

**LA QUARTA PROSA
THE FOURTH PROSE**

Vyacheslav Akhunov
Babi Badalov
Vlado Martek
Dmitrij Prigov

Curated by
Marco Scotini

Opening
Nov 19th 2015, h 6.30 pm
19.11.2015 — 25.03.2016

LAURA BULIAN GALLERY
via Piranesi 10, 20137 Milano
www.laurabuliangallery.com

Monday - Friday , 15 - pm.
Morning by appointment
free entrance



Vlado Martek, *La quarta prosa*, 2015,
Mixed technique, 11 x 15 cm.

The Laura Bulian Gallery is pleased to announce the exhibition that will open its next season and inaugurate the new exhibition spaces at Via Piranesi, inside the ex-industrial complex Frigoriferi Milanesi. The exhibition, curated by Marco Scotini, though in keeping with the Gallery's commitment to exploring the art scene in Eastern Europe, proposes a completely new theme: visual and conceptual poetry in this area from the 70s onwards. Entitled *The Fourth Prose*, the exhibition presents important graphic works and rare documents from four artists already known on the international scene: **Vyacheslav Akhunov** (Uzbekistan, 1948), **Babi Badalov** (1959, Azerbaijan), **Vlado Martek** (1951, Croatia) and **Dmitrij Prigov** (1940-2007, Russia).

I divide all the works of world literature into those written with and without permission. The first are trash, the second – stolen air. This firm invective against any denial of freedom of expression is central to *The Fourth Prose* by the great Russian poet Osip Mandelstam. Written in 1930, it was the antithesis of the servility of Soviet writers and the mystification of cultural bureaucracy; while published in the Soviet Union only in 1988, prior to this date it circulated exclusively in manuscript copy and as a *samizdat* publication. In opposition both to betrayed forms of writing and subscription to “the pack of scoundrels who write”, in Mandelstam we find a desire to escape from typography and to lay claim to the materiality of the word. *On the other hand, I have a lot of pencils and they are all stolen and of different colours. You can sharpen them with a Gillette blade.*

Typewritten pages, drawings and collages of multiple materials, graphic alphabets, handwritten notebooks, duplicated flyers, series of postcards, photocopied slogans, newspaper pages, limited run homemade pamphlets, tattoos and poem-objects are at the centre of *The Fourth Prose*. The exhibition illustrates a “pre-Gutenberg” landscape, despite being a constituent part of the Russian cultural tradition since Cubo-Futurism or El Lissitzky, in the 70s it embraced both the form of ideological dissent of the clandestine circulation of *samizdat* publications and attitudes in conceptual art throughout Eastern Europe. Within this necessary, political protest against the authority of the printed text

there is a dimension we might call an ‘exodus from the book’ which intensifies the performative and visual aspects of the text: not only in the forms in which it is produced but also in the channels of circulation that evaded control. In short, all these self-published projects cannot be dissociated from a highly aesthetic outcome and freedom from any form of conditioning.

Being located on the border between the literary and visual worlds, the artists of *The Fourth Prose* all share a sense of libertarian militancy in their relationship with the power, which is expressed in a variety of solutions: ranging from compulsory psychiatric treatment (Prigov) to the denial of an exit visa (Akhunov) or the quest for political asylum (Badalov). While the Croatian artist **Vlado Martek** engages in a form of poetic activism interacting with a public of passersby on the street, **Vyacheslav Akhunov** chooses the format of the notebook as the medium for a daily, solitary and silent rebellion. On the one hand, Martek's artistic approach consists in reducing the text to a ‘pre-poetry’ dimension where the writing is disassembled leaving its basic tools and elements, thus showing the pure power of representation as such; on the other, we can synthesise Akhunov's approach in his reduction of socialist political slogans into mantras which lose their meaning with repetition and acquire a new aura.

During the 80s one of the leaders of Muscovite conceptualism, **Dmitrij Prigov** focused on the pages of one newspaper, Pravda, as the frame for his graphic layout and the choice of single words (such as Gorbachev, Sakharov or Glasnost) which, unvaried, continuously return isolated against a bed of printed words. Quite opposite to this extreme and minimalist approach is the linguistic and alphabetic babel that **Babi Badalov** invents and transcribes incessantly following nomadic, permeable and trans-local procedures that stretch the boundaries on language itself. In Badalov, absurd neologism, visual and phonetic collages, unexpected puns and grammatically incorrect phrases always indicate an intermediate or transitory space. The artists of *The Fourth Prose* extend an invitation to experience not this or that content of language, but language itself, the faculty to speak per se.

Vyacheslav Akhunov was born in 1948 in Och, Kyrgyzstan. He lives and works in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Selected shows since 2007 **2015** *Early Too Late. Middle East and Modernity*, curated by Marco Scotini, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna, Bologna, Italy. **2014** *And the trees set forth to seek for a king*, curated by Raphie Etgar Museum On the Seam (MOTS), Jerusalem, Israel; *The Other & me*, curated by Jassim Alawadhi and Colin Reaney, Sharjha Art Museum, Sharjha, UAE; *The empty pedestal*, curated by Marco Scotini, Museo Archeologico, Bologna, Italy. **2013** *The Red Line*, solo show curated by Marco Scotini, Laura Bulian Gallery, Milan, Italy; *Lost to the Future*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Singapore Biennale 2013, *If the World Changed*, Singapore; *More light*, 5th Moscow Biennale 2013, curated by Catherine de Zegher, Moscow, Russia; *Winter*, curated by Ayatgali Tuleubek and Tiago Bom, Central Asian Pavillion - 55. Venice Biennial, Venice, Italy; *The Collection As A Character* MuHKA museum, Antwerp, Belgium. **2012** *Documenta (13)*, curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Kassel, Germany; *Arsenale 2012*, Ukrainian Biennale of Contemporary Art, curated by David Elliott, Kiev Revolution vs Revolution, Beirut Art Center, Beirut. **2011** *I've Dreamt About*, MUDAM-Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg; *Atlas. How to carry the world on one's back?*, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Hamburg-ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany *Between Heaven and Earth - Contemporary Art from the Centre of Asia*, Calvert22, London, UK; *Ostalgie*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York City, NY, USA. **2010**: *Watchmen, Liars, Dreamers (Erudition concrete 3)*, FRAC-Ile-de-France Le Plateau, Paris, France; *Ground Floor America*, Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark; *Lonely at the Top #5*, curated by Viktor Misiano, MuHKA, Antwerp, Belgium. **2009** *Changing Climate*, WUK Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, Austria; *11th International Istanbul Biennial*, curated by WHW/What, How & for Whom collective, Istanbul, Turkey; *The view from elsewhere. Small Acts*, Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia; *For Keeps: Sampling Recent Acquisitions 2006 -2009*, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand; *Monument to Transformation 1989-2009*, City Gallery Prague/Galerie Hlavniho Masta Prahy, Prague, Czech Republic. **2008** *Busan Biennale 2008*, Busan, South Korea; *I dream of the stars: videos actuales de Asia central*, Museo de Arte de El Salvador, MARTE, San Salvador, Bahamas Traces du Sacré - Centre Pompidou - Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, France; *Tracing Roads through Central Asia*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, USA.

2007 *Live Cinema/The Return of the Image: Video from Central Asia - Philadelphia Museum of Art*, Philadelphia, USA; *Time of the Storytellers*, curated by Viktor Misiano, Kiasma, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland; *52nd International Art Exhibition Venice Biennale*, Venice, Italy; *La Biennale de Montréal 2007*, Montreal, Canada

Babi Badalov was born in 1959 in Lerik, Azerbaidjan. He lives and works in Paris, France. Selected shows since 2007: **2015** *6th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art*, Moscow, Russia; *Migrant Poetry*, Nice, France. **2014** *Report on the Construction of a Spaceship Module*, New York, USA. **2013** *Jakarta Biennale 2013*, Jakarta, Indonesia. **2012** *Adaptation*, Prague, Czech Republic; curated by Sara Raza, Maraya Art Centre- Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE. **2011** *The Journey to the East*, Krakow, Poland; Vestfossen, Norway. **2010** *Manifesta European Biennial of Contemporary Art*, Murcia, Spain; *Watchmen, Liars, Dreamers (Erudition concrete 3)*, Paris, France -Tranzitdisplay, Prague, Czech Republic; curated by Viktor Misiano, MuHKA Museum voor Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerp, Belgium; *Babi Badalov. My Life Report In Paris*, Prague, Czech Republic. **2009** Tbilisi, Georgia; Centre for Visual Introspection, Bucharest; Billek Villa, Prague, Czech Republic. **2007** *Progressive Nostalgia*, curated by Viktor Misiano, Prato, Italy

Vlado Martek was born in 1951 in Zagreb, Croatia, where he lives and works. Selected shows since 2005: **2015** *Vlado Martek. The boundaries of language*, Wrocław Contemporary Museum, Wrocław, Poland; *What We Call Love*, The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland; *Hommage à Malevich- 100 years of the black square*, Mestna galerija Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia. **2014** *Personalcuts, Carré d'Art-Musée d'art contemporain*, Nîmes, France. **2012** *You are kindly invited to attend*, Open Systems - Zentrum für Kunstprojekte, Vienna, Austria; *The present and presence*, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, Slovenia . **2011** *Scenes from Zagreb: artists' publications of the new art practice*, MoMa-Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York, USA; *Museo de las narrativas paralelas. En el marco de la internacional*, MACBA, Barcelona, Spain; *Volume Collection*, MMSU-Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Rijeka, Rijeka, Croatia. **2010** *Volume collection*, Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice, Italy; *Ground floor America*, Den Frei Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark *Art always has its consequences*, Muzeum Sztuki Lodz, Lodz, Poland; *Quartet-four biennials reflected inprints*, International Centre of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

2009 *Gendercheck*, Museum Moderner Kunst SLW, Vienna, Austria. **2008** *Retrospective*, Modern Gallery, Zagreb, Croatia; *Kontakt... aus der Sammlung der Erste Bank-Gruppe*, Museum Moderner Kunst SLW, Wien, Austria. **2006** Ljubljana; *Essence of Life Art*, Marble Palace, St. Petersburg. **2005** *Collective creativity*, Kunsthalle Friedericianum, Kassel, Germany; *Essence of Life Art*, The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia; *Essence of Life. Essence of Art*, Ludwig Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, Hungary; *First Person Singular*, Museum of Modern Art Dubrovnik, Dubrovnik, Croatia

Dmitrij Prigov 1940-2007, Moscow, Russia. Selected shows since 2008: **2015** *Grammar Of Freedom/Five Lessons: Works From Arteast 2000+ Collection*, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia; *Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society 1915-2015*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, UK. **2014** *Dmitrij Prigov. From Renaissance to Conceptualism*, The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia; Ludvig 25. The Contemporary Collection, Ludwig Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, Hungary; *Russian Performance: A Cartography Of Its History*, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia; Havremagasinet Art Center, Boden, UK, Marble Palace, St. Petersburg, Russia; *Grovitgl? Scrittura, segni, sculpture*, Galleria Melesi, Lecco, Italy. **2013** *Space Of Exception - 5Th Moscow Biennale Special Project*, Artplay Design Center, Moscow, Russia; , Moscow museum of modern art, MMOMA, Moscow, Russia. **2012** *John Cage's Experiments In Context*, Moscow, Russia; *Breaking The Ice: Moscow Art, 1960-80s*, The Saatchi Gallery, London, UK. *The Way of Enthusiasts*, Casa dei Tre Oci, Venice, Italy; *The Hero, the Heroine and the Author*, Ludwig Museum - Museum of Contemporary Art Budapest, Budapest, Hungary. **2011** Bern, Switzerland; Ljubljana, Slovenia; , curated by Massimiliano Gioni, New York, USA; Calvert22, London, UK. **2010** Moscow, Russia; , Perm Museum of Contemporary Art, Perm, Russia; Cultural Foundation Ekaterina, Moscow, Russia; , Centre Pompidou - Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, France; , Garage Center for Contemporary Culture - GCCC, Moscow, Russia. **2009** *Dmitry Prigov / Said Atabekov - LONELY AT THE TOP*, curated by Viktor Misiano, Antwerp, Belgium. **2008** Moscow, Russia; Madrid, Spain