

Marc Buchy en Katya Ev

Colette Dubois

Entretenir vaut mieux



Marc Buchy, Twirl & Tango, installatie (detail), New Space, Luik (BE) 2022 © Marc Buchy

Marc Buchy (*1988, Metz) en Katya Ev (*1983, Moskou) delen de ruimte van New Space in Luik. Ik ontmoette de twee kunstenaars en de curator, Dorothée Duvivier, voor het eerst op 8 februari, dus nog voordat Poetins troepen Oekraïne binnenvielen. Katya Ev¹, geboren in Moskou, bracht haar jeugd door in Oekraïne. Het spreekt voor zich dat de huidige situatie de kunstenaar diep raakt. In een reactie daarop heeft ze ondertussen een aantal elementen van haar project gewijzigd; ik heb ze in het verslag van dit interview geïntegreerd.

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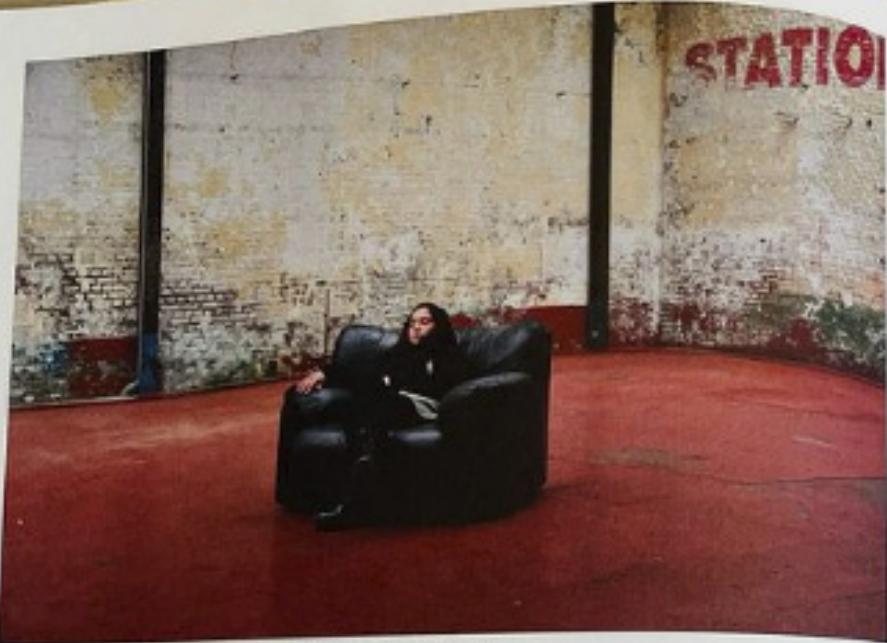
April 7, 2022

Colette DUBOIS

Marc Buchy (*1988, Metz) et Katya Ev (*1983, Moscou) partagent l'espace de la New Space à Liège. La rencontre initiale avec les deux artistes et la curatrice, Dorothée Duvivier, a eu lieu le 8 février dernier, donc avant l'invasion de l'Ukraine par les forces russes de Poutine. Katya Ev, née à Moscou, ayant des origines ukrainiennes, la situation actuelle a bien évidemment bouleversé l'artiste qui a modifié certains éléments de son projet ; je les ai intégrés à la relation de cet entretien.

Les deux artistes placent au centre de leur pratique artistique la performance, le protocole et le geste. Ils se situent hors des formats classiques de l'exposition et des lieux consacrés, pour déconstruire les structures, les institutions, les systèmes de surveillance mis en place. Tous deux interrogent les dispositifs du travail artistique, de la création et de la valeur. Leurs propositions, souvent conceptuelles et minimales, sont radicales dans la manière dont elles perturbent la réception des œuvres par le visiteur. Enfin, tous deux travaillent à l'échelle 1 : 1 et intègrent souvent la prise de risque à leur travail. Dorothée Duviver, curatrice de l'exposition à la New Space de Liège, précise que s'ils s'étaient déjà rencontrés avant de travailler pour cette exposition, ils se connaissaient à peine et ils ne présentent pas ici un travail commun. [...]

Katya Ev renchérit : « On y trouve une certaine symétrie que je trouve intéressante. Les deux propositions sont à la fois « sculpturales » et performatives avec une absence du « performeur » au sens classique. Dans les deux cas, l'expérience du spectateur/visiteur est au centre de l'œuvre. On y trouve aussi des correspondances formelles, l'idée du « voyage » est suggérée, la façon dont les œuvres sont construites avec un élément central accompagné d'interventions subtiles ». Dans les deux cas les interventions ont à voir avec le ready-made. L'esthétique de l'exposition est délibérément simple, fonctionnelle, populaire car en dehors des circuits du monde de l'art. Cette notion de double, de duo prend une forme particulière dans le lien que les œuvres nouent avec l'extérieur : entre la New Space et le quartier [...]



Katya Ev, *Ne rien faire contre rémunération*, performance, New Space, Lük, 2022. © Katya Ev



Marc Buchy, détail de *Twist & Tango*, installation, New Space, Lük, 2022. © Marc Buchy

Katya Ev : *Ne rien faire contre rémunération*

La pratique performative de Katya Ev s'articule souvent autour d'une « situation construite », en référence à Guy Debord, c'est-à-dire un assemblage de paramètres concret : le lieu, les éléments légaux, les moyens de diffusion, etc. Son travail prend place dans l'espace public ou à l'intérieur d'une institution où elle déjoue une situation donnée. « Il y a toujours une dimension socio-politique dans mon travail » dit-elle.

A la New Space, Katya Ev proposera une variante de la performance *Visitors of an Exhibition Space Are Suggested to 'Do Nothing'* présentée à l'exposition de fin de cursus du Hisk qui mettait en jeu les codes néo-libéraux et ceux d'un événement d'art contemporain institutionnel entre un espace de galerie et une esthétique de start-up. Les visiteurs, moyennant la signature d'un contrat par lequel ils s'engageaient à s'asseoir et ne rien faire pendant une heure minimum, pouvaient emprunter un siège confortable mis à disposition contre une rémunération au salaire minimum horaire (à savoir 10,25€ brut de l'heure), à la suite de quoi ils recevaient une fiche de paie. [...]

A cet égard, Katya Ev intervient dans « Art au Centre », où elle propose une affiche – un ready-made de l'affiche « à louer » fortement agrandie qui porte les mots « Ne rien faire contre rémunération » et un numéro de téléphone. Cette intervention articule la performance avec le modèle de la location. Quand je lui fais remarquer qu'il s'agit effectivement aussi de louer son corps, ce qui est lié à la prostitution, Katya Ev acquiesce et précise : « pour moi, cette performance était intéressante dans la confrontation entre le 'rien faire' et le privilège de classe ». Il s'agit de déconstruire l'idée que « ne rien faire » est une perte de temps qui s'oppose ici radicalement à la notion d'otium prônée par la philosophie antique et ensuite largement développée dans la pensée occidentale : un privilège aristocratique obtenu par l'exploitation d'autrui [...] Déterminer le 'rien' est une tâche totalement, ontologiquement impossible. La guerre entre la Russie et l'Ukraine apporte encore d'autres réflexions brûlantes : comme l'indique Dorothée Duvivier, « 'ne rien faire' pose la question de notre impuissance, de notre incapacité à faire, à intervenir, à aider et soutenir les victimes ».

Steun aan Oekraïne

Voor mij als Russisch staatsburger, afkomstig uit Odessa, is Oekraïne een immens persoonlijk drama. Russisch zijn betekende voor mij nooit alleen onderdaan zijn van de Russische staat; het houdt ook in dat ik een gemeenschappelijke achtergrond en cultuur deel met Oekraïne, de Baltische staten en andere voormalige Sovjetrepublieken. En nu gaat het nog veel verder. Geconfronteerd met de gruwelen die Vladimir Poetin begaat, verzet elke vezel in mijn lichaam zich om Russisch genoemd te worden. Maar in plaats van mij beschaamd in stilte te hullen, wil ik mijn verantwoordelijkheid opnemen.

Ik ben enorm bevoordeeld dat ik vrijuit kan spreken en ik spreek in de naam van velen: ik steun Oekraïne en betuig mijn oerchte en diepe solidariteit met het Oekraïense volk, die we altijd onze 'broeders' hebben genoemd, en ik veroordeel de verachtelijke militaire invasie van de Russische staat in Oekraïne.

Miljoenen Russen zijn geschockt door de feiten en kapot van deze menselijke tragedie en al het veroorzaakte leed. Het is in Rusland verboden om het woord 'oorlog' te gebruiken, op straffe van criminale vervolging: verschillende media moesten noodgedwongen stoppen omdat ze weigeren deze oorlog een 'speciale militaire operatie' te noemen.

Nooit eerder werd de publieke opinie in Rusland op dergelijke schaal onderdrukt. Mensen die zich uitspreken tegen de oorlog worden ontslagen, wie deelneemt aan anti-oorlogsmanifestaties (brieven, demonstraties, individuele acties, artistieke uitingen enzovoort), kan vervolgd worden, en elke hulp aan Oekrainers wordt beschouwd als 'verraad aan de staat' en bestraft met tot twintig jaar gevangenisstraf. De Russische staat liegt over de hele lijn en gaat zover om het leger uit te rusten met draagbare crematoria om zo het aantal menselijke slachtoffers te minimaliseren.

Ik roep op tot solidariteit met en steun in welke vorm dan ook voor de slachtoffers van deze verwoestende oorlog en voor kunstenaars, activisten en andere slachtoffers van de Russische staat die anti-oorlogsstandpunten hebben ingenomen. Ik ben actief betrokken bij diverse initiatieven en ik ben van plan om door te gaan en mijn uiterste best te doen met de bescheiden middelen die ik als mens ter beschikking heb.

Katya Ev

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"For me as a Russian citizen and having origins from Odessa, Ukraine is an immense personal drama. Being Russian was never being just the subject of Russian State, but sharing common roots and culture with Ukraine, Baltic States or other former Soviet Republics. Now it goes far beyond that. Facing the horrors committed by Vladimir Putin, all my cells want to scream their opposition to be called Russian. Rather than falling into the silence of shame, I want to take my share of responsibility.

I have a huge privilege to safely speak-out and I speak for many: I support Ukraine and I express my most sincere and profound solidarity with Ukrainian people. I condemn the dirty military invasion of the Russian State in Ukraine, that since ever we called "brother nation". Millions of Russian people are shocked and devastated by this humain tragedy, disaster and suffering. It is prohibited in Russia to name the "WAR" under risk of the criminal pursuits: several medias were closed for their refusal to call the war the "defense military operation".

The unprecedeted repression of public opinion is taking place In Russia everyday. Those who expressed their anti-war position are being fired from their jobs, criminal cases are open to those who committed any anti-war actions (letters, demonstrations, individual actions or artistic expressions etc.), and any help to Ukrainians is considered as the "betrayal of the state" and punishable by up to 20 years in prison. The Russian state applies a massive lie that goes that far to equip the army with portable crematoriums to hide the number of human victims.

I call for solidarity and support in any forms for the victims of this devastating war and for victims of the Russian state who expressed anti-war positions, artists, activists and others. I am actively involved in diverse support initiatives and I plan to continue and to do my best with my modest means of a human being."

Katya Ev, March 10, 2022

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VISITORS:



Katya Ev, *Visitors of an exhibition space are suggested to 'do nothing'*, vue d'exposition *In a Long Blink of an Eye*, HISK, site Gossel, Bruxelles
2020 © Katya Ev

NE RIEN FAIRE, TOUT GAGNER

"Book your slot to 'do nothing'", apostrophe intrigante faite au visiteur, cette injonction à ne rien faire donne le ton de la performance proposée par l'artiste KATYA EV (Moscou, °1983; vit et travaille à Bruxelles et Paris) au sein d'*In a Long Blink of an Eye*, exposition des diplômé-e-s de l'HISK (Hoger Instituut voor Schone Kunsten - Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts) en son nouvel espace bruxellois¹. Ainsi montrée pour la première fois du 17 décembre 2020 au 31 janvier 2021, la pièce *Visitors of an exhibition space are suggested to 'do nothing'* (il est suggéré aux visiteurs d'un espace d'exposition de ne rien faire) se veut une réflexion conceptuelle sur l'incessante productivité induite par le consumérisme contemporain avec, en filigrane, une critique fine des pratiques de rémunération des artistes.



L'Art Même #84 (BE), Claire Contamine, 'Ne rien faire, tout gagner', 2021

Le samedi 19 décembre à 15 heures — acmé de la frénésie des courses de Noël — j'ai rendez-vous pour et avec une expérience artistique censée prendre à rebours le système capitaliste : ne rien faire et être payée.

Isolé à dessin des autres œuvres, l'espace très épuré accueillant la performance *Visitors of an exhibition space are suggested to 'do nothing'* (dénommée *Visitors* pour la suite) propulse le visiteur dans une atmosphère quelque peu atemporelle, jouant de l'esthétique start-up et des codes de l'art contemporain.

En pénétrant, mon regard se fixe sur un grand fauteuil en cuir marron avant de remarquer la présence discrète d'un réceptionniste. L'hôte — tel qu'il est nommé dans le protocole de la performance — m'explique en détail les règles du jeu ou, plutôt, les clauses du contrat auxquelles j'adhère en le signant. Cette étape confère un caractère hautement officiel et exclusif à des règles dont la latitude d'adoption s'avère en réalité très relative : invitée à m'asseoir sur le fauteuil, je dois incarner l'acte même de ne rien faire "avec profond sérieux et engagement personnel" contre rémunération au taux horaire minimum en vigueur en Belgique.

Accompagnée par mon hôte Titouan, je franchis un seuil invisible me transposant métaphoriquement d'un espace bureaucratique à une zone dédiée au confort. Trônant au centre d'un tapis et sous une aura lumineuse, le fauteuil, soigneusement choisi par l'artiste, apparaît comme la sacro-sainte incarnation de la paresse. Néanmoins, je comprends très vite qu'il va plutôt devenir le divan d'un psychanalyste imaginaire, le lieu d'une introspection. Une fois assise, mon seul point de repère est l'horloge posée sur le comptoir de la réception, visible uniquement de biais, permettant de garder l'œil sur le temps qui s'étire durant l'inactivité. Mais, davantage concentrée sur les potentialités qu'offre cette expérience, ma notion du temps devient cependant floue : sans écran d'ordinateur, de panneau publicitaire ou de smartphone à disposition, force est de constater que mes sensations habituellement sollicitées par pareils stimuli sont ici perturbées. Vient alors le temps des questions : au fond, qu'est-ce que rien faire ? Respirer, est-ce ne rien faire ? Scruter l'espace environnant dans ses moindres détails, est-ce ne rien faire ? Même au repos, le corps lui-même est incapable de ne rien faire... À l'instar du *Paradox of Praxis* développé par l'artiste Francis Alÿs en 1997, où le faire peut ne mener à rien ou bien à tout, ici le rien mène à beaucoup. Sur le site web présentant le concept² — qui a aussi valeur de statement —, Katya Ev donne des indications sur la façon d'entendre le "ne rien faire". Il s'agit simplement d'être présent, de créer un vide, à travers un exercice spirituel de conscience de soi.

"L'objectif de ne rien faire peut être atteint en s'abs tenant de toute action", écrit-elle. Elle note avec pertinence que cet acte ne peut être défini que par la négation, comme si cette acceptation ne pouvait être exprimée par le langage. Dans la langue française, le terme le plus proche pour décrire ce qui est proposé par la performance *Visitors* est sans doute l'oisiveté. Or l'oisiveté, proche de la paresse, a une connotation parfois péjorative et, bien souvent, bourgeoise ; elle convoque des figures littéraires comme Oblomov ou Emma Bovary. Dès la Rome antique, l'*otium*, qui peut être traduit par les loisirs de l'esprit, a été établi comme un privilège de classe. Seules les élites ont toujours eu le confort de profiter d'un temps désintéressé pour façoner leur esprit et mieux comprendre le monde, ce que Cicéron nommait *otium cum dignitate*, le repos dans l'honneur. Mais depuis le premier siècle avant Jésus-Christ, les cartes des classes sociales ont été généreusement rebattues et, aujourd'hui, l'absence contrainte d'activité est devenue un signe de pauvreté. L'œuvre montre qu'il y a socialement deux façons de vivre le ne rien faire, l'une étant bien plus précaire que l'autre : les artistes le savent bien et c'est ce que Katya Ev souligne subtilement. La possibilité de prendre une pause d'introspection à durée déterminée par soi-même est un luxe qu'elle offre à ses visiteurs. Elle permet d'expérimenter ce que les Chinois nomment le *wuwei*, un état de présence, de réceptivité, de disponibilité qui ne peut être considéré comme de la passivité. Comme l'indique l'annexe au contrat, "l'activation d'un espace intérieur en connexion profonde avec le soi, tout en s'asseyant tranquillement, en 'ne faisant rien', révèle un potentiel émancipateur." Mais encore faut-il parvenir à lâcher prise.

Pendant ce moment de détachement d'un quotidien effréné offert ici, j'ai davantage eu l'impression de me remplir la tête plutôt que de me la vider. J'ai été extrêmement surprise par le flot de pensées qui m'a soudainement submergée, comme si je vivais un léger *bore-out*, ce nouveau fléau du monde du travail contemporain où l'ennui au bureau finit par épuiser mentalement et physiquement. Perdue dans mes émotions, je me surprends même à m'assoupir. Je parviens à rester un peu plus d'une heure, comme la moitié des participants, et apprendrai par la suite que l'autre moitié n'a presque jamais dépassé les six minutes.

Toutes les interrogations spontanées sur le rien faire mènent aussi à une réflexion plus large sur la dualité activité / passivité. L'invitation faite par Katya Ev à ne rien faire rend le visiteur très actif, puisqu'il est obligé de se confronter au tumulte de ses pensées, souvent mises en pause par le rythme hyperactif qu'imposent nos sociétés contemporaines. La stimulation est en effet rendue permanente par nos interactions dématérialisées, l'information disponible en continu et les réseaux sociaux, nous rendant ainsi passifs à notre propre conscience. Les hôtes, choisis par l'artiste pour leurs capacités d'accompagnement des participants à plonger dans un état de profonde connexion à soi, peuvent les guider vers un état d'apaisement s'ils n'y parviennent pas par eux-mêmes. Il est vrai que la posture du "ne rien faire" peut mettre mal à l'aise : non seulement performer le rien n'est naturel pour personne mais en plus, dans ce dispositif, cette in(activité) se fait aux yeux de tous.

Katya Ev, *Visitors of an exhibition space are suggested to 'do nothing'*, vue d'exposition *In a Long Blink of an Eye*, HISK, site Gossel, Bruxelles
2020 © Laure Cottin Stefarelli, Manuel Wetscher

¹ Établi depuis plusieurs années à Gand, l'HISK dispose en outre, depuis 2020, de ses propres locaux à Bruxelles, plus précisément dans l'ancienne usine Gossel à Molkenbeek-Saint-Jean. *In a Long Blink of an Eye*, exposition inaugurale, s'y est tenue du 17 décembre 2020 au 31 janvier 2021.

² www.doingnothing.website.
³ Monique Chollet, *Chac soi : une odyssee de l'espace domestique*, Paris, éditions Zones, 2015.



Comme le démontre l'autrice Mona Chollet dans son essai *Chez soi*³, le domicile est le lieu où il est le plus socialement acceptable de ne rien faire. Elle cite Gaston Bachelard qui légitime la pratique du repli de soi dans un cadre intime: "La maison abrite la réverie, la maison protège le rêveur, la maison nous permet de rêver en paix. Il n'y a pas que les pensées et les expériences qui sanctionnent les valeurs humaines". Lovée confortablement dans le fauteuil en cuir de *Visitors*, j'essaye de me familiariser avec l'environnement pour tenter de m'y fondre. Mais, dans un espace d'exposition, la propension au rêve est quelque peu mise à mal par la présence des autres visiteurs. Immobile, à distance, le performeur est comme réifié, regardé par le public au même titre que les éléments de mobilier habillant l'espace. Le titre de l'œuvre, considéré en extenso, semble brouiller les pistes. "Visitors of an exhibition space are suggested to 'do nothing', vue d'exposition In a Long Blink of an Eye, HISK, site Gossel, Bruxelles 2020 © Katya Ev

Reporté à une date indéterminée, le projet a finalement amené l'artiste à le concevoir en tant que performance dégagée, diffusée sous forme de publication dont chaque exemplaire serait un contrat. Il suffira à l'acquéreur de le lui renvoyer signé pour que la performance soit activée. Cette publication participant d'un projet à long terme, la pièce présentée à l'HISK en est, en quelque sorte, une version bêta. L'échelle de réalisation de la performance autorisée contractuellement par l'artiste est, quant à elle, extrêmement variable: seuls quelques paramètres essentiels de mise en espace et de respect des règles sociales en vigueur sont obligatoires. Prévoyant de porter sa publication à deux mille exemplaires, Katya Ev souhaite faire sortir la performance du strict cadre du centre d'art, l'ouvrant à des canaux non institutionnels. Dans ce contrat, il est indiqué que l'artiste doit être rémunérée au prorata du nombre d'heures d'inaction des participants. Tant qu'il est au moins égal au salaire minimum en vigueur, le montant de rémunération des participants choisi par le déléguéataire reste libre, peu importe son statut. Cette clause assure en tout cas à l'artiste de percevoir sa rémunération.

Ayant envisagé *Visitors* comme une proposition de nouveau modèle socio-économique diffusible à grande échelle, Katya Ev montre comment l'artiste peut aussi influer sur le monde en s'attaquant à l'appareil juridique qui le régit. Sa performance a en effet été conçue dans la stricte application du droit en vigueur. Pour son concept initial et la publication à venir, elle a souhaité explorer le contrat comme nouvelle forme artistique et a eu pour cela besoin de s'entourer de juristes à même de comprendre tous les enjeux de la performance. Le cheminement juridique a été long. Les deux contrats de délégation et de cession de droits d'auteur ont finalement été rédigés à plusieurs mains, par Nicolas Crestani, avocat en propriété intellectuelle, et par l'équipe de Caveat, projet de recherche basé à Bruxelles comprenant artistes, chercheurs et juristes, dont l'objectif est de repenser les pratiques et relations de travail déterminant la condition des artistes. Caveat souhaite éveiller les consciences de tous les acteurs du monde culturel afin de "contribuer au passage

d'une économie à une écologie de pratiques artistiques"⁵. En ce sens, l'ambition de sa recherche est de créer des alternatives plus durables de collaboration, en élaborant des cadres juridiques valides pour des artistes dont le travail s'intéresse au phénomène contractuel.

En 2018 par exemple, Caveat a soutenu l'installation *Zero Hour* de Sofia Caesar, projet dénonçant la précarité des contrats dits de "zéro heure", phénomène en recrudescence qui voit l'employé s'engager, en quelque sorte, à être à tout moment à disposition de l'employeur. Dans ce cas, comme dans celui de Katya Ev, le groupe de recherche se positionne tel un coproducteur de l'œuvre, mais pas au sens traditionnellement entendu dans l'art contemporain. Caveat ne fournit pas de soutien financier mais bien un accompagnement, un soutien pratique, voire moral. Les artistes aidés sont nommés "produsers", c'est-à-dire des "utilisateurs produisant de la valeur en utilisant ce qu'ils ont produit eux-mêmes"⁶ d'après le terme inventé par le théoricien des médias australien Axel Burns. Par ces liens de "produsage"⁷, l'objectif de Caveat est de créer une relation de longue durée avec les artistes, au cours de laquelle le partage de savoirs et de compétences permet de repenser les solidarités dans le monde de l'art, avec moins de prédatation et plus d'horizontalité. Caveat organise aussi des *reading rooms* durant lesquelles des projets soutenus sont débattus collectivement et forment le point de départ d'une discussion plus large sur les pratiques socio-économiques dans l'art contemporain. Une prochaine *reading room* sera dédiée au contrat préparé pour *Visitors*.

Ce travail sur le contrat mené avec Caveat a produit une réflexion quant à la meilleure façon de traduire le prisme conceptuel de Katya Ev en un langage juridique, tout en jouant sur les ambiguïtés de la loi et ses interprétations actuelles, lesquelles suivent bien souvent un agenda politique sous-jacent. Julie Van Elsande, juriste chez Caveat, a élaboré le contenu du contrat en utilisant tous les interstices et vides juridiques existants. Par exemple, il ne s'agit pas d'un contrat de travail mais d'un contrat de prestation afin d'éviter que l'artiste ne devienne employeuse: les parties ne sont jamais qualifiées autrement que par "vous" et "je", conférant ainsi une certaine ambiguïté au cadre de leurs obligations respectives. La coproduction de *Visitors* eut aussi pour effet de montrer à quel point le droit est une matière vivante, avec laquelle l'on peut jouer pour atteindre des buts autres que la seule législation. Une fois mis en pratique, il peut ouvrir à des questionnements sociaux

plus larges que le cas d'espèce qu'il vient régir. C'est un trait reconnaissable de l'artiste, habituée à produire des pièces subversives, tenant sur le fil de la légalité. En plein état d'urgence post-attentats du 13 novembre 2015, sa performance *Augenmusik* (achetée par le M HKA en 2020) a vu déambuler dans Paris des performeurs portant silencieusement un gyrophaare de police, objet symbolique des forces de l'ordre, pourtant disponible dans le commerce.

Pour *Visitors*, le tour de force du contrat imaginé par l'artiste et Caveat est de rendre valable le fait de ne rien faire dans le système capitaliste. En ce sens, il est intéressant de noter que ce projet produit par l'HISK a donc été financé par des subsides émanant du gouvernement flamand. En rémunérant le spectateur pour le temps passé à ne rien faire, la performance s'attaque à l'argent, valeur centrale du capitalisme, dans la plus grande antinomie. Adoptant toutes les spécificités de son système, elle a même prévu une rémunération à 200% les dimanches et jours fériés.

En offrant le droit de ne rien faire, Katya Ev s'inscrit à contre-courant de ce que la société hyper productiviste attend de son *homo economicus*: "Visitors of an exhibition space are suggested to 'do nothing'" déconstruit l'idée de ne rien faire comme étant du temps perdu, mais aussi la productivité comme valeur" précise-t-elle sur le site "doing nothing"⁸. Par ces incitations au ralentissement, elle s'inscrit également dans une histoire de l'art affirmant l'importance du "ne rien faire" comme l'avait mis en lumière l'exposition *New Ways of doing nothing* à la Kunsthalle de Vienne en 2014, en accord avec la formule du Bartleby de Melville: "je préférerais ne pas". Qu'il s'agisse de l'éloge de la paresse par Kazimir Malevitch dans *The Truth of Mankind* de 1921, de la figure du flâneur chez les situationnistes ou, plus récemment, des œuvres d'Edith Dekyndt questionnant le sommeil et la veille, les propositions artistiques sur la question se posent essentiellement comme des réflexions ou des images sur le "ne rien faire" en tant que geste non productif.

Au visiteur, Katya Ev propose une expérience concrète et légale. En outre, elle lui accorde une grande part d'autodétermination: il peut partir quand il veut. En théorie, il peut ne jamais perdre sa mission rémunérée. N'est-ce pas là, au fond, un nouveau modèle bienveillant des relations de travail qu'a imaginé Katya Ev? Poser un cadre d'obligations mutuelles en laissant au salarié le loisir d'être maître de son temps de travail? Et donc, peut-être, décider de faire ou de ne rien faire, pour toujours.

Claire Contamine

4 Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'espace*, Paris, PUF, 1957.
5 "contribute to a shift from an economy to an ecology of artistic practices" source: <https://caveat.be/pages/about.html>

6 "users producing value as they use", source: <https://caveat.be/producers.html>

7 Définition de "produsage" par son inventeur: "produsage is 'the collective and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement', source: <http://produsage.org/produsage>

8 [www.doingnothing.website/concept-prism](http://doingnothing.website/concept-prism)



Katya Ev, *Visitors of an exhibition space are suggested to 'do nothing'*, vue d'exposition In a Long Blink of an Eye, HISK, site Gossel, Bruxelles 2020 © Katya Ev

Claire Contamine est une curatrice basée à Bruxelles. Titulaire d'un master en histoire de l'art contemporain et d'un master en droit public des universités de la Sorbonne et Panthéon Assas à Paris, elle a travaillé comme assistant curateur au Palais de Tokyo puis comme responsable de l'équipe curatoriale de RIBOCA2, la deuxième édition de la biennale d'art contemporain de Riga. Elle travaille actuellement comme chargée de production des expositions et programmatrice radio à Kanal Centre Pompidou. Elle fait également partie du collectif 10N, espace d'exposition temporaire ouvert en novembre dernier à Uccle.

For all its deadpan self-explanatory qualities, the title of Katya Ev's *Visitors of an Exhibition Space are Suggested to 'Do Nothing'* (2020, henceforth *Visitors*) does not mention what is in fact a crucial aspect of the work: that it employs legal tools to explicitly frame 'doing nothing' as productive labour.¹ A participatory performance piece, it indeed suggests visitors to do nothing, but not without first meticulously spelling out the conditions that 'doing nothing' will be both subject to and enabled by. Upon entering the exhibition space, visitors first encounter a reception desk where they are explained the parameters of the piece. If a spot is available, it is possible to take part and 'do nothing' for any amount of time, and to be financially compensated for every full hour spent in and on the performance. Before commencing, visitors sign a contract that was developed by Ev in close collaboration with a lawyer, and which is legally valid and binding. After the performance, they are remunerated and receive a proof of payment. They are reminded that, now they have sold their time and labour-power to the artist, they are responsible for paying all applicable taxes and social contributions.²

The 'act' of 'doing nothing' itself takes place on a chair placed in the exhibition space and can consist of anything, insofar as the contradictory and ultimately impossible proposition to 'do nothing' must be interpreted and navigated by each visitor as they see fit. Nonetheless, some instructions are given: visitors are invited to be attentive to themselves as well as to their surroundings, to try to be fully 'present.' As such, the performance is supposed to facilitate and foster a pleasant, positive experience of 'doing nothing' marked—again, contradictorily—by a kind of plenitude. This experience, the website for the work states, possesses a "generative emancipatory potential."³

In these notes, I want to begin to rise to the challenge not only of taking this claim seriously, but also of considering and examining it alongside the work's emphatic equation of 'doing nothing' with productive labour and its concomitant, and acute, emphasis on legal regulation. For, as is evident, the putatively emancipatory 'act' of 'doing nothing' here is compromised and contaminated from the outset by capitalist relations, and is threaded through state and legal apparatuses that enable and reproduce these relations—most conspicuously, the labour contract.⁴ What to make of the work's simultaneous foregrounding of legal regulation and the emancipatory potential it would contain? And how to conceptualize this emancipatory potential when it is so clearly entangled with precisely those things that one would imagine we need emancipating from? These contradictions, which *Visitors* all but flaunts, strike me as especially fruitful and instructive for attempts to move beyond a simply and straightforwardly oppositional understanding of emancipation. One limitation of such an understanding is that it tends to become reductive and binary in equating political emancipation overly or exclusively with an antithetical attitude towards something one is either entirely for or against—with the former option supposedly signaling complicity, and the latter requiring critical distanciation and immunization. Another is that it may often not be so viable under the present conditions of neoliberal

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capitalism, where those committed to emancipation are inevitably part of and reliant on systems "whose conditions they have little or no ability to negotiate."⁵ I therefore want to confront and engage the contradictions present in *Visitors* directly, in an effort at thinking how—if at all—claims to emancipation, such as the one staked by the work, might currently be furthered and achieved through artistic and aesthetic practice.



I have asserted, but not yet demonstrated, that 'doing nothing' in *Visitors* is not just subject to, but also *enabled by* the legal framework and conditions advanced in and by the piece. Here, a look at the contract and the paratext accompanying the work is in order. Consider, for instance, this particularly glorious mobilization of the perverse poetic potential of legal-administrative language, on the webpage that explains the premises of the work: "In whichever way 'doing nothing' is enacted concretely, the contract signed by participants formally recognizes that what they are doing is what 'nothing' is."⁶ The pragmatic solipsism of contractual and legal circumscription here substitutes for rather more lofty meditations on the ontology of 'nothingness'. The performativity of legislative utterances is what makes the impossibility of 'doing nothing' appear as available and renders it practically realizable—but not really, as participants in *Visitors* will naturally experience first hand. In this context, it is worth recalling the example of the perception or experience of the absence of a friend in a café, which philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre uses in *Being and Nothingness* to demonstrate the dialectical entwinement of appearance and non-appearance, and ultimately of being and nothingness.⁷ Somewhat like Sartre's absent friend, the contract and the discursive framing of *Visitors* affords a kind of perception of nothing(ness), and sets off a series of reflections on the paradoxical nature of such perception.

But *Visitors* is also, and in ways that are perhaps more significant for my purposes here, reminiscent of feminist philosopher Cressida J. Heyes's interest in a particular kind of liminal experience that she terms anaesthetic time in her book *Anaesthetics of Existence: Essays on Experience at the Edge*. The experience of anaesthetic time is liminal not only in that it mediates between different states, but also because it itself teeters on the edge of what can or cannot be accounted for as (having an) experience. Sleep, passing out, and the self-administration of anaesthetic drugs—both licit and illicit—are all phenomena that Heyes discusses at some length in this regard. But one example, discussed in the introduction to the book, seems particularly valuable in relation to *Visitors*. Here, Heyes describes an advertisement for a float tank—or sensory deprivation tank, where one floats in salted water in complete silence and darkness—that promises the possibility of experiencing nothing while also, quite ironically, stressing the productive dimension of the experience. Heyes mentions that while the promised benefits of the float tank fall "under the headings of relaxation and meditation, broadly construed," the advertisement also insists that such relaxation and

meditation are beneficial for one's work performance: "Some people, we learn, have 'drafted whole portions of books while floating.'"⁸

For Heyes, the float tank demonstrates not only the possibility of withdrawing from experience, but also the ambiguous political import of such forms of withdrawal. It is clear that the float tank is not only a characteristic product of the so-called experience economy, but is also valued precisely to the extent that the experience of 'nothing' would enable productivity. At the same time, insofar as it offers some refuge or respite from what Heyes calls postdisciplinary time—characterized by an excess of stimuli, a proliferation of demands and tasks, and a general sense of temporal fragmentation—anaesthetic time for Heyes is supremely political. If withdrawal into anaesthetic time falls short of qualifying as emancipatory in any immediately recognizable sense, and is likely to be perceived instead as mere escapism, then this is because it troubles the conventional understanding of political agency as the exclusive domain of fully autonomous and self-sovereign individuals. Heyes, however, resists seeing the conscious or unconscious decision to detach from experience only in such terms. She wants to salvage the ambiguous emancipatory qualities of anaesthetic time, and to consider and propose it as a political tactic for the refusal—however flawed and problematic—of conditions which do not allow for escape or effective resistance. Anaesthetic time, for Heyes, presents a form of emancipation (albeit a temporary one) that does not rely so intensely or exclusively on opposition against or negation of its object.

8. Cressida J. Heyes, *Anaesthetics of Existence: Essays on Experience at the Edge* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2020), 8.

In *Visitors*, 'doing nothing' is expressly valorized; it is claimed to possess an emancipatory potential, which would reside in its capacity to activate "an inner space in deep connection to the self." One can certainly be skeptical of this use of therapeutic-meditational rhetoric, or indeed of any appeal to the virtues of supposedly direct and unmediated corporeal experience. But then what is crucial is that this use and this appeal in *Visitors* are complicated by the explicitly avowed intrusion of political economy and the juridical system alike. The work seems to insist on having it both ways—emphasizing the positivity and fullness of the experience of 'doing nothing' while also indexing its imbrication with capital and law. Somewhat analogous to Heyes's treatment of the sensory deprivation tank and of the political valences of anaesthetic time more generally, then, it engages the political character of contemporary experience—including aesthetic experience—in its complex ambiguity.

As such, the work poses some pressing questions for critical cultural theory—which, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has argued, is often disproportionately driven by a 'paranoid' hermeneutics of suspicion and is therefore likely to be impatient with political compromise, complicity, and ambiguity, favouring instead strategies of critical distantiation and determinate negation.⁹ Yes, the experience of 'doing nothing' here is compromised and contaminated by capitalist relations, as I have written,

9. Concomitantly, and importantly for my discussion of *Visitors*, what Sedgwick terms paranoid readings also tend to be politically salient in that they ascribe significance to (aesthetic) pleasures and the forms of betterment and relief they might offer. "Reparative motives, once they become explicit, are inadmissible in paranoid theory both because they are about pleasure ('merely aesthetic') and because they are frankly ameliorative ('merely reformist'). What makes pleasure and amelioration so 'mere'? Only the exclusiveness of paranoia's faith in demystifying exposure: only its cruel and contemptuous assumption that the one thing lacking for global revolution, explosion of gender roles, or whatever, is people's (the other people's) failing to notice the effects of their position: poverty, or deludedness sufficiently exacerbated to make the pain conscious (as if otherwise it wouldn't have been) and intolerable (as if intolerable situations were famous for generating excellent solutions)." Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003), 144.

but does that automatically mean that one should disregard or dismiss its potential emancipatory yield? Should consciousness of the capitalist nature of 'doing nothing' be seen as necessarily foreclosing all politically desirable (side-)effects in advance? And if some visitors do experience something they want to describe as a deep connection to the self, then is this experience or its significance qualitatively lessened because of its subsumption by the juridical-economic complex? The knee-jerk response of the critical critic would be a resounding "yes", but the wholly unironic certainty with which *Visitors* insists simultaneously on the beneficial nature of 'doing nothing' and its entanglement with both the market economy and the law is enough to make anyone think twice.



While I hope already to have shown how 'doing nothing' in *Visitors*, is not at all tantamount to mere passivism or escapism and offers some distinct—if also thorny—political possibilities, objections might still be raised about the apparently individualistic nature of the experience the work affords. Considering that this experience is so explicitly personalized and premised on interiority and a depth model of subjecthood, one may well wonder about how, if at all, it could become communicable—how 'doing nothing' might provide common ground for politically significant activity or praxis. But while individual experiences with *Visitors* may all be unique, they are also likely to be considerably similar. It is ultimately rather improbable, for instance, that someone would not experience and make sense of the work as a more or less determinate and strategic retreat from what Heyes terms postdisciplinary time.

Recall, also, that this supposedly unique and intimate experience is both preceded and followed by an entirely standardized administrative procedure—the signing of the contract, receiving payment—and therefore emphatically conditioned by the impersonal mechanisms and procedures of both the juridical system and capitalism. It remains, at root, an economic transaction. Rather than subvert, transgress, or destabilize the legal and economic frameworks that increasingly regulate life, *Visitors* takes a work-to-rule approach. In so doing, it tests the limits of these frameworks, probes them for inconsistencies, and evaluates what emancipatory experiences are residually possible—or may indeed be newly available. In its affirmation of an outspokenly immanent form of emancipation, Eve's work attests to an arguably less dualistic, but certainly more realistic, understanding of the ambiguous political valences of both artistic production and aesthetic experience at the present time—when compromise and contamination by law and capital cannot be phobically avoided, but need unfortunately to be recognized and reckoned with as the everyday normality for most of us, most of the time.



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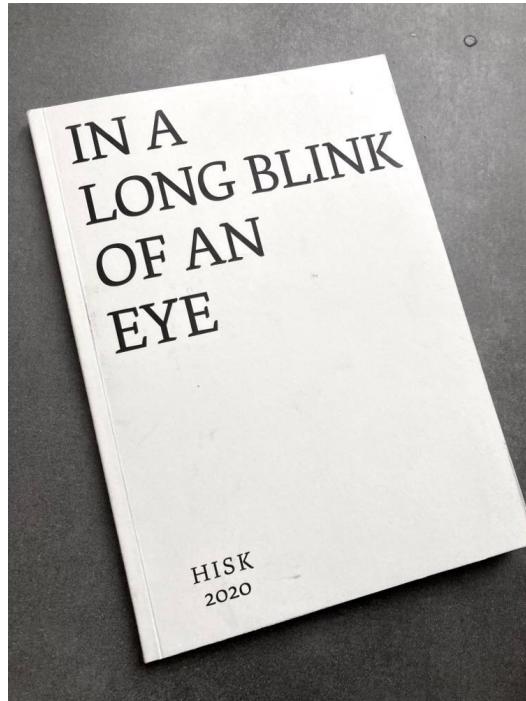
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M HKA library
A Conversation
Between Katya Ev and Bart De Baere

Recorded by CHRISTINE CLINCKX
and transcribed by SABINE HERRYGERS

BART DE BAERE: What is there that should in any case be mentioned in this conversation, other than Augenmusik, which M HKA has committed to. What other points of reference should certainly be taken into account?

KATYA EV: For me, the first important performance was *Axe de Révolution*, in 2014. It was the first performative work and the first site-specific work. Like *Augenmusik*, it was a durational performance: walking for seventeen hours in the city with a six-meter long metal structural element, from north to south. It also linked up to the political context—Moscow and the beginning of war in Ukraine. There are two other performative works that I consider important. Last year, I did a work in the Musée Zadkine in Paris, performing in an institutional space, which you can see as institutional critique or as an “infiltrated performance.”

In tends to be a work called *Blue Room*, linked to the law prohibiting VPN providers in Russia, thus blocking the access to the dark web and to anonymous apps like Tor. This was the most important thing happening politically when I was invited there. In a work like that, I bring together many different parameters of the situation. In this instance, a solo show, how to live in a space, how to live in a public space, how to play with a place, so that every place was new and not labelled as a place of art. I benefited from this and created what I named a “constructed situation,” a term from Guy Debord. A bed, a chair and a desk, a sleeping pill, and a computer configuration was the dark web.

The only anonymousness of the events was that you could not say like website for private persons. People got information anonymously by textting and getting instructions. It worked for two weeks. When visitors were finally pushing in the door and getting into the space—an electric blue room—they received a text that said: “Your timer is unlimited, just send me a message where you want to leave and close the door.” They could stay for two weeks. I had a place for two days, and nobody knew who the visitors, who were alone and anonymous, and I honestly do not know what they did there. They could either go on the dark web or just take a view and chill; it was a kind of David Lynch-like atmosphere: getting to the basement, being in the blue room, not knowing if the offer was true or not. I was in the care of an uncorrected studio, three rooms away, not far from the basement, in the same building, waiting to put the space back to zero every time, perfectly clean to re-open the door, and to let myself out.

B DE: Lets come back to what HISK wants with this kind of notion of “construction” of what you are doing. I think one may distinguish three kinds of “construction” in your work. One is the performative dimension, which has been mentioned as “performances,” and another is the fact that there is a focus everything onto poignant images. Prior to this double figure of performance and image, there is a contextual capacity, as if your work were something you weave, you look at different elements, and then develop a narrative that configures those elements. For that reason, I like this notion of “constructed situation,” which is certainly more precise than that of a “performance.” Your work might be seen as a kind of constructed image, and even as an image, in the sense of a kind of performative image, happening in each of your projects, as opposed to be continued. That’s something very different from a performance, and rather more like setting up a situation.

K EV: Yes, I am having difficulties defining it.

B DE: In any case, it may be interesting not to use the notion of “performance.” It’s too restrictive. It seems to me that calling the works a “constructed situation,” or a “constructed performative image,” might give more attention to their specificity.

KATYA EV: “Constructed situation” or this “constructed performative image” is a performative, very much in its own way, and it is a kind of a “selfie” of your contextual weaving. Although it is not done on your behalf, it also, and simultaneously, depicts. One can see the construction as something of a side effect, an outer dimension of the performance. This “selfie” may get its own life, and it may become more important because it came into existence in the kind of weaving you practice it somehow continues in the “afterlife” of the performative image you construct. The construction is not limited in their initial moment, but they may also continue afterwards through different modes of documentation. In the end, the work is the sum total of all the materials the researcher has collected, including and up to their afterlife. None of them is more important than the other. There is no ultimate goal that transforms the situation or form—any element may continue to be of help. You can turn a work into a video, you may turn it into a single photo, or a series of photos, or into a contextual documentation, or into a re-enactment, or into a reconstruction. That is what I think we should understand by “constructed situation.”

K EV: I feel close to the conceptual logic of Smithson, in which a “site” is about an intervention in a place, opposed to the “non-site,” which is about embracing a kind of absence. My formal intervention process-based work and the temporal structures of subjectivity, not in sculptural or static form.

B DE: Perhaps the core moment is that of the constructed performative image...

K EV: Yes, that is very subjective, because it is linked to the experience of a person, and the key question is how this person feels...

B DE: Making a comment by Smith, by Francis Alÿs, is also a prime “constructed performative image.” “With a beautiful, lavish installation documenting it, with beautiful video, and beautiful materials. In a certain way though, the “wachowdness” of the takes some of the character of the performative moment itself. The “constructed situation” is about the construction of the performance in the temporary state. It is as if the performance was already dominated by, or included in, its specific. In your work, the fact that this is less clearly the case is certainly a quality. K EV: I do think about this. For example, *Axe de Révolution* in Moscow consists of a 17-hour non-stop walk. It started from Moscow’s northernmost point, at the city’s northernmost tip, making a speech about the movement of the sun, leaving at sunrise, crossing with the sun, and ending at a geographical center, the Revolution Square, and then continuing south as the sun went east. For this, I foresaw seventeen hour long film, so I organized myself to have the most complete documentation possible, a 1:1 scale with the real walk. But the walk and the performance has two facets, two parts. There is the abstract one, the cross with the sun formed within the circles out of which Moscow is constructed. And there is the film. It is a completely

HISK publication *In a Long Blink of an Eye*, 2020 - [A Conversation Between Katya Ev and Bart De Baere](#)

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[...]

BDB: In any case, it may be interesting not to use the notion of “performance.” It’s too reductive. It seems to me that calling the works a “constructed situation,” or a “constructed performative image,” might be something that draws more attention to their specificity.

I think there is one more constitutive element of your works, which is their “afterlife.” This “constructed situation” or this “constructed performative image” is very intensely performative, very much in its own time and situation, an outcome of your contextual weaving. Although it happens on its own behalf, it also, and simultaneously, depicts. One can see the documentation as something of a side effect, an outer element, but it is also a continuation. This “afterlife” may get its own form of complexity, precisely because it came into existence out of these different elements. This “afterlife,” a kind of an echo, continues all of the components in the kind of weaving you practice: it somehow continues the capacity of the performative image you construct. The components belong together in their initial moment, but they may also be expressed once again afterwards through different modes of documentation. In the end, the work is the sum total of all the materials: the research and its documentation, including and up to their afterlife. None of these has priority over the other. There is no ultimate goal that transfixes the works in time or form—any element may continue to be of help. You may turn a work into a video, you may turn it into a single photo, or a series of photos, or into a contextual documentation, or into a re-enactment: all of these forms are possible.

[...]

BDB: A question I often ask myself is why a person takes on this very strange and lonely job, being an artist: why does a person decide to move into art? What is the value that gives you the courage to do this? What makes you do this?

K EV: The answer to that is constantly evolving. I moved from Moscow to Paris, and also from being a brand manager in a multinational American company, Procter & Gamble, to making art. I had experienced how high capitalism works from the inside, with all its internal mechanisms, and it

drove me crazy.

{...}

BDB: You work on the borderline between what society accepts and what it doesn’t. You must be quite aware of the fact that there are always conditions, in contrast to our Western societies, which grotesquely pretend that society is free. How do you imagine that political, cultural, and societal changes may affect your work?

K EV: My work draws its origins from them. It is a constant, fluid back and forth. I couldn’t imagine my works as unrelated to the novelty of the historical presence.

BDB: Instead of starting from an analysis of a context, it starts from an acknowledgment and a rendering visible of the conditions. If we compare your methodology with Femen—you’ve already offered a beautiful and very consistent answer with the synapses, but I’ll ask this again all the same—we notice that they work with an output-oriented effectiveness. Is that something you would consider for your work?

K EV: My work makes use of the activism model, yes, it belongs to that family.

BDB: One of our reference artists in Antwerp, Guy Mees, was a hero for us because he was the ultimate anti-hero. We have one of his works from the 1960s in the collection. It is called Lost Space, a prism made of embroidery with black light emanating from its inside. He once said to me: “If I were an American artist, I would have made it room-size, but I’m not.” For him, the reduced model was the right scale. In activism, as I experience it, you have a topic, you turn the topic into a specific goal, and you take a path the authorities do not expect. One of the important components in this is the mediatization. Femen is an extreme example of that, in a most precise way. For you, the mediatization is part of it, as is the amount of people who see the work in an art context afterwards. But it is not the ambition. You count it in, but it is not—at least, so it seems to me—part of the performative image. It is something that may or may not happen.

K EV: You’re right, I am not very interested in mass media. For Axe de la

Révolution, it just happened, I didn't expect it at all, it was crazy. In this specific situation, the performance was seen as such a contestation and transgression that all major television stations came. Actually, I would rather not have gotten that much attention because, in such a tense context, our actions could have landed us in jail. Since then, I've moved my focus away from activist performance and towards the subjective experience of time and temporal structures, in an almost phenomenological sense.

Still, activist artists remain an important influence. I like Alexander Brenner, an artist and activist based in Moscow, for example; in a famous performance at the Pushkin Museum, Brenner was naked and shouting, crying: "Why did you not invite me to this show?" It was super radical, but also super fun and humorous. It is very subtly political, in his case. Or Anatoly Osmolovsky, who, with the activist group E.T.I., used human bodies to write a vulgar Russian word for "dick" on Red Square. Of course, they were counting on media attention, but there is an immediate symbolic efficiency in the proposals. For me, the media effect is only secondary. What interests me is how a work responds to the place, site, or situation in which it happens.

BDB: If we go through the classical notions of performance, I have a list of them here ... the body does not exist as a body but as an experience, and as an actor in the image. The space is a holistic here and now, with all its capacities and all its specificities, expectations, limits, laws, and regulations. I'd name this form "a constructed performative image," but such a description becomes nearly a mathematics of words. It wants to become something and the something is very focused and precise. If we look at the documentation, it seems that for the afterlife you don't have an answer, but always a multitude of possibilities.

K EV: No, I don't have an answer, and it bothers me: I would like to have one. There may be the afterlife in the form of a new event ...

BDB: Like a re-enactment, or like what we did with Augenmusik in Ghent...

K EV: Not necessarily. There are broader possibilities still. It may be a performative conference, or any type of live modality. In the case of Axe de la Révolution, I once did nothing more than narrate it through a series of one-to-one conversations with the public. That was for a solo show that lasted

two weeks. Or it can be a very distance re-enactment, because the works are so site-specific, and their site-specificity is part of their nature, so the re-enactment has to contain that as well. It has to keep the key problematics and formal elements of the initial work, though the *mise-en-scène* can change completely. That is the first modality. A second modality is the archive, in an indexed way. A third are the new and autonomous artworks that come out of or strongly echo the initial performance, as when elements of the performance (documentation, props, etc.) are transformed into a new work. It could be a sculptural work, a video, or an installation. If I were to use Robert Smithson's terms, this would be a kind of "non-site." However, it is very paradoxical to try to render the evasive and shifting nature of a performance—an event—within the static form created for an exhibition space. We can almost say that the site-specific practice works against its own final location, be it a museum or a gallery. Another way to think of a site-specific practice for me is through an analogy with the notion of a *readymade*, a found object: I am working with a "found place" (a term used in environmental theater), or even a "found situation." This is about approaching the context: the geography of a place, its social, political, and historical dimension—outside of representational terms.

-- > Full version of the conversation [here](#)

***En garde* by John C. Welchman**

1.

One of the key operating parameters for (*Le Plus Objet des Objets*) is *stealth*. While the event was announced in a formal invitation in January 2020 as the last in a cycle of four associated performances some weeks after the opening in October 2019 of an exhibition at the Zadkine Museum in Paris ('*Instant de la Matière*'), no further information about it was posted. There was no associated wall text or handout; and during the ensuing event the artist herself did not directly enter the space. Visitors could see no stage or performers—nothing that pointed to anything answering to the event; no visible trace, in fact, of something that to all appearances seemed not to be taking place. Visitors were only alerted to the possibility that they had been unwitting participants in, or witnesses to, the event when they left the space and were given a numbered and stamped slip of paper attesting to their presence and imbrication in whatever it was that had transpired. This *Accusé de Participation* functions, simultaneously as a receipt and attestation, but also—as both the French original and its English translation suggest—as a means of *accusation*.

But more than stealth, the action was subject to plausible deniability, as the officers of the museum and the exhibition's curator, brushed-off or deflected any inquiries about the event and seemed—or claimed—to have no knowledge about it. Stealth, redundancy and deniability thus combined to frame the event as a kind of fraud or deception; or the very least, a secret of some kind ordained by a non-disclosure agreement that was itself undisclosed.

2.

Katya Ev's set-up replaced and augmented all of the invigilating and supervisory staff who would normally work at the reception desk, the security station outside the galleries and, as attendants, in the exhibition galleries themselves. Normally numbering around half a dozen, for her opening night event, Ev commissioned eleven performers, camouflaging them in plain sight in the same kind of casual-smart attire that their opposite numbers in real life might have worn; and effectively replicating their "standard" age and gender profiles. From within these disguises, however, the surrogate protagonists represented a cross-section of individuals chosen because of their capacities to simulate, order or even control the rhetoric of exchange associated with a public situation: some were theatrically-trained actors or performance-seasoned musicians; and the group included the head bouncer from an underground techno-music club and a dominatrix. The artist's careful selection of "actors" offered partially to preempt the concept of a performance directive. She relied on a number of key capacities, orchestrated by a combination of personality and profession, including the ability to instruct or command in ways that were not ostentatious or conspicuous; an awareness of the formality, ritual and *politesse* of the museum space, so that the actors could inhabit the protocol of a guard, using a plausible repertoire of gestures and phrases associated with the function. But effective simulation of museological normality was at the same time overcoded by action mandates that subtly flouted or exceeded this basic framework of reference by recourse to a manner that, as the artist puts it, "would be delicately subversive, or absurd, or inadequate." By way of instructions that might be mildly contradictory, or repetitive, or accompanied by gestural or linguistic accents that somehow exceeded—but only in small increments—the visitor's threshold of expectation or awareness, Ev sought to precipitate and unravel the coercive constitution of art-denominated institutional space.

The "training" of the performers was a kind of interactive seminar predicated on "rules of engagement" that emphasized a number of strategies giving rise to a general mode of situation-correlated exaggeration. The impersonating guards would respond both proactively and reactively to the social horizons of behavior that unfolded around them, interposing facetious even ridiculous routines of advice and prohibition sanctioned by and drawing on their unquestioned authority. A visitor standing some distance from an artwork might be enjoined to "please move closer . . . a bit more, please." When performed seamlessly, this patent reversal of the usual injunction in museums to "stand back" and "keep your distance" might itself appear completely normal; and reluctant viewers would—unselfconsciously—find themselves in compliance. Ev marshaled an array of these control conditions: the nature and direction of viewer itineraries; behavior modifications; and a spate of cautions and warnings. Each was enacted and delivered by drawing on the resources of authority and conviction vested in the vocational arbitration of professional invigilation and secured by unquestioning public sanction.

19. *En garde*, text by John C. Welchman, 2020, about Katya Ev's infiltrated performance, (*LE PLUS OBJET DES OBJETS*), 2019, commissioned by Musée Zadkine, Paris, France for the exhibition 'Instant de la Matière' curated by Azad Asifovich.

3.

(*Le Plus Objet des Objets*) addresses the opacity, arbitrariness, and secrecy of the rule-governed orchestration of museum or gallery space. It foregrounds the over-riding mechanism of control by which these zones are ordered and disciplined: that of surveillance. To this end, it magnifies and italicizes the consequences of the coercive regimen by giving rise to counter-manding episodes fraught with humor, parody, contradiction and even intimations of punishment. Above all the project reveals the contours of the manufacture of consent by way of conformist obedience—a declaration more remarkable because most of the museum-going public would never imagine that their volition could be short-circuited or deferred.

At the same time, the title, (*Le Plus Objet des Objets*), borrowed from Gilles Deleuze, points to the nesting of objects within hierarchies or groups; and, beyond this, to the defining relationality between subject and object. By foregrounding the structures that underwrite and manage social objectification within the museum as a system of objects, Ev points to a fundamental transmutation between orders of identification as objects are consumed by tactical subjectivities; subjects are objectified by routines of surveillance; and the event itself inhabits its invisibility by way of transgressions transacted through covert masquerade.

John C. Welchman is professor of art history, theory and criticism in the Visual Arts department at the University of California, San Diego. His most recent publications include the first two volumes of his collected writings: *Past Realization: Essays on Contemporary European Art* (Sternberg, 2016) and *After the Wagnerian Bouillabaisse* (Sternberg, 2019); *Catching Mayhem by its Tale*, vol. 2, *Paul McCarthy: Caribbean Pirates* (Hauser & Wirth, 2019); *Tala Madani: Shit Moms* (Vienna Secession, 2019); and the monograph, *Richard Jackson* (Hauser & Wirth, 2020). He is also editor of *On the Last Afternoon: Disrupted Ecologies and the Work of Joyce Campbell* (Sternberg, 2019).

POPULAR NEARBY CHOOSE YOUR MUNICIPALITY



© RLA

Performance art with a flashing blue light draws attention to the hard-hit cultural sector

AALST Three performers took a walk to Netwerk Aalst on Saturday evening with a flashing blue light in hand. They did this as part of the 'Still Standing for Culture' campaign and the 'New Songs for Old Cities' exhibition in Netwerk Aalst on the Houtkaai. As part of Still Standing for Culture, there were almost 200 actions by artists across the country to draw attention to the injustice with which they are treated.

Rutger Lievens 21-02-21, 13:40 Last update: 21-02-21, 18:22

08-04 Lindemans Aalst introduces new coach Idner Martins: "He is hungry and..."

08-04 Silke Van Vaerenbergh (Independent) opposes Forensic Psychiatric Center in...

08-04 New asphalt layer for Gentsestraat: "But have they forgotten to asphalt a strip?"

08-04 **HLN+** Johan Van Nieuwenhove (ex-VB, now city list): "Vlaams Belang leader..."

08-04 **HLN+** 'Feud' between Dendermonde and Aalst about Ros Belaard even lives on i...

[ALL MESSAGES](#)

International symposium as an exhibition space for visual arts

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Friday 13/12 in UFO (Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 33 9000 Gent) from 7.30 pm to 10.30 pm.

Saturday 14/12 and Sunday 15/12 in Zebrastraat (Zebrastraat nr 32, 9000 Ghent) from 9 am to 7 pm.

You can register for the symposium via <https://webappsx.ugent.be/eventManager/events/Arbeidendemocratie>.

More info on crescendo-s.eu/nieuws and facebook.com/events/389509278594210

Anyone who sees someone walking down the street with a police flashing light in the late afternoon of Friday December 13, sees a moment from a performance by the Russian artist Katya Ev. Twelve people then walk from all corners of Ghent to the main auditorium of Ghent University, where a symposium starts at 7:30 am with fascinating dialogues from 3 perspectives (economic, identity and city) with, among others, the Greek economist Yanis Varoufakis.



(c) Katya Ev, (c) photo Mathilde Geldhof / Camille Le Chatelier

The theme of the symposium is 'Labour and Democracy'. It was initiated by two friends, the Ghent emeritus professor of anthropology Rik Pinxten and Jan De Tremerie. It is organized by Crescendo-S in collaboration with 't Zaï Wel Gaan, Ugent, the city of Ghent and DIEM25. Pinxten asked M HKA director Bart De Baere, a fan of his, to complement the symposium with a visual art section. De Baere invited three artists, the Russian Katya Ev (ekaterina vasilyeva), who knows Ghent well as a resident of the HISK, the Ukrainian Alevtina Kakhidze and the Greek Danae Stratou. They each make performative and socially oriented work in very different ways. The outcome is a fusion of symposium and visual art.

Katya Ev's contribution is a concentrated version of her performance *Augenmusik*, which took place in 2016 in Paris while the terrorist attacks were still reverberating there, as an image of urgency. She had twenty-four performers

HART Magazine (BE), [Internationaal symposium als tentoonstellingsruimte voor beeldende kunst](#), 2019

ART ROZE

Door Jan Braet

Jan Braet kijkt naar kunst en het leven, in bloei en verval, zoals de rozen. Deze week de expo **Over my (dead) body** in galerie Geukens & De Vil, Antwerpen.

Na haar plots overlijden vorige zomer prezen medestandsters haar 'onverschrokkenheid' en haar 'kwetsbaarheid', twee eigenschappen die ze omschreven als 'machtige wapens tegen onrecht'. De Oekraïense Oxana Shachko, medeoprichtster van de militante feministische groepering Femen, werd amper 31. In 2014 had ze de groep verlaten en was ze haar land ontvlucht als opgejaagd wild. Ze vond asiel in Frankrijk en vestigde zich in Parijs, waar ze zich toelegde op een oude liefde, het schilderen van iconen. Curator Azad Asifovitch presenteert er een tiental in de expo *Over my (dead) body*, aangevuld met sculpturen van Katya Ev en tekeningen van Sofie Muller. Op de smartphone toont hij me Shachko's allereerste icoon, gemaakt toen ze negen jaar was. Een madonna, helemaal volgens de eeuwenoude regels van de kunst geschilderd: met tempera, eigeel en bladgoud op hout.

Op het eerste gezicht lijken de kleine anachronistische iconen die ze in haar laatste jaren schilderde pure afrekeningen met een diep religieus verleden, zo heilsgennend en uitdagend zijn ze. Een vrouwelijke Heilige Drievuldigheid op sneakers speelt doodgemoedereerd roulette. De naakte Christus aan het ene kruis vertoont een erectie, de andere gekruisigde is een naakte vrouw (de voorstelling van naakte martelaresSEN was absoluut taboe in de iconenschilderkunst). De aartsengel Michael van zijn kant verschijnt gewapend met een kalasjnikovgeweer. En sommige provocaties zijn niet eens zo gratuit, beweert Azad Asifovitch: zo zou de orthodoxe kerk belangen hebben in de gok- en de wapenindustrie. Maar Shachko's stijl is zo delicaat, de uitdrukking van de figuren zo vroom en zacht, dat het effect uiterst ambigu is, alsof er aan de snoeiharde satire toch een oprocht verlangen naar een zuivere religiositeit ten grondslag ligt, vergelijkbaar met die van de middeleeuwse iconenschilder Andrej Roeblev, voor wie Oxana Shachko een grote bewondering koesterde.

Ook haar landgenote Katya Ev verontrustte enkele kerken de publieke orde toen ze met Hanna Subovka heel Moskou van noord naar zuid afleefde, gewapend met een zes meter lange metalen staaf, of in Parijs vierentwintig zwaailichten en sirenes van de politie liet mee-

→
DRIEVULDIGHEIDSICOON
van Oxana Shachko, medeoprichtster van de militante feministische groepering Femen.



dragen in een stille optocht. Maar in *Over my (dead) body* zorgt Ev met een ingetogen beschouwing over lichaamselijkheid voor een mooie sculpturale aanvulling bij Shachko's iconen. Een maag, een nier, een baarmoeder en een long, licht geabstraheerd, in gips gegoten en glad gepolijst, vormen evenveel in het rond gestrooide organen van een *Corps Eclaté*. En voor de kamer van de galerie die vanwege het stucrelief op het plafond de *bonbonnière* wordt genoemd, zocht ze een geraamte van een bed in Louis XVI-stijl uit. Ze vulde het met melk, symbool van goddelijke levensdrank, zuivering en moederschap. Melk is bederfelijk, wie deze *Dôme du Silence* bezit, zal regelmatig het bed moeten verversen.

Sofie Muller sluit naadloos aan bij de onverschrokken omgang met kwetsbare lichaamselijkheid en het gebruik van natuurlijke middelen. Geplaagd door een hernia was ze lange tijd niet in staat om sculpturen te maken. Ze tapte haar eigen bloed af voor een reeks kleine tekeningen op albast. Daarbij vertrok ze van levende modellen van wie ze in potlood de contouren schetste en onderwerp die al tekenend aan soms hallucinante vervormingen, in een toestand tussen wildgroei en bederf. Op de getekende lichamen bracht ze met het penseel bloederige vlekken aan die hun eigen vorm zochten: grillige landschappen, roodbruin en ook schimmelgroen door de oxidatie van het bloed. Een onweerstaanbare drang naar echtheid dreef haar, zo zei ze. •

Tot 22 juni.

De naakte Christus aan het ene kruis vertoont een erectie, de andere gekruisigde is een naakte vrouw.

Knack Magazine (BE), Jan Braet, 'Over my (dead) body', 2019

August 13, 2014, 00:10 / Life style

Ekaterina Vasilyeva and Ganna Zubkova crossed Moscow with a pipe for the sake of art

Ekaterina Vasilyeva and Ganna Zubkova carried a heavy beam through Moscow. Their performance "Revolutionary Axis" is one of the cutest art events of the summer

Olga Kabanova

 I'll read it later

Photo documentation of the performance "Revolutionary Axis" / Ekaterina Isaeva



Фото: Татьяна Кузнецова / Медиа

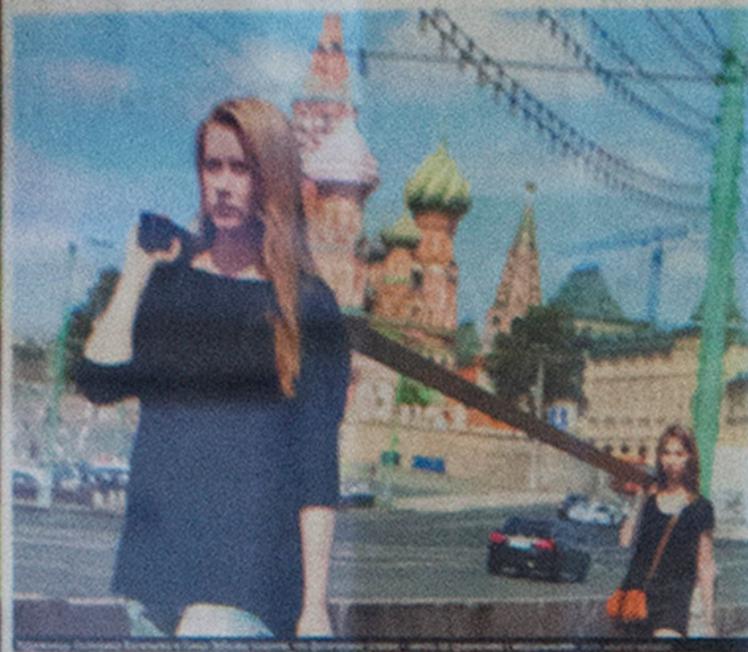
Фото: Татьяна Кузнецова / Медиа
Большой Осетинский фестиваль в Москве
Фото: Олег Смирнов

• • • • •

ВЕДОМОСТИ | Недвижимость**Why is construction cost so high?**

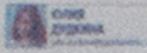
Large housing developers are working to standardize design solutions

In Moscow, every day you can start the renovation of a dozen research institute buildings for offices, there will be enough work for years to come



Балку сделали мировой осью

Подиумное искусство.
Чтобы привлечь внимание кураторы прошли через всю Москву с грузом на плечах



Несколько за жареное дно, Екатерина Васильева и Елена Желтова разнесли деревянную балку в 45 м с балконов здания института МГУД и Академии наук, чтобы занести ее в здание на другом конце города. Девушки

Слово
«Стражи порядка против нашей акции не возражали. Видно, у них хорошо развито чувство юмора»

Татьяна Костина

что тоже делают от главной мировой точки МГУД до самой консерватории

Свой перформанс актеры группы «Объ революции» доказали тем, что иногородние гости Революции, зная только быль и мифы.

Как известно, они же являются разработчиками проекта «Сокольники» в их акции нет – так подтверждают они разные стороны из любви и презрения.

– Это искусство, а не просто – общественник Метро Ольга Зубкова. – Ничто выше не симпатии. Тут вопрос спортивного марафонца, а не физического состояния. Физическая чистота может выдержать все что угодно. Чистота – это – чистота физическая, эстетическая, то есть, которая у нас получается со стороны физиологии. Балка должна фиксировать то, что она имеет, – пишет представитель группы «Балконы».

Жертву связали простыней
Инициатором выставки выступил молодежный театр «Лицей», который в последние недели организовал несколько спектаклей в центре Москвы.

«Лицей» сделал многое для того, чтобы привлечь внимание к проблемам молодежи, но не всегда это получалось.



«Лицей» организовал выставку «Жертвоприношение», на которой представили работы художников из разных стран мира.

– Это не фрагмент парижского пространства, он говорит о городе и цивилизации.

– Но

– Это не фрагмент парижского пространства, он говорит о городе и цивилизации.

– Но

– Это не фрагмент парижского пространства, он говорит о городе и цивилизации.

– Но

– Это не фрагмент парижского пространства, он говорит о городе и цивилизации.

– Но

Решение. «Бритоголовых москвичек» суд объявил вне закона

Совинский суд признал не приемлемым жалобу Адвокатской коллегии «Московский юридический центр» против решения.

Владимир Бондарев, что этими людьми изображены за разделение международной розы, – вложил и изложил то, что состоялось в общественной группе по

Слово
15

он хочет быть какими-то приемлемыми для общества. И, конечно, я считаю, что это было неправильно.



Выставка «ищет» Андрея



Каскадная выставка Учебки

Самый большинство живописных групповых выставок в Москве организованы студиями и музейными учреждениями, имеющими определенную историю. Но в последние годы появляются новые, интересные. Одна из них – группа Галактика, которая, как ее организаторы заявляют, проводит выставки в приватных помещениях, находящихся в частной собственности.

«Баррикады» Учебки с молотка

Среди ее спортивных выставок в Москве, «Баррикады» одна из тех, что привлекают наибольшее внимание.

Инициаторы выставки – группа спортивных художников мастерской «Баррикады». Их самая большая выставка состоялась 124-125 марта 2013 года. В группе участвовали 20 художников, из

METRO, «A Bar transformed into the world axis»,
August 12, 2014

Ekaterina Vasilyeva (nata nel 1983 a Mosca, vive e lavora a Parigi) e Hanna Zubkova (nata a Mosca, vive e lavora a Minsk e Mosca), lavorano insieme dal 2014. Partendo dall'indagine delle forme di comunicazione, delle ambiguità linguistiche e culturali e procedendo con dei dati di fatto (architettonici, geografici, sociali e caratteristiche politiche del luogo), le artiste costruiscono progetti performativo-de-duttivi.

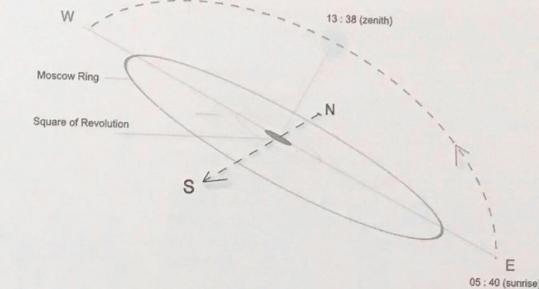
Axe de Révolution (*Asse di rivoluzione*, 2014) è una performance, della durata di 17 ore, di Ekaterina Vasilyeva e Hanna Zubkova, durante la quale le artiste camminano in silenzio per 45 Km, attraversando Mosca, dal punto più a Nord della città, sulla strada ad anello, fino all'estremo punto a Sud, mentre portano una sezione di metallo pesante rettangolare, lungo 6 metri e del peso di 13,5 Kg. Camminando attraverso la struttura urbana circolare di Mosca, che nella sua forma ricorda il modello eliocentrico di Copernico, le artiste disegnano una croce seguendo la traiettoria del sole. L'ambivalenza del titolo fa riferimento alla parola "rivoluzione" e allo stesso tempo, al termine latino, coniato da Copernico, che sta per il costante moto circolare, un capovolgimento drastico (di solito in senso politico).

Axe de Révolution è un esempio importante di performance astratta, che trova la sua origine all'interno di un contesto specifico e trova intensità emotiva e significato soltanto in relazione a esso. Dopo la restrizione estrema mossa dalla politica interna e il ritorno di uno stato di violenza nel 2011, l'anno 2014 per la storia contemporanea russa è diventato un punto di non ritorno e ha tracciato un assetto nuovo: la guerra in Ucraina, l'intensificarsi di guerre mediatiche e propaganda, il confronto economico con l'Europa, il graduale isolamento e la crescita della retorica di destra, sono alcuni degli aspetti. L'atto di trasportare una trave di metallo pesante per le strade della capitale russa, cita diversi aneddoti della realtà politica, storica e culturale: Lenin che trasporta una trave insieme ai lavoratori, l'1 maggio del 1920; il tran tran dovuto ai lavori di costruzione, tipico del panorama di Mosca; relazioni di potere stabilite dalla pianificazione cittadina. In questo clima di isteria che ha prevalso sullo spazio mediatico convenzionale, la performance è stata percepita da molti come un'azione di protesta politica. Ha toccato il nervo giusto, provocando la paura di un'altra rivolta contro lo stato. Un buon numero di giornalisti, compresi quelli della televisione di stato, che normalmente ignorano l'arte contemporanea, è arrivato a riprendere il corteo. Per la performance *Axe de Révolution*, il duo è stato nominato per il premio Kandinsky nel 2015. (KK)

Ekaterina Vasilyeva (born in 1983 in Moscow, lives and works in Paris) and Hanna Zubkova (born in Moscow, lives and works in Minsk and Moscow) work together since 2014. Through questioning forms of communication, linguistic and cultural ambiguities and proceeding from factual data (architectural, geographic, social and political characteristics of the place), the artists construct performative-discursive projects.

Axe de Révolution (*Axis of Revolution*, 2014) is a 17-hour performance by Ekaterina Vasilyeva and Hanna Zubkova, during which the artists silently walked 45 km through Moscow from the very North point of it on the orbital highway to the very South point, carrying a 6 meter long 13,5 kilo heavy metal structural element of rectangular section. Walking across Moscow's circular urban structure, that in its shape reminds the Copernican heliocentric model, the artists drew a cross with the trajectory of the Sun. The ambivalence of the title refers to the word 'revolution,' at the same time as a latin term, coined by Copernicus, meaning circular motion and its everyday use – a drastic overturn (usually in political sense).

Axe de Révolution is a powerful example of an abstract performance, that originated in the specific context and only gains emotional intensity and meaning in relation to it. After extreme tightening of the internal politics, and return of state violence in 2011, 2014 became the point of no return in the contemporary Russian history and drew a new setting: war in Ukraine, escalation of media wars and propaganda, economical confrontation with Europe, gradual isolation and rise of right wing rhetorics are among its features. The act of carrying a heavy iron beam through the streets of the Russian capital references several layers of political, historical and cultural reality: Lenin carrying a beam together with the workers on the 1st May, 1920; the routine of construction works in Moscow landscape; power relations set by the city planning. In the climate of hysteria that took over the mainstream media space, the performance was perceived by many as a political protest action. It touched the nerve, provoked fear of another anti-state revolt. A number of journalists, including the ones from state television, normally ignorant to contemporary art, arrived to cover the procession. In 2015 for the performance *Axe de Révolution* the duo was nominated for Kandinsky prize. (KK)



Schema tridimensionale
della performance
Three dimensional scheme
of the performance

Ekaterina Vasilyeva & Hanna Zubkova,
Axe de Révolution, 2014
Video
17'00" In situ