravia Gallery, 2012), *Friendship of Nations: Polish Shi'ite Showbiz* (Book Works, 2013) as well as their translation of the legendary Azeri satire *Molla Nasreddin: the magazine that would've, could've, should've* (JRP-Ringier, 2011). The artists explain that *Love Letters*, the textile works shown here, reference the revolutionary cartoons and lyric poetry of Vladimir Mayakovsky (see pp. 154, 205) to 'present a carnivalesque scenography of the feats and foibles of messing with language... Soon after the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks found themselves inheritors to a Russian Empire with sizeable territories of largely Muslim, Turkic-speaking populations. Lenin believed the Revolution of the East – that is, the political emancipation of Muslims through modernization – passed through the Latinization or more precisely the Romanization of their Arabic-script languages. Around the same time, in 1928, Atatürk initiated his language revolution for many of the same reasons as Lenin: to cut Turks off from their Islamic heritage and usher them into modernity. The march of alphabets has always accompanied that of empires and religions: the Latin script along with the Roman Catholic faith, Arabic with Islam and the Caliphate, and Cyrillic with Orthodox Christianity and subsequently the USSR.'

HAIM SOKOL

Born 1973 in Archangelsk, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 178

Sokol graduated from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (1996 B.A., 2004 M.A.) and in 2007 studied at the Moscow Institute of Contemporary Art; since this time he has been based in Moscow. He is a teacher at the Rodchenko School of Photography and Multimedia, Moscow and has been nominated two times for the NCCA Innovation Prize (2008, 2014). In 2009 he won the Special Stella Art Foundation Prize. His work has been exhibited in many different venues: *Spartacus. Time New Romans*, NCCA, Moscow (2015)/Centre of Creative Industries Fabrika, Moscow (2014), *Premonition*, Rendom Gallery, Moscow (2013) and *Ambivalence*, Anna Nova Gallery, S. Petersburg (2012). ¶ Sokol works in a variety of media, including video, installation and sculpture, using a variety of found materials such as worn out tools, floor cloths and cleaning implements. He inhabits the periphery of reality and fantasy, mixing them together to tell stories about the present by showing terrible events from the past within a parodic framework. In the installation shown in *BALAGAN!!!* an amateur performance of Katchachurian's high Soviet ballet *Spartacus* by Central Asian *gastarbeiter* contrasts the story of the revolt against the Roman Empire by slaves with the racist violence and exploitative labour market that cohabit in Moscow today.

LEONID TISHKOV

Born 1953 in Nizhniye Sergi, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 180

Tishkov initially trained as a doctor, graduating in 1979 from the I.M. Sechenov Medical University in Moscow but, from the early 1980s, began to work as an artist, making cartoon-like books and paintings that commented in an absurd way on ideology and social change. Since that time his work has expanded to include installation, video, theatre and performance and has been presented internationally: over the past decade his installation *Private Moon* has travelled to Austria, France, Japan, Russia, Singapore, Switzerland and Taiwan and his solo shows include *The Arctic Diary*, Krokin gallery, Moscow (2011), *In Search of the Miraculous (Selected works, 1980-2010)*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2010), and Looking Homeward, Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw (2007). His work has also been exhibited in the 11th Krasnoyarsk Biennale (2015), the Moscow

Biennale (2009) and the Singapore Biennale (2008) as well as in the museum shows *Eye on Europe – 1960 to Now*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2006), *Berlin – Moscow/ Moscow- Berlin 1950-2000*, Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin (2002). ¶ Tishkov is widely known for his *DABLOIDS*, a social and artistic project initiated in the early 1990s directly after the fall of the Soviet Union. These small, and large, bright red, kidney-shaped creatures, consisting of little heads on large feet, may be understood as emblems of the burden of personal experience, views and prejudices within a transformed 'democratic' world. They spawn their own culture with clothes, flags and banners in an ironical artistic representation of symbols and opinions that refer to homeland, nationality and religion. As such, *DABLOIDS* become child-like, but potentially vicious, expressions of familiar ideologies, languages, histories and social identities. Tongue-in-cheek, the artist once warned 'Foreign DABLOIDS can be dangerous' – a truth clearly demonstrated in his 1998 short video, *War with DABLOIDS* as well as by the xenophobic paranoia that is presently sweeping Europe. ¶ As well as making an special *DABLOID* installation for *BALAGAN!!!*, Tishkov will be revisiting both his early medical training and the famous painting *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632) by Rembrandt in his performance of *The Anatomy Lesson of the DABLOID*.

ALEKSANDR UGAY

Born 1978 in Kyzyl-Orda, Kazakh SSR
Lives and works in Almaty, Kazakhstan
Illustration | p. 182

Of Korean extraction, Ugay graduated from the Kyrgyz State University in Bishkek in 2002 where he founded the Kazakh-Kyrgyz-German artists' group *Bronepoezd* (Armoured Train) in 2000. His film and photographic works focus on the position of Central Asia within the globalised economy and the effects of the Soviet heritage in this region today. ¶ His works have been shown at the Kazakhstan Pavilion, 56th Venice Biennale (2015), Busan Biennale, Busan (2014), *Between Heaven and Earth. Contemporary Art from the Centre of Asia*, Calvert 22, London (2011), *The Generational Triennial: Younger Than Jesus*, New Museum Digital Archive, New York (2009) and *Plug In #02*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2006/07). ¶ He describes his work as follows: 'I am interested in time – how the past affects the future and vice versa, and how reality is transformed under the pressure of these streams. I am interested in memory – in personal and collective forms of memory space and mythology. I am interested in social space as a structure, topology, and synergy. I am interested in the future – as the object of art, as there are many models of the future in a nonlinear, chaotic motion.' ¶ Quoting Gilles Deleuze, he describes his 16 minute video *Earth and Form* (2013-15) shown in *BALAGAN!!!* as follows: '[This work is]... video as collage, combining disparate spaces into a single plan. In this plan there is neither East, West, North or South. Moving through different countries, the camera captures spaces, architectural shapes and the situation around them. All contain layers of memory and desire. Geography is not confined to historical form ... It is not merely physical and human but mental, like the landscape. It always becomes double, and this double becoming constitutes the people to come and the new earth.'

OLEG USTINOV

Born 1984 in Rostov-on-Don, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow and Rostov-on-Don
Illustration | p. 184

Oleg Ustinov works with different media – sculpture, painting, installation and sound-art – and has developed two major artistic directions in his work. The first is concerned with a provocative interaction with the Media in which public response becomes a key part. One such work is *Alexander Zaloopin* – the creation of an imaginary singer and Russian star of the internet who performs in the innovative genre of 'gay-chanson'; another is *Administration* shown here.

His second direction is concerned with developing a new approach in abstract mark-making typified by the formal research in his *IDM* series that is related to the visual mapping of electronic music and dance. ¶ In 2013 Ustinov, a Rodchenko School graduate, caused havoc with the Russian media in his home town of Rostov-on-Don by manufacturing official looking notices signed simply 'The Administration', that asked the residents of housing blocks to look out for and report to the Town Hall any indications of sexual 'abnormality'. Most people took them seriously and were nonplussed. Some tried to phone the published telephone number either to make a report or protest, others ignored them completely. Soon, when the rash of absurd notices and public reactions to them continued to increase, the newspapers and television got hold of this story that had extended far beyond opinions on the definition of 'deviant' to turn into a detective mystery tracking the origin of the notices. Ustinov's work is a re-creation of one of one of his notices posted in a public hallway along with documentation of the many different public responses to his action.

ANASTASIA VEPREVA

Born 1989 in Archangelsk, USSR
Lives and works in St Petersburg
Illustration | p. 186

Anastasia Vepreva works in a variety of media, including photography, video, installation, performance, collage, drawing and text. Her video triptych, *Requiem For Romantic Love* (2015), part of her *Movement* series, is a compilation of found footage depicting romantic scenes from cinema and other aspects of popular culture. In this requiem, or dance of death, she parodies the idea of romance as a perfect decoration for patriarchal marriage to expose contradictions within it that are often accepted as 'natural': he beats her and then he brings her flowers; dead drunk, he promises her the stars of the heavens; he sleeps around but he always comes back home. Jealousy and possessiveness, 'traditional values' that define the dark side of romance, slowly corrode the dignity of both partners. Unless recognized, its deathly impact pollutes countless generations and its vapid, false promise erodes a clear conscience and common decency. ¶ In earlier work she has examined and made fun of the institutional sexism within Russian Media and particularly the ways in which some women bolster their own lack of status. Her video installation *She Has To* (2013) focuses on the absurd content of Reality Shows in which young women ask their elders for advice about how to save their marriages. With unintentional black humour, grotesque hags, in voices distorted by the artist, unfailingly and repeatedly lay the blame on the young wife for 'failing to look after their "men" properly'.

VMS GROUP

Anna Abazieva, Born 1974 in Moscow Lives and works in Moscow
Elena Kovylina, Born 1971 in Moscow
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 188

Abazieva and Kovylina and worked together as the VMS group during the early 2000s. ¶ The VMS group was shown in the Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2010), the State Tretyakov Art Museum, Moscow (2002), and the Guelman Gallery, Moscow (2000). ¶ Kovylina studied at the Surikov Art Institute, Moscow (1995), the F+F School for Art and Media Design, Zurich (1998) and the Universität der Künste Berlin (2003) and has established a high reputation and has exhibited widely as a performance artist. ¶ Satirising the military march pasts in Red Square every May Day during the Soviet era, and the inevitably male symbology of the rockets and guns of the tanks, female power is revealed as these two young naked women, self avowed 'Heroines from the East', gleefully straddle the armaments while receiving equally symbolic offerings of

red carnations strewn in their path. Feminism, identity and openness are the key motives in their cooperation. Approaching controversial themes with an aggressive critique, they are at this time one of the most important groups of women artists in the whole region.

STAS VOLYAZLOVSKY

Born 1971 in Kherson, Ukrainian SSR
Lives and works in Kherson, Ukraine
Illustration | p. 190

Volyazlovsky has worked in a range of media: with graphic art, videos, objects, photographs, textiles and collages, but he is best known for what he has described as *chanson art*, drawings and paintings on pre-used fabrics that comment on contemporary political events, often with a scurrilous broadside text, drawn in the style of *lubki* (traditional Russian folk art prints) or of GULAG tattoos. ¶ He was awarded the International Malevich Prize in 2010 and his work has been exhibited widely, including *Kiosk Between Two Towers*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2011), *Chanson Art*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2008) and in groups shows such as *The Team I Can't Live Without*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2013), the 1st Kyiv International Biennale of Contemporary Art (2012), *Past, Future Perfect*, Calvert 22, London, and the 3rd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art at the GARAGE Center for Contemporary Culture, Moscow (2009). ¶ His textiles tell legends and tales, where he sometimes takes on a role himself. Their combination of political wordplays and sexual *double entendres* with humorously explicit illustrations draw the viewer into a wondrous, surreal and conflicted world. Provocatively, what he sees as the excesses and abuses of today he depicts as national folk myths, wrapping them up as 'the art of the people'.

ELENA VOROBYEVA & VIKTOR VOROBYEV

Elena Vorobyeva, Born 1959 Nebit-Dag, Turkmen SSR
Viktor Vorobyev, Born 1959 Pavlodar, Kazakh SSR
Live and work in Almaty, Kazakhstan
Illustration | p. 192

Elena Vorobyeva and Viktor Vorobyev work as artists, writers and curators. A couple, they began working together on conceptual art projects during the early 1990s Their work has been shown in a range of different international venues including 1st Kyiv International Biennale of Contemporary Art, (2012), *Between Heaven and Earth. Contemporary Art from the Centre of Asia*, Calvert22, London, (2011), *Kazakhstan Blue Period*, Impronte Contemporary Art Milan (2010), *Postmonument*, 14th International Sculpture Biennale, Carrara, (2010), *Lonely at the The Top*, MUKHA, Antwerp (2009), *Time of the Storytellers*, Kiasma Museum, Helsinki (2007) and *Progressive Nostalgia. Contemporary Art from the former USSR*, Luigi Pecci Centre, Prato (2007) and the 51st and 53rd Venice Biennales (2005, 2009). ¶ From the matrix of Central Asia, the Vorobyevs' work has focused on the past remnants of everyday life in the former Soviet Union, on how these have been transformed after independence, and what they represent in the present. One of the images in *Kazakhstan Blue Period* (2002-05), the group of works work shown here, portrays a school where the former Soviet red paint has been roughly obliterated by blue. Another photograph shows a tall, sad boy, standing in front of a Soviet block of flats. A pointed blue party-hat is awkwardly perched on his head making him seem like a Pierrot from a Central Asian *commedia dell'arte*. ¶ Elena Vorobyeva wrote about this work in 2005: 'After the Republic declared its independence, the Kazakh flag became blue. To be more precise, its colour, *kok* in the Kazakh language, means both 'blue' and 'green'. It can refer to 'sky blue', while its derivative *koktem* means 'Spring' and *kokteu* means 'becoming green'. Fraught with endless associations – the 'Eternal Blue Sky' in the local religion of Tengriism, the *nauryz*, the pagan celebration of Spring, the blue domes of Islamic mosques, a dream of the vast expanse of the inaccessible ocean – the colour blue was accepted by the people as the best, most 'appropriate', colour to represent our country. ¶ The people of Kazakhstan love the colour blue ... *Kok* is Kazakhstan's best selling shade of paint. Everything is painted with it: fences, kiosks, walls, benches, even the crosses on graves. Objects of the "Blue Period' are everywhere, in the strangest places and combinations ... It has spread throughout Kazakhstan, adding an optimistic lustre to the dim nature of our lives. ¶ In this way our society, 'yearning after' a, perhaps non-existent, bygone integrity, has reacted to the instability and fluidity of this transitional period ... Aspirations of unity ... identificatory signs – splashes of colour that not only designate membership of a concrete community, but also signify belonging to both the 'Divine' as well as to a Power far greater. ¶ Perhaps it's just a kind of good luck charm....'

VADIM ZAKHAROV

Born 1959 in Dushanbe, Tajik SSR
Lives and works in Moscow and Berlin
Illustration | p. 194

A graduate of the Moscow State Teachers' Training Institute, Zakharov has worked as an artist, archivist, editor, collector, book designer and as publisher of the magazine 'Pastor'. He has been awarded numerous prizes, such as the Best Work in the Visual Art section of the 'Innovation Prize', Moscow (2006), the Joseph Brodsky Memorial Fellowship at the American Academy, Rome (2007) and the Kandinsky Prize, Moscow (2009). His recent exhibitions include *Postscript after RIP* (a sarcophagus-like installation of his extensive archive of video documentation of Moscow artists' exhibitions from 1989 until 2014), Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2015), *Movie on One Page*, Mario Mauroner Contemporary Art, Salzburg (2015), *A Space Odyssey*, The 2nd CAFAM Biennale, Beijing (2014), *Danaë* in the Russian pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale (2013) and *25 years on one page*, State Tretyakov Museum, Moscow (2006). ¶ Since 1978, Zakharov has been an active participant in the Moscow unofficial art scene as well as a leading proponent and chronicler of Moscow Conceptualism. From the absurd texts in his earliest enigmatic paintings of speech-bubble-elephants, he has built his work on a relationship between utterance, action and sign, not unlike the experiments of the Russian Futurists with *zaum* [see pp. 146-155] ¶ The paintings exhibited in *BALAGAN!!!* are made in response to the fleeting movements of projections of old films as he becomes engaged in a hypnotic dance with their flickering images. Sometimes, these works remain in their painted form, at others they are photographed and exhibited in series. A third element in this work is the film of the artist painting over the image of the film that enables him to establish this primary image. The two appropriate themes chosen for *BALAGAN!!!* are Zakharov's renditions of F.W. Murnau's *Faust* (1926) and Aleksandr Medvedkin's *Happiness* (1934) [see pp. 206-207].

SERGEY ZARVA

Born 1973 in Krivoi Rog, Ukrainian SSR
Lives and works in Odessa, Ukraine
Illustration | p. 196

Zarva studied painting at the Grekov Art College in Odessa, graduating in 1992. His work has been exhibited widely, his solo shows including *The Library of Optimism*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2013), and *Three new projects («Ogonyok» «Family Album», «Honours Board»)*, Collection Gallery, Kiev (2010). He participated also in the following recent group exhibitions: *Fortune Museum*, Museum of Modern Art, Moscow (2014), *The Encyclopedic Palace*, 55th Venice Biennale (2013), the 1st Kyiv International Biennale of Contemporary Art, and *Ostalgia*, New Museum, New York (2011). ¶

Grotesque faces, evocative of Egon Schiele's portraits, painted roughly in a brown palette are a trademark of Zarva's work. Using thick layers of paint, he has taken and 'redesigned' the personalities from different front pages of *Ogonyok*, an illustrated news magazine rather like *LIFE* begun in the Soviet era. Leaving these 'stars' in a state of derangement, tourism, consumerism and popular culture, along with the 'winners' in the predatory neo-liberal state, are all dragged into his dark limelight, that unmasks these people and their flaws in front of the viewer. ¶ The two large paintings shown in *BALAGAN!!! Disco* (2005) and *Lya-lya* (2006) multiply this grotesque *commedia* on a monumental scale.

ZIP GROUP

Founded in 2009 in Krasnodar
Eldar Ganeev, Born 1979in Cobrin, USSR
Evgeny Rimkevich, Born 1987 in Krasnodar, USSR
Stepan Subbotin, Born 1987in Krasnodar
Vassily Subbotin, Born 1991 in Krasnodar
Live and work in Krasnodar
Illustration | p. 198

Under the collective name of ZIP (an acronym that denotes the name of Krasnodar's main art space, situated in the former premises of a factory manufacturing measuring instruments, *Zavod Izmeritelnykh Priborov*) the group has created a small autonomous zone of contemporary art in the city. The summer of 2011 saw them found the self-proclaimed Krasnodar Institute of Contemporary Art (KICA), the city's first independent and experimental art space, and a new intellectual/art milieu for the younger generation has started forming around it. ¶ Reversing the party-inspired unanimity of the Soviet avant-garde's 'agitational' propaganda of the 1920s and '30s, ZIP have designed an environment that actively encourages dissent. Their *Civil Resistance District*, comprising B. O. P. s (Booths for One-man Pickets), bunkers, control platforms, 'plumbic fists' and information stands, has been deployed in actual demonstrations. A full-size example is shown outside, while inside the exhibition videos show them in action; drawings and a model illustrate how they all function together. ¶ In a demonstration these objects provide both protection and means of communication among participants and transform a simple protest into an organised civil uprising. The B. O. P. or B. I. P. (Booth of Individual Picketing) is a legally allowed 'protester's agitation costume'. At the same time it also serves as a protective bunker and a protester's 'tank' as it is able to carry more placards than a single person and provides physical protection from attack. ¶ The 'Shelter/Refuge' is disguised as a high voltage transformer station. A protester can quite comfortably hide inside it. In addition, it can communicate with others and covertly survey the environment. The 'Command Tower' is designed both for scouting and for the coordination of the actions of protesters in the 'B. I. P.'s. It is also equipped with a loud-speaker for campaigning. An interactive model shows an operation in a 'resistance district' in action. and tracks the movements of the 'B. I. P.'s along with the locations of the 'Shelter/Refuges' and 'Command Towers'. Each of these objects has a practical, crucial use. They have been tested out in action by artists on the streets of Krasnodar, Almaty and Perm.

ARTUR ŻMIJEWSKI

Born 1966 in Warsaw, Poland
Lives and works in Warsaw
Illustration | p. 200

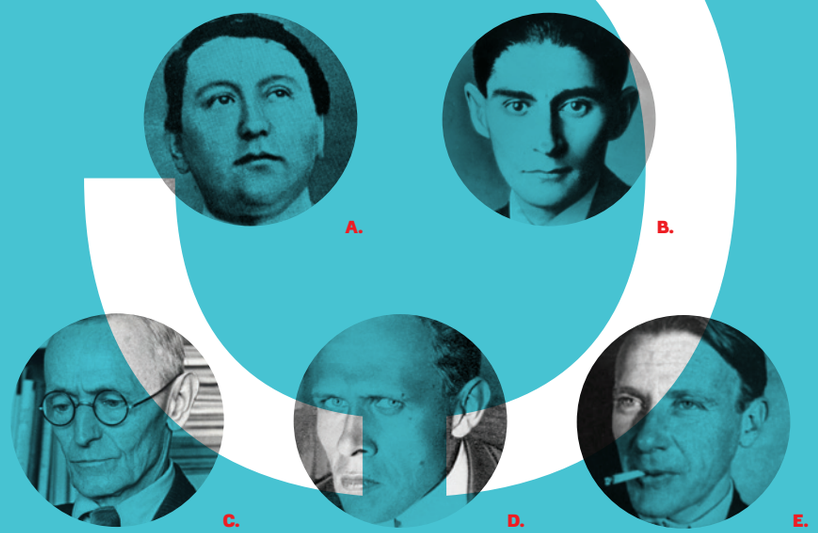
A graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw (1995), Żmijewski studied there under the performance and installation artist Grzegorz Kowalski. He is currently working as Arts Editor for *Krytyka Polityczna*, a journal of political critique. He was curator of the Berlin Biennale (2012) and was awarded the Ordway Prize at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York in 2010. His work has been featured in numerous exhibitions, including: *Pracując*, Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw (2012/13), *Democracies*, HMKV, Dortmund (2012) and *Videozone / Artur Żmijewski*, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen (2012). *The Mess*, Teatre Dramatyczny, Warsaw (2011), *Following Bauhaus*, A Foundation, Liverpool, (2010) and *Artur Żmijewski*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, (2009). ¶ A radical artist, who provokes his viewers with an insistence on the politics of aesthetics and the primacy of human values, Żmijewski works mainly in photography and video. He returns to social trauma like a bad tooth, it gives him pain but cannot be ignored. His video *KR WP* (2000), shown in *BALAGAN!!!* features a group of armed soldiers from the country's crack Honour Guard Unit carrying out ceremonial drill in front of the camera. The action then moves inside where the men have taken off their clothes and cavort nakedly with their rifles in the mirrored space of a ballet studio. In a parody of vulnerability and innocence one could almost believe these soldiers were children, Żmijewski described this work as '... a musical and a masquerade, but also a serious story about the defenceless body hidden under the uniform. A tender film about men.'

CONSTANTIN ZVEZDOCHETOV

Born 1958 in Moscow, USSR
Lives and works in Moscow
Illustration | p. 202

Zvezdochetov graduated in 1981 from the Moscow Art Theatre School, where he studied stage design. His work has been exhibited widely within Russia and abroad, including his solo shows *Given Up*, Museum of Modern Art, Moscow (2009-10), *Hello Dear Boltansky!*, Paperworks Gallery, Moscow, (2007) and Gallery D137, St Petersburg (2006). His recent group exhibitions include the 6th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2015), *Upward!*, Museum of Moscow (2014), *The Team I Can't Live Without*, Regina Gallery, Moscow (2013), *Progressive Riot*, Museo Pecci, Milan (2012), *Russian Pop Art*, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (2007), *Angels of History*, MUHKA, Antwerp (2007), *Moscow-Berlin/ Berlin Moscow*, Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin, (2003-04). ¶ A leading figure in the Moscow art scene during *perestroika*, he participated at that time in such influential artists' groups, as APTART, Mukhomor, and The Avantgarde Club (CLAVA). Influenced by folk art, popular prints, caricatures and comix, his paintings, environments and installations evoke an absurd parallel reality in which the past is brought together with the present in a gruesome car crash that captures the balagan of contemporary life. ¶ Zvezdochotov's large oil painting *Tipi di Mosca: tifosi o paparazzi (Moscow Types: Soccer Fans or Paparazzi, 2003)* builds on the idea of traditionally picturesque depictions of Moscow professions but within an absurd juxtaposition of the historical and the contemporary. The left hand panel reflects traditional Russia and appears to be based on an old print of the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 but set in view of the statue of Pushkin in the centre of Moscow. Instead of soldiers, however, the combatants are the fanatical supporters of two rival Moscow football teams – Spartak (Red and White) and Dinamo (blue and white) – each with their own flags. ¶ On the right hand panel, described by letters in the Roman alphabet, supporters in their favourite colours with matching ballet dancers' tutus mince clumsily and suggestively in Red Square in front of the Kremlin's Spassky Gate. As on the other panel, there is evidence of conflict, overlaid here by the ludicrous effeminacy of the dancing supporters in their costumes. Perhaps this is a comment on the demonstratively emotional ways in which some of the players behave during matches? Both sides are overviewed, and chased, by ever-present cameras of the paparazzi.

>>>THE DEATH OF AN ARCHDUKE AND OTHER STRANGE TALES ///



A. Jaroslav Hašek
B. Franz Kafka
C. Hermann Hesse
D. Daniil Kharms
E. Mikhail Bulgakov

I

THE DEATH OF AN ARCHDUKE AND OTHER STRANGE TALES

JAROSLAV HAŠEK

'And so they've killed our Ferdinand' said the charwoman to Mr Švejk, who had left military service years before, after having been finally certified by an army medical board as an imbecile, and now lived by selling dogs—ugly, mongrel monstrosities whose pedigrees he forged.

Apart from this occupation he suffered from rheumatism and was at this very moment rubbing his knees with Ellimans's embrocation.

'Which Ferdinand, Mrs Müller?' he asked, going on with the massaging. 'I know two Ferdinands. One is a messenger at Průša's, the chemist's, and once by mistake he drank a bottle of hair oil there. And the other is Ferdinand Kokoška who collects dog manure. Neither of them is any loss.'

'Oh no, sir, it's His Imperial Highness, the Archduke Ferdinand, from Konopiště, the fat churchy one.'

'Jesus Maria!' exclaimed Švejk. 'What a grand job! And where did it happen to His Imperial Highness?'

'They bumped him off at Sarajevo, sir, with a revolver, you know. He drove there in a car with his Archduchess,'

'Well, there you have it, Mrs Müller, in a car. Yes, of course, a gentleman like him can afford it, but he never imagines that a drive like that might finish up badly. And at Sarajevo into the bargain! That's in Bosnia, Mrs Müller. I expect the Turks did it...'.

[Jaroslav Hašek, *The Good Soldier Švejk and his Fortunes in the World War* (Prague, 1921–23), London, Penguin Books, 1974, pp. 3–4. Translated from Czech by Cecil Parrott. During World War II, film director Sergei Yutkevich, one of the signatories of the *Eccentric Manifesto*, [see pp. 208–209] made *The New Adventures of Schweik* (1943) and, from the late 1960s, this novel also provided inspiration for Russian writer Vladimir Voinovich's (born 1932) World War II trilogy of satirical novels *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* (1969–75), *Pretender to the Throne: The Further Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* (1979) and *Displaced Person* (2007)]

II

INNOCENT?

FRANZ KAFKA

'Is yours an officially recognised position?'

'No,' the painter said curtly, as if this question had snatched further words from his mouth. But K. did not want to stop him talking and said:

'Well, often these unofficial positions are more influential than the official ones.'

'That's just how it is with me,' the painter said, knitting his brow and nodding. 'I was talking to the manufacturer yesterday about your case, he asked me whether I would be willing to help you, and I told him you should come and see me sometime, so now I'm glad to see you here so soon… Perhaps first you'd like to take your coat off?

Although K. did not mean to stay there long, he was very glad to hear the painter suggest this. The air in the room had gradually begun to seem very stuffy, and several times already he had glanced in astonishment at a small, almost certainly unlit iron stove in the corner; he could not understand why the air in the room was so oppressive. As he took off his overcoat and even unbuttoned his jacket as well, the painter said apologetically:

'I have to have it warm. It's very cosy in here, isn't it? The room's very good from that point of view.'

K. made no reply, but it was not really the warmth that was making him feel uneasy, it was rather the stuffy air in which he could hardly breath, for the room could not have been ventilated for a long time. What made things more unpleasant for K. was that the painter asked him to sit on the bed, while he himself sat in front of the easel on the only chair in the room. Moreover, the painter did not seem to understand that K. insisted on sitting on the edge of the bed; indeed he asked K. to make himself comfortable, and when K. hesitated, he came over and pushed K. deep into the bedclothes and pillows. Then Titorelli went back to his seat, and at last asked his first pertinent question, which put everything else out of K's head.

'Are you innocent?' he asked.

'Yes,' K. said. It really gave him a lot of pleasure to answer this question, especially as he was talking to a private individual and therefore had no need to worry about any consequences. So far, no one had asked him such a frank question. In order to savour this pleasure to the utmost he even added: 'I am completely innocent.'

[*The Trial* (written 1914-15, published 1925), from Chapter 7 'Lawyer–Manufacturer–Painter', London, Picador, 1977, pp. 170-171. Translated from the German by Douglas Scott and Chris Waller]

III

A THEATRE GONE MAD

HERMANN HESSE

FOR MADMEN ONLY

PRICE OF ADMITTANCE YOUR MIND.

NOT FOR EVERYBODY HERMINE IS IN HELL

As a marionette whose thread the operator has let go for a moment wakes to a new life after a brief paralysis of death and coma and once more plays its lively part, so did I at this jerk of the magic thread throw myself with the elasticity and eagerness of youth into the tumult from which I had just retreated in the listlessness and weariness of elderly years. Never did sinner show more haste to get to hell.

[*Steppenwolf* (1927), London, Penguin Books, 1965, p.192. Translated from German by Basil Creighton]

IV

PUSHKIN AND GOGOL (1933-38)

DANIIL KHARMS

GOGOL *(falls onto the stage from behind the curtains and lies still).*

PUSHKIN *(Walks out, trips on Gogol and falls)*:
What the devil! Could it be Gogol!

GOGOL *(getting up)*:
What a filthy, no-good…! Won't let you alone.
(Walks, trips on Pushkin and falls.)
Could it really be Pushkin I tripped on!

PUSHKIN *(getting up)*:
Not a moment's peace!
(Walks, trips on Gogol and falls.)
What the devil! It couldn't be–Gogol again!

GOGOL *(getting up)*:
Always something going wrong!
(Walks, trips on Pushkin and falls.)
What filthy, no-good…! On Pushkin again!

PUSHKIN *(getting up)*:
Foolery! Foolery all over the place!
(Walks, trips over Gogol and falls.)
What the devil! Gogol again!

GOGOL *(getting up)*:
This is mockery, through and through!
(Walks, trips on Pushkin and falls.)
Pushkin again!

PUSHKIN *(getting up)*:
What the devil! Truly the devil!
(Walks, trips on Pushkin and falls.)
On Gogol!

GOGOL *(getting up)*:
Filthy good-for-nothings!
(Walks, trips over Pushkin and falls.)
On Pushkin!

PUSHKIN *(getting up)*:
What the devil!
(Walks, trips over Gogol and falls behind the curtains.)
Gogol!

GOGOL *(getting up)*: Filthy good-for-nothings!
(Walks off stage.)

From offstage the voice of Gogol is heard:
"Pushkin!"

CURTAIN

[Daniil Kharms, *Today I wrote Nothing*, New York, Ardis, 2009, pp. 51-52. Translated from the Russian by Matvei Yankelevich]

V

AN EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCE

MIKHAIL BULGAKOV

With a tremendous effort of self-mastery Bengalsky went through his habitual motion of washing his hands and in his most powerful voice began:

'We have just seen, ladies and gentlemen, a case of so-called mass hypnosis. A purely scientific experiment, demonstrating better than anything else that there is nothing supernatural about magic. We shall ask Maestro Woland to show us how he did that experiment. You will now see, ladies and gentlemen, how those apparent banknotes will vanish as suddenly as they appeared.'

He began to clap but he was alone. A confident smile appeared on his face,but the look in his eyes was one of entreaty.

The audience did not care for Bengalsky's speech. Faggot broke the silence: 'And that was a case of so-called fiddlesticks,' he declared in a loud goatish bray. 'The banknotes, ladies and gentlemen are real.'

'Bravo!' abruptly roared a bass from high up in the gallery.'This man,' Faggot pointed at Bengalsky, 'is starting to bore me. He sticks his nose in everywhere without being asked and ruins the whole act. What shall we do with him?'

'Cut off his head!' said a stern voice.

'What did you say, sir?' was Faggot's instant response to this savage proposal. 'Cut off his head? That's an idea! Behemoth!' he shouted to the cat, 'Do your stuff! *Eins, zwei, drei*!!'

Then the most incredible thing happened. The cat's fur stood on end and it uttered a harrowing 'miaaow!' It crouched, then leaped like a panther straight for Bengalsky's chest and from there to his head. Growling, the cat dug its claws into the compère's glossy hair and with a wild screech it twisted the head clean off the neck in two turns.

V
(CONT.)

Two and a half thousand people screamed as one. Fountains of blood from the severed arteries in the neck spurted up and drenched the man's shirtfront and tails. The headless body waved its legs stupidly and sat on the ground. Hysterical shrieks ran out through the auditorium. The cat handed the head to Faggot who picked it up by the hair and showed it to the audience. The head moaned desperately:
'Fetch a doctor!'
'Will you go on talking so much rubbish?' said Faggot threateningly to the weeping head.
'No, I promise I won't!' croaked the head...
'For God's sake stop torturing him!' a woman's voice from a box suddenly rang out above the turmoil and the magician turned towards the sound.
'Well, ladies and gentlemen, shall we forgive him?' asked Faggot, turning to the audience.
'Yes, forgive him, forgive him!' The cries came at first from a few individual voices, mostly women, then merged into a chorus with the men.
'What is your command, messire?' Faggot asked the masked professor.

Well, now,' replied the magician reflectively. 'They're people like any others. They're over-fond of money, but then they always were... Humankind loves money, no matter if it's made of leather, paper, bronze or gold. They're thoughtless, of course... but then they sometimes feel compassion too... They're ordinary people, in fact they remind me very much of their predecessors, except that the housing shortage has soured them...' And he shouted the order: 'Put back his head.'

Taking careful aim the cat popped the head back on its neck, where it sat as neatly as if head and body had never been parted. Most amazing of all–there was not even a scar on the neck. The cat wiped the tailcoat and shirtfront with its paw and every trace of blood vanished. Faggot lifted the seated Bengalsky to his feet, shoved a bundle of money into his coat pocket and led him offstage saying:

'Go on – off you go, it's more fun without you!'

[From Chapter 12, 'Black Magic Revealed' in Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita* (1938)
Translated from Russian by Michael Glenny, London, Fontana, 1985, pp. 135-37]

VI
THE PRIVATE LIFE OF MARIONETTES
BRUNO SCHULZ

From 'Treatise on Tailors' Dummies, continuation'

'Figures in a waxwork museum,' [Father] began, 'even fairground parodies of dummies, must not be treated lightly. Matter never makes jokes: it is always full of the tragically serious. Who dares to think that you can play with matter, that you can shape it for a joke, that the joke will not be built in, will not eat into it like fate, like destiny? Can you imagine the pain, the dull, imprisoned suffering, hewn into the matter of that dummy that does not know why it must be what it is, why it must remain in that forcibly imposed form which is no more than a parody? Do you understand the power of form, of expression, of pretence, the arbitrary tyranny imposed on a helpless block, and ruling it like its own, tyrannical, despotic soul? You give a head of canvas and oakum an expression of anger and leave it with it, with the convulsion, the tension enclosed once and for all, with a blind fury for which there is no outlet. The crowd laughs at the parody. Weep, ladies, over your own fate, when you see the misery of imprisoned matter, of tortured matter which does not know what it is and why it is, nor where the gesture may lead that has been imposed on it for ever.

'The crowd laughs. Do you understand the terrible sadism, the exhilarating, demiurgical cruelty of that laughter? Yet we should weep, ladies, at our own fate, when we see that misery of violated matter, against which a terrible wrong has been committed. Hence the frightening sadness of all those jesting golems, of all effigies which brood tragically over their comic grimaces...

'Have you heard at night the terrible howling of these wax figures, shut in the fairbooths; the pitiful chorus of those forms of wood or porcelain, banging their fists against the walls of their prisons?'

In my father's face, convulsed by the horror of the visions which he had conjured up from darkness, a spiral of wrinkles appeared, a maelstrom growing deeper and deeper, at the bottom of which there flared the terrible eye of the prophet.

[Bruno Schulz from *The Street of Crocodiles* (originally titled *Cinnamon Shops*, Warsaw, 1934), London, Picador, 1980, pp. 40-41. (Translated from Polish by Celina Wieniewska)]

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