

CONTEMPORARY = FUTURE



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INTRODUCTION BY **DR. MARGOT KLESTIL-LÖFFLER**
THE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION



AUSTRIAN-RUSSIAN SEASON OF CULTURE AS A FUTURE-ORIENTED COOPERATION PROJECT

The Austrian season of culture, which took place in Russia in 2013 and 2014, gave artists from both countries an unprecedented opportunity for creative exchange and joint projects. The cooperation of institutes and artists from all areas of culture expanded far beyond the framework of particular events. During the Austrian season of culture in Russia, new contacts and connections were established and new projects between curators, concert halls and museums were launched. This gives a great chance for further cultural collaboration, thus making an essential contribution to mutual understanding between our countries. As current events demonstrate, this kind of cooperation is of particular importance. It is therefore highly significant that the current Austrian season of culture is not a unilateral project of Austria in Russia, but that in 2014 and 2015 a Russian season of culture takes place also in Austria.

I am very glad that a number of Austrian and international curators agreed to give a statement for this issue. Moreover, it is very important that the works of many artists, especially from Russia, will be presented to readers of The Moscow Times.

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A DESIGN WITH(OUT) A NARRATIVE

What is Austrian design? Or for that matter, Italian design or Japanese design or British design? For many, the fashionable answer would be, “Who cares?” We live in a time of globalization. We are constantly reminded, as national boundaries are blurring, conventional notions of identity have been discredited and distance has become relativized — if not made irrelevant — by easy travel and the virtual realm. In design, one sees Dutch designers working for American companies that manufacture in China, British designers working for Swiss companies with factories in Germany, and so on. We are no longer citizens of nations but, rather, nodes in overlapping networks.

Of course, things are never so straightforward. Globalization and the homogenization it threatens have in fact prompted the inverse effect as well. That is to say, we are increasingly consumed by, and asked to consume, the local (even if what is “local” comes from very far away). Consider the emphasis on locally grown food and locally sourced products, or on reclaiming vernacular idioms and craft traditions. Many fashion customers dogmatically insist on a “Made in Italy” label — never mind if Italian law allowed everything but the button sewing to be actually done in China.

And in contemporary design, it is still easy to conjure an image of “Dutch design,” “Japanese design” and “Scandinavian design.” But Austrian design? Not so much. Other than it being probably pretty good, I am not sure many people

have a strong impression of what that is.

So what does this mean for design in Austria? The short answer is that it means as much as Austrian designers want it to mean — and based on first impressions, they appear to be skeptical. “Does it matter if we’re Austrian?” one asked me. “We don’t think of ourselves as Austrian designers, but simply as designers,” another insisted. Such responses are neither unreasonable nor unique to Austria; no one wants to be pigeonholed, and the very notion of national identity can seem ambiguous, anachronistic and overly reductive, not to mention uncool.

But from an outsider’s perspective, it seems that “Austrian design” can, and ought to be, better positioned to compete worldwide. We all know that national design labels can easily lead to a cascade of empty clichés. But if we are to agree that such classifications have been successful, if imperfect, devices — that they have benefited designers and their home economies, while also providing valid frameworks for creativity and, yes, even encouraging heterogeneity on an international scale — then we have to accept that they are useful and, frankly, legitimate and unavoidable.

That being said, a “branded” national design is not about creating a style but, rather, a narrative. And a well-articulated narrative seems to be exactly what is missing from contemporary Austrian design — which is surprising, given the richness of the country’s design legacy.

Perhaps Austrians don’t need to be reminded of Wagner, Hoffmann, Loos and the Wiener Werkstätte — nor the splendor of the Habsburgs; the heritage of Lobmeyr and Thonet; the brilliance of Kiesler; the masterfulness of Austrian craftsmanship, both folk and industrial; the less widely known, yet fascinating work of Hermann Czech, Carl Auböck, Victor Papanek and others. However, I would argue that the rest of the world could use a refresher. Much of this patrimony is studied in classrooms, exhibited in museums, retold in books and sold in stores everywhere. But as far as I can tell, it has yet to be noticeably and convincingly claimed by Austria under the umbrella of being Austrian. Nor has it been effectively tied to the present. Think of Sweden, which in recent years fixated on the mid-20th-century designer Josef Frank — an Austrian, no less — in successfully promoting its contemporary design.

The suggestion here is not that Austrian designers should conform to some historically derived, formal straitjacket. Contemporary Austrian designers appear to be a feisty and fiercely independent bunch, and that should be encouraged. Nevertheless, one can begin to sense a certain Austrianness within the diversity of their work. At Polka, I saw glass and enamelware interpreted with both refined pragmatism and wit. Despite the firm’s international emphasis, EOOS’s technological-anthropological approach felt appropriate coming from a land equally rooted in folk tradition and modernity. Tino Valentinitz showed me some of

his fantastic brass pieces designed for, and influenced by, Carl Auböck. Vienna Design Week’s Passionswege project, which arranges collaborations between designers and local manufacturers, is a brilliant idea.

Meanwhile, other efforts like das möbel, designforum, MuseumsQuartier and, notably, Pure Austrian Design have the right idea. “In the past, Austria was very relevant in design, but now we have to bring people together, present their work worldwide and rebuild an image,” the latter’s co-founder, Andrés Fredes, told me. At Lobmeyr and Wittmann, I saw encouraging, if somewhat conservative, attempts at bridging the past and present with reissued Austrian classics alongside new designs. Still, many whom I spoke with in Vienna seemed resigned to seeing the Austrian capital become a regional, rather than global, design center (perhaps this reflects a broader mentality; it says something that the in-flight magazine of Austrian Airlines, a global carrier, covers only topics relating to Central Europe). And I mostly heard Austrian design being defined in terms ranging from quality and craftsmanship to technology, research and sustainability. All are perfectly laudable attributes, but they don’t do much to differentiate Austria from other countries. Perhaps another way of thinking about it is this: It is Austrian because it is Austrian.

Aric Chen, curator of art and design for M+, a new museum for visual culture in Hong Kong

EXHIBITION OF AUSTRIAN DESIGN IN MOSCOW

ADVANTAGE AUSTRIA SHOWCASES THE VERY LATEST OF PRODUCT AND FURNITURE DESIGN.
WHEN AND WHERE: OCTOBER 14-19, 2014, ARTPLAY DESIGN CENTER, MOSCOW

The Commercial Department of the Austrian Embassy in Moscow (Advantage Austria) will organize for the first time in Russia a comprehensive exhibition with the very latest creative works of product and furniture design. During the exhibition which will take place in cooperation with the Moscow Design Week at the Artplay Design Center 14–19 October, 2014, Austrian designers, architect bureaus and production companies show at their best.

Austria is a design country in the truest sense of the word and is one of the most dynamic movers in recent years. Contemporary Austrian designers appear to be a feisty and fiercely independent bunch, coming from a land equally rooted in folk tradition and modernity. Nevertheless, one can begin to sense a certain Austrianness within the diversity of their work.

Characterized by inventive talent, artisanal accuracy and technological advance, Austrian design is becoming more and more successful internationally. Austrian designers focus not only on the local market but are also active beyond the country’s borders.

The Exhibition of Austrian Design was created under the framework of the “go international” initiative, which was established with the aim to encourage and support Austrian companies to step across the border. Advantage Austria, which

is also the foreign trade promotion organization within the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber with its headquarters in Vienna and 117 trade commissions around the globe, is responsible for the execution of the “go international” program and has placed a special emphasis on the creative industries since 2005. It has defined and executed a strategic plan to consult Austrian creative enterprises on their way to conquering international markets.

Within the context of the “go international” program, design presentations at international industry gatherings such as Salone Internazionale del Mobile in Milan, the London Design Festival, ICFF in New York, the Dutch Design Week and the European Cultural Capitals are being organized on a regular basis. It’s the first time Austrian design is presented in Russia. The exhibitors of the Austrian design exposition are all well-known in Austria for being innovative companies that focus strongly on design when developing products. Central elements of works presented in Moscow are an obsession with finding technical solutions to complex problems from daily life, a passion for exploring the limits to which unusual materials can be put and a desire to couple aesthetic minimalism with tongue-in-cheek humor.

Dietmar Fellner, commercial counselor at the Austrian Embassy, organizing the Exhibition of Austrian Design





INTRODUCTION BY **SIMON MRAZ**, DIRECTOR OF THE AUSTRIAN CULTURAL FORUM IN MOSCOW AND CURATOR OF THE AUSTRIAN CULTURAL SEASON IN RUSSIA

CONTEMPORARY IS THE FUTURE

The art being created today lays the foundation for the cultural identity of tomorrow. This primarily stems from the fact that important artistic

endeavors, as a rule, are only understood long after their creation. Only historical distance helps shed light on what works of art are capable not only of capturing the present, but also of defining the future, and therefore finding a place in the history of art and culture. This applies to all great artistic figures, such as Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Alexander Pushkin, Andrei Rublyov, Kazimir Malevich, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johann Nestroy and Egon Schiele, on the basis of whose efforts we attempt to form our own identity. In the end, every generation and era has at least several creative minds of which we can be endlessly proud. Thus, what could be more relevant and important than studying the art of today in all its manifestations? Today we don't know what work, in the end, will truly find a place in the history of art, but everyone can develop their own taste and convictions and like the artists that appeal to them, while also considering work that may not be entirely to their taste, as who judged art correctly or incorrectly will be decided long after we're gone, and shouldn't influence our consideration.

THE AUSTRIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE AUSTRIAN-RUSSIAN SEASON OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Culture, by its nature, has no borders. We don't need to cite globalization or the Internet; it's enough to consider history. There is no Byzantine art without Greek and Roman antiquity, there is no Romanesque without eastern Byzantium, there is no German Dürer without the Italian Renaissance, and so on.

Cross-cultural influence doesn't pose any danger or threat to local cultural heritage; to the contrary, it allows it to have a wider impact on humanity as a whole, as well as a chance to enrich other cultural spaces. The path to cultural enlightenment and development lies not in isolation, but in the interaction of different cultures and traditions.

I remember a televised interview with the German artists Herbert Volkmann and Jonathan Meese in which they said: "Art exists in order to obliterate the boundaries of reality. Most artists are afraid of art but not of life, and this is useless — we need fearless artists. In art, everything is possible; everything can be realized. You can unfold all the maps." It is only under these conditions that the seemingly impossible portrayal of reality can be made visible and real through art.

As part of the Austrian Cultural Season in Russia in 2013 and 2014, a variety of well-known Austrian artists and cultural institutions took part in projects and visits to Russia. Almost all of the projects were documented in books, catalogs and film clips. However, one important issue remains unmentioned, and addressing it is the goal of this publication.

RUSSIA'S CREATIVE POTENTIAL

Curators and artists who travel to Russia have the chance to meet their Russian colleagues, about whom little, unfortunately, is generally known.

Willingly or unwillingly part of the rich and diverse artistic traditions of an enormous European and non-European empire, the Russian art scene is perhaps the most promising in the world. Confident

in relating to art abroad, farsighted and independent in formulating strong, independent opinions, Russian contemporary art has potential that is unparalleled.

In our opinion, Russia can truly take pride in its current generation of artists, who for international curators and artists are a major discovery and source of enrichment.

At the close of the Austrian Cultural Season in Russia, we, the organizers of the Austrian Cultural Season in Russia, together with our partners in the current publication, would like to talk not about Austria, but about Russia. What is written here is a story of mutual discovery, a story of creative potential that lays the foundation for a promising future. Today there is nothing more important, for all of our collaborations in the Austrian Cultural Season in Russia — whether in theater, music or fine arts — have taught us that we in Europe and Russia have a lot to say to one another, and that together we have tremendous potential that is limitless in its application, that is unburdened by obstacles large or small.

I hope that the readers of this publication gain an idea of what's happening in Russian contemporary art, and that they enjoy reading the commentary of an array of Austrian and international curators and individuals who have had the opportunity to work in Russia and whose expertise and experience gives them something to say.

Special thanks to everyone who supported this publication, first and foremost the artists, those who wrote articles and commentary, and the project's staff at The Moscow Times and Vedomosti, as well as the general sponsor of the Austrian Cultural Season in Russia, Raiffeisenbank, the sponsors of this publication, VIENNAFAIR, HR Solutions, MeInl, and the Commerce Department of the Austrian Embassy in Moscow, without whom this project would never have been possible.



DMITRY AKSENOV, FOUNDER OF RDI, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF VIENNAFAIR

My interest in contemporary art has evolved from a purely personal attraction and has now become a full-fledged professional engagement. As chairman of the advisory board of VIENNAFAIR and as an art collector, I strongly believe in contemporary art and have a lot of vested interests in it.

As a collector I'm interested in building a narrative. The focus of the collection is on contemporary Russian and Eastern European art, but there are no binding geographical constraints. Art is an important historic document, and by making visible cultural links between countries with shared histories, or shared momentum in history, you become something

of a chronicler, establishing important causal and artistic relations. And in this respect, collecting contemporary art is immensely gratifying — you feel you're making history, not just watching it build by itself.

Contemporary art is also the strongest bridge-builder between cultures, which is especially relevant today. And I'm glad that VIENNAFAIR in the past three years has turned into a platform for a cultural dialogue in Europe that fosters cultural and business partnerships alike.

And then there's an indirect but nevertheless very strong connection between contemporary art and my core business activities in real estate development. Artists are visionaries, and as "imagineers" of new real estate we draw on an inherent plurality of contemporary art to shape our vision of inspired living, filled with unique architectural designs and innovative construction technologies. And, of course, on a more practical level we try to incorporate contemporary art into our development projects.

Finally, I am especially happy that we can announce three great and promising exhibitions in this issue: TALES OF TWO CITIES, a cooperation between the Jewish Museum Vienna, Memorial, Moscow Museum of Modern Art and the Austrian Cultural Forum Moscow, "CREATIVE APPROACHES," the first ever Austrian Group exhibition fully dedicated to Austrian Design and VIENNAFAIR. In short: We keep on rocking.



CEO Jean-Emmanuel de Witt
Publisher Ekaterina Movsumova

Editors Simon Mraz, Kevin O'Flynn
Translations Ksenia Levitskaya, Andreas Laubreiter
Copyeditor Peter Spinella
Art Director Maria Georgiyevskaya

Project Manager Elmira Latfullina, Isabella Gaisbauer

Sales Director Sofia Selivanova

Client Services Julia Bychenkova, Maria Alexeeva

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Cover "Motorcyclist" by David Ter-Organian, 2013
David Ter-Organian lives and works in Moscow

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Editorial address:

3 Ul. Polkovaya, Bldg. 1, Moscow, Russia, 127018
Tel. +7 (495) 234 3223, Fax +7 (495) 232 6529

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RUSSIA'S CREATIVE POWER

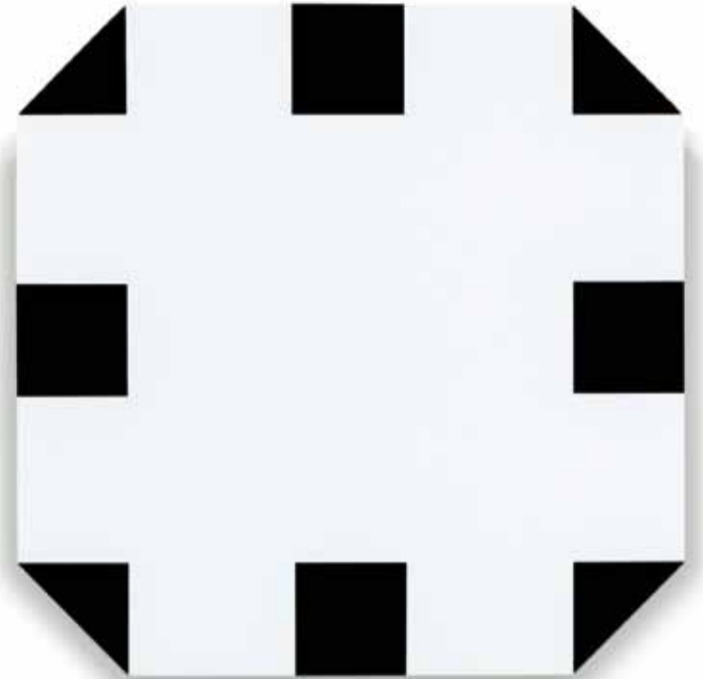
TAKE A LOOK AT WORKS BY 15 RUSSIAN CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS WHO ARE CREATING ART IN AN ARRAY OF STYLES



"Celebration," 2013

Irina Korina

Born in 1977 in Moscow where she also lives and works. Korina trained as a theater designer and is known for creating enveloping room installations out of disposable ordinary materials common to every Russian. She uses familiar cheap floral fabric, discarded furniture and magazines to create an unfamiliar materiality verging on the absurd, and to confront us with objects and spaces that conjure memories of a previous time.



"Wooden Tower," 2014

Dima Hunzelweg

Born in 1968 in Moscow. Lived and worked in New York, 1991–2007. Currently lives and works in Moscow. Hunzelweg's compositions are characterized by a delicate and sensitive beauty that gives his art a very specific position within the tradition of minimalist art. What might look from afar as computer-generated or produced with high-tech support is actually realized by hand with classic artistic materials and simple tools. | Photos by Ksenia Voeykova

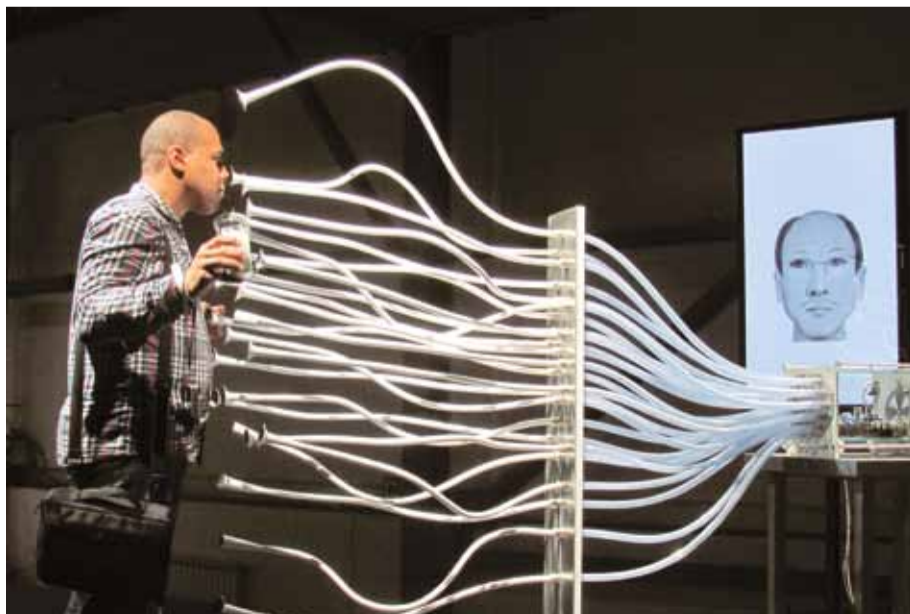


"Screws Wood77," 2014

Kuda Begut Sobaki

Kuda Begut Sobaki (Where Are the Dogs Running) is an art group from Yekaterinburg made up of Alexei Korzukhin, born in 1973, Vladislav Bulatov, born in 1975, Nataliya Grekhov, born in 1976, and Olga Inozemtseva, born in 1977. The group creates multimedia art that often plays with the physical senses.

"The Face of a Smell," 2012. We created a work that fixes the smell of a person and then produces a photofit of that smell. When a person comes up to the device, the smelling tubes take in his odor. The data received creates a unique image tied to that place, that person, that moment in time. The subject gets to see the face of his smell.



Andrei Kuzkin

Born in Moscow in 1979. Lives and works in Moscow.

"The Dash," 2011.

"The room was wrapped in cellophane, leaving some space between the film and the walls and furniture. As a result we have a transparent picture, where the image gets its color from reality, while its outline and tone are set by the artist's hand. Thus we create a look-alike of reality so that it becomes artistically documented. I try to pull the viewers out of today's space and place them into the space of recollection of the day, into the space of my personal unsuccessful effort to stop time and secure what there is."





Olga Kroyter

Born in 1986 in Moscow. Lives and works in Moscow.

“Point of Support,” a performance in 2013: The artist stands on a narrow four-meter column, one-on-one with the world. A contradictory, mixed sensation of flight and fear of falling, a sense of one’s own greatness and of utter loneliness. What is a person one-on-one with him or herself?

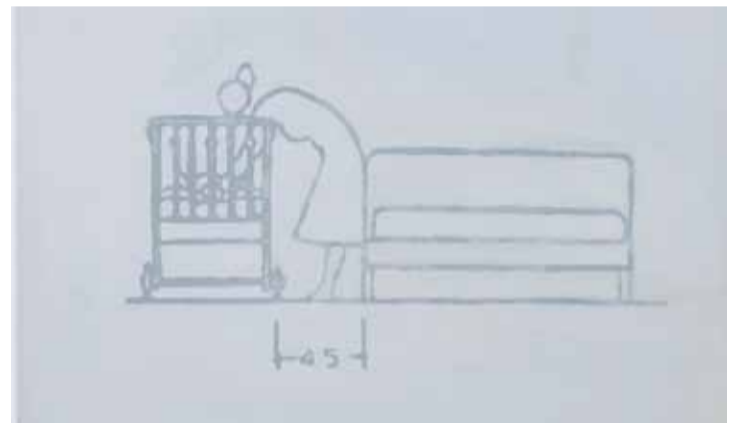
Alexander Povsner

Born in Moscow in 1976. Lives and works in Moscow. Povsner belongs to a young generation of artists who work in the tradition of Moscow conceptualism. For “Standby” in 2011, Povsner created a simple pair of shoes, fused together and filled with plaster, a material that often figures in the artist’s work. “Standby” is placed among shoes in a flat in the House on the Embankment.

“Standby,” 2011



“Untitled” from the series “On Sleeping Arrangements in the Sixth Five-Year Plan,” 2012



“Norms” from the same series as “Untitled,” 2012

Alexandra Paperno

Born in 1978 in Moscow. Currently lives and works in Moscow. Left for the United States at the age of 13. Studied at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York. Currently lives and works in Moscow. In 1955, the Communist Party adopted the resolution “On the Elimination of Excess in Design and Construction.” Plans, maps and other symbols take on an entirely new tonality when brought to the canvas by the brush.

Taisia Korotkova

Born in 1980. Currently lives and works in Moscow. “My works are devoted to the beauty of the world of science. This is a painting about the importance of technologies in our life and also about man’s place in industrial society. By working in a traditional, old style of tempera on wood painting, I let my audience stop and feel the beauty of the work process. One of my subjects is IVF, delivery and neonatal intensive care. It’s interesting to look at the origin of a new generation of people, made in laboratories.”





Tima Radya

Tima Radya, street artist, born, lives and works in Yekaterinburg. "For sure I don't know as much of you as you of me, but now we have something in common."

"Bridge Case," 2011



Anna Shiller

Born in 1988. Currently lives and works in St. Petersburg.

"VDV Day" is a documentation of the random events our heroine, Schiller, finds herself entangled in the summer of 2013, during the Russian Airborne Troops Day celebrations in St. Petersburg. Deliberately placing herself into this space of militaristic mayhem, our heroine embodies the exact opposite of what is unfolding before the viewer's eyes: a backdrop of drunken bodies in striped shirts. Schiller leaves the ending open — dancing, she retires into the night, a faithful follower in tow.



Alexandra Sukhareva

Born in 1983, studied in Moscow and Gothenburg, currently lives and works in Moscow and Dubna. Her artistic practice is primarily interested in the historical cycles of toxins within military, daily and aesthetic realms as well as the poetical recourse deriving from that shift. Sukhareva often deals with the interaction between humans, nature, society and social responsibility.

"Fogs sury firm u," 2013



Recycle Art Group

Recycle Art Group is made up of two young and talented artists, Andrey Blokhin and Georgy Kuznetsov. They live and work in Krasnodar.

The group does not provoke confrontation but looks for compromises and the means of making peace between incompatible and competing aspects of the modern world — a world made up first and foremost of concepts and images. Recycle digs through various cultural and visual "software" that has managed to grow into a thick layer on the hardware of collective consciousness, and try to identify conflicting "programs."



“Roots of Unrest” | Courtesy: Gallery 21



“Vases on Stands” | Courtesy: Gallery 21

Anna Titova

Born in Sverdlovsk in 1984. Currently lives and works in Moscow.

Titova explores the inconsistent relationships that she identifies between representation, found objects and experiences of social relations. Titova’s method is based on redefinition of boundaries between installation and photography, collage and sculpture.

Alexander Lysov

Born in Bratsk in 1987. Currently lives and works in Moscow.

“IRx272,” interactive light installation, 2013.

In a horizontal plane on the perimeter of the sphere, there are eight sonar emitters, or ultrasound rangefinders, able to determine the distance of a person approaching the sphere. The closer the person comes, the stronger the “flames” glow: a greater number of lamps shine and, accordingly, more heat is released.



Anya Zholud

Born in 1981 in Leningrad, lives and works in Moscow. Zholud has long been working in three-dimensional space. The artist is famous for her metal installations, depicting very often everyday items in an almost minimalist, graphic style. However, it is her paintings that give a particularly touching insight into the fascinating artistic creation of this extraordinary young artist.



HIDDEN ART SPACES

THERE IS MORE TO THE ART WORLD THAN GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS. YOU CAN FIND EXTRAORDINARY ART GALLERIES IN ARTISTS' FLATS, IN A FRIDGE, IN A CUPBOARD, IN A CORRIDOR AND EVEN ON LENINSKY PROSPECT IN A BIG INDUSTRIAL CITY

House of Alexander Petlura

The House of Alexander Petlura in Moscow is an institution, a living space, a museum, a theater, an exhibition space, a gallery and a meeting place for intellectuals, artists and art lovers of different generations. Legendary performances have taken place there over the years by artists and actors from all over the world.



Magnitogorsk

A very different art space is the one that is currently being formed in the industrial city of Magnitogorsk, where the city administration is opening the industrial powerhouse up to the world.

The steel city on the Ural River is using art as a chance to reinvent the city. Graffiti artists from around the world have come to create works on the huge facades of downtown buildings. The art brightens up life for city residents and also contributes to a new understanding and identification of Magnitogorsk for the outside world.

The Austrian Cultural Forum in collaboration with Art University Linz (Austria's own steel city) worked so that four Austrian youngsters — Oliver Naimer, Andreas Tanzer, Jonas Fliedl and Daniel Rappitsch — could create their own personal artistic greeting to Magnitogorsk. Everyone should check out this city in its current state of artistic development.





Studio Burakova

Studio Burakova plays an essential role as it allows experimental artistic works to be shown unofficially, very often by the artists themselves. The art space was created around artist David Ter-Organyan and is located in an old Moscow industrial space that is partly still in use. A number of artists (among them Alisa Yoffe, Svetlana Shuvaeva and Alexandra Galkina) share the spacious studio and invite Russian and foreign artists for residences, organize concerts and film screenings, and set up exhibitions that are among the most important in Moscow.



The VGLAZ independent association

The VGLAZ independent association of artists was established in 2010 by a group of contemporary artists (Gosha Ostretsov, Liudmila Konstantinova, the Yelikuka group, Georgy Litichevsky, the PG group and others). The goal was to create an independent venue for experiments by artists who are striving to develop a personal identity outside the context of government institutions and commercial galleries.

The KOP studio at a former plastic factory, where the group's artists mostly work and hold their events, has a room for visiting artists and curators as well as a workshop where artists make sculptures, art objects and artistic furniture. Master classes are held here for those who want to learn how to work with wood, metal and plastic.

The freedom of creation, independent criticism and self-analysis are the defining elements of the group, which includes about 20 artists between 20 and 60 years old. Despite their age differences, the artists work together very well, submitting their works for regular exhibitions and auctions. They also create contemporary, classical and experimental music, host parties and self-defense exercises.





Brown Stripe Gallery

The Brown Stripe Apartment Gallery is a joint enterprise between photographer Pyotr Zhukov, who is also a member of the art group Vverkh, and artist Yekaterina Gavrilova. Located in the northern outskirts of Moscow close to the ring road that surrounds the city, the gallery was set up as a haven for art that could never get into the bigger, more official galleries. Founded in 2006, the gallery has hosted artists from Ukraine as well as Russia, including Alexandra Sukhareva (see Page 8 for one of her works).



White Cube Minsk

"I conceived the concept and organized the exhibition in collaboration with V. Kruchinsky based on the idea of creating new gallery premises from arbitrarily selected spaces. The exhibition we organized took place in my self-proclaimed Refrigerator gallery and consisted of 17 galleries, or 'Jars,' where different artists had their personal shows. The exhibition was named 'White Cube Minsk' after the refrigerator brand and united 17 micro, one-man shows in the jar galleries," says Varvara Gevorgizova, curator of the Refrigerator gallery.



Svetlana Gallery

Once upon a time, the well-known Vsevolod Lisovsky was leaving after a visit when he sat on the stool in the cupboard to tie his boots. He sat down, tied his boots and said: "Oh, how good it is here."

I said to him: "Do you think we should open a gallery here?"

Him: "Uh-huh!"

And that's how the gallery came about.

Svetlana Gallery opened in the apartment of artist Svetlana Shuvaeva in the summer of 2013.

In the past year the gallery, in a small cupboard in the corridor of the apartment, has hosted 17 exhibits by Russian and foreign artists.



CURATORS SPEAK OUT

WE ASKED 16 ART PROFESSIONALS TO TELL US WHAT THEY THINK OF RUSSIAN CONTEMPORARY ART AND ITS ROLE IN WESTERN ART WORLD.



Christina Steinbrecher-Pfandt is the art director of VIENNAFAIR

1. Is Russian contemporary art represented enough internationally, considering its significance? If not, how can that be changed?

Very few Russian contemporary artists are represented by international galleries or have had a museum show at an international museum. This is very unfortunate for the artists because their art is internationally competitive.

To change this it requires international residence programs for artists so that artists develop their own networks, curators and museum groups, that they go frequently to Russia and that passionate Russian collectors and museums appear supporting their artists.

2. Which role does Russian art play for Western artistic work, and can Russia inspire contemporary artists?

Russia has a strong place in the history of art and has shaped artists today. This history keeps being highlighted internationally, but the link to today is missing.

Potentially everything is in place to inspire artists and curators in the cities and in the regions. All it requires is a curious eye and an infrastructure. There is a lack of money from private and institutional bodies so that projects can be realized.

Christine Koenig is the founder and owner of the Christine Koenig Gallery in Vienna.

To claim that “we” here in the West are knowledgeable about contemporary Russian art would be a euphemism. Of course we’re familiar with the work of world-famous stars such as Ilya Kabakov, and everyone saw Pussy Riot’s bold performance, if for political reasons rather than creative ones. We might also know



the Blue Noses, Olga Chernysheva, whose works I exhibited before she became famous, Leonid Tishkov, and perhaps five more artists.

This is unfortunate, but in light of Europe’s shared history with its colossal neighbor, unsurprising. Russia has always been so close, but at the same time, so far. The image of the close stranger, in contrast to that of the spellbinding distant stranger, unsettles us, as political scientist Katrin Seifert has observed in her study “The Construction of Russia in German Mass Media Coverage of Foreign Affairs.” From Catherine the Great, to the Volga Germans, to the post-World War II occupation, to the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the allure of the unknown has become ever stronger. Russia is a direct neighbor that doesn’t embody the other, but instead reveals our own other, and in doing so, ourselves.

In the midst of this murky psychosocial confusion, as seen in the “Russian mirage” (“le mirage russe”) of Albert Lortholary and others, art becomes part of a broader social and political context and is stripped of its subjective stamp. As in the case of Pussy Riot, art becomes an example of something and is no longer a medium that allows us to grasp the truth by expressing existential dilemmas through aesthetics.

THESE ARTISTS’ COMMITMENT TO A TRUTHFUL AND HUMANE SEARCH FOR BEAUTY — HOWEVER DISTURBING IT MAY BE — SHOWED ME THAT, IN ART AT LEAST, RUSSIA AGAIN DESERVES OUR SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

What can we do to change this? Nothing, I’m afraid, until the “Western” critics, gallery owners, museum establishment and public tastemakers finally part with the false picture that they have invented about the East and view Russian contemporary art as the subjective expression of idiosyncratic individuals, just like in the West. At present, however, it doesn’t seem as though anything will change, and current political events are unlikely to help eliminate stereotypes about the eternal desperation of Eastern Europe.

David Elliott is an Art Gallery and Museum curator

This year as artistic director of “A Time for Dreams,” the Fourth International Moscow Biennale for Young Art, I was asked by its organizers — the National Center for Contemporary Art and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art — to take the temperature of what comprises “young art” in Russia today. This meant traveling widely, visiting galleries, artists’ studios and alternative spaces. Other than obligatory trips to Moscow and St. Petersburg, I went to Yekaterinburg, Krasnodar, Nizhny Novgorod and Samara as part of my research. But in such a vast country this was obviously only scratching the surface. Even so, I found there a number of as yet unformed but dynamic, reflective and critical young artists who completely upturn clichéd, hidebound stereotypes of what it is to be Russian.

At the end of the 1990s I was working in Russia, as well as elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, on an intensive survey of young artists for the large traveling exhibition “After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe.” It was shown first in Stockholm, where I was director of Moderna Museet, and then in Budapest and Berlin. The idea was to take a snapshot of what had happened in art over the decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall so that we could begin to see how a new generation had reacted to, and perhaps even led, the change. During this time when the enormities, rather than the banalities, of a totalitarian past could only start to be digested, a new, cynical and sometimes violent edge had appeared in art. But in Russia, the head of the former Soviet empire, the new art was still heavy and the slowest to move.

The most significant and welcome change for me, working on this biennale 15 years later, was the repudiation of the seemingly interminable state of being “post-Soviet.” The anodyne ironies of socialist realism and the terminal paradoxes of conceptualism have been replaced by a more open sense of enquiry that, avoiding style for its own sake, relates to a contemplation and critique of the state of things as they are — good or bad — and that can therefore be appreciated within a much broader context.

In addition, a vast number of new art schools, studios and collectives have started to supplement and, in some cases, revolutionize the work of the established academies. These were particularly evident in Moscow and St. Petersburg. A similar openness can also be seen in the range of work being made. Painting is still strong, but so is photogra-



phy, installation art and performance.

Video is finding its own way and, making no reference to the grand narrative of Soviet cinema, moves between parody of reality TV — as in Anastasia Vepreva's nightmare show "She Owes" (2013), in which elderly women "instruct" their youngers in how to please and keep their worthless, boorish men — and a more intimate, subjective handmade approach as in Yevgeny Granilshchikov's 11-minute video "Courbet's Funeral" (2014), filmed on a mobile phone and somehow poetically reminiscent of classic French cinema. Samara-

based artist Vladimir Logutov adopts a more laconic approach in his video "The End of the Industrial Era" (2012). This is a view of a view in which a young woman standing on a large classical balcony surveys a glowering, toxic industrial landscape flared by explosions as, after its period of production, it begins to destroy and consume itself.

"In The Triumph of Fun" (2013), an unruly fountain constructed out of oil barrels, St. Petersburg artist Ivan Plusch makes an ironical reference to the Russian taste for grandiosity (as expressed in such Soviet monuments as the Friendship of Nations Fountain in Moscow's VDNKh Park) as well as to

I AM SO GLAD THAT AGAIN AND AGAIN I HEAR FROM ARTIST COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS OF MINE IN RUSSIA AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISTIC PROCESSES IN THEIR COUNTRY.

the wealth of New Russia and the importance of energy in the economy. This ludic sense of carnival is continued in the collective work "Agricultural Studies" (2013), which was made by four graduates of Moscow's Rodchenko School and in which they use their bodies to re-enact in photographs the forms of obsolete agricultural equipment, their absurdity transforming them into a dance or a sculpture.

In her extended photo study "True Self" (2013), Natalie Maximova, a graduate of the same school, traveled throughout Russia interviewing men and women who felt that their gender and biological sex were not the same and as a result had decided to embark on the difficult and painful procedure of changing sex. These moving portraits, showing their sitters as they wish to be seen, are accompanied by descriptions of who they are and their condition. In his installation "Administration" (2013), Oleg Ustinov also refers to thorny political issues of sexual orientation and how society regards this, by documenting a particular action and its consequences. As a starting point, he posted a seemingly official notice in a number of housing blocks asking residents to report on any abnormal sexual habits or practices they had noticed among their neighbors. It was signed simply "The Administration," with a Town Hall number given as a contact. Some people took this at face value and called either to complain about this infringement of civil liberties or to report someone whom they suspected. Others ignored it entirely. Soon it became the talk of the town, and the press and TV news reported this inexplicable phenomenon, interviewing people for their views on what had happened and on whether such an action, if it had taken place, was acceptable. Ustinov's work, a Gogolian fiction of social dismay and outrage, reveals the complexity and range of people's reactions with the comforting conclusion that, although media might be superficial, not all people think the same.

The four artists of the Krasnodar-based collective Zip Group also touch on the question of authority and social control in their installation "District of Civil Resistance" (2013) while



also referring back to revolutionary Soviet architecture by artists such as El Lissitzky and Gustav Klutsis. Some of their structures — such as BOPs (Booths of Individual Picketing), which protect demonstrators from attack and carry banners and slogans — have been used in actual demonstrations, while a model shows how the whole system of command, demonstration and escape operates.

The specter of revolution in another form appears in the nearly seven-meter-wide painting "Bandits to the Trash" (2014) by Dmitry Okruzhnov and Maria Sharova, who both studied at the Surikov Academy in Moscow. Here, at the center, a Femen demonstrator (a member of the activist feminist artists' group founded in Kiev but now based in Paris) holds up a banner with the work's title — a denunciation of this violent, restrictive element of Russian life — against a background of flaming trash, barricades and violent right-wing thugs.

Moscow-based artist, Oleg Matrokhin's installation "Phlogiston: Epitaph" (2014) engenders a new order while referring to a time and way of thought that has long become extinct. Baroque swags of old Soviet textiles are refashioned into gateways, arches and columns that celebrate a bittersweet and nearly lost ideal of beauty. The Recycle Group from Krasnodar invokes a similar elegy in "The Keys of Paradise" (2014) but also considers the conditions of the present. Shadowy figures loom out of a background of white plastic netting and, as if in a classical frieze, become enmeshed in a strange Bacchanalian conflict. This setting, however, is not rooted in some ancient myth but in the grim quotidian reality of a supermarket's checkout line, the participants of which are the high priests and handmaidens of excessive consumption.

These are just a few of the many young artists I visited and whose work I showed in the biennale. I admire their energy and commitment to art. Innocent of the past, they do not feel bound by it. Intelligent and critical, they view their world as it is, without prescribing how anyone else should see it. Strong, independent, courageous vision provides a sound basis for any idea of quality in art. This and these artists' commitment to a truthful and humane search for beauty — however disturbing it may be — showed me that, in art at least, Russia again deserves our serious consideration.

Eva Fisher is the founder and curator of sound:frame festival, Vienna

The broadening of contacts and international exchange!

In times when people stop appreciating the fact that wonderful things are going on in their country, it is more important to express and inform them about diverse thoughts. I am so glad that again and again I hear from artist colleagues and friends of mine in Russia and their understanding of the current development of artistic processes in their country. I trust the picture of Russia that the accounts of these people create. These artists and creative people have modern and open mentalities akin to my own, mainly due to their international contacts. And the negative portrayal of Russia that one is exposed to in the West is tempered by what I hear from them. Such opinions should be heard on an international level! If not art, then what else will help?

Russian artists provide a significant contribution to art internationally, especially if one is to take the example of the latest trend of performance art. Pussy Riot created an incredibly powerful stimulus and has influenced artistic and theatrical viewpoints and concepts in not only Austria, but also on an international level. Similarly, many observers have commented on the exciting Russian way of thinking. It is an important point to make that not everyone is unaware of the harsh realities of Russian society such as that which is going on with the elite in their country and in others. Russia's creative circles must remain strong! They reveal to the international community Russia's diversity, and it is of the utmost importance. Powerful statements help us realize that freedom of creativity and of opinions (basic concepts!) should be highly valued in not only Russia, but everywhere.



Georg Schöllhammer is the founder and editor of the contemporary art publication "Springerin — Hefte für Gegenwartskunst," independent author and curator.

To me, everything now happening with Moscow and Russia seems to be in the spirit of the great German-Jewish historian, philosopher and idler Walter Benjamin, who in the mid-1920s described his impressions of the city and the shift in post-revolutionary Russia in his "Moscow Diary."

Amidst descriptions of the enormous city through which Benjamin strolls, observing with surprise its changing tempo, commodities appear to him over and over as an ideal and the embodiment of Muscovites' mate-

rial reality. The commodity, which in modern terms indicates status, reflects the city's lifestyle and economic makeup. I've been traveling to Moscow for more than 20 years, and have watched as the art world and the artists of this city have transformed, grown, found new spaces and kept their eyes open in order to understand the frank, alienating "glamour" of the changing city and its society during perestroika and the subsequent wild and hopeful years of rupture and transformation. Its art scene is one of the most alien, native and intellectual that I know. It has maintained its critical eye and fresh viewpoint. It has always strived to distance itself from the prevailing order and the new temptations that have arisen within it.

Criticism and pragmatism. By looking at the things upon which, for which and against which it acts, and what it takes into its Western-oriented subconscious, we can learn a great deal, especially today, in a time of geopolitical fault lines and the converging of Europe's tectonic plates. Or as Walter Benjamin wrote in the winter of 1926: "Concerning my impression of the city and its people, everything is the same as with my spiritual impressions: the new ideas one can gain here are the main experience of being in Russia." In my diary there are many such impressions.



Hans Ulrich Obrist is an art curator, critic and art historian. He is co-director of Exhibitions and Programmes and director of International Projects at the Serpentine Gallery, London

Edouard Glissant is the most urgent writer of the 21st century. Glissant, who was born on Martinique in 1928

and died in Paris on February 3 of this year, was one of the most important writers and philosophers of our time. He called attention to means of global exchange that do not homogenize culture but produce a difference from which new things can emerge. He bears the intellectual significance for our time that Foucault and Deleuze bore for theirs.

His poems, novels, plays and theoretical essays are a "toolbox" that I use every day in my praxis as an exhibition curator. The globalization we find ourselves in is certainly not the first historical phase of cultural interaction and transactions in the world, but the third or fourth. Presumably, however, it is one of globalization's most extreme and violent phases. The homogenization of cultural differences represents a serious threat. The relevance of Glissant's writings lies in the ways they show us of escaping this threat but through dialogue and not through refusal of dialogue. Glissant says the counter reaction to globalization can be a refusal of global dialogue or also a growing lack of tolerance. Glissant proposes his idea of mondialite, a generous way of engaging with the global dialogue while avoiding the homogenization, he calls it a difference-producing global dialogue.

Besides his visionary thoughts on Creolization we can learn

from Glissant's "Archipelagic Thought." The Antillean archipelago's geography is important for Glissantian thought because it is an island group that has no center but consists of a string of different islands and cultures. The exchange that takes place between the islands allows each to preserve its own identity: The American archipelagoes are extremely important because it was in these islands that the idea of Creolization — that is, the blend of cultures — was most brilliantly fulfilled. Continents reject mixings ... [whereas] archipelagic thought makes it possible to say that neither each person's identity nor the collective identity is fixed and established once and for all. I can change through exchange with the other, without losing or diluting my sense of self. And it is archipelagic thought that teaches us this.

"Archipelagic Thought," which endeavors to do justice to the world's diversity, forms an antithesis to continental thought, which makes a claim to absoluteness and tries to force its worldview on other countries. To counter the homogenizing force of "globalization" (mondialisation), Glissant coined the term "globality" (mondialité) for a form of worldwide exchange that recognizes and preserves diversity and Creolization. Glissant's texts are mostly available in French only, and it's urgent to have translations of Glissant for the 21st century into many languages and also into Russian.



Hans Knoll is the founder and owner of Knoll Gallery in Vienna and Budapest

"Russia is Europe. Its fascinating art is important to understanding one another and ourselves."

Hans Knoll is a gallery owner who has been working in Russia since the mid-1990s, organizing art tours to Russia for European collectors and curators and regularly displaying Russian contemporary art in his galleries in Vienna and Budapest.

Kate Fowle is the chief curator at Garage Museum of Contemporary Art

It is difficult for me to put into concise words how the current situation in Russia is impacting cultural life here, let alone its reception abroad. Since I started working as chief curator at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in early 2013, no month has been the same, but in general the faith in an open, stable future for art and ideas, especially in terms of building any relations internationally, is fluctuating.

That's not to say there haven't recently been productive moments — exhibitions, events, conversations, conferences — that have brought together practitioners from around the world and across generations to create opportunities for trying to make sense of the political mayhem. There is no shortage of talk about the urgencies of a culture that seven or so years ago saw itself on the brink of having a chance for growth on a world stage. I'm talking about the time around the late 2000s and early 2010s when new institutions were being created, international collaborations were proliferating, and a new generation of artists, writers and curators was gaining prominence for their ideas rather than their nationality. Now the question is how many steps back we are taking before there is a chance to move forward again. The answer, it seems, becomes increasingly negative according to the years you have already been struggling to build community and infrastructure.



Julius Meinl

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I am optimistic, perhaps because I am new to the landscape. The artists, writers and curators I am getting to know around me repeatedly inspire and challenge my understanding of what art can be and do. The potential to engage broad publics in contemporary art is immense, and the energy for making this possible is as big. There is a number of experimental initiatives developing from the newest generation of practitioners, while independent-minded institutions like Garage, the Ekaterina Foundation, the Stella Foundation, the Victoria Art Foundation, NCCA, Winzavod, the Multimedia Art Museum and the Jewish Museum have diversified enough in recent years to enable an art scene to survive for now.

The major problem is the incredible speed that we, internationally, have begun to echo Cold War geopolitics, not least in the media. The impact is an increasing inability to parse people, communities, politics and propaganda. Just 25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall and only two decades since the end of the Soviet Union, it is hard to believe that we are back to a scenario where Russia and the United States are implementing a seismic East/Soviet/West divide, regardless of the wide-ranging consequences this will have (and is having) on people physically and psychologically.

Among the actions we have taken at Garage is to build international collaborations and talk to people, not communicate via statements. Perhaps most importantly, through producing exhibitions, books and research from our archive collection, we are looking back at the 1990s in Russia and exploring parallel developments in the rest of the world to understand the impact of the decade now. More than ever, it is evident that the seeds were sown then for what we are currently experiencing, culturally and politically. There is much to learn and much to be done, but one thing is certain: There is both desire and determination for (re)building a meaningful international art world within and from Russia.

Martin Böhm is CEO of Dorotheum Auction House Vienna

In recent years modern art has gained increasing significance, and not only on the auction market. Founded over 300 years ago, Vienna's Dorotheum auction house is one of the largest and oldest auction houses in the world specializing in art. As such, it devotes the bulk of its attention to paintings by the Old Masters.

Over the past decade, we've successfully expanded our focus to the sphere of modern art, which is ever gaining in importance. Dorotheum has achieved particularly impressive results with Italian, Austrian and German modern art, thanks in part to our many representatives on the ground who provide excellent service to our clients. The auction house, which has more than 100 experts on staff, is active around the world and represents 45 artistic genres. Our goal is the continued expansion of our activities, of which contemporary Russian art is undoubtedly a part.

In addition, I'd like to draw attention to the auction house's special project. Dorotheum's Vienna Art Week, which this fall will take place for the 10th time, highlights Vienna as a vibrant center of modern art. Thanks to exhibitions, showroom visits, special displays and discussion groups in all of Vienna's exhibition centers and galleries, Art Week offers the fascinating possibility of contemporary art presented outside historical margins.

Massimiliano Gioni is curator and associate director of New Museum, New York | Courtesy New Museum, New York. Photo Jesse Untracht-Oakner

I have been going regularly to Russia, in particular Moscow, since 2002 after my very first trip in the 1990s.

Seeing how the city and the various artistic communities have changed, expanded and transformed has been an exciting experience. At times, witnessing the sudden acceleration of change, I even felt it was necessary to slow down and try to analyze what was being lost in the process. The exhibition "Ostalgia," which I curated at the New Museum, was very much suggested by seeing the city of Moscow — along with other capitals in the so-called former East — become more and more similar to any contemporary metropolis in the world. Obviously one should never fall prey to nostalgia, but many artists whom I have encountered in Moscow — artists as different as Victor Alimpiev, Evgeny Antufiev, Nikolay Bakharev, Sergey Bratkov, Olga Chernysheva, Chto Delat?, Evgenij Kozlov, Boris Mikhailov, Andrei Monastyrski, David Ter-Oganian, Anatoly Osmolovsky, just to really name a few randomly — have looked at the world around them capturing the sense of a profound cultural transformation. In the work of these artists, I have often admired the simplicity and directness of their language, which refuses high production standards and aims instead straight to the heart, straight to reality. One should never generalize, of course, and we cannot reduce all those artists' works to some fictional common denominator. But at the cost of over-simplifying, I have learned a lot from these and other Russian artists — one should also remember other artists from older generations such as Eric Bulatov, Pavel Pepperstein, Viktor Pivovarov, Dmitri Prigov and, of course, the great Ilya Kabakov — and particularly I have admired their belief in the transformative power of art and the link that still ties art to personal freedoms.

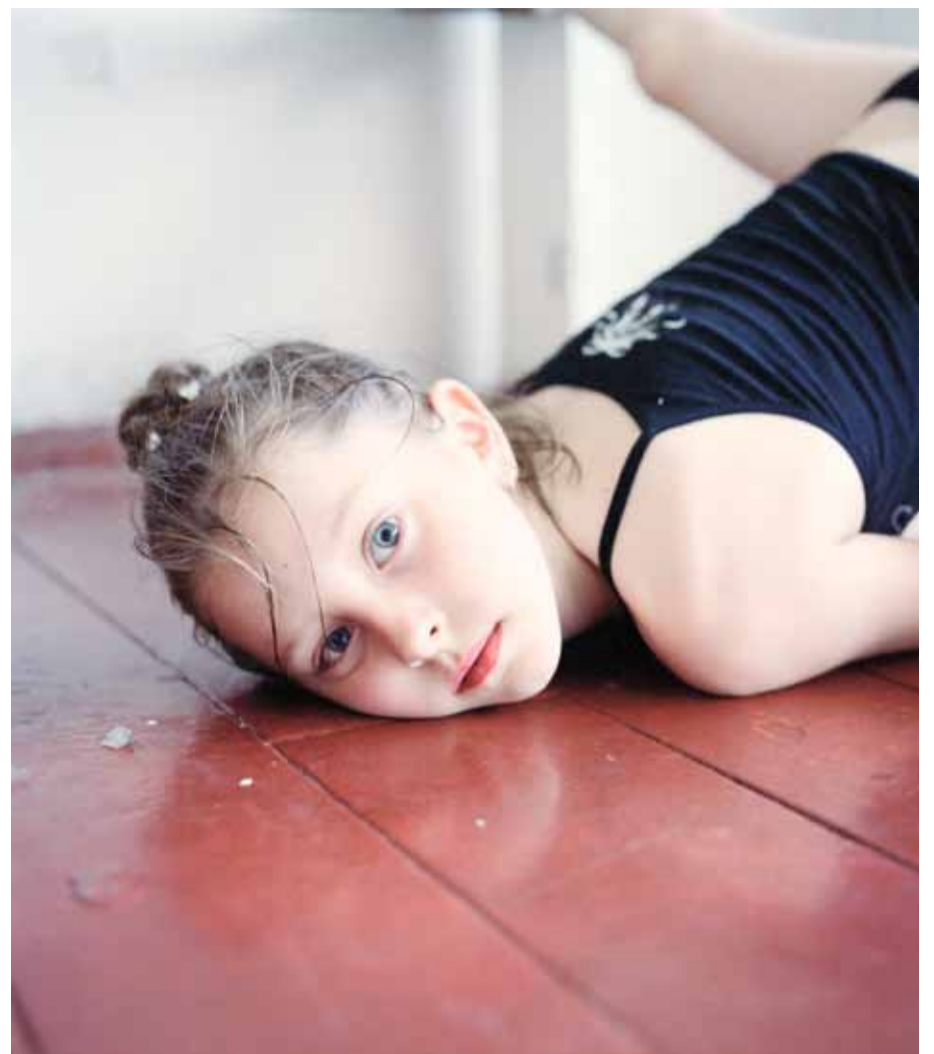
I also love to return to Moscow because I think there is a fervent change happening among institutions, with the development of private museums and foundations. In particular, I always love to go to Moscow and discover the old forgotten museums and un-

THERE IS BOTH DESIRE AND DETERMINATION FOR (RE)BUILDING A MEANINGFUL INTERNATIONAL ART WORLD WITHIN AND FROM RUSSIA.





Margo Ovcharenko (born 1989, Krasnodar, Russia) is a Moscow-based photographer. "Furious Like a Child" is a very personal journey to the childhood with its fears, pains and affects. Margo uses her childhood memories and feelings to study the position of a woman in a contemporary society. | Courtesy: pop/off Art Moscow-Berlin



usual spaces that the "Victoria — The Art of Being Contemporary Foundation" scouts and makes available to artists. I am partial to the Victoria Foundation because we have often worked together but, more importantly, because they are cultivating a model in which art is not just glamour: It is instead a tool to engage with the present, the future and the past, constructing dialogues between art and history to imagine new models of change.

Peter Noever is designer and Art Curator, Vienna

Art can shake confidence!

Twenty-five years ago, when I had the good fortune to display Malevich's modern icon "Red Square" at an exhibition in Vienna, I was filled with indescribable joy, happiness and pride. The fact that these artworks from the revolutionary avant-garde were in the museum that I had only been directing for a couple of years became a major event for me and my calling for further work in museums. Today I see this particularly clearly. The exhibition took place in 1988 (incidentally, soon afterwards Katalin Neraï was shown at the Mucsarnok in Budapest), several years before the exhibition "The Great Utopia. The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde" at New York's Guggenheim in 1992.



We called the Vienna exhibition "Art and Revolution: Russian and Soviet Art 1910-1932." We displayed major works by all the most important artists: Tatlin, Popovaya, Lebedev, Rodchenko/Stepanovaya, as well as Chernyshev, Golosov, Leonidov and Melnikov.

As a kind of "wall" for Malevich's "Red Square" (1915, oil on canvas, 53cm x 53cm) we placed a separate block (3.5m x 0.40m x 4.20m) and an immovable piece of concrete that weighed over three tons in the middle of the empty central exhibition hall of the Museum of Applied Arts, a space of more than

500 square meters, as a sign of admiration and commemoration of this period of intense, penetrating, backbreaking, liberating art.

While writing these lines, I received an invitation from the Siberian Center for Contemporary Art and the Siberian Center for the Promotion of Architecture to serve on the jury of the international competition "Avant-Garde Worlds of El Lissitzky." Studying the Russian avant-garde 100 years after the fact is a worthy undertaking, of course, but it raises the question: where is the avant-garde today?

Today, it seems to me that the relationship between art and technology, between art and science, i.e. between analysis and the act of creation, has changed significantly.

Art is the only source of continuity. The artist captures the highs and lows of our condition and our society and is able to reveal them and respond to them. This is especially important in a time of methodically distorted phenomena such as globalization, modernization and hybridization. This is why we can't allow art, in its efforts to capture the spirit of the time, to devolve into a carnival.

Yes, we must fight against omnivorous tendencies in the name of fashion.

Art should shake our confidence!

Perhaps this is why politicians fear artists. This is true of a variety of politicians, both here and there.

We need to do everything in our power to stop attempts to bring ourselves in lines with their desires, i.e. to make art understandable, compliant and domesticated.

What is happening now, both here and there?

Good versus evil?

America and its ally Europe against the post-Soviet countries and the Russian Federation?

Presidents as the incarnation of good and evil?

Is it possible that public opinion both here and there is more diverse than the so-called public opinion that is published?

The impression arises that an increasing number of journalists are forgetting the meaning of their profession and professional ethics. Perhaps this conflict drives us to mechanically choose sides?

Where are the writers who are interested in the true nature of events? Please step forward!

Our culture is at stake, and if I may say so, it's not worth leaving it to journalism or political parasites!

I have always been certain that for museums in Europe to overlook the two poles—New York and Moscow—is a major omission.

Now more than ever I have great respect for artists in Russia.



Peter Weibel is an artist, curator, theoretician and director of ZKM / Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe

Is Russian contemporary art represented enough internationally, considering its significance? If not, how can that be changed?

Contemporary Russian art has responded to decades of repression with two strategies: compression and decompression. This means tension and relaxation, tightening and loosening, in a process that amounts to stress therapy. Painting and sculpture are either released or confined to the point of condensation or evaporation, or they're so compressed that they become boulders in possession of magnetic force. This potential is far from fulfilled. On the international stage it hasn't been shown sufficiently. The West should build its relations with Russia not through the usual problematic economic sanctions, but with courage, humanity and innovation by staging Russian art exhibitions.

Which role does Russian art play for Western artistic work, and can Russia inspire contemporary artists?

In reality, Russian art displays not only a degree of radicalism in developing modern conceptions of art that is unknown in the West, but also new responses to the problems of modernity. By studying the ruined utopias of the Russian avant-garde, with all its life-affirming ideology that lost out to the life-despising ideology of the real conditions of Soviet communism, Russian art has developed a pluralism of hope.

Stella Rolling is artistic director of LENTOS art museum Linz

The fact that today contemporary Russian art only attracts attention outside of Russia in the wake of a scandal is problematic and highly unfortunate. In these cases one always wants to express outrage at power, violence, repression and the censorship of creative freedom — at a safe distance and without excessive reflection on what reaction these works would provoke in Austria or other European Union countries. In a majority of instances, these “provocative works” are truly radical works of art that



distract attention from more subtle forms of expression.

In the 1990s, Russian artists primarily devoted their work to the former government and perestroika, which won them a considerable amount of international recognition. Over the past 20 years, their presence at international exhibitions has fallen significantly. Thus, in the midst of endless pseudo-contemplation, an inaccurate perception has arisen that contemporary Russian art is a direct reflection of the Soviet era or is guided by a primitive desire to shock. Meanwhile, countless artists with diverse modes of expression and subject matter go overlooked.

My work has brought me to Moscow many times, and I've had the good fortune to meet some excellent artists. For the “Lenin Icebreaker” exhibition we invited six Russian artists to Linz, and one of them, Anya Titovaya, will have a solo exhibition in the gallery in 2016. Such a cultural exchange first of all requires people who support it, and second, unimpeded trips abroad. Bureaucratic obstacles hurt cultural exchange. It sounds like a cliché, but artistic successes, so-called “careers,” are rooted in personal meetings and networks that foster recognition and friendship.

Let's dream of spontaneous flights to Moscow, of my Russian friends' unimpeded trips to Linz, of a welcoming and generous Russia!



RoseLee Goldberg is the founder and director of Performa, New York

Contemporary art in Russia is like a sleeping giant who has only recently woken up. Everyone is now realizing that the extraordinarily rich life of Russian art in all media at the beginning of the 20th century is a remarkable launchpad for new work in the 21st. When I wrote my book on the history of performance art (first published in 1979, and in Russian translation in 2013), the chapter on Russian art of the 1920s was absolutely pivotal. It was a period like no other anywhere in the world, when Russian artists were encouraged to think of the avant-garde as an effective and inspiring instrument of the new utopian society; they were encouraged to make work that was as radical as the new economic policies that were being implemented.

Artists invented entirely new ways to reach a large public, mixing astonishingly beautiful graphic design with “living newspapers”; actors performing the daily news; constructivists staging devices with “biomechanical” body exercises for traveling “pop-up” theaters; futurist poetry that was as stunning to look at on the page as it was to listen to, and bold new cinema.

Then it all went quiet for 60 years. In the 1970s and '80s, word of “apartment art” and “sots art” and other small collectives seeped out of the Soviet Union. But in the last decade we're beginning to see an emerging generation that is both looking back at this incredible history as a foundation on which to build, looking forward trying to understand how to respond to the present and picking up where the much earlier generation of artists left off. That early work can only be the most stunning inspiration.

I've had the chance now to visit Moscow twice, and it's been thrilling to see the interest in artists' performance. The fact that two of my exhibitions — “100 Years of Performance Art” at Garage, about performances by artists from 1909 to 2009, and “Performance Now” at the Jewish Museum for Tolerance, about performances from 2000 to the present — have been presented in Moscow within just a few years and that my book was recently made available in Russia speaks of a broad interest in the avant-garde and in artists finding new ways to make their shifting cultural history known. We also brought an exhibition on performance from Russia to New York, “33 Fragments” for Performa 11 through Garage, so it's been a two-way process. Through these exhibitions I have met a very strong group of art historians, critics and artists. The two-way conversation is intense and fascinating. It's a powerful engine for generating new ideas — an exciting time.

Volker Diehl is founder and owner of Volker Diehl Gallery in Berlin

In these unexpectedly fraught times, you have asked me to write something about art and politics.

Justifiably so, you are concerned there is the possibility that art and culture will fall by the wayside.

Inevitably, I have no definite answer to this. I can simply tell you a few things about my life, and about my experiences with art and politics.

From time to time, art has been abused, sometimes with the knowledge of the artist, sometimes without.

The CIA used to support abstract expressionism with large sums of money, about which artists like Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline etc had no idea.

In the Soviet Union, Socialist Realism was used as a propa-ganda tool, with the support of the artists who were involved.

These facts can all be verified. But talking about

non governmental influence, it becomes far more difficult.

Both, destructive and primitive, agitational propaganda, no matter from which side, always has the upper hand, at least in the beginning.

It's like playing chess: the forthright and therefore more aggressive whites make the first move, and usually make the most of an advantage, but not always.

Arts, no matter if its fine arts, literature, film or music, is as Fyodor Dostoyevsky's beautiful word - *stushevatsya* - describes. (there is no direct translation, but it means something like understatement, hiding, silently, sensitive)

Art is much more quiet, sensitive and sophisticated. It stands for freedom and pacifism. It seems to hide rather than putting itself forward. That's why it is in a disadvantage at least to begin with.

Noise and provocation is usually an exception. For centuries art has always been international: the East and West and national barriers do not come into consideration.

This distinction always evokes our sense of curiosity. That's why we are not very often taken seriously, but also get underestimated.

One of my favorite quotes comes from Anna Akhmatova, who wrote:

The gold rusts, the steel corrodes

And the marble crumbles — everything is ready to die.

On this earth, sorrow stands most firm,

While the most lasting thing is the regal word.

FOR CENTURIES ART HAS ALWAYS BEEN INTERNATIONAL: THE EAST AND WEST AND NATIONAL BARRIERS DO NOT COME INTO CONSIDERATION.

This quote comes from the only nation I know in which so many poets were willing to die for the sake of their poetry.

Tyrants and instigators of war in history become false giants.

They are diminished proportionally down to the period of time which separates us and them. Some, thankfully, after only one night.

However, with poets and artists, the opposite is true.

Over the course of decades and centuries, they enrich and change my life and that of my friends with their incredible imaginations.

To conclude, I would like to quote a certain western politician.

At the beginning of the Second World War, as a cut of the cultural budget was planned to make way for increased military expenditure, Winston Churchill said the following:

“What, then, are we fighting for?”



“Koshka Sashka” 2014 by Alexandra Galkina. Alexandra Galkina was born in 1982 in Moscow where she lives and works

Karl Regensburger is director of ImPulsTanz, the Vienna International Dance Festival

Russia is the country of the avant-garde, especially in the performing arts. It sparked a revolution in scenery and acting; film, painting and photography; and costumes, music, dance and choreography. It continues to be influential today, especially through collaboration. The Sacre complex has been important for decades in aesthetics, culture and geopolitics. 2013 proved highly significant in terms of reconstruction, deconstruction and repetition, as well as interpretations and revisions. There were several fine examples at the ImPulsTanz festival: *Sacre* (David Wampach), *DeSacre!* (Christine Gaigg) and *NO SACRE* (Ismael Ivo). Now I'll leap (*Faux Pas?*) into the present. And at present I, as the director of the largest contemporary dance festival in Europe (specifically, in Vienna — could the connection be any closer?), am truly pained when I wonder: where are today's contemporary Russian dancers? And most importantly, how can we build a relationship with one another? The avant-garde was the 20th century. The beginning of the 21st century is marked by artistic collaboration and connection. We need to start everything from scratch. Some steps have already been taken in this direction: in 2014, a number of dancers from Russia participated in our scholarship program *danceWEB*. We must continue this dialogue. We must bring the legacy of the avant-garde to new approaches in art, where there is a historical consciousness of form, a highly developed sense of collectivism, a sharp sense of humor and intellectual depth. For this we need, as always, state support and public recognition. Let's work on this!





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