Sostenibilart

Ambassadors of Sustainability

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La prospettiva rovesciata
Obratnaja perspektiva

Collana diretta da
Silvia Burini

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edited by
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This publication is the first result, although partial (but I hope that in the future it can develop, as it would be relevant, also through courageous exhibition events), of a much more articulated project. The idea took shape from my research in progress, which connects to my consequent and more recent teaching activity. The project is curated and promoted by the Centre for Studies in Russian Art (CSAR) of Ca' Foscari University of Venice and by CYLAND MediaArtLab, in collaboration with other qualified institutions, including the Italian Section of the World Food Programme, the Kolodzei Foundation. It aims to constitute a format of transversal skills and a creative platform to support artistic and historical-critical voices from different parts of the world. The theme is now unfortunately well known to all, as it has also been indicated among the fundamental objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the action programme for people, the planet, and prosperity signed in September 2015 by the governments of the 193 member countries of the UN.

The collaboration between the Centre for Studies in Russian Art and the media art laboratory CYLAND has been active for many years, and in virtue of it we have curated exhibitions on the occasion of the Venice Biennials from 2011 to 2019. CYLAND was founded by Anna Frants in 2006, in St. Petersburg and New York, with the intention, anticipatory, to develop a new multimedia art through the cooperation of artists, engineers, and scientists, educating in the creative use of technology, and, finally, to attract the public's and artists' attention to new media. Since 2013, the CYFEST International Festival has been organised annually in different countries (and continents), with the support of international art institutions and museums like Leonardo, the International Society for Art, Science and Technology, and the Lumen Prize International Festival. Every year dozens of artists participate in the event (so far from at least 20 different countries). With its international exhibitions, CYFEST has quickly become one of the most influential and recognised multimedia art events, helping to increase the possibilities for cooperation on a global scale within the technology community.

The project *Sostenibilart* aims to raise awareness on a crucial issue, i.e. the sustainability of all our activities on the planet, and together to 'educate' concretely, through art, sustainability in a broad sense, inspiring and promoting actions. The idea is powerful and understandable: to encourage, in the current international scene, artists of significant standing to become 'Ambassadors of Sustainability', contributing with their works to promote a greater and more active awareness of environmental respect, the non-dissipative use of the planetary resources, multiethnic and multigenerational sharing. The CSAR, in the persons of its two directors, has already engaged for a long time in the critical analysis of two figures (also with the publication of relevant monographs for Rizzoli, New York). These are the Italian artist Maria Cristina Finucci, with her project *Wasteland and the Establishment of the Garbage Patch State,* whose 'national' pavilion was hosted at Ca' Foscari during the 2013 Biennale, and the Russian artist Alexander Ponomarev, promoter in 2017 of the Antarctic Biennale, and who was also previously present several times in the University spaces. Thanks to the collaboration with CYLAND we have added these two artists – widely recognised at the international level – and other significant personalities of different nationalities: they are, among others, Marina Alekseeva and Vladimir Rannev, Ludmila Belova, Chakaia Booker, Alexandra Dementieva, Anna Frants, Elena Gubanova and Ivan Govorkov, Pavel Ignatev, Victoria Ilyushkina, Francisco Infante Arana, Ilya Kabakov, Sergei Katran, Oleg Malenok, Vasily Bakanov, Alexey Grachev, Andrew Strokov, Alexander Bochkov, Tuula Närhinen, Miriam Simun, Valentina Tamborra, Anna Tolkacheva, Where Dogs Run.

Their works are an important sign of sensitivity, conscience, and cultural sharing. They are presented in this volume with the idea to 'give voice' to artists, also through its dialogical format, precisely to induce the widest possible public to perceive and visualise, through their works, the great issues related to the indiscriminate use of environmental resources. The common background is that of a fragile, delicate, extraordinary ecosystem: Venice. And these are instead the keywords recurring in these pages and characterising the whole project: inspire, sensitise, make people perceive, visualise, involve, and promote actions on topics that affect our lives in full, such as Environment, Climate, and Society. The publication is part of the book series published by Edizioni Ca' Foscari *La prospettiva rovesciata | Obratnaja perspektiva*: it is the first stage of a journey that begins here but that I hope will take us very far.

Silvia Burini
Sostenibilart: Ambassadors of Sustainability
Project for a Dialogue between Art and Environment

Stability is one of the most desirable states for human beings.

Of course, we understand that the world always strives towards entropy, but until recently we were criminally unconcerned about everything that did not regard our personal space.

But then the Coronavirus pandemic began – and people faced the first total collapse of stability since the Second World War. For almost 80 years, destructive processes such as epidemics, wars and natural disasters were local, not affecting the majority of the world's population. The Coronavirus came as a shock to us all, and we felt the breath of global catastrophe.

It is now becoming clear that the nature of this catastrophe is not so important: it may be ecological, man-made, political, military, or biological. Everyone suddenly saw that the stability of the familiar world order and the paradise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution were an illusion that vanished in an instant, making way for chaos and suffering.

Time will tell whether a new lesson will be learned, although there is little hope that it will. People tend to forget bad things very quickly. The desire to achieve personal safety at any cost is stronger than the need for critical thinking about reality.

Perhaps it is only art – the highest manifestation of the 'civilised mind' – that can accumulate and keep a constant focus on humanity's problems. Art can illuminate global issues, contemplate possibilities for progress, provide an unexpected look at the familiar world, and comfort us with compassion and hope. It can inspire us and spurn us to take the right actions.

The exhibition *Sostenibilart* was prepared by CYLAND Media Art Lab and the Center for Studies in Russian Art (CSAR) at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in cooperation with the Italian delegation of the World Food Program (WFP), the main humanitarian organisation of the UN. The exhibition participants – 25 artists from 7 countries – present their vision of the problems of world stability and prosperity.

Elena Gubanova
Artist, curator, CYLAND Media Art Lab

Sostenibilart
Ambassadors of Sustainability

Summary

On My Way, exhibition view. Exhibition in parallel
with the 56th Venice Biennale, Ca' Foscari University, Venice, 2015.
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To Feel, to Understand, to Act
Sustainability on Display

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Abstract   This essay describes the exhibition project Sostenibilart promoted by CYLAND MediaArtLab and the Centre for Studies in Russian Art (CSAR). Starting from an analysis of what is normally described with the term 'sustainability', we will examine how this concept is developed by the artists identified as ambassadors of sustainability. Their reflection on the theme is also expressed through the answers to three questions posed by the Author that allow a transversal reading of the project. The text will therefore consider the ideas that emerged in this interrelated exchange. Finally, we will consider participation in contemporary art to verify the significance of the contribution of the artists-ambassadors of sustainability to stimulate in the public a reflection – and eventually action – on the issues.

Keywords   Sustainability. Climate Change. Social Inequality. SDGs. CYLAND. Relational Art. Contemporary Art and Participation.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 Technologies Shaping the World: CYLAND's Perspective. 3 Sustainability on Display. – 4 Three Questions for a Cross Reading of the Project. – 5. Conclusion.

The clock ticks, global danger looms.
(Noam Chomsky, *Verso il precipizio*, 2018)

True planetary awareness is the creeping realization
not that 'We Are the World', but that we aren't.
(Timothy Morton, *HYPEROBJECTS. Philosophy
and Ecology after the End of the World*, 2013)

1   Introduction

The project that we present in this volume aims to introduce to the public the reflection of the selected artists on the issues of environmental, climatic, and social sustainability. It is hoped that, thanks to their sensitivity to the topic discussed and through their works, readers (and possible viewers, whenever the project becomes an exhibition) will be induced in turn to think concretely about the dangers deriving from abusing the planet's resources (as we said both human and natural). The hope is that where journalistic information does not move consciences, artistic reflection may have an effect.

The title *Sostenibilart* is created by the union of art and the Italian word for sustainability (i.e., *sostenibilità*). The English word maintains the Latin root *sustinere*. This allows us to think about the broader meaning of the term, which is not purely that of sustain, of support, but has rich and varied facets. These are: to stand up to, to withstand, to endure and to have the necessary endurance, to submit to, even to hold up and to hold back. This immediately identifies a problem of approach with respect to just using the term sustain/support, which assumes a hierarchy in which a subject ('active' if we wish) acts on an object ('passive' element). On the other hand, by employing the other meanings mentioned, the role of subject and object is re-established on the same level to create a system.

In fact, it is easy to talk about sustainability, but what does it really mean to be sustainable? In his analysis of environmental art, Demos warns us about the rhetorical use of the word sustainability, declaring the danger about the 'greenwashing' effect of artistically exhibiting themes related to ecology with the risk of not having a true impact on the public (Demos 2009, 18). Sustainability could then be defined as 'being in balance', not leaving one's trace – which does not mean leaving one's mark, but rather, not imposing one's weight on others, not depriving someone of their resources only for one's own well-being, whether it is environmental resources or human resources. Indeed, we must think of a sustainable ecosystem in which economic, social, and environmental conditions are in equal relation. This is the aim of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) of the UN Agenda for 2030: joint action by countries to ensure "peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future".[1] The program is marked by seventeen objectives that concern world hunger and poverty, the right to education and the guarantee of a non-violent childhood, the right to gender equality and the right to adequate health, the defence of nature and the prevention of disasters caused by human intervention in it, better infrastructure and scientific and technological progress.[2] The project, therefore, as we said, in line with

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[1] https://sdgs.un.org/goal.

[2] https://sdgs.un.org/topics.

the SDGs, intends to make these problems tangible by offering their visualisation.[3] We would like to analyse this concept through the lens of the words of the philosopher Citton, which are a criticism of being subjected to media images[4] – a risk of mass communication that the project also tries to evade: "Le seul fait de regarder ensemble les mêmes choses au même moment produit des effets de valorisation commune" (Citton 2015, 51).

Indeed, the individual artistic experience can be transformed into collective emotion, as Lévy writes about such emotions that:

by making them autonomous from a space-time contingency, or at least (for contemporary arts) by giving them a collective reach, art makes us partakers of a way of feeling, of a quality of subjective experience. Virtualization, in general, is a fight against fragility, pain, attrition. (Lévy 1997, 70)[5]

We could then argue that to see is to feel, to feel is to understand, and to understand is to act. And this is also a system in balance.

2 Technologies Shaping the World: CYLAND's Perspective

It is no coincidence that this exhibition project was created by CYLAND MediaArtLab. The multimedia art laboratory was created in 2007 by a group of artists on the initiative of Anna Frants and Marina Koldobskaya. Simultaneously, the annual CYFEST (Cyber festival) was also created, and, since 2013, it has been exported almost all over the world. In fact, in the fifteen years of its existence, the festival has been presented in Italy, Germany, Finland, the United States, Canada, Japan, Brazil and Argentina. The formula of the festival matches the global trend of exhibiting projects of this type, as it allows for the participation of international artists thanks to a specific thematic call. Every CYFEST is a reflection on global relevant themes and how these influence contemporary art practices.[6] To quote a few, let's first go back to the festival held in 2011 – at that time the official name was Cyberfest – where there was not a theme to explore but rather a pivotal question accompanied by the evocative

[3] The idea is part of the historical concept of *art engagé*/engaged art, therefore of art and politics, and in this sense of 'artivism' (merged form of art and activism), a phenomenon that has been emerging in contemporary art since the late 90s. In Italy a recent volume dealing with this topic is that of Vincenzo Trione (2022).

[4] This discourse clearly also falls within the concept of media ecology which involves the analysis of media conceived as an environment in which man is influenced by it and in which human culture develops. Since there is no way to deepen here, please refer to a reference bibliography (cf. McLuhan 1994; Postman 2000; Strate 2004; Scolari 2013; Linley 2016; Mattoni 2017).

[5] Where for virtual the author means possible ways of living, possible ways of being, therefore opposed not to 'reality' but to 'actuality' (Lévy 1997, 2-5). All translations from Italian to English are by the Author.

[6] Here's the complete list of CYFEST and their themes to expose what has been said in the text: CYFEST-14 (2021-22) *Ferment*; CYFEST-13 (2021) *Cosmos and Chaos*; CYFEST-12 (2018-20) *ID. ART:TECH Exhibition*; CYFEST-11 (2017-18) *Weather Forecast: Digital Cloudiness*; CYFEST-10 (2016-17) *Frame of Reference*; CYFEST-9 (2015-16) *Patterns of the Mind*; CYFEST-8 (2014) *The Other Home(s)*; CYFEST-7 (2013) *Capital of Nowhere*; CYFEST-6 (2012) *At Heaven's Door*; Cyberfest 2011, slogan: *Show us your Tongue!*; Cyberfest 2010, festival motto: *House Bugs*. Please note that Cyberfest 2007, Cyberfest 2008, Cyberfest 2009, were not strictly thematic and thus did not have a subtitle. See: http://cyland.org/lab/program-list/cylandfest/.

slogan *Show us your Tongue!*: is the art created thanks to new technologies a new artistic language or is it a mere parody of 'traditional art'? Let's consider then CYFEST-9 (2015-16) with the title *Patterns of the Mind* where artists were called to explore the problem of neo-tribalism, or digital tribalism. The speed of computerised communication and rapid dissemination of messages, allows for the creation of groups (tribes) of people geographically distant, but having the same interests. This phenomenon includes artists too, of course. For the CYFEST-11 (2017-2018), the theme was *Weather Forecast: Digital Cloudiness*, encouraging to reflect not about climate but about the digital clouds, thus trying to understand the ambivalence between the 'real' world and the digital one. The artists proposed works that showed how perception of reality changes with digital technologies, how they shape our social interactions considering also that information and even the most intimate thing we have, our memories, are stored in metaphorical clouds, travelling in a parallel world where they live without us, and they even survive us. Finally, let's consider the last CYFEST presented at Ca' Foscari in 2019, whose title was *ID. Art:Tech Exhibition* (CYFEST-12). On this occasion, we were facing the problem of identities and self-identity when interacting with digital technologies. Screens and alphanumerical codes deconstruct and multiply images and self-representations thus creating many and parallel living selves.

We should consider that a dynamic and free space such as the one spurring from the festival (which is an almost 'ephemeral' event) imposes itself in a decisive way parallel to the artistic and cultural museum tradition. Proposing an independent festival allows you to experiment and let yourself experience. The target audience is also obviously different: through festivals, it is possible to reach a younger audience that is already receptive not only to new technologies but also to the most urgent issues at a global level. It therefore seems important to us in this context to remember that CYLAND's activity is not limited to exhibition events but is widely dedicated to educational programs. The seminars, lectures and workshops organised by CYLAND always present different approaches thanks to the participation of international artists and curators, and this also occurs in the exhibitions. In this we therefore find the will to implement existing synergies and create new ones, between professions and heterogeneous professions (physicists, engineers, programmers, artists, curators, art historians). Due to this type of approach, since 2011, CYLAND weaves a close bond with the Ca' Foscari University of Venice where almost annually thematic exhibitions are presented or the CYFEST is proposed.[7] Offering exhibitions and free of costs events in educational contexts is suitable for the purpose of encouraging research, and above all, stimulating the curiosity of the young public where their future takes shape.

Returning to the synergy between different professional figures created by the laboratory, it is essential to point out that some works are made in the context of the laboratory work: these are called *Made in CYLAND* (there is an archive available online and a series of video interviews on YouTube where the same artists talk about their works[8]). In this case, these works turn out to be an effective transposition of theoretical reflections in the field by creating a forge of practical elaborations of current issues in the context of the international debate. We find some of these works also within the project: *Blops Per Minute*, *Time Density*, *Trembling Creatures*, *Artists Union. Still Life.*

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7 In the pages of this volume, we also find the images of the projects presented by CYLAND at Ca' Foscari, to retrace the consolidated history of the link between the laboratory and the Venetian university. We also find an image of the last edition of the CYFEST presented recently in Yerevan (CYFEST-14: *Ferment*, 10-25 October 2022).

8 https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxfD4yyMvYbUeCPMkFJNp_KETxm7Nu75Z.

3   Sustainability on display

Returning to the main theme of the exhibition project, we can say that it is an effort to try and answer the questions:

> How are we to cope these changes creatively?[9] […] Could the experience of individual isolation and uncertainty itself be used to provoke a transformation to some form of community, united in shared experienc-

es and the need to survive and thrive? (Haley 2003, 143, 145)

With this purpose, we will now propose below an overview of the works based on some common denominators that distinguish the research of the artists presented in the volume in alphabetical order.

3.1   Instability

The uncertain era in which we live, characterised by continuous changes, is echoed in the reflection on the instability and fear of the future by the group Where Dogs Run. Their interactive installation *The Phobia of Tomorrow* marks the hand of the visitor with the date of the following day, thus concretising exactly the anxiety for tomorrow, like a sort of *memento mori*. Instability is the word that distinguishes – and gives the title (i.e., *Instability Mode*) to – Alexander Ponomarev's project, which aims at mirroring emergency signal launched by an entity on the verge of decline (taking inspiration from his experience as a sailor and the morse codes of distress call when you must abandon the ship). In insecurity and unpredictability, we try to

find something to hold on to, on which we can rely. Anna Frants' work *Artist Union. Still life* is based on this assumption, that is, on the law of large numbers: as much as there is a random variable, a certain degree of probability of an event can still be determined. We can also find variability in the fermentative sound installation *BPM - Blops Per Minute* by Oleg Malenok, Vasilii Bakanov, Alexey Grachev, Andrew Strokov, Alexander Bochkov, where man no longer exists, but only the relationship between technology and nature. In fact, the drum is played by the fermentation process of the beer that takes place inside the ampoules connected to the electric instrument. The 'random' is therefore the rhythm that will be created.

3.2   Fragility

Along with instability goes the question of fragility. Although the historical moment we are experiencing may not be the minute before mass extinction,[10] it is true that the great changes we are facing determine serious dis-

appearances: of natural resources, animal and plant species, but also linguistic differences and folklore. It is on these assumptions that the research of Valentina Tamborra is based. With her photographs she tries to draw

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[9]   The author refers to "the accelerating increase of the human species, the accelerating decrease of other species, and the accelerating effects of climate change" (Haley 2003, 143).

[10]   Let's take up the concept of countdown introduced by Chomsky, also mentioned in the epigraph where the philosopher sees the end of the world as midnight on a clock that marks the final time of the planet: after the Second World War the lancets have moved to seven minutes from midnight and continue to run rapidly towards the fatal hour since then (Chomsky 2018).

attention to this problem. This reportage photograph, however, not only documents and records a certain situation, but also gives great dignity to the subjects represented like those we see from the series *ÁhkÁt – Terra Madre*. The fragility and at the same time the resilience of the peoples of the Arctic is also explored by Anna Tolkacheva and Sergey Katran. Like Tamborra, Tolkacheva attempts to record, to catalogue, all the elements that distinguish these peoples and reworks them in interactive *Nomadic Poetry* that allows us to see their places and know their words and traditions. It is an attempt to make immortal in memory what is fading before our eyes. Katran instead realises what he calls 'social sculpture' (starting from the definition of Joseph Beuys), and his work *Northern Corpus* reports on the real threat to the linguistic and folklore traditions of the Nenets people due to global warming and the consequent disappearance of the tundra. Speaking of fragility and resistance we must cite Tuula Närhinen's project *Drop Tracer* which, starting from the assumption of the delicacy of the ecosystem, demonstrates how many small drops together are able to make it resilient.

3.3   Interferences

The most eye-catching thing about environmental issues is that we have lost control of the landscape, which has changed and continues to change very quickly because of man. Here Maria Cristina Finucci with the installation *Wasteland Memoire* builds traces of her Garbage Patch State, the state of plastic she founded symbolically starting from the news of the huge barges of garbage that assemble and live in the oceans. This space is literally invaded by piles of plastic that make the emergency tangible, such that it seems that the space is even asking for help. Chakaia Booker, instead, more than working with garbage in public spaces, gives new life to the elements of waste, creating prints with them to create new environments. Alexandra Dementieva with *Re-Lighting* also creates new environments, real landscapes giving new life to recycled elements, which is thanks to the use of recycled Led. In all these cases we see how these are environments in which the human presence is not contemplated; it is a sort of occupation by objects, a claim of territories and spaces taken away. For Francisco Infante-Arana and Nonna Goryunova, on the other hand, the *Artifacts* that they insert into the environment make us perceive the influence of man – even if we would almost perceive it as a supernatural presence –, which has the purpose of demonstrating just how human intervention modifies the environment within which it acts.

3.4   Interiority

The reflection on change and sustainability concerns clearly also human inner reality. Anna Frants with *Trembling Creatures* shows us some beings in perpetual motion, just like us in our everyday routines, unlike the static rocks of the Arctic. Movement is also at the center of Elena Gubanova and Ivan Govorkov's installation, but it focuses on time, on the lancets running by – or us running by the lancets. In their installation *Time Density*, time accelerates and slows down suddenly, casually, recalling that desperate race in search of happiness on the part of society.

But then we can also find some interior environments, interior landscapes, the representation of interior world in the work *Neurons Living and Dead* of Ludmila Belova. Starting from a reflection on Alzheimer's Disease, Belova reconstructs neurons to form new intimate scenarios against memory loss.

Finally, dealing with external perception and its reflection in individual sensitivity, we cite the media installation *Let them Talk* by Marina Alekseeva and Vladimir Rannev.

The artists remind us how words have a significant weight and are able even to trigger a war.

3.5 Fluidity

In these difficult times there are also those who imagine escape routes, or alternatives, to these relentless modification processes. For Ilya Kabakov the way to go is dematerialisation in the universe: indeed, the main character The Flying Komarov of his series of drawings *Ten Characters* gradually dissolves and fades into the atmosphere. Then, Pavel Ignatev, for example, for *Reverse Drift. Unpacking and Absorption* fills his sculptures (and the exhibition hall) with snails to demonstrate the increase in entropic flow and the survival of the biosphere. Culture and the human being reabsorbed by nature. In a similar manner Victoria Ilyushkina, in her multichannel video installation *Cat Dreams*, shows us what it would be like to be cats, to be much closer to nature than men are. She does this also thanks to the acoustic part made by Thorsten Soltau, Max Kuiper, Vasilii Stepanov. In these processes of hybridisation between human and animal sensitivities, Miriam Simun's answer to the problem is to imagine that man learns from cephalopods, acquiring their skills and sympathy in the video *Your Urge to Breathe Is a Lie*.

4 Three Questions for a Cross Reading of the Project

Alongside the presentation of the works that are part of the project, it is possible to find the answers to three questions that were submitted to the artists and that are related to the proposed theme. The idea is to offer a transversal reading through some key points of the problem at issue. These are: humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us? Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature? Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?

These are clearly somewhat provocative questions, which could affect the different strings depending on the receptiveness of each and which could in this way result in sincere and direct answers. Especially in touching on such controversial issues, such as the theme of mass extinction stemming from the indiscriminate use of the planet's resources, the relationship of man with the machine and the impact of scientific-technological progress, and finally the role of the artist within society. In the dedicated texts we find discordant opinions, we find commonalities and we find recurring important terms. We are sure that this type of cross reading will help not only in understanding the proposed projects and the ambassadors of sustainability, highlighting the way in which everyone fulfils this mission – although they focus on different assumptions or give more value to some issues than others – but will also instil a greater curiosity about sustainability in the broad sense. We will try to summarise the answers collected, but we prefer to give clues without mentioning names so that it may arouse more curiosity in the reader, who will research them autonomously.

First, we must mention the fact that the work of this volume (as well as the project) began in a completely different world, as the group Where Dogs Run says, namely before the attack on Ukraine by Russia. Unfortunately, there has never been a period without conflicts in human history, but we must for sure point to this moment as decisive – in a negative way – for some of the artists we present.

4.1   Going Extinct or Surviving?

The first question evidently highlights the climate crisis as well as the international tensions we are going through. As Morton point outs, now the threat is already too developed and is part of the problem itself unfortunately:

> The spooky thing is, we discover global warming precisely when it's already here. It is like realizing that for some time you had been conducting your business in the expanding sphere of a slow-motion nuclear bomb. You have a few seconds for amazement as the fantasy that you inhabited a neat, seamless little world melt away. All those apocalyptic narratives of doom about the 'end of the world' are, from this point of view, part of the problem, not part of the solution. By postponing doom into some hypothetical future, these narratives inoculate us against the very real object that has intruded into ecological, social, and psychic space. (Morton 2013)

However, we prefer to think that it is still not too late. Indeed, based on the answers collected, we can say that not everyone believes that we are on the brink of extinction, sometimes arguing that we will not become extinct but

transform. Some assert art is already saving the world. It's a common opinion anyway that if art cannot save us, art can for sure make us feel the urgency of the question. For this aspect we can relate to Raessens' thought:

> The discourse around climate must mobilize and reinforce progressive and positive moral ideas; it must be persuasive, changing attitudes and behavior by using narratives, documentary information, and games; it must stimulate social learning by using the power of social networks; and it must stimulate a post-liberal and global form of citizenship. (Raessens 2019, 97)[11]

Someone proposes that the planet will survive without us, in which case the problem will be what to do with all the art we have produced. We can testify a general confidence in people, in the hope that the world can be changed thanks to the union of art and souls.

Therefore, whatever the facet of the position on the subject by the artist-ambassador, the essential point is to be able to be part of her/his reflection, the fact that her/his vision is shared with the public.

4.2   Is There a Hierarchy?

The second question as anticipated in the introduction deliberately poses a terminological problem that concerns the use of the term hierarchy approached to the concept of system. In fact, many artists have responded that it is not possible to establish a hierarchy, as it is precisely a system in which the elements are interdependent and in balance. As Morton says, it's a "dialogue between equal

partners, a dialectical play between the organic and electronic" (Morton 2013).

It is certainly evident how man often feels above nature, what Passmore defines with the term "despotic man", who controls nature and thinks he can shape the world as he pleases with arrogance (Passmore 1991, 19-42).

Also interesting is the answer that many others give

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[11]   These different facets are also analysed and compared in another volume, see Shin 2016.

about the machine (and technology in general) as an integral part of man and nature.[12] Still, others hope that the machine will definitively surpass man, that dream of human disappearance also described by Baudrillard as follows:

> Technique becomes [...] the art of disappearing. Its purpose would consist, more than in the transformation of the world, in an autonomous world, fully realized, from which we could finally withdraw [...] we therefore dream of a world miraculously moved without our intervention, and autonomous beings who, far from escaping our will, as in the sorcerer's apprentice, would realize our desire to escape our will. (Baudrillard 1996, 45)[13]

A prevarication, that of the machine over man, that for Wiener, considered the father of cybernetics, was to be avoided as very dangerous (Wiener 1996, 36).

4.3 Acting for Change?

The third question was probably the most complex and the one that garnered the most discordant opinions. In fact, few believe that art can inspire change. Several artists believe that, rather, it can be the tangible demonstration of these changes.

In this context we would like to recall how Lévy identifies the role of the public and the social function of contemporary art:

> Instead of spreading a message to receivers outside the creation process, invited to give meaning to the work only at a later time, the artist here tries to constitute an environment, a device of communication and production, a collective event that involves recipients, that transforms hermeneutics into actors, that puts interpretation in circuit with collective action [...] this, moreover, is one of the main social functions of art: to participate in the continuous invention of the languages and signs of a community. But the creator of language is always a collective. (Lévy 1996, 130)

In the era of fast and fake news (meaning the distortion and the rapid divulgation of information through the internet), art is the way to communicate with the audience on a deeper level.

The use of technology in art also results, for example, in an interaction where the audience becomes not only spectator, but actor too.

> The new media and technologies by which we amplify and extend ourselves constitute huge collective surgery carried out on the social body with complete disregard for antiseptics. If the operations are needed, the inevitability of infecting the whole system during the operations has to be considered. For in operating on society with a new technology, it is not the incised

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12   Where by nature it is correct to understand both animals and plants that for intelligence and 'sensitivity' are certainly not to be excluded and separated in the idea of an equal natural system (Coccia 2018).

13   However, the opposite is also true, namely: "The culture of industrialized society, functional to machinism, is firm to the idealizations of classical physics: abstracting individual relationships of cause and effect from the infinite complexity of becoming, it has practically cut the bridges with biology. The technological man seems incapable of understanding life because his cultural patterns are shaped to understand the machine. The need to quantify, to draw on the mathematical intelligibility of phenomena, leads him to represent a passive, inert nature, subject to deterministic laws that he must only take possession of to build, transform, dominate" (Sacchetti 1997, 85).

area that is most affected. The area of impact and incision is numb. It is the entire system that is changed. The effect of radio is visual, the effect of photo is auditory. Each new impact shifts the ratio among all the senses. What we seek today is either a means of controlling these shifts in the sens-ratios of the psychic and social outlook, or a means of avoiding them altogether. To have a disease without its symptoms is to be immune. No society has ever known enough about its actions to have developed immunity to its new exten-

sions or technologies. (McLuhan 1994, 64)

Today we have begun to sense that art may be able to provide such immunity. Technical tools may seem 'cold' and distant from us, but they speak to us, and we nowadays speak their same language. We are accustomed to their language but we are kind of still not accustomed to their use in art. We should however not be surprised as they can create new universes, new spheres of meaning and being.

5   Conclusion

Bowie sang "Is there life on Mars", but we know there is no Planet B, so we cannot but ask ourselves: what future will there be on Earth? It is a question addressed to every single individual but what the ambassadors of sustainability do, as we have shown, is share with us their reflections, their scenarios. That is also what Bishop, starting from what Rancière defines as "partage du sensible", writes about this type of mutual exchange, asserting that this "opens the door for all art to be political, since the *sensible* can be *partagé*" (Bishop 2006, 27-8). The political aspect entails a call to act, to work concretely for the betterment of the planet. Still according to Bishop in fact:

> The hope is that the newly-emancipated subjects of participation will find themselves able to determine their own social and political reality. An aesthetic of participation therefore derives legitimacy from a (desired) causal relationship between the experience of a work of art and individual/collective agency. (Bishop 2012, 12)

Although we may feel powerless in the face of major

changes, sustainability also means pushing humans to assume their responsibilities not as individuals but as a collective, because change requires a "new mentality" and the "promotion of a new art of living in society" (Guattari 2020, 39).

> Our survival on earth is threatened not only by environmental degradation but also by the disintegration of the fabric of social solidarity and psychic ways of life that therefore need an overall reinvention. The refoundation of politics must therefore necessarily pass through the aesthetic and analytical dimensions connected to the three ecologies: of the environment, of the socius and of the psyche. (Guattari [1992] 2020, 39)

Undoubtedly the most important actions must be moved by politics, but certainly citizens can contribute to raising the threshold of attention on issues of ecological crisis and social injustice. This ties in with Bourriaud's concept of relational art,[14]

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[14]   "Relational (art): A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space". (Bourriaud [1998] 2002, 113)

Because art is made of the same material as the social exchanges, it has a special place in the collective production process. A work of art has a quality that sets it apart from other things produced by human activities. This quality is its (relative) social transparency. If a work of art is successful, it will invariably set its sights beyond its mere presence in space: it will be open to dialogue, discussion. (Bourriaud 2002, 41)

Art has the power to create new imaginaries, new worlds, but it also has the power to show us reality for how it is. It can bring to the public attention not only the problem of the present, but of the possible future too. When we see that, that future becomes tangible, and we cannot avoid reflecting about the problems we are living and creating. For Bourriaud then artworks have the chance and give us the chance of

learning to inhabit the world in a better way, instead of trying to construct it based on a preconceived idea of historical evolution. Otherwise put, the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist. (Bourriaud [1998] 2002, 13)

Developing a project, a volume, and a possible future exhibition dedicated mainly to the visualisation of the process of valorising actions aimed at improving the planet means not considering art and artworks as a separated form society, merely as individual aesthetic experience, but making them an actual integrating force for defending sustainability as the foundation of a healthy ecosystem.

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ID. ART:TECH EXHIBITION, exhibition view. As a part of CYFEST-12 and in parallel
with the 58th Venice Biennale, Ca' Foscari University, Venice, 2019.
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Ambassadors of Sustainability

Marina Alekseeva & Vladimir Rannev

Russia

Let them Talk
From the series "Internal Landscapes"
Media installation, 2021

The installation *Let them talk* develops the thesis advanced by the artists in the work *We can do it again*: war does not start with shooting, it starts with words that are more harmful than the most terrible poisons. And if it is impossible to escape from the presence of these words, we should find an antidote that neutralises their destructive effect on the human mind – which is what the authors try to do.

Images   © Marina Alekseeva, Vladimir Rannev. Shtager Gallery, London,
                          UK, 2022. The artwork belongs to the artists. Supported by Frants
                          Art Foundation
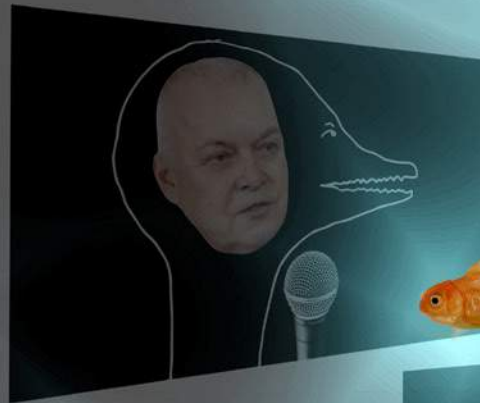
Marina Alekseeva & Vladimir Rannev

Marina Alekseeva

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
I don't think that art will save humankind from extinction. It's another matter that when humankind becomes extinct, it will leave behind a huge pile of art. But for whom?

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
Initially, the system was 'nature-human-machine'. Then came 'human-nature-machine'. Now it is 'human-machine-nature'. In all likelihood, the next stage will be 'machine-human-nature'.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
In the light of current events, it seems unlikely. Only during peacetime.

Vladimir Rannev

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
Art is just a tool which may be used for different goals, like a kitchen knife or nuclear power. We remember the malevolent role that German art played during the Third Reich; we can notice similar symptoms today in the behaviour and works of certain Russian writers, artists and musicians. We also see the fruits of their labours – the barbarisation of society, the readiness of people to accept brutality and crimes with indifference or sympathy, and even to commit these crimes. But there are also other artists – and so there is hope that art is also capable of forming humane features in a person.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
Yes, this hierarchy is determined by the dependence of one on the other, and this is why it is like this: nature-human-machine.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
Art has two fundamental abilities: to comfort and to problematise. In the first case, art reconciles us with reality, whatever it is like (including through escapism), and in the second, it cultivates a critical attitude to reality, and therefore the readiness to transform it. Problematising art faces a difficult time when reality is too dangerous or complex. But in this situation art becomes an actor of social processes and the creator of a new reality.

Ludmila Belova

Russia

Neurons Living and Dead
From the series "Internal Landscapes"
Installation, 2021

This work visualises a serious medical problem – Alzheimer's disease. From the familiar and 'homely' material of clay, neurons are made. Axons and dendrites 'grow' out of them, forming neural networks which allow us to receive and transmit information. In Alzheimer's disease, amyloid deposits form around neurons, causing neurons to die and breaking the links between them, leading to memory loss.

The installation invites us to look inside ourselves, to admire the structure of the brain and imagine our internal universe, and our internal landscape. "Internal Landscapes" is the title that the artist Pavel Tchelitchew (1898-1957) gave to his works. From the 1920s he developed the theory of mystic perspective, in which the world is not viewed by looking into the distance from the inside, but in a combination of many projections.

Images   © Ludmila Belova

Ludmila Belova

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
I don't believe that humankind is on the brink of extinction, it is actually heading towards an evolutionary transformation. Or rather, this transformation is taking place before our eyes. We are merging with digital technologies and are gradually mutating into semi-cyborgs. This is happening unnoticeably and naturally, and in the future the familiar species of Homo Sapiens will not exist. But this doesn't mean that humankind will become extinct. People will exist, but they will be different – without the built-in biological program of survival where the main driving force is a craving for power, and the only tool for attaining this goal is violence.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
There will be no hierarchies in the future, as a hierarchy involves a vertical power structure. The structure of life will be horizontal. It will resemble a net that brings together everything and everyone.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
A drop of water hollows out the stone, as the saying goes. Enlightenment, education and art – all these things can change society. But these days, the media is the main force for change. It is a weapon. Right at this moment, we are seeing an example of how this weapon can be used to fool an entire country and force people to trust an insane politician.

152/250   Chakaia Booker 2011

3
Chakaia Booker
USA

Untitled
Woodcut Chine Collé, 2011.52 × 63.5 cm
Kolodzei Art Foundation

Booker began to integrate discarded construction materials into large outdoor sculptures in the early 1990s. She slices, twists, weaves, and rivets this medium into radically new forms and textures, which easily withstand outdoor environments. For her, the varied tones of the rubber parallels human diversity, while the tire treads suggest images as varied as African scarification and textile designs. The visible wear and tear on the tires evoke the physical marks of human aging.

Booker's artistic process is enormously physical, from transporting the tires to reshaping them with machinery. Her prints retain a visual link to her three-dimensional works. In her sculptural practice she often transforms the bulky tire into seemingly feather-light forms, imbuing the ubiquitous material with social and political implications. In her prints, Booker transforms the static nature of two-dimensional works into dense, patterned compositions almost buzzing with frenetic energy. In some, the gestural, abstract forms seem to burst forth from the geometric figures that are layered and stacked on the paper. The print process is intricate and labor intensive, requiring 20,000 pieces which all needed to be cut, stored and registered before going through the press.

Image   © Kolodzei Art Foundation

4

Alexandra Dementieva

Belgium-Russia

Re-Lighting
Objects made of recycled LEDs, 2021

About 400 km above the Earth (the orbital altitude of the International Space Station), the planet's surface has great importance. You can see the continents during the day, and the city lights at night. From a distance, the Earth gives the impression of a lonely and fragile place of life which triggers the 'overview effect' in the consciousness of astronauts. National borders disappear from space, conflicts dividing people become less important, and the need to create a planetary society with a united will to protect the planet becomes obvious and urgent. Recycling industrial products into elementary material is one way to protect the environment. The *RE-Lighting* objects are made from recycled LED strips and represent the maps of cities significant to the artist.

Images   © Alexandra Dementieva
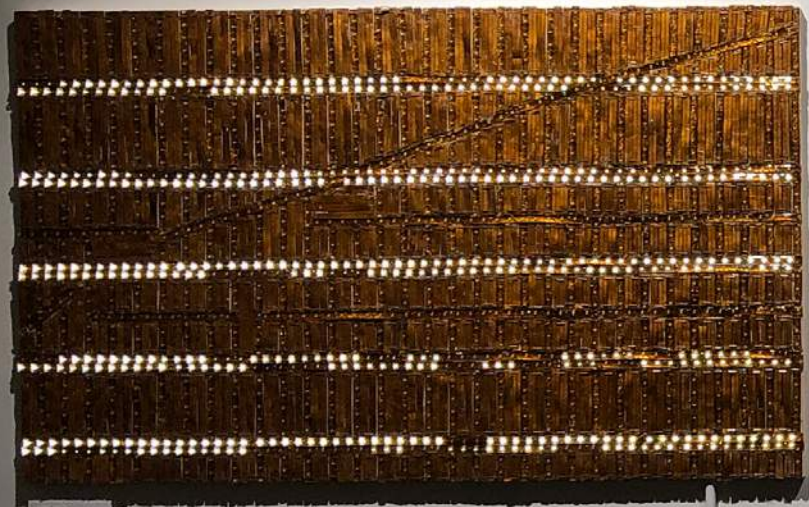
Alexandra Dementieva

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
Art, science, philosophy are anthropological practices for understanding the world. By creating art, we learn to see, to aestheticise, create, transform the world into images – both visual and sound. I find it difficult to believe that humanity will become extinct, at any rate in the near future. I can imagine the degradation of sapiens, a reversion to the way of life of prehistoric times – for example after a nuclear war or a global natural disaster. And this means that the little that remains of civilisation, including art, may become like the black obelisk from Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* for the survivors. In any case it is better to MAKE ART, NOT WAR!

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
A hierarchy is an "order of subordination of lower entities to higher ones" (Wikipedia). Accordingly, the question arises as to who or what is higher and lower. I would like to avoid these definitions, as they are always subjective.
I prefer to look at nature without giving it a divine aura, but also without ignoring it by treating it like ordinary decorations. Machines are much more complicated. I understand their existence as the natural development of the human being, and as humans are part of nature, machines (technology) also belong to humanity. The main question is not what a machine can do, but for what purposes it can be used. And if artificial intelligence is created, which not only solves technological problems, but also has certain moral and ethical qualities, it may also lay claim to equality.
"It's all your life in one. Our life is half natural and half technological. Half-and-half is good. You cannot deny that high-tech is progress. We need it for jobs. Yet if you make only high-tech, you make war. So we must have strong human element to keep modesty and natural life" (Nam June Paik).[*]

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
From the history of art we know of artistic movements which tried to change society:Dadaism, Fluxus, the Situationist International… over centuries artists have studied social problems in their work. Art can take the form of a protest, which attempts to provide a direct solution to social and political problems. Art changes people's ideas about the world. Through art, artists convey joy, happiness and anger. Their works draw a certain reaction from viewers, making them reconsider reality. The Situationist International played an important role in the revolution of 1968 in Paris by revealing differences between artists, consumers and the means of production.

[*] Nam June Paik, quoted in Douglas C. McGill, "Art People", *New York Times*, October 3, 1986, https//:www.nytimes.com/1986/10/03/arts/art-people.html
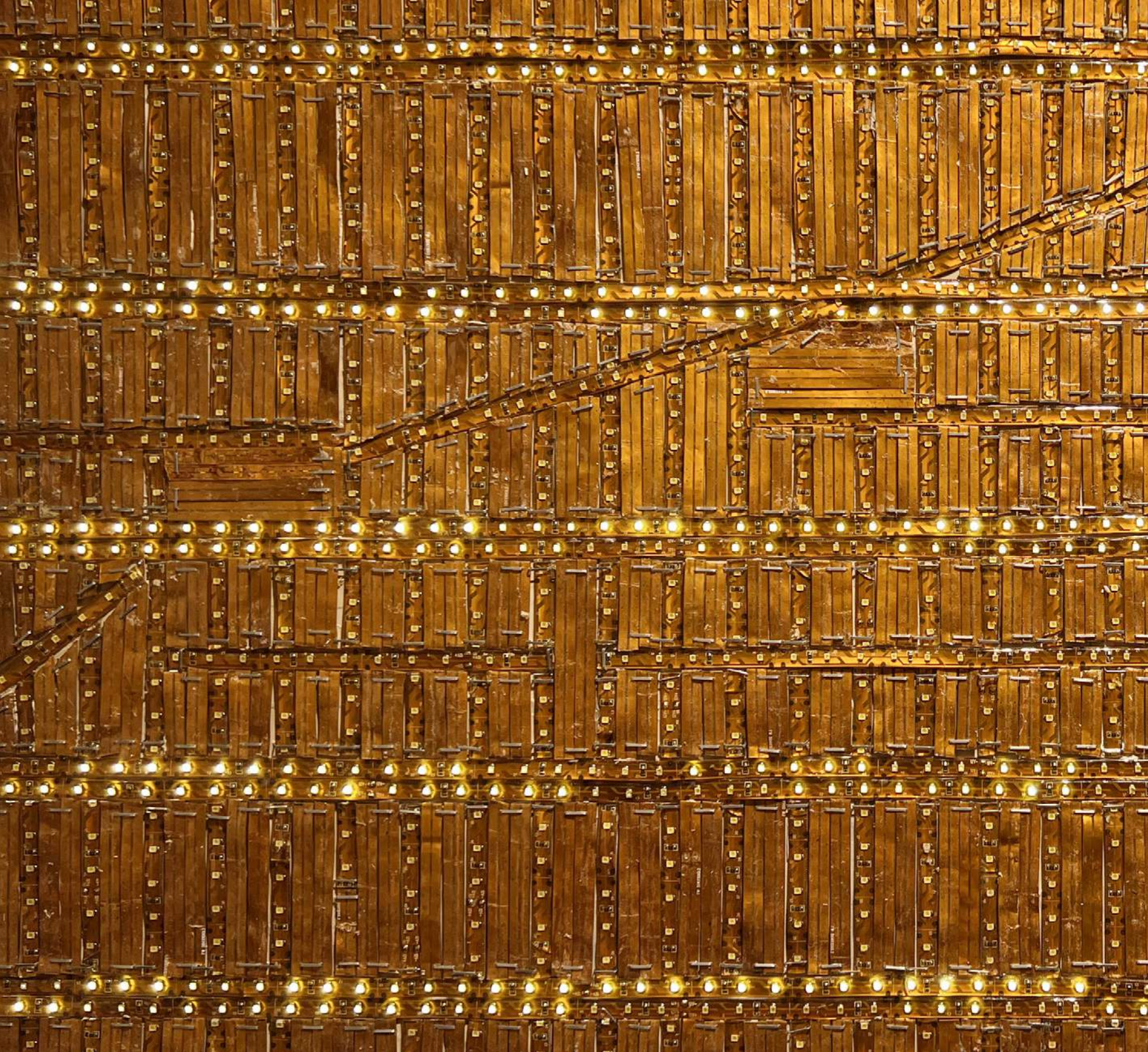
Maria Cristina Finucci

Italy

Wasteland Memoire
Installation, 2022

This is the story of the work *Wasteland* (2012-present) shown through a collage of photos, sketches and other objects used to create the monumental installations that appeared in various cities around the world including Paris, Venice, Rome, Milan, Madrid and New York. It is the story of the birth of a new state, the Garbage Patch State, which includes the islands formed by plastic that infest the oceans. The work was conceived to make people aware through art about the state of our planet caused by the advent of the Anthropocene. The greed of humankind has led to the devastation of nature. Humans are not the guardians of the Earth, but its masters, with consequences that we now have before our eyes. *Wasteland* creates a simulacrum – the State – to start a pervasive process that can mentally involve its audience; a dynamic element that seeks to establish a register of communication beyond simple ecological protest.

Images   © Maria Cristina Finucci

Maria Cristina Finucci

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
I believe that in the emergency that we face to safeguard the planet, art can create a deeper awareness in people, compared to mere scientific communication. When I began the work *Wasteland* ten years ago, I was responding to the need I felt to communicate how much we were in danger. Most people still did not understand the seriousness of the situation back then. Now that the issue is in the spotlight, it may be too late. Unfortunately, I think we've reached a point where nothing can stop the ongoing extinction process. The Earth will survive, but without humankind; there are many animal and plant species for whose extinction we are responsible, but other forms of life are likely to develop in the next millions of years.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
As a matter of fact, after the Industrial Revolution, humans imposed themselves as masters of the land that they exploit only for profit. As guardians of the Planet, humans became the masters of It by despising other forms of life from which they took away all dignity, including themselves. They brutally treat animals, soil, subsoil, and all the rest of creation. The Anthropocene, the era that led to the destruction of the Earth, will have to end, and it will end along with everything else if we do not overturn the human-machine-nature hierarchy.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
Art can strike chords that ordinary mediums cannot. It is a powerful and transversal medium that acts by reception channels that are indefinable. Artists have always anticipated the challenges of their time in a prophetic way. Art can be so revolutionary that it inspires social changes. It anticipates themes that are not yet part of the public discourse, and reveals them in new and original ways. Today, more than ever, there is a need to awaken people's conscience.

Anna Frants
USA

Artist Union. Still life
From the series "Matter of Chance", media installation, edition of 20, 2019
In collaboration with CYLAND Media Art Lab

Artist Union. Still life is a reflection on the law of large numbers. Is it applicable in visual arts – to colours in painting, lines in graphics, forms in sculpture, and the image integrity in installations? The law of large numbers is a principle that describes the completion of the same experiment many times. According to this law, the joint action of a large number of random factors leads to a result almost independent of the chance. For example, in the XVI century the length of the English foot was defined, by a royal order, as the arithmetic average length of the foot of the first 16 people leaving the church on Sunday matins. Although the law of large numbers was not yet defined, it serves as the basis for the principle of arithmetic mean used in determining the length of a foot.

Image	Installation view, CYFEST-14, HayArt Cultural Center, Yerevan, Armenia, 2022. Photo by Ann Prilutckaia. Artworks in Kolodzei Art Foundation collection and Frants Family collection © Anna Frants
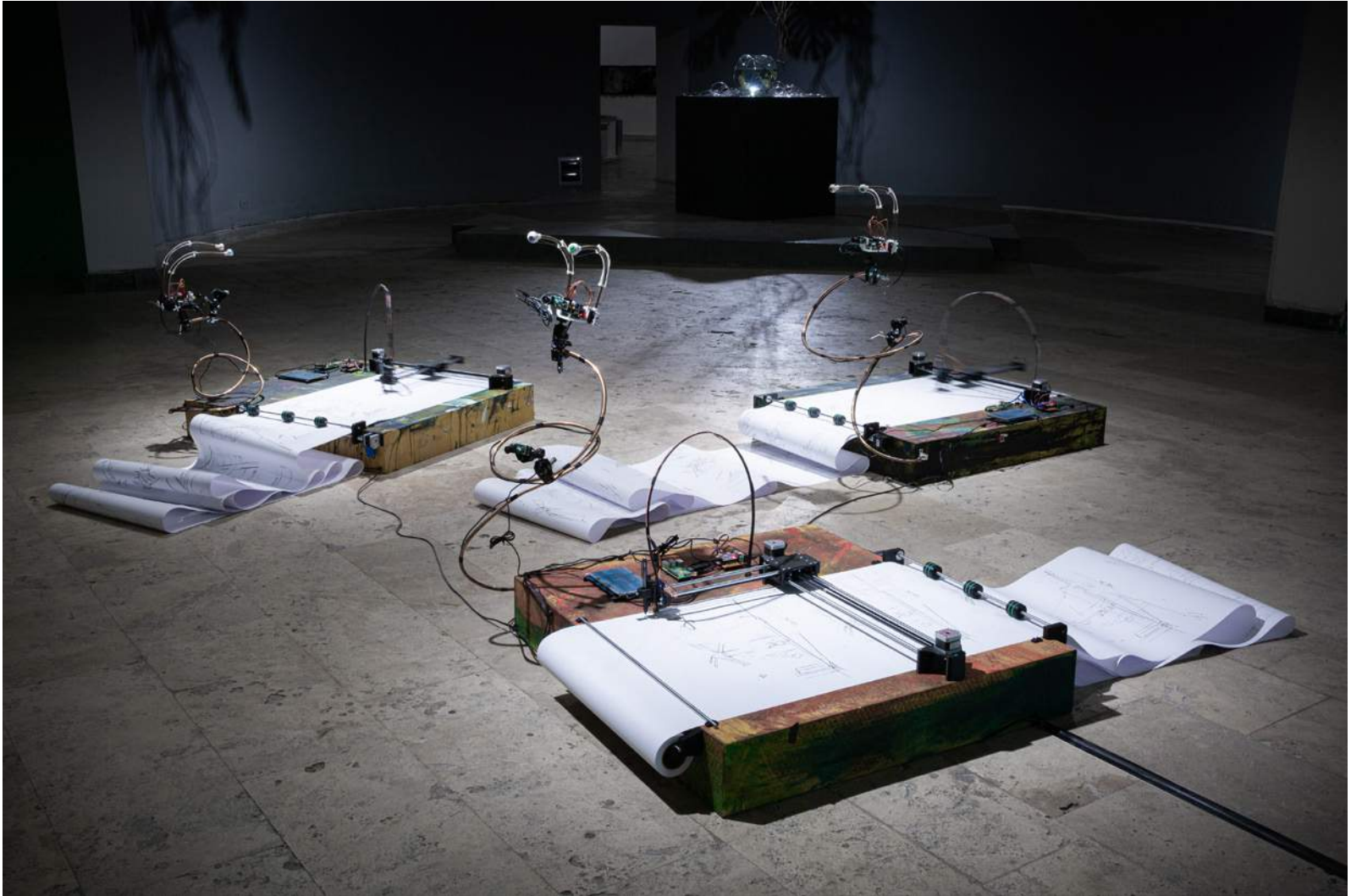
Anna Frants

USA

Trembling Creauters
Installation Edition of 40, 2010
Felting: Hannes Kivits
Robotics and programming: Alexey Grachev
In collaboration with CYLAND Media Art Lab

In Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov pondered the question: "Am I a trembling creature, or do I have the right?" This installation answers both parts of this question positively: yes, you are a trembling creature, and yes, you do have the right… to tremble from any change in the world, like these hats felted by the Estonian artist, which start to move, or rather to tremble, from any gesture by the viewer. Perhaps they literally follow the mandate of Paul the Apostle "to work out your salvation with fear and trembling". Or they remind us that life is movement – unlike the immovable stones in the Arctic Circle, that strangely enough served as an inspiration for this work.

Images   Installation view, exhibition *Offline/Online*, Cultural Centre Gromov,
                Saint Petersburg, Russia, 2019 © Anna Frants. Photo by Anton
                Khlabov
                Artwork in Frants Family collection

Anna Frants

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction. Will art save us?

Since the ultimate purpose of art is beauty, and, according to Dostoevsky, beauty will save the world, then hypothetically art is capable of saving humankind. In reality, however, since the extinction of our civilisation will most likely be the fault not of the aliens, but of us, the earthlings, then arguably only a miracle would be capable of saving us. According to Alexander Blok, the artist "has been given a dispassionate measure to measure everything" that he sees – that is to say, to evaluate everything and then to depict or reflect everything. Therefore, while artists exist, their duty will be to reflect everything that has to do with humankind, including the process of our extinction.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?

If we are to think about it, a hierarchy in this system has always been in existence, but not always in the same order. Initially, it most likely was 'nature-human-machine'. After all, man is a creation of nature, and at the beginning he was entirely at its mercy, and the machine (in this case, fire and tools) helped him to cope with it, explore it and conquer it. Nowadays, this hierarchy seems to look like 'human-machine-nature': man has long since conquered nature and now he ruthlessly uses it with the help of all kinds of machines. I believe that this hierarchy will be going forward as well, but I hope it will not come to a sci-fi variation 'machine-man/nature' when the machine will rise and destroy both nature and mankind.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?

If artists can inspire social change, it's news to me, and if this happens in the future, it will be one of the greatest achievements in art. In any event, I was unable to find anything of the kind in the past. At the same time, I found quite a few examples of the opposite, when social changes inspired artists. Art has always been more a key to history (including social history) than its catalyst or inspirer. However, artists can inspire an individual – for example, Pushkin whose "lyre was tuned to loving-kindness" – and this ultimately might bring changes for the better in society if, of course, this is not prevented by political correctness and cancel culture.

Elena Gubanova & Ivan Govorkov

Russia

Time Density
Installation, 2021
Engineer Andrew Strokov
Supported by CYLAND Media Art Lab
Dedicated to the memory of astronomer V.S. Gubanov

We are accustomed to perceive time as a constant value with a vectorial movement from the past to the future. But this is only one of many concepts of the structure of the Universe. In nature, in our feelings, even in history, as we know, strange contradictions often arise, which may lead us to suspect that time has a different nature and a different structure.

In his experimental research, the outstanding Soviet astronomer Nikolai Kozyrev developed a new concept – time density, which depended on processes taking place in nature. Kozyrev tried to prove that processes with a reduction of entropy (for example, apples blooming in orchards, warmth, light and so on) weaken the time density around them, or absorb time. On the contrary, processes accompanied by an increase in entropy (withering of matter, thunder, a loud noise and so on) increase time density, and accordingly radiate time. Thus, nature and humans themselves construct the passing of time by different phenomena, acts, emotions and creation.

In their project, Elena Gubanova and Ivan Govorkov have attempted to find a pictorial expression of Kozyrev's experiments. Above a screen with drifting clouds, the artists have placed a round Soviet-era clock connected to the surface by light sensors. The video affects the movement of the minute hand: it slows down and speeds up depending on what is happening on the screen. The moving sky is a metaphor of society with its search for happiness and restlessness, and at the same time of nature with its tranquillity and sudden cataclysms. The clock slows down when the light sensor detects a white cloud floating across the sky, a symbol of happiness: time is 'swallowed up'. The clock speeds up, 'radiating' time, when a space of entropy and stagnation appears on the screen in the form of fragments of a black sky.

Images   Installation view, Cyfest-13 (2021) *Cosmos and Chaos*, Saint
                Petersburg Stieglitz State Academy of Art and Design, Saint
                Petersburg, Russia, 2021. Photo by Mikhail Grigoriev
                © Elena Gubanova & Ivan Govorkov

Elena Gubanova & Ivan Govorkov

Elena Gubanova

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
The Nobel Prize winning poet Joseph Brodsky said that the main task of humanity as a species is culture. If everyone understood this, we would have a chance. But evidently domination, procreation and survival have always been and remain the main motives for their actions. So it seems to me that we do not have a chance.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
Now, when nature is in the last place in this chain, we are far from an ideal hierarchy. But if the machine takes a place above man and nature, then even worse times will come.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
Let's dream. A little boy comes to a museum and sees Francisco Goya's painting *Saturn Devouring His Son* – and in the future, when he is elected president of the country, this boy does not become a dictator. But this is an impossible dream.

Ivan Govorkov

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
First of all, we must understand who 'we' are, what the 'individual' is, and how it is linked with space and time. Are space and time real or not? Do the past and future exist – or only the present? Only by answering these questions can we find the courage to think further.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
Evidently, the moment of the present is a vibration between the past and future. According to the theory of the German physicist Max Planck, a quantum of time is the time in which light passes one quantum of space. It becomes clear that at this speed of vibration and on this scale, it is impossible to conceive of the existence of matter. And then it is unlikely that we can pose the question of priorities, for they only exist in our imagination, and in their turn our minds only exist in the imagination of the absolute and unattainable essence of being.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
Art which preaches, instructs and considers itself capable of improving the world becomes a wingless Pegasus harnessed to a plough.
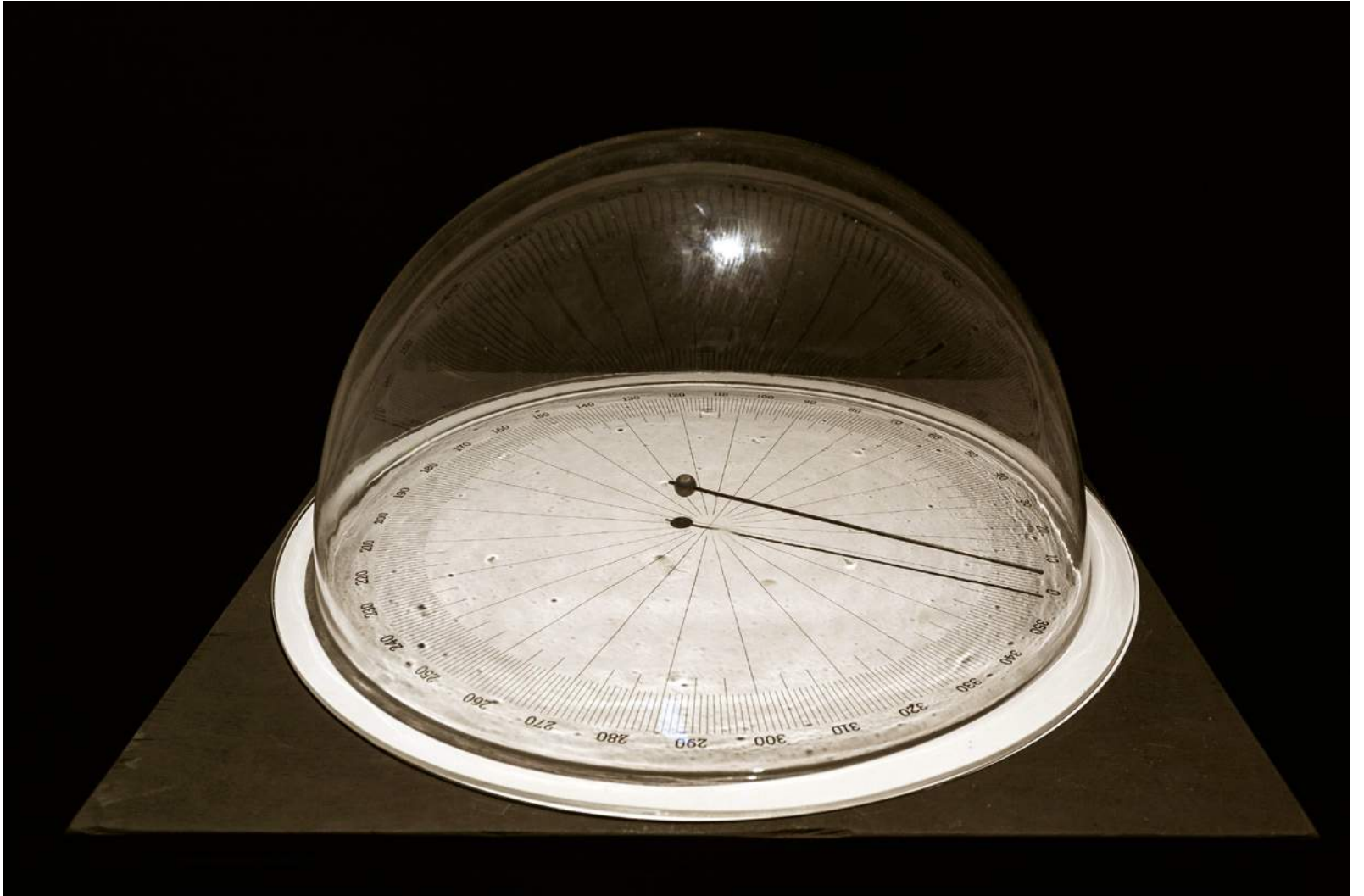
Pavel Ignatev

Russia

Reverse Drift. Unpacking and Absorption
Sculptures, 2018-2022

The name of the project refers to situationism and the texts of Guy Debord, primarily the essay *Mode d'emploi du détournement*. Since the time these manifestos were written, 'drift' as a form of artistic invasion has become a widespread practice for the author to interact with the surrounding reality.

The project *Reverse Drift* includes copies of classical sculptures, with their surfaces covered in snails. Dozens of snails are also found in the corners of the room and on the cornices. One of the points of attraction is the glass case: inside it the snails replace a familiar exhibit.

The artistic intervention of the academic ends with a removal, a disappearance. The spiral of any process, like the spiral of a snail, can be unravelled and rolled back up. The anthropic has only existed for 20-30 centuries, and this is nothing compared with the millions of years when the biosphere developed. And the practice of 'deviation' (détournement) turns out to be accessible not only by people, but also by gastropods.

Images   Installation view, CYFEST-14, HayArt Cultural Center, Yerevan,
                Armenia, 2022. Photo by Ann Prilutckaia
                © Pavel Ignatev

Pavel Ignatev

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
To answer this question, I must first define what humankind is. We may regard humankind as a biological species of higher primates, or as a social organism that differs from the rest of the natural world. There is also a third definition: humankind as the bearer of consciousness. The complete extinction of the 10 billion people on Earth is possible, but there is probably no point in wondering what will happen to the biosphere without human beings, as there will be no one left to find this out. We can also not rule out the possibility that complex civilisation as a social organism will collapse. One probable cause for this is an ecological disaster, so ecological art is gaining new impetus as the 'art of salvation'. The ethics of this art are clear: what protects nature is good, and what leads to its destruction is bad. Artists in this genre also gain a solid foundation to stand on, which many believe was stolen by relativist postmodernism. The third definition stipulates that consciousness also exists outside the human being, as a quality and element of creation. In this concept, the human brain is only a temporary bearer of consciousness, which we will transfer to artificial intelligence, for example. In this case, the task of art is to teach artificial intelligence something 'beautiful'. Today, the artistic result of training neural networks in social systems is often remote from both 'shining summits' and the 'palace of the subconscious'.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
Yes, if we accept the idea that humanity is a temporary bearer of consciousness which will subsequently be transferred to a machine. Could we imagine that machines will worry about preserving humankind? Will a machine find it necessary to support a 10-million strong community of 100-kilogram Homo sapiens, which has no ecological benefit? Wouldn't it be better to restore the sands of the Sahara, purify the water from microplastics and deactivate nuclear reactors – i.e. pursue values that are important for the entire biosphere? Values which the human consciousness has advocated, but which it has been unable to protect.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
They can, but when and through what media? It is very difficult to talk about predictions in art. Artistic thinking is based on mechanisms of cognition, processing information and creating a product that are completely different from scientific thinking. The most interesting things in art are unexpected, heuristic and frequently have no basis in logic. At the same time, logic, analysis and prediction with non-contradictory hypotheses are important tools of human consciousness. Without them, for example, such activities as philosophy are impossible. And this puts us in a difficult position, for contemporary art today is promoted as a type of philosophy, as a form of visual contemplation. This activity also has a practical side: it can be called 'visual ecology'. This does not mean designing a comfortable environment in the spirit of 20th century concepts of modernism. The ethics and aesthetics of visual ecology involve clearing a place for meanings, for free thinking and the creation of open but equally positive endings.

10

Victoria Ilyushkina

Russia

Cat Dreams
Multichannel video installation, 2021
Sound: Thorsten Soltau (Germany), Max Kuiper (Austria),
Vasilii Stepanov (Russia)

Day Dream
00:03:37
Sound: *Zwart, Wit En Grijs* ("Black, White and Grey") by Thorsten Soltau (Germany)
From: CAA—33 "DeStijnation", CYLAND Audio Archive, 2017

The soundtracks for *Day Dream* and *Night Dream-1* are a mixture of analogue and digital processes, incorporating found sounds and structures taken from media or discarded tape loops. Contrasts are created with analogue synthesisers and granular effect chains. Errors, glitches and hiss are considered to be equal parts of each work.

Night Dream-1
00:07:33
Sound: *Mikrophagie I & II* by Thorsten Soltau (Germany) and Max Kuiper (Austria)
From: CAA—15 *Mikrophagie*, CYLAND Audio Archive, 2014

Lilies
00:03:06
Sound: *Lilies Foam #3* by Vasilii Stepanov (Russia)

The composition uses digital synthesisers and field recordings. The processing was originally made for an open-air performance of the S A D project.

Red
00:03:36
Sound: *Cloud Voice 1* by Vasilii Stepanov (Russia)
From: CAA—12 *Cloud Voice*, CYLAND Audio Archive, 2013

Vasilii Stepanov studied the possibilities of natural reverberation and reflections of sound. The composition was made from sounds from the Casio MA-120 synthesiser, recorded beforehand in various spaces.

Images   © Victoria Ilyushkina and The CYLAND Video Archive

Victoria Ilyushkina

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?

Art can save us by affirming the values of humanism and beauty and passing them on to future generations through digitalised thought and memory. Through art, a person perceives the world in a special way, as if through a magnifying glass. But the question arises of how to preserve and pass on this memory.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?

We human beings have material bodies – the intermediary between us and the world. The issue of the survival of our species on Earth is naturally important. It is clear from the history of evolution that nature can be self-sufficient and even destructive. We know that machines with artificial intelligence can already think faster than a human. But only humans, thanks to reasoning and humanism, can balance this irrational chaos. If a person who holds the upper position in the hierarchy takes care of the ecosystem of the planet and other living beings, and makes correct use of machines and technology, then perhaps this will help to continue the miracle of our existence in the boundless cold ocean of the cosmos.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?

An artist can inspire social changes in society. For example, in the 1920s, when artists of the avantgarde and the revolution (Kazimir Malevich, El Lissitzky) constructed and developed the aesthetics and architecture of the future, the image of the 'New Man' arose. The art of cinema has always been a powerful tool of propaganda and influence on society. Now, with the emergence of digital technologies, artists have become the pioneers of a new virtual reality, aesthetic and design: they help to visualise the latest ideas, to make them visible for society. Today artists focus their attention on the micro-world and so-called non-human agents. From this a new aesthetic and ethics arise, which influence the way of life, materials and ideas with which people fill their lives.

Francisco Infante-Arana

Russia

Artifacts
Silver gelatin print, 1979
From the series "The Seat of the Distorted Space"
Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, Kolodzei Art Foundation
Silver gelatin print, 1981
From the series "The Seat of the Distorted Space"
Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, Kolodzei Art Foundation

Since 1976, Infante has studied artistic forms that he calls "artifacts". He defines an artifact as a "geometric object placed in a natural environment" or an "item created by a person, and therefore autonomous in relation to nature". In this context, nature and the artifact co-exist on equal terms, supplementing each other.

Infante creates installations in the open air and photographs them. He metaphorically transforms the natural environment, placing ready-made pieces of geometric reflecting objects in it. The photographs of these installations, which are not altered in any way, become artifacts. The constructions are later dismantled, and nature remains untouched.

The Russian avant-garde had many creative unions: Varvara Stepanova and Alexander Rodchenko, Olga Rozanova and Aleksei Kruchenykh, Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov. Infante and his wife and colleague Nonna Goryunova continue this tradition, working on artifacts together. For them, artifacts symbolise the secret of the world of nature, the attempt to reveal the secret of a 'second reality' that arises as the result of human activity.

Images   © Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art,
                 Kolodzei Art Foundation

Francisco Infante-Arana

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
Art will save the world – this is true. Dostoevsky writes "will save", in the future tense, which in my opinion is incorrect, for every minute the world is saved by contemporary art, not by retrospective art. It also saves us (humans), of course – regardless of whether we understand this or not. But if humankind becomes extinct, there will not be any contemporary art. So if we vanish into oblivion, the world will too.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
Thinking about this is not a problem, but can our thoughts come into line with what is decreed by fate? Only very brave people can answer this question without being melodramatic or sentimental. I don't know whether I am one of them, but based on my modest experience in the artistic system of the 'artifact', I can say that today parity exists, and will continue to exist, between nature and so-called 'secondary nature' (i.e. the nature of technical products), with the human standing between them. At the same time, like everything connected with human activity, the priority lies with the creative human being.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
I do not believe that art is functional. It cannot be reduced to a narrative or illustration. It is autonomous and exists in its own space, which is connected with the space of our thinking. I don't know of any cases when art has changed anything in society. On the contrary, there are examples of beautiful art, but society (of any kind) remains horribly ugly. And you can't decorate it with art, this would be fraudulent.

12
Ilya Kabakov
Russia-USA

The Flying Komarov
From the series "Ten Characters"
Mixed media on paper, 1973.20 × 26 cm
Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, Kolodzei Art Foundation

In the 1970s Kabakov created a series of large albums entitled "Ten Characters". Each album individually tells the story of a lonely Soviet person, who dies at the end. "Ten Characters" is a description of 10 'psychologised' ideas depicted in their development from the very beginning to their logical conclusion.

The Flying Komarov is a utopia of bliss, a state of eternal hovering, suspension between heaven and earth, between a dream and reality. One day Kabakov's characters step out of their houses and become airborne. They hover alone or in pairs, with everyday objects levitating around them. The main character climbs up the balcony railing, waves his arms and attempts to join them. Over time, he notices that some of the characters are becoming increasingly transparent and eventually begin to dissolve into the atmosphere. The act of death is registered in the viewer's imagination with several 'white' pages that suggest a celestial light of heaven or nirvana. Death resolves the crisis at the end of each album, followed by rebirth in the next. It is the death of the representational and the beginning of the 'abstract' being of a character.

Kabakov began his experimentation with the word/image art in his albums. The album genre allowed him to introduce the 'fourth dimension' – time – into his work. The artist showed his albums to groups of four to ten people at a time. The viewer was invited to turn the pages one by one – an action that Kabakov envisioned would result in an experience comparable to viewing a theatrical performance. Kabakov's albums present a model of a fictional Soviet citizen who is a 'small man', fully subordinate to the collective social mindset and whose inner freedom and private existence are extremely limited. The albums feature seemingly unrelated statements and comments issued by a range of 'voices'.

The work is a variation of one of the images from *The Flying Komarov* from "Ten Characters".

Image   © Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art,
                         Kolodzei Art Foundation
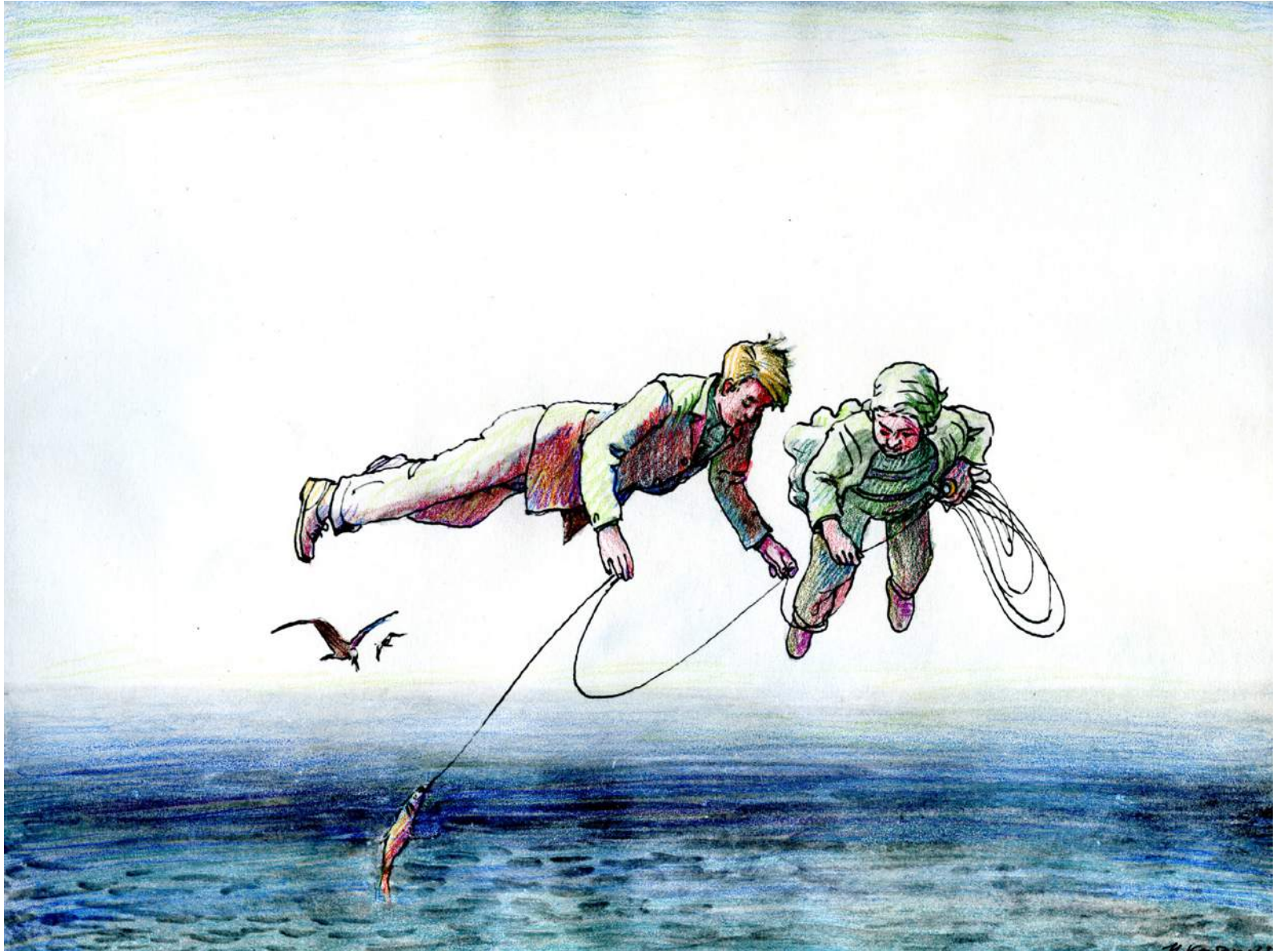
13
Sergey Katran
Russia

Northern Corpus
Installation, 2022

The *Northern Corpus* is an interdisciplinary project that combines linguistics, ecology, anthropology, sociology and art. The author examines seven Nenets neologisms proposed by native speakers and linguists to designate the concept of 'art'. This word does not exist in the Nenets language, and a borrowing from Russian is used.

The Nenets language, like other languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, is directly dependent on the preservation of the traditional way of life, which for the Nenets revolves around reindeer breeding, hunting and fishing. Ecological problems and the warming of the Arctic mean that the Nenets are gradually losing the connection with the tundra and moving to towns, gradually losing their language, verbal folk traditions, handicrafts and culture.

Sergey Katran's project is an example of 'social sculpture' (the term of Joseph Beuys): in this concept, art changes reality and rearranges social priorities. The search for a neologism within the ethnic community itself becomes a collaborative effort of the people, responding to the artist's initiative. Katrin hopes that this process will be a catalyst for the further development of the Nenets language, and the creation of a new conceptual apparatus, inspiring the Nenets to create new words and study their own culture in more depth.

Images   © Sergey Katran

Sergey Katran

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
ding dong tilly bom
ding dong tilly bom
ding dong tilly bom
(sing rather aloofly and thoughtfully until the war ends)

2 . Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
I would like to answer this question with a poem:
every person is an artist
roma jumped in the last wagon
when the train started like a champion
gathering impressive dynamics
making glass and ceramics ring
every person is an artist
every person is an artist
every person is an artist
but this is not certain
mama whispered furtively to father
roma didn't eat matzo today
it can be interpreted as
an indecent unheard sign
I get this feeling
that our roma doesn't like art
father talk to roma about it
he's played the clarinet since he was small
every person is an artist
every person is an artist
every person is an artist
but this is not certain
the train is moving to the metropolis to
moscow
and it made a terrible noise I'll tear and tear
roma had a severe crisis

thesis casus setting and basis
every person is an artist
every person is an artist
every person is an artist
but this is not certain
roma runs away from his father's home
mama sorry roma whispers tenderly
I turn 34 tomorrow
at this age cleopatra died
or someone else I have to google it
robot controlling the system
of movement of electric transport suddenly felt it was an artist
And thought It should go south of moscow
It sped up and went to krasnodar
by fateful coincidence the robot was also called roma
turning off the safety and accident prevention system
on the railway transport of the roossian federation
the robot roma changed the route and went like a monad where it should and should not go
the passengers woke from the noise of broken windows by a military helicopter exploding
the emergency ministry paratroopers
developed a plan to capture the unhinged pilot robot of electric train 714
minusinsk-moscow
unfortunately the helicopter hit an old concrete post at full speed
18 soldiers died including two crew members
the train sped on
panic has started
all the doors were closed
the conductors were paralysed by electronics
one of the passengers jumped out the window his bloody stain before become such
silently splashed on the canvas
The train went flying
the robot roma exulted

every person is an artist
every person is an artist
every person is an artist
everyone else too
every robot is an artist
every robot is an artist
every robot is an artist
if he is roma
A melodic song with these words drifted through the wagons and compartments of the train
Robot roma had an iron railroad audience, which could not
turn off the sound and the radio, without breaking it. Although in wagons 3, 7, 14, 18 in the compartments 4, 6, 1 and 5 respectively property was ruined and radios were broken. So robot roma turned off the electricity and wi-fi in these wagons
Artists travelled with Roma in the compartment
Pavel, Igor and Slava.
All four of them assessed the situation and began to brainstorm the situation
1. They streamed everything taking place in the compartment and outside the window.
2. Igor posted four events an hour which received 6 million views and kept getting more.
3. Slava proposed to make a performance, but hadn't yet devised a conceptual part.
4. Roma answered the question why he was silent, he said that he was not an artist and want to do something useful for humanity or die.
5. Pavel retorted that it was impossible to do anything useful for humanity if you weren't an artist.
6. Roma replied that he wanted to try.
7. Igor made another two videos for TikTok.
8. Slava decided to make a performance and asked the others to hold him firmly by the legs, so he could lean out the window, at least to his wait, and in this position he intended to make a video with his telephone for exactly 15 minutes. Slava's idea was that he would still remain free on the train captured by a robot.
9. Igor took Slava by the right leg.
10. Pavel took Slava by the left leg.
11. Roma refused, but the others persuaded him to make a video of the performance.
12. Slava put his head out the window, it was impossible to take a breath because of the incredible speed of the train.

13. Slava shouted for the others to pull him back in, but no one heard anything, because the sound was carried away by the flow of air.

14. Igor and Pavel decided to push Slava further out, and as soon as they took a step forward, they were pulled out of the train along with the still living but no longer breathing body of Slava.

15. Roma stayed alone in the compartment, sitting on the lower bunk, filming the empty window until the phone went dead.

16. 114 days later when the runaway train stopped by a specially constructed super-magnet in the district of the Stockholm Goods station, in compartment 6, wagon 6, Roma Akselrod was found dead of thirst and starvation holding a telephone.

17. The video that Roma had taken was called Gone with the Wind and shown at the American Metropolitan Museum, the Tate Modern of London, the Louvre of Paris, the Pushkin Museum and the Hermitage.

18. Critics and experts highly assessed this work as being relevant, terrible and truthful, which is practically impossible in a time of semi-truth and symbolic post-speculative pathos, built on the tombstones of the Anthropocene.

19. Roman Akselrod was recognised as the greatest artist of the century. He posthumously received the Joseph Beuys Prize and another 985 prizes from all over the world, and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize

every person is an artist
every person is an artist
every person is an artist
everyone else is too

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
I work as a surgeon
in the city hospital
I call myself a demiurge
by earthly tradition
on the gurney medics
brought a beauty
with a devilish rogue
they raced through nighttime Moscow
on a flashy motorbike
very stylish naked
tattooed people
with smashed heads
died on the operating table
I swapped their hearts

copypaste
copypaste
copypaste
copypaster
what could I do with them
copypaste
copypaste
copypaste
copypaster
with their love to the grave
    copypaste
copypaste
copypaste
    copypaster of your sheep

Oleg Malenok, Vasilii Bakanov, Alexey Grachev, Andrew Strokov, Alexander Bochkov

Russia

BPM – Blobs Per Minute
Sound installation, 2021
Glass carboy, custom made circuit boards, speakers, blob counter, heater, microcontroller, LEDs, camera, Raspberry Pi, drum kit, robotics. Supported by CYLAND Media Art Lab

BPM (Beats Per Minute) – an essential concept in music denoting the rhythm and speed of a track in quarter notes. The essential parameter which shows the number of blobs per time unit. It denotes the intensity of the fermentation. The process is determined by the number of blobs: whether it is taking place, has stopped or has yet to begin.

The basis of the installation is a drum kit and beer brewing fermentation system. Together, they form a closed system in which the fermentation process is the source and initiator of sound. The sound in the installation is completely analogue and is formed in real time. The rhythm that the drum sticks beat out depends on the fermentation process – the carbon dioxide released in the fermentation process initiates the mechanical beating of the drum. The sticks beat in time to each blob that forms.

In each vessel, the process takes place with differing intensity. The combination of the ingredients, the temperature, the properties of the drum kit and the fermentation system – all of this determines the process and nature of fermentation, and also the rhythmical pattern of the music created.

As the fermentation takes place, polyrhythmic structures are created (which can be found in Afrobeat) – several different rhythms are heard at once, which combine to form a single musical composition after a certain time. It is difficult to predict what the sound pattern of the fermentation will be. The resulting soundtrack is additional data, an analysis of which helps to gain a better understanding of the fermentation process.

This 'drummer' can keep playing as long as it is fed by yeast consuming sugar, and as long as blobs continue to form. The working principle of the installation resembles a creative process and the presentation of its results to the world. As long as there are thoughts and ideas, possibilities and resources, we carry out actions in this process. If the sound of the drum is a sign of life in the installation, in the art system the signs of life are artistic projects. A feeling of timeliness is important here, an understanding when the project is ready, and when one needs to give oneself more time for the idea to reach maturity. If it is kept too long or stopped prematurely, the process may end in failure, becoming incomprehensible or incomplete.

Images   Installation view, Cyfest-14 (2021-22) *Ferment*, Arts+Ecology festival, Dartington Trust, Dartington, UK, 2021. Photo by Alexander Bochkov
© Oleg Malenok, Vasilii Bakanov, Alexey Grachev, Andrew Strokov, Alexander Bochkov and CYLAND Media Art La

Oleg Malenok, Vasilii Bakanov, Alexey Grachev, Andrew Strokov, Alexander Bochkov

Oleg Malenok

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
Without getting into the reasons that humanity has reached the brink of total oblivion and the complete extinction of Homo sapiens as a species, I will ask the question: "What is art for a person today"?
Is it what can delight the eye, the ear or the taste buds? Is it what can make us think, in an attempt to understand "what the author wanted to say"? Or is it what can give an inner feeling of delight and the joy of expression, regardless of the method to evoke these feelings?
In any case, art as an independent unit is incapable of solving the global issue of saving humanity, but it may serve as a catalyst in the aspiration of each one of us to become better, 'brighter' and happier in our existence!

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
We live in an era of virtual reality, metaverses, social networks, cryptocurrencies and artificial intelligence. Nature, which formed independently over millions of years, without the global participation of humans, is now given the role of a resource to ensure our existence and the creation of a new reality. Humans have taken a dominant position by taming nature, and created machines for their own comfort. In the distant future I do not rule out the possibility that machines will play the dominant role, and humans will become resources for them. Will the need remain for the existence of nature as such?

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
In the daily bustle of maintaining one's existence, without finding time for profound reflection, a person loses the ability to think on a large scale, to think abstractly, to think DIFFERENTLY. In this light, artists are perceived as individuals who have been capable of overcoming 'earthly gravitation', for they have mastered the art of developing their inner selves, and are not afraid to announce their vision of everything in existence.
By improving themselves in one field, people create a favorable environment for the development of their inner circle. By creating art, they form a community of people who think and attempt to express their own thoughts and position. Can we speak of art as a method of understanding oneself, influencing the minds of others, and consequently as a way to create changes in society? My answer is clear: YES.
It's another question whether individuals and humanity as a whole are prepared to accept this approach. Every day I become less certain of this.

Vasilii Bakanov

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
I don't believe that humanity is on the brink of extinction. I rather believe that we face a rejection of customary Eurocentricity in favor of something quite new, which we see as extinction. Art which really can influence people is controlled by state and corporate institutions. The platforms, algorithms and filters are strictly controlled, and this places art in a servicing position. The underground cannot get through this filter. We are the Internet, but the Internet is not us.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
I see this hierarchy as machine=human-nature. A machine will not be able to rise above humans for a long time. The main movement now is towards achieving equality between machine and humans. Nature is finally losing out and will only be a means of support. No green ideas will have any meaning.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
The main question is: what changes should artists inspire? Changes do not take place because the artist or anyone else wishes them, but as a part of a complex evolutionary process. Artists can only feel and attract attention to these changes. This is the most that they can do.

Alexey Grachev

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
I recently rewatched the performance by Yoko Ono and John Lennon where they protested in bed, and I thought to myself: those were great times! Back then you could express yourself in an interesting way and cause a sensation. Today the institution of free expression is in the state of 'we'll listen to you', but when it comes to serious problems, any human being will be erased, along with their opinion. In countries of a high legal culture, expression (which is now easily interpreted as art and moved to a museum) has a certain power: it may partially defuse the situation, put a new advertising banner in social networks or social graffiti on walls. But it cannot save us.
Only for a second a beautiful piece flickers in the flames of the world fire – and turns to ash. All that remains of art is its function. Which practically does not exist.
There is great benefit from this picture: it covers the hole in the wall.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
The only path is to immerse ourselves in the matrix and let machines take care of us, relying on their balance with nature. People must distance themselves from the real world, go outside the limits of the biosphere of Planet Earth, immerse themselves in the virtual world with endless lives and virtual children (if this function is available), with the only limits being the resources required by the robots that service these people.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
They can, but changes must take place in people's souls, and not in laws. In fact, the modern approach to disseminating information in the social sphere is already art. A global performance in forming public opinion is a complex operation that uses many different media: from photographs, costumes, music and murals to comments and news feeds. This is true modern art on an international scale.
All personal (classical, contemporary, media-) art is just splashes of paint that decorate our day between the morning espresso and the evening social networks, and answer the question 'how was it?' – 'it was nice'.
Last year, on the day of the autumn equinox, I spoke with a young British artist, and asked her what art meant to her. She said that it was what makes her happier at the moment of immersion in the creative process.
So I think art should not set grandiose tasks – or rather its tasks do not have to be grandiose. You should simply create art without judgment and enjoy it. And then there will be one more happy person on earth, and perhaps this person will be joined by others. And then we'll all become happier.

Amen.

15
Tuula Närhinen
Finland

Drop Tracer
Installation, 2011
Detail. Rain splash patterns on soot-coated glass slides: scanned, enlarged and printed in 110 × 166 cm

The installation includes 35 mm glass slides coated with soot and exposed to rain, photographs of splash patterns created by raindrops, and a video which allows the spectator to witness the raindrops' collision with glass.

The work draws from a scientific method for studying rainfall, devised by the meteorologist Vincent J. Schaefer in the 1930s. When a drop of water hits the soot-coated glass surface, air trapped under the droplet lifts tiny particles of soot that scatter and result in splash patterns. In adapting Schafer's method for the artwork, Närhinen placed a contact microphone under the glass to catch the sound of the collision. The slides with the splash patterns were scanned and enlarged into black and white pigment prints.

When observing the rain with naked eye, it is hard to see individual raindrops, but the visuals reveal the impact of each drop. The samples show that, while seemingly uniform, rain is in fact variable, sometimes consisting of big, widely spaced drops, sometimes dense and finely granulated. The work encourages us to look closer. Ecosystems are both resilient and fragile; together, the tiny drops can make a big difference.

Images   Artist's solo exhibition *The Touch of Rain* at the Kluuvi Gallery,
                  Helsinki Finland, 15 February-3 March 2013
                  © Tuula Närhinen
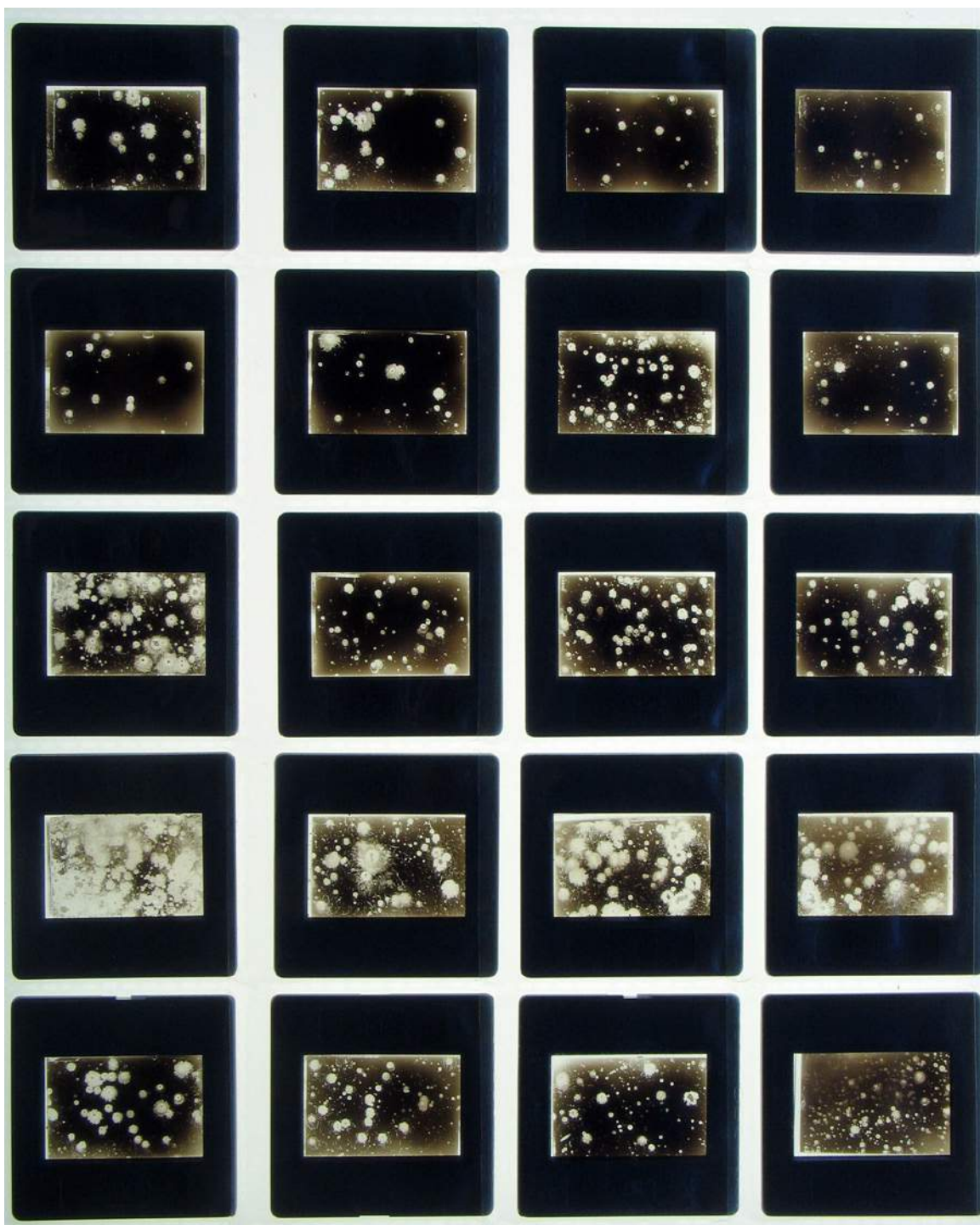
Tuula Närhinen

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
Art cannot save the species from extinction. But in acknowledging our condition as part of the global ecosystem, art proposes to challenge the human centred perspective, which again could lead to more resilient ways of coping with the natural world.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
There is an urgent need to reconsider man's position as the master of the universe. It is time to start respecting other sentient species and to act accordingly. To fully acknowledge the impact and the rights of various non-human agencies calls for adopting new, more inclusive philosophies, ethical principles, and co-operative practices. Finding a viable substitute for man's visual dominance and technological power involves exploring alternative perspectives, listening to multiple voices, and fathoming the uncharted potential of weak factors.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
Through making visible the consequences of our actions, art may be productive in bringing about a change. For example, in exposing the threat imposed by plastic waste in the ocean, works of visual art may encourage to abandon the 'take, make, dispose' -path characteristic of a ruthless exploitation of natural resources. Through their works, artists who touch upon the economic and social aspects of plastic pollution can show new ways of dealing with rubbish and recycling. Or they can invite the audience to consider alternative models, such as a circular economy, or zero-waste processes where resources are kept at their highest utility and value for as long as possible.
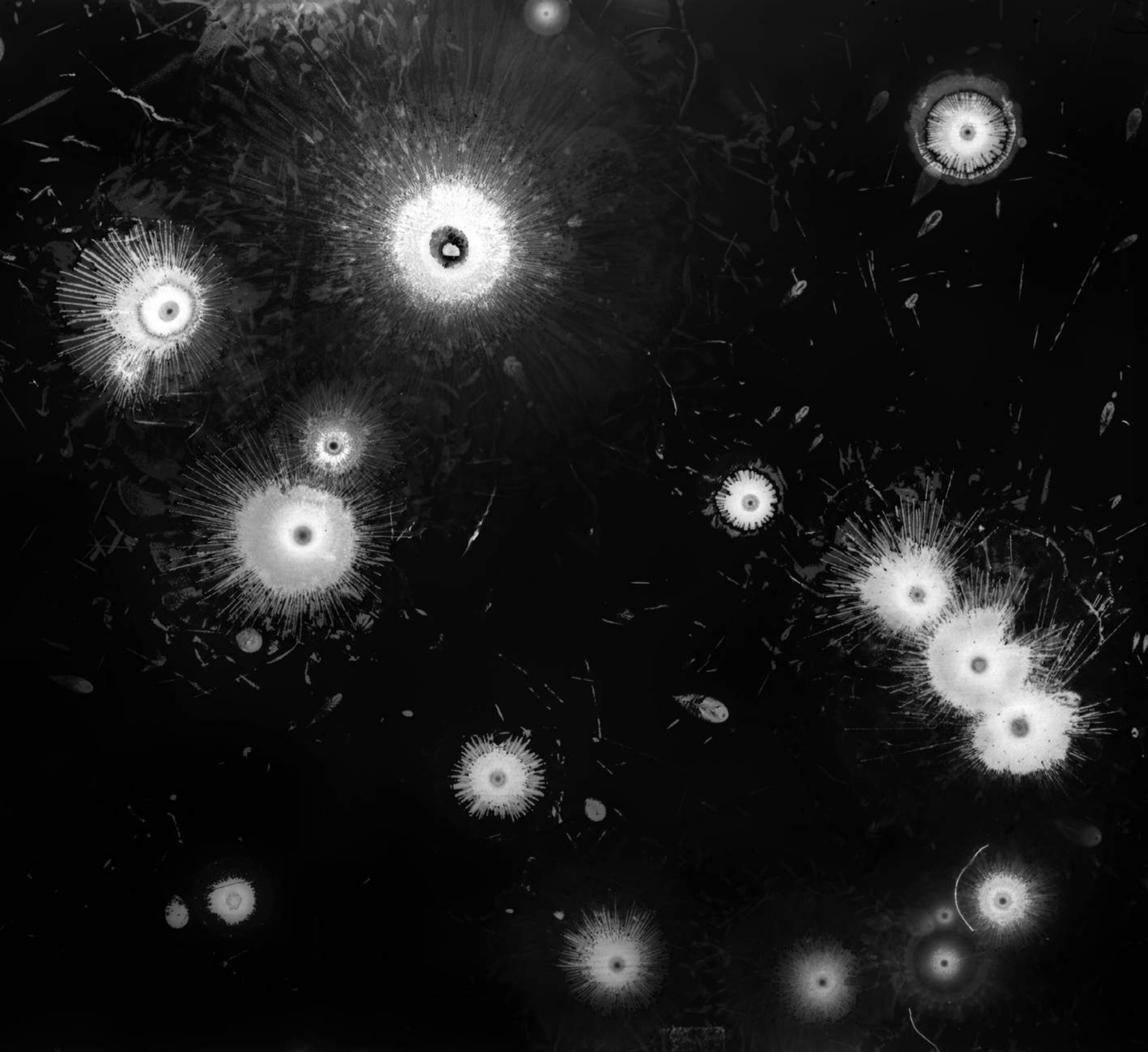
Alexander Ponomarev

Russia

Instability Mode
Installation, 2022

The time of absolute instability has come. At any moment the centre of gravity and the centre of magnitude can change places and the world will turn over like an iceberg. The signals of art are similar to SOS signals in Morse code, which has almost been forgotten but proves to be still relevant. Patterns of dots and dashes, generated by the ship's radio station, scatter in space with the certainty that humanity in the ocean of time will hear the final warning: 'People, we may all sink!'

Images   © Alexander Ponomarev
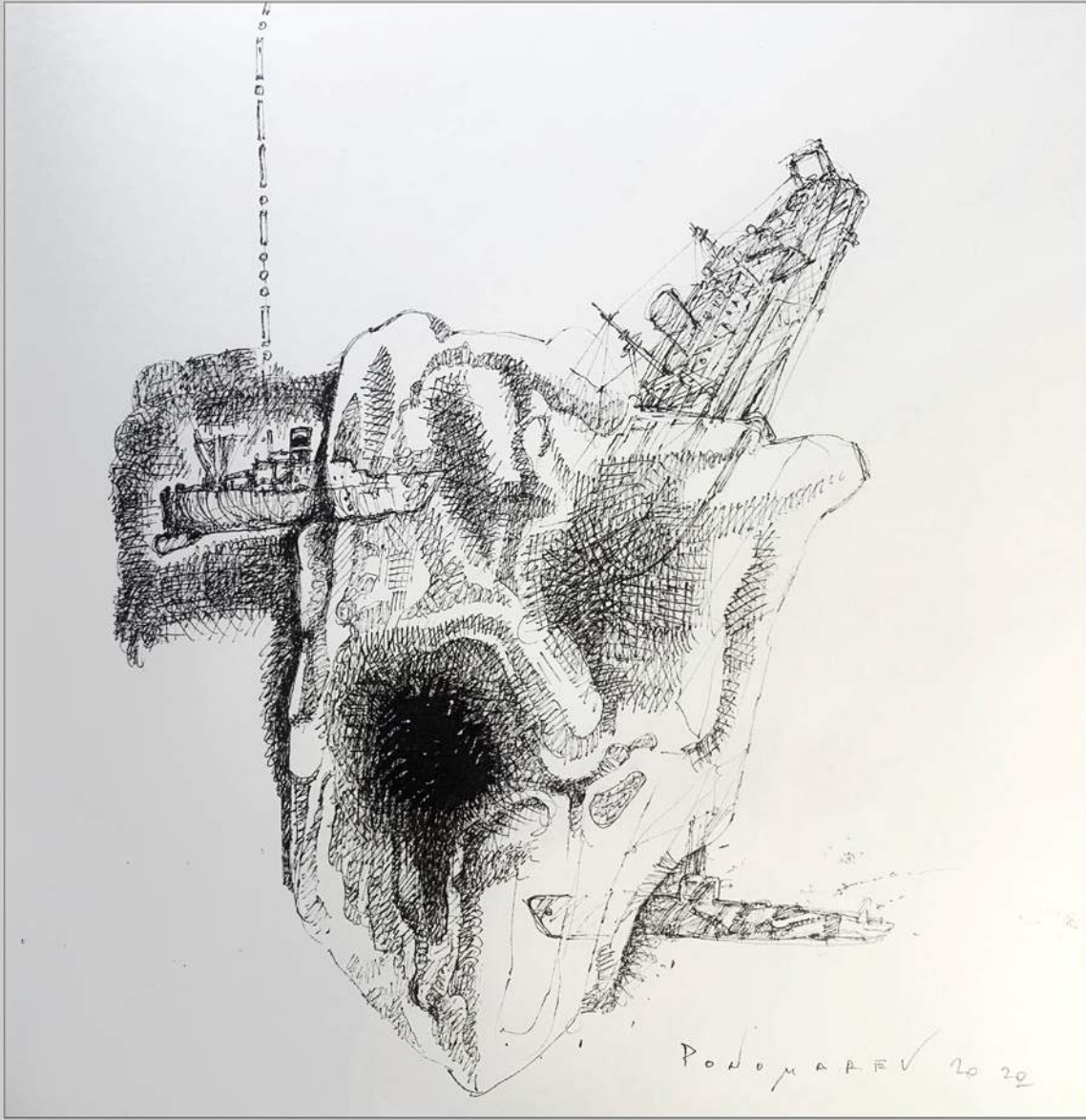
PONOMAREV 20 20

Alexander Ponomarev

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
Art saves souls, and souls may save the world!

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
This hierarchy already works, but it's difficult to determine who the machine is!

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
Artists can probably not inspire change, but they must keep trying to inspire it all their lives!

27 02 2022

17

Miriam Simun

USA

Your Urge to Breathe Is a Lie
Video, 2019

A sensorial document of transhumanist cephalopodic evolution. A call to join the psycho-physical training regimen for human enhancement. In the face of rapid ecological and technological change, we train new sensitivities and capabilities, based on the model of the cephalopod. Miriam Simun's work positions the non-mammalian ocean animal as an evolutionary role model; embraces the capacities residing in the existing biological human system, looks towards indigenous forms of deep ocean bodily labours; advocates for non-anthropocentric and embodied knowledges for the project of innovation; and embraces training as a technology, as an augmentation – one rooted in practice, development of internal abilities, and equity in access.

Images   © Miriam Simun

Miriam Simun

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
No.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
I don't subscribe to this false division of human vs. nature. We are part of nature and the machines we make are part of us. I believe this false division is the source of many of our problematic relations to our worlds.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
Boris Groys in 2014 wrote: "Art activists do want to be useful, to change the world, to make the world a better place – but at the same time, they do not want to cease being artists. And this is the point where theoretical, political, and even purely practical problems arise".
I work at crash sites: where bodies (human and non-human) collide with rapidly evolving techno-ecosystems. If collision is understood as a form of disturbance (in the ecological sense), then in disturbance we find not only damage, but also the opportunity for renewal. As we collide in new and ancient ways, we (a multi-species we) discover, as the great poet Fred Moten said, "a shared need to renew our habits of assembly". As an artist I am interested in the sensual conditions of the collision, the disturbance, and the renewal. Working at these sites opens up new ways of thinking and being for me, and perhaps for others as well. I am under no illusion that anyone is being saved. Sometimes art makes things more bearable.

Valentina Tamborra

Italy

Arnt wearing the typical Sami dress: the Gakti
A moment of the Ođđabeaigállát / Nissetoget in Manndalen valley
From the series "ÁkhÁt - Terra Madre"
Digital photographs, 2018-2022

This project arose from the photographer's artistic need to explore the concept of borders, and from the discovery of a world that is close for Europeans, but at the same time unknown. The Sami culture has developed over thousands of years, facing many ordeals in a very hostile climate, with a nomadic community spread out over a vast area. The Sami are divided by the state borders of four countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. They live in the extreme North of the world, in a broad region known as Sapmi.

Although the attempt to abolish their culture during the Nationalism era of the last century failed, today climate change is challenging the future of the Sami lifestyle which is deeply rooted in nature. The moment has come to give voice to this ancient community of European natives, and share their lives and culture with the world to prevent them from disappearing.

This project marks the end of three years' work, and covers such sensitive topics as climate change, sustainability, inclusion, respect of cultures, memory, tradition and cultural heritage.

Images   © Valentina Tamborra - Ahkat TerraMadre project

Valentina Tamborra

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
Art is a powerful medium, and if it can't save us, at least it can help to make people think. Words, images, sound, movement… everything creates communication that lies at the basis of discussion, debate, and therefore of critical thinking. Art can help, and we must keep on making it, talking about it, breathing it and sharing it.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
I don't like to talk in terms of hierarchies, but in terms of cooperation and making a difference. The Human being created the machine as a work of intellect: the machine is helpful, but doesn't replace the human and will not destroy Nature, which is itself part of the human and humankind. As a consequence, rather than a hierarchy I would express it as a connected system aimed at overall wellbeing: nature, human and machine working together to help and sustain.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
Artists can inspire, suggest, and make people think, but never alone. Art is a collective genre: it comes from the creator to reach the receiver who will make a new message out of it, maybe different, but not less valid. Anything that stimulates thoughts and discussions is a tool for change, and for this reason artists must realise their responsibility in sending messages that can be positive and productive. I personally work on borders, margins, on small stories that perhaps nobody can see, but that still fill our lives, as I'm convinced that we must listen to everybody, especially those who do not have much of a voice.

19

Anna Tolkacheva
Russia

Nomadic Poetry
Media poetry and interactive installation, 2015-2022

There are over 40 small groups of indigenous peoples living in Russia. They speak languages from 7 different language groups. Many of these languages are disappearing because they have few native speakers.

Nomadic Poetry is a long-term project which consists of a series of works with small ethnic groups in the Russian North. Although the project does not attempt to solve the current situation, it creates an additional zone of visibility, among other things. Even small peoples have their folklore, their poetry, and songwriters. It is possible to capture languages in their current states.

Saami, Nganasan, Evenks, and Nenets are presented in the work. Viewers can touch any object on a panoramic photo and hear the word of the language of the ethnic group dwelling in this area. Click on a tree and the word meaning 'tree' will be spoken. Touch a cloud, or a lake, or a leaf, or snow, or the sun – everything can be spelled out. The translation is shown and sounds are echoed several times before they disappear. Click on poets and you will hear their poetry. Reindeer horns are a sacral object which changes the panoramic picture that is touched. The poetry of spoken words forms the vanishing language landscape.

Image   Screenshot from *Nomadic Poetry*. Panoramic photo near
                     Dudinka, October 2016
                     © Anna Tolkacheva

Anna Tolkacheva

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
I don't agree with the thesis that humankind is on the brink of extinction. I believe in people. For me, art is what gives hope and itself lives by hope: it does not proceed from a position of disaster, and so it is capable of properly opposing disaster. There is no place for despair here, it is not productive. To create a new world, you must imagine it, and to imagine it, you need to live in it, to believe it and examine its details in yourself. Only then will they become reality and change it.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
Hierarchical relations are alien to me. I may play with them, but in these categories I only think like a mathematician. We have three entities, and we generate all possible options of strictly hierarchical relations between them. Obviously, there are six of them:
human → machine → nature,
human → nature → machine,
nature → human → machine,
nature → machine → human,
machine → human → nature,
machine → nature → human.
Each version can be imagined, and for each one we may think up scenarios of a utopian and anti-utopian future. But I would prefer to exclude from this system the operation of comparison altogether, which gives the possibility to build hierarchies.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
Yes, they can. By doing their work thoughtfully, sincerely, responsibly and competently. Art in this sense only has one advantage – freedom. 'Art' is the name of the abstract place of the existence of the strange, and these strange things may and should be absolutely different. I would hesitate to make it a task or mission, even a social one, otherwise we risk having artists who serve ideology, instead of artists who come up with ideas. But some of these chaotic strange things will certainly make more change in society than if people merely see a process of good work, which I repeat is no less important for society.

20

Where Dogs Run

Russia

The Phobia of Tomorrow
Interactive installation, 2017
Programming: Sergey Maskov

Viewers are invited to put their hands in a grey cube box. Inside the box there is a little pillow for the palm, a mechanical stamp, a microcontroller, a clock, servos, etc. When you take your hand out of the box, on your palm there is a stamp with tomorrow's date. The date of the stamp is automatically changed each day.

The Phobia of Tomorrow continues the project entitled *Museumification of Phobias*. The artists collect various phobias and realise them inside boxes in order to experience these phobias regularly. They have already realised such artworks as *Portable Mini Customs* (the phobia of passport control) and *The Phobia of the Other* (the phobia of an arm without a vaccination mark).

Images   Photo by Where Dogs Run: artists' studio in Yekaterinburg, 2017
                © Where Dogs Run Group
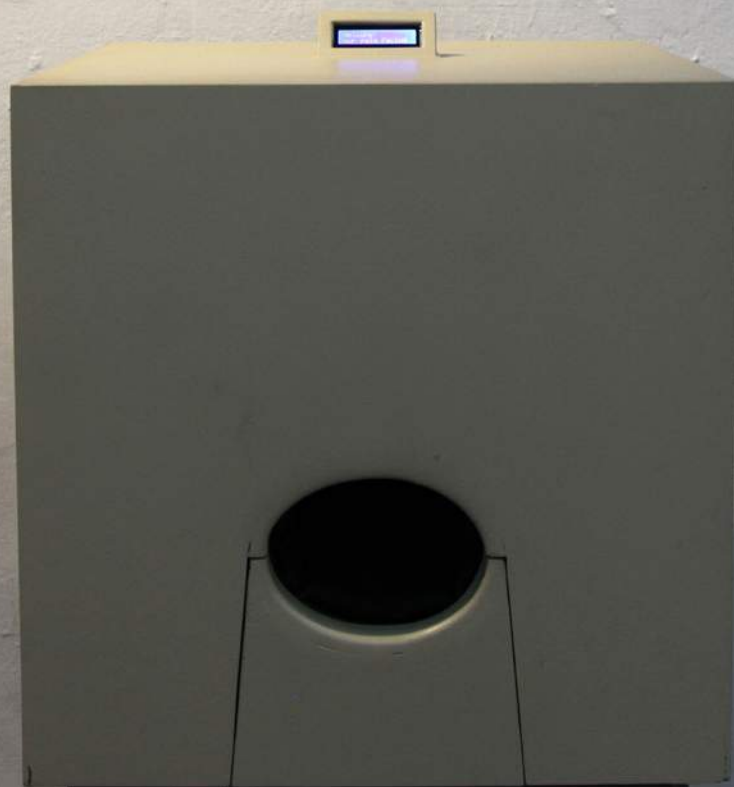
Where Dogs Run

1. Humankind is on the brink of extinction, will art save us?
We were sent these questions a few days before the war that Russia started against Ukraine. This was in a different reality that no longer exists. It only took one day for us to cease to understand and feel the circle of questions discussed, and it is unclear whether we will ever be able to return to them. We didn't manage to answer them in that other life. But we don't think that our answer would have been optimistic even then. Today it is quite clear: art cannot stop a war, and cannot save anyone. There is hope that it may try to educate (a terrible word which we have always tried to avoid), to teach people to think and feel; but this is a slow process with no guarantee of success. If we are on the brink of extinction, then we probably won't have enough time. This means there will be different, no less interesting forms of life.

2. Can we think of a hierarchy in the system man-machine-nature?
Before the war we believed that now was the time to develop new types of communication, where the fact that we are alive and the structure of our natural organisms would become a starting point for building relations with artificial organisms. For example, chemical communication between bio- and cyber-agents seemed promising to us, as it would even out the capabilities of all involved and would oppose hierarchies. The connection of artificial and natural technologies in the free world will only increase, we believe. If a human being has managed to fit into this complex ecosystem as an ordinary representative of natural technologies and realise themselves in this way, then perhaps the system will become more stable. A time will come when we will be able to think about bio-cyber-systems and their symbiotic existence, and project these relations. So far our reality does not allow this.

3. Can artists inspire social change? If so, how?
To continue living, we have to think that this is theoretically possible. We don't know how exactly, but there are naïve and very simple suggestions. To try to remain yourself and do what you consider necessary. To try to communicate not only with people who are part of your small circle, to try to understand others and convey your values to them. To try not to disappear and to be visible. These simple things now seem to be a massive task in Russia. If this somehow influences a few people, and they influence a few more, and these points of influence increase, then… There is no great hope, of course, but it's worth trying.

06.10.2016

Biographies of the Artists

Marina Alekseeva

Artist. Born in 1959 in Leningrad, USSR. Graduated from the Vera Mukhina Higher School of Art and Design (Leningrad) as a ceramist. She works in various media including installations, objects and painting. Participant of the Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2011, Russia) and Panama Biennale of Contemporary Art (2013). Winner of the Sergey Kuryokhin Contemporary Art Award (2010, Russia) in the category "Art in Public Space" (together with Boris Kazakov). Nominee for the "Golden Mask" Theatre Award (2019, Russia) for set and costume design of Vladimir Rannev's opera *Prose* (The Stanislavsky Electrotheatre, Moscow). Her works are held in the collections of the Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Multimedia Art Museum, Fundació Sorigué (Lleida, Spain), Art Vectors Investment Partnership (Vienna) and others. Lives and works in St. Petersburg.

Vladimir Rannev

Composer and music theorist. Born in 1970 in Moscow, USSR. Graduated from the Composition Department of St. Petersburg State Conservatory (Russia) in 2003, and earned his postgraduate degree in music theory in 2005. In 2003-2005, Rannev undertook an internship in the field of electronic music at the Hochschule für Musik, Cologne, Germany. Lecturer at the St. Petersburg State University, Russia. Gartow-Stiftung program recipient (2002, Germany), winner of the Salvatore Martirano Memorial Composition Award (2009, Illinois University, USA) and the Gianni Bergamo Classic Music Award (2010, Switzerland). His opera *Two Acts* took the Grand Prix of the Sergey Kuryokhin Contemporary Art Award (2013); the opera *Prose* won the Russian Opera Prize "Casta Diva" (2018), the Prize of the Russian Association of Theatre Critics (2018) and the "Golden Mask" Theatre Award (2019, Russia). Rannev's music has been performed in Russia, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Netherlands, UK, Finland, Poland, Japan and USA. Lives and works in St. Petersburg.

Ludmila Belova

Artist and curator. Born in 1960 on the Kamchatka Peninsula, USSR. Graduated from the Abramtsevo Art and Industry School (Moscow Region, USSR). She works with video, sound, painting, and photography. Investigates the issues of memory, space and time; studies the impact of new technologies on the human being in art practices; makes the viewer a participant of the art process through interactivity. Her works have been exhibited in Europe, USA, Russia and Asia. Participant of the Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2005, 2011, Russia), exhibitions parallel to the Venice Biennale (2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, Italy) and the parallel program of the Manifesta 10 Biennale (St. Petersburg, 2014). Winner of the Prize 50 Bestern ZKM (2000, Karlsruhe, Germany) and of the Sergey Kuryokhin Award (2017, Russia) for "Best Curatorial Project". Participant of more than 50 local and international group exhibitions and festivals. Her works are held in the collections of the Russian Museum, the Anna Akhmatova Museum, Erarta Museum (St. Petersburg), the Kolodzei Art Foundation (New York), and in private collections in Switzerland, Germany and Russia. Lives and works in St. Petersburg and Rose, Montenegro.

Chakaia Booker

Sculptor. Born in 1953 in Newark, New Jersey, USA. Received a BA in sociology from Rutgers University (New Jersey, USA), and an MFA from the City College of New York (USA). She is known for creating monumental, abstract works from recycled tires and stainless steel for both the gallery and outdoor public spaces. Booker's use of discarded tires resonates for their rich range of historical and cultural associations and reference industrialisation, consumer culture, and environmental concerns. Her artworks can be found in more than 40 public collections and have been exhibited across the USA, in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Booker was included in the 2000 Whitney Biennial (New York). She received a Pollock-Krasner Grant in 2002 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2005. Lives and works in New York.

Alexandra Dementieva

Artist. Born in 1960 in Moscow, USSR. She studied journalism and fine arts in Moscow, USSR, and Brussels, Belgium. Her principal interest as an artist is the use of social psychology, perception theory and behaviourism in media installations that combine dance, music, cinema and performance. She organises LASER Talks Brussels and teaches at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (Brussels, Belgium). Dementieva received the first prize for the best mono-channel video at VAD Festival (2005, Girona, Spain). She is a participant of numerous exhibitions in major Russian and international cultural institutions, including the Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg), Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art (Russia), Centro de la Imagen (Mexico City, Mexico), Rubin Museum (New York) and others. Lives and works in Brussels, Belgium.

Maria Cristina Finucci

Architect and artist. To protest against plastic waste in the sea, in 2013 she founded a new state at UNESCO: the Garbage Patch State. In 2018, as the Head of State, she signed the UN resolution Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development. Her work has been published in books and magazines around the world. She has received many awards in Italy. Her work as an artist has been exhibited in museums and institutions including the Shenzhen Biennale (China), the Bracco Foundation (Milan), and the Borromeo Palace (Rome, Italy). In 2019, she was awarded the Decoration of Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

Anna Frants

Artist, curator in the field of media art. Born in 1965 in Leningrad, USSR. She graduated from the Vera Mukhina Higher School of Art and Design (Leningrad, USSR) and Pratt Institute (New York). Founder of the nonprofit cultural foundation CYLAND Foundation Inc. Cofounder of CYLAND Media Art Lab and Cyfest. Frants' interactive installations have been showcased at Museum of Art and Design (New York), Video Guerrilha Festival (Brazil), Manifesta 10 Biennale (2014, St. Petersburg), Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg), Chelsea Art Museum (New York), Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), Kunstquartier Bethanien (Berlin), Hatcham Church Gallery, Goldsmiths, University of London (UK), Dartington Estate (UK), Ca' Foscari Zattere Cultural Flow Zone (Venice, Italy), MAXXI Museum (Rome, Italy), National Arts Club (New York) and at other major venues all over the world. The artist's works are held in the collections of the Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), Museum of Art and Design (New York), Sergey Kuryokhin Centre for Modern Art (St. Petersburg) and Kolodzei Art Foundation (New York) as well as in numerous private collections. Lives and works in Miami.

Elena Gubanova

Artist and curator. Born in 1960 in Ulyanovsk, USSR. Graduated from the Ilya Repin State Academic Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture (Leningrad, USSR). Works in the fields of painting, sculpture, installations and video. As a curator, she is engaged in CYLAND Media Art Lab projects. Lecturer in the master's program at the ITMO Art & Science University and the "Young Artist's School" at the Pro Arte Foundation (St. Petersburg) in 2020-2021. Recipient of the Sergey Kuryokhin Award (Russia) for "Best Work of Visual Art" (2012, together with Ivan Govorkov) and "Best Festival in the Field of Contemporary Art" (2018). Her works have been exhibited at major Russian and foreign venues, including the Hermitage Museum, Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), Museum of Moscow, Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow), University Ca' Foscari (Venice, Italy), Goldsmiths, University of London, Chelsea Art Museum (New York), Kunstquartier Bethanien (Berlin) and National Arts Club (New York). Participant of the Manifesta 10 parallel program (2014, St. Petersburg) and several exhibitions parallel to the Venice Biennale (since 2011, Venice, Italy); frequent participant and curator of Cyfest. Since 1990, she has worked in collaboration with Ivan Govorkov. Lives and works in St. Petersburg.

Ivan Govorkov

Artist. Born in 1949 in Leningrad, USSR. Graduated from the Ilya Repin State Academic Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture (Leningrad, USSR). He is engaged in philosophy, psychology, painting, drawing, sculpture and installations; he works at the junction of traditional art and cutting-edge technologies. Professor of drawing at the Ilya Repin Institute (St. Petersburg). Recipient of the Sergey Kuryokhin Award (2012, Russia) for "Best Work of Visual Art" (together with Elena Gubanova). His works have been exhibited at major Russian and foreign venues, including the Hermitage Museum and Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), Museum of Moscow, University Ca' Foscari (Venice, Italy), Chelsea Art Museum (New York), Kunstquartier Bethanien (Berlin) and Sky Gallery 2 (Tokyo). Participant of the Manifesta 10 parallel program (2014, St. Petersburg) and several exhibitions parallel to the Venice Biennale (since 2011, Venice, Italy); frequent participant of Cyfest. Since 1990, he has worked in collaboration with Elena Gubanova. Lives and works in St. Petersburg.

Pavel Ignatev

Sculptor, researcher and curator. In his sculptural performances, installations and site-specific projects, Ignatev explores the relationship between author and statue, traditional materials and contemporary interpretation, reference heritage and ready-made. He uses such technologies as 3D printing, old hand-made practices and computer prototyping. Ignatev is also famous for his libretto for the opera *Professor Pavlov's Session* (2021). His works have been exhibited at the Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), Academy of Fine Arts Museum (St. Petersburg), Indiana University (USA), and other venues. He gave performances with clay at the Hermitage Intellectual Marathons (St. Petersburg). Member of the international Dream Mapping Project. Lives and works in St. Petersburg.

Victoria Ilyushkina

Media artist and curator. Graduated from the Ilya Repin State Academic Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture (Art History and Theory; St. Petersburg) and the Pro Arte Foundation (New Media Program; St. Petersburg). Her works have been exhibited in Russia and abroad at such venues as the Russian Museum, State Hermitage Youth Education Centre, Anna Akhmatova Museum (all in St. Petersburg), including solo shows at Gislaveds Konsthall (Gislaved, Sweden), Iragui Gallery (Moscow), Gallery Pfeister (Gudhjem, Denmark), ART re.FLEX Gallery and AL Gallery (both in St. Petersburg). Participant of numerous group exhibitions, including "The Other Home", part of the Manifesta 10 parallel program (2014, St. Petersburg), the "Urbi et Orbi" special project at the 6th Moscow Biennale (2015, Russia), "On My Way" exhibition parallel to the 56th Venice Biennale (2015, Italy) and "Russia Contemporary" at Galerie Gmurzynska (2014, Zurich, Switzerland). Since 2009 she has worked as a curator of video programs and exhibitions for CYLAND Media Art Lab and Cyfest, Sergey Kuryokhin Award (Russia) and Videoforma International Video Art Festival (Russia). Lives and works in St. Petersburg.

Thorsten Soltau

Artist. Born in 1987 in Lower Saxony, Germany. He has a strong interest in sonic disintegration, conceptualism and dualism (philosophy/gender). Editor of the online music review source *aemag* from 2009 till 2010. Citizen of the KREV (KonungaRikena Elgaland-Vargaland) conceptual art project. Lives and works in Friesland, Lower Saxony, Germany.
thorstensoltau.de

Max Kuiper

Artist. Born in 1960 in the Netherlands. Kuiper has been working with images and text since 1978, and in 1982 he also became interested in sound, mostly in sound collage. He creates sound installations, live performances, workshops, sound walks and visual installations with a sound component, working under the name "Les Horribles Travailleurs" derived from Rimbaud's *Letters of the Visionary*. He uses a variety of methods and techniques and makes recordings in abandoned factories and houses, cellars, attics, empty rooms, bunkers, etc.
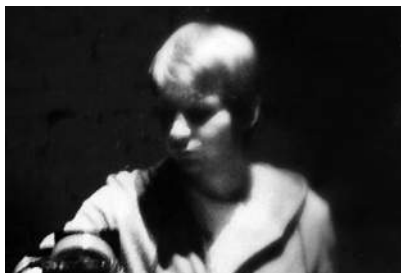
Vasilii Stepanov (P_SH)

Multidisciplinary musician and visual artist, composer and DJ. Born in Moscow, Russia. He has been involved in music and sound since 1995. During this period, he collaborated with many Russian and foreign artists, issued several releases, starred in a movie, participated in the International Noise Music Contest "Luigi Russolo – Rossana Maggia" (for young composers), played in various free jazz collectives and organised three exhibitions of his paintings. The main starting point for his art is the flow of information and the combination of the incompatible. Lives and works in Moscow.

Francisco Infante-Arana

Artist, photographer, art theorist; one of the key figures representing kinetic art in Russia. Born in 1943 in Vasilievka, Saratov Region, USSR. Graduated from the Faculty of Monumental Painting of Moscow Higher School of Industrial Art (former Stroganov School, USSR). In the 1960s, he was a member of the art group "Dvizhenie" ("Movement"). Since 1968, he has worked with his wife Nonna Goriunova (born in 1944). In 1970, Infante organised the "Argo" group of artists and engineers. Since 1976, he has created an ongoing series of works known as "artifacts". Has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions in museums and galleries around the world, including the Biennale of Dissent (1977, Venice, Italy). In 1996, he received the Russian Federation National Award in the field of fine arts "For the development of a new language in art". His artworks are held in many museums and public collections including the Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow), Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts (Moscow), Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), Kunstmuseum (Bern, Switzerland), Museum of Contemporary Art (Seoul, South Korea) and Kolodzei Art Foundation (USA). Lives and works in Moscow.

Ilya Kabakov

Conceptual artist, one of the founders of the Moscow Conceptual Art movement. Born in 1933 in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine, USSR. He graduated from the Surikov Art Institute (Moscow, USSR) and earned a living as a book illustrator, which allowed him to experiment with formal issues and work on his own art. He lived in Moscow before emigrating to the USA in the late 1980s. Since 1989, Kabakov has collaborated with his wife Emilia Kabakov. Their work is based on the intersection of everyday and conceptual elements, evoking themes of Utopia, creativity, human suffering and response to totalitarian oppression. Over the course of their artistic partnership, they showcased and produced large-scale projects and installations around the world, including such venues as Documenta (Kassel, Germany), Grand Palais (Paris), Hirshhorn Museum (Washington DC, USA), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam, Netherlands), Whitney Biennial (New York) and Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg). Ilya and Emilia Kabakov represented Russia at the 45th Venice Biennale (1993, Italy). Their artworks are held in major museums and public institutions. The Kabakovs live and work in Long Island, New York.

Sergey Katran

Artist. Born in Nikopol, Ukraine, USSR. In 1992 Katran obtained his first degree in Natural Sciences at the Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical Institute (Ukraine), majoring in biology and chemistry. He later moved to Moscow, where he received his Fine Arts degree from the School of Visual Arts. Katran is a versatile artist who experiments with Science Art and Bio Art and works in a variety of media, such as installation, sculpture, performance and video. His practice is grounded in recent scientific and technological findings. He is a recipient of the Lomonosov Art Prize for intellectual contribution to contemporary art (2012, established by the Faculty of Philosophy, Moscow State University, Russia) and a laureate of the Fabrika Centre for Creative Industries competition (2019, Moscow). Katran's artworks can be found in museums, private and corporate art collections, such as Luciano Benetton's collection *Imago Mundi* (under the auspices of the Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche, Treviso, Italy), Les Jardins d'Étretat (Normandy, France), the Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), National Centre of Contemporary Art (NCCA, Moscow), and others.

Oleg Malenok

Engineer of computer networks and telecommunications, drone operator (BPLA), beer brewer. Born in 1986 in Obninsk, Kaluga Oblast, Russia. He works as a cadastral engineer's assistant. Since 2015 he has studied the art of whole-grain brewing; in 2016-2018 he worked at local breweries, gaining experience from specialists of international class; in 2019-2020 he worked as a brewer at the LaBEERint Brewery in Naro-Fominsk, Moscow Oblast, Russia. He presents beverages of his own manufacture at regional and national festivals. Participant of Cyfest-14: Ferment, held in Dartington, UK in autumn 2021. He took part in creating the installation *BPM – Blobs Per Minute* as part of the CYLAND Media Art Lab. At present he is studying the cultivation and selection of strains of cultured yeasts. Lives and works in Obninsk, Russia.

Vasilii Bakanov

Media artist, R&D specialist and chef. Born in 1987 in Kaluga, USSR. Graduated from the Moscow Automobile and Road Construction State Technical University (MADI, Russia). Hardware engineer at CYLAND Media Art Lab. As a chef he participated in the semi-final of the S. Pellegrino Young Chef 2018 (Moscow), and as an artist in such festivals as Theatrum: Re-Formation (2020, Moscow) and Cyfest-14: Ferment (2021, Dartington, UK). He gave a workshop on rediscovering ancient techniques of fermentation at Dartington Hall (2021, Dartington, UK). Lives and works in St. Petersburg.

Alexey Grachev

Media artist, engineer, computer programmer. Born in 1983 in Kaluga, USSR. Graduated from the Bauman Moscow State Technical University (Russia). Completed the program "School for Young Artists" at the Pro Arte Foundation (St. Petersburg). Technical director and chief engineer of CYLAND Media Art Lab. Participant of the World Event Young Artists Festival (2012, Nottingham, UK), Cyfest (many times), special project "Urbi et Orbi" at the 6th Moscow Biennale (2015, Russia) and "The Creative Machine 2" exhibition at Goldsmiths, University of London (2018, UK). Participant of the "Arts Work of the Future" project in the Tate Exchange space (2018, London). Since 2015, together with Sergey Komarov, he has developed the sound project "Subjectivization of Sound" based on the interaction with space and spectators. He has given lectures and workshops at the University of the Arts London (UK), St. Petersburg Stieglitz Academy of Art and Design (St. Petersburg), Pro Arte (St. Petersburg), and ITMO University (St. Petersburg). Lives and works in St. Petersburg.

Andrew Strokov

Engineer, programmer, media artist. Born in 1991 in the Omsk region (USSR). Graduated from the Physics Faculty of Omsk State University (Russia) and the Master's program of the St. Petersburg Electrotechnical University "LETI" (Russia). He has worked on developing electronic and biomedical devices and systems of the Internet of Things. One of the founders and resident of the hackerspace B4CKSP4CE (St. Petersburg, Russia). Head programmer of CYLAND Media Art Lab. Participated in such festivals as Chaos Constructions (2019, St. Petersburg), Chronotope (2021, Vyborg, Russia) and CYEFST-14: Ferment (2021, Dartington, UK). Lives and works in St. Petersburg

Alexander Bochkov

Engineer, 3D modeller and media artist. Born in 1990 in Orsk, USSR. Founder of the main gravel cycling race in Russia, "Reverse Side of the Road". Co-founder of the cycling brand SinX. Chief 3D printing specialist at CYLAND Media Art Lab. Participated in such festivals as Chronotope (2021, Vyborg, Russia) and Cyfest-14: Ferment (2021, Dartington, UK). Lives and works in St. Petersburg.

Tuula Närhinen

Artist and researcher in visual arts. Born 1967 in Helsinki, Finland. She holds an MFA from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts and an MSc in Architecture from the Helsinki University of Technology. In 2016 she gained a Doctorate in Fine Arts from the Helsinki University of the Arts. Re-adapting methods and instruments derived from natural sciences, Närhinen facilitates the visual rendering of natural phenomena. Alongside tracings and recordings, her installations showcase the processes of inscription and the DIY instruments implicated. The poetics of the practice arise from corporeal enactment and the exposition of the material process. Närhinen has exhibited widely both in Finland and abroad, at such venues as Laboratoria (Moscow), Beaconsfield Gallery Vauxhall (London), Uniarts Helsinki Research Pavilion (Venice, Italy), Turku Biennial (Finland), Unseen Amsterdam (Netherlands), Stadtgalerie Kiel (Germany), Helsinki Photography Biennial, Oulu Museum of Art (Finland) and Finnish Museum of Photography (Helsinki). Her works are represented in the collections of the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art (Helsinki) and the Helsinki City Art Museum. Närhinen lives and works in Helsinki.

Alexander Ponomarev

Artist. Born in 1957 in Dnepropetrovsk (Ukraine, USSR). Graduated from the Odessa higher engineering naval academy (Ukraine). Left a career in the navy to become an artist. His projects had been exhibited and supported by such cultural institutes as the Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow), the Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), the Louvre (Paris), the New National Museum of Monaco, the Pompidou Centre (Paris), the Pushkin Museum (Moscow), the National Museum of Singapore and others. He was the main artist of the Russian pavilion at the World Exhibition *Expo '98* in Lisbon, Portugal. With the navy and scientific fleet of Russia, he worked on art projects in the world ocean, the Arctic, Greenland and the Antarctic. Participant of all Moscow biennales of contemporary art. In 2007, he represented Russia at the 52th Venice biennale (Italy); in 2009 he realised the special project *SubTiziano* at the 53th biennale. Ponomarev's works are held in the collections of the Hermitage and the Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), the Tretyakov Gallery and the Pushkin Museum (Moscow), the Pompidou Centre (Paris), the Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art, the Multimedia Art Museum (Moscow), and in many other museum and private collections around the world. Lives and works in Moscow.

Miriam Simun

Artist. Simun is a graduate of the MIT Media Lab (USA), New York University's ITP (USA) and the London School of Economics and Political Science (UK). Their work is focused on sites of collision: where bodies (human and non-human) collide with rapidly evolving techno-ecosystems. Simun works in multiple formats, including video, performance, drawing, installation and communal sensorial experiences. Their work has been presented by venues such as the Himalayas Museum (Shanghai, China), Museum of Modern Art (Bogotá, Columbia), Deutsche Bank Kunsthalle (Berlin) and Museum of Arts and Design (New York) and has been supported by Creative Capital, the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the Onassis Foundation, the Gulbenkian Foundation, among others.

Valentina Tamborra

Photographer. Born in 1983 in Milan, Italy. She focuses mainly on photojournalism and portraits, with a penchant for mixing storytelling with images. Tamborra has collaborated with some of the principal NGOs and other organisations such as AMREF, Doctors Without Borders, L'Albero della Vita, Emergenza Sorrisi, and the Italian Red Cross. Her projects have been exhibited in Milan, Venice, Rome and Naples (Italy). She has published work in the most important Italian media (*Corriere della Sera*, *La Stampa*, *La Repubblica*, and others) and has also appeared on radio and television broadcasts (Rai 1, Rai 3, Rai Italia, Sky, and others). Tamborra is an instructor at the Istituto Italiano di Fotografia (Milan) and has taught classes and workshops at the IED (Istituto Europeo di Design, Milan) and NABA (Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti, Milan), where her first large personal project *Doppia Luce* was exhibited and later turned into a lecture cycle. In April 2018, she won the Premio AIF Nuova Fotografia at Milan's Photofestival (Italy). Lives and works in Milan.

Anna Tolkacheva

Media artist, researcher and poet. Born in 1985 in Gorky, USSR. Graduated from Lobachevsky State University (MS in Applied Informatics, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia) and Rodchenko Art School (Moscow). She has worked as a researcher in the field of computational linguistics in Russia and the Netherlands. Co-organiser of the Red Swallow publishing house. Anna makes multimedia installations and projects which involve a variety of techniques such as video, VR, interactive objects, code art, and text. She explores new ways of creating text and accessing it through the new media, non-standard interfaces and controllers. Most of her artworks can be attributed to the emerging field of media poetry. Anna has participated in many exhibitions, screenings, and festivals in Russia and abroad. Winner of the International Extra Short Film Festival (2014) and the *The Fifth Leg* Video Poetry Film Festival (2012, 2016). A nomadic artist, she lives and works mainly in St. Petersburg and Norilsk, Russia.

Where Dogs Run Group

Art group founded in 2000 in Yekaterinburg, Russia. The artists Vlad Bulatov, Natalya Grekhova, Olga Inozemtseva and Alexey Korzukhin create kinetic sculptures, objects, installations, performances and videos, uniting innovative visual methods with tools of scientific research. They study the intertwining of the mythological and mundane through technological processes, and seek new forms of human interaction with reality. Many of the projects are developed in cooperation with students, or are commissioned by organisations that promote scientific development. The group has participated in exhibitions all over the world and at various festivals, including Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria), the Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (Russia), and the Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art (Russia). Works by the group are held at the collections of the Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow), the National Centre of Contemporary Art (NCCA, Moscow), the Multimedia Art Museum (Moscow), the Antwerp Museum of Contemporary Art (Belgium) and others.

CYFEST-14, exhibition view. HayArt Cultural Center, Yerevan, Armenia, 2022.
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The project *Sostenibilart* aims to raise awareness on a crucial issue, such as the sustainability of all our activities on the planet, and together to 'educate' concretely, through art, sustainability in a broad sense, inspiring and promoting actions.

The idea is powerful and understandable: to encourage, in the current international scene, artists of significant standing to become 'Ambassadors of Sustainability', contributing with their works to promote a greater and more active awareness of environmental respect, the non-dissipative use of the planetary resources, multiethnic and multigenerational sharing.

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