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**An artist's journal focused on artistic
critique in texts and works by artists**

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MANIFESTA

Our priorities can be counted on one hand:

1. Direct attitude in ambiguous situations

When everybody is afraid to judge anybody, we believe it is necessary to judge everybody, including ourself. Judging is like breathing, we all do it even though we might not be aware about it.

Most of the time we encounter complex, ambiguous situations in life where a direct position as an artist is not desired nor requested. Art is supposed to question reality, to reveal 'complexities' through carefully constructed research. Should an artwork take concrete action, speak out unpleasant truths or deliver apparently simple and direct answers to complex questions; then the artist has made a regrettable "faux-pas" which is rewarded by suspicion and dismission from the representatives of the more 'progressive' and 'refined' positions.

2. Being literal is a conceptual advantage

Artists are often Licking the Curator's Ass but not many do it literally — at least not in public. Being literal is another way to make us experience the reality of language, collective imagination and culture. For us being literal means to translate thoughts and metaphors into a visual reality by speculating, associating, sometimes creating absurd contexts which expose us to shocks of reality. These experiences can also be seen as reality checks which help us see reality better through its' paradoxes.

3. Humor is a weapon

By taking ourselves very seriously and doing the wrong thing we like to challenge ourselves, to make fools out of ourselves and to see how far we can go. We like to laugh about ourselves in advance because our jokes are delayed and our events are non-events: the real show seems to be constantly postponed but we can laugh again once everything is over. Everybody deserves a second chance to laugh and nobody should be considered a sacred cow.

4. Criticality is vital — everything else is an excuse for maintaining the power in place

Artists usually take symbolical action against power they are not depending on, power that is not able to bite back on the artist. We believe it is important to bite the hand that feeds us — or rather the hand that maybe could have fed us if we would not have bitten it. Thus we are confronted with real power that affects us and our action against this power is not just symbolical but real action (and real reaction).

"When an artist tries to rebel against the iron logic of Power, he comes into conflict with principles to which he himself owes his existence as artist. And so his action against Power must lead to his own downfall. Of course, Power can be mocked for a certain time, but its' revenge will not fail to appear." *1

5. We will fight till the END

"Those who want to make Art, let them fight; and those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to be Artists. The true Artist must know that the Struggle against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice can offer honor and fame in the eyes of posterity, but nothing in the present." *2

Ondrej Brody & Kristofer Paetau (january 2011)

*1. Adapted from: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Vol. 1, Chapter 10 & 11

*2. Adapted from: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Vol. 1, Chapter 11 & 3

TREKHPRUDNY LANE

A documentation by Kristofer Paetau (december 2004)

I first heard of the Trekhprudny Lane Gallery from one of its founding members, the russian artist Avdey Ter-Oganian. As I was interested in his work, he told me about the Trekhprudny Lane artist-run space, that existed in Moscow between September 1991 and May 1993. I was very impressed by the quality of the weekly exhibitions made by this group of artists including Pavel Aksionov, Vladimir Dubosarsky, Viktor Kasianov, Alexander Kharchenko, Ilya Kitup, Valery Koshliakov, Konstantin Reunov, Alexander Sigutin, Avdey Ter-Oganian and Oleg Tistol. Trekhprudny Lane is, in my opinion, the ultimate, the coolest and the most interesting artist-run space ever.

The history of Trekhprudny Lane began in 1990, right after the end of the "USSR boom" in Western art institutions and shortly before the collapse of the USSR. Avdey Ter-Oganian arrived in Moscow from a provincial Town called Rostov-on-Don, together with some artist-friends in order to conquer Moscow with their artist-group called "Art or Death". The artists squatted a building on Trekhprudny Lane, a street in the center of Moscow, where they installed individual studios and a gallery space in common. They defined their gallery program as "a waste of time and money" and enjoyed their burlesque weekly openings together with the Moscow art community that soon found its way to Trekhprudny Lane.

Many projects of Trekhprudny Lane can be seen as a preceeding of the work of well-known contemporary artists and of celebrated movements of contemporary art in the 90's. I especially think of the concept "Relational esthetics", developed around the same time by the French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud, and of some exhibitions by Trekhprudny Lane that for example somebody like Maurizio Cattelan could have been happy to make... I also see interesting connexions with the work of some younger artists today, who work in a 'performative-conceptual' way. Last but not least I find the work of Trekhprudny Lane very inspiring for my own artistic research and I hope that You will appreciate my "Top 10" selection of exhibitions made by Trekhprudny Lane.

All photographs courtesy of the artists of Trekhprudny Lane.



CHARITY (5.9.1991)

By Konstantin Reunov, Avdey Ter-Oganian

For this very first exhibition at Trekhprudny Lane the artists hired three street pedlars to 'accompany' three reproductions of Rembrandt's etchings - one of them entitled "Charity".



A SEMI-SAISON EXHIBITION (31.10.1991)

By Alexander Sigutin

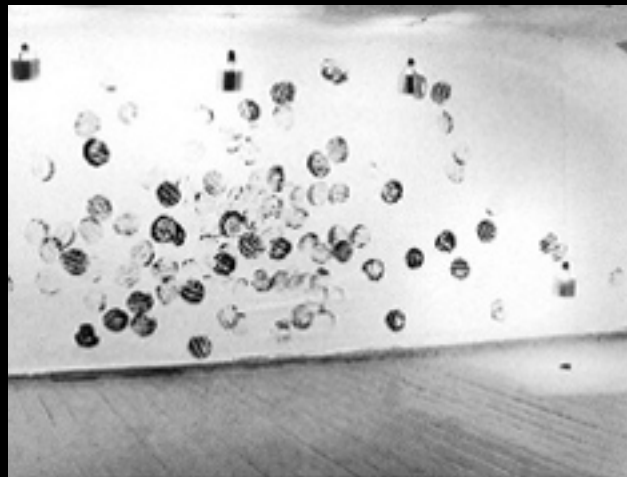
The artist installed 12 hooks on the wall for the visitors to hang their clothes.



MOSCOW (16.1.1992)

By Alexander Gormatiuk, Vladimir Dubosarsky, Avdey Ter-Oganian, Alexander Kharchenko

A tour guide was hired to guide the public with a megaphone on a four hours bus trip around Moscow. The trip included all the typical Moscow sight-seeings as well as some carefully selected liquor stores and it finally ended up where it had started, at the Trekhprudny Lane.



WE WERE ALIVE IN THOSE YEARS... (28.5.1992)

By Alexander Sigutin, Avdey Ter-Oganian

Another slightly parodical tribute: an exhibition dealing with the nostalgia for "our courtyard", a recurrent theme in modernist soviet prose and poetry. One gallery wall was filled with prints made with a football and a piece of dried excrement was lying on the floor.



NEONACADEMY (27.2.1992)

By Alexander Gormatiuk, Konstantin Reunov, Avdey Ter-Oganian

Two models from the Academy of Fine Arts were hired to pose with two neon lamps during the exhibition. This was another 'hired performance', a static spectacle.



DWARFS (2.7.1992)

By Ilya Kitup, Avdey Ter-Oganian

The artists presented themselves as a living sculpture by combining their bodies and acting a kind of puppet-theater.



TOWARDS THE OBJECT (16.7.1992)
By Avdey Ter-Oganian

This exhibition was titled after the large exhibition of 'non-conformist' art, organized by the Department of Contemporary Art of the Tsaritsyno museum. Avdey Ter-Oganian exhibited himself as an art object, dead drunk and asleep in the middle of the gallery.



AS USUAL (23.7.1992)
By Viktor Kasjanov

The words "As Usual" were painted on the wall. Thereby referring to – and turning the vernissage and its public into the actual work of art.



THE MARRIAGE (26.11.1992)
By Youri Babitch

Youri Babitch, a friend of the Trekhpudny Lane and an artist himself, didn't have any appropriate space at his disposal to celebrate his marriage. He asked if he could use the gallery space for this occasion and thus turned the marriage into a performance or vice-versa.



QUEER UNCLE'S TESTAMENT (18.3.1993)
By Vladimir Dubosarsky

A hand-painted cinema poster for a semi-pornographic movie called "Queer Uncle's testament" was exhibited. At the opening of the show the public was directed to the nearby movie-theater to see the film.