



**LIFE FROM
MY WINDOW**

Babi Badalov
Lusine Djanyan
Aslan Gaisumov
Musay Gaivoronskiy
Taus Makhacheva
Koka Ramishvili

opening
Thursday 19 October, 2017
at 6.30 pm

19.10.2017
26.01.2018

curated by
Andrey Misiano

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

Monday – Friday, 15 – 19 pm
Morning by appointment
Free entrance

The **Laura Bulian Gallery** is pleased to announce the exhibition *Life from My Window*, curated by **Andrey Misiano**, that studies the contemporary experience of artists who were born in the Caucasus during the Soviet period yet that are rapidly losing touch with their socialist past. First and foremost, all the artists participating in the exhibition – **Babi Badalov** (Lerik, Azerbaidjan, 1959), **Lusine Djanyan** (Ganja, Azerbaijan, 1981), **Aslan Gaisumov** (Grozny, Chechnya, 1991), **Musay Gaivoronskiy** (Dagestan, Russia, 1987), **Taus Makhacheva** (Moscow, Russia, 1983), **Koka Ramishvili** (Tbilisi, Georgia, 1959) have in common a painful search for their place in the world in the conflictual conditions of the new world order. They depict people that have experienced the end of history in one way or another and are now living in a disjointed globalized world.

At the same time, they retain recollections of Soviet life and the first post-Soviet decades that are currently seen in an extremely contradictory historical perspective. On the one hand, the practice of analyzing, reconsidering and debunking the Soviet project is rapidly spreading in the academic and artistic communities. On the other, at the political level, the regimes that have arisen on post-Soviet territories are selectively speculating on recollections of positive aspects of socialist life in order to patch holes in their profane ideological programs. To sum up, although it is difficult to say in what form the Soviet past is returning today, it is clear that the great expectations of the period continue to exist in the future conditional tense.

The exhibition's title stems from the well-known work of an artist participating in the project: **Koka Ramishvili's** *War from My Window*. Ramishvili documented the events of the Georgian Civil War in 1991-1993 directly from his window. The difficult and contradictory feeling of “the impossibility of feeling at home” is one of the exhibition's main themes. The collapse of the USSR led to a series of armed conflicts, including two Chechen

Wars that are at the center of **Aslan Gaisumov's** work. In turn, the art of **Lusine Djanyan** focuses on the consequences of the Nagorny Karabakh War that forced a great number of Armenian and Azerbaijani families to leave their native lands in a hurry.

However, the exhibition is not limited to problems stemming from armed conflict. The history and culture of one's people and the search for eternal truth are at the center of the work of the Dagestani artists **Taus Makhacheva** and **Musay Gaivoronskiy**. In turn, **Babi Badalov** focuses on the problems of people that were forced to leave their homes on account of political circumstances. Such problems are intrinsically connected to the individual's right to self-determination, which is particularly apparent in the current sociocultural situation in the Caucasus.

The struggle or complex thoughtful dialogue with one's surroundings takes very diverse forms in the work of these artists. Nevertheless, the latter are united by the anthropocentric context that they study and bring to the fore in their art. In the final analysis, every work in this exhibition invites viewers to share the artist's highly personal intuitions that stem from different social circumstances or facts of his or her biography. Thus the personal experience of project participants brings to the fore a set of artistic and general human problems that have still not been fully understood.

Babi Badalov was born in 1959 in Lerik, Azerbaïdjan. He lives and works in Paris, France. Selected shows since 2009 — **2017** *Babi Badalov. Bonjour Je Suis Réfugié Politique*, Ephemeropterae – Summer performance series, Tyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary-Augarten, Vienna, Austria; Gwangju Biennale — **2016** *The Eighth Climate (What Does Art Do?)*, Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, Republic of Korea; *Incorporated!* Les Ateliers de Rennes - contemporary art biennale, Curated by François Piron, Rennes and Brittany, France; *Babi Badalov. For the wall, for the world*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France — **2015** *The fourth* proe, curated by Marco Scotini, Laura Bulian Gallery, Milan, Italy; *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 Misiyan, 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; Bilék Villa, Prague, Czech Republic.

Lusine Djanyan was born in 1981 in the city of Kirovabad (now the city of Ganja), Azerbaijan. She lives and works in Russia. She was member of the *Pussy Riot group* with whom she conducted art actions and performances. Selected shows since 2010 — **2014** *Action in art!*, Köttinspektionen, Uppsala, Sweden; *White circle*, Museum CODE, Bergen, Norway; *Mordovlag*, Kunsthall Stavanger, Norway — **2012** *I* International Kiev Biennale ARSENALE - Oleg Kulik's project *Apocalypse and Renaissance*, Kiev, Ukraine; *Pussy Riot and the Russian Tradition of Art Rebellion*, Installation *The White Ring* in collaboration with Alexei Knedlyakovsky at MeetFactory International Centre of Contemporary Art, Prague, Czech Republic; *Resistance FOREVER*, Cultural Center of the Labour Party, Buenos Aires, Argentina — **2010** *From the opposite*, Contemporary Art Center Winzavod, Moscow, Russia; *Stop! Who's Going?*, II International Biennale of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia; *My Favorite Toys*, project of the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, ARTPLAY Design Center, Moscow, Russia.

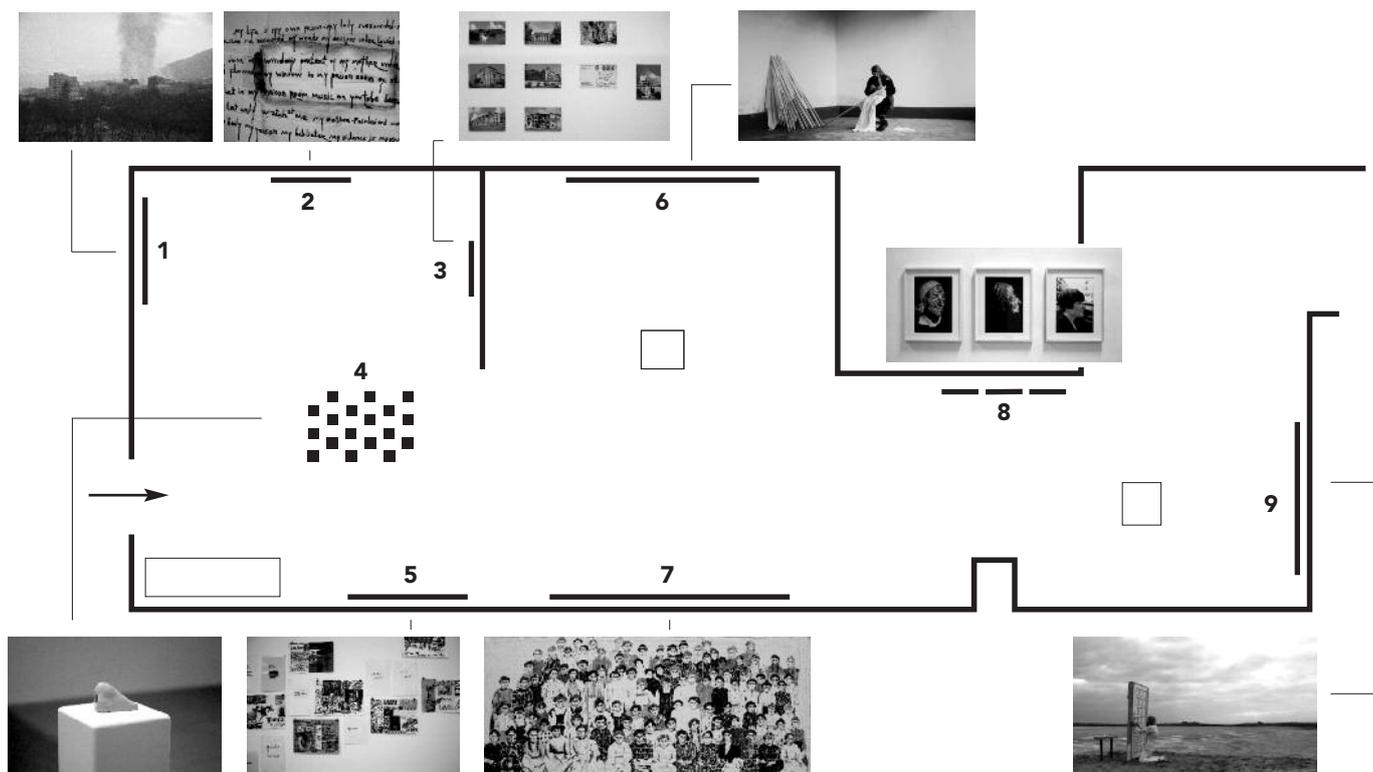
Aslan Gaisumov was born in 1991 in Grozny, Chechnya. He lives and works in Grozny. He graduated from the Institute of Contemporary Art, Moscow in 2012. Selected exhibitions since 2011 — **2017** *I am a native foreigner*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; *Lives Between*, Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco, USA; *How To Live Together*, Kunsthalle Wien, Wien, Austria; *A World Not Ours*, Kunsthalle Mulhouse, Mulhouse, France — **2016** *People of No Consequence*, M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium - solo show; *Uncertain States*, Academy of Arts, Berlin, Germany; winner of Innovation Prize, Russia — **2015** *Memory Belongs to the Stones*, Kromus + Zink, Berlin, Germany - solo show; *When You Ride in a Chechen Cart*, *Sing a Chechen Song*, Contemporary Art Center, Grozny, Chechnya - solo show; *Lines of Tangency*, Museum of Fine Arts MSK, Gent, Belgium; *Glassstress Gotika* 56th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy; *Austeria*, BWA SOKOL Gallery of Contemporary Art, Nowy Sącz, Poland; *The World in 2015*, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China. — **2014** *Burning News: Recent Art from Russia*, Hayward Gallery, London, U.K.; winner of Future Generation Art Prize, Ukraine. — **2013** 5th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia — **2012** *I Am Who I Am*, Kunst im Tunnel, Dusseldorf, Germany; 3rd Moscow International Biennale for Young Art, Moscow, Russia — **2011** *Untitled (War)*, Winzavod Center for Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia - solo show.

Musay Gavvoronskiy was born in Kaspiysk, the Republic of Dagestan, in 1987. He lives and works in Kaspiysk. Selected shows since 2011 — **2013** *Addiction and Temptation*, North Caucasus Biennale of Contemporary Art, First Gallery, Kaspiysk; *Hand in Art*, State Museum of Oriental

Art, Maykop, The Republic of Adygeya; *A Drawing of Russia 2013*, 5th Tomsk All-Russian Triennial; *Festival des Ailes et l'espace*, MILSET Science Photo Contest, Toulouse, France (first place, Aeronautics and Space) **2012** *Mount Kaspiy. The Contemporary Art of Dagestan*, First Gallery, Dagestan (mobile exhibition project) — **2011** *Touch*, First Gallery, Dagestan - solo show; *Untitled (Native Foreigners)*, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia.

Taus Makhacheva was born in 1983, in Moscow, Russia. She lives and works in Makhachkala, Russia. Selected shows since 2009 — **2017** *Viva ArteViva, 57th Biennial Venice*, Italy — **2016** *Museum ON/ OFF*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; 11th Shanghai Biennial, Shanghai; winner of the Kandinsky Prize, Russia — **2015** *(In)sidenotes*, Uppsala Konstmuseum, Uppsala, Sweden - solo show; 6th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia; winner of the Moscow Biennale Art Foundation Prize, Russia; *Too Early, Too Late. Middle East and Modernity*, curated by Marco Scotini, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna, Bologna — **2014** *A Walk, A Dance, A Ritual*, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, Germany - solo show; *Untitled... (Native Foreigners)*, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia; winner of the Future of Europe Prize, Germany — **2013** *History Demands to be Continued*, Union of Artists Exhibition Hall, Makhachkala, Russia - solo show; 11th Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, UAE — **2012** 7th Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool, U.K. — **2011** 4th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia; *Affirmative Action (mimesis)*, curated by Marco Scotini, Laura Bulian Gallery, Milan, Italy - solo show; winner of the Innovation Prize 2011 — **2010** *History of Russian Video Art*, Volume 3, curated by Antonio Geusa, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow, Russia; *Affirmative Actions*, curated by Alexey Maslyayev, Panopticon Inutero, Moscow, Russia; *Zones of Estrangement*, curated by Marina Fomenko, Land of Tomorrow, Lexington, USA; *Time, Forward?*, curated by Arseniy Zhilyaev, Souz factory, Moscow, Russia; *Intimate Capital*, II Moscow international biennale for young art Qui Vive? Proekt_Fabrika, Moscow, Russia — **2009** *Aluminium*, curated by Leyla Akhundzadeh, 4 International Biennale of Contemporary Art, Baku, Azerbaijan; *Duration: London*, Candid Arts Trust, London, UK; *Let me think!*, curated by Stanislav Shuripa, Red October factory; 3 Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, parallel program, Moscow, Russia; *Really?*, curated by Alexander Sokolov, Artplay, 3 Moscow biennale of contemporary art, parallel program, Moscow, Russia; *Topography of happiness: Russian wedding end of XIX - beginning of XXI century*, curated by Olga Sosnina, State Museum Tsaritsino, Moscow, Russia; *My love My friends*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow, Russia; *We will take the lead from now on*, Voronezh centre for contemporary arts, Voronezh, Russia; *Art of young artists*, Dagestan Museum of Fine Arts, Makhachkala, Russia.

Koka Ramishvili was born in 1956, in Tbilisi, Georgia. He lives and works in Geneva, Switzerland. Selected shows since 2009 — **2016** *Independent Organism II*, Häusler Contemporary Zürich, Switzerland - solo show — **2015** *Aeroland*, Galerie Laurence Bernard, Geneva, Switzerland - solo show — **2014** *Radiance*, Häusler Contemporary Zürich, Switzerland - solo show; *Echolat*, Stiftung Binz39, Zürich, Switzerland; *Prix de la Fondation Irène Reymond*, Lausanne, Switzerland; *Bourse d'aide à la création*, Ville de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland — **2013** *Perforated Screen*, Artra Galery, Milano, Italy - solo show; *Temperamente auf Papier II*, Häusler Contemporary Zürich, Switzerland; *Trait Papier II*, CCA, Yverdon, Switzerland; *The Collection as a Character*, M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium — **2012** *(HN+SPK)/FMAC=excerpt-fragments d'une collection*, Fédération des associations d'artistes en lien avec les arts visuels, Geneva, Switzerland; *Migrasophia*, Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah, UAE; *A Window on the World*, Museo Cantonale d'Arte and Museo d'Arte, Lugano, Switzerland - solo show — **2011** *Back to the future*, Mitterand+Sanz, Zurich, Switzerland; To see The Dimensions, Konsthalle, Lund, Sweden - solo show — **2010** *Teaching Photography*, Museum Folkwang Essen, Germany; *Lonely at the Top #4*, Museum voor Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerp, Belgium — **2009** 53rd International Art Exhibition Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy.



1. Koka Ramishvili
War from my Window
1991-1992

13 b/w photographs, 32 cm x 42 cm
Printed on Baryta Rag Hahnemuhle

The work of Koka Ramishvili entitled *War from my window* documents a complex page of the history of his native country, Georgia, or the days of the civil war of 1991–1992, a conflict that flared up shortly after the country’s proclamation of independence. After a series of mistakes made by the new government in domestic policies and regarding the national minorities, including the declaration of independence of the autonomous regions, President Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s attempt to start negotiations with the State committee for the state of emergency and obviously, Moscow’s loss of any control over the South Caucasus, South Ossetia and subsequently Abkhazia proclaimed their right to self-determination. Against this background, Moscow tried to impose a new candidate, Eduard Shevardnadze. Using criminal organizations and a compliant part of the intelligentsia, a civil war was provoked, that was extremely local in character. Shops, cafes and restaurants were in fact open; people sat in the bars literally a few meters away from the theater of war.

As the clashes raged throughout the country, Ramishvili filmed the fighting that was taking place in the center of Tbilisi from the window of his home. As far as it may seem paradoxical, in this work Ramishvili does not investigate the possibilities of setting down war through the photographic medium, or creating some kind of documentation or archive. At the same time, he does not even try to reveal and discuss the “heavy,” deeply dramatic aesthetics of the conflict. His photographic project rather shows war in a deliberately sober and contained format that, in turn, transmits with extreme precision the sensation of an eternal, transeunt moment. The landscape as a metaphor for the eternal, the title and the whiffs of smoke as transeunts. There is nothing here that has to do with nations, states or territories, but only the same landscape and twelve days of invisible war. A twelve-day meditation on a “landscape with war.” And the most singular thing is that the lens remains fixed, moving only slightly, now to the right, now to the left. A project that exploits in all its drama that meditative bond that has always been inherent in photography.

2. Babi Badalov
Visual poetry on textile
2015-2017

Series of collages on textile

In his work, the artist and poet Babi Badalov systematically criticizes the political regime set up in his native country, Azerbaijan, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. A regime that caused his exile and the amazing and complex existential path followed by the artist throughout these years. Born on the border between Azerbaijan and Iran, Badalov did his compulsory military service in the Soviet Army, after which he moved to Russia, finding himself at the center of the underground art scene in St. Petersburg. Upon his return to Azerbaijan in 2006, in fear of being persecuted and deported due to his being gay, the artist was forced to seek political asylum in Britain. Following his rejection, he settled in Paris. The linguistic consequences of his existence as a refugee, migrant, and artist struggling for freedom in the broadest sense of the term re-emerge in many of his works through a play of idioms and meanings. Badalov defines himself as a “victim of language,” because in these long years of forced wandering he has not found a language that has really become his own. Consequently,

his work is partly a reflection on the linguistic boundaries and the links between national identity and cultural integration, which is through a mixture of the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, of alliterations and onomatopoeia. His visual poetry also often takes on the form of a diary or poster, starting with the combination of linguistic analyses and figurative material, mostly featuring a political subtext. In this way, Badalov’s works create in their entirety a vast panorama of meanings and allusions behind which one glimpses much more than the personal history of an individual, with his difficulties and his conflicts, and that is, a whole set of problems of a supra-national dimension.

3. Aslan Gaisumov

Postcards

2015

Series of nine postcards
15 x 10 cm each

Postcards containing images of Grozny, the Chechen capital destroyed during the First War of 1994–1996, were issued during the brief rule of the Republic of Ichkeria that was abolished at the end of the Second War of 1999–2009. The postcards are historic artifacts forbidden in present day Chechnya. The artist sent nine postcards out of the ten he had, accomplishing the initial purpose they were made for.

4. Taus Makhacheva

Landscape

2013 – present

Set of objects, wood, different sizes
Courtesy of the artist

The work *Landscape* consists of a collection (still being expanded) of noses of the inhabitants of the northern Caucasus, made in wood in natural-size, scale 1:1. This series has its “prehistory”, or even several of them. In Dagestan in particular, various legends exist about men who have lost their noses. To prove their valor and recover their noses, they set off and perform heroic deeds. This subject not only refers back to initiation rites and the search for a virile principle at the heart of Dagestan’s cultural map, but also of something that typifies the majority of young Caucasian men, with their thirst for adventure and their taste for the most unbridled amusement. Another “prehistory” of this work is inextricably linked to the deep historical ties that the population of the Caucasus has with the surrounding mountainscape.¹ A direct testimony of this connection can for example be traced to the avar language, in which *megier* means both nose and mountain. At the same time, the mountains of the Caucasus have been an escape route since ancient times, a kind of natural hiding place protected from enemy incursions. In other words, a sacred territory around which many myths and legends have been woven during the course of history.

¹ Ju. Ju. Karpov, *Vzglyad na gorcev. Vzglyad s gor.*

5. Babi Badalov

Visual poetry

2013–2014

Series of collages

6. Aslan Gaisumov

Flag

2015–2016

Video HD, colour, sound
4 min 45 secs

With an absorbed look on her face a woman attaches a piece of white cloth to a pole, some already prepared white flags are placed on a wall not far from her. It is well known that the white flag symbolises armistice, that is, a provisory agreement that puts an end to the state of war and during which martial law is still in force.

7. Lusine Djanyan

Ires

2014

Oil on fabric
140 x 400 cm

Although Lusine Djanyan’s work involves various techniques and subjects, the theme of her work is always linked to what could be termed as the fundamental purpose and projection of contemporary art, namely the quest for and the discovery of a space of freedom. This project in particular investigates the possibilities of memory and imagination, historical events and their interpretation, and is devoted to a series of traumatic events in the history of the Armenian people, including the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict of the nineties, that also affected the artist’s own destiny. Djanyan remembers and recounts: “The *Ires* is a special cut of a precious fabric that is applied to the upper part of the blanket, called *Astar*. The *Astar* is a beautiful colorful cloth that covers the blanket completely, preserving it intact and clean. The blanket itself—which is called *Ērchan* —is made of pure sheep’s wool. According to tradition, the *Ērchan* was sewn by hand by the elder women of the family using large needles. As a child, I heard the story of an Armenian woman who fled from Azerbaijan, who had placed her most valuable possessions in the blanket to take them away with her.

At night, she wrapped her children in that same blanket, to prevent them from dying of cold. The blanket contained some valuables, some savings and photographs, old family photos. These same photographs were the most precious thing that this woman wanted to leave her children. The images of her loved ones and their faces remained intact under the *Ires*, the “face” of the blanket. The *Ērchan* thus preserves the memory of past generations and transmits it to the future ones. I wanted to make my memory visible. I took the photos of my ancestors and transferred them onto the cloth. For example, this tiny little child, sitting on his mother’s knees, is my grandfather. Here, however, we see him standing, surrounded by his own children (including my father). Only the folds of the fabric separate the past from the present.”

8. Taus Makhacheva

Delinking

2011

Photographic documentation
of a performance / Milan

The cultural archaeology and the authorial interpretations that follow is one of the key methods used by Taus Makhacheva in her work. In *Delinking* (a term that roughly means “demarcation” and that was proposed at the time by Madina V. Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo), Makhacheva turns to Oriental culture in general and, in particular, to the tradition of painting one’s body with henna, called mehndi. As a result, during the course of the performance, the face of the artist is covered with Indian, African, and Near Eastern arabesques. Once the arabesques have been drawn, the empty spaces between them are also filled with henna, until the face becomes a monochromatic stain in shades of dark green. Gradually the henna dries and the orange and brown traces that remain on the skin are visible for about a week, thus extending the performance over time. *Delinking* contains a whole series of cultural references that sink their roots into the most diverse places and at the same time, in the Western world are automatically associated with the ‘other’, with the East, or that is with an indissoluble link to the many contradictions of the current times. In this work, the very face of the artist be-

comes the space in which the contradictions of women’s position in the East (or that of Eastern women in the West), the sacrifice of oneself in the name of art, and the search for one’s own identity in a multipolar world are encountered.

8. Musay Gaivoronskiy

EXIT

2012

Video, Colour, Sound, 9.06 min
Courtesy of the artist

Of all the potential meanings contained in this work, the author of the performance emphasizes one in particular, that is the search for and the finding of one’s own personal path that must not be corrupted by extraneous authorities or socio-cultural norms imposed from on high. Nonetheless, this work remains open to all kinds of interpretation. As the action takes place, the protagonist passes through a whole life seen in a succession of stages. Freeing himself from the rope and in this way, “breaking the umbilical cord”, he receives a bunch of keys he must use on his own. However, he soon finds out that none of them corresponds to the door lock that an existential need demands he open. What is disturbing to the author is the illusionary nature of the choice that ends up by associating us to others, a choice already predetermined by one’s family, one’s circle of friends and acquaintances, by society ... “Banging your head against the wall” and realizing the mistakes made, the protagonist decides to risk everything and to draw on what’s left of his energy in order to achieve his purpose. In the space beyond the door that precedes his long-cherished goal, another, absolutely unknown reality opens up, of which he knows neither the laws nor the rules. And in just one gruff movement he destroys this world that is as fragile as crystal, a world that he had sought after and desired for so many years. When, on the other hand—the author believes—to find one’s own way, one just needs to rid oneself of the blinkers and the artificial barriers created by others.

Andrey Misiano