This book is dedicated to Elena

ARTGUIDE | EDITIONS

Igor Makarevich
Elena Elagina

COUNTDOWN

Dust jacket: Igor Makarevich
and Elena Elagina's installation
Creation at the exhibition
Beyond Zero, Calvert 22 Gallery,
London, 2014
Photo: Andy Keate

Artguide Editions
2023

Valentin Diaconov

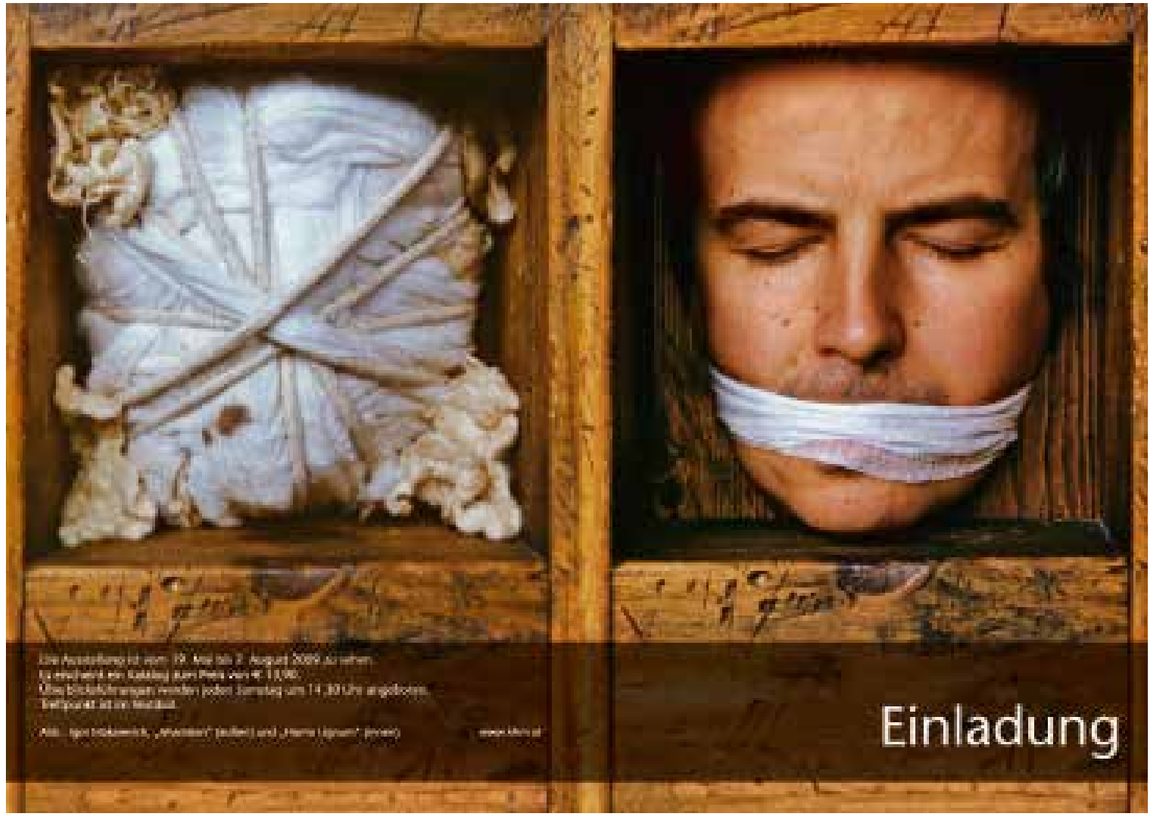
THE UNKNOWN WAY

In art, the concept of negative space describes empty areas around figures on the surface, but following curator Peter Weibel and his 2019 retrospective at ZKM (Karlsruhe), it can also be extended to sculpture and to objects that are porous and permeable to the eye. If we go even further and consider philosophical notions of the negative dating back to Hegel, we see that art in the second half of the 20th century deals almost exclusively with the negative space that emerged after the dismantling of Europe's totalitarian regimes. This space is formalized both aesthetically—as pedestals left without monuments—and physically, as the gaping absence of millions destroyed by repressions, war, and other catastrophes of the 1930s and 1940s (the famine in Bengal in 1943, the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic bombs, etc.). Following Parmenides, the avant-garde proclaimed that whatever is, is, and what is not, cannot be; it only addressed the global rhythmic and social organisation of Being. Artists of the postwar era, on the other hand, were forced to work with a thick catalogue of Nonexistence in countless forms, from the furnaces of Auschwitz to *Life in the Snow*, to quote the title of a 1994 exhibition by Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina based on an eponymous 1941 Moscow exhibition, a guide to survival in a major war.

According to Hegel, negativity serves an important goal, separating the subject from "simple self-identity," an inward but animal-like life. Thus, after 1945 (or, in the case of the USSR, 1953), negativity formed a new pan-European personality, equipped with political autonomy, human rights, and new ways of exhibiting its subjectivity. In the visual arts, the white cube concept became crucial. More than any other artists in the Moscow Conceptualist circle, Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina take seriously the negative space of the postwar years and the theoretical possibility of the subject it generated. From the very beginning of their work, both solo and collaborative, they have been creating philosophical containers for negative space. It is only logical that their main spatial units are the coffin and the cabinet. The coffin is pure negative space, a completed potentiality, and also perceived as such, no matter how "circle of life" ideas might argue the physical impossibility of death. Furthermore, in a sense, it is the afterlife that provides a subject with the finality and expressiveness that is difficult to catch in life's many social and political streams.

When the atmospheric pressure of negative space was almost unbearable, as was the case in the Soviet Union, the theme of non-existence became taboo to a degree. In 1979, Igor Makarevich tried to show his painting *Corpses of Communards* (1973) in a group exhibition of three graphic artists (Andrey Kostin and Olga Abramova being the other two) in an exhibition space on Vavilov Street. As Makarevich recalls, after viewing it, the Moscow Union of Artists party functionary said to him: "You are doing the wrong thing! You've got the wrong idea!" Soviet art developed its own toolkit for suppressing death and constructing an optimistic façade, but beginning with the Thaw, it was no longer possible to ignore the negative space that arose after the war. Thus, voids appeared in the paintings of young official artists; these were explained as new frontiers for the Soviet modernization machine, but they actually meant something entirely different. The Soviet cultural administration understood this very well; it saw the pessimism and disillusionment with Soviet reality in the steppe of Pavel Nikonov's *Geologists*, in Nikolai Andronov's *Rafters*, and other examples of early "severe style." Early conceptualism and sots art reveal negative spaces in slogans, in the emptiness of paper with all its lacunae and marginalia (illustration was an ideal testing ground for such questions), and in the lapidary language of posters warning of lethal danger.

Makarevich and Elagina belong to the next generation, formed in the epoch when key figures of modernism (Malevich, Duchamp, and others) were canonized, while "optical media" such as photography and video were integrated into the field of art. No matter how different the contexts and conditions of their work (and these are sometimes diametrically opposed), Makarevich and Elagina are close to the artists of *The Pictures Generation* exhibition (Cindy Sherman, Robert Longo, Sherrie Levine) and to the masters of appropriation (Haim Steinbach, Sturtevant). Igor Makarevich's series *Changes* (1978) belongs to a series of works on the relationship between death and the photographic image, mediated through transformation and the refusal to respect one's own identity boundaries, much like Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–1980). While Sherman moves into a cinematic frame format that promises immortality within a fictional narrative, Makarevich's work is rooted in posthumous rituals and the



Invitation to the exhibition *In Situ* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 2009

rich texture of the paintings produced by underground artists of his time. Gradually concealing his face under layers of plaster, bandages, and other materials, he ends up by showing it against the background of an empty cell. This reference to the afterlife, albeit in the form of a slight, mystical hint, distinguishes Makarevich's work from most of its Western counterparts. He and Elagina juxtapose their main theme—the problem of living—to the polished materiality and decorativeness of contemporary Western art. Arguably one of the most striking examples of this is the "green" part of the installation *Within the Limits of the Beautiful* (1992), which appropriates Isaac Levitan's painting *Above Eternal Peace* using pipes to connect it to three coffins. Here, the "substance of art" is distilled, like in a moonshine machine, into "living substance," but an attempt to enliven the emptiness of absence with the eternity of a textbook painting is doomed to failure. In Elena Elagina's installations (*Children's, The Sublime–The Infernal,, Tar-Based*), attributes of medicines and metaphysical categories point to different therapies, i.e., ways to prolong life, be it by healing the body or the soul.

Their work with the negative spaces of the post-war era often reinterprets ideas from the capacious Russian storehouse of utopian fantasy, which in search of "pure selfhood" let life win "in a way unknown to science," as Daniil Kharms puts in a short story in which a nameless character tries to survive in a stuffy trunk until finally the trunk evaporates. Thus, Makarevich and Elagina evoke real and fictional characters

who are either situated between the living and the dead or are desperately trying to establish a lasting connection between the two states. Not coincidentally, one of their central characters is Buratino, the Russian version of Pinocchio—a wooden puppet striving to transform into a living boy. In the project *Life in the Snow*, he enters several historical art styles, turning into the abducted Ganymede, an element of suprematist abstraction, and a series of cubist geometric figures. Placing the wooden boy into the trunk of an avant-garde "-ism" or a mythological subject, Makarevich and Elagina create a universal trickster who emphasizes the totality of great aesthetic statements with his puppet self. Moreover, they sceptically comment on all claims to eternity made by art. Buratino intrudes into closed and internally logical pictorial systems, but they cannot transform him into a full-blooded human being. The golden key leading to transformation is guarded by the imperial eagle, the real master of life and death. Nikolai Borisov, the protagonist of Makarevich's *Homo Lignum* project (1996–), another "man stuffed into a trunk," aspires to a reverse transformation: all his life, he has "talked to planks and caressed logs," practiced erotic self-asphyxiation by means of a wooden board in the form of a guillotine, and slept in a "pinewood box." If we juxtapose *Life in the Snow* and *Homo Lignum*, Buratino seems like the optimist of the life-building avant-garde era, while Borisov is a character trapped in a vast and hopelessly negative space, trying to escape from a humanity doomed to death into the adjacent biological realm, where life flows differently. In the Pagan project, Makarevich and Elagina mix utopia and biology to produce a religion: the projects of Russian avant-garde sprouting from hallucinogenic mushrooms are presented as shrines of some oriental religion lost in the polyphony of South Asian beliefs.

Elena Elagina's interest in Olga Lepeshinskaya, a revolutionary and Lenin's comrade-in-arms, who—together with Trofim Lysenko—put science back at least a decade with her pseudo-scientific theories, can be explained in biographical terms: Elagina's father rewrote Lepeshinskaya's memoirs (*At the Origin of Life,* 1953) into a popular science book for kids and teens. Searching for "life substance" in egg yolk,

I. Makarevich
The Weight of Being, 2012

Lepeshinskaya revived the ideas of the French biologist Félix Archimède Pouchet, refuted in the 19th century by Louis Pasteur's experiments. Studying longevity, she insisted on the idea of spontaneous generation of life and called for the treatment of wounds with fresh blood. She claimed that during World War II, some Soviet hospitals used her method, and that the wounds healed "easier and faster." Lepeshinskaya's methods and "discoveries" appear to be irrational reactions to the sprawl of negative space and the rivers of blood flowing in the 1930s and 1940s. In the installation *Laboratory of Great Acts,* Elagina expands the scale of Lepeshinskaya's personality, turning her into an alchemist obsessed with the mystery of being, while at the same time humorously downgrading her image: she combines the scientist's photograph with a medical device similar to a smoking pipe, turning her from a cosy-looking old woman (her image on a Soviet poster) into a cyborg. Lepeshinskaya is also a logical part of the series of Russian immortality seekers—ranging from the philosopher Nikolai Fyodorov to the charlatan Grigory Grabovoy—in the installation *The Russian Idea* (2007). The biographies of Fyodorov, who died three years into the 20th century, and of Grabovoy, who was arrested in the 21st, mark the extent of negative space, a space where deaths are too many to form a European subject and survival is the key issue at hand.

Of course, in a heritage so rich in ideas and nuances as Makarevich and Elagina's, one can see many themes, branches, and variations that lie beyond the main motif. There is the legendary *Closed Fish Exhibition* (1990); there is the conceptual portrayal of contemporaries through the architectonic foundations of their works, such as Makarevich's portraits of Ilya Kabakov, Erik Bulatov and Ivan Chuikov; there is Elagina's objectification of the category of beauty through color, text, and found objects between the late 1980s and the early 1990s; there are works connected to Russian cosmism and works based on appropriation. All these show that the practice of the duo remains open-ended. Here, meaning emerges not only through comprehending negative space and considering death but also through creating positive spaces and consciously arranging emptiness.

Igor Makarevich
and Elena Elagina's installation
The Russian Idea at the exhibition
Countdown, Moscow Museum
of Modern Art, 2021

Nikita Alexeev

THE ALCHEMY OF MAKAREVICH AND ELAGINA

The art of Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina is a strange phenomenon. Whatever materials and techniques they use, even if their work is ephemeral and involves rubbish, what they create always appears extremely weighty. At first sight, their art oppresses space, like a boulder placed on top of a tub so as to turn cabbage into sauerkraut. At the same time, these works do not exist within themselves: just blow on them, it seems, and the mirage will dissipate.

Makarevich and Elagina are among the key figures in what Boris Groys christened "Moscow Conceptualism." Their role in the development of this Russian art movement is enormous, but their works are untypical of it: always extremely polished, as if intended for placement in a very expensive interior; emphatically intellectual, referencing manifold ramified cultural codes. But the meaning tends to break off like a dry branch, leaving behind something whole, isolated, ineffable.

Arguably, this phenomenon can be described as the synthesis of radical conservatism and retrograde innovation: here, past and future either no longer exist or do not yet exist, while the present is so very present that worms from the past and future fill it with wormholes.

A glowing stump. An artist's biography sometimes gives you a glimpse into their work. Though it can lead you astray, too. Still, let's try it.

Igor Makarevich was born in 1943 in the village of Tripoli in Georgia, in evacuation. His father, Gleb Makarevich, was a major Soviet architect, later head of the Chief Architectural Department in Moscow for many years. From 1955 to 1962, Igor studied at the Moscow Art School, a place "for young talents," that is, for the conditioning of future masters of socialist realism. This conditioning often worked. Even when the Stalinist regime was dying, the ideological pressure was monstrous. But there was an upside, too: very good traditional technical teaching. The result was a mastery of every technique, like at some oriental martial arts school.

Makarevich is excellent at drawing and very competent at painting. He can create a mural of many meters or explain to a worker how to produce any desired sculpture. He's rather good at photography, too.

At the art school, his peers were Leonid Sokov and Alexander Kosolapov. He also met a somewhat older student, Lev Nussberg, the future founder of the group Dvizhenie. In full accordance with the barracks ethos that reigned at the school, Nussberg bullied the younger ones, the "maggots," in every possible way. This could explain a lot.

Alexander Nezhdanov as a child. Leningrad, 1946

Then there was Alexander Nezhdanov, a young guru for many artists growing up in the early 1960s. Makarevich was introduced to him by Alexander Yulikov. Nezhdanov's traces in Russian art history have nearly disappeared: if you look at his work now, there is not much to see. But he is still remembered, and thus we must conclude that he was able to inculcate something in the minds of his peers.

According to Makarevich, the salvation from Soviet conditioning and the rest of the unappetizing school mores was the study of the old masters. It also helped combat the desire for genius (as cultivated by Nezhdanov, who he hardly knew at the time). What mattered, too, were the impressions of the American Exhibition in 1958, when, along with cars and a Pepsi Cola machine, paintings by contemporary American artists were brought to Moscow. There was abstract expressionism, of course, totally incomprehensible and thus attractively mysterious. Works by Mark Tobey and Ivan Albright were clearer and even more seductive. Arguably, the influence of the latter can still be felt in works by Makarevich and Elagina.

After Moscow Art School came the art and directing department at the Russian State University of Cinematography (VGIK), from which Makarevich graduated in 1968. In the 1960s, this institute was not merely prestigious; it was in. VGIK students believed themselves to have all the freshest and most fruitful ideas, that they were destined to shape the future of Soviet culture and society. Having graduated from the institute, Makarevich staged several theater productions and worked for TV for a couple of years, a dream job at the time. But soon he left both TV and theater. He felt himself irrelevant in the collective game, in which everyone working in the sphere of media or theater had to participate.

Then came the period of graphic art, a sphere of full personal responsibility and, one might think, solitude. But it was his graphic work that catapulted Makarevich to fame. One of the best illustrators of his time, he worked with classic books, receiving Soviet and international awards. He joined the Graphics Bureau of the Moscow Union of Artists and its Youth Section. As many may gratefully recall, he helped the so-called "asocial elements" to join this organization: that is, he saved these young people from charges of "parasitism."

For Makarevich, the USSR had ceased to exist long before its natural death; the Soviet system disappeared gradually, covered by a patina or melting away like fog. Highly successful within this system, he began doing very strange things as far back as the early 1970s. First, he created a series of elegant and frightening etchings based on Franz Kafka's stories; then some still lifes with decrepit objects, reminiscent of Platonov's *Foundation Pit*. Then came the horrifying *Corpses of Communards* and *Surgical Instruments*. Next, portraits of fellow conceptualists as characters from some dusty old play—Kabakov in a wardrobe, Chuikov as a window. Some pseudo-posthumous masks of Makarevich himself. His ascetic role in the group Collective Actions: without Makarevich's photographs, its visual field would have remained unclear. And finally, Homo Lignum, the Wooden Person: a rotten Buratino, the (anti-)Soviet Pinocchio he imagined himself to be. It was Elagina who photographed Makarevich as a formerly living creature turned into a rotten piece of wood. She was not happy about this project. And indeed, can a wife like it when her husband portrays himself as a rotten stump? But then the stump lit up much more luminously than rotten wood ever could.
"Why don't you make it yourself?" Elena Elagina was born in Moscow in 1949. From 1962 to1965, she too studied at Moscow Art School. Apparently, she did not feel at home among other "gifted youths," though. She did not want to participate in the rat race of alleged talent.

Igor Makarevich in his studio, 1980

Alice Poret. Leningrad, 1928

In 1964, Elagina met Ernst Neizvestny and remained his assistant until 1976, the year of his emigration. Elagina says that she did not learn much from Neizvestny as an artist, but his social circle mattered to her: in his studio, she met underground artists and famous musicians, great philosophers like Mamardashvili and Piatigorsky, political dissidents, poets, Soviet functionaries, writers, diplomats, and journalists of all stripes.

In the late 1960s, Elagina became friends with Alice Poret, a student of Pavel Filonov, a friend of Daniil Kharms and Alexander Vvedensky, and one of the few artists to remember the avant-garde era. Elena considers Alice to be her teacher, but Poret herself may have also learned something from this friendship. For instance, once Elagina handed Poret a samizdat copy of Daniil Kharms' "adult" texts. Poret cautiously thumbed through it and said, "Daniil forbade me to read anything of his, except children's poems! Elena, why did you let me read such disgusting things? I had thought much better of Daniil!"

Only in 1988 did things change. Elena came up with the idea of *Child's Play*, and Igor said, "Why don't you make it yourself?" Elagina finally took on artistic responsibility; from then on, almost all their works were signed with two names. The Makarevich-Elagina duo was born.

Memento mori. Thus emerges the Makarevich-Elagina phenomenon. One cannot help but ask: how do the two artists work together? Is it a complete fusion or a fierce competitive struggle resulting in a compromise? In a long interview, Makarevich insisted that he is a non-verbal, non-reflective person, while Elagina is his genius editor who senses every intertext of the conceived project and fits it into the necessary mental space. But is this true? Is Makarevich really a master without awareness, perfectly capable of any technique but not of thought? Is Elagina really the channel of his artistic intuition, which resists all things unnecessary and directs everything necessary to where it belongs?
Most likely, this self-description by Makarevich is a case of artistic coquetry. Besides, does it really matter what goes on in the creative kitchen of two people who have been working together for decades? What really matters is the strange result of this alchemy, which is by necessity doubled. To turn lead into gold, you must have the sun and the moon shine simultaneously on the retorts; you must place both pillars—Boaz and Jachin—beside the crucible. But the gold produced by Makarevich-Elagina is not an ingot. It might shine, and it might seem heavy, but for all the weight and almost perfect mastery of the material, their works hardly exist. They ephemerally occupy a place in other people's spaces. They are subtle, watered-down signs of what is, was, and will be.

It is thanks to this exaggerated old-world modesty, to the way in which Makarevich-Elagina's works mutter to themselves, that they become witnesses of cultural reality. And we need witnesses to understand both what has happened and what is yet to come.

The Moscow artistic duo is often accused of reinterpreting previous art. "Appropriators," some say. But, firstly, nothing truly new has happened since the birth and death of the first humans on Earth, and secondly, it is difficult to define what Makarevich-Elagina might be appropriating. Signs of Soviet reality? Achievements of the Russian avant-garde? Sometimes, they do neither but instead make up stories about people who might be real or completely fictitious. These stories are always covered by a veil of decay, of self-negation, of what Christian theology calls kenosis. The Makarevich-Elagina duo can hardly be counted among religious artists in the usual sense. Rather, their kenosis is the fruit of purely artistic ascetism. Whatever Makarevich and Elagina do, their works fall within the genre that in 17th century Europe was called *Vanitas vanitatis* or *Memento mori*.

Appropriation or not, there is really nothing new under the sun, everything had been and will be again. In the meantime, this ever-present past and future keep sprouting magically glowing mushrooms through the perforated fabric of ephemeral reality.
And let us not forget one thing: the Makarevich-Elagina duo manages all this without gloomy pathos and heavy-handed insistence—they are very good at talking about serious things with exquisite irony.

Elena Elagina in Ernst Neizvestny's studio, late 1970s

Boris Groys

SPACES OF REDUCTION

Contemporary art strives toward ambivalence and openness to many interpretations—potentially, an infinity. Such is Igor Makarevich's and Elena Elagina's work. Their projects and installations enable one to develop the most varied discourses, to construct the most different texts. One can hardly write about their art without a twinge of remorse: the vast field of possible interpretations forces one into reductionism. This is inevitable, since all texts are written under conditions of scarcity: of time, of space or of imagination.

This text, too, is the result of a reductionist approach—a reductionist approach toward reduction, as it happens. After all, the problem of reduction can be considered central to Makarevich/Elagina's work. Radical reduction was a basic technique of the classical avant-garde. Cézanne, for instance, reduced the spatial illusion of traditional European painting to the two-dimensional plane. Then cubism reduced all forms of nature to basic geometric shapes. And after that, Malevich reduced painting as such to a monochrome square on a white background.

But whence this avant-garde penchant for reduction? One answer is well known—the love for reductions is akin to the love for revolutions, a feature of strong personalities. A genius, a revolutionary, a prophet aspires to simplify the world in order to gain power over it. The will to power is also the will to truth: knowing means penetrating the simple, elementary essence of things by cutting away everything superfluous, incidental, false, unnecessary.

But is reduction only a tool in the hands of a hero? Certainly not. It can also be the result of poverty, squalor, misery, death or, as already mentioned, scarcity. Here, the issue is not world domination but rather the ability to make do with little. The revolutionary gesture turns into a gesture of submission to fate. Reduction takes on the modest charm of dignified poverty.

Ernst Jünger once wrote that his generation—the generation of the literary and artistic avant-garde—had to leave behind its cultural baggage in order to travel light. But did this generation want to travel anywhere at all, or did it simply have no other choice? We'll never know for sure, but it's worth keeping in mind a question that was crucial to Nietzsche: does nihilism (a form of reduction) arise from an excess of vitality or a lack of it? All of Makarevich/Elagina's works can be seen and read in the light of this famous question. Their own answers are ambivalent, elusive or, if you will, evasive.

In their installations, one can find references to the heroic history of the European and Russian avant-garde, to cubism and Malevich. These works appear under the imperial sign of the eagle, symbolising victory over the world. But at the same time, the installations tell a story of a deprived "life in the snow," of Buratino, the Russian Pinocchio, who by his very essence lacks vital energy. Besides, they are full of "poor things," which do not appear to refer to, say, Arte Povera but rather to a reduced everyday existence. To sum up: all of Makarevich/Elagina's installations deal with reduction; all of them represent reductionist spaces—always as a strange combination of poverty and heroism, as heroic poverty, as ascetic heroism.

And thus, reduction turns from an artistic device into a theme. It ceases to be a purely formal operation; it is emotionalized, even sentimentalized. A life history seems to be looming behind the artists. Was it full of heroic revolutionary ascesis? Was it a semi-impoverished existence in a relatively poor country? Maybe both. Or maybe neither. From a historical distance, the answer to Nietzsche's question thus becomes vague and indistinct. Indeed, the question itself loses its acuteness. Everyday life becomes heroic; heroic asceticism turns into everyday poverty. But while the question and the answer both become blurred, Makarevich/Elagina diagnose this blurring with great precision. Reduction is only acceptable to us today when it is surrounded by an aura of poverty. And poverty is only acceptable when it is surrounded by an aura of heroic asceticism.

I. Makarevich
A Sketch, 1994

EARLY WORKS

Andrei Monastyrski

MONUMENTAL MAKAREVICH

Makarevich's works are always unexpected, not in their form or content but in the choice of object that they "put to death." One can never predict the next victim of Makarevich's lethal touch, his touch of Rhadamanthus. We are, of course, speaking not about magical manipulations that kill real people but about myths. Makarevich's work is all about destroying myths—public, personal, and esthetic ones. He does not spare himself in the process. A painting made in 1977 depicts a cross next to a grave surround into which the artist's own photograph is inserted. In essence, this theme of self-destruction also lies at the centre of his well-known series *Changes*. One may say that Thanatos—one of the principal heroes of postmodernism—inspired all of Makarevich's work in the 1960s (drawings), 1970s, and 1980s.

One English critic has compared modernism with a grid and postmodernism with a map.[1] What he probably meant, among other things, is that a grid lets one see certain depths and perspectives of the real world, while the painted and delineated surface of the map does not let anything shine through. In other words, the postmodernist deals exclusively with recollections. In a manner of speaking, explorers, seafarers, and aviators (modernists) overcame real space and time in order to collect information about the world; scholars and geographers (critics of modernism) drew maps on the basis of this information; and, finally, the maps of an already familiar and described world became part of the postmodernist's artistic consciousness. In this way, the spatial and temporal realities of the world have been concealed from the trusting postmodernist by modernist maps, as if by funerary shrouds.

All a postmodernist can do is react to these maps, decorating, distorting, adding, and completing them. This has given rise to the notion of the "flat" postmodernist consciousness. Indeed, faith in descriptions may lead a postmodernist to turn the "map" into a fine net and to shut himself up in a cell or aviary, a space for parting sobs, convulsions, doleful meditations, etc.

Yet let us return to the Englishman (or German—unfortunately, I have forgotten his name), who compared the two forms of artistic consciousness to the grid and the map. Makarevich outwardly appears to be a postmodernist (the "fatal" perfection of the content level), yet he is a typical modernist on the level of intention and given the "depths" of his discourse. This contradiction can be resolved by taking a look at Russian cemeteries. In contrast to English (or German) ones, Russian cemeteries feature grids; in fact,

1. The author is referring to Rosalind Krauss' essay "Grids," published in the journal *October* (volume 9, Summer 1979, pp. 50–64).

I. Makarevich
The Communard Corpses, 1973

Berlin–Moscow / Moscow–Berlin (1950–2000),
State Historical Museum,
Moscow, 2004

Other Art, State
Tretyakov Gallery,
1991

there are grids all over the place. Every tomb is surrounded by one made of metal. They overlap, looming in boundless fenced-off panoramas, in enormous modernist fields, which Makarevich so successfully covers with his works in the name of Thanatos. The basic module of his art is the box, that is, the coffin. In the late 1970s, he made use of cardboard boxes in *25 Memories of a Friend* (1979) and *Dispersion of a Soaring Soul* (1979); as the titles suggest, these boxes are also variants of coffins. The subsequent *Case of Sensations*, one of Makarevich's key works, presents six boxes with different-colored human torsos. Later, Makarevich went on to create a portrait of Kabakov in a closet. In itself, a closet with the image of a human being placed inside is already a sarcophagus of sorts, an image which Makarevich enhances by putting a heap of old shoes (a Thanatic motif) in the lower part of the closet and attaching a map of the "Chuvash Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic" on the inner side of the closet door. One gets the impression that Kabakov, like Gogol's Chichikov, is riding somewhere in this closet or covered cart, seeking to buy "dead souls." Makarevich also depicted Erik Bulatov in a red box (also clearly meant to resemble a coffin). In these works, Makarevich shows Kabakov and Bulatov in the entirety of their personal myths and with all the principal attributes of their individual artistic worlds; he encases and limits them by coffin walls: i.e., he is looking at

Igor Makarevich in his studio, 1978

them from the perspective of those modernist fenced-off cemeteries of the Russian-speaking world, which can destroy the personal modernist myth as easily as create a new one. In essence, Makarevich uses this highly favourable topographical and existential standpoint to observe how "gods (modernists) go off into the distance," surrounded by angels (postmodernists), usually, fallen ones, which does not spoil the general picture, whose correlativity always remains intact.

In his painting *Sotheby's*, Makarevich cast his Medusan glance at another hero of postmodernism, Pluto. Here he killed or "buried" (and, in the process, arguably introduced into the museal, cultural world) an entire style (called the "Volkov style"), which is very popular and enjoys a lot of financial success. He "crushed" it with a tombstone made from the found art of Soviet signage: the "Volkov" texture was covered by the word СОТБИС (SOTHEBY'S) made out of letters that he had found lying in the street: they had come off signs on Soviet banks (the modernism of Soviet finances, still far from being exhausted, represents a very loose grid). He also attached metal handles to both sides of the painting. It is well known that such handles are not found on Soviet coffins, but they do appear on English and German ones, making them easier to carry. In this way, Makarevich provides a precise description (more "existential" than esthetic) of the stylistic myth of the impetuous contact between Soviet art and Western consumers of cultural valuables that occurred at a famous auction not long ago.

Nearly all of Makarevich's artistic actions are ritual acts of burial, funerals of sorts. The artist's mastery consists in preparing perfect funerary paraphernalia for the "deceased" (the object of the work). The transparency of the conceptual gesture shines through in all his works, although the style of these paraphernalia changes with the spirit of the times: the "coffins," rather austere and impersonal in the 1970s, became somewhat brighter and more detailed in the 1980s, when the artist began to pay more attention to the objects of the ritual (Kabakov, Bulatov, Volkov) than to its general structure.

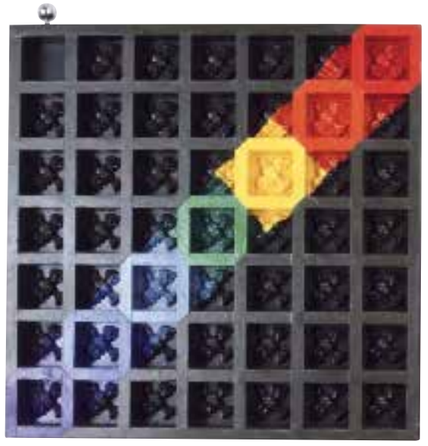
Arguably, the continuity and conceptual clarity of Makarevich's work also derives from his over ten years of experience as a monumental artist: he earned a living by working on commissions for institutes, sanatoriums, and important public buildings. This combination of conceptualism and monumentalism in a single artist is unique. In essence, monumental art in its different manifestations (even the most unexpected ones, such as designing a children's playground) does not break all that much with its original area of activity: decorating cemeteries, sculpting tombstones, and adorning pyramids, mausoleums, and tombs with frescos and reliefs, which typically feature not only heroic depictions of the biography of the deceased but also scenes of a happy future life.

FlashArt, no. 1, 1989

I. Makarevich
Surgical Instruments, 1978

I. Makarevich
The Extra Factor, 1988

I. Makarevich
Dispersion of a Soaring Soul,
1978



I. Makarevich
25 Memories of a Friend, 1978

I. Makarevich
Dispersion of a Soaring Soul,
1978 (1988 version)

I. Makarevich
25 Memories of a Friend,
1978 (1988 version)

I. Makarevich
A Present for Germany, 1993

I. Makarevich
25 Memories of a Friend, 1978
(2005 version)

I. Makarevich
Zvuv (The Fly Man), 1989

I. Makarevich
From the *Gallery* series, 1988

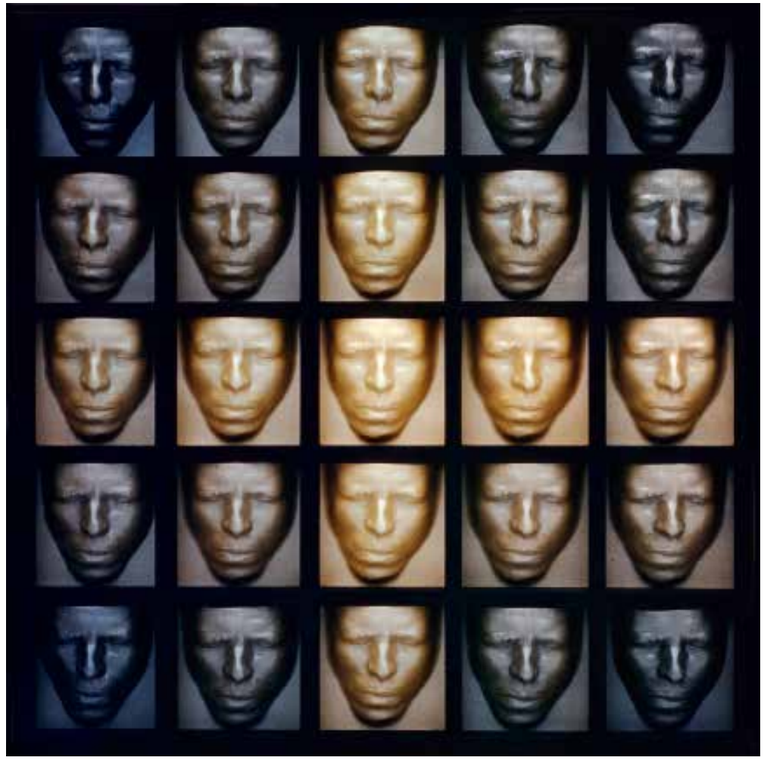
I. Makarevich
The Lion of St. Mark, 1989

I. Makarevich
Bate, 1988

I. Makarevich
Temperature of Change, 1990

I. Makarevich
Case of Sensations, 1979
Detail

I. Makarevich
Cross of St. Andrew, 1989



I. Makarevich
Cross of St. Ignatius, 1989

I. Makarevich
Landscape with Five Flies, 1992

I. Makarevich
Case of Sensations, 1979
(detail)

I. Makarevich
Reincarnation of St. Ignatius,
1990

The title of the installation, *The Sleep of Painting Produces Monsters*, echoes Goya's famous engraving *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, which depicts a sleeping artist haunted by ghosts. Makarevich's work features no subject; instead, it's the objects and furnishings that act. Thus, painting itself becomes the imaginary sleeping subject here, and the viewer must discover the hidden mechanisms of its life.

The large sofa made by Makarevich brings to mind Sigmund Freud's couch, on which his patients lay during psychoanalytical sessions, while also referring to similar furniture in famous paintings of the past such as *Portrait of Madame Récamier* by Jacques-Louis David and René Magritte's *Perspective: Madame Récamier by David*. On the sofa, Makarevich has placed a large, soft painter's palette reminiscent of the surrealists' flowing forms.

The spring-loaded chair is not a piece made by the artist, but a found object, and its original function is unknown. In any case, this chair is no longer intended for sitting but forms part of the composition as one of the actors. Chief among these actors is, of course, the closet.

This piece of furniture occupies a special place in the repertoire of Moscow conceptualists. Ilya Kabakov dedicated one of the albums in his Ten Characters series to *Primakov-in-the-Closet*, an invented boy who created his world within a closet's walls and eventually dissolved in this tiny space. According to Makarevich, an important source for the formation of the Moscow conceptualist program was the absurdist poetry of Daniil Kharms, who once said: "Art is a closet." Moreover, one cannot help but think of the famous "My dear and honored bookcase!" monologue uttered by Gaev in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* [in Russian, bookcases, closets, cupboards, and wardrobes are all called *shkaf*]. In Makarevich's installation, the closet is an animate subject, a portal to another world, a bottomless receptacle for fantastic objects. It is only ajar, but we can discern something on a shelf: a tiny toy cot, and on it, tubes of oil paint, laid out carefully like newborn babies. They symbolize the sleep of painting, an art form which in the second half of the 20th century gave way to new practices and new forms of artistic activity: objects, performances, installations. Arguably, it went into "sleep mode."

In a sense, Makarevich's work is a materialization of painting: the birth of spatial composition (that is, of installation) from the "spirit" of painting. All the objects here are of a dull official green, like in Soviet institutions, but at the same time, this colour is traditionally associated with death and resurrection. Generated by surrealist dreams, filtered through the experience of Soviet communal esthetics, the "monstrous" installation intrudes into the real world.

The sense of coarse reality is intensified by the presence of rubber slippers. They seem to multiply and scurry around, as if trying to occupy as much space as possible, so as to leave a trace and gain a foothold in the schizophrenic space of the installation.

The Treachery of Images is the title of one of René Magritte's key paintings, and it is through such "treachery" that Makarevich's installation demonstrates a "genetic" connection between surrealism and contemporary conceptualist practices. In 1990, Makarevich's installations featured in the exhibition *Toward the Object*, organized by Andrei Erofeev; in the same year, he and Elena Elagina created the installation *Gerantomachy* for a large-scale group exhibition with the characteristic title *Shizokitai: Hallucination in Power*, reflecting the decay of Soviet civilization, events that appeared like an incredible phantasmagoria and were followed by an invasion of reality.

Natalia Sidorova, with Kirill Svetlyakov

I. Makarevich
The Sleep of Painting Produces Monsters, 1990

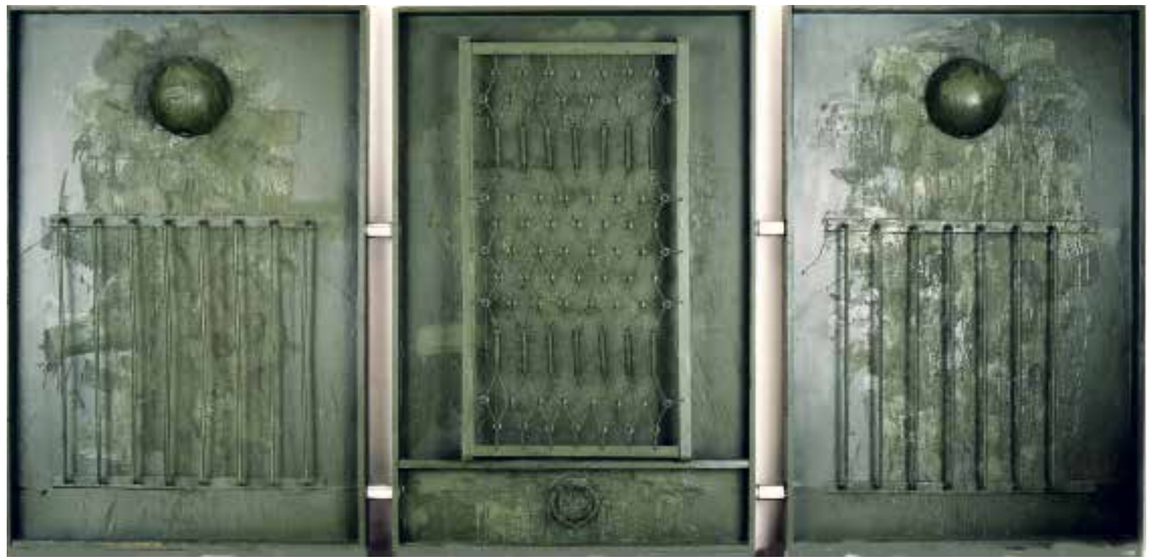
I. Makarevich. From the series *USSR: Bastion of Peace*, 1989

I. Makarevich
From the series *USSR: Bastion of Peace*, 1989

I. Makarevich
From the series *USSR: Bastion of Peace*, 1989

I. Makarevich
I Love Paris, 1989

I. Makarevich
From the series *USSR: Bastion of Peace*, 1989



I. Makarevich
Covered Painting, 1988

I. Makarevich
Sotheby's, 1988

I. Makarevich
Open Space, 1988
Installation detail

I. Makarevich
Poetic Landscape, 1992

Igor Makarevich's studio,
1989

I. Makarevich
From the project *Movable Gallery of Russian Artists*, 1979

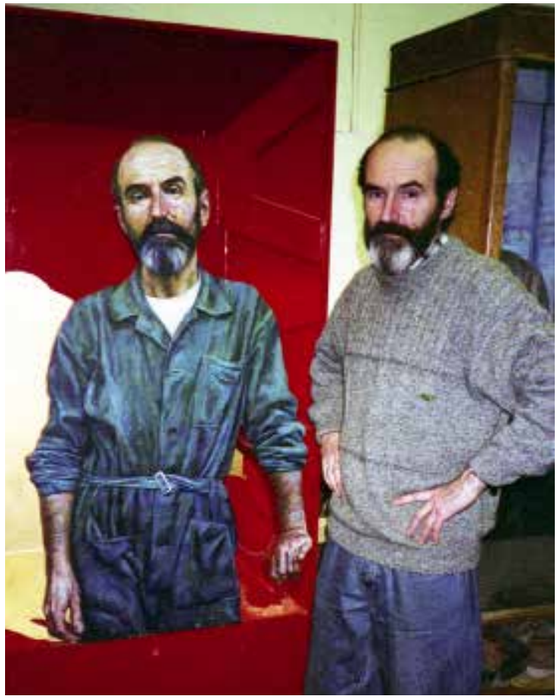



Photodocumentation
of Igor Makarevich's
Movable Gallery of Russian Artists, 1979–1996

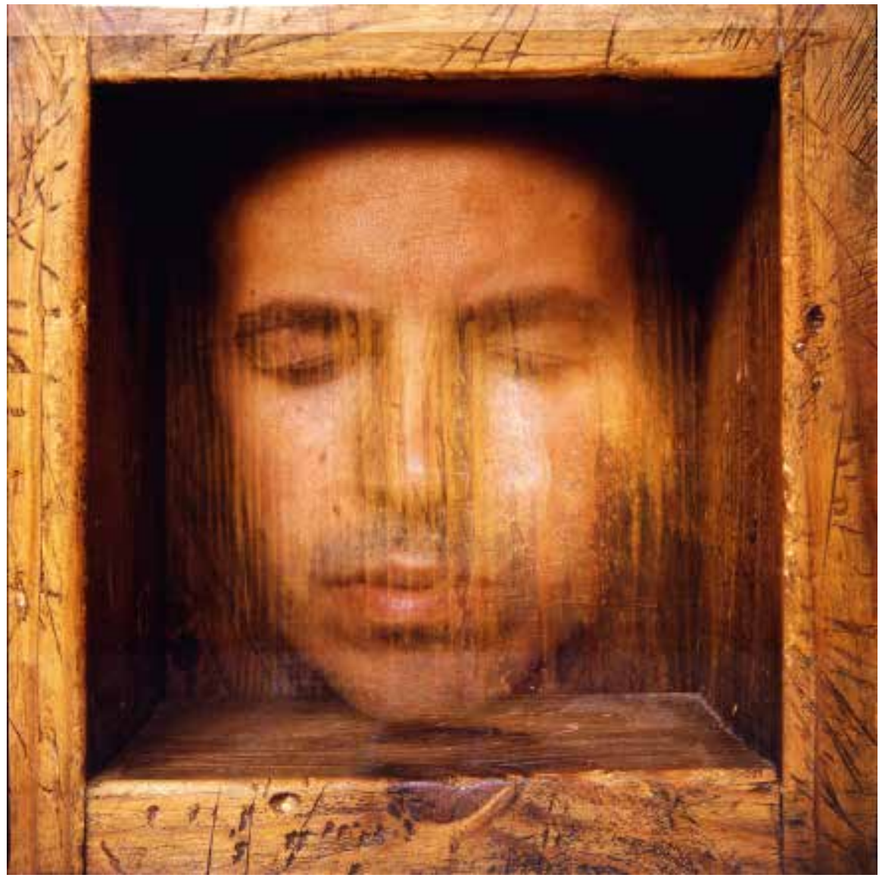


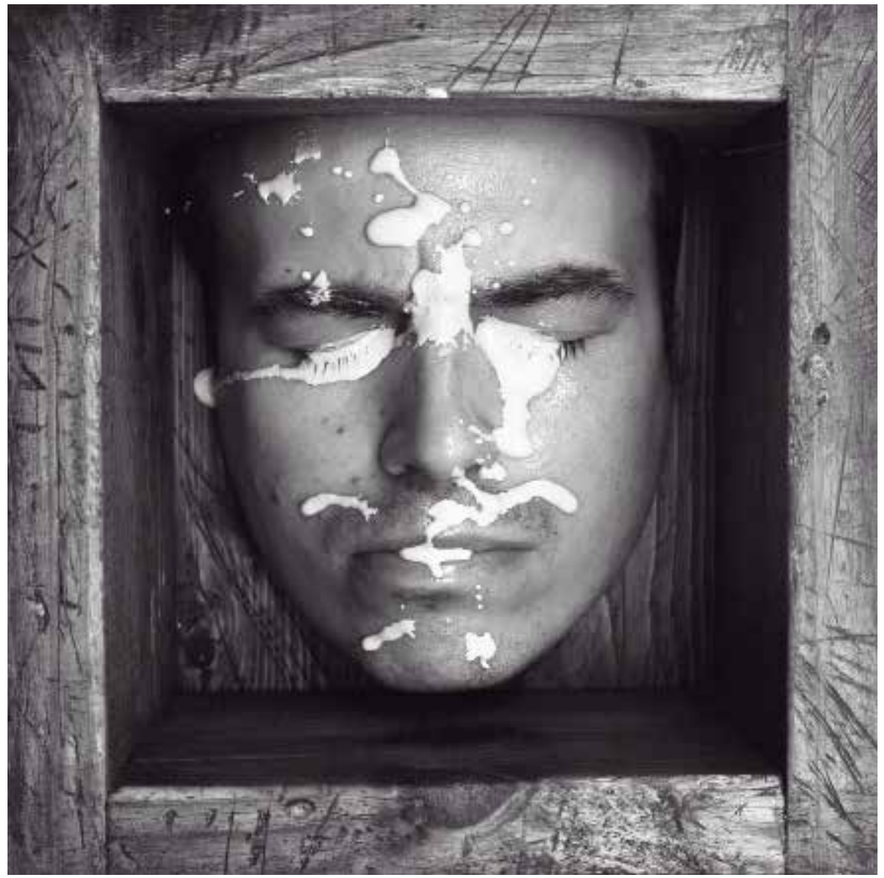

Photodocumentation
of Igor Makarevich's *Stationary Gallery of Russian Artists (Portrait of Ivan Chuikov)*, 1981–1991

Photodocumentation
of Igor Makarevich's *Stationary Gallery of Russian Artists (Portrait of Ilya Kabakov)*, 1983–1986



Photodocumentation
of Igor Makarevich's *Stationary Gallery of Russian Artists (Portrait of Erik Bulatov)*, 1987–1989



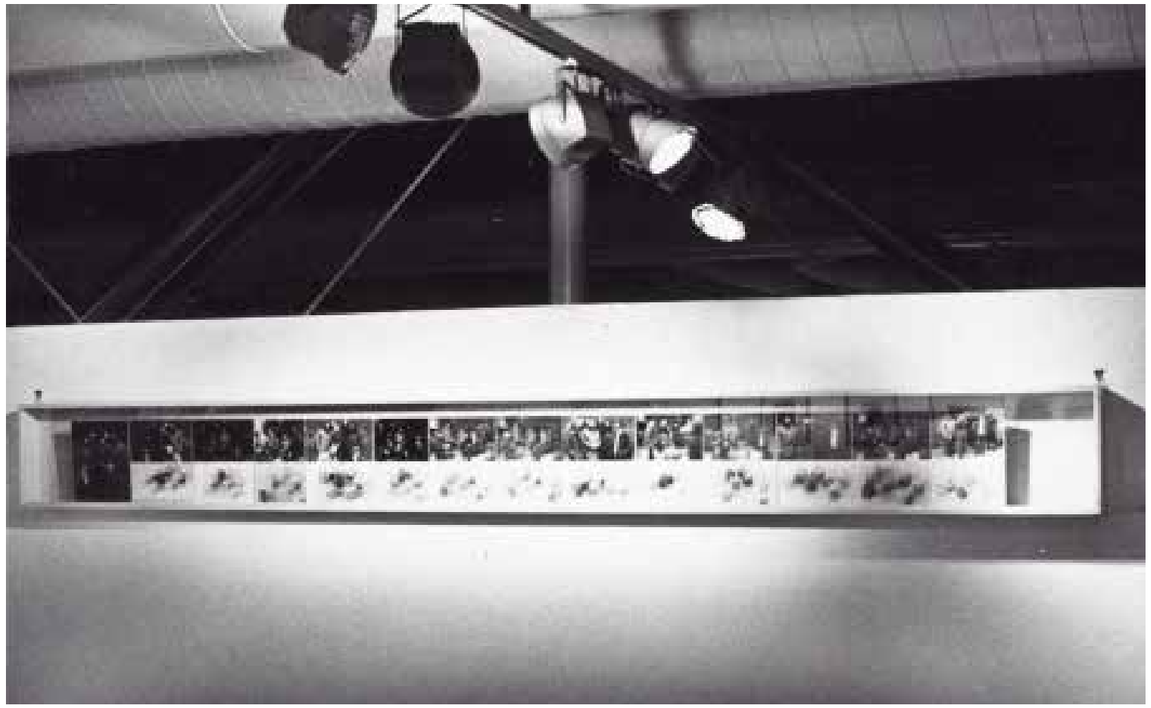


I. Makarevich
Change, 1978 (detail)

Abramov. Chuikov. Makarevitch
exhibition at Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris,
1979

I. Makarevich
Change, 1978 (detail)

I. Makarevich.
Selection of the Target, 1977
Details



I might call the series *Selection of the Target* my first meaningful photo work. It depicted a group of non-conformist artists, participants of an unofficial exhibition at Leonid Sokov's studio in the summer of 1976. We decided to take the group photo in the backyard of Sokov's studio on Sukharevsky Lane. We chose a bit of wasteland surrounded by low brick buildings; I took the photos with a heavy 6×6 cm camera mounted on a tripod, with long shutter speeds, and the artists had to freeze at the moment when the shutter was released.

Although the place seemed deserted at first, a minute after we started, there was hissing, shouting, and other threatening noises coming from everywhere. This is how the locals reacted when they peered out of their windows at what was happening in the wasteland. It was only natural that one or other of the artists would respond in some way to these displays of social vigilance. As a result, of the 13 shots I made, only one was uncompromised; the rest were all blurred to varying degrees, to my initial great annoyance.

However, after examining the prints I gradually concluded that this defective photography creates another space in the images, one that fundamentally changes the whole meaning of the action.

I decided to enhance this spontaneous effect by photographing some dice, whose number and position corresponded to the number and motions of the artists.

In doing so, I introduced the factor of time into the image, arguably much like the shift (*sdvig*) of cubist painting.

Igor Makarevich

Abramov. Chuikov. Makarevitch
exhibition at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris,
1979

Igor Makarevich

PHOTO DOCUMENTATION OF WORKS BY COLLECTIVE ACTIONS, 1979–1983

The group Collective Actions was fundamental to the development of what art critic and philosopher Boris Groys termed Moscow romantic conceptualism.

Collective Actions appeared in 1976, when the poet and artist Andrei Monastyrski invited a close circle of friends to a poetry reading in Izmailovsky Park in Moscow. This small-scale event launched something entirely new on Moscow's art scene and denoted a special relationship between the creative process and our perception of the world around us.

The theorist and Moscow conceptualism specialist Ekaterina Bobrinskaya wrote: "In the mid–1970s, when Collective Actions began to organize their 'trips out of town,' Moscow conceptualism was not unified. One of Collective Actions' functions at this time was the creation of a particular 'mental field' or, to use Ilya Kabakov's expression, 'a field of consciousness,' in which one could trace the outlines of the school and the movement. In the 1970s and 1980s, regular trips to actions and participation in discussions about them were particular tools for structuring artistic life and, one might say, artistic consciousness."

Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina joined Collective Actions in 1979. Makarevich became the main photographer of the group's actions. His photographs are distinguished by their focus on the preparation and organization of actions in addition to documenting the scenario of the action itself.















Andrei Monastyrski

ON ELENA ELAGINA'S INSTALLATIONS

The installations made by Elagina in the late 1980s, the ones whose titles all consisted of a single adjective, impressed me more than anything else being made in our circle at the time. She was a kind of autochthonous Soviet Haim Steinbach, a genuine Soviet simulation artist, centring not on the object (as with Steinbach and other Western simulationists) but on the word, in full accordance with our logocentric consciousness and culture. Elagina's installations were therefore completely accurate and exceptionally contemporary in terms of international art, forming a crucial stage in the history of Moscow conceptualism. In their significance, they are comparable to Kabakov's works from the early 1970s, one of which (an album) features words such as "Carrot," "Cloud," or "Sky" written on blank sheets of paper. With Elagina, we see the development of this line of logocentric readymade in the form of installation.
Like all successful and authentic works, these installations are ambiguous and leave open a semantic gap: they always contain an irreducible residual meaning not covered by any interpretation (especially because of the plastic solution). The final sense eludes the viewer. Let us consider two of the works whose titles are adjectives: *Sosudistoe* ("Vascular") and *Degtyarnoe* ("Tar-Based"). These appear as metaphysical altars of sorts, and at the same time as a Soviet showcase with some heart medicine and soap [tar soap was a staple in Soviet bathrooms]. The strong suggestive gesture becomes critical through its absurdity. The plastic work suggests not so much bottles of Corvalol medicine or bars of soap but rather factories for their production, not a particular product but the process of making it. The works resemble exhibition stands at the Soviet Exhibition of National Economic Achievements or, indeed, entire pavilions dedicated to a particular industry, such as heart medicine or soap: *Children's* (the title of another installation) or *Tar-Based* (with a capital letter!). Absurdist metaphysics are expressed through an increase in verbal objectivity (a small bottle or a bar of soap or fragments of the same are magnified to a comparatively giant size). These works by Elagina remain relevant, because even now (in a different era, it would seem) what matters to our consciousness is not the usability of the object but its name; not the thing but the word.

E. Elagina
The Sublime—The Infernal, 1989
(1992 version)

E. Elagina
Clean, 1987

E. Elagina
Children's, 1988

E. Elagina
Tar-Based, 1990

E. Elagina
Vascular, 1990

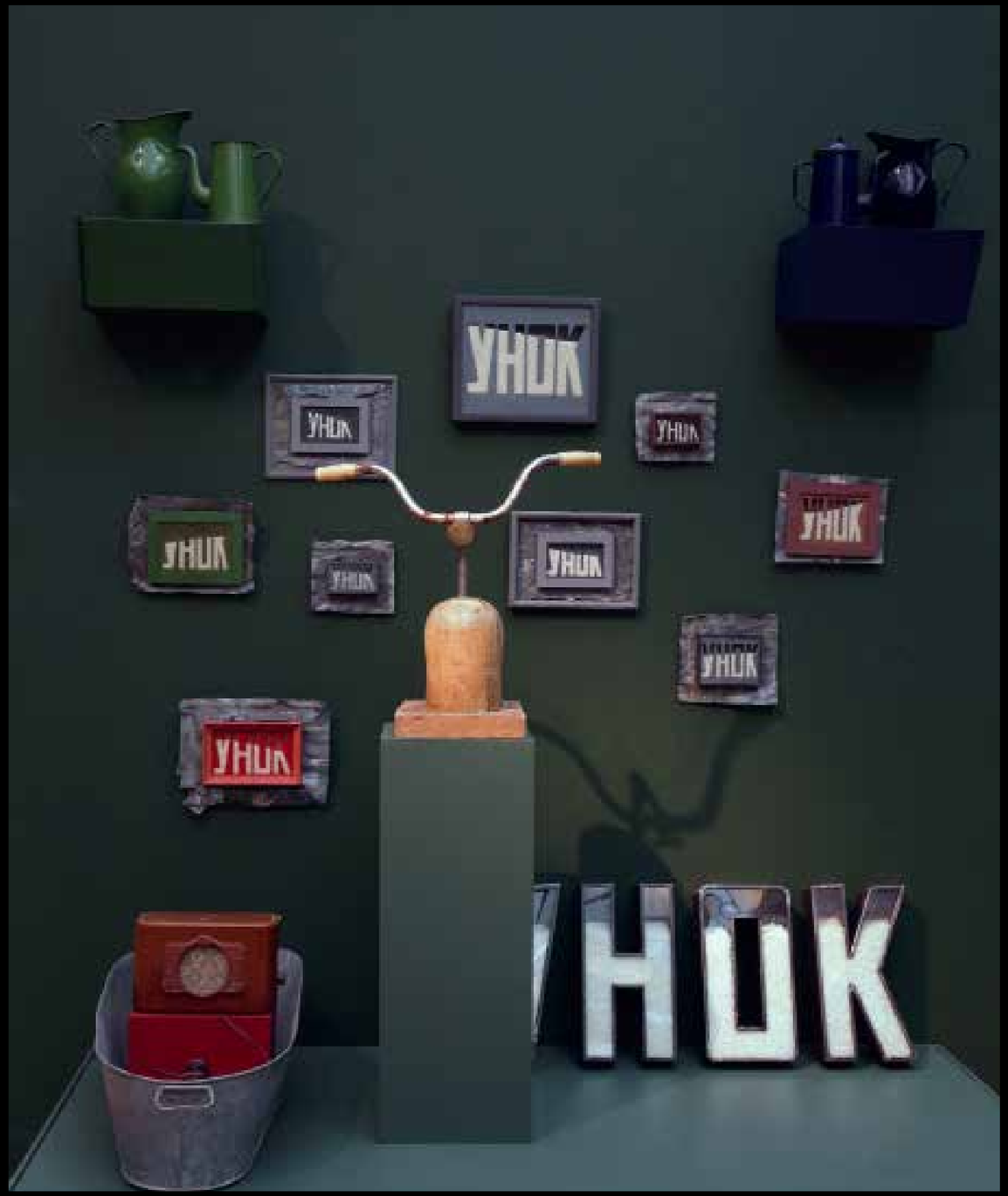
Elena Elagina's works at the exhibition *Within the Limits of the Beautiful*, L Gallery, Moscow, 1992

E. Elagina
The Sublime—The Infernal, 1989

E. Elagina
Iksisos, 1992

Elena Elagina's works
at the exhibition *Girls and Death*,
Velta Gallery, Central House
of the Russian Army, Moscow, 1993

Elena Elagina
and Igor Makarevich's
exhibition *Iron Fly*,
XL Gallery, Moscow, 2000



MAGIC AND IDEOLOGY

Closed Fish Exhibition

Life in the Snow

The Writer's Tale

Pagan

Laboratory of Great Acts

Igor Makarevich

THE WELL OF TIME

At the beginning of 1970s, one of my friends brought me a very valuable find: the modest archive of an unknown artist, discarded by his "solicitous" relatives. A strange document among the faded newspaper articles and pitiful, meagre catalogues attracted my attention. It was a small brochure with a very strange combination of words on its cover: "Closed Fish Exhibition." There was not a single reproduction in this so-called catalogue, issued by the Volga-Caspian Gosrybtrest [State Fish Trust], and the introductory note concluded with the exhortation to "use the artist's brush rationally in the fish industry."

The works' titles mixed ideological clichés and fish industry terms. In 1990, Elena Elagina and I recreated these works of art according to the inspiration provided by their names; we made nearly 100 objects that were united by the title *Closed Fish Exhibition*.

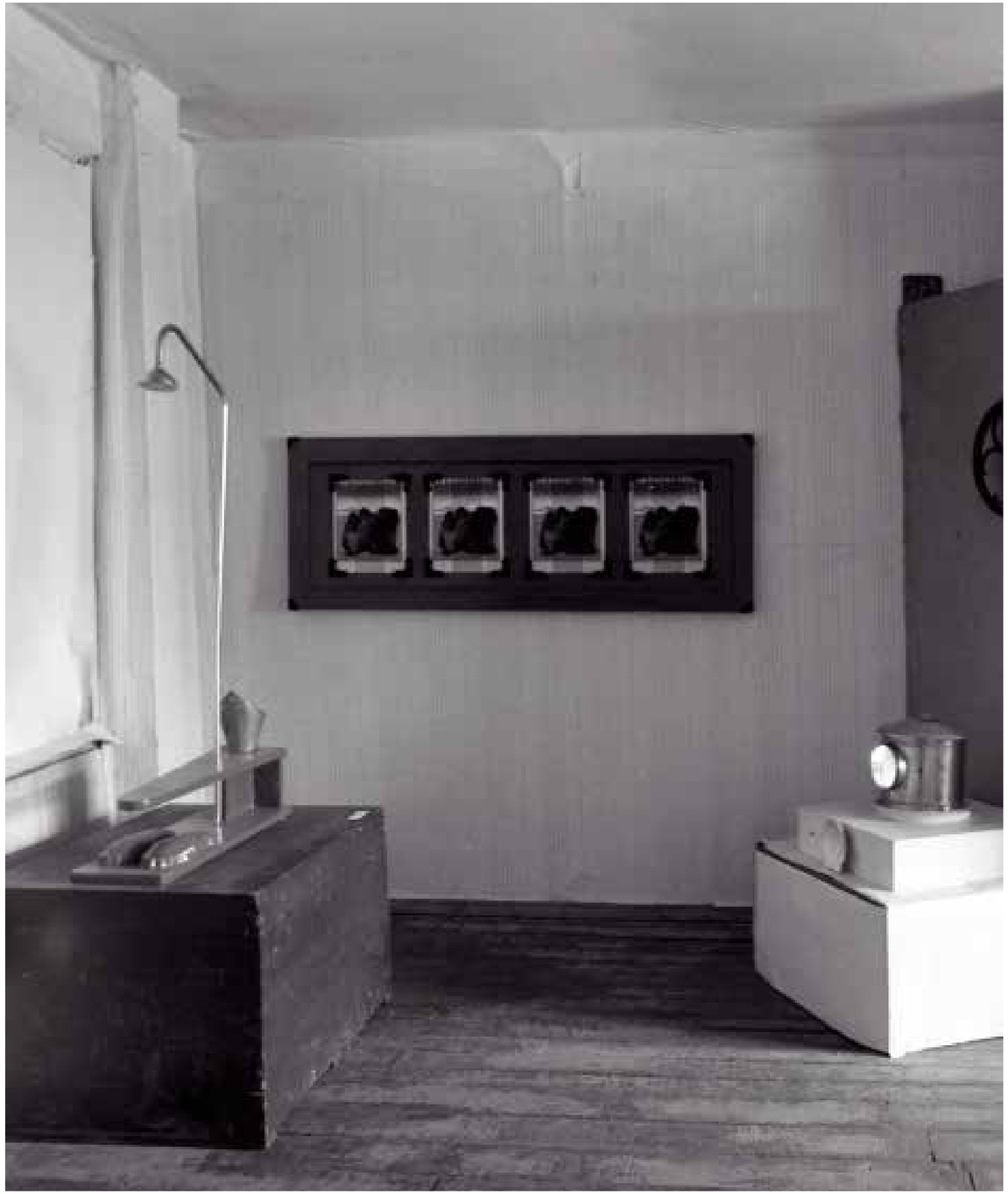
This work proved fascinating, and four years later we visualized other "archeological finds" in an extensive project called *Life in the Snow*. This time, we worked from two sources of inspiration: an anonymous brochure which provided the title *Life in the Snow* to the entire work; and a tiny book by E. Novikova-Vashentseva called How *I Became a Writer*. The first, a very rare document issued by the Young Guard publishing house in the fall of 1941, testifies to the total panic and disarray which seized the country at the beginning of World War II. The brochure contains numerous instructions on how to survive in extreme winter conditions and was most likely intended for retreating Red Army troops and civilians driven deep into the countryside by the swift German advance. This defeatist publication, whose circulation was almost completely destroyed, clearly pointed to Frost as a mythological foundation and a Great Ally, to which ideology appeals for help at critical moments of its existence.

The book *How I Became a Writer* is a remarkable example of the technique of character creation. Its author is a concrete person, an elderly woman named Novikova-Vashentseva who became a famous worker-correspondent in the uneasy 1920s and won Maxim Gorky's favour. Creating her own personal mythology, she describes how she, a semi-literate worker, was struck on the head with a wooden log by her alcoholic husband. Her life changed as a result: she left her large family and, feeling a powerful impulse, departed for new vistas, becoming first a correspondent for the newspaper *Red Virgin Soil* and subsequently a famous proletarian writer. For us, however, the most interesting thing in the story was the instrument of her transformation, the heavy wooden log: the shape of Buratino [the Soviet Pinocchio] could be seen clearly in its depths, and so this nimble character came to light.

It so happened that after traveling for a while, our installation disappeared in the deceptive mist of European gallery spaces. So, we decided to repeat this story in a different way.

Abandoning the honorable Novikova-Vashentseva, we retained her offspring, Buratino, who gained much greater weight and significance in the new context. The Beginning and the End, Alfa and Omega, the Cosmos itself, as the great Kazimir indicated, is concentrated in his bottomless Square. The source of everything existing, it is situated between the symbols of Frost and Fire, between the two Eagles. Signs of the conception and decay of life are situated around this great Forge—Suprematist compositions and old book pages that tell of scanty food and harsh journeys under conditions of approaching eternal winter. The only hope for a happy ending in this somber story falls to the infantile consciousness of the wooden character, whose long nose sticks right through, here and there, a partly concealed and partly revealed image.

2005



Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich's *Closed Fish Exhibition*, MANI Museum (Moscow Archive of New Art), 1990

БЕСПЛАТНО

ЗАКРЫТАЯ

ВЫСТАВКА

ЖИВОПИСЬ
ГРАФИКА

МОСКВА НОЯБРЬ 1935

Путина, с ее яркой и животворной тематикой дает богатейший материал для кисти художника. К сожалению, до сих пор в изобразительном искусстве путина отражалась очень бледно.

Представленные на выставке этюды и рисунки члена московского областного союза советских художников З. В. Куликовой и студентов московского института изобразительных искусств В. А. Меллин и А. В. Иванова являются первой серьезной попыткой отобразить растущую индустрию рыбной промышленности и героический труд рабочих и рыбаков-колхозников.

Волго-Каспийский Госрыбтрест, устраивая эту выставку, надеется, что посетители, ознакомившись с работами художников, помогут им своими советами и указаниями в создании больших полотен о путине—таких полотен, которые были бы достойны социалистической рыбной промышленности.

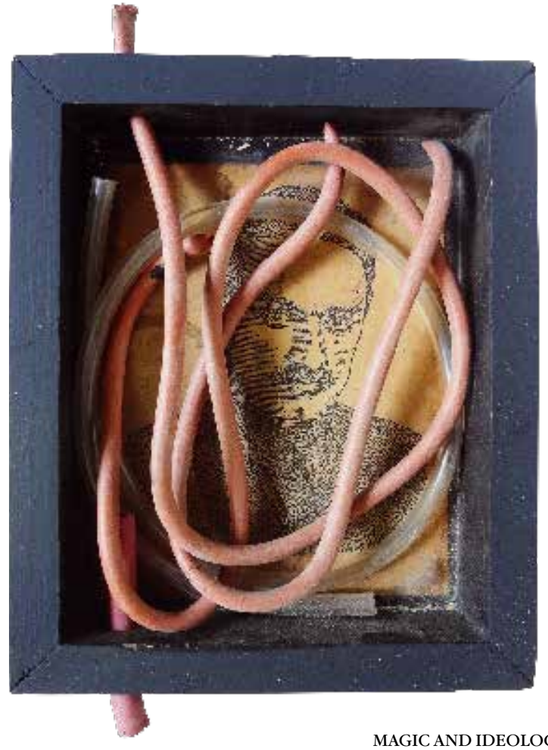
Волго-Каспийский Госрыбтрест.

КУЛИКОВА ЗОЯ ВАСИЛЬЕВНА

Член московского областного союза советских художников.

Москва, 2-я Мещанская, д. № 47, кв 15.

1. Промывка красной рыбы	Сепиевый карандаш
2. В убойной палатке	„ „
3. Резка красной рыбы	„ „
4. Зачистка эксперта	„ „
5. Белуга	„ „
6. Починка парусов	„ „
7. Сейнера	Тушь
8. Неводной приплоток	„
9. Нефтянка	„
10. С шаланды	Сепиевый карандаш
11. Зачистка эксперта	„ „
12. Набросок	Тушь
13. Прорези	„
14. Набросок	Сепиевый карандаш
15. У шаланды	„ „
16. Рыбница	„ „
17. Портрет рулевого	„ „
18. На плоту	Тушь
19. Ловецкая стойка в море	Сепиевый карандаш



Catalogues of the *Closed Fish Exhibition*, at the Astrakhan Party Members House and the Moscow Polytechnical Museum, 1935

E. Elagina, I. Makarevich
Mikoyan's Womb, 1994

Ekaterina Degot

THE NAME OF THE FISH

Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina's *Fish Exhibition* is based entirely on coincidences and stratification. The socialist realist exhibition serves as an object of reflection, while the conceptualist exhibition becomes the form of reflection. The exhibited items belong to two spaces simultaneously: the physical space and the textual one. The catalogue of the 1935 exhibition plays the role of a "sky chart" on which all the objects are set out, reckoned, and recorded ahead of time. The labels clearly relate each of the exhibited objects to the catalogue, which acts as a constitution of sorts, giving the entire exhibition the right to exist.

Nevertheless, the peculiarity of the *Fish Exhibition* lies in the fact that this "structure" must be constantly "turned over." This enables the material objects to materialize the virtual phantom titles, to bring the unknown works made by unknown artists to life.

"By repeating a lost painting, we give it the status of an existing one," Kabakov once wrote with regard to his work *Tested*. Although this idea remains very topical today, Makarevich and Elagina's gesture is different. It does not submerge into the language of socialist realism but instead "pushes away" (in all the senses of the term), "starts from," and then "transposes" and "translates." (All of this recalls certain word games, such as charades employing pantomime and gesture, in which the only permitted means are the creation of a different semiotic series and the equivalent exchange of meaning.) The interest in socialist realist stylistics gives way to an interest in the words denoting it.

All of the exhibited works are already contained in the 1935 catalogue, with the exception of the composition *Fishing Season*, which expresses everything that ordinary socialist realists were unable to say. It takes the form of a pathetic utterance in contrast to the individual words (and even syllables) which made up the original *Fish Exhibition*. In this context, *Fishing Season* is a large-scale canvas alongside small studies and sketches; from the conceptual point of view, it is an installation surrounded by individual items, and the inner parallel that we are drawing here suggests that classical notions of painting rudimentarily and perhaps unconsciously existed in the Moscow conceptualist school. *Fishing Season* is a "thematic painting," the product of the will to unification. At the same time, "oil studies" and "sketches" are not its parts but are literally cast down before it (as is often the case in socialist realism), in the same way as its thematic and painterly aspects are unthinkable without the "elevation" of empirical reality to a mythological level.

The *Fish Exhibition* reconstructs studies, which are called an "approach to the theme" in socialist realist theory. Contemplation and passive naturalism are permitted in studies. This corresponds well to the artistic act modelled by Makarevich and Elagina, an extremely modest act with exclusively mimetic goals. The "denominative" nature of the exhibition serves to thematize the "denominative" nature of the studies.

At the same time, it is noteworthy that Kulikova's, Mellin's and Ivanova's studies and sketches are mostly recreated by Elagina and Makarevich as real paintings that hang on the wall in something resembling frames. The "painterly" nature of Makarevich and Elagina's objects derives from their "fish" theme (the theme of the reproduced exhibition). In a similar way, socialist realist studies had such a large scope only through their relation to the Theme (the study *Communist Fishery* was undoubtedly perceived as more "painterly" than a study of a non-ideological landscape).

The reflection on the theme "study/painting–word/utterance" that pervades the entire exhibition is so structurally organizing that the *Fish Exhibition* can be said to be devoted to artistic questions just as much as ideological ones. The myth of Art and its representative Painting also figures here as a typically Soviet myth. In the USSR, art was considered to be not only an ideological activity but also a professional one (somewhat like fish processing). Like the fish industry, it conserved certain archaic rudimentary technologies, such as studies, which were considered to be the "secret of good art," i.e., they formed the identity of this activity. Decades during which life "had to be somehow lived" witnessed the appearance of an "everyday" layer (the sphere of the "manual" rather than the "mental") over the ideological foundation: in the words of Boris Groys, "daily life and ideology coincided in an endless text." All of Kabakov's work is devoted to the secondary or private mentality that existed within this sphere, derived its vestigial non-reflected

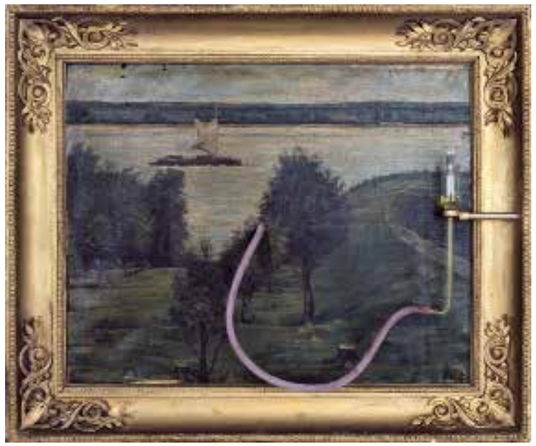
Elena Elagina
and Igor Makarevich's
Closed Fish Exhibition,
Profsouyznaya 100 exhibition hall,
Moscow, 1991

ideology from it, and, at the same time, reconstructed Soviet culture from the surrounding monuments of material culture.

Let us now make a few remarks. First of all, the considerable volume of the "manual sphere" that built up over the years created the illusion that purely artistic problems (the problems of craftsmanship and quality) were independent from ideology, a stance that was widespread among broad circles in unofficial art. The *Fish Exhibition* thematizes this aspect, too, for Makarevich and Elagina label reconstructed objects with their titles and media (e.g., "study, oil"), since such a rigidly formal description of routine media was typical of Soviet art descriptions.

Secondly, although the *Fish Exhibition* brings out a relatively humane layer of Soviet culture, it is devoted to the theme of fish production rather than consumption. The Soviet ideological system did not consider consumption by itself, but treated it as a form of re-production. This recalls the dichotomy of "contemplation" and "production" that was the driving force of artistic development in the 1920s and 1930s.

Thus, the *Fish Exhibition* consummates the unrealized conceptualism of socialist realism. It consummates it by manipulating sheer titles, i.e., the very thing before which art bowed its head and declared itself vanquished in socialist realism. The disintegration into thing and name, whose awareness lay at the root of the conceptualist practices of the 1970s and early 1980s, is palpable and visceral here. Despite the total external literal "adhesion" between each exhibited item and its title, one senses an inner tension between the "other" and the "same"—both an ideal coincidence and an absolute mismatch (e.g., between the toy car and the beer bottle, on the one hand, and the title *On the Volga in the Zhiguli Area*,[1] on the other; between the radio in a tub of water and the title *Take-up Motor at Sea*;[2] and so on).



The primitive realistic studies that actually depict exemplary communist fisheries, fish boats,[3] and slit boats are structurally similar to Makarevich and Elagina's objects: the latter appear to be naively literal (the slit boats have real slits, while the sterns of fish boats are denoted by bags with fish food[4]), yet their true function is to reproduce something pre-existing and off-limits (the paintings from 1935). In both cases, we are dealing with staged abstractions that appear in the guise of something else, i.e., a mystification. This gives rise to the complex relation between literal and figurative language that constitutes the fabric of the *Fish Exhibition*.

Makarevich and Elagina reconstitute the "root" meaning of a title in the spirit of naive etymology: common sense serves as a means for removing the spell. Such *ostranenie* (defamiliarization) is essentially the opposite of the metaphor. Whereas the metaphor (according to Aristotle) is the "transfer of the name," the name is the only thing that remains in place here, while the missing, substituted works vanish from the logical chain, leaving only their "false likeness" behind.

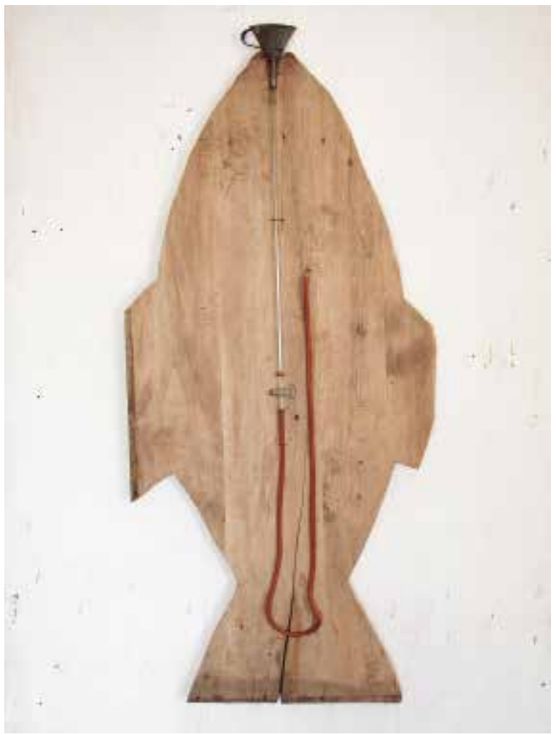
It turns out that the exclusion of metaphors harbors the risk of figurative speech and that the riddle is greater and more complicated than the answer on the label. The attempts to recreate objects relating to fish using "non-fishy" means (Igor Makarevich told me that anything to do with fish would disturb the general atmosphere) result in the

1. Zhiguli is also the name of a car.
2. The Russian word for "take-up" ("priemnyi") resembles the Russian word for "radio" ("priemnik").
3. Fish boats with holes allowing water from nets to drain off.
4. The Russian word korma (pl. kormy, "stern") is a near-homonym of the word korm (pl. kormy, "(animal) food").

exhibition's unexpected "poetry," which derives from subtle shifts and inaccuracies. They create what, in poetics, is sometimes called "semantic assonance" or the emergence of associations; in Makarevich and Elagina's exhibition, these associations are sometimes verbal (similar names), sometimes purely plastic (similar forms).

This explains why the *Fish Exhibition* (which may have been an intuitive step) is so topical. By reconstructing socialist realism, it finally leaves it to distant history, so distant that not even its monuments survive. By reconstructing ideology, it returns things to their existence. It puts everything back where it belongs, recreates the fullness of meanings, and makes it possible for something different to exist.

This is why it is crucial that the "closed" *Fish Exhibition* opens—after all and comes out into the public space.



E. Elagina, I. Makarevich
Slits, 1990

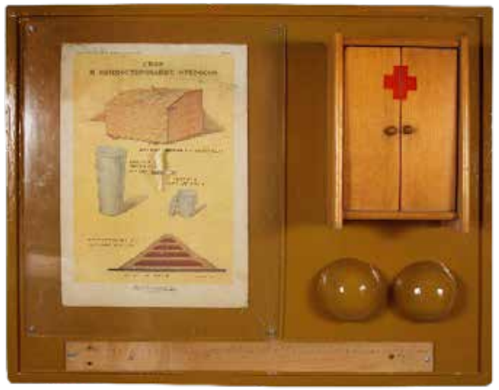
E. Elagina, I. Makarevich
Near the Pier in Kuibyshev, 1990

E. Elagina, I. Makarevich
The Washing of the Red Fish, 1990

E. Elagina, I. Makarevich
Fish, 1990

Elena Elagina
and Igor Makarevich's
work at *In Situ*
at the Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Vienna.
Snuders Hall, 2009

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Still Life–Fish, 1990



I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
At the Reception Point, 1990

Igor Makarevich

UNOKS, EMANCIPATED OBJECTS OF THE WORLD

The endless movement of creative being
has liberated will and reason from their
meaning to create a new meaning of
creative pictorial self-causes.
Konstantin Malevich, UNOVIS

Since the early 1990s, a glimmering of interest in the "otherworldly" side of traditional art can be observed in the work of the artist responsible for this current exhibition. "Otherworldly" here means reaching beyond the classically conceived, two-dimensional plane of art, whether it be canvas, paper or any other organic surface. The installations *The Sleep of Painting Produces Monsters* (1990) and *Within the Limits of the Beautiful* (1992) overcome the boundary between the viewer and the metaphysical space recognized as existing beyond the painter's canvas or the artist's "concoctions."

The project *Drawings of Old Soviet Masters* employs the analytical methods of Kazimir Malevich. However, in this case the artist examines samples of post-¬suprematist art, works by those Soviet artists who were never included in the main, official pantheon of socialist realism. Their primary meaning is released by means of a simple technique. The Russian word for drawing is risunok, which consists of two parts: RIS (which also means "rice," the grain that is incorporated in the object) and UNOK (a letter combination that resembles Malevich's favorite abbreviation, UNOVIS [the acronym for the association "Affirmers of the New Art"]. In the 1930s, Soviet artists, apparently for lack of other materials, used "lead pencils" (i.e., sharpened pieces of the soft metal) to draw. This technique is also "encrypted" in the objects by using actual pieces of lead.

The viewer can compare actual drawings by Soviet artists, which are included in the exhibition, with their metaphysical equivalents emancipated from the burden of will and reason and endowed with the new meaning of creative "selfcauses."

From the diaries of L.A. Yudin, student of K.S. Malevich:

Sept. 30, 1922. Petrograd

I have just understood the principle of cubist construction. A truly economical principle, not an esthetic one. Nothing superfluous. Clarity. Precision. These are the enormous virtues of K.S.'s konst[ruktivny] ris [unok] [const[ructive] draw[ing]]. It's easier to build after suprematism. And you feel much more clearly what is truly valuable. Now I understand where his ris comes from (I understood a little before, but today it's particularly clear).

Malevich o sebe. Sovremenniki o Maleviche. Pis'ma. Dokumenty. Vospominanii'a, vol. 2
Moscow: RA Publishers, 2004), p. 232.

I. Makarevich
From the *RIS-UNOK* series, 2000

I. Makarevich.
Drawings by the *Old Soviet Masters* series for the *Closed Fish Exhibition* project, 2000

Igor Makarevich

LETTERS OF OBLIVION

Just like *Closed Fish Exhibition* and *Life in the Snow*, the installation *The Writer's Tale* was inspired by a marginal publication from the turbulent 1930s: a tiny Profizdat booklet from 1938 entitled *How I Became a Writer*.

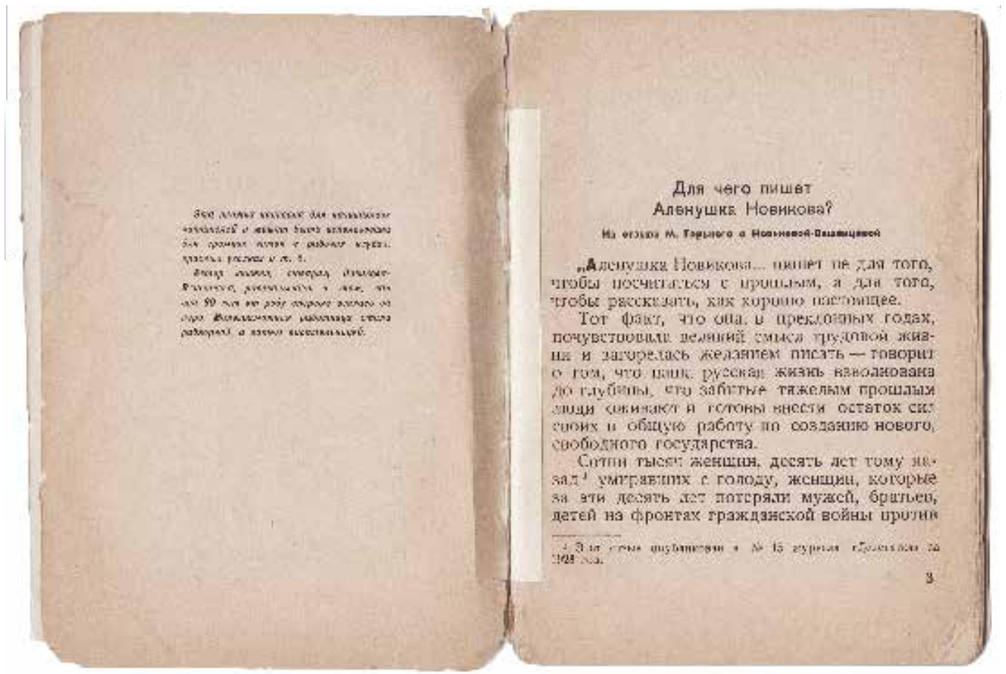
It tells the story of a certain Novikova-Vashentseva, an elderly worker who undergoes a personality change at a ripe old age. In a drunken fit of violence, her husband hits her on the head with a log, and this mutilation transforms the old woman from a battered and unhappy mother of a large family into a vigorous correspondent of the proletarian magazine *Delegatka* (Female Delegate). There is more to come. She goes on to write the autobiographical novel *Marinka's Life*, which bears a striking resemblance to Maxim Gorky's bestseller of the time, *Mother*. Despite or because of this, the great proletarian writer notices her and blesses her literary career.

At the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, Novikova-Vashentseva speaks on behalf of aspiring writers of all nations. I quote the first words of her address to Congress delegates: "I confess, comrades: to my great shame, I cannot speak eloquently and at length. Besides, my memory is poor..." (transcript of the congress, p. 209). An aspiring writer confessing to poor memory: this is the key to the whole story. After all, writing first emerged in order to help forget rather than remember. All ancient peoples kept the art of writing and reading a secret, considered unsafe for the uninitiated. The Russian saying "don't mend the clothing you're wearing, or you'll stitch up your memory" can be interpreted as a fear of putting stitches—runes, letters, lines of writing—onto yourself, thus sealing up the self in a fixed time. Novikova-Vashentseva learns to forget her past, turning her own life into a myth needed by the present. She is fulfilling a state order, for a victorious utopia badly needs a mechanism of oblivion.

Her simple words are spoken in the sacred language of the present. The world of memory is the realm of the dead. Thus, an old woman whose holy cross is the red five-pronged star, arguably becomes a Bolshevik Mother of God. Accordingly, we have placed her portrait into a massive wooden shrine. The birch log at its base is the magic wand responsible for her transfiguration. By the way, it is from this log that Buratino—the Soviet Pinocchio, an agent of the Great Utopia—is created in our project. Opposite, there is a wooden eagle with a golden key (another symbol from the Buratino story) and picturesque samples of Soviet avant-garde art in its victory over old art history.

The meaning of this installation—which precedes the central one, *Life in the Snow*—lies in the function of Oblivion when facing the immensity of total Cold.

I. Makarevich
From the project
The Writer's Tale, 1994

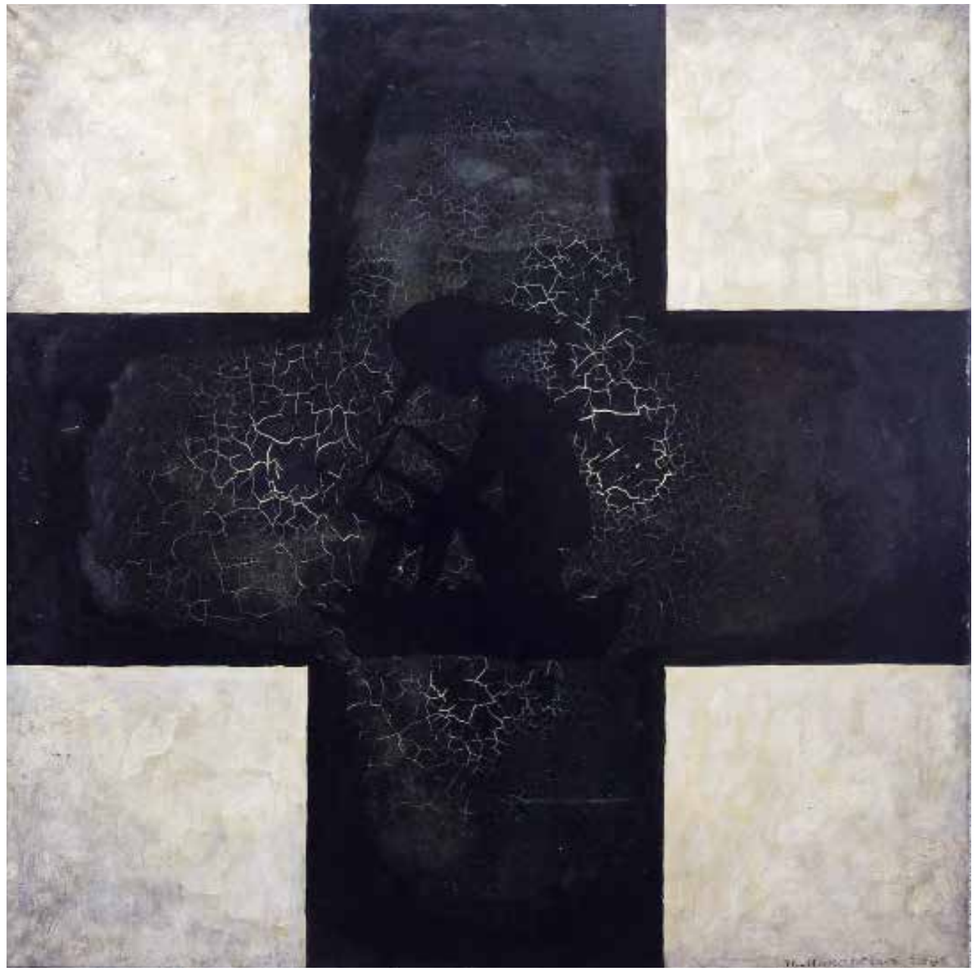


I. Makarevich
Letters of Oblivion, from the project
The Writer's Tale, 1994

Elena Elagina
and Igor Makarevich's *The Writer's Tale*, Central House of Artists, Moscow, 1994

I. Makarevich
Book of Fire assemblage
for the project *The Writer's Tale*, 1995

I. Makarevich
Buratino's Space Circle,
2003



I. Makarevich
Buratino's Space Cross,
2003

I. Makarevich
Untitled, 1993

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Malevich's Hut, 2003

Andrei Monastyrski

MALEVICH AS BURATINO'S HABITAT

There are many storylines to be found in Makarevich's new series. I will discuss a few that I found particularly interesting. First, the most fundamental and aesthetically intriguing one: an unexpected look at the relationship between sculpture (Buratino/Pinocchio) and painting (Malevich) through literature (the tale of the wooden creature). In this tale, the sacred is unexpectedly revealed behind, of all things, a painting—namely, a painted fireplace. Buratino pokes his nose through the canvas and reaches a door which leads him toward "real" exploits and fulfilling his destiny (fighting the evil puppet master, and so on). The "flat" cosmos of painting appears to be a mere obstacle in the way of the autonomous cosmos of sculpture, with its laws and tensions. (In actual fact, two-dimensional art has its own laws and its own cosmos). In pre-Duchamp esthetics, sculpture was considered less "iconic" than painting (after all, the latter was thought to derive, via icons and other religious art, from "magical" handprints and drawings on cave walls). The emergence of Duchamp's three-dimensional objects turned the context into a meta-sign (in philosophical literature, this notion emerged much earlier, but it only entered the esthetic realm with the works of Duchamp). Like anything of volume, sculpture is arguably more complex than "flat" painting. It is interesting that sculpture dominates in Western Christian churches, while in the Eastern/Orthodox tradition two-dimensional art (the icon) is much more important.

But this is not to suggest that Catholicism is more complex than Orthodox Christianity. After all, polytheist idols are sculptures, too. Rather, the two churches "correlate," their esthetic dominants shimmering through each other—just as Makarevich's Buratino (sculpture) shimmers through Malevich's work (painting). But in this wood-bound series, the intrigue is even more complex: all three artists invoked—Makarevich, Malevich, and Duchamp—are essentially Western and Catholic (not Protestant) in their mentality. Following his insights, Malevich kept trying to turn painting into sculpture. One might argue that his *Black Square* is an apophatic icon of sorts, but this work is not central; he had created his *Red Square* long before. The main reason for the fame of *Black Square* is that it lends itself to both Russian icon-based discourse and the Western tradition of religious local history and ethnography. Malevich remained drawn to volume, to urban architecture, ever since painting his 1903 *On the Boulevard* with

Elena Elagina
and Igor Makarevich's
Countdown at Moscow
Museum of Modern Art, 2021

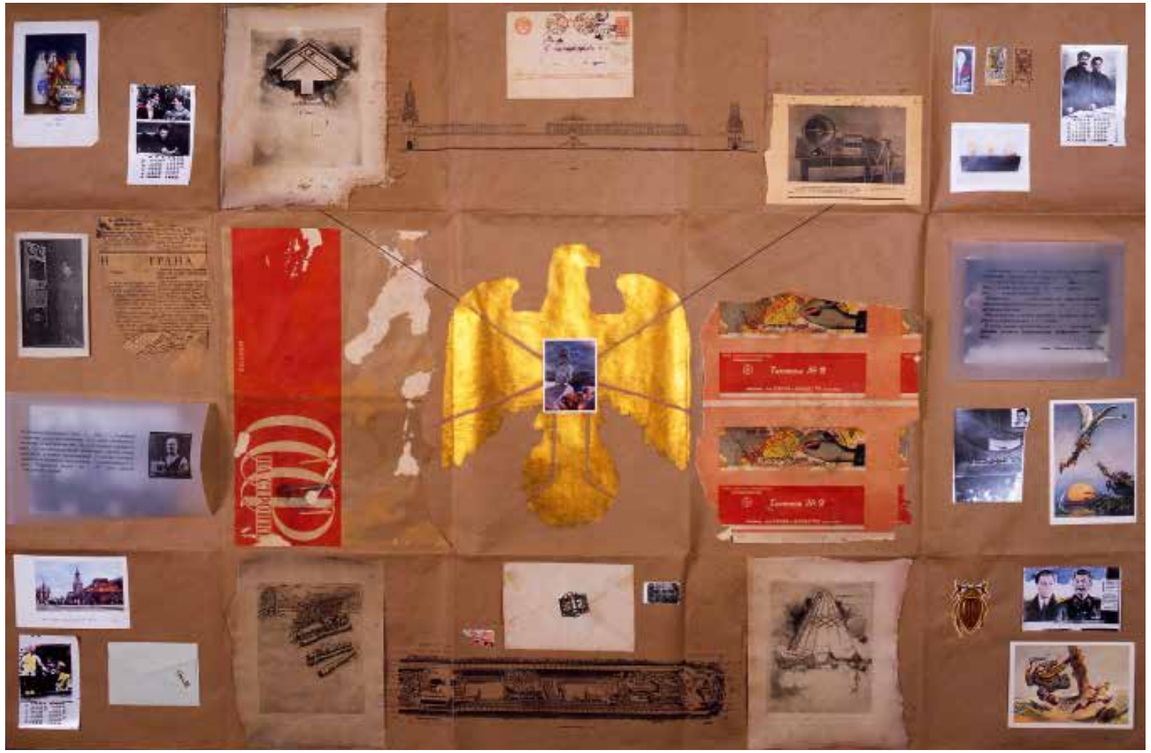
I. Makarevich
Buratino in the North,
1994

its motley little houses in the distance. You can see his love for the three-dimensional in his sculpture-like peasants and in his urbanistic cubist oeuvre, not to mention his architectons and his final work, a vertically placed coffin with the body of the architect of Russian "urbanization."

Makarevich's gesture toward Malevich's cubist works is quite different from, say, the mockery of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* engaged in by Malevich himself (*Partial Eclipse*, 1914; Mona Lisa crossed out in red) or by Duchamp (*L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919, Mona Lisa with a moustache). By behaving like two schoolboys scribbling over portraits in textbooks, these two urban classics were protesting not so much against Leonardo's authority as against the bizarre landscape behind Gioconda. If we look at it carefully, especially in a black-and-white reproduction, we see mountains and valleys that are strangely similar to Chinese images with their aerial perspective. Instead of pretty "Parisian" houses or Catholic churches, we see the countryside, a landscape oblivious to urbanization (in Leonardo's times, at least, and also in the 1910s and 1920s). But the nerve of Western culture has always been the city and its problems. In certain (arguably quite substantial) ways, Western artists always enjoyed less esthetic freedom than Far Eastern ones due to their engagement with social processes. They were as unfree as a schoolboy: all he can do against Newton's authority is to paint a moustache on his portrait in a textbook. For a Chinese artist, only technique matters; for a Western one, so does technology. Apart from artistic and esthetic techniques (which are not the same thing), the Western artist also considers machines, factories, and everything associated with urban life. This is how history played out—on the one side, the ancient Greek discourse on *techne*; on the other, the rejection of technical inventions in ancient China, so strange to the Western eye.

But let us return to Buratino and Makarevich. It's 1996. Moscow. Another spasm of urbanization. Complex informational "cubism." Buratino is not a particularly clever guy, as behoves a creature made from wood. A simple creature finds it easiest to navigate life using a single point of reference. For instance, Western civilization, the rooftops of Paris, all that jazz. But why navigate at all? Most of us aren't geologists or sailors. Most of us aren't going anywhere at all. Buratino is stuck in Malevich's cubism. Why would he need a point of reference?

Then again, we—the NOMA circle—have our own Buratino mythology. In 1986, in the preface to *Hierarchy* by Hieromonk Sergius, Sorokin and I wrote: "The worlds of impermanence consist of six spheres and three worlds. All these spheres and worlds are inhabited by rotten Buratinos. The largest Buratinos are eight in number. They are distributed according to the elements and trigrams. Thus, earth Buratinos have South Africa, Ruhr, etc. as their habitat, celestial Buratinos are distributed in California, Baikonur, the Dzerzhinsky district of Moscow, etc. Rusty metal Buratinos are widespread in industrial areas of developed countries and in the Kuzbass." Expanding and enriching this theme, Makarevich shows us the life of Buratinos in other habitats, such as the snow. He explores their role in the fate of a writer (the installation *The Writer's Tale*, together with Elena Elagina), their relations with wooden and iron eagles, their sex life, etc. Now, we are facing a new adventure—Malevich as Buratino's habitat.



I. Makarevich
Collage for the project
Life in the Snow, 1995

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Wooden Eagle with the Golden Key,
from the project *Life in the Snow*,
2003

I. Makarevich
Assemblage for the project
Life in the Snow, 1995

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Frost-Bitten Eagle, from
the project *Life in the Snow*,
Marble Palace, State Russian
Museum, St. Petersburg, 2003

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Frost-Bitten Eagle, from the project
Life in the Snow, State Tretyakov
Gallery, Moscow, 2005

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Book of Snow, from the project
Life in the Snow, 2003

Ekaterina Degot

THE TRAGIC END OF LIFE IN THE SNOW

The plot of the exhibition develops in a remarkably clear fashion, much like a classic tragedy. The first room is called *The Writer's Tale*. A photograph in a huge wooden frame: the viewer is pierced by the intimidatingly enlightened gaze of an elderly peasant woman, her hand resting on a book. An imposing wooden eagle spreads its wings, the golden key to happiness in its talons. On the shelf, there are logs representing the transformation stages of Buratino, the Soviet Pinocchio: before our eyes, the New Man is triumphantly born. Part two is entitled *Life in the Snow*. The eagle seems the same but is now made of metal. There he stands, all alone, gradually covered by layer after layer of hoarfrost. Life is freezing away. The golden key has not helped. On the walls, we see twenty ancient-looking engravings depicting snowshoes, primitive sleds, ice houses, and other objects necessary in the glacial cold. The excitement of moving toward the future has cooled.

What all this is about does not need to be explained to post-Soviet viewers. The great era witnessed by them has remained in their memory not only as a set of vivid plastic details but also as a gradually fading motif. To embody it today, you need art that is temporal rather than spatial: the stylization of forms signaling (albeit not encompassing) sots art becomes impossible when forms no longer develop. The genre of visual art that can unfold in time is the installation, the most literary of contemporary arts. This is not a plastic construction of something new but an intellectual reconstruction of what has been, complicated by a multitude of associations. What Makarevich and Elagina are doing here must be called the archeology of culture.

An installation is always a text about a text, and in this case, the concrete source of the whole exhibition is texts found, literally or figuratively, in a garbage dump. One such find is an autobiographical novel by Elena Novikova-Vashentseva, a writer from the "simple people," who was created by Gorky in the 1930s much like a Kabbalist might create a Golem. "The awakening of genius" began with a blow to the head with a log, sudden like a stroke of lightning, inflicted by her violent husband. "I didn't feel well afterwards, so they retired me. There I was, all lost and sad, with nothing to do. And suddenly I felt like writing." The second text is an instruction for Red Army soldiers published in the autumn of 1941: "You can dig a snow cave in a large drift with tightly packed snow. The tunnel leading into the cave should be as long as possible and end at ground level... Winter is dangerous only for those who are not used to it and do not know how to adapt to life in the snow."

The texts themselves have such a fantastic force of being that there can be no question of competing with their authenticity, let alone of treating it ironically. The line of contemporary artistic consciousness represented not only by Makarevich and Elagina but also by the writer Vladimir Sorokin does not aspire to rational description or analysis. Rather, it seeks to fulfil the task that culture itself seems to assign, a task that can never be completely fulfilled. After all, both the book by the old log-traumatized peasant woman and the instructions to Red Army soldiers on how to properly bury their future remains in the snow belong not to the sphere of professional culture but to that layer between it and reality which in the 20th century produced phenomena so striking and bizarre that post-totalitarian generations might well be envious. Arguably the only comparable art product is the writings of Platonov, whose name immediately comes to mind in the atmosphere of this exhibition.

Makarevich and Elagina are mythological artists. Their installations harbor the heavy spirit of a romantic fairy tale with a bad ending. They describe the world of ideology at the most fundamental level, the level of survival. Here, the locally exotic (primitive sleds and snowshoes) appears as the primordially universal. Wood, snow, fish—these are the ur-elements in Makarevich's and Elagina's universe. The exceptional, the wrong, the strange becomes the most essential. It was the combination of the universal and the marginal, the important and the insignificant that constituted the charm and glory of reflective 1970s art from which Makarevich and Elagina emerged. They were both members of the legendary conceptualist art group Collective Actions. By now, most major representatives of this art form have left Russia, de jure or de facto, and the rest consider themselves retired. But Makarevich and Elagina are still standing guard, waiting for a relief commander with enough historical significance. So far, none is in view. There may be some traces of weariness and decadence in their installations, but it is the decadence of a great era that they are bidding farewell, infinitely and utterly pessimistically.

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Frost-Bitten Eagle, part
of the exhibition *Countdown*
at Moscow Museum
of Modern Art, 2021

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Snowshoe, from the project
Life in the Snow, 2003

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Pages from the *Life in the Snow*
catalogue, 2003

The installation *Mushrooms of the Russian Avant-Garde* at Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich's exhibition *Countdown,* Moscow Museum of Modern Art, 2021

The installation *Mushrooms of the Russian Avant-Garde* at Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich's exhibition *Within the Limits of the Beautiful,* State Tretyakov Gallery, 2005

Anton Gorlenko

A MATTER OF MUSHROOMS

On the face of it, or rather by the sound of it, Pagan as a title in Russian brings to mind not the English word for polytheism but a common Russian name for inedible mushrooms, *poganka* (pronounced "paganka"). However, as we shall see, the English association is not as wrong as it may sound. The artists, the most informed source, trace Pagan to the name of the region and the state (also known as Bagan) that once existed on the territory of contemporary Burma, and which was flooded with sacred objects bearing a corresponding energetic charge.

This deeply coded geographical name produces an association with ordinary toadstools rather than with the history of ancient oriental spirituality. Having foreseen the triggering of this mechanism based on primary phonetic association, Makarevich and Elagina cunningly follow the collective reaction and produce an illustrated catalogue, or a guide, for mushroom gathers—their own version of it, though.

Their version is as follows: mushrooms, being important components of many ancient religions and beliefs, are coded in human mentality as catalysts of all kinds of revolutionary activity (both in art and in politics). This seems to be true, since every post-revolutionary situation is comparable to "mushroom hallucinosis," a state unlike the sphere of the previous (normal) life. This theory requires skilfully arranged proof. In their search for it, Makarevich and Elagina continue their activity as archeologists and pathfinders. This time, their research was based on the architectural and cultural space of Moscow, the history of avant-garde creation, and the Russian revolution.

An ancient state in Burma and toadstools from the Moscow region are but an introduction to the theme developed in photo arrangements and 3D objects. Elements of proof, singled out by the creative duet from the polyphony of the urban text, resemble mushrooms that sprouted at various periods out of the "spores of old meanings" in the Moscow space. A panel with pretty fungi in art nouveau style decorates Lenin's desk in a memorial museum, and a mushroom-like cap (exactly like Lenin's) finds itself on the head of a worker in a sculptural group on a Moscow metro substation building. Attempts to prove the mushroom nature of Vladimir Lenin have already been made in the Russian artistic sphere.

The obvious abundance of mushrooms and fungomorphic forms in the urban landscape gives the creative gesture the ability to cure society of a collective delirium of which patients were not aware. "Healthy" citizens who acquired new knowledge and reference points would go on to examine the white spots of a fly agaric resembling Malevich's architectons and stay for hours at the corner of the Patriarch's Ponds gazing, their heads craned, at a newly mangled yellow-and white twelve-apartment building. A giant stylized mushroom and Vladimir Tatlin's *Monument to the 3rd International* look rather convincing at the top of it.

Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich's work as part of *Making Worlds,* Venice Biennale, 2009

Igor Makarevich

AMANITA MUSCARIA: LOOKING BACK MILLENNIA

Pagan: the first Burmese state in the 11-13th centuries.
Also, a city in Burma on the Irrawaddy river. Buddhist religious centre. Founded in 850.
In the Middle Ages, capital of the state of the same name. Known for its numerous cult constructions, including the Shwezigon Pagoda (11th century).
Soviet Encyclopedic Dictionary

Despite the differences in the linguistic and economic structures of the peoples inhabiting the current territory of Russia, they have one thing in common: since time immemorial, most tribes have used the hallucinogenic amanita muscaria, better known as fly agaric, to achieve altered states of consciousness. With over fifty varieties, this mushroom is to be found on all continents except South America and Australia.

In his monumental two-volume monograph *Mushrooms, Russia, and History*, the American mycologist R.G. Wasson disputes the claim that the use of fly agaric mushrooms as a drug began around 10,000 years ago. He contends that it actually started much earlier, near the end of the Ice Age, as the fungus shared its habitat with birch and pine trees that covered the Eurasian plains just after the glacial retreat.

The wealth of anthropological evidence provided by Wasson and reviewed in his book clearly confirms the crucial role played by the plant in the lives of the indigenous peoples in this geographical area.

Two anthropologists, Jochelson and Bogoras, members of the North Pacific Expedition organized by the American Museum of Natural History to study the peoples of the coastal areas of Siberia, also wrote about fly agaric and its uses (in 1905 and 1910 respectively). As a rule, the mushrooms were collected in August; only young girls were allowed to pick and dry them. For fear of poisoning, the Koryaks never ate them fresh but dried them in the morning sun. Women were not allowed to swallow any, but they would chew them and keep them in their mouths for lengthy periods.

The alkaloids contained in fly agaric cause poisoning, hallucinations, and addiction. One of the hallucinogenic effects is that nearby objects become either very large (macropsia) or very small (micropsia). Episodes of extreme agitation are followed by moments of deep depression. Unlike other hallucinogens, amanita muscaria also leads to physical hyperactivity. It was used for particular sacred, medicinal, and ritual purposes: to communicate with supernatural forces, to predict the future, to find the cause of an ailment, and for pleasure during feasts.

Some tribes, such as the Chukchi, were convinced that mushrooms were "another tribe." Under the influence, they would always see visions of men—precisely the same number of men as the number of mushrooms eaten. The tundra people believed these creatures would take you by the hand and travel the world with you. They would show the mushroom eater real objects and spirits, following tangled paths and visiting places inhabited by the dead.

An interesting point in the use of mushrooms is the secondary employment of urine. For example, the Koryaks discovered that the hallucinogenic properties of the mushrooms appear in the urine of men who have taken of fly agaric. The man, leaving his dwelling, would relieve himself in a specially prepared wooden container which contained mushrooms. The process was repeated five times until the mushrooms took on the necessary properties. Siberian shepherds may have noticed the link between the properties of mushroom and their presence in urine by observing the behaviour of their reindeer. When the animals ate mushrooms, they developed a craving for shepherds' urine and would often approach their dwellings to drink it. Every Koryak man carried a sealskin vessel which he used to store his urine. This vessel was a means to lure deer who had gone off to remote pastures. They would return for a taste of urine-soaked snow.

Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich's work at *In Situ* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Bruegel Hall, 2009

Samoyed forest shamans would eat mushrooms when they were completely ripe and had dried out. It was a dangerous business: if the spirits that inhabited the mushrooms were not well-disposed toward the eater, it was believed that they could kill him. Like the Chukchi, the Samoyeds reported that man-like creatures appeared to them in visions. According to Karjalainen, music was an important element in the Vashugan mushroom ritual. A peculiar ceremony of eating mushrooms existed among the Khanty and Ket peoples, two other Siberian indigenous groups. They would fill the shaman's tipi-like tent with the smoke of smouldering resinous tree bark; the shaman would eat nothing for a day, then take three to seven caps of fly agaric on an empty stomach before falling asleep. When he woke up, he would narrate what the Spirit had revealed to him through its messengers. The shaman would be greatly agitated, shouting and trembling.

Evidently, a culture associated with the use of amanita muscaria existed everywhere in the southern and western regions of present-day Russia.

The struggle between Christianity and paganism pushed the use of fly agaric further and further northeast. Even so, for thousands of years, the spiritual development of the peoples inhabiting this colossal territory was based on the ecstatic states associated with the consumption of fly agaric. In our view Russia, which has become the arena of all kinds of socio-historical experiments and the Russian character with its immensity and lack of restraint are phenomena connected to a bright-red mushroom, which still grows abundantly in any natural environment marked by the symbiosis of birch and pine.

Much of this essay is based on information from *Hallucinogens: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* by Marlene Dobkin de Rios.

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Pagan Tables, 2003

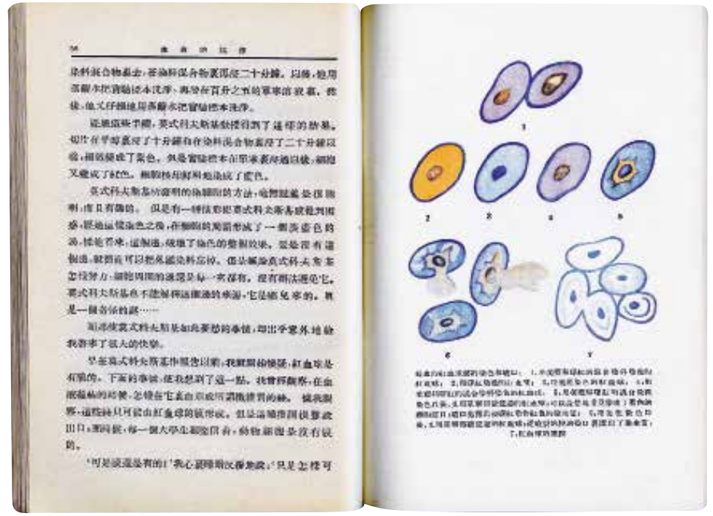
The installation *Mushrooms of the Russian Avant-Garde* at Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich's exhibition *Countdown*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, 2021

From Elena Elagina
and Igor Makarevich's project
Mushrooms of the Russian Avant-Garde, 2008

From Elena Elagina's project *Laboratory of Great Acts*, 1996

Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich's installation *Gerantomachy* for the project *Shizokitai: Hallucination in Power*, Construction Pavilion, Exhibition of National Economic Achievements, Moscow, 1990

Materials for Elena Elagina's project *Laboratory of Great Acts,* 1996



From Elena Elagina's project
Laboratory of Great Acts, 1996

Elena Elagina's installation *Laboratory of Great Acts* at the exhibition *Within the Limits of the Beautiful,* State Tretyakov Gallery, 2005

Ekaterina Bobrinskaya

ARS CHEMICA AND CONTEMPORARY ART

Olga Lepeshinskaya, who for many years headed the Living Matter Department at the Institute of Experimental Biology of the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences, belonged to the poorly researched Order of Marxist Alchemists, whose members (including A. Bogdanov, I. Michurin, and T. Lysenko) had embarked on a quest to create "new forms of living organisms" with revolutionary fearlessness and childlike naivety. As an Old Bolshevik, Lepeshinskaya imagined she could find mysterious "living matter" capable of producing cells and new organisms in an ordinary chicken egg. Her *prima materia*—that is, the chaotic substance that gives rise to all forms—was always at her fingertips. She would be making some meatballs, and the world's abysses would open up before her every time that golden liquid—that magical magnesia—poured out of a broken eggshell. The aura of inexplicable fear that has accompanied stories of the Royal Art of Transmutation since times immemorial also surrounds the theoretical constructions of "scientific" alchemists prepared to violate the innermost precepts of human rationality. There is no getting away from scientific magic. Irony might provide some distance, but never enough. Uncannily reminiscent turns of phrase and thought processes keep cropping up all over the place. After all, alchemy itself has not dissolved into chemistry, but has found other forms of existence, for example, in the political theories of the people who carried out the French Revolution.

The language and universal symbolism of the Royal Art, woven into the fabric of contemporary culture, can both collapse meaning and create paradoxical spaces. The practice of breaking down borders, which opens the road to the mechanics of transformations, was tried out by the chief alchemist of contemporary art, Marcel Duchamp, in the early twentieth century. Today, it has been supplemented by the discovery of an esthetic alkahest: a universal solvent. With its help, contemporary artists are able to

Elena Elagina's project *Laboratory of Great Acts*, 1996

From Elena Elagina's project
Laboratory of Great Acts, 1996

Elena Elagina's installation
Laboratory of Great Acts,
at the exhibition *ŽEN d'ART*,
Moscow Museum
of Modern Art, 2010

construct spaces which are both absolutely illusionary and absolutely authentic, much like the universe enclosed in a hermetically sealed alchemical retort, where the processes of calcination and distillation, sublimation and fermentation alternate in a chaotic whirl. The elements constituting the matter of contemporary art enable it to condense to the weight of stone and to melt into the blur of writing. The contours of all forms are unstable and fluid. No boundaries exist, for instance, between the lofty delirium of alchemical engravings in ancient manuscripts and faded visual aids that bored many a generation of schoolchildren. There is no opposition between the living and the lifeless, the significant and the insignificant. Everything merges in a symbiosis strangely resembling that very "living matter" from which everything can be moulded, be it history, science, religion, ethics or esthetics.

If an alchemist's magisterium was unsuccessful, he remained at the dangerous "black" stage known as *nigredo*. But if he succeeded in advancing, allying with the "secret actor" of alchemical work, he could slip away from the final plunge into mental chaos and the chaos of matter.

An artist who risks working with the prima *materia* of contemporary culture must be able to clear some space in its turbulent stream for distanced contemplation. Elena Elagina has succeeded in this. She organizes the mental and physical space of her work so as to describe and reveal mental structures that have receded into the depths of consciousness, so as to make visible—in concrete and credible forms—the unconscious mechanics of the chemical theater that is contemporary art. By outlining contours and drawing boundaries, she manages to construct a system of reference points, enabling us to navigate within mannerist chaos in strict compliance with the norms of classical esthetics.

HOMO LIGNUM

Lignomania
Homo Lignum
Borisov's Diary
Story of the Wardrobe

Igor Makarevich

LIGNOMANIAC

When my hand touches the surface of wood, when I pat lightly its springy substance or gently feel the coarse bulges of the bark, warmth pours into me, filling me with sunlight, all my troubles and fears disappear in sweet mist, and I am dissolved in iridescent radiance.

This is one of my earliest memories: father brought me to the factory where he worked. I enter a room (a hall, I guess), I'm confused by the multitude of strangers, by the sounds of various machines. And then, in this alien uncomfortable world, I suddenly see a golden stream pouring from the hands of a tall gloomy man. Sparks are flying everywhere around him. My head spins, and I enter what seems to be a pillar of bright light. I came to, several days later, bandaged, in the hospital, feeling an unbearable ache in my head: I had gotten under the knife of the factory's chipping machine and was seriously injured.

I have never had friends; my friends were trees. Dwarves and giants, knotty and slender, they understood, loved, and protected me. The flesh taken off the tree does not die; a shaving and a plank are still alive until they find their home in the orange heat of fire. All my life I spoke with fire logs and boards, caressed timbers, whispered to tiny coals.

When I was young, I found a large, strong pinewood box at a dump, and I have been sleeping in it ever since. When it freezes outside, I'm not cold in it even without blankets, and it brings coolness in the summer heat. When the night closes my eyes, my box rocks me like a magic ship and takes me beyond the clouds where everything shines with golden sunlight.

March 1996

Igor Makarevich's
Lignomania at XL Gallery,
Moscow, 1996

Ekaterina Degot

A TALE OF AN ELDERLY BURATINO

"Lignomaniac"—a fan of all things wooden—is a neologism coined by Igor Makarevich and a protagonist invented by him. He appears in a series of almost identical photographs: a striped cap, a long nose. An elderly, naked Buratino sits immersed in his thoughts, while his monologue (written by Makarevich) recounts the origins of his mania. In the center, we see the object of his desire: a stump forking into two trunks, cracked in the middle, and prostrated in a gynecological chair.

Makarevich's new work is provocative enough to be interpreted in the categories of bodily aesthetics; however, its theme is not physiology but the essence of representation. Still, we cannot help but read Buratino's nose as a penis, especially as his face has no other features: a mask covers his eyes and mouth; vision and speech are negated. The meanings keep shifting and floating: several times in the catalogue, we see a finger taking on the shape of a penis. Thus, Buratino's nose is also an index finger. He cannot see, but he can point. The pictures have darkened edges, as if we were looking at the Lignomaniac through a keyhole. A voyeur's vision is akin to the act of pointing, of naming (after all, a neologism forms the core of the exhibition). Back in his *Fish Exhibition* installation (in collaboration with Elena Elagina), Makarevich proceeded from names: the two artists had created new works to (mis)fit the names of missing socialist realist paintings. Thus re-interpreted, each title was left hanging in the air. Another object that comes to mind is Finger by Andrei Monastyrski (founder of the group Collective Actions, which Makarevich was part of), another exercise in pointing: if you put your finger through a hole, you can see it pointing back at you. In the conceptualist framework, this attention to pointing is a self-parody of sorts: after all, conceptualism downgrades the image to a sign. Classical Western conceptualism is about interchangeability, reductionism, freedom, and equality—of a chair, a photo of a chair, a text about a chair. There, art is a transparent way of communicating, of exchanging meanings. Moscow conceptualism, on the other hand, is built on irreducibility, incomprehensibility, on the violation of communication.

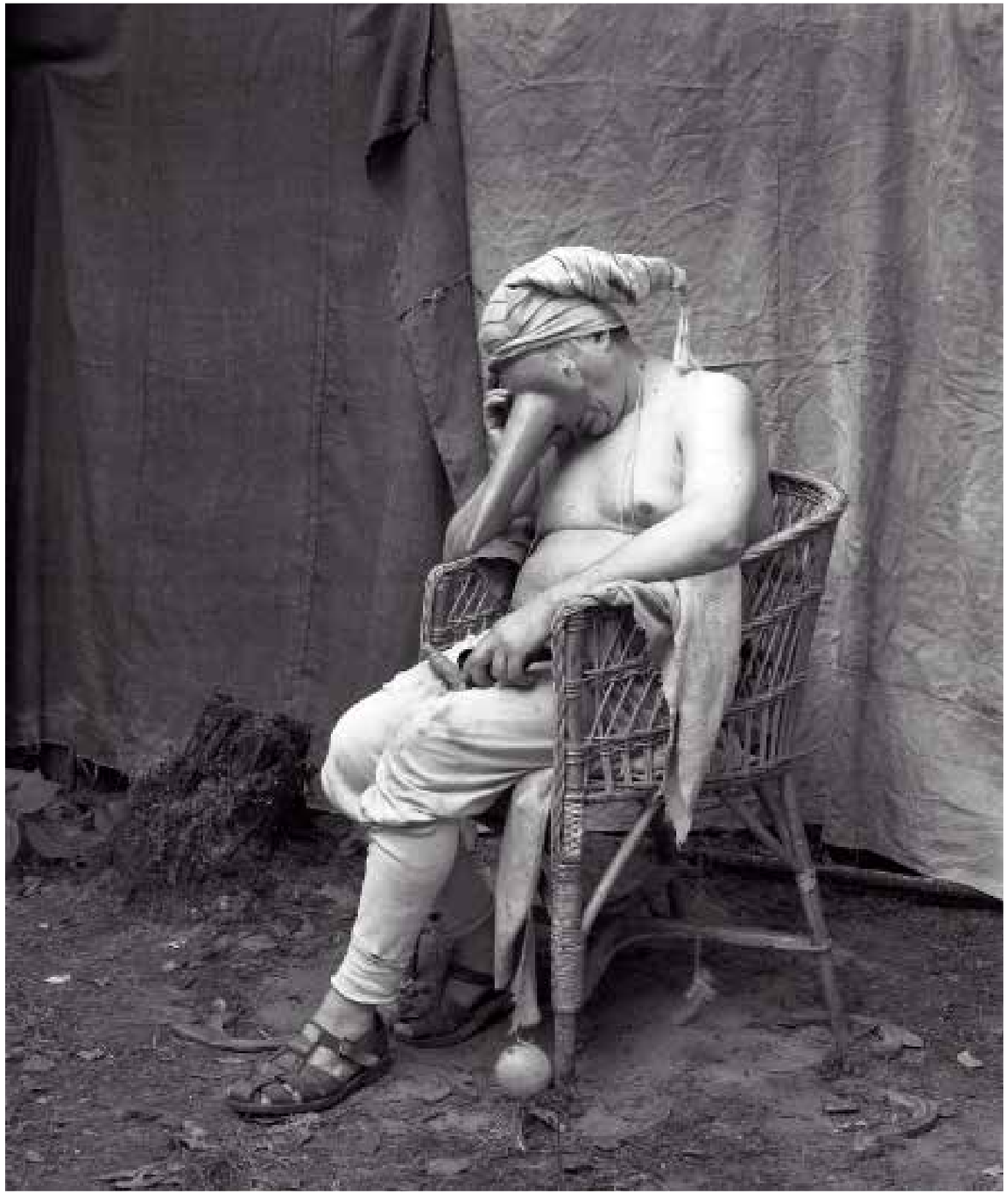
In Monastyrski's *Finger*, as in Makarevich's photographs, subject and object keep switching places. Who is looking at whom? Who is pointing at whom? Who is Oedipus, who is the Sphinx? Both are asking this and neither gets an answer.

Moscow conceptualism, about which so much has been argued in recent years, does work with texts and ideologies, but it is not what is usually understood as conceptualist art. It is just a self-appellation, like Viennese actionism or Fluxus; the reference to conceptualism only confuses. It would make more sense to call the movement post-surrealist—an art form working not only with the totality of language (the current condition of all contemporary art) but with the totality of desire.

This does not nullify the radical role of sots art but changes the emphasis: the prehistory of the movement would focus not on early Russian pop art, but, for instance, on the early works of Vladimir Yankilevsky (who combines eroticism with technology, much like Francis Picabia) or on Ülo Sooster.

Surrealism is often interpreted as the liberation of repressed imagination; it might well, as is sometimes argued, have played a particularly emancipatory role for Moscow "conceptualist"/ unofficial art. However, Moscow conceptualism was formed not against the background of the triumph and banalization of abstract painting (as in temporarily parallel Western art) but against the triumph and banalization of socialist realism, which itself (at least in the Stalinist period) was an arguably surrealistic art of total desire and total collective eros. Therefore, artists constructed the subconscious in the subconscious, trying to find a place for the individual. This art is defined by constant duality, a rotation between the super-subconscious of the majority and the personal subconscious. The artist constantly reinterprets collective myths as personal, indulging in the utopia of re-individualizing the unconscious.

The comparison to surrealism is not an insult: I do not mean trashy imitations of Dali's paintings. Surrealism, as it is understood today, is primarily not a system of fantastic images but the first movement to question affirmative art. "This is not a pipe," claimed Magritte under the painting of a pipe. Just like Moscow conceptualism, surrealism integrates the critique of the image into the image itself.



I. Makarevich
Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov,
photogravure from
the series *Homo Lignum*,
1998–2000

In surrealism, the image is the object of desire, which inevitably fails; the work of art becomes a monument to this failure, this inability to master reality. This is why motifs of eroticism and death are so often intertwined, and, as Dali put it, images of desire appear in images of terror. Some examples of contemporary, post-surrealist art include Cindy Sherman (depicting herself as a terrifying sex doll) or Paul McCarthy (creating video performances in which he cooks or has sex or murders someone wearing a rubber Pinocchio mask).

Moscow conceptualism features a large number of post-surrealist works, many of them by Monastyrski and the group Inspection Medical Hermeneutics. Makarevich and Elagina constantly work with what surrealism called a "find" (trouvaille), defined as a response to the unconscious desires of the finder (Breton bought his finds at a flea market; Makarevich gets his from a junkyard). The blind, bird-headed Lignomaniac is close to Max Ernst's Loplop, endowed with surrealistic "blind vision." The Lignomaniac's story about his childhood contains a father figure, a castration metaphor, and everything a psychoanalyst might wish for. The fact that lignomania made him wear the mask of Buratino can be interpreted as mimicry (a favorite surrealist motif). Finally, Makarevich closely relates to surrealism as a critique of reality. In his work, every image is a tombstone engraving; the death of the object is integrated into the image as a radical form of its critique. In his new project, he postulates a "survival aesthetic," with the very word "survival" pointing to the presumption of death. His world is reminiscent of Platonov's: as the Lignomaniac confesses, his love of wood made him sleep in a "big, sturdy pine box" all his life.

Lately, Moscow art has appealed more and more openly to surrealism. Let's consider, for instance, Prigov's evolution from sots art to installations with huge bleeding "eyes" and Sorokin's new play, in which he polemicizes with the reductionist and arguably enlightenment-drawn utopia of sots art, affirming the incurability of the subconscious. Alexander Brener's proclamations, too, increasingly allude to early Breton, Bataille, and Antonin Artaud (sometimes as direct citations). Thus, a consensus in the new Moscow art is quite possible, at least one based on surrealism.

I. Makarevich
Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov's Dwelling, photo from the series *Homo Lignum*, 1998–2000

I. Makarevich
Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov's Dwelling, photo from the series *Homo Lignum*, 1998–2000

Andrei Monastyrski

MAKAREVICH'S LIGNOMANIA

If we consider the installation spaces constructed by contemporary artists as a sacralization of mundane (mostly communal and urban) life, then this genre forms a metaphysical architecture arguably inspired by religious buildings of very different traditions, ranging from tombs and druidic structures to the temples of any modern confession and the assembly halls of political parties. Installations can be small, mounted on walls or in display windows or they can occupy entire buildings or even giant open spaces like Christo's works. I do not think it makes sense to establish a hierarchical scale here, nor to consider installations in terms of degrees of archaism. After all, esthetics in any genre deals with the same thing: the secularization of cultic, magical consciousness. In this particular case, we are dealing with the transformation of ritual spaces into contemplative ones, often with fewer details than in other genres of fine art. Installations are arguably a question of the space itself rather than of what is exhibited in it. More often than not, the viewer feels this way, and if the objects and structure of an installation do not obscure the main subject—the space itself—the overall impression is positive. This effect is comparable to the ambience of an event, an experience. It has no spatial limitation, only a temporal one: something is everywhere, all around me, inside me, and far away.

An experience begins and then passes. That is to say, an installation artist uses space as a tool, and the result is something situated in time, which in itself is an esthetic (and not just an artistic) act. Angels, seraphim, and cherubs are clearly heavenly powers, but the sky is fleeting and these sacred figures can suddenly turn into different types of illumination. Such surprises, shifting and "perverse" signs constitute the objects and details of an installation. In *Lignomania*, for instance, it is easy enough to see something akin to a Catholic reliquary, an altar of photographs in the style of an Orthodox iconostasis (a wall of icons and religious paintings), where a character from a literary fairy tale suddenly reveals his druidic nature. But the esthetic secret that makes this installation an important event consists not so much in all this but in the unexpected choice of material: though the installation purports to be about wood, Makarevich deals not with a log but with photographs—with negatives, to be precise. He processes them, just as one processes coarser materials (such as wood). For me, it is in this perversive technicism, the ratio of processing degrees (and not the literary or ideological themes of the details) that make up the space-time event of the *Lignomania* installation.

I. Makarevich
Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov's Dwelling, photo from the series *Homo Lignum*, 1998–2000

Igor Makarevich

BORISOV THE VISIONARY

The project *Homo Lignum, Issues of Physiology and Burial Survival* emerged in 1996. The first step was the exhibition *Lignomania*, which opened at XL Gallery in March 1996.

The project's essence then evolved over time. In 1998, in sunny and picturesque Umbria, a gloomy character was born: Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov, complete with "selected passages" from his diary. While in these notes, Borisov opens the door to the darkest regions of his self, in everyday life he remains the modest and inconspicuous accountant of a furniture factory. He might be included in the gallery of "little" people whose lineage starts with Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin from Gogol's *The Overcoat*.

The diary text juxtaposes Eastern and Western modernist discourses. This juxtaposition is framed by two symbols: on the one hand, the protagonist is called Nikolai in memory of Nikolai Gogol; on the other, the text ends with a slightly modified final entry from Franz Kafka's diary.

Borisov attempts to escape reality and enter the world of the Woods; he imagines himself to be made of wood or able to transform into wood through some titanic effort. The gynecological chair is a reference to "breathing machines" and various torture instruments with which he tries to change his flesh. Thomas Mann once said that the world of the soul is the world of disease. In the installation, we are surrounded by Borisov's disease. On the surface, medically speaking, it can be described as a sadomasochistic rite using the image of Buratino/Pinocchio. But the story of his soul, reconstructed from fragmentary diary entries, full of contradictions and darkness, combines extreme crudeness and refinement of perception, ascesis and shamelessness. This story is a mystery to be solved by everyone who encounters it.

March 2000

I. Makarevich
Borisov's Bed. Object at *In Situ* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Van Dyck Hall, 2009

I. Makarevich
Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov, photo from the series *Homo Lignum*, 1998–2000

I. Makarevich
Slave Girl, 2000

I. Makarevich
Buratino's Skull, 1998

Vitaly Patsukov

IGOR MAKAREVICH, *HOMO LIGNUM*

Igor Makarevich's project *Homo Lignum* continues his figurative and visual research into the social mythology of human archetypes and cultural traditions. In his previous artistic reflections, Makarevich explored the humanization of a wooden puppet—Buratino—revealing the human in the non-human and the artistic in impossible, "wooden" forms of existence. In this project, he now explores the reverse process: the transformation of the individual under certain social conditions, the destruction of human nature or rather its transition into other, "wooden" dimensions.

Homo Lignum belongs to the genre of social dystopias in the tradition of Orwell and Zamyatin, but built on the mythologization of personal life. Its philosophical core is the fate of a fictional protagonist, Nikolai Borisov, whose life coincided with a period of Soviet totalitarianism when all things human were questioned, condemned, concealed or destroyed. Borisov describes his life in a diary and a visual commentary (drawings, schemes, photographs) as a mutation of human physiology and mentality into the substance of a tree, referring to Nikolai Fyodorov's philosophical ideas about the endless transformation of the human body after death, and David Copperfield magic practices. His texts are endowed with archetypal images—matrices and models, the magical world of the forest. The style of Soviet classics such as Konstantin Paustovsky, Vitaly Bianki, and Alexei Tolstoy shimmers through this prose, paradoxically combined with the mythologies of Franz Kafka and Michel Houellebecq.

Igor Makarevich's *The Land of Dreaming Grasses* is a multimedia, multidimensional, mythical image in which the personality and its sociogenetic changes transcend the borders of the post-Soviet social space. It becomes a universal (or at least a pan-European) problem of contemporary human mutation, a crucial issue for most actors of contemporary culture, from Ilya Kabakov to Matthew Barney. Makarevich's visual philosophy must be seen in the deeper context of cultural memory, presenting to our consciousness the archetypes of tree cosmogenesis, the magical roots of mandrake, and the creative vine of alchemists.

Igor Makarevich's
Borisov Museum at Atlas Sztuki Gallery, Lodz, 2015

I. Makarevich
Borisov's Icon, 1998

Anastasia Kotyleva

A CHARACTER BRANCHING OUT

Igor Makarevich's project *Homo Lignum* has a longstanding history. It began with the *Lignomania* exhibition (XL Gallery, 1996), based on the confession of a character who was morbidly obsessed with trees. The "Lignomaniac" appeared in a series of photographs—an elderly man dressed in Buratino's stripy cap and a long-nosed mask, which he appears to have put on to come closer to the state of lignification. Hereafter, Makarevich creates another series of texts and installations, in each of which he re-gathers and re-invents the story of this character. The name and detailed biography of the character appeared in 1998–1999. The artist wrote several texts signed with this name and simulating a personal diary. He presented them to the viewers as *Excerpts from the Notes by Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov, or the Secret Life of Trees*.

From the pseudo-historical reference preceding the notes, one learns that Borisov was born in Moscow in 1927, worked as an accountant at a woodworking plant, and lived in a communal flat. The main plot of the diaries is a story of insanity or of a mystical epiphany of the character. Nikolai Borisov realizes that he is not like other people; that inside him grows a special tree, which influences his sensory organs, enabling him to feel and understand more, to penetrate the key secrets of the world order. Obsessed with the ultimate desire to turn into a tree, he invents his own system of rituals and prayers. Among the main attributes of his eroticized mysteries is the Pinocchio mask. In a small gallery room, there are catalogues of previous projects by Makarevich, in which the image of a lignified man has been formed. By looking at those catalogues, we can trace the character's gradual emergence.

Borisov is a miserable man who fails to fit into society, feels scared of the Soviet repressive state, of dogs, the authorities, neighbors, even crows. He flees from this unbearable world into the terrain of his fantasies. He is the "little man" of Gogol's texts (indeed, the name of the character, Nikolai, is a tribute to the writer) or those of Kafka. In fact, phrases from Kafka's last diary entry appear in the concluding lines of Borisov's text. For modernism, the marginal—that which is rejected by the dominant culture, that which does not fit into the frame of "normal" society, that which Bataille calls heterogeneous—becomes the main field of research. Artists, philosophers, and poets aspire to study ultimate, frontier states. "What he bequeathed was not works of art but a singular presence, a poetics, an aesthetics of thought, a theology of culture, and a phenomenology of suffering." This is the outline of Antonin Artaud's heritage formulated by Susan Sontag. It could easily be a formula for describing many modernist characters: the artist-creator, possessed by sacred insanity; "a disturbing prophet," one of the main characters of this epoch. Creating Borisov's story, Makarevich takes up this image in a grimly humorous fashion, while also researching the modernist mythology of exclusion.

The exhibition *Homo Lignum. Story of the Wardrobe* at Navicula Artis Gallery is a new extension of the project. Makarevich created a text for it, which did not straightforwardly continue the preceding story but referenced it. The name of the exhibition refers to a text by Georges Bataille, *Story of the Eye*. Roland Barthes starts his essay about this novel with a reflection on what can be implied by the story of an object. Such a story can be illustrated by listing the names of all people who ever owned the object, or the writer can create a situation in which the object is transformed from one image into another, entering a cycle of transformations through which they pass at a distance from primary existence according to the curve of defined imagination, which transforms the object but does not abandon it. Barthes notes that the narrative of *Story of the Eye* serves only to enfold a number of such chains of transformations. Jean-Luc Steinmetz, who researched the "work of the words" in the novel, records that one of the key moments in this text is the image of the closet, which turns out to be a device which executes various functions connected with the topic of guilt and punishment. Igor Makarevich applies this logic of variation of one object through others, which substitute it. He creates another story, a diary written on behalf of the character who finds a closet in a dump and, being charmed by this object, launches a series of real and phantasmatic transformations. It stops functioning as a piece of furniture and becomes a closet-ward, a closet-urinal, a closet-guillotine, a closet-altar, and a closet-coffin. The guillotine is the "furniture of justice"—the first mechanized device for the execution of death penalty in the history of humankind. In the character's imagination it simultaneously becomes a device of passion, which delivers sexual pleasure. This image refers

I. Makarevich
Borisov's Wardrobe, 2015

to the fantastic mechanisms created by Duchamp, Kafka or Roussel and which the French literary scholar Michel Carrouges amalgamated under the name of "Bachelor Machines." He accentuated their unified characteristic: mechanizing the erotic, they transform it into the Thanatic.

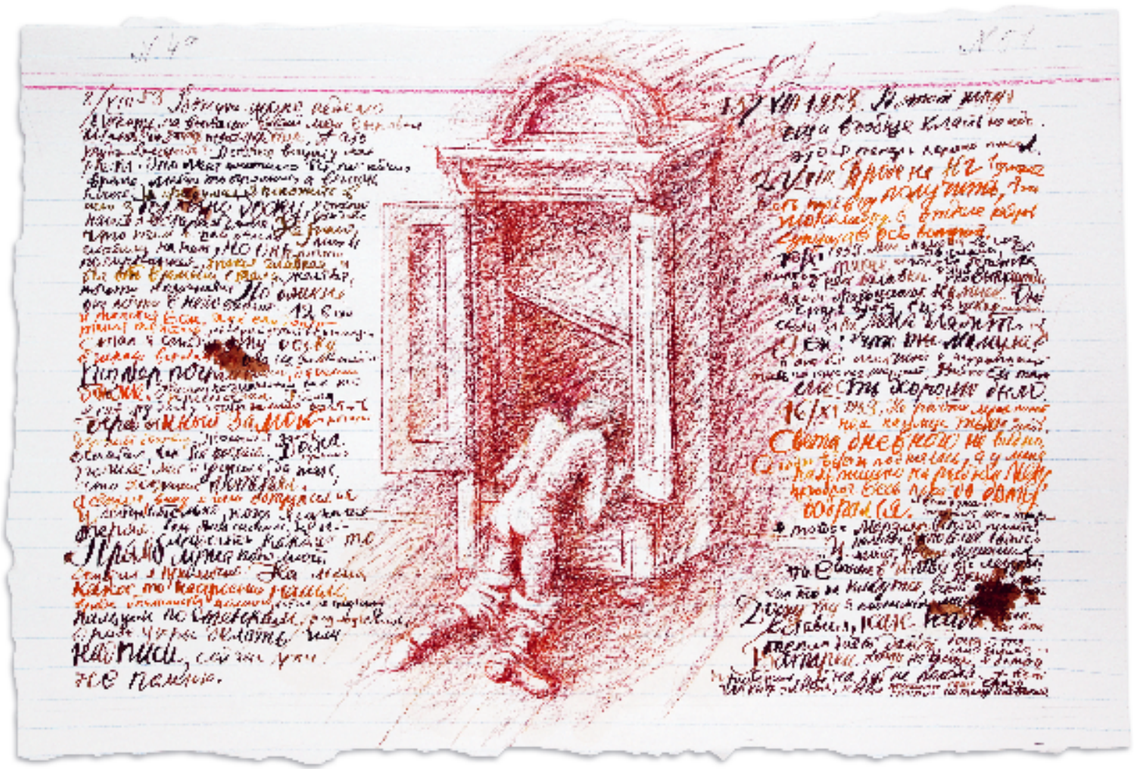
Similar to other projects in the *Homo Lignum* series, the artist assembles the exhibition out of photographs, drawings, and diaries of the main character in order to construct a situation in which viewers find themselves inside the fantasy world of the character. Here, one can see drawings with fragments of *Story of the Wardrobe* and earlier works, which unfold Nikolai Borisov's story. In the center is the star of the new exhibition, the killing closet-device. The immersion into the shadow world of the character, repulsive and fascinating at the same time, takes a complex route: the text refers to the visual, which refers right back. However, like the bachelor machine—an auto-erotic mechanism—this game is important in its essence: the character becomes the figure through which the reader/viewer gets involved in the entwinement of numerous cultural references, which grow into the character's story.

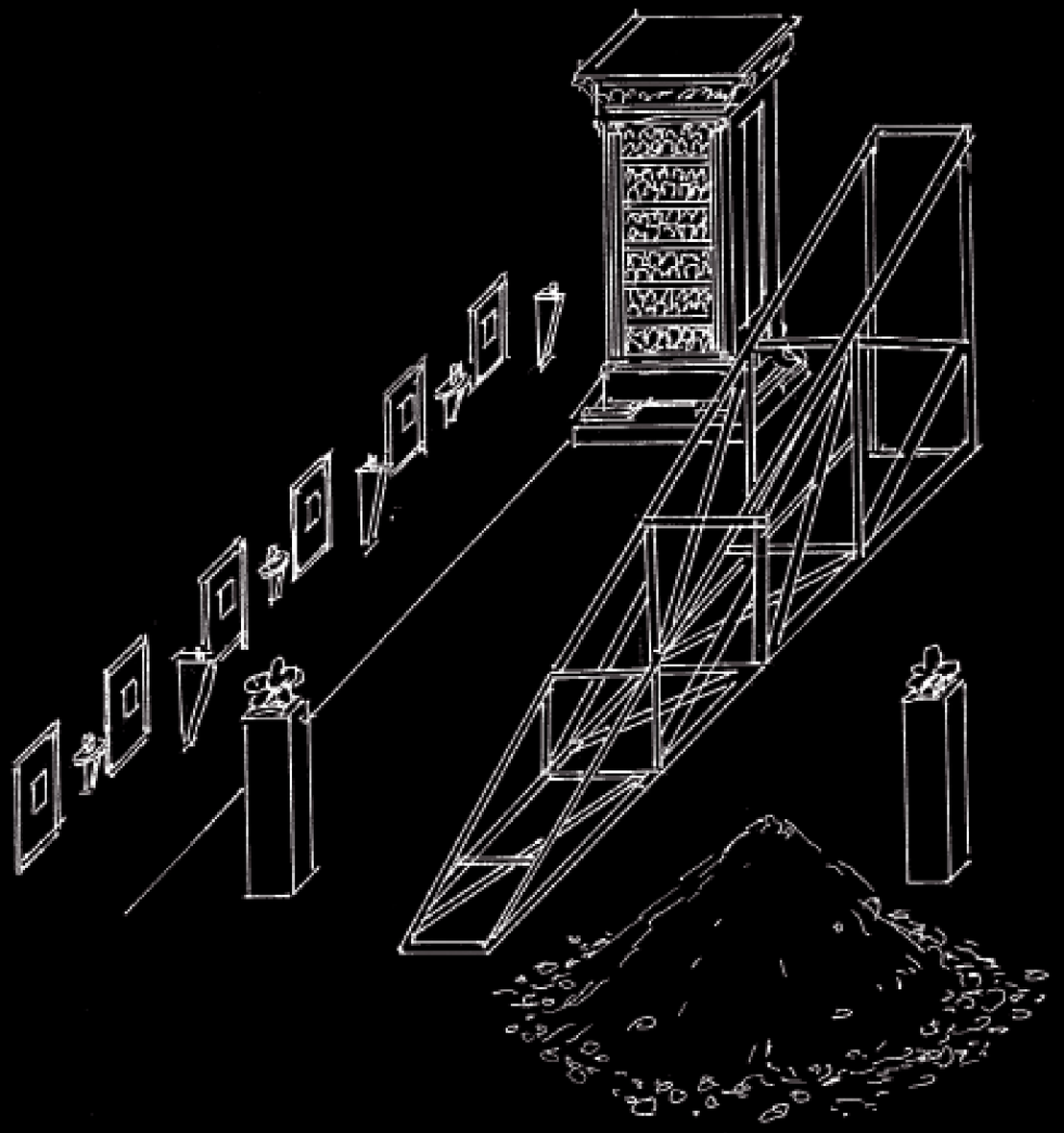
I. Makarevich
The Door of Borisov's Wardrobe,
2015

I. Makarevich
The Handle of Borisov's Cane, 1998

I. Makarevich
Borisov's Diary (Story of the Wardrobe), 2015

I. Makarevich
Ganymede, 2004





RUSSIAN COSMISM
&
THE RUSSIAN IDEA

Olesya Turkina

2121: THE RUSSIAN COSMISM OF ELENA ELAGINA AND IGOR MAKAREVICH

This text emerged from a longstanding friendship and an ongoing conversation about Russian cosmism with the artists Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich, who had managed to rethink old/new ideas they had extracted from the past at a time when Soviet ideology was collapsing. A New Disorder[1] emerged; the Stargate[2] opened; all religions and ideologies found themselves at the singularity point from which the new is born. I met Elena and Igor in 1991 while preparing an exhibition for the Kunstverein Hannover entitled *Sowjetunion. Kunst, Europa (Soviet Union. Art, Europe)*,[3] where their 1990 installation *Closed Fish Exhibition* was first shown outside of the Soviet Union. This installation was the two artists' first shared project. Its archeological character and its plaidoyer for reconstruction would soon become characteristic not only of post-Soviet aesthetics but also of post-Soviet politics and ideology. The project was visionary and, moreover, it made a striking reference to Nikolai Fyodorov's idea of resurrecting the future from the past. Back then, in 1991, we did not talk discuss cosmism, but a posteriori it seems that the material and project-oriented nature of their *Closed Fish Exhibition* not only followed Fyodorov but also manifested the main qualities of their work to be created over the next three decades. In 2014, I invited Elena and Igor to participate in *Beyond Zero*,[4] an exhibition dedicated to the two most revolutionary discoveries of the twentieth century—challenges to the notions of time and space—at Calvert 22 Gallery in London. They created an installation called *Cosmos*. While preparing the exhibition in Russia, and then strolling through London, we often discussed the strange notion of Russian cosmism, arguably the most original Russian idea and at the same time the most elusive one. Finally, during their retrospective exhibition *Countdown* at Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Elena and Igor invited me to travel to space with them, that is, to write about Russian cosmism in their work.

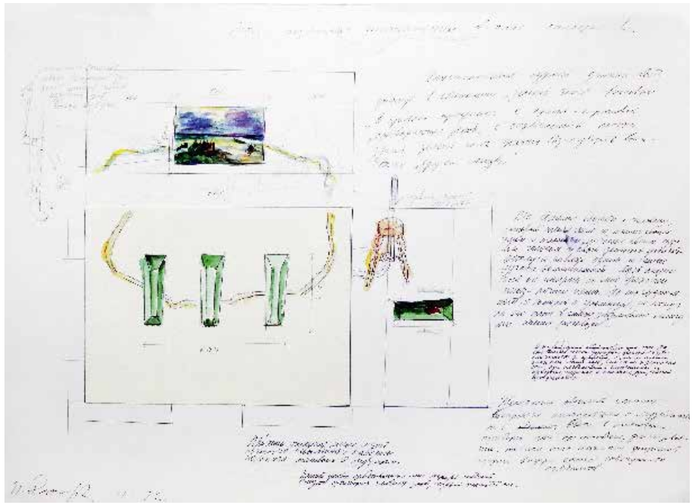
This text is a collage/montage in the vein of the philosopher Jacques Derrida and the critic Gregory Ulmer.[5] After all, critics are parasites and saprophytes, feeding on their hosts and benefitting them at the same time. The text includes direct quotations from a recent conversation with the two artists, as well as from the works of Nikolai Fyodorov, Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, Kazimir Malevich, Hannah Arendt, and many others. As Russian cosmism favours the idea of universal resurrection and seeks to overcome the injustice of death, the artists and I imagined our conversation as taking place in the year 2121.

Russian Cosmism: From Kazimir Malevich to Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich

Russian cosmism is a religious-philosophical movement; having emerged in Russia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it can be split into scientific, religious, and poetic trends.[6] Russian cosmism dreamt of the universe as an interconnected whole inhabited by generations present, past, and future. This dream grew out of religious-philosophical thought and became a new religion in the times of the Great Utopia and the creation of the New Man. In suprematist compositions by Kazimir Malevich, Ilya Chashnik, Nikolai Suetin, and Konstantin Rozhdestvensky, space is linked to new optics, to a new vision of the unity of the universe. Artists of the Russian avant-garde managed to break away from the Earth in their imagination, presenting what nobody had ever seen before. Malevich described the state of weightlessness as a plastic property of suprematism and suggested constructing a suprematist satellite between the Earth and the Moon:

A new suprematist satellite could be built between the Earth and the Moon [...] Working on suprematism, I discovered that its forms have nothing to do with the machinery of the Earth's surface. All technical organisms, too, are nothing but small satellites—a whole living world ready to fly off into space and occupy a special place there. [...] Abstract suprematist forms have achieved utilitarian perfection. They no longer concern the Earth; they can be viewed and studied as any planet or an entire system.[7]

Evgeny Kovtun, a specialist in the Russian avant-garde, believes that Malevich coined the word "suprematism" under the influence of Fyodorov's notion of "supramoralism".[8] In the 1920s, Vasily Chekrygin was inspired by Fyodorov's *Philosophy of the Common Cause*. In his drawings, universal *Resurrection* (the title of a series of drawings made in 1921) proceeds from chaos, from a black mass of coal. The radiant whiteness of the paper embodies the "divine image of enlightened matter" discussed by the artist. Chekrygin dreamed of frescoing the Cathedral of the Resurrection Museum: this main project of his continues Fyodorov's idea of inviting artists to paint the walls of the Kremlin. For Ivan Kudryashov, a student of Ma-



I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Within the Limits of the Beautiful,
L Gallery, Moscow, 1992

I. Makarevich
Installation sketch for *Within the Limits of the Beautiful,*
L Gallery, Moscow, 1992

Igor Makarevich
and Elena Elagina's installation
Common Cause for the exhibition
The Philosophy of the Common Cause, Perm State Art Gallery, 2012

levich and Ivan Klyun, cosmism also became a new way of conceptualizing the universality of space and comprehending the infinity of the universe through the trajectories of light streams in space. In the Russian avant-garde, the idea of a shared universe, of Earth as a spaceship powered by human activity, is combined with the pathos of modernization, turning Fyodorov's project into a revolutionary undertaking. However, not everyone within the movement agreed with Fyodorov's religious philosophy. Alexander Svyatogorov and the anarchist biocosmists, for instance, negated Christian ideas, calling for a struggle against the inequality of death.

In the 1930s, the ideas of Fyodorov and his followers were expunged from Soviet history as quasi-religious and opposed to the idea of retribution (all the dead were to be resurrected, regardless of their merits) that prevailed in the era of class struggle. Many philosophers and artists became victims of repressions. Then, cosmism was partially rehabilitated at the height of Soviet victories in space. In the 1970s and 1980s, Fyodorov's work received more and more interest. In 1970, the word "cosmism" appeared in the fifth volume of the Soviet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy in an article about Vladimir Vernadsky. The volume also contained articles on Alexander Chizhevsky, Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, and Nikolai Fyodorov. In 1972, Nikolai Gavryushin published the article "Toward a History of Russian Cosmism." From the early 1970s, the philosopher and writer Svetlana Semenova made an enormous contribution to the study of Nikolai Fyodorov's texts and to introducing the concept of cosmism into the scholarly discourse. In 1982, Fyodorov's *The Philosophy of Common Cause* was first published in the Soviet Union thanks to the cosmonaut Vitaly Sevastyanov, who called Fyodorov a brilliant teacher of morality and humanism. Even so, the publication was considered ideological subversion. As the Soviet space program developed, Malevich's disciple Konstantin Rozhdestvensky took up the topic of the cosmos when decorating the "Space" section at the Soviet exhibitions in New York in 1959 and Paris in 1961. In the same period, Ivan Kudryashov and Alexander Labas resurrected their early space compositions. One can argue that a peculiar culmination of the space project with its ideal of universality was created in the 1960s by Malevich's graduate student at GINHUK, Vladimir Sterligov: an original system of cups and domes inspired by Malevich's theory of the surplus element and by his religious and philosophical understanding of the modern world.

From the 1960s, the artist and inventor Bulat Galeev cooperated with the student construction bureau Prometheus to create a "Projection-Raster Light-Musical Indicator" for cosmonauts. They also worked on light and music compositions on the theme of space and actively promoted cosmism. The Prometheus bureau introduced the Amaravella group, whose members had been subject to repressions in the 1930s, at a conference in Kazan. There, the writer and philosopher Yuri Linnik first encountered their work; he went on to research and collect works by Amaravella. The Dvizhenie group, led by Lev Nussberg, and later the Mir group founded by Viacheslav Koleichuk, found new cosmic symbols for times of real cosmic achievements. In 1982, Koleichuk decorated the Hall of Interplanetary Journeys at the newly opened Moscow Museum of Cosmonautics.[9] In 1985, Ilya Kabakov created the installation *The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment*, in which not only does the character fly out of the confined Soviet atmosphere through a hole in the ceiling but the Spasskaya Tower becomes a rocket preparing to take off from Red Square. The installation calls to mind the utopian projects of the Russian avant-garde, the engineers and artists who dreamed of breaking away from Earth. At the same time, it is a critique, a work very much aware of the claustrophobia inherent in any utopia. With the beginning of perestroika, Fyodorov's doctrine and Russian cosmism were legalized. Conferences devoted to cosmism were held; a library in Moscow was named after Fyodorov.[10] In 1992, the composer Sergey Kuryokhin, founder of the Pop-Mekhanika orchestra, officially registered the Center for Cosmic Research, where he proposed launching artificial "satellites of the soul" and engaging in religious enlightenment in the spirit of Russian cosmism.[11] In the 2000s, Russian cosmism became a key theme in the work of Pavel Pepperstein, Leonid Tishkov, Arseny Zhilyaev, Anton Vidokle, and others. Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich can be considered the most consistent cosmist artists of our times, having turned to this theme back in the early 1990s. Now, let's start the countdown![12]

Countdown by Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich
Our exhibition *Countdown* at Moscow Museum of Modern Art is a retrospective and summary of the work we have been doing for almost fifty years. The two main themes are the Russian idea and Russian cosmism. The former is a rather problematic expression and almost impossible to analyze. We concluded that Russian cosmism is the most productive concept for us as unique phenomenon of the national character. No other country concentrated such a grandiose impulse of thought and soul on researching all things cosmic and the problem of immortality. This probably happened because in the mid-nineteenth century, the ancient Christian tradition lay in ruins. Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy and Nietzsche's tragic grandiosity defined the new era. When the universe ceased to be the province of the divine, people began looking for a replacement. Fyodorov was a true pioneer, invested in materialism and scientific discoveries, but within the framework of religious philosophy. His rejection of a passive attitude toward the divine was mirrored much later, in Stalin's time, in Michurin's slogan "We must not expect mercy from nature. It is our task to take what we need from her!" Incidentally, Vernadsky was very sceptical about Michurin, though they both believed in scientific progress, in the material embodiment of ideas. Fyodorov's astonishing innovation was this: we should not wait for the resurrection of the dead, he argued; we should resurrect them ourselves. A truly revolutionary idea. He argued that the dead had suffered and experienced so much that they all deserved resurrection. Cosmism and connected phenomena concentrate on the future happiness of mankind, just as socialism does. But while socialism has been realized to some degree, cosmism remains entirely in the future. After all, even if everyone becomes happy, this means a great injustice: humanity would then be happy at the expense of the suffering of dead generations. In order to restore real justice, Fyodorov argues, we must resurrect all the generations that came before us.

Beyond Good and Evil
Fyodorov did not like the Western philosophical ideas of his time (as it happens, neither did Tsiolkovsky). He criticised Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, saying in his essay "Christianity Against Nietzscheanism" that "Nietzsche's philosophy necessitates an active Christianity as a counter-reaction, united for resurrection instead of 'approaching the coming destruction with a tragic understanding (of what is happening)'"[12] Recognizing Nietzsche's merit in being "beyond good and evil," he proceeded to say:

The human yearning to go beyond good and evil is as old as mankind, but one should not confuse its subject with so-called "other-worldly being." This is a yearning for a new heaven and a new earth, for uprooting evil and establishing good. But this is not what we find in Nietzsche's dreams: in his *Übermensch*, he restores old vices. [...] Nietzsche's 153rd aphorism, "What is done out of love always takes place beyond good and evil," is close to the truth because only good is done out of love (universal love!) and good means life without evil, that is, without death.[13]

The common cause of resurrecting the forefathers united Christianity and nineteenth-century positivism, appealing to scientific achievements. Fyodorov dreamed of humanizing Providence, turning the human being into an active co-worker of the Creator. For his followers at the beginning of the twentieth century, he appeared as a Messiah in the white lab coat of a scientist, persistently working to change human nature and to influence space and time as demanded by the zeitgeist. To resurrect previous generations, he argued, we must change ourselves. That is an active form of evolution. According to Fyodorov, we must develop into an organism that unites law and action: the nourishment of this organism is a conscious and creative process of turning elementary, cosmic substances into mineral, then vegetable, and finally, living tissues. [...] The aero- and aetheronautical means of traveling and finding materials for building this organism will also become human organs. This new being will carry within them the entire history of discoveries, the entire course of this progress: they will contain physics, chemistry, and all cosmology not in the form of a mental image but in the form of a cosmic apparatus. This will render them truly cosmopolitan, able to be in all places in turn. Then, the human being will truly be enlightened.[14]

Sketches for Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina's installation *Common Cause* for the exhibition *The Philosophy of the Common Cause*, Perm State Art Gallery, 2012

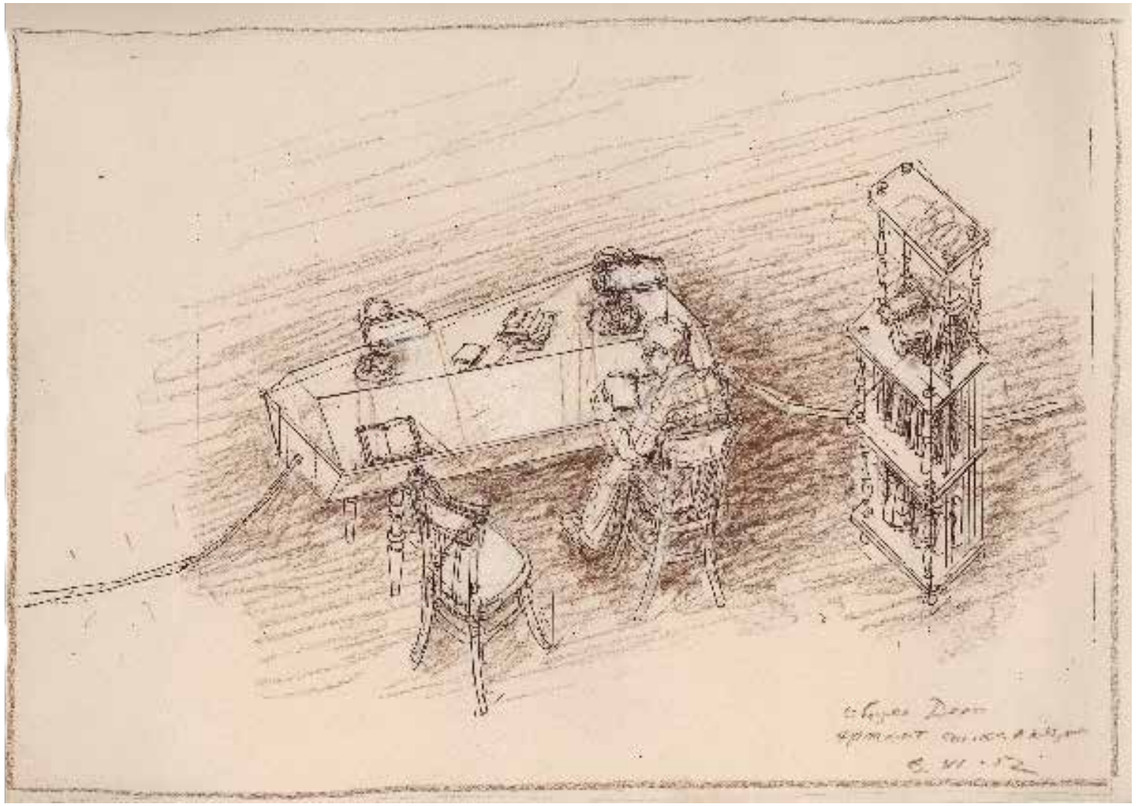
Today, the idea of immortality for those alive has replaced Fyodorov's hope of universal resurrection. However, this idea is deeply rooted in social inequality. A handful of billionaires invest in, say, Raymond Kurzweil's research, seeking to live forever thank to new technologies. The call for the resurrection of previous generations is replaced by the idea of immortality or at least life extension for those who have the means to do so. In Victor Pelevin's novel *Transhumanism Inc*,[15] biological humans become mere servants of jars containing the brains of those who managed to pay for the long-term (ideally, indefinite) production of virtual illusions. Today, the idea of over-abundance for some and abject poverty for others is everywhere. In his time, Fyodorov spoke not only of the injustice of death but also of the injustice of distributing earthly resources in a way that forces most to toil or even starve. His work might have become a quaint curiosity by now, but instead, his ideas of active evolution, regulation of nature, and universal resurrection have turned him into a forerunner of the new ecology. Arguably, he could even be called a forefather of transhumanism.

The Beginnings of Cosmism in the Work of Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich

In 1992, at L Gallery in Moscow (later renamed XL Gallery), we realized a project entitled *Within the Limits of the Beautiful.* Our thoughts were still far from cosmic ideas, but we were already contemplating immortality. As Igor had done a lot of work on Chekhov,[16] we had this idea of combining Chekhov and Levitan. It was Levitan's *Over Eternal Peace* that inspired us, a giant Brueghelian panorama of Russia from a bird's-eye view, with a tiny, almost invisible, church and cemetery. We decided to introduce some scenography at this point. Beyond the canvas, models of coffins entered space, connected by tubes filled with some kind of elixir leading to the cemetery in the painting. A connection between the graveyard and the gallery space. In the beginning, we had wanted to explore the substratum of the painting itself, the spirit of painting that flows through the tubes. But then other ideas and associations emerged despite us. The coffins in the exhibition hall declared a completely different theme: not a graveyard lost in space but the idea of resurrection. Gradually, we grasped this theme.

Then, in 1993, Komar and Melamid invited artists to participate in the project *Monuments: Transformation for the Future*.[17] They had this idea of changing Soviet monuments in some way to make them fit for the future. Igor proposed a project for the monument in front of the Exhibition of National Economic Achievements, the one with Tsiolkovsky sitting at the base of a rocket. Instead of a rocket, he placed a coffin flying off into the sky—a homage to Fyodorov, with a great deal of space left for commentary. There was a landscape, too, depicting the Exhibition building with a graveyard and a flock of crows. Here, we see how the Fyodorov theme gradually took hold of us, starting from a rather passive approach in *Within the Limits of the Beautiful.* Later still, we went to see the place where Fyodorov is supposed to be buried, the Skorbyashensky Monastery. The thing is, Fyodorov's ashes are now covered by asphalt and above them there is a playground. Quite a paradox, considering that he had wanted to stop all childbirth. Back in the late 19th century, the Skorbyashensky Monastery was very large, with huge graveyards all around. Now, there is only a tiny cemetery on the other side of the street, adjacent to the Savelovsky railway station. The poet and artist Anna Alchuk is buried there. From the late 1970s, we traveled to events by the Collection Actions group, coming in from the Savelovsky station—you might say, right from Fyodorov's grave. But we didn't know that at the time.

We tried different versions, different projects. There was a very important one called *The Philosophy of the Common Cause*, curated by Valentin Diaconov. We had this idea of showing the vaults of provincial museums where the avant-garde had been walled up. Fortunately, a lot of Russian avant-garde art has survived: usually, it was not destroyed but sent off to distant provincial museums. The project took place in the Perm State Gallery, which is located in a former cathedral. It's fascinating that we were offered that space. Back in 1952, a government decree proclaimed that churches were to be transformed into museums, including the cathedral in Perm. There were reconstructions to expand the premises and to get rid of the religious feel of the place. In the Perm cathedral, right in the main space, with its high vaulted ceiling, a mezzanine storey was created, dividing the height of the room. So now, in that mezzanine, you find yourself right under this giant vaulted ceiling. Moreover, there is a balustrade separating the mezzanine from the rest of the space.

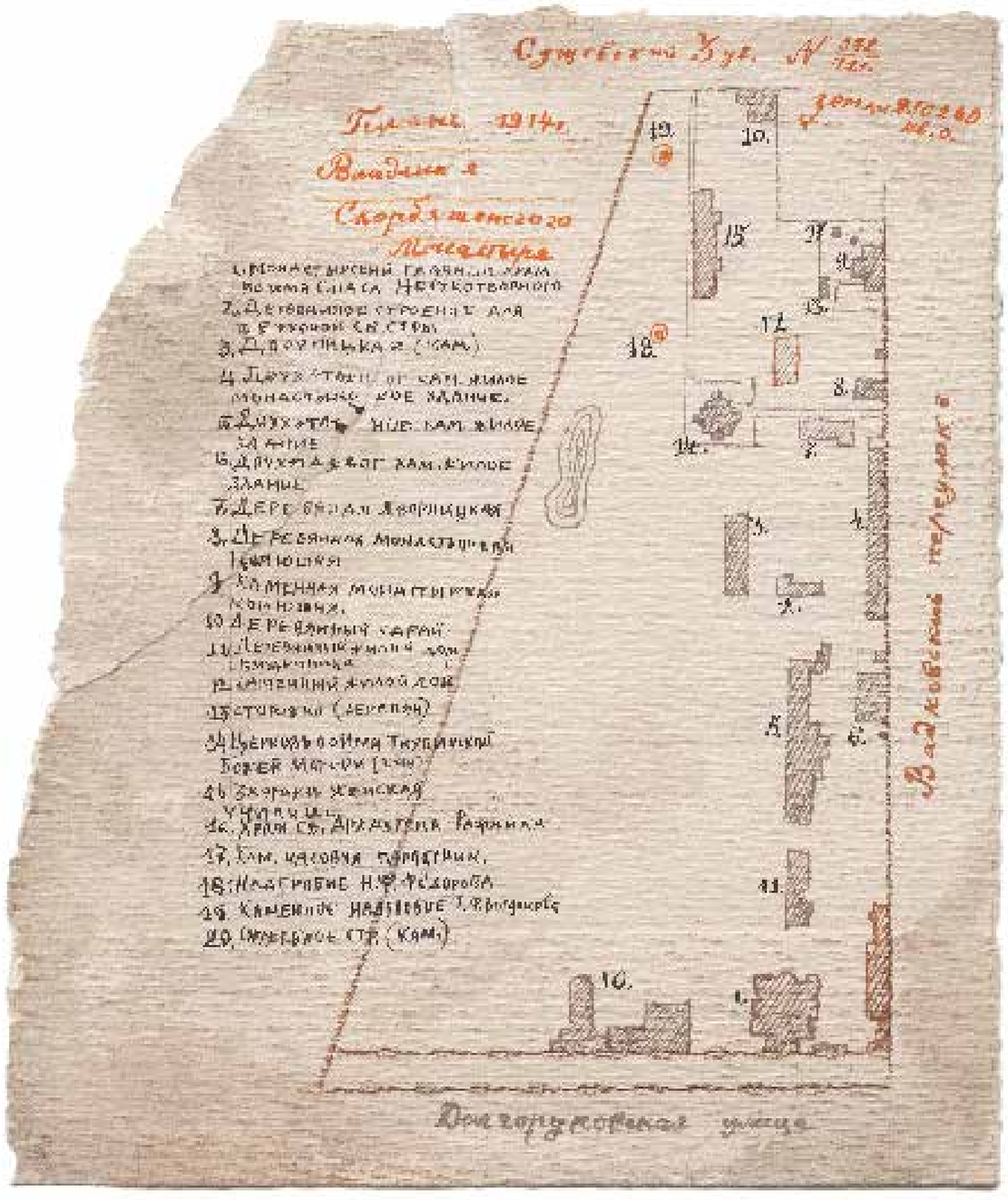


Sketches for Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina's installation *Common Cause* for the exhibition *The Philosophy of the Common Cause*, Perm State Art Gallery, 2012

It was in the mezzanine that we organized the Fyodorov library, the basis of our project. We were immediately struck by the discrepancy between the space of this newly created exhibition hall and the gigantic, vaulted ceiling. Without its intended height, it was hypnotically disproportional. We felt that this space had something in common with Fyodorov's main idea, resurrection of the dead. As conceived by Diaconov, the Fyodorov library housed art history publications from the 1950s and 1960s that are now difficult to find. Along the balustrade, there were white coffins that served as library tables complete with typical library lamps under green lampshades. Quotations from Fyodorov's works, in neon letters of that same green, glowed on the walls.

The Philosophy of the Common Cause vs. Ideological Immortality

If the church is a spaceship of sorts—a rocket sending you to Heaven or Hell depending on your sins and virtues—then the Fyodorov Museum, a place for the resurrection of all generations, is a space station based on ideas of regulation. It is not by chance that the successes of the Soviet space program helped partially rehabilitate the ideas of cosmism. From the outset, the programs aimed at a prolonged stay in outer space, implying long-term expansion and exploration of interplanetary space as a new home. Strikingly, interplanetary travellers in the USSR were called cosmonauts, a word coined by Ari Sternfeld in 1933 and meaning "someone who inhabits an orderly cosmos." After all, the Greek cosmos (κόσμος) means *order*, unlike the Latin *space* (room).



I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Reconstruction of the burial plan of the philosopher Nikolai Fyodorov at Skorbyashensky Monastery in Moscow for the installation *Common Cause*, 2012

In Elagina and Makarevich's art, the Russian idea has overtaken Russian cosmism. Both themes are connected to immortality. In principle, *Homo sovieticus* had achieved ideological immortality. And except for followers of Fyodorov and Vernadsky, nobody was too keen for its practical embodiment, considering the difficult living conditions. The task was to accelerate, to invent the "energy microbe," as Andrei Platonov did in his story "Descendants of the Sun (Fantasia)"[18] —a microbe which would enable people to do as much as possible for the common good in the shortest possible period. Moreover, since the beginning of the 20th century, we have seen rapid automation of the human being, who (in a telling Soviet song) was given "arms/wings of steel and a flaming motor in place of a heart." What mattered was no longer the fate of the concrete "atom-spirit," as Tsiolkovsky had it, not what people thought and felt—it was what they produced. Starting with the *Closed Fish Exhibition*, Elagina and Makarevich have been resurrecting Soviet ideological artefacts originally created for eternity. In their installations, geography and history (crucial terms for Fyodorov) allude not so much to specific grave—though they do always involve personified protagonists—as to what is missing, left out, abandoned to the void. Processed by the void (be it temporal or spatial), the Russian idea paradoxically turns into substance, into matter in the installations by Elagina and Makarevich.

The Russian Idea by Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich
In *The Russian Idea*, we wanted to embody the formulas and thoughts connected to this theme in a plastic way, without any intellectual analysis of texts and images. The Russian Idea is elusive, incomprehensible; like the Biblical expression "the salt of the Earth," like bread or soil, it is indivisible, basic, crucial. A primary image emerges. The installation *The Russian Idea* alludes to this idea's originators, Fyodorov and others. Our interest in the theme emerged along with a change of ideology, or rather, with the loss of the former ideology. During perestroika, people tried to replace communism with Orthodox Christianity. This did not work out. So, we tried out the Russian idea as a new ideology. The construction in the center of the hall could be the steamer on which the philosophers who had created the Russian idea were expelled from Russia in 1922. It could also be the basis of a rocket, ready to be launched. The figurine is an image of the Russian idea. It cannot disappear or be broken. In prison, people made such figures out of bread. When I was a child, one of my father's friends made such a figurine and suggested I try to break it. I tried and failed. It is an image of the Russian idea. It does not exist, but at the same time it is unbreakable. It is always somewhere. (Elagina)

The Fyodorov Museum
According to Fyodorov, the museum opposes infernal progress, the production of dead things. "The museum is a project of the heavens; under the guise of old things (rags), it gathers the souls of the departed, the dead."[19] Fyodorov believed that one day museums would be used to revive the victims of progress. He compares the museums of his times to books, to libraries with many picture and sculpture galleries. These are museums of ideals, likenesses, knowledge, but not yet museums of action. The ideal museum, he says, should be different. "A museum is not a collection of things but a collection of persons; its activity is not to accumulate dead things but to restore the remains—the dead—to life via their works." In the rapidly changing world, museums create the conditions for immortality or at least longevity. According to Fyodorov, they should become temples of resurrection.

Elagina and Makarevich's installations also resurrect and capture things. In *The Russian Idea*, we see real bread next to a bronze model of bread. The cosmic theme is embodied via everyday things left behind by people and preserving their traces. According to the artists, "There is a world of infinite spaces. And there is a world of forgotten space". The archeological character of their installations is directly connected with Fyodorov's idea of a museum. After all, some "Unknown Intelligent Forces" might find old tools more intriguing than sublime works of art.

Unknown Intelligent Forces by Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich:
In our work, we explore the milestones of plastic embodiment of cosmism. Our next installation on cosmism opened in the Louvre in 2010 as part of the collective exhibition *Counterpoint*. We were extremely

Sketches for Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina's installation *Common Cause* for the exhibition *The Philosophy of the Common Cause*, Perm State Art Gallery, 2012

lucky there: our works were exhibited in the most ancient part of the Louvre, in the basement, a space with a special atmosphere. You walked along a long corridor, relatively low—six meters, ten at most—low, this is, in relation to the other ancient structures, and you could see every stone. This area was excavated when the pyramid in front of the Louvre was built; it was preserved as an exhibition space. The whole palace is surrounded by this exhibition corridor. Just like with those hypertrophied vaults in Perm, these ancient walls—the foundations of the towers—also produced a strange and unusual feeling. The ladders in our installation represented an exit from this space, a departure into Tsiolkovsky's visions.

We were inspired by a page from Tsiolkovsky's diary describing a strange optical phenomenon that took place in 1928: he went out onto the roof of his house in the evening and saw three fiery letters spelling the English word *ray*. We put these letters in neon on the ancient wall of the Louvre; between them, we installed four large wooden ladders, six meters long, reaching almost to the top of the room. Several hundred pairs of worn shoes were stacked at the bottom. It felt very visceral, evoking a lot of associations. The shoes could bring to mind the terrifying documentary footage of concentration camps, where clothes and shoes were stacked in piles. But it was not the only association. So many beliefs have to do with shoes! There are rituals of throwing them away. They can symbolize so many things in human life: for instance, recall Khrushchev banging his shoe on the table during a UN meeting. Shoes leave traces behind, they write human biographies. You leave a record of your life through your shoes. And we should also mention that all texts concerning the teachings of Fyodorov or Tsiolkovsky have something totalitarian about them. They claim that a natural or artificial selection must be made, that procreation must be restricted, etc. There are dark spots on the shining sun of the bright future. And this is reminiscent of modern transhumanism.

The Will of the Cosmos
In 1928, Tsiolkovsky published and sent out to his correspondents a pamphlet entitled *The Will of the Cosmos. Unknown Intelligent Forces*,[21] which he considered crucial for his philosophy. He always published his philosophical works at his own expense and gave them away for free: after all, one should not "sell Eternity for a dime," as he put it in a letter to one of his correspondents. In his worldview, the Will of the Cosmos is the principle that makes the universe work; unknown intelligent forces control it like a filmmaker controls a film:

Thus, everything is generated by the cosmos. It is the beginning of all things, everything depends on it. Man or another higher being and his will only manifests its will.

Not one creature or entity can have absolute will, not any more than a clock or some other kind of complex automatic equipment, for example, sound cinema. The shadows [the protagonists] of cinema walk, talk, do things, perform what seems like their will, co-ordinate their words with their actions, but everyone knows that their will is only apparent, not absolute, that all their movements and speech depend on the film, on the person who had made the film. In the same way, the most intelligent being only fulfils the will of the cosmos.[22]

Tsiolkovsky described himself as a "materialist" and a practical man. Still, twice in his life, he experienced visions. At the end of the 1880s, in Borovsk, he saw clouds form first a cross and then a human figure. He described this event and drew a picture of it. And then, in Kaluga in 1928, there was the incident which became the basis for the installation by Elagina and Makarevich:

This is what happened to me on May 31, 1928, in the evening, at about eight o'clock. After reading or some work, I went out as usual to freshen up onto the glazed balcony. It faced northwest, toward the sunset. The weather was somewhat cloudy, and the sun was obscured by clouds. Near the horizon, I saw, without any imperfections, three letters printed horizontally side by side: *чАу* [Cyrillic]. They were clearly made up of clouds and were 20–30 versts [≈ kilometers] away, close to the horizon. While

I was looking at them, they did not change their shape. I was very surprised that the letters were so correct and clear, but what did *чАу* mean? It didn't make sense in any language I know. After a minute, I went inside to write down the date and the word as inscribed in the clouds. Immediately, it occurred to me to read the letters as Latin. And I saw ray [a Latin transliteration of the Russian word for "Paradise"]. Now, that made some sense. The word was rather vulgar, but that's what I was handed. Underneath the cloud word, there was something like slab or tomb (I didn't look at it closely).

I understood it this way: death is the end of all our torments, i.e., what I had argued in *Monism*. Thus, to put it loftily, the sky itself confirmed my assumptions. These were mere clouds, but what forces had given them a form with a definite and appropriate meaning!? In the 70 years of my life, I had never suffered from hallucinations, never drank wine or taken any stimulants; I did not even smoke.

No projection lantern could have produced these images in broad daylight; at a greater distance, they would not have been visible or at least would have been distorted; the same for smoke figures produced by an aeroplane. Besides, if someone had wanted to play a trick on me, they would have written "Paradise" in Russian. Or if they wanted to write it in Latin letters for some reason, it would have been *Ray* rather than *чАу*—for some reason, I saw the word with a capital letter in the middle and lower-case letters around it.

When I returned to the balcony, the word was gone. My room is on the first floor, and I didn't have time to call out to anyone; besides, at first, all I saw was a curiosity, having initially read the nonsense *чАу* in Russian.

In English, ray means *ray* (e.g. of sunlight). You could argue, though it is quite a stretch, that the sunset (end) of life (death) gives you the light (the ray) of knowledge.

Tsiolkovsky called himself a "panpsychist," arguing that the entire universe was sensitive. He wrote that "to know the destiny of the atom we must know the destiny of the Cosmos" and believed that the happiness of the Cosmos "is the happiness of the atom, i.e., my happiness depends on the happiness of the Cosmos." He believed in immortality because to him, both living and non-living matter consisted of immortal wandering "atom-spirits." He called this "the monism of the Cosmos." At the end of his life, he sent his correspondents a pamphlet entitled *Is there a God*?[23] Here, he identified God with the Cosmos as the unified beginning and origin of all things. He believed that each inhabited universe had its own God, a president of the planet, who is more just than any god of existing religions.

Patrofication by Elena Elagina —
If I were to take the work of any artist with me on an interplanetary voyage or into the immortality of the Fyodorov Museum, I would settle for something in small format. I might take my portrait with my dog by Alice Poret. It's such a small and cosy painting, done in the late 1960s. At the time, I thought it was a caricature. I thought Alice was suggesting I was bad at posing.

When I was fifteen, I found myself in Ernst Neizvestny's studio, a haunt of artists and philosophers. They talked a lot; I sat and listened. There was Evgeny Shiffers, a handsome man from St. Petersburg, very bright and unconventionally religious. He didn't go to church. He had become a religious philosopher after the Hungarian events. In 1956, he had suffered a concussion in Budapest. His head was hit by shrapnel from a grenade thrown off the roof by rebels. There were no art historians in our circle back then; instead, there were philosophers and cultural historians. I talked a lot with Shiffers, but I don't remember him mentioning Fyodorov, though he had been involved in Russian religious philosophical thought. He let me read books by Berdyaev and Solovyov. He had some books from the West, which were not available in the Soviet Union or at least impossible to get. Later, Shiffers wanted to make a film about the murdered family of Nicholas II. It was Yuri Karyakin who had brought Shiffers to Neizvestny's place. He loved bringing in new people. It was the time of the Thaw.

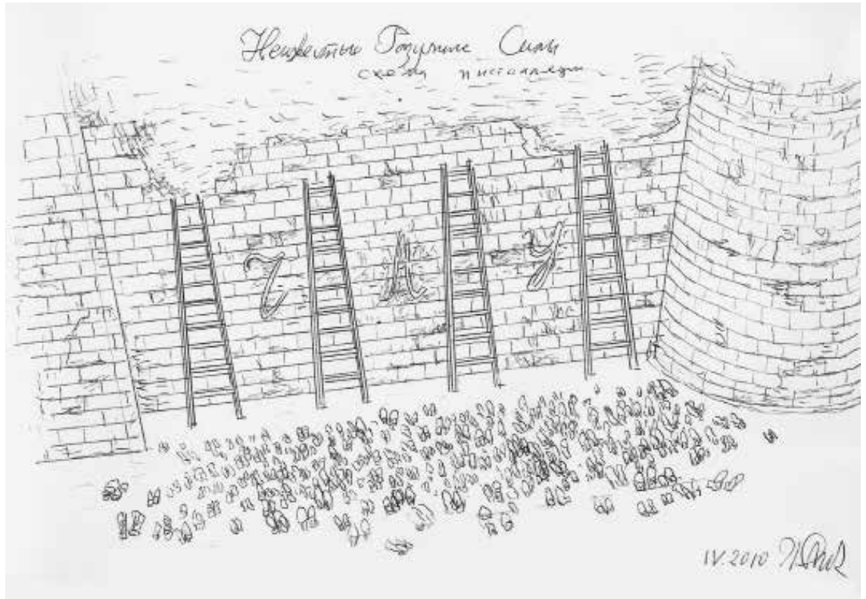
I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Unknown Intelligent Forces
at the exhibition *Counterpoint*,
Louvre, Paris, 2010
Photo: Jean-Pierre Dalbéra

— *and by Igor Makarevich:*
If we leave aside grandiose works, I appreciate Lena's choice of Alice Poret. Indeed, I guess I should choose not so much Bruegel or Rembrandt but something more adequate. For instance, Alexander Nezhdanov's early works made a huge impression on me in my youth. I'd take any of his small works on a voyage through space. There is a childhood memory that I cherish: when I walked to school, I could see the windows of the boarding school opposite the Tretyakov Gallery around the corner. And I'd often see Nezhdanov sitting on the windowsill on the 4th floor, his legs dangling, doodling in his notebook. I worshipped Nezhdanov. I dared not approach him. Then, having finished school, I begged Alexander Yulikov, who was on friendly terms with Nezhdanov, to introduce us. Nezhdanov sometimes came to Moscow, and his arrival was like that of some prophet or preacher. We agreed to meet in the Italian courtyard of the Pushkin Museum. I arrived there, half-dead with excitement. In the brownish gloom of that space, I saw two figures, Yulikov and Nezhdanov, come around the corner. Nezhdanov was so thin, strangely red-cheeked; he was wearing a child's suit and shoes polished to a shine. I began to tremble as they approached. Yulikov was visibly worried, too. He mumbled my name and said that I had wanted to meet Nezhdanov. Nezhdanov shot me a quick glance, stood there for a second or two, then turned around and left. Yulikov ran after him. Later, when I called Yulikov and asked him what had happened, he admitted in a depressed voice that Nezhdanov wasn't interested in "talking to people like me." Well, Nezhdanov was a prophet, after all. He immediately identified a person's spiritual potential.

A few years later, I managed to rehabilitate myself. At the time, I lived in a house on the corner of Old Arbat and Smolensk Square, opposite the Foreign Ministry. It had been built in the 1930s in constructivist style and was originally intended as a hotel. On the first floor, there was a long public balcony, right over the delicatessen on the ground floor. I liked to go down to that balcony. There was never anyone there; it felt like floating above the crowd of people in the street. Once, I looked down from there and saw the two of them walking along—Nezhdanov and Yulikov, engrossed in conversation. Excited, I shouted, "Alex, Alex!" I was addressing Yulikov, but Nezhdanov's name was the same, and he raised his head. His eyes were so expressive. He looked up expectantly. Maybe he thought it was an angel calling him. And Yulikov just stopped in his tracks, not raising his head. I sprinted down the stairs and ran up to them. And then Nezhdanov was very gracious with me. He must have appreciated the extravagance of our meeting. Later, he reinvented himself as Alexander Ney. This transformation took place in America. He was an unearthly man. There were always admirers around him, ambitious people waiting for revelations. He was a teacher and demanded reverence. His youth was the brightest period of his life. He tried many different professions; he was a gardener, a fireman. He was a highly unusual person, very different from everyone; he had special knowledge. I kept talking to him in my head for a long time.

A New Dichotomy between Man and the Universe
In her book *The Human Condition*, published after the launch of the first satellite, Hannah Arendt wrote: While man can do things from a "universal," absolute standpoint, what the philosophers had never deemed possible, he has lost his capacity to think in universal, absolute terms, thus realizing and defeating at the same time the standards and ideals of traditional philosophy. Instead of the old dichotomy between earth and sky we have a new one between man and the universe, or between the capacities of the human mind for understanding and the universal laws which man can discover and handle without true comprehension.[24]

Elagina and Makarevich's cosmic viewpoint marks this new dichotomy between the human being and the universe. When an astronomer from Greenwich Observatory saw the *Cosmos* installation exhibited in London, he said that he had now finally understood what dark matter was—something beyond description or sensory experience. In Elagina and Makarevich's *Cosmos*, the infinity of dark matter is juxtaposed with the detail of the subject medium. Following the principles of Russian cosmism, the artists combine a visionary approach with practical tasks. The materiality of their installations (stairs, shoes, a lamp, a coat rack) emphasizes the emptiness of space. But although a person is no longer there, traces remain. Maybe that person has died, turned into cosmic dust, disintegrated into wandering atom-spirits or maybe we are simply unable to see them, an unknown intelligent force superior to us, calling for cosmic expansion.



I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Sketch for the installation *Unknown Intelligent Forces* for the exhibition *Counterpoint*, Louvre, Paris, 2010

Cosmos by Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich
Cosmos is first and foremost a rejection of the literal attempt to fit cosmic space into our minds. The cosmos, we suggest, is not only infinite in space; it is also the microcosm that surrounds every person from birth. It is your world, and you can never leave it. It, too, is infinite. All you must do is immerse yourself in it. And then some sort of understanding becomes possible. Also, everything is surrounded by dark matter. By something utterly incomprehensible.

"Strange as this may sound, the space of the universe, the infinitely distant galaxies, explosions and the births of new worlds, dark matter and other wonders with which modern science so assiduously indulges us coexists in the mind with the communal space through which we comprehend the world, just as the Hubble telescope comprehends the unfathomable universe.

Our dreams, our insights, our fears and hopes are reaching into the abyss of the sky and at the same time crawling, insect-like, along the dilapidated walls of our homes where we find shelter. The light of the mind glides over the glittering radiance of the Milky Way while also seeking to penetrate the lumpy interior of the unknown. The corridors of consciousness sometimes follow the inscrutability of redshift theory and sometimes stop at the threshold of the public kitchen. Since biblical times, the ladder has been a symbol of the ascent to heaven, used both by Jacob and by Siberian shamans helping souls to leave the Earth. But who left that little pile of old shoes on the floorboards?"[25]

1. Viktor Mazin and I coined this notion to describe a semiotic rearrangement in culture. See: Olesya Turkina, Viktor Mazin, "The New Dis-order Summarised in St. Petersburg," in *Post-Soviet Art and Architecture* (London: Academie Ed., 1994). O. Turkina, V. Mazin, "Novyi bes-poriadok," *Moscow Art Magazine. Digest, 1993–2005*, pp. 20–27.
2. *Stargate* (1994) is a science fiction film directed by Ronald Emmerich, in which an archeologist discovers an alien mechanism, a portal for instant travel to an unknown planet. Perestroika became such a Stargate for us.

3. Kunstverein Hannover was one of 60 art associations taking part in the large-scale Kunst Europa exhibition across Germany, bringing together art from East and West after the fall of the Berli Wall. *Sowjetunion. Kunst, Europa,* June 21–August 5, 1991: Ilya Kabakov, Alexander Kosolapov, Igor Makarevich/Elena Elagina, the Necrorealists, Anton Olshvang, Boris Orlov, Dmitri Prigov, Sergey Volkov, Dmitri Vrubel.
4. *Beyond Zero* is an exhibition I curated at Calvert 22 in London in 2014, featuring work by Elena Elagina and Igor Makarevich, as well as by Mikhail Matyushin, Vadim Fishkin, Peter White, and the Blue Soup group, along with films by Pavel Klushantsev.
5. G. Ulmer, "Ob"ekt postkritiki" (The Object of Post-Criticism), translated into Russian by V. Mazin, *Cabinet* 11, 1996, p. 125–154.
6. For scientific, religious-philosophical and poetic texts underlying Russian cosmism, see: *Russkii kosmizm: Antologiia filos. mysli* (Ed. S. Semenova, A. Gacheva) (Moscow: Pedagogika-press, 1993); B. Groys, *Russkii kosmizm: antologiia* (Moscow: Ad Marginem Press, 2015). An alternative view argues that Russian cosmism as a national idea has much earlier origins, perhaps even in early Christian cosmology.
7. K. Malevich. "Suprematism. 34 Drawings" in *Kazimir Malevich. Sobranie sochineniia v piati tomakh*, vol. 1 (Ed. A. Shatskikh) (Moscow: Gilea, 1995), p. 186.
8. See E. Kovtun. "Pobeda nad solnt'sem — nachalo suprematizma," *Nashe nasledie*, vol. 2, 1989.
9. See Viacheslav Koleichuk. "Modelirovanie dlia okolozemnogo prostranstva," *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo*, 11 (288), 1981, p. 24.
10. In 1993, Anastasia Gacheva established the N. Fyodorov Reading Library in Moscow. For a detailed chronology of Russian cosmism, see her publication *Russkii kosmizm v ideiakh i litsakh* (Moscow: Akademicheskii proekt, 2019).
11. Sergey Kuryokhin's Center for Cosmic Research, officially registered by him at the St. Petersburg A-Ya Society, consisted of two departments called "macrocosmos" and "microcosmos." The latter was intended to educate computers that would later become saints of the Orthodox Church, to create "inter-orbital spiritual stations" as well as "permanent artificial and natural satellites of the soul," as stated in the "Regulations of the Centre for Cosmic Research," St. Petersburg, 1992.
12. N. Fyodorov, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tt.* (Ed. A. Gacheva & S. Semenova) (Moscow: Progress, 1995), vol. 2, p. 145.
13. N. Fyodorov, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tt.* (Ed. A. Gacheva & S. Semenova) (Moscow: Progress, 1995), vol. 2, p. 143-144.
14. N. Fyodorov, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tt.* (ed. A. Gacheva & S. Semenova) (Moscow: Progress, 1995), vol.1, p. 281.
15. V. Pelevin, *Transhumanism Inc.* (Moscow: Eksmo. 2021).
16. For a project on Chekhov in which Igor Makarevich was involved, see Olesya Turkina. "The Magicians of Ideology. Igor Makarevich and Vassiliev" in *The Chekhov Project. Igor Makarevich. Oleg Vassiliev. Yuri Vashenkov* (Oslo: Oivind Johansen Editions, 2013), pp. 69–81, 360–364.
17. In 1992, Alexander Komar and Vitaly Melamid, via *Artforum* magazine, appealed to artists to consider transforming Soviet monuments in order to turn Moscow into a "phantasmagorical garden of post-totalitarian art." These projects were then shown in the 1993 exhibition *Monuments: Transformation for the Future* at the Central House of Artists.
18. A. Platonov, *Potomki Solntsa (Fantaziia)*, 1922.
19. N. Fyodorov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, p.371.
20. N. Fyodorov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, p.377.
21. K. Tsiolkovsky, *Volia Vselennoi. Neizvestnye razumnye sily* (Kaluga: gostip KGSNKh, 1928).
22. K. Tsiolkovsky, *Volia Vselennoi. Neizvestnye razumnye sily* (Kaluga: gostip KGSNKh, 1928).
23. "Est' li Bog?" (2nd version, March 1932) in Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, *Ocherki o Vselennoi*, pp. 299–302.
24. H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 270.
25. Elena Elagina, Igor Makarevich, "Explanation of the Installation," 2014. Manuscript.

Igor Makarevich
and Elena Elagina's *The Russian Idea* at the exhibition *Art Index*,
Arsenal City Hall, Riga, 2008

Dmitri Khvorostov

A CONVERSATION WITH THE ARTISTS

When Elena and Igor invited me to write a text for the catalogue, I was delighted, since I was very impressed by the duo's art and had been involved in the *Reconstruction* of their *Closed Fish Exhibition* at the Voznesensky Center by Jan Ginzburg and a group of art students. However, organizing my impressions and thoughts proved to be quite a challenge: I realized that I was in a state of affect. The thing is, exposure to Lena and Igor's work reshapes something crucial in the way I look at art. Perhaps this is typical of artists who explore the museum as a topic, suspending exhibition conventions or narrativizing the experience of seeing.

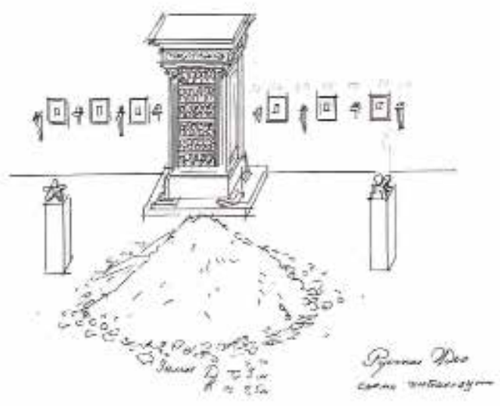
Elagina and Makarevich's work occupies a special place in the history of Russian art. While they belong to the first wave of Moscow conceptualism, their projects go beyond both conceptualism and Moscow. Consider the striking thanatocentrism in some of their works: *Life in the Snow, Borisov's Diary, Changes, Homo Lignum*. In these and other projects, you can detect a gothic darkness quite untypical of the Moscow context. The project devoted to the fictional character Borisov, a sawmill worker irresistibly erotically attracted to wood, shows clear links to the darkly absurd film *Silver Heads* by Yevgeny Yufit. Even the popular and usually optimistic cosmic narrative unfolds in darker tones in Lena and Igor's projects. Their assemblage turns out surprisingly suggestive, much more convincing than Kabakov's little angels or the romantic constructivism of Arseny Zhilyaev and Anton Vidokle, the main standard-bearers of Russian cosmism. Lena and Igor are drawn to an exhibition esthetics that forms the genealogical base of the modern museum—the cabinet of curiosities with its marinated babies and taxidermical sketches. They keenly sense the dark nature of all things museal.

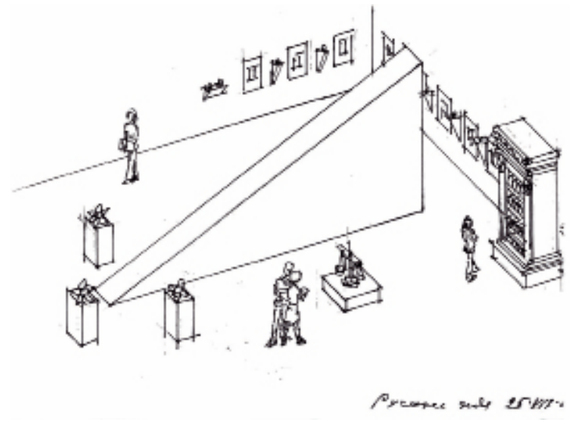
This kind of museum creates a special kind of spectator, too, as portrayed most vividly in Lopushansky's film *A Visitor to a Museum*: a madman raves about salvation, longs for an exhibition, driven by mental ennui, and loses his last hope for a happy ending along the way. Clearly, Lena and Igor create a particular anthropology that is close to existentialism. However, they view human nature rather differently. During a long conversation, Lena once opined that life had no meaning. Igor gave it some thought and said that there was a meaning after all, namely "the contemplation of approaching death." This discordance turns into a philosophical symphony in the duo's projects, sometimes tilting toward analysis and intellectual play, at other times succumbing to dramatic thanatography. I'm not sure if I'm capable of seriously analyzing the binary specifics of this artistic alliance, but what certainly comes to mind is a formula by the last European visionary, Jean Parvulesco: "Everything that approaches truth must bifurcate."

As for the conceptualist aspects of the duo's art, apart from subtle formalism and attention to texture, to the body of things, their works are closer to those of the group Inspection Medical Hermeneutics, a second generation of conceptualism characterized by literary, narrative, and even mystical features. For example, the project The Writer's Tale, about a miraculous blow to the head, contains ironic discourse on magic and the nature of creativity. Lena and Igor have a wonderful sense of humor. Arguably, this is the quality that enabled them to drive formerly serious conceptualist gestures ad absurdum—to turn concepts into rebuses, texts into epitaphs.

Their strangest and most ambiguous project, *The Russian Idea* (2002, XL Gallery), emerged as a response to a common trope in political discussions of the late 1990s—the search for the Russian Idea. At first glance, the artists' answer is traditional: we see an impressive gallery of national thinkers and the key images that emerge in such a discourse: land, bread, a project of the future, and references to the secret, the hidden, the elusive—the essence, the meaning, the category.

When I talk to Elena and Igor about this project, they politely explain that the zeitgeist had demanded this topic back then, that it had urgently needed some kind of "flipped form." This flip is present in the exhibition, but what I really wanted to know is the intention of the project. Does it have a conclusion? Do they have an answer to the question of the Russian Idea? To be honest, I even wanted to discuss the Russian Idea in this text, but it turned out an impossible task, plus one that nobody asked me to tackle.





Igor Makarevich
and Elena Elagina's *The Russian Idea* at the exhibition *Art Index*, Arsenal City Art Hall, Riga, 2008

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina.
Sketches for the installation *The Russian Idea*, 2007

Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina's installation *The Russian Idea* at the exhibition *Countdown*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, 2021

Dmitri Khvorostov: In your projects, the question of the role of art seems crucial. There may be many answers, or perhaps the question is complicated enough to be unanswerable. Can the role of art be formulated? Does your art relate to constructivism in the context of the Russian national idea, of Russian culture? Do you see yourselves as agents of Russian culture?

Elena Elagina: I'd say that we study and investigate culture, trying to understand certain things.

Igor Makarevich: Still, we are not indifferent.

EE: We have our basic themes and reflections, albeit often ironic ones. And yes, we do our research.

IM: We define where we are.

DK: And how do you feel doing that? Estranged, detached?

EE: We tend toward detachment: otherwise, if you go in too deep, you lose your mind or you become a laughing-stock. A friend of ours, who unfortunately died recently, had read a lot about the magi and could not stop talking about them. He just couldn't talk about anything else.

DK: How does this detachment, this distance arise? For example, we might imagine a scientist who, in a laboratory, is distanced from the object of study by the constructed experiment. On the other hand, we know the story of an apple falling on a scientist's head, of reality infecting someone, in a way…

EE: …stimulating someone.

DK: Yes, stimulating someone, like the blow of a log to the head. There was this blow, which threw people off course, creating a distance, and this blow was a collision of world and human, world and knowledge. And then you find yourself at some distance from the world. On the other hand, there can be total conscious immersion into the world. You can see it in literary form in Andrei Monastyrski's novel *Kashira Highway*, which is based on a real, spiritual experience; he got deep into it and then managed to leap out of it, and this created distance.

EE: I think he kept that distance and then came back.

IM: You could say that.

EE: He got lucky; apparently, it had to be that way.

DK: But it could have gone on and on, and there, you risk landing in a looney bin: the next stage would be antipsychotics, haloperidol and all that jazz.

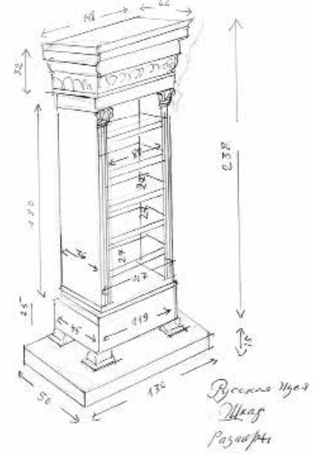
EE: That's terrible.

DK: That's how it worked in Soviet times.

EE: Yes, they made people take horrible drugs there. I think the Soviet authorities inadvertently helped us create distance.

DK: It seems to me that any effective distance for observing things comes from depth.
But the deeper you go...

EE: …the harder it is to get out.



I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Sketch for the installation
The Russian Idea, 2007

Elena Elagina
and Igor Makarevich's work
as part of *Making Worlds*,
Venice Biennale, 2009

DK: The shamanic illness works in a similar way: say, there is a young man in a tribe who isn't able to do the simplest things like carrying brushwood or picking berries. He's been like that forever. If you give him a toy, he'll break it; he cries or laughs all the time. At some point, a shaman takes him in and manages to teach him two or three basic functions. Then the young man overcomes the shamanic illness and returns to the tribe; he starts understanding the social structures, the local geography, and after his delirium, having had the experience of distance, receives spiritual power. Have you ever had such an experience, an epiphany, a particular moment that you might call the birth of the soul?

EE: I experienced something like that after my time in a psychiatric clinic. I was 16 and my worldview changed considerably. An unpleasant thing happened: I went somewhere on holiday, and my mother decided to tidy up my room while I was away. With the help of some other people, she got rid of my books, my favorite things, some of my works. They took some of these things to the cellar, threw others away, made a mess of everything. It gave me such a shock that I thought: that's it, I've had enough. So, I took all of my grandmother's pills, there was some Medinal in there, and I almost died. They noticed that I was asleep for a long time, called an ambulance and had my stomach pumped; then they sent me to the madhouse and kept me there for a week. Or for ten days, even. It was the psychosomatic ward of the Botkin hospital. This quickly put me in a different state. For example, I understood that I shouldn't get attached to things; that really made a big difference. But my attitude toward life in general changed completely.

DK: How did that change come about? Through internal dialogue, by making sense of your act or by observing the people around you?

EE: I was fascinated by everything around me. In my room, there were mostly failed suicides. In the neighboring beds, there were women who had tried to kill themselves. Some had jumped out of windows and broken a limb; others had tried poison themselves. That was later, though. First, I was in a ward with senile old women who were in a state of stupor; one woman was in lethargic sleep. It was horrible. It was as if there was a dead person in the bed next to me. (To Igor) Didn't everything change for you after the madhouse?

IM: For me, things changed at a certain age; in the sixth or seventh grade I developed persecution mania, and it lasted for about two years, or maybe a year and a half. I went to school, I studied; outwardly, nobody could see what was going on with me. It was almost a disease: I couldn't walk down a street, it was a terrible ordeal for me, an insurmountable sense of danger.

EE: Was it agoraphobia?

IM: No, I wasn't just afraid of large spaces; the fear was constant.

EE: The fear of what?

IM: I don't know. Pure terror. For example, I remember there were films about virgin Siberian soil and they filled me with extreme angst.

EE: I actually liked those films! I used to make plasticine trucks bringing sacks of grain from virgin soil regions.

DH: All these things going on: the mowing, the combines, all that machinery. A nightmare!

EE: Were you afraid of being sent there?

IM: No; there was a sense of dreadful melancholy, hopelessness. I made an enormous effort for it to go unnoticed. And then I found a cure: I gradually began to remember the tiniest details of my childhood: the furniture, the arrangement of objects, and somehow that remembering healed me. Recovering these objects in my memory really helped me; eventually the anxiety went away, and I was all right again. And yes, that brought me some distance; I could look at reality with different eyes.

DK: As children and teens, did you ever want to become Young Pioneers, members of the Komsomol, to follow the path that society offered?

EE: I managed to avoid the Young Pioneers, and I certainly never considered joining the Komsomol. There was no desire to do that whatsoever.

DK: There wasn't?

EE: Nope. I was very good at school, but it had nothing to do with ideology.

DK: So, the correct way of the Soviet citizen didn't seem sexy to you?

EE: Not in the least. Those rituals, the parades, the "good deeds" in the style of Timur and his team from Gaidar's books, this whole set of Soviet archetypes—no thank you.

IM: My parents were members of the Stalinist generation, though; they weren't at the forefront of the system, but they did fit in.

E. Elagina, *Special Object*. Detail of Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina's installation *The Russian Idea*, 2007

EE: My mother had hated Stalin since she was a schoolgirl: the KGB walked right into the class and took away her teacher. Many relatives and close friends were arrested, too. She had no illusions about the authorities. Still, there was a general collective spirit, a collective optimism.

IM: I grew up in a model Soviet family: I was surrounded by a positive world, a sunny backdrop free of fears. But one day in the early 1950s, a stooped, worn-out man knocked on the door of our little room on the Arbat. My parents treated him with marked deference. The stranger spoke at length with my father, and this conversation gave me a sense of underlying danger. I listened intensely to their muffled voices. I could hear phrases like "beaten to death," "machine-gunned," "prison war between the tough guys and the politicos." These words and the dark, unshaven face of the evening visitor filled me with deep horror. These were the first black holes in the wonderful world that had hitherto surrounded me. I later found out that the man's name was Miron Merzhanov. He had been known as Stalin's architect and used to design state buildings and important government facilities. His dizzying career was cut short with one such assignments. Just before the war, construction work was going on at the very heart of the Kremlin: two old halls were connected into one larger one for the meetings of the Supreme Soviet. Miron Merzhanov was appointed to lead the reconstruction. He managed to persuade the authorities that the large emblem of the Soviet Union, to be placed most prominently in the hall, should be made of wood. The talented artist that he was, he wanted the entire interior to be made of one material. Everything was perfect. Stalin, however, was furious. The main symbol of the new powerful state was made of wood, an archaic, outdated material calling to mind the country's agricultural past. The mighty architect was demoted, thrown into the Gulag, and his name was erased from all his previous designs. As soon as Merzhanov was arrested, workers with saws and axes stormed into the hall and within hours demolished the wooden coat of arms, replacing it with one made of polished bronze. The country was industrialized, after all, so everything had to be made of steel or bronze.

DK: In the 1950s, people lived in a world created by Stalin, and within the framework of Stalin's imperative those who disagreed were silenced. Still, he had created this whole world, and it remained standing. It survived the war, and the people who had spent most of their lives building it found it understandably hard to give it up; they could not just negate this experience. They were inclined to only perceive what helped keep their beliefs alive. When someone starts making jokes about the essence of your life, of course it seems unsettling and distasteful. I can understand these people. Besides, you can't just keep casting pearls, at some point they must add up to something. I think your work becomes more and more of a path, a highway of artistic paths. Do you have a similar feeling, do you see a path when you look at your own work? And if so, where does it lead?

IM: We lived our youth and young adulthood under the Soviet regime, which made the path crystal clear to us: all our thoughts were aimed at destroying the communist ideology that surrounded us, at damaging the image constructed around us.

DK: Was this a revolutionary or a satirical urge? Or did you perhaps feel like tricksters caught in the Soviet narrative?

IM: It was satirical: there was no real desire for radical change. It's just that we saw an ideology forced upon us, and we had to fight it or introduce an alternative. It was Western art that became this alternative, our positive field of knowledge.

DK: Modern Western art?

IM: Yes, because classical art was not forbidden. Just the opposite, it was encouraged; the history of art was studied. But modern, or let's say modernist art was persecuted. There were no books; we were in a vacuum. Even the names of Russian avant-garde artists had been erased. We had no idea about Malevich, say. What did he do, why was he so reviled, what was the secret behind his work? Many avant-garde artists were still alive then; they taught us at art schools, they worked in design bureaus, but they did their best to behave like quiet little mice. They did not dare mention their own past. God forbid! They knew it was extremely dangerous; they had lived through a time when any reminder of their closeness to avant-gardism could have put them in grave danger and ultimately led to total collapse.

People say that Una, Malevich's daughter, was a frightened creature who saw her father as a failure, and a dangerous one at that: he had failed the whole family, she thought; they were all miserable because of his sins. Then, one day, she was in Poland—some travel was possible at the time, and as Malevich of Polish origin, he probably had relatives in Poland—and a man across from her on the train was reading a magazine with her father's photograph on the cover. Astonished, she finally dared ask him: "Who is the man on the cover"? And he replied: "Don't you know? This is a great artist." This stunned her, and for the first time in her life she wondered if her father really was a leper best erased from memory. She saw a completely different attitude toward him. Our life was oriented toward this unknown code of the avant-garde; we kept looking for information about it, tried to reflect on it. Our creative journey was not one of confusion but of mobilization. Most of the people around us did not even try to think. They automatically fulfilled what the official authorities were teaching. Some, though, had views that were similar to ours.

DK: I think I can understand this feeling well, can experience it retrospectively, even though I was born at a different time. This longing, this demand for reconstruction, for the exhumation of a body (of work) that was buried in the early 20th century by the revolution. I am confronted with fragments of this body, this corpse, simply by walking around the city, discovering pre-revolutionary architecture, the churches, Kazan Station. The Soviets broke everything down, simplifying and twisting things until the world looked utterly different. For instance, at the Martha and Mary Convent, there is a modernist church built in 1916–1917. It is absolutely incredible: a mixture of Byzantine and Russian styles, stucco, and the overall effect is of futurism. Even today it looks like something from the future, when in fact it was the past preparing a future which never came to pass. Being in it gives me the feeling that something is wrong, that something important has been interrupted. It seems to me that the "Russian style" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries is of great importance; it was then that Russian history and the Russian national myth began to be written in a new language. But the writing of this Russian myth was interrupted.

Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina's *The Russian Idea*, XL Gallery, 2007

EE: The Russian idea was interrupted also by the expulsion of its creators. It's a tragedy. It was a beautiful Russian idea, a beautiful utopia.

DK: When somebody unpacks pre-revolutionary reconstructivisms today, they immediately become isolated, they get into this problem field where they are asked: why do we need this? To put it crudely, for most, the Russian idea is over.

EE: But is it? I think it has been incarnated in full, in various spaces. Take food court—that's the communal idea for you, sobornost, if you will. Yes, food courts reflect the Russian idea.

DK: Well, that's an interesting consideration. An imperial one, as it happens: after all, food courts represent a multinational gastronomic code.

EE: They represent the Russian people.

DK: The Russian People, capitalized.

EE: Yes, food courts do unite people. But on a rather materialistic level.

DK: To get back to the Russian idea: was it present in your circle in Soviet times, when you were fighting the Soviet idea?

EE: Yes, it was. For instance, I talked a lot with the theologist Evgeny Shiffers; he even wanted to be my godfather. True, I was told that my nanny had baptized me back when I was little, but I had my doubts that this had really happened. My father was a communist, after all, this just wasn't done. And so, when I decided to be baptized, Shiffers wanted to be my godfather. He supplied me with literature, and as he was not a zealot but an enlightened man, all this was interesting. Of course, it was all connected to the Russian idea; he was fond not so much of canonical saints but of Russian religious philosophers. And, naturally, it was all extremely important to me.

***

The main question, which is certainly naive and perhaps even inappropriate in today's context, remains unanswered. Here is it: "Is your appeal to the Russian Idea really an appeal, or a homage, an invocation?" After the conversation, Igor gave me a shy nod, a signal of mere politeness or perhaps of secret agreement. I leave, encouraged by the conversation. It seems I have heard the main point. However, editing this text, I realise that something has been lost. My immediate relationship to this project is gone.

The text is published with minor omissions.

Bronze Bread on a Black Marble Base. Detail of Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina's installation *The Russian Idea*, 2007

Portraits of Russian thinkers for Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina's *The Russian Idea*, 2007

P. S.

E. Elagina
Food of the Future, 2020

E. Elagina
The Heart of Our Motherland, 2020

Elena Elagina's object *PREkrasnoe* at the exhibition *Countdown*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, 2021

I. Makarevich
Star of Geometry, 2015

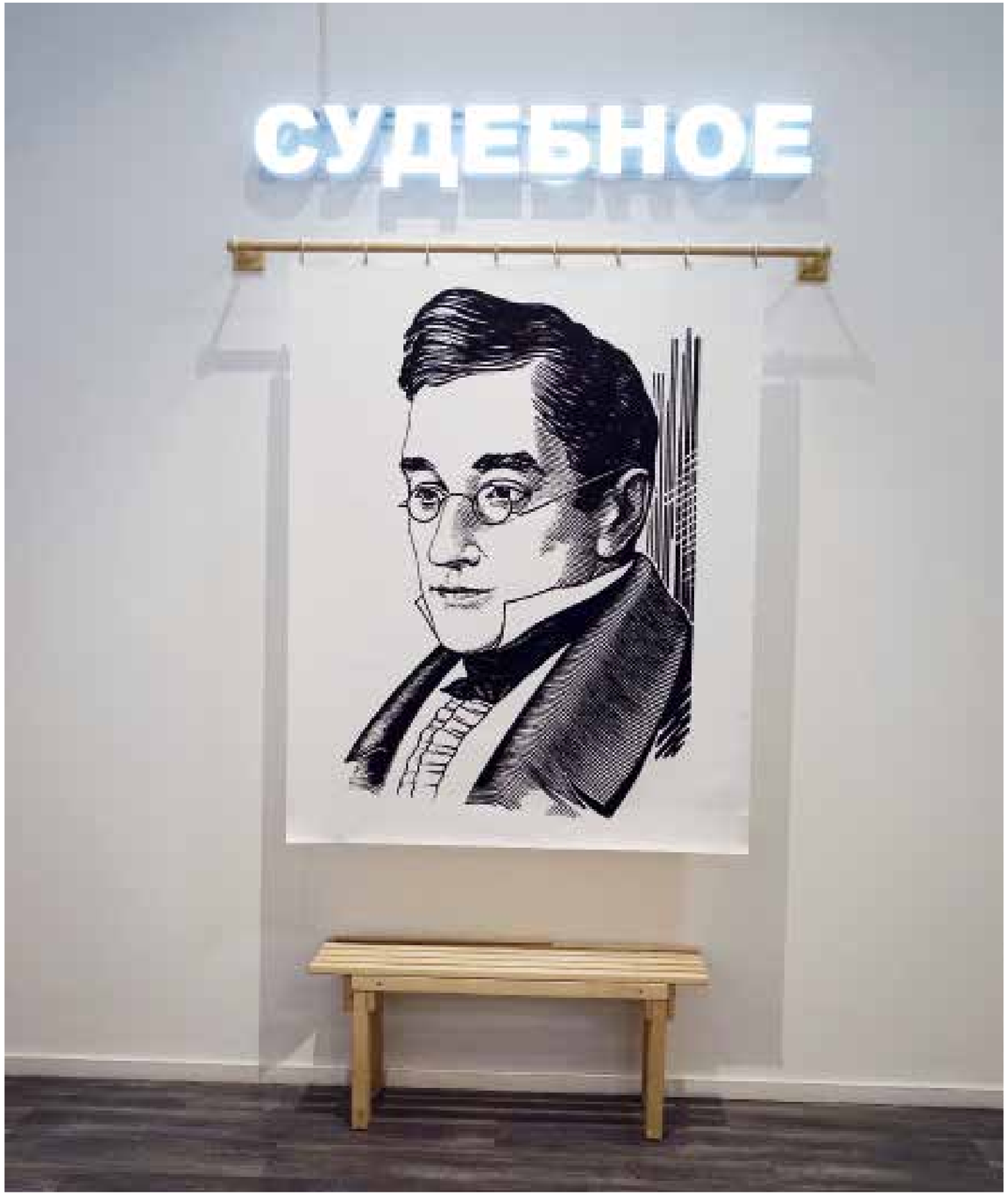
E. Elagina
External – Internal, 2010

E. Elagina
The Main Thing, 2020

I. Makarevich
Muzbes, 2013

E. Elagina
Feminine, 2010

E. Elagina
Trial, 2020



Anna Tolstova

ON FISH, MUSHROOMS, AND TREES

Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina are the same age as the fathers of sots art, Vitaly Komar and Alex Melamid. But as a duo, they are much younger. Their shared debut, the famous *Closed Fish Exhibition*, took place in 1990, and in this sense, they are younger than the youngest generation of conceptualists such as the group Inspection Medical Hermeneutics. The technique underlying their mushroom cycle—objects, assemblages, and paintings of toadstools sprouting on Suprematist backgrounds, growing right through Malevich's squares and architectons—might seem close to sots art. But let us look more closely at the fly agarics sprouting from building of the Exhibition of National Economic Achievements (VDNKh) and giving birth to Tatlin-like towers. What we see here is mannerist art trying its best to avoid a head-on collision of languages and ideologies, which is so characteristic of classical sots art.

The metatext behind these hybrid organisms includes Andrei Monastyrski's essay "VDNKh: the Capital of the World," Vladimir Sorokin's Moscow stories, Boris Groys' *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin*, and Vladimir Paperny's *Architecture in the Age of Stalin*: *Culture Two*—in short, the entire corpus of contemporary discussions on the avant-garde, modernism, and postmodernism. It is not by chance that these products of artistic mycology looked so natural next to *The Tower of Babel* by Bruegel the Elder in Vienna in 2009. These are two mannerist worldviews, aware of the vanity of youthful dreams, senile wisdom, and artistic intellectualism. The stylishly achromatic project *The Russian Idea*, on the other hand, moulded from raw earth, black bread, pure spirit, and great utopias, exudes a sense of irony reminiscent of the Inspection Medical Hermeneutics. Finally, we can also find a shared analogy for both *The Russian Idea* and *Mushrooms of the Russian Avant-Garde:* the retro-avant-garde works of the Slovenian group IRWIN, which paradoxically combine irony with sincerity. However, Makarevich and Elagina prefer to see themselves as 1970s artists, members of the generation of post-Thaw disillusionment and metaphysical escapism.

Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina both studied at a very special school, the Moscow Art School, albeit at different times. Makarevich's classmates included the artists Leonid Sokov, Alexander Kosolapov, and Alexander Yulikov. But while they went on to study at institutions emblematic of the underground, he continued at the well-respected Art Department of the State Institute of Cinematography. Elagina joined the School too late to meet this illustrious company, but while studying in the philology department of the Pedagogical Institute she was an assistant to Ernst Neizvestny, in whose studio she encountered early graduates of the School—Vladimir Yankilevsky, Ilya Kabakov, and their friends, the entire "Sretensky Boulevard circle." Later still, Elagina took lessons from the artist Alisa Poret, who in the early 1970s remained the last link to the times of Daniil Kharms and Alexander Vvedensky. Igor and Elena met, married and began to work together, both on monumentally decorative money-making hackwork and as part of the group Collective Actions, which they joined in 1979. Only much later did they become the Makarevich/Elagina duo.

In their installations, the metaphor of universal interconnectedness is presented as hoses and catheters, through which something is flowing from face to photographed face, from painting to painting, from coffin to coffin. What is this something? The world soul, perhaps? Or maybe "living matter," as proclaimed by the Stalinist pseudo-scientist Olga Lepeshinskaya, the object of Elagina's installation *The Laboratory of Great Acts?* (Using hoses to signify connections suggests a seemingly simple, childish, material literalism, which is typical of the way Makarevich and Elagina treat the immaterial.) The two installations that open the exhibition, *The Collective Actions Circle* and *The Life Circle*, lead the viewer into an intimate space of the underground, bound together by ties of friendship and love, with its own "philosophy of the common cause" (a great deal if not most of the duo's works deal with the ideas of Nikolai Fyodorov and Russian cosmism). Photography is a key element in both installations. After all, Makarevich was one of the principal photographic chroniclers of Collective Actions. In photographs from this period, we always see him with a camera in his hands and a guarded, focused expression, as if permanently worried about missing a decisive moment.

An imposing section of *Countdown* is dedicated to works created by Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina independently, both before and after 1990. In these spaces, you cannot but wonder how two so vastly different artists could have found a common language in the first place. And then, gradually, you begin to see and appreciate the contribution of each to the joint work. The photographer Makarevich works with the indexical—with traces, fingerprints, impressions of faces and bodies, and with photographs, which are also, in essence, light impressions. His art is corporeal, erotic, existential, and linked to the tragic experience of human mortality. The philologist Elagina works with the symbolic—with wordplay, rebus objects, slips of tongue, horror stories, and myths. Her art is intellectual, coldly ironic, literary, impersonal, and intertextual. Although she is usually the writer of the two, it is Makarevich who penned one of the best texts of Moscow conceptualism, putting a full stop in the big story of the "little man." This text, which remains underestimated by historians of Russian literature, is called *Borisov's Diary* and illustrated with a multitude of performative photographs, collages, assemblages, objects, and installations. It is difficult to imagine a creative alliance between, say, Christian Boltanski and Joseph Kosuth, but here, the unthinkable happens. By adopting the wood fetishist Borisov, who is tormented by an erotic-thanatological attraction to all things wooden and is gradually turning into wood along with the entire Soviet oikumene, Makarevich and Elagina discover a hybrid art that tells visual stories in space through words and objects. An art that enables them to say a lot and leave even more to the imagination. An art that seems to be all about fish, mushrooms, trees, squares, and towers, but that is human, even too human.

Appendix

Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina List of Works

The works are arranged in order of appearance in the book.

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Creation, 2014
Installation
National Museum Cardiff, Wales

I. Makarevich
Change, 1978 (16 parts)
Gelatine silver print
State Tretyakov Gallery

I. Makarevich
The Weight of Being, 2012
Mixed media
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
The Communard Corpses, 1973
Oil on canvas
Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick

I. Makarevich
Surgical Instruments, 1978
Oil on canvas
Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick

I. Makarevich
The Extra Factor, 1988
Wood, plastic, metal, alkyd enamel
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Dispersion of a Soaring Soul, 1978
Mixed media
Private collection

I. Makarevich
25 Memories of a Friend, 1978
Wood, plastic, alkyd enamel
AZ Museum, Moscow

I. Makarevich
Dispersion of a Soaring Soul, 1978 (1988 version)
Wood, plaster, alkyd enamel
Private collection

I. Makarevich
A Present for Germany, 1993
Suitcase, papier-mâché, fabric, PVA
Berlinische Galerie (Museum of Modern Art)

I. Makarevich
25 Memories of a Friend, 1978 (2005 version)
Wood, plastic, alkyd enamel
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Zvuv (The Fly Man), 1989
Wood, papier-mâché, plaster, metal, alkyd enamel
Moscow Museum of Modern Art

I. Makarevich
From the *Gallery* series, 1988
Mixed media
Private collection

I. Makarevich
The Lion of St. Mark, 1989
Mixed media
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Bate, 1988
Mixed media
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Temperature of Change, 1990
Mixed media
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

I. Makarevich
Case of Sensations, 1978
Wood, papier-mâché, acrylic
Moscow Museum of Modern Art

I. Makarevich
Cross of St. Andrew, 1989
Wood, encaustic painting, plastic
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Landscape with Five Flies, 1992
Wood, encaustic painting, acrylic, plastic
Private collection

I. Makarevich.
Cross of St. Ignatius, 1989
Wood, plastic
Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick

I. Makarevich
Case of Sensations, 1979
Wood, papier-mâché, acrylic
Moscow Museum of Modern Art

I. Makarevich
Reincarnation of St. Ignatius, 1990
Installation
Private collection

I. Makarevich
The Sleep of Painting Produces Monsters, 1990
Installation
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

I. Makarevich
From the series *USSR: Bastion of Peace*, 1989
Encaustic in canvas
Private collection

I. Makarevich
From the series *USSR: Bastion of Peace*, 1989
Encaustic on canvas
Private collection

I. Makarevich
From the series *USSR: Bastion of Peace*, 1989
Encaustic on canvas
Private collection

I. Makarevich
I Love Paris, 1989
Mixed media
Private collection

I. Makarevich
From the series *USSR: Bastion of Peace*, 1989
Encaustic on canvas
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Covered Painting, 1988 (triptych)
Wood, enamel, encaustic painting, alkyd enamel
Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham

I. Makarevich
Sotheby's, 1988
Wood, enamel, encaustic painting, relief
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Open Space, 1988
Installation
Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham

I. Makarevich
Poetic Landscape, 1992
Encaustic on canvas
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Movable Gallery of Russian Artists, 1979
1) cardboard case with plaster fingerprints;
2) stand with black-and-white photos of fingerprints
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

I. Makarevich
Stationary Gallery of Russian Artists (Portrait of Ivan Chuikov), 1981–1991
Wooden relief, oil
State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

I. Makarevich
Stationary Gallery of Russian Artists (Portrait of Ilya Kabakov), 1983–1986
Object. Mixed media
State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

I. Makarevich
Stationary Gallery of Russian Artists (Portrait of Erik Bulatov), 1987–1989
Wood, oil, and enamel
State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

I. Makarevich
Change, 1978 (25 parts)
Print on film (1979)
Centre Pompidou, Paris

I. Makarevich
Selection of the Target, 1977 (14 parts)
Gelatine silver print
Centre Pompidou, Paris

E. Elagina
The Sublime – The Infernal, 1989 (1992 version)
Mixed media
Private collection

E. Elagina
Clean, 1987
Installation. Wood, ceramic tiles, 5 plastic vessels, plastic worms, enamel, wooden stool, glass bottle, Furacin solution, rubber tube
Tate, London

E. Elagina
Children's, 1988
Installation. 2 elements:
1) tablet: wood, plywood letters, PVA;
2) object: wooden bench, warming pad, plasticine, bandage, acrylic
Stella Art Foundation, Moscow

E. Elagina
Tar-Based, 1990
Installation. 2 elements:
1) tablet: wood, plywood, plywood letters, PVA;
2) object: wooden base, metal pipe, tarpaulin impregnated, tar
Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham

E. Elagina
Vascular, 1990
Installation. Tablet (wood, plywood, relief, PVA), plastic bucket, plastic tubing, 2 plastic laundry trays
Berlinische Galerie (Museum of Modern Art)

E. Elagina
The Sublime — The Infernal, 1989
Installation. 3 elements:
1) Sublime panel: plywood, velvet, applique, metal fittings;
2) Infernal panel: plywood, oil, velvet, metal hooks;
3) 2 chairs, metal, metal chain, weight
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

E. Elagina
Iksisos, 1992
Mixed media
Private collection

E. Elagina
Girls and Death, 1993
Installation
Private collection

E. Elagina, I. Makarevich
Iron Fly, 2000
Metal, laser cutting, welding
Private collection

E. Elagina, I. Makarevich
Mikoyan's Womb, 1994
Mixed media
Collection of the artists' family

E. Elagina, I. Makarevich
Slits, 1990
Oilcloth
Centre Pompidou, Paris

E. Elagina, I. Makarevich
Near the Pier in Kuibyshev, 1990
Mixed media
Stella Art Foundation, Moscow

E. Elagina, I. Makarevich.
The Washing of the Red Fish, 1990–1996
Ironing board, shower, plaster relief, sieve, alkyd enamel
Ludwig Museum, Cologne

E. Elagina, I. Makarevich
Fish, 1990
Mixed media
Stella Art Foundation, Moscow

I. Makarevich
RIS-UNOK, 2000
Installation. Objects: rice, lead, glass, wood, cardboard. Drawings: pencil on paper

I. Makarevich
The Writer's Tale, 1994
Installation
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Assemblage for the project *Life in the Snow*, 1995
Stella Art Foundation, Moscow

I. Makarevich
Buratino's Space Circle, 2003
Acrylic on canvas
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Buratino's Space Cross, 2003
Acrylic on canvas
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Untitled, 1993
Oil on canvas
Private collection

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Malevich's Hut, 2003
Wood, carving, canvas, acrylic
Moscow Museum of Modern Art

I. Makarevich
Buratino in the North, 1994
Acrylic on canvas
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Life in the Snow, 1995
Paper collage
Stella Art Foundation, Moscow

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Wooden Eagle with the Golden Key, 2003
Wood carving
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Assemblage for the project *Life in the Snow*, 1995
Stella Art Foundation, Moscow

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Life in the Snow, 2003
Installation
State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Frost-Bitten Eagle, from the project *Life in the Snow*, 2003 (2005 version)
Metal, refrigeration device
Stella Art Foundation, Moscow

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Book of Snow, from the project *Life in the Snow*, 2003
Etching on hand-coloured paper, aquatint, colored ink, pen
Stella Art Foundation, Moscow.

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Snowshoe, from the project *Life in the Snow*, 2003
Wood, leather
Collection of the artists' family

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Pagan, 2003–2005
Installation
Private collection

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Mushrooms of the Russian Avant-Garde, 2008–2015
Installation
Private collection

E. Elagina
Laboratory of Great Acts, 1996
Installation
Private collection

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Gerantomachy, 1990
Installation for the project *Shizokitai: Hallucination in Power*
Lost

I. Makarevich
Lignomania, 1996
Installation
Lost

I. Makarevich
Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov, 1998
Photogravure from the series *Homo Lignum*
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov's Dwelling, 1998
Photo from the series *Homo Lignum*, Ilfochrome
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov's Dwelling, 1998
Photo from the series *Homo Lignum* series.
Gelatine silver print by the author
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov's Dwelling, 1998
Photo from the series *Homo Lignum*.
Gelatine silver print by the author
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov, 1998
Photo from the series *Homo Lignum*.
Gelatine silver print by the author: photographic paper, mechanical and chemical processing of the negative and positive
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Slave Girl, 2000
Oil on canvas
Collection of the author's family

I. Makarevich
Buratino's Skull, 1998
Aspen, Indian marble
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Borisov's Icon, 1998
Object
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Handle of Borisov's Cane, 1998
Mahogany, carving
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Borisov's Diary (Story of the Wardrobe), 2015
Hand-made paper with watermarks, colored ink, pen, colored pencils
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Ganymede, 2004
Oil on canvas
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Within the Limits of the Beautiful, 1992
Installation
Private collection

I. Makarevich
Sketch for the installation *Within the Limits of the Beautiful*, 1992
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Common Cause, 2012
Installation
Lost

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Sketches and drawings for the installation *Common Cause*, 2012
Collection of the artists' family

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Sketch for the installation *Common Cause*, 2012
Collection of the artists' family

I. Makarevich, Elagina
Reconstruction of the burial plan of the philosopher Nikolai Fyodorov at Skorbyashensky Monastery in Moscow for the installation *Common Cause*, 2012
Colored ink and pen on patinated paper
Collection of the artists' family

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Sketch for the installation *Common Cause*, 2012
Collection of the artists' family

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Unknown Intelligent Forces, 2010
Installation
Moscow Museum of Modern Art

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Sketch for the installation *Unknown Intelligent Forces*, 2010
Collection of the artists' family

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
The Russian Idea, 2008
Installation
ROSIZO Museum and Exhibition Center, Moscow

I. Makarevich, E. Elagina
Sketches for the installation *The Russian Idea*, 2007
Collection of the artists' family

E. Elagina
Special Object, 2007
Bronze
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Bronze Bread on a Black Marble Base, 2007
Private collection

E. Elagina
Food of the Future, 2020
Mixed media
Collection of the author's family

E. Elagina
The Heart of Our Motherland, 2020
Mixed media
Collection of the artist's family

E. Elagina
PREkrasnoe, 2021
Installation
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Star of Geometry, 2015
Mixed media
Collection of the artist's family

E. Elagina
External – Internal, 2010
Mixed media
Collection of the artist's family

E. Elagina
The Main Thing, 2020
Mixed media
Collection of the artist's family

I. Makarevich
Muzbes, 2013
Mixed media
Collection of the artist's family

E. Elagina
Feminine, 2010
Mixed media
Collection of the artist's family

E. Elagina
Trial, 2020
Mixed media
Collection of the artist's family

Igor Makarevich
Selected Solo Exhibitions

1979
Exhibition at Vavilov Street studios, Moscow. Catalogue
Abramov. Chuikov. Makarevitch, Centre Georges Pompidou. Paris, France
Freedom—Liberty, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, USA

1995
Life in the Snow. Journey on an Ice Floe, Krings-Ernst Galerie, Cologne, Germany
How to Survive in the Summer Snow, Overcoat Gallery, Moscow

1996
Lignomani, XL Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue

1997
Partial Change, Obscuri Viri Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Homo Lignum, XL Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue

1998
Seeking Paradise, XL Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Selections from the Diary of Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov, Hand Print Workshop International, Alexandria, USA

1999
Selected Entries from the Diaries of Nikolai Ivanovich Borisov, or The Secret Life of Trees, XL Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Homo Lignum 99, Spider & Mouse Gallery, Moscow

2000
Nikolaj Ivanovitj Borisovs Museum, Edsvik Konsthall, Sollentuna, Sweden
Borisov the Visionary. Within the Limits of the Beautiful, National Center for Contemporary Arts, Nizhny Novgorod
Drawings by the Old Soviet Masters, XL Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Three Views, Sakhalin Regional Art Museum, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk

2001
In Search of Lost Time, Krings-Ernst Galerie, Cologne, Germany
Evidence of Harmony, Yaroslavl Art Museum

2003
Masters of Contemporary Russian Mythology, Gallery K, Washington, USA
Works on Paper 1993–2003, Pinakoteka Moscow
Pagan, XL Gallery, Moscow.
Homo Lignum 03, National Center for Contemporary Arts, Moscow. Catalogue

2010
Manifestations Conceptuelles, Galerie Blue Square, Paris

2011
Erastov's Home. XL Gallery, Moscow

2013
Unknown Intelligent Forces, Stella Art Foundation, Moscow

2014
Homo Lignum. The Story of a Wardrobe, Navicula Artis Gallery, St. Petersburg
Borisov Museum, Atlas Sztuki Gallery, Lodz, Poland

Igor Makarevich
Selected Group Exhibitions

1979
Photographic Art, City Graphic Arts Committee, Moscow
Twenty Years of Independent Art from the Soviet Union (20 Jahre unabhängige Kunst aus der Sowjetunion), Kunstmuseum Bochum, Germany

1980
Nonconformists: Contemporary Commentary from the Soviet Union, University of Maryland Art Gallery, USA. Catalogue
New Tendencies in Russian Unofficial Art, Museum of Soviet Unofficial Art, Jersey City, USA
Russian New Wave, Contemporary Russian Art Center of America, New York. USA. Catalogue

1982
Aspects of Soviet Art in Contemporary Culture. Russian Samizdat Art, Chappaqua Library Gallery, New York, USA

1983
Russian Samizdat Art, 1960–1982, Hewlett Gallery, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA

1984
Russian Samizdat Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA

1987
The Object in Contemporary Art, City Graphic Arts Committee, Moscow
Retrospective of Work by Moscow Artists. 1957–1987, Hermitage Creative Association, Moscow
First Exhibition of the Avant-Garde Club, Avtozavodskaya Street, Moscow
Photographic Art. Hermitage Creative Association, Moscow

1988
Nowe ruskie (New Russians), Palace of Culture and Science, Warsaw, Poland. Catalogue
Exhibition of the Avant-Garde Club, Swimming Pool Hall of the Sandunovskie Baths, Moscow

1989
Expensive Art. Avant-Garde Club, Moscow Palace of Youth.
The Green Show, Exit Art Gallery, New York, USA; Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina, Canada; Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, Canada. Catalogue
Smile, Please. Soviet Photography, Paris. Catalogue
Inexpensive Art, or Small Creatures, First Gallery, Moscow

1990
The Work of Art in the Age of Perestroika, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, USA
Adaption and Negation of Socialist Realism, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Connecticut, USA. Catalogue

1991
Other Art, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue

1992
Topography, L Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Exhibition in Butyrskaya Prison, Institute of Contemporary Art, Moscow
A Mosca ... a Mosca ..., Villa Campoleto, Herculaneum; Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Bologna, Italy

1993
Views of Three Artists on Chekhov's Art, Culture Centre. Kirkenes, Norway. Catalogue
Monuments. Transformation for the Future, Institute of Contemporary Art, Moscow
Three Views, Murmansk Regional Art Museum

1994
Vanishing Point Moscow (Fluchtpunkt Moskau), Aachen. Catalogue
Victory and Defeat, Obscuri Viri Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
The Artist Instead of the Artwork, or A Leap into the Void. Central House of Artists, Moscow
Seeing in the Gloom, II Cetinjski Bijenale, Cetinje, Montenegro. Catalogue

1995
The Art of Dying, Yakut Gallery, Manege Central Exhibition Hall, Moscow. Catalogue
Walks Beyond the Horizon, Belyaevo Gallery, Moscow

1996
From Gulag to Glasnost: Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union, Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, USA. Catalogue

1998
Body and the East. From the 1960s to the Present, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, Slovenia

2000
KLAV(a)'s Lovers, Central House of Artists, Moscow
Personal View, International Hand-Printing Workshop, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue

2002
40 Years of Non-Conformist Art, Manege Central Exhibition Hall, Moscow

2003
Berlin—Moskau / Moskau—Berlin, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany. Catalogue

2004
Lucky Letters, Yasnaya Polyana Gallery, Tula

Warszawa–Moskwa / Moscow–Warsaw. 1900–2000, Zachęta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, Warsaw, Poland; State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Beyond Memory: Soviet Nonconformist Photography and Photo-Related Works of Art, Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, USA. Catalogue

2005
Warsaw–Moscow. 1900–2000, State Tretyakov Gallery. Catalogue
Russian Pop Art, State Tretyakov Gallery.
Catalogue Russia! Nine Hundred Years of Masterpieces and Master Collections, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA. Catalogue
Collage in Russia, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Catalogue

2006
Once Upon a Time, There Was Chernobyl, Centro de Cultura Contemporanea de Barcelona, Spain. Catalogue

2007
Adventures of the Black Square, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Catalogue

2008
Russian Povera, Marat Guelman Foundation. Catalogue

2009
Another Mythology, National Center for Contemporary Arts, Moscow. Catalogue
Crisis of Identity, Open Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Installation Sketches, XL Gallery. Moscow

2010
Masculinity, Open Gallery. Moscow
Glasnost: Soviet Non-Conformist Art from the 1980s, *Haunch of Venison Gallery*, London. Catalogue
Memories and Dreams, Open Gallery, Moscow

2011
Illusion, including the installation *Borisov's Photolab*, National Center for Contemporary Arts, Nizhny Novgorod. Catalogue

2012
I Was Here, Open Gallery, Moscow
Moscow Conceptualism. The Beginning. National Center for Contemporary Arts, Nizhny Novgorod.
Limited Edition. Open Gallery, Moscow

2013
Dreams for Those Who Are Awake.
Moscow Museum of Modern Art
Kafka in Russian Book Illustrations,
Library of Book Illustration, St. Petersburg

2014
Beyond Zero, Calvert Gallery 22, London, UK. Catalogue
In the Footsteps of Malevich, Arina Kovner Foundation, Zurich, Switzerland. Catalogue

2015
Kafka, Ark Gallery, Moscow
Spiritual, Eternal Stuff, Museum of Moscow
Kreks Feks Peks. State Literature Museum, Moscow. Catalogue
Around Kharms, KultProekt Gallery, Moscow

Elena Elagina
Solo Exhibitions

1996
Laboratory of Great Work, Obscuri Viri Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue

Elena Elagina
Selected Group Exhibitions

1990
Woman Worker, L Gallery, Moscow

1991
Visiting. Avant-Garde Club, Peresvetov Lane, Moscow

1992
Hearts of Four, Officers Club, Frunze Academy, Moscow

1994
Museum of Desires. Hearts of Four, Institute of Modern Art; Officers Club, Moscow
After Perestroika. The Cook or the Servant. National Gallery of Art, East Wing, Washington, USA. Catalogue

1995
Woman Worker 2, L Gallery, Moscow
The Limits of Interpretation, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow. Catalogue
About Beauty, Regina Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue

1997
Item Two, Phoenix Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue

1999
Gender Boundaries, ZSZhI, Moscow; Gallery of the Free Culture Partnership, St. Petersburg; Cyber-Femin-Club, St Petersburg. Catalogue

2001
Femme Art: Women Painting in Russia XV-XX Century, State Tretyakov Gallery. Catalogue

2004
Eurografik, Moscow Museum of Modern Art

2005
Gender Disturbances, Moscow Museum of Modern Art; ARTPOLE, Aidan Gallery and XL Gallery, Moscow

2008
The Power of Water, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Catalogue

2010
Gender Check, MUMOK, Vienna, Austria. Catalogue
ŽEN d'ART. The Gender History of Art in the Post-Soviet Space: 1989–2009, Moscow Museum of Modern Art. Catalogue

2011
Exséquorc Project, IX Krasnoyarsk Museum Biennale
In Depth, IX Krasnoyarsk Museum Biennale

2013
International Women's Day. Feminism: from Avant-Garde to the Present Day. Rabochy i Kolkhoznitsa Museum and Exhibition Center, Moscow. Catalogue

Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina
Joint Projects

1990
Closed Fish Exhibition, MANI Museum, Moscow

1992
Within the Limits of the Beautiful, L Gallery, Moscow

1993
Girls and Death, Velta Gallery, Moscow
Fish Exhibition and Other Installations (Fischausstellung und andere Installationen), Krings-Ernst Galerie, Cologne, Germany. Catalogue

1994
Life in the Snow, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.
The Writer's Tale, Central House of Artists. Moscow

1995
Playing Croquet, Obscuri Viri Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue

2000
NOMAGE, Museum of Animal Pathology at the Veterinary Academy of St. Petersburg
Proof of Harmony, Yaroslavl Art Museum

2002
Iron Fly, XL Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue

2003
Pagan, XL Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue

2005
Within the Limits of the Beautiful, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue

2008
Mushrooms of the Russian Avant-Garde, A-Foundation Gallery, Rochelle School, London, UK; Sandmann Gallery, Berlin, Germany. Catalogue

2009
In situ, Kunsthistorisches Museum.
Vienna, Austria. Catalogue

2010
Manifestations Conceptuelles, Galerie Blue Square, Paris, France

2013
Unknown Intelligent Forces, Stella Art Foundation, Moscow

2015
Makarevich—Elagina: Analysis of Art,
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
Pagan, Fundacja Profile, Warsaw, Poland

2021
Countdown, Moscow Museum of Modern Art

Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina
Joint Projects in Selected Group Exhibitions

1989
Perspectives of Conceptualism, Avant-Garde Club, Moscow

1990
Between Spring and Summer: Soviet Conceptual Art in the Era of Late Communism, Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, USA. Catalogue
Toward the Object. Tsaritsyno Museum, Moscow; Amsterdam City Museum and Stedelijk Museum, Netherlands. Catalogue
Shizokitai: Hallucination in Power, Avant-Garde Club, Moscow
Collective Exhibition, Kuznetsky Most, Moscow. Catalogue
Exposition, Tsaritsyno Museum, Moscow

1991
Perspectives of Conceptualism, Art Gallery of the University of Hawaii at Honolulu; Clock Tower Gallery, New York, USA
MANI Museum: 40 Moscow Artists at Frankfurt's Carmelite Monastery, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Catalogue
Private Lessons, Gallery 1.0, Moscow. Catalogue
Soviet Contemporary Art From Thaw To Perestroika, Setagaya Museum of Art, Japan. Catalogue
Contemporary Russian Artists, Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Catalogue
Art: Europe—Soviet Union, Kunstverein Hannover, Germany. Catalogue
Novocento, L Gallery, Central House of Artists. Moscow

1992
In the Rooms, Bratislava House of Culture, Slovakia. Catalogue
Ex USSR, Groningen Museum, Netherlands. Catalogue
Perspectives on Conceptualism, Fine Arts Center at the University of Rhode Island; North Carolina Museum of Art, USA. Catalogue

1993
Gifts for Germany, Central House of Artists, Moscow; Tränenpalast, Berlin, Germany. Catalogue
Perspectives of Conceptualism, Santa Fe Art Centre. New Mexico, USA.
Temporary Address for Contemporary Russian Art, Musée de la Poste, Paris, France. Catalogue
New Art Territories Festival, Krasnoyarsk. Catalogue
From Malevich to Kabakov. Russian Avant-garde of the Century from the Ludwig Museum, Sammlung Ludwig, Cologne, Germany. Catalogue

1995
Concealed Art. Non-Conformists in Russia 1957–1995, Wilhelm Hack Museum. Ludwigshafen am Rhein, Germany
Esotericum (Tarot Cards), XL Gallery. Moscow. Catalogue
Measuring Forces. The End of the Great Utopia, Kunstverein Munich, Germany.
Drawings of the Moscow Scene, Gallery Hohenthal und Bergen. Munich, Germany. Catalogue
Measuring Forces—Instead of Archaeology, Berlin Academy of Arts, Germany
Flight—Departure—Disappearance. Moscow Conceptual Art, Galerie Hlavniho Mesta Prahy, Prague, Czech Republic; Haus am Waldsee, Berlin; Stadtgalerie im Sophienhof, Kiel, Germany. Catalogue

1996
Fluxus. Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow. History Without Borders, Central House of Artists, Moscow
The Zone, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Avant-Garde Club 96, Peresvetov Pereulok Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Three Cards, ROSIZO Gallery, Moscow
Moscow Studio: a Five-Year Printmaking Retrospective 1991–1996, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; Mimi First Gallery, New York, USA. Catalogue

1997
Concept and Colours. Pivovarov. Prigov. Elagina. Makarevich, Krings-Ernst Galerie, Cologne, Germany
Collective Actions, Exit Art Gallery, New York, USA
The World of Sensual Things, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow. Catalogue
Mystical Correct, Gallery Hohenthal and Bergen, Berlin, Germany. Catalogue

1998
The World of These Eyes 2, Chuvash State Art Museum, Cheboksary. Catalogue
Seeking Heaven. Workshops. Russia+Switzerland, Tsarskoe Selo
Dynamic Couples, Marat Guelman Gallery; Manege Central Exhibition Hall, Moscow. Catalogue

2000
Ephemerides, British Council, Moscow
Art vs Geography. Beyond, State Russian Museum, Marble Palace, St. Petersburg

2001
Mysterious Relative, Fersman Mineralogical Museum, Moscow

2003
New Approaches. Contemporary Art from Moscow, Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, Germany. Catalogue
Moscow Conceptualism, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Germany. Catalogue

2004
Esotericum (Tarot Cards), Moscow Museum of Modern Art
Berlin–Moscow / Moscow–Berlin (1950–2000), State Historical Museum, Moscow. Catalogue
Essence of Life—Essence of Art, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow; Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary; Museum of Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, Slovenia; State Russian Museum, Marble Palace, St. Petersburg. Catalogue

2006
The Origin of Species. Art in the Age of Social Darwinism. Museum of Modern Art, Toyama; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art. Japan. Catalogue

2007
Wit Works Woe, Vera Pogodina Gallery: VP Studio, Moscow. Catalogue
Word and Image, National Center for Contemporary Arts, Moscow. Catalogue
Learning from Moscow: Positionen aktueller Kunst aus Moskau, Dresden City Art Gallery, Germany. Catalogue

2008
A Magazine on the Sill: History of A-Ya, Sakharov Centre, Moscow. Catalogue
Total Enlightenment. Conceptual Art in Moscow 1960–1990, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany; Fundación Juan March, Madrid, Spain. Catalogue
Altars of the Avant-Garde, Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb, Croatia. Catalogue
This Little-Known Object: Art. Contemporary Russian Masterpieces, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria
Performing the Archive: Collective Actions in the 1970s–80s, Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, USA.
Tales of the Jung Brothers, Laboratory Gallery, Moscow
Russian Art. Paradoxes of History, Bulgarian National Academy of Arts, Sofia. Catalogue

2009
Russian Papers, Galerie Blue Square, Paris, France
The Secret Life of Bodies, Open Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Seduction, Open Gallery, Moscow
Self-Portrait, Fine Art Gallery, Moscow.
Common Cause, 53rd Venice Biennale, Italy. Catalogue
Common Cause 2, Art Biennale of Thessaloniki, Greece

2010
Futurologia / Russian Utopias, Garage Center for Contemporary Culture, Moscow. Catalogue
Sanctuary, E.K.ArtBureau, Moscow
History Lesson, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France. Catalogue.
Counterpoint, Louvre, Paris, France. Catalogue
Manifestes, Passerelle Centre for Contemporary Art, Brest, France. Catalogue
Field of Action. The Moscow Conceptual School in Context 1970s-1980s, Ekaterina Foundation, Moscow Catalogue
304×587, 1887. Installation at the IX Krasnoyarsk Museum Biennale

2011
Snowstorm, National Center for Contemporary Arts, Nizhny Novgorod. Catalogue
Hostages of Emptiness. Aesthetics of Empty Space, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Five MANI Folders: An Experiment in Modeling Cultural Space, Ekaterina Foundation. Catalogue

2012
Norman. Archetypal Variations, National Center for Contemporary Arts, Moscow. Catalogue
The Philosophy of the Common Cause, Perm State Art Gallery
LifeFromFinish, Tula Necropolis; Tula Museum of Fine Arts. Catalogue
Still-Life. Metamorphoses. A Dialogue between the Classic and the Modern, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Catalogue
Shadow of Time, Tsaritsyno Museum, Moscow. Catalogue

2013
Expansion of the Object, Moscow Museum of Modern Art.
Lost in Translation, Moscow Museum of Modern Art. Parallel project within the framework of the 55th Venice Biennale, Ca Foscari University, Venice, Italy
Reconstruction. Part I, Ekaterina Foundation, Moscow. Catalogue
Lenin: Icebreaker, Murmansk—Moscow—Vienna. Catalogue

2014
Reconstruction. Part II, Ekaterina Foundation, Moscow. Catalogue
Childhood, Open Gallery, Moscow
Russian Cosmism, Erarta Gallery, London, UK. Catalogue
One Place Next to Another, Winzavod, Moscow.
Creation, installation at the exhibition *Beyond Zero*, Calvert 22 Gallery, London, UK. Catalogue

2015
Nadezhda Suslova, A Woman Doctor. Installation for the exhibition *Museum of Great Hope*, National Center for Contemporary Arts, Nizhny Novgorod.

2016
Rebooting, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
Moscow Artists Participating in the Venice Biennale, Manege Central Exhibition Hall, St. Petersburg

Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina Museum Collections

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg
Moscow Museum of Modern Art
New Museum, St. Petersburg
AZ Museum, Moscow
Stella Art Foundation, Moscow
Pompidou Centre, Paris
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid
Tate Gallery, London
National Museum of Wales, Cardiff
Berlinische Galerie, Berlin
Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin
Ludwig Museum, Cologne
Würth Museum, Künzelsau
Museum Jorn, Silkeborg
Library of Congress, Washington
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington
Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick
Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, Durham
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh

Works by Igor Makarevich and Elena Elagina are also to be found in in private art collections around the world.

Bibliography

Alchuk, A. “Diletanty i professionaly.” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, February 15, 1996.

Alchuk, A. “Prikliucheniia Buratino.” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, March 26, 1996.

Baigell, M. and R. *Peeling Potatoes, Painting Pictures: Women Artists in Post-Soviet Russia, Estonia, and Latvia* New Brunswick, NJ: Zimmerli Art Museum Press, 2001.

Balashov, A. “Shizokitaĭ.” *Tvorchestvo*, no. 7 (1991): 8–9.

Bobrinskaia, E. “I. Makarevich. Chastichnoe izmenenie.” *Khudozhestvennyĭ dnevnik* (April 1997): 31–33.

Bobrinskaia, E. *Kontseptualizm*. Moscow: Galart, 1994.

Bykova, E., and I. Makarevich. “Graficheskaia seriia k proizvedeniiam F. Kafki.” *Sovetskaia grafika*, no. 7 (1983): 109–118.

Cudecka, A. “Karty Tarot.” *Grapheion*, no. 2. (1998): 80.

Cullerne Bown, M. *Contemporary Russian Art*. Oxford: Phaidon, 1989.

Degot, E. “Der Name des Fisches.” *DU*, no. 3 (February 1993): 13–21.

Degot, E. “Imia Ryby.” *Artograph*, no. 1 (1993): 3–12.

Degot, E. “Skazka o pozhilom Buratino.” *Kommersant*, no. 46 (1996): 12.

Degot, E. “Zhizn’ na snegu zakanchivaetsia tragicheski.” *Kommersant*, no. 104 (1994): 13.

“Drugoe Iskusstvo?” *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR*, no. 7 (1991): 126.

Ermen, R. “Fischausstellung und andere Installationen.” *KUNSTFORUM International*, no. 124 (1993): 438–439.

Fomenko, A. “Festival’ ‘Rossiia Shveĭtsariia.’ Beseda s E. Elaginoĭ i I. Makarevichem” *Mir dizaina*, no. 3 (1998): 73–75.

Frangenberg, F. “I. Makarewitsch, J. Jelagina.” *Kunstforum*, no. 133 (Feb–Apr 1996): 373.

From Gulag to Glasnost: Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union: the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995.

Gambrell, J. “Nekotoraia pol’za ot politiki.” *Tvorchestvo*, no. 2 (1992): 46.

Gambrell, J. “Notes on the Underground.” *Art in America* (November 1998): 117–118.

Gambrell, J. “Report from Moscow.” *Art in America* (November 1992): 50.

Gambrell, J. “The Perils of Perestroika.” *Art in America* (March 1990): 50.

Gerchuk, Y. “Igor’ Makarevich kak monumentalist.” *Dekorativnoe Iskusstvo*, no. 2 (1990): 7–9.

Gerlovina, R., and V. Gerlovin. *Russian Samizdat Art*. New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1987.

Grundmann, U. “Ein Schweinsrüssel macht Geschenke.” *Neue Bildende Kunst*, no. 5 (1992): 12–15.

Hochfield, S. “Soviet Art: New Freedom, New Directions.” *ARTnews* (October 1987): 105.

Isaak, A. *Feminism & Contemporary Art.* London/New York: Routledge, 1996.

Kaimann, F. “Pests.” *Marquee*, January 17, 1999: 7.

Kovalev, A. “Zhizn’ posle zhizni.” *Segodnia*, no. 60 (1996).

Lerner, L. “I. Makarevich. Homo Lignum.” *Khudozhestvennyi dnevnik*, no. 6 (1997): 29–31.

Lerner, L. “I. Makarevich. Interv’iu.” *Arkhiv Sovremennogo Iskusstva*, no. 1 (1997).

Makarevich, I. “Kladbishche kak ideal’naia model’ mirozdaniia.” *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR*, no. 7 (1991): 32–33.

Makarevich, I. “Kniga prodolzhenii.” *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR*, no. 9-10 (1991): 26.

Makarevich, I. “My Work with the Tarot Cards.” *ArtChronika Moscow*, no. 1 (2001): 92–97.

Makarevich, I. “Selection of the Target.” Les Cahiers du Musee national d’art modern, no. 2 (1979): 259–271.

Makarevich, I. “Taro”. *Zhurnal “29”* (April-March 1998): 100–107.

Makarevich, I. “Tol’ko bez imperskikh ambitsiĭ!” *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo*, no. 1-2 (1997).

Monastyrskii. A. “Igor’ Makarevich.” *A-Ia*, no. 3 (1981): 31–34.

Monastyrskii, A. “Monumental’nyi Makarevich.” *Flash Art*, Russian Edition, no. 1 (1989): 132–133.

Orlova, M. “Rai na pomoike.” *Kommersant*, no. 62 (1998).

Petrovskaia, E. “Predchuvstvie rasskaza.” *Segodnia*, no. 144 (1995).

Romer, F. “Iskaniia raia.” *Itogi*, April 14, 1998.

Rothe, W. *Kafka in der Kunst*. Zurich: Belser, 1979.

Ryklin, M. *Apropriatsiia apropriatorov. Terrorologiki*. Tartu/ Moscow: Eidos, 1992.

Ryklin, M. *Iskusstvo kak prepiatstvie*. Moscow: AdMarginem Press,1997.

Ryklin, M. “The Fish Show at the MANI Museum.” *Flash Art News* (Nov/Dec 1990): 178.

Soviet Dissident Artists. Interviews after Perestroika. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995.

Svodnyi katalog vystavok L Galerei. 1991–1998. Moscow: OGI, 1998.

Svo*dnyi katalog vystavok galerei Obscuri Viri.* 1994–1998.

Tarkhanov, A. “Igra v iashchik.” *Kamera Obskura*, no. 3 (1998): 34–39.

The Ludwig Museum at the Russian Museum. St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 1998.

The Print Collector’s Newsletter 26, no. 5 (November–December 1995): 180.

Tupitsyn, M. *Margins of Soviet Art.* Milan: Giancarlo Politi Editore, 1989.

Tupitsyn, M. *Moscow Vanguard Art. 1922–1992.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018.

Tupitsyn, M. “Shaping Soviet Art.” *Art in America* (September 1994): 43.

Tupitsyn, V. *“Drugoe” iskusstvo*. Moscow: AdMarginem Press, 1997.

Igor Makarevich
Elena Elagina

COUNTDOWN

Idea:
Igor Makarevich
Elena Elagina

Design:
Sergey Khripun

Layout design and prepress:
Anna Yurionas-Yurgans

Translator:
Alya Berlina

Copy Editor:
Ruth Addison

Executive Editor:
Danila Stratovich

Publisher:
Artguide Editions (Artguide s.r.o.)

Thank you to XL Gallery for helping
to make this publication possible.

ISBN 978-80-908899-2-7