



THE PUSHKIN
STATE MUSEUM
OF FINE ARTS



HOUSE OF IMPRESSIONS

WANDERING WITH

A TROUBADOUR

OFFICIAL PROJECT PARTNER — MY.COM

HOUSE OF IMPRESSIONS

WANDERING WITH A TROUBADOUR

PETR AIDU (RUSSIA), VITO ACCONCI (USA), SEMYON ALEKSANDROVSKY (RUSSIA), VICTOR ALIMPIEV (RUSSIA), JOHANNA BILLING (SWEDEN), COD.ACT. ANDRÉ ET MICHEL DÉCOSTERD (SWITZERLAND), PETR ZHUKOV (RUSSIA) AND KIRILL SHIROKOV (RUSSIA), RAGNAR KJARTANSSON (ICELAND), JONAS MEKAS (USA), CAMILLE NORMENT (NORWAY), SASHA PIROGOVA (RUSSIA), JULIAN ROSEFELDT (GERMANY), ANRI SALA (ALBANIA), GARY HILL (USA), MARINA CHERNIKOVA (THE NETHERLANDS — RUSSIA), ANDREY CHERKASOV (RUSSIA), !MEDIENGRUPPE BITNIK (SWITZERLAND)

▶▶ Sound and music have always been a universal means of communication making it possible for various communities to understand each other when words are unable to perform this task. It is a special way of exploring the world, for music is a tool that forms the emotional state and affects the unconscious. Invisible and intangible sound, which seems to be a secondary instrument in video and cinema, is in fact the key element of creating the atmosphere and the dramaturgy of the moving image since sound film has emerged. The sound is able to affect inner conditions and provoke emotions independently of our will, to create an alternative narrative, which contravenes what we see and comprehend. One of the essential characteristics of sound is its performative quality: not only in the literal sense, as a performer's presence, but also in its constant motion. It resonates, transgressing borders and overcoming all barriers.

▶▶ Today, curators from all over the world working with sound describe it as one of the leading media in contemporary art. For instance, the *Sound as a Medium of Art* exhibition at ZKM (Karlsruhe) presented the viewers with an extensive history of the sound art development in the 20th and 21st centuries, in which sound is deciphered by practices of a wide variety of contemporary artists. The MoMA *Soundings: A Contemporary Score* project has become a research of sound spaces and social immersions by artists who perform 'field experiments'. The *Art or Sound* exhibition in Venice became an almost encyclopedic collection of 137 most unusual musical utterances (from instruments to sound installations). The Roman *Open Museum — Open City* exhibition is

the most vivid example of soundscapes succeeding painting in the museum space of MAXXI with the sound going outside into the urban environment.

► Contemporary artists working with sound are presented to the viewer as contemporary troubadours narrating tales of invisible matters: the sound and plasticity of metaphors, the hidden but omnipresent musicality. Medieval troubadours, the comparison to whom is the key concept of this project, are primarily associated with poetry, chivalry and courtly love. But the influence of these itinerant musicians on the morals and worldview of the society of that time was much broader and proved to be unprecedented in the history of medieval poetry. Enjoying a certain freedom of speech, they sang their songs about gallant knights and fair ladies, about society's corruption, faraway wanderings and historical events. They were the first to talk about the world as bearers of high culture while remaining accessible to common people: they performed their songs both at court and public squares. The main innovation of troubadour poetry was inventing a new language and the markedly grown interest in the world and man, where the man is able not only to pray and fight, but also to love tenderly and admire the beauty of nature and human creations. The word 'troubadour' comes from the verb *trobar* — to create, to find, to invent — their main task was to create a new language. At the time when Latin was the only literary language, troubadours proved in their practice Dante's later thoughts from *De Vulgari Eloquentia* treatise — the importance and possibilities of the new languages that were every bit as

good as the classical ones. Creating poetry not in Latin, but in the vernacular, they found the language that was later used by Renaissance poets. Similarly, today's 'new troubadours' create the new language of art: they mix poetry, video and music to communicate an emotive experience and their message to the viewer.

► In recent years, contemporary art is often blamed for becoming a hermetic system accessible only for the elite. An elitist community of people in possession of this special knowledge and language is engaged in a dialogue with itself, solving increasingly complex charades of intellectual conceptualism. It seems that now is the time to talk with the audience in some other language clear to everyone. One can agree with the curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, who claims that we have entered the era of the new Middle Ages, in which ancient rationality was replaced by sensuality as a basis for a new language. This new language of feeling that comes into its own in art, is based on *the sound*, which, in the form of a song, melody, and even a whole sounding space, is accessible to all. The new sensuality is a source of intimate messages of an artist to us, the audience, which provokes emotions against our will. Poetry, sound, and rhythm create the new sounding universe, in which the polyphony of artists' voices gives us an emotional and meaningful momentum.

The "new troubadours" — participants of this project — are artists with special methods and strategies of work. They do not fit neither high nor mass art, rather they are somewhere in between — they are interested in reaching the audience

and being comprehensible without conceptual texts and programs. These artists are sensitive to current social and cultural processes, and they try their best to convey their observations to the viewer. In order to do this they often experiment with different media, thus inventing new languages of art. In order to communicate their message they need to pass it through themselves first — for example, one of the living classics of conceptual video art, Gary Hill, with his experiments in altering conscience and conveying this state of mind to the viewer with audiovisual means.

▶▶ These artists do not work with agents or managers, perceiving the experience of direct communication with the viewer as primarily important. For instance, Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson literally embodies an itinerant troubadour when performing and improvising at exhibitions and in public spaces, and directly engaging audience into his performance. The space created by these artists is hand-made and bears an artistic message in a similar way to elaborately decorated medieval book of poems. Such is, for instance, a composition by Marina Chernikova generated from audiovisual fragments and fully immersing the viewer in the process of perception. It appears possible to transfer sound vibrations on paper, as shown by artist and composer Camille Norment, whose works study music as a source of universal sensuality.

▶▶ Today, medieval troubadour's love song gives way to other subject matters: those of loneliness, inner harmony, the possible and the impossible. But love songs are also present, and their message is to stay faithful to the mystic love

(and it is not necessarily love for a lady). It is enough for the viewers to come to the exhibition, and the artists will capture them into their net by all means. This is what Vito Acconci is literally engaged in: he sings his *Theme Song*, gradually engaging the viewer in this process, where his personal song is supposed to become ours. At first, it seems that he sings about the lady he wants to seduce, but in fact the object of his desire is the viewer: he wants to capture them for the 30 minutes of the video duration. An uncut recording of the hits of the 1970s–80s invites the viewers to a conversation about attraction, but in the end, the song comes out with an opposite sense — it is about us not understanding each other.

▶▶ The art of troubadours was not only in the field of love lyrics. By activating the vernacular, it often undermined the foundations of the Latin Church and gained popularity. Sometimes contemporary artists also address the topic of Christian foundations — like Ragnar Kjartansson with his song about Satan. Of course, they do not enter into a literal dialogue with the medieval culture, but sometimes it is implicitly built. Many of them visualize the miracle, creating a special space based on duality of the real and the fictional. For instance, Sasha Pirogova with her project *MONO*, where the voice miraculously separates from its bearer and starts living its own life. Many artists work at the intersection of high culture and the culture of mass consumerism continuing the tradition of troubadours — like !Mediengruppe Bitnik who try to literally *connect* citizens to the elitist art of opera using phones, building the bridges through physical and virtual space. Andrey Cherkasov finds figurative

equivalents to lines of poetry and shows us *Something That Looks Like Poetry*.

▶ Many projects are filled with tragic notes. Jonas Mekas's project makes the viewer feel crescent reverberating emptiness that comes after destruction of the World Trade Center in NYC on September 11, 2001; in the project by Gary Hill it arises in the mind, and in the mini-series by Petr Zhukov — in the post-apocalyptic environment of a devastated city, where the protagonists (musicians participating in the ensemble “the same” cooperating with Petr Zhukov) combine folk, classical and experimental music, trying to compose a melody able to resurrect a new life. In the same way, the art of itinerant troubadours once merged traditions of Arabic, Romanesque, and Latin poetry. Today's experience shows that the world gets reborn in some new social and cultural context.

▶ One of the unifying factors offered by the artists is musical performance. In his work called *Innocent*, Victor Alimpiev brings together three actresses in order to create a universal synthetic performer. Each actress is the one who speaks and the one the speech is about. They ascertain the insufficiency and inadequacy of the language. In her *Pulheim Jam Session*, Johanna Billing creates a choral performance and brings together not only people stuck in traffic, but also history and today. The artists invite the viewer to a journey in time, but also in space — like stage director Semyon Alexandrovsky who offers visitors to immerse in the atmosphere of several European museums.

▶ The exhibition gives visitors an opportunity to enter the sounding tissue of the exhibition space, and unveils the

mechanics of creating a new language. For instance, scores of the sound installations by the Cod.Act duo (André and Michel Décosterd), which combine notes of the audio performance, algorithms of movements of the performers, as well as of the mechanic parts of the installation, illustrate the evolution of the language of codification of performative aesthetics. French-Albanian artist Anri Sala builds a single composition of a music piece and silent body language, exposing their sometimes controversial relationships. The viewer can watch the process of creating a simulation of an existing language in the project by German filmmaker Julian Rosefeldt called *Soundmaker*, which discloses work of a Foley artist as a continuous creative flow with no beginning and no end. Most importantly, the viewer is not just a bystander, but also a co-author of a symphony being created. An installation by composer Petr Aidu draws the viewer into a journey through a sounding maze where the roles of listener, performer and musical instrument intertwine.

► Sound art and video art, unlike music or cinema, are full-fledged genres of contemporary art, which today address a fundamentally different arrangement of sound and image. Polyphony, improvisation, experiments with multiplying and multilayered sound and image, connected with the notion of *all-seeing* and *all-hearing* lead to interesting formal gaps: the disparity of hearing and the dislocation of the listener, the search for an acoustic dead zone, dissecting means of sound, and so on. Each project creates a resonating space and expands the boundaries of sound, cinema and performance. By means of poetry, sound and rhythm, the sympho-

ny of voices within this project creates a unique universe, which is open to the viewer for their search of new meanings and emotional experiences.

▶▶ The polyphony that is a foundation of the nature of musical sound and melody becomes the main principle of the project structure. The educational program of the project will feature a lecture course focusing on musical textual structures and creating a new language, and will continue the study of intersections between the culture of medieval troubadours and contemporary artistic experiments. The display, already moving and breathing, will come alive every day in a new way through various performances of musicians, actors, through the sound of various musical instruments. Thus, the exhibition will attract representatives of all sorts of artistic communities, *free troubadours* — poets, musicians, artists, dance performers; it will sound as an orchestra — polyphonic and improvisational, composed of a number of voices.

Olga Shishko, curator

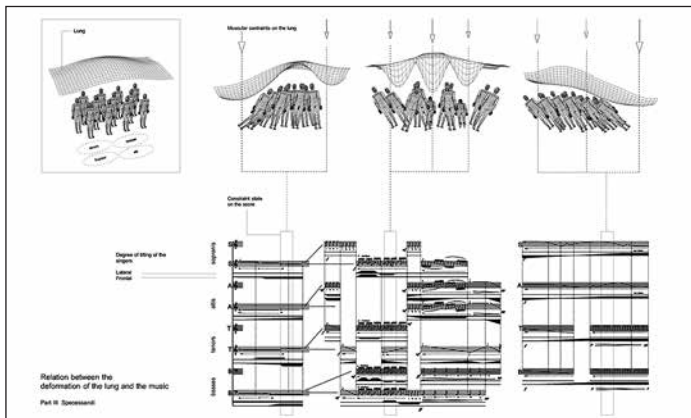
1. ANDRÉ AND MICHEL DÉCOSTERD (COD.ACT) (SWITZERLAND)

►► André and Michel Décosterd create complex sound installations and performances based on the study of sound, motion, and their mutual influence. Preparatory stage of their work involves producing numerous technical outlines similar to a musical score, which combines notes of the sound sequence, drawings of the performers' movements, and algorithm of actions of the mechanic part of an installation. These sketches can be equally considered works of art (although the artists do not consider them as such), illustrating the evolution of musical and performative aesthetics and the language of its codification.

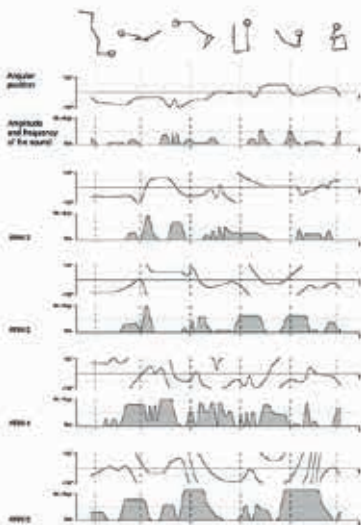
►► Objects and performative practices by the Décosterds are primarily focused on interaction with space: their sculptures form a resonating universe inside an exhibition space, where the viewer stops being a mere observer and becomes a full-fledged participant of the sound experiment. For instance, their *Pendulum Choir* installation explores relations between choir music and movement by means of interaction of human and robot. "Instruments" created by the Cod.Act duo convert physical movement into a sonic phenomenon.

COD.ACT DUO: ANDRÉ DÉCOSTERD AND MICHEL DÉCOSTERD

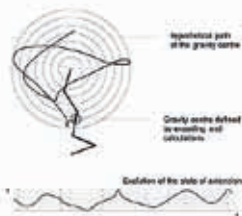
André Décosterd (b. 1967, Le Locle, Switzerland) — musician, composer, and Michel Décosterd (b. 1969, Le Locle, Switzerland) — architect and plastician. The duo was awarded the Golden Nica Interactive Arts of the Ars Electronica Festival (2013). They have been active in participating in exhibitions, festivals and conferences all over the world.



EVOLUTION OF THE SOUND BROADCASTED BY AN ARM AS A FUNCTION OF THE SPEED OF ROTATION



EVOLUTION OF THE SOUND OF THE WHOLE AS A FUNCTION OF THE DEGREE OF EXTENSION OF THE ARM



STAGES OF THE SOUND TREATMENT OF THE ARM 5

Two discrete
signals on track 5



Intermittent modulation
according to the speed
of the path



Sound treatment
according to the state
of attention



Four different
signals



Preparatory sketches

Computer graphics

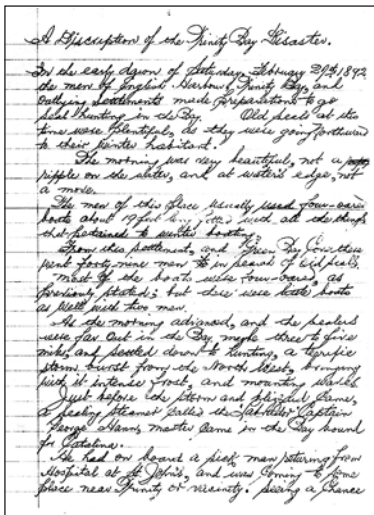
Courtesy of the artists

▶▶ In his work, Cherkasov reflects on the problem of defining the genre of media poetry. Its critics often base their opinions on the formal side of the matter and claim that it does not look like poetry, therefore cannot be defined as such. They apply the same principle of judgment to traditional poetry: for them, the formal elements such as rhyme are enough for defining its belonging to the genre. Following this approach, Cherkasov takes a visual form of classic Russian poetry and seeks for its visual equivalents — literally making a Google search by image using a screenshot of a poem and choosing the first result from the list of similar images.

▶▶ In his poems, Andrey Cherkasov works with the form, dissecting poetic practice and its methods. He often mixes certain genre attributes appealing to different modes of perception. Thus, he creates collages of poetic structural elements by weakening syntactic relationships between them, extending the range of possible combinations. This approach is close to aleatoric music, where some elements of composition are left to chance. This method was used by avant-garde composers Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage, and others. As emphasized by the critic Dmitry Vorobyev, in Cherkasov's poems "the artistic effect manifests itself when reading out loud and is achieved by collision and tension between diverse parts of textual material and silent rests". Cherkasov's poetry exposes the poetic work with the language and shows the uselessness of its formalization.

ANDREY CHERKASOV

(b. 1987, Chelyabinsk, Russia) — poet and artist. Graduated from the Maxim Gorky Literary Institute (2012) and the Open School Manege / MediaArtLab (2015). He has been a participant of the Media Poetry Laboratory and a member of the expert council of the New Verse series (publishing project of the Order of Words bookstore). He received the award of the Pushkin Laboratories poetic festival (2016) and was nominated for the LiteratuRRentgen award (2008, 2009, 2010). His book “Decentralized Observation” has entered the short list of the Prize of Russian Gulliver (2014) and the short list of the Andrei Belyi Prize (2015).



Something that Looks like Poetry, 2016

Mixed media installation
Courtesy of the artist

▶▶ Acconci's classic work dramatizes the artist's interaction with the camera. Accompanied by tape recordings of songs by Bob Dylan, the Doors, and Leonard Cohen, Acconci carries on his seductive monologue with the camera — referring to an unknown viewer who will see the tape. The artist performs an experiment in interpersonal communication and demonstrates the new possibilities of media contact with the viewer, appealing directly to their intimate feelings and experiences. The ironic mixture of the artist's vulnerability and his verbal manipulation aimed at the viewer results in a dynamic tension between "I" and "you".

▶▶ Since the second half of the 1960s, Acconci's work was centered on poetry. By the 1970s, he began exploring movement in space using photography and video to document various actions like jumping, falling, or performing absurd rituals (like following a passerby in the street in a 1969 performance piece). In the same period, he challenges borders between public and private: during his 1970 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, he had his mail forwarded to the museum and went there every day to open it. In the *Theme song* camera and screen act as such border: the artist does not see whom he seduces with his songs, while public demonstration of his come-ons makes him vulnerable.

VITO ACCONCI

(b. 1940, New York, USA) — artist, architect, and a cult figure of conceptual media art. Starting from the 1980s, he produces public artworks and architectural projects, among them several works for a number of American colleges and airports, and the *Murinsel* project of a futuristic island in Graz, Austria (2003). Acconci has taught at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, San Francisco Art Institute, School of Visual Arts in New York, Yale University in New Haven and other institutions. His retrospective exhibitions were held at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1978), and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (1980).



Theme song, 1973

Video installation, 33' 15"

Courtesy of EAI, New York, and Vito Acconci Studio, New York

▶▶ The video depicts a lab where scientists study microphones as if they do not have any idea about these objects. They manipulate a microphone attempting to use it in various ways, alternating its real purpose each time. Going too far in their “study”, scientists do not notice when eventually the microphones come “alive” and start dominating. As a result, scientists switch places with the subject of their research, and the microphones “sing” into people.

▶▶ Sasha Pirogova creates her works at the intersection of cinema, video art, performance, and sound art. One of the main subject matters of her studies is motion and its capacities. Pirogova simulates unusual situations in a familiar context, thereby revealing the mechanism of habit and automatism of perception. Using the language of motion and video editing, she manipulates familiar visual codes to construct unexpected sequences open for interpretations.

SASHA PIROGOVA

(b. 1986, Moscow, Russia) — media artist. Graduated from the Department of Physics of Moscow State University (2010) and from Moscow Rodchenko Art School (2014). She was awarded the prize of the Extra Short Film Festival (Moscow, 2012) and was long-listed for the Kandinsky Prize 2013 in the “Young Artist — Project of the Year” category. In 2014, she was awarded the Innovation Prize in the “New Generation” category, as well as the special prize of this award.



MONO, 2015–16

Dual-channel video installation, 10'

Courtesy of the artist

▶▶ *Pulheim Jam Session* combines two events and two sound sequences. Sixty cars carrying over a hundred people from the Pulheim region of Germany, situated within commuting distance from Cologne, took part in constructing a traffic jam. Despite the obvious frustration inherent in the experience of traffic congestion, people have busied themselves — they talk, eat, and listen to the music. This moment of cozy sociability takes place in front of a power station. Meanwhile, in a barn nearby, Swedish artist and musician Edda Magnason is improvising on piano.

▶▶ Forty years earlier in Cologne, in the same year as Pulheim's reform that united nearby lands, the American pianist Keith Jarrett held his live improvised concert, which was recorded and eventually became widely famous. These two historical events are connected by their geography and by local people's memories. Billing linked past and present in a single space by constructing it from memory and repetition, shifting spatial and temporal boundaries. In her work, a car jam and a jamming session are two distinct kinds of activity, both with their own *freedom* and *constraint*.

▶▶ Billing's creative work in general and this piece in particular is about collective sound, which is formed of individual melodies, about a sound vector of each person, and their intersection in a public space. Her videos weave music, movement and rhythm, placing subtle emphasis on the individual within representations of changing societies. Connecting elements of performance with a strictly film-like language, Billing in part directs the participants and

in part puts a series of improvisations in place around the notion of performance and the possibility it holds to explore issues of the public and the private. All the protagonists of Billing's videos play themselves but take part in staged situations that oscillate between documentary and fiction, as a multi-layered interpretation of a place.

JOHANNA BILLING

(b. 1973, Jönköping, Sweden) is a video artist. Her major solo exhibitions include *I'm Gonna Live Anyhow until I Die*, the MAC, Belfast (2012), *I'm Lost without Your Rhythm*, Modern Art Oxford (2010), and a show at the P.S.1 Center for Contemporary Art (2006); she also participated in the 9th Istanbul Biennial (2005).



Pulheim Jam Session, 2015
Single-channel video installation,
22' 40''
Courtesy of the artist



Pulheim Jam Session, 2015
Single-channel video installation,
22' 40''
Courtesy of the artist



▶▶ In his *Satan is Real* video, Kjartansson appears shirtless, buried waist deep in the dirt of a public park, strumming a guitar and singing a piece with eponymous lyrics. The words “*Satan is real, and he’s working for me*” are an incidental interpretation of a song by the American country-duo The Louvin Brothers. The artist misinterpreted the original lyrics, which not only dramatically changed its meaning, but also sneered at the American country music that often appeals to Christian piety. Playing with human perception, when we remember lyrics as it refracts in our minds, the artist shows that the original and the reinterpretation may be unstable. Kjartansson repeatedly sings his lyrics, making it sound absurd. The performance happening in a public park draws the attention of the people strolling there and attracts children.

▶▶ Pretending and staging become key tools in the artist’s attempt to convey sincere emotion and offering a genuine experience to the audience. Kjartansson’s playful work is full of unique moments where a conflict of the dramatic and the trivial culminates in a memorable way. Most of his performances last for several hours, days, or even months, and appear as endless repetitions of the same action. He likes to undermine cultural stereotypes; in particular, he mocks a romanticized figure of an artist. For instance, every day along six months during the Venice Biennale in 2009, Kjartansson painted a portrait of a young man with a can of beer and a cigarette in front of the Grand Canal as part of his performance *The End*.

RAGNAR KJARTANSSON

(b.1976, Reykjavík, Iceland) — performance artist. He represented Iceland at the Venice Biennale in 2009. Participated in the public art program of Manifesta-10, and was awarded Kuryokhin Prize for his performance *Sorrow Conquers Happiness* at the Vitebsky Railway Station. Kjartansson has exhibited widely around Europe and the US, most recently at the Barbican Art Gallery, London, Mass MoCA Hunter Center and Palais de Tokyo, Paris.



Satan is Real, 2007

Single-channel video installation, 63'

Courtesy of the artist, i8 Gallery (Reykjavik) and Luhring Augustine Gallery (New York)

▶▶ *The Destruction Quartet* features four films, which bring together fragments of symbolic and real acts of destruction. Each film, of varying duration, is played on a continuous loop. The first one documents the 1997 Nam June Paik performance, in which he destroys a piano, the second one observes the demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1990, the third one is Mekas' footage of Danius Kesminas' fire sculpture, presented in New York in 1991, and the last one graphically records the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 that Mekas filmed from the roof of his SoHo apartment building.

▶▶ While the soundtracks in the first three films create an ambient backdrop to the filmed events, the increasingly incredulous comments by a fellow observer in the 9/11 footage bring a chill to the whole installation. In an attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible, Mekas has, with the addition of a title page quoting the 19th Century German poet Heinrich Heine (*Ein Marchen aus alten Zeiten*) and an old photographic image of a young child, presented the 9/11 as a fairy tale, as if passing on the story as folklore, disconnecting it slightly from its defining date and introducing a sense of timelessness and metaphor.

▶▶ Mekas is often called “the godfather of American avant-garde cinema”. He is considered founder of the “diary films” genre. Besides his classic films, his practice involves multi-monitor installations, sound immersion pieces and “frozen film” prints. He is also known as a poet

whose works have been published in many European languages. According to the artist himself, he is preoccupied with what we still have left in our self-destructive civilization that essentially matters to the more subtle aspects of our soul.



The Destruction Quartet, 2006

Four-channel video installation

Courtesy of the artist

JONAS MEKAS

(b. 1922, Semeniškiai, Lithuania), artist, poet, curator, critic, and one of the leading filmmakers of independent and avant-garde cinema. His films have gained widespread recognition and have been presented extensively at festivals, galleries, and museums around the world. In 1954, he co-founded *Film Culture* magazine, and in 1958, he began his legendary *Movie Journal* column in *Village Voice*. Mekas also co-founded the Film-Makers' Cooperative, the Film-Makers' Cinematheque, and Anthology Film Archives. Mekas represented Lithuania at the 51st Venice Biennale (2005). In 2007, the Jonas Mekas Visual Art Center was opened in Vilnius. He has received numerous awards, among them: Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres of the Ministry of Culture of France (2013), Los Angeles Film Critics Association's Award (2007), and others.





**The Destruction
Quartet, 2006**
Four-channel video
installation
Courtesy of the artist

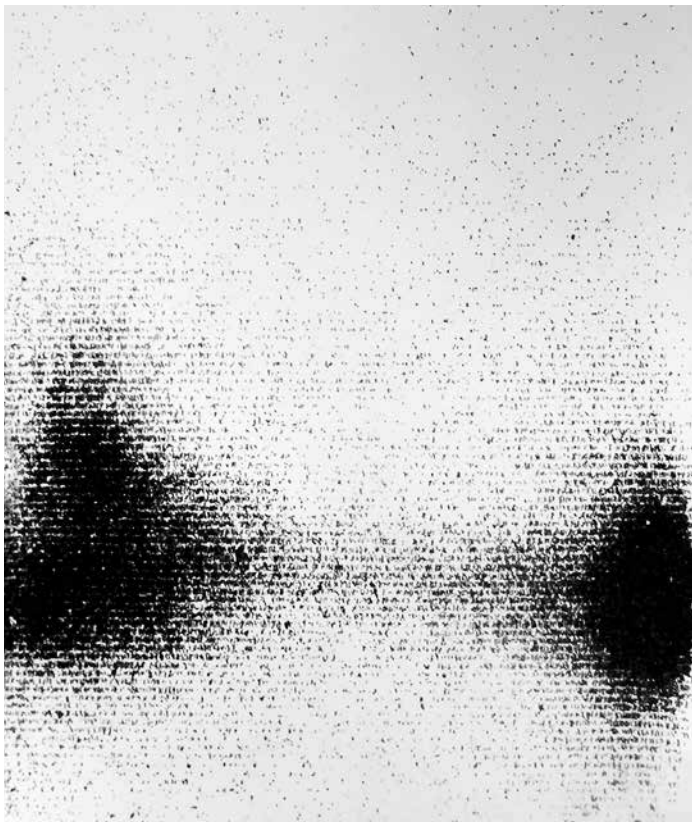


▶▶ Norment works with various media, often addressing the phenomenon of sound. In her graphic series, she continues to seek for equivalents to sound. Tiny points of ink delicately touching the surface create a multi-layered rhythmic composition. This work bears the beauty of the thickened air, the disturbance of historical residue, and the sound vibrations, while engaging the viewer on multiple levels of depth.

▶▶ Norment utilizes sound, light, action, objects, and the viewer for creating a multisensory space, conveying aesthetic and conceptual experience. She often uses the notion of cultural psychoacoustics — the examination of socio-cultural phenomena through sounds and music, and the contexts in which they are produced. Her works interweave the formal and the contextual, creating experiences that are both somatic and cognitive.

CAMILLE NORMENT

(b. 1970, Silver Spring, USA) — media artist, musician, composer; she lives and works in Norway. Norment works with various media: sound, installation, light sculpture, drawing, performance, and video. As a musician, she performs both as a solo artist, and with her ensemble *Camille Norment Trio*. She has been participating in numerous exhibitions including the 2013 solo show in the Museum of Modern Art (New York) and the Venice Biennale in 2015.



Studies in Sympathetic Vibrations, 2016

Iron filings and ink on paper

Size variations of 210 x 297 mm

Courtesy of the artist

9. !MEDIENGRUPPE BITNIK

(SWITZERLAND)

▶▶ *Opera Calling* was an artistic intervention into the cultural system of the Zurich Opera. By means of a system of microphones placed within the auditorium of the local opera house, the wide audience was given an opportunity to listen to performances on their phones.

▶▶ From March 9th to May 26th 2007, audio bugs, hidden in the auditorium by the artists of the !Mediengruppe Bitnik, transmitted performances of the Zurich Opera to randomly selected telephone landlines in the city of Zurich. Anyone who picked up their telephone, was able to listen to the on-going opera performances for as long as they wanted through a live connection with the audio bug signal. As soon as the listener would hang up, the telephone machine would call the next random number. The use of the telephone for the dissemination of opera transmissions does not allow to fully cover the virtual audience but rather functions as home delivery service. In total, over 90 hours of opera performances were retransmitted to 4363 households.

▶▶ The Zurich Opera launched a search for the bugs and in a first reaction threatened to take legal action against the artists if the transmissions were not stopped and the bugs not removed, which was followed by a debate in the media over cultural ownership and cultural subsidies. Eventually, the Zurich Opera decided to tolerate *Opera Calling* as a temporary enhancement of their performance repertoire.

▶▶ In their works, !Mediengruppe Bitnik work with the Internet while, at the same time, trying to comprehend it as a subject matter. Their practice expands from the digital to affect physical spaces, often intentionally applying loss of control to challenge established structures and mechanisms. They have been known for sending a bot called *Random Darknet Shopper* on a three-month shopping spree in the Darknets where it randomly bought objects and had them sent directly to the gallery space. After buying 10 ecstasy pills, the prosecutor's office seized the work and a public debate was launched on whether the artists should be held responsible for what a computer program has committed. In early 2013, !Mediengruppe Bitnik sent a parcel to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange at the Ecuadorian embassy. The parcel contained a camera which broadcast its journey through the postal system live on the internet. Flirting with the legacy of conceptual art, they described *Delivery for Mr. Assange* as a SYSTEM_TEST and a Live Mail Art Piece.

!MEDIENGRUPPE BITNIK

(Carmen Weisskopf, b. 1976, Switzerland; Domagoj Smoljo, b. 1979, Croatia) — media artists working primarily with the Internet. Their works have been exhibited internationally including Shanghai 21st Century Minsheng Art Museum, City Art Gallery (Ljubljana), Kunsthaus (Zurich), Contemporary Art Center (Vilnius), the Roaming Biennale (Teheran), and others. They have been awarded Swiss Art Award and Honorary Mention Prix Ars Electronica.



Opera Calling. Arias for All, 2007

Intervention / Video installation

Courtesy of the artists

▶▶ The title *Unravel* refers to the previous piece by Sala called *Ravel Ravel*, in which two different interpretations of Ravel's *Left Hand Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* are heard alongside one another. The respective tempos of each performances have been recomposed, first creating a slight echo, then doubling with the notes heard twice, only to shift away from one another once again. *Unravel* disentangles the interlocked tempo differences of *Ravel Ravel*. A DJ endeavors to synch together the two executions of the *Left Hand Concerto*. This results in a stereo effect of two distinct realities. The unrelenting concentration perceived in DJ's face and the soft but surgeon-like choreography of her hands are in a stark conflict with the music resulting from her actions.

▶▶ In *Unravel* Anri Sala continues his exploration of space and sound, turning to the silent body language. The emotional experience triggered by the music is supplemented by the physical one, which lets feel its spatial impulse.

▶▶ In his early works examining post-Communist life in his native Albania, Sala observed the role of language and memory in narrating social and political history. Music often accompanies the visual narrative of his video works, affecting the emotional perception and acting as an additional semantic level. Since the 2000s, Sala has turned to exploring acoustic experiences. His recent works emphasize the perception of sound in relation to architectural spaces.

ANRI SALA

(b.1974, Tirana, Albania) — videoartist based in Berlin. Represented France at the 2013 Venice Biennale. His solo shows run internationally including such venues as: The New Museum (New York, 2016), Haus der Kunst (Munich, 2014), Centre Pompidou (Paris, 2012), National Museum of Art (Osaka, 2011), Serpentine Gallery (London, 2011) and others. Sala received Prix Gilles Dusein (2000) and Vincent Award, the Netherlands (2014).

**Unravel, 2013**

Single-channel video installation, 20' 45"

Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris;
Marian Goodman Gallery; Hauser & Wirth; kurimanzutto,
Mexico City

11. PETR ZHUKOV (RUSSIA) AND KIRILL SHIROKOV (RUSSIA)

▶▶ The work shows the events developing in not so distant future. Humanity has died out of irrepressible passion. The scenery is full of corpses that do not decompose but lie around embracing each other. The only survivors are Sasha Elina and Kirill Shirokov (performers of “the same” ensemble). Blending into one, like Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, and performing their music they wander around the empty city of Moscow filling it with music and trying to find the performance that will save the humanity. Each episode equals one day, one journey, and one performed melody.

▶▶ Petr Zhukov works at the intersection of cinema and video art exploring mythology in culture. His approach is a performative interaction with culturally important spaces with a further processing of the collected material in order to create certain senses. Currently, he is developing various approaches of combining narrative video representation with live performances and music.

PETR ZHUKOV

(b. 1982, Moscow, Russia) — artist, curator. Graduated from the Moscow State University (2005) and from the Rodchenko School of Photography and Multimedia (2009). Co-founder and member of the *Upward!* Community. Founder and program curator of *7th Floor radio*. He has recently taken part in the

following exhibitions: *Open Systems* at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art (2016), *Metageography* at the State Tretyakov Gallery (2016), *History of Russian Videoart. Vol.3* at Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2010).

KIRILL SHIROKOV

(b.1990, Gorky, Russia) — composer, improviser. In 2013, his opera performance *Haze* composed in collaboration with Mark Buloshnikov and staged by the Provmyza group, was awarded the Grand Prix of the Innovation Prize. Performs in “the same” ensemble with his partner Sasha Elina selecting their repertoire not only according to the location but also to the season.





**Tomorrow Will Be
the Same**, 2015–2016
Musical post-
apocalyptic drama mini-
series, 1 episode, 23'
Courtesy of the artists





**Tomorrow Will Be
the Same**, 2015–2016
Musical post-
apocalyptic drama mini-
series, 1 episode, 23'
Courtesy of the artists



12. JULIAN ROSEFELDT

(GERMANY)

▶▶ *The Soundmaker* is a staged piece shot on a film set and portrays the protagonist and his doppelgänger — a Foley artist. The screen profiles a man obsessively rearranging furniture in the narrow enclosed space of his apartment, assembling objects in a personal Tower of Babel to later bring them back to their initial position. His *alter ego* — the Foley artist, observes his endeavor. The main action takes place on the central screen, while the side screens show the process of creating sound for the main scene. The two accompanying scenes, shot in aerial and frontal perspective, depict a sonic translation of this activity through the routine process of sound-making. This work is an allusion for the Sisyphean task — futile activities that sometimes fill our daily life. At the same time, Rosefeldt reveals the film set mechanics rhyming it with the mechanics of life.

▶▶ *The Soundmaker* is the first part of the *Trilogy of Failure*, whose characters — the Foley artist and the Stuntman (*Stunned Man* — the name of the second part) inhabit their self-created world. They are sensorial machines within an autonomous system. They observe themselves, and that is their own reality.

▶▶ Rosefeldt's works deal with practices, rituals and structures of daily life revealing their absurdity. His video installations are panoramic multi-channel projections that range in style from documentary to short theatrical narratives. He primarily uses 16 and 35 mm film. Most of his works are characterized by

their complex interweaving of several dimensions of reality, a device he uses to expose the production process. Thus, his films are also a reflection on the construction of fictional narratives using cinematographic means.

JULIAN ROSEFELDT

(b. 1965, Munich, Germany) — artist and filmmaker. Member of the Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste (Department of Film and Media Art, since 2010), professor at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich (since 2011). Rosefeldt's works are represented in the permanent collections of MoMA (New York), Saatchi Gallery (London), Kunstmuseum (Bonn), Sammlung Hoffmann (Berlin), and other institutions.



The Soundmaker (Trilogy of Failure, Part 1), 2004

Three-channel video installation, 35' 7"

Courtesy of the artist and VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

▶▶ *Depth Charge* combines a component of an earlier work, *Varèse 360*, in which the composition, *Un Grand Sommeil Noir*, 1906 by Edgard Varèse, is interpreted on solo electric guitar by musician/composer Bill Frisell. The blue electric projection shows the guitar player and a specter of elements slowly moving towards each other and backing away before disappearing. The process repeats over and over again overlooking the artist's psychotropic experience like some kind of guardian angel. The work is a reference to another installation of the artist, *The Psychedelic Gedankenexperiment*, and demonstrates hidden linguistic mechanisms of the altered state of consciousness.

▶▶ Gary Hill is one of living classics of conceptual video art, a pioneer of sound installations and a researcher of the corporeal; for over 40 years, he has been working at the intersection of linguistics, avant-garde poetry and video art. His works explore an array of issues ranging from the physicality of language, synesthesia and perceptual conundrums to ontological space and viewer interactivity. Hill has dealt with linguo-acoustics throughout his entire career exploring the border between noise and narrative, when words cease to be an array of spoken sounds and acquire meaning. His works exemplify linguistic theories, give voice to nuances of contemporary poetry, and refer to the Gnostic Apocrypha. With his textual perception of the world and literary images, Hill stands close to Moscow Conceptualism.

GARY HILL

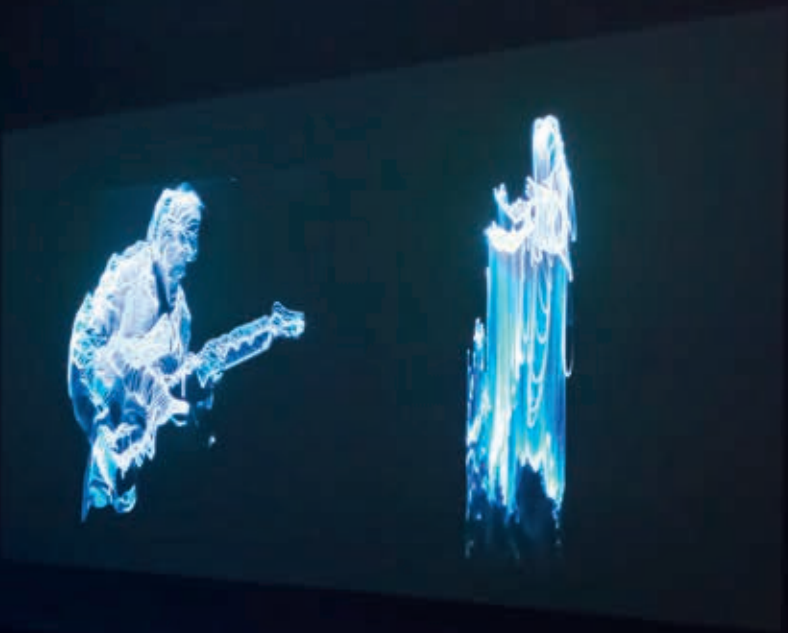
(b. 1951, Santa Monica, USA) is a multimedia artist, one of the pioneers of video art. His solo shows were held worldwide including: Centre Pompidou (Paris), Guggenheim Museum (New York), Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art. His works are housed in the collections of many museums including MoMA (New York). Hill has received numerous awards including: Leone d'Oro prize at the Venice Biennale (1995), MacArthur Foundation Award (1998), Honorary Degree from the Cornish College of Arts, Seattle (2011).



Depth Charge, 2009–2012
Mixed media installation
Courtesy of the artist







Depth Charge, 2009–2012
Mixed media installation
Courtesy of the artist

14. MARINA CHERNIKOVA

(THE NETHERLANDS — RUSSIA)

▶▶ In this installation, documentary and computer-generated audio and video fragments transform into sequences similar to music, flows moving through the exhibition space. Since the projections are not synchronized, their intersections generate unforeseen compositions, unexpected harmonies, or noise. This reminds of an orchestra rehearsing when at some point it is about to reach harmony. But as soon as a new element appears, the audiovisual puzzle falls apart. In her work, Chernikova reflects on how new technologies reformat our conscience. Virtual reality enters our daily life on a sensory level and affects our perception of reality making it fragmentary. The artist turns audiovisual digital material into a composition, which immerses the visitor into the process of perception, like music.

▶▶ The subject of Chernikova's creative experiments is the intersection between everyday life and virtual reality, which became accessible due to new technologies. They transform reality and allow locating ourselves in different planes of time and space at the same time. Her works are made of old documentaries and computer-generated images. Their superimposition creates a new unique space surrounding the viewer. Video as a media aimed at documenting reality turns into an instrument similar to music creating a new harmony.

MARINA CHERNIKOVA

(b. 1956, Moscow, Russia) — media artist. Graduated from the Surikov Moscow State Art Institute (1983) and received a Master degree in Media Arts at the Utrecht School of the Arts in the Netherlands (1998). Her works participated in Russian and foreign festivals and exhibitions, including solo exhibition at Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2007), Kandinsky Prize long list shows (2013, 2008, 2007), the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Moscow Biennial special projects, FiLE Electronic Language International Festival São Paulo (2009), Rencontres Internationales Paris — Berlin — Madrid (2006, 2007, 2008, 2010).



Symphonic Surfing // M 3-16, 2016

Video projection

Courtesy of the artist



▶▶ Three women are involved in a perfectly staged cyclic movement bound to their reciting an enigmatic text: “She won’t say. She won’t be. In no way, she’s nowhere, she won’t say. In no way, her nowhere, she won’t be. Fucking language!” Musically, each cycle is constructed of three parts: a chord, an increase in interval up to an octave, and construction of a new chord that ends with utterance of a phrase. Intervals and heights of each cycle are different, as they are determined by changing positions of actresses with different voice tones. Viktor Alimpiev is not interested in each performer’s personal experience and view. His aim is to find an abstract universal performer who can mediate the art making process and the way a work affects the viewer. Each performer is the one who speaks and the one who is being spoken about. They ascertain insufficiency, inadequacy, and insurmountableness of language.

▶▶ The video installation is in line with other “media sculptures” by Alimpiev with their characteristic use of repetition, austere choreography, vocalise born out of breath, subtle body tension, and attention to the experience of experiencing an action. According to the artist, he sees the score arrangement as a basis of his works as opposed to a narrative.

VICTOR ALIMPIEV

(b. 1973, Moscow, Russia) — artist. Graduated from the Art School in Memory of 1905, and the New Art Strategies School at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Moscow. He participated in the 2nd and 5th Moscow Biennial, 4th Berlin Biennial, 50th and 55th Venice Biennale, Manifesta-5 and other international exhibitions. His works are housed in collections of major Russian and foreign museums including the National Centre for Contemporary Arts, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Rovereto, Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou.

**Innocent One, 2015**

Single-channel video installation, 10'37"

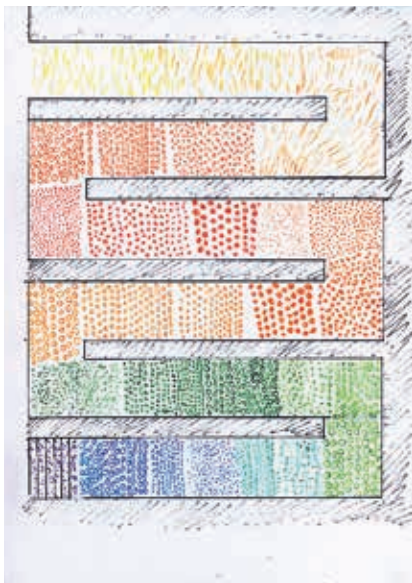
Courtesy of the artist and Regina Gallery

▶▶ This installation is a labyrinth immersing the viewer in a space of permanent sound. The labyrinth represents a sort of “sonic forest” composed of hanging objects — cardboard, bamboo, aluminum, steel, and plastic tubes of various diameters, wooden and metal rods, and shredded paper. All the materials constitute separate sonic patterns arranged in a particular sequence within the labyrinth space. The logic of this sequence is based on a gradual tonal transition from one type of material to another. The two floors resemble two parts of a symphony. When the viewer passes through the maze, they become the performer of this piece, while hanging objects turn into musical instruments, and the surrounding space — into the score that organizes the musical shape.

▶▶ In his works, Aidu transforms understanding of a musical instrument and ways of producing sound, and redefines the seat of power in music performance. He revived early Soviet music projects, which had similar goals — PerSimfAns (short for First Symphony Ensemble — *Pervyi Simfonicheskiy Ansambl* in Russian), an orchestra playing without conductor, and Vladimir Popov’s Noise Machines. Aidu explores relationships between music and surrounding space: for example in the *Soundscape* project noises produced by the noise machines constitute a sonic landscape out of routine noises. In the *Sound Transformation* the space acquires independence from the performer producing sound on its own; movements of the viewer within the installation is just a cause for this process to start.

PETR AIDU

(b. 1976, Moscow, Russia) — pianist, composer. He teaches at the Moscow Conservatory and leads the Music Laboratory of the School of Dramatic Art. He was awarded the Sergey Kuryokhin Prize for contemporary art for his performance piece *Reconstruction of Utopia* (2013), and the *Golden Mask* Russian theatre award in the “Experiment” nomination for the *Sound-scape* performance (2016).

**Sound Transformation,**

2016

Sound installation

Courtesy of the artist

17. SEMYON ALEKSANDROVSKY

(RUSSIA)

▶▶ A visitor coming to the exhibition at the Golitsyns' manor is invited to take an audio journey to "another museum". The headset they get at the start of the route plays sounds of a walk through one of European museums to choose from: Van Gogh Museum and Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Musée Rodin and Centre Pompidou in Paris, Peggy Guggenheim Collection and Palazzo Grassi in Venice. Binaural microphones, which recorded these walks, create the effect of presence when listening. While visitor wanders through the empty halls of the Golitsyns' manor, they get immersed into the ambience of a European museum. Thus, the spatial boundaries are erased and mythology constructed in the memory by aural impressions comes to the fore.

▶▶ *Another Museum* continues the project *Another City* produced by Aleksandrovsky's Pop-up theatre together with the Access Point Art Festival in St. Petersburg. Visitors of the performance (this genre definition of *Another City* is given by Aleksandrovsky) follow a real route in St. Petersburg city center while listening to the stereo recording of street noise of one of European cities — Amsterdam, Paris, or Venice. The project symbolically erases borders, while having actual reality as its matter. The combination of the cityscape of one city with a soundtrack of another alters familiar configurations: a listener cannot help looking back to the sound of Amsterdam bicycle bells, or Paris

street music performance, and trying to give way to non-existent passersby.

▶▶ An effect that disturbs the viewer's everyday rhythm and behavioral patterns is one of the characteristic goals of contemporary theatre.

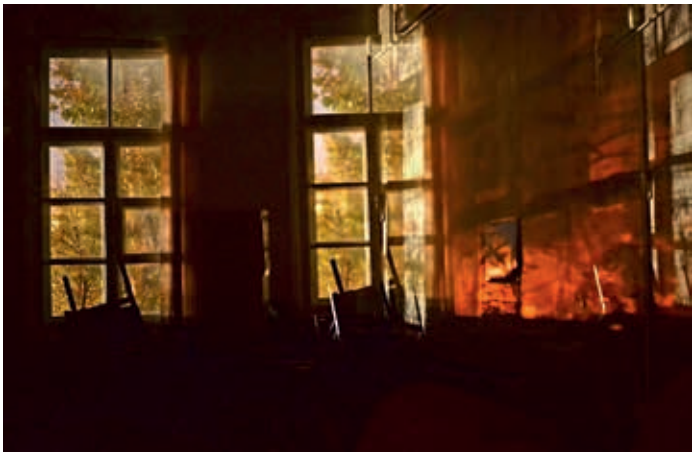
▶▶ Aleksandrovsky, founder of an experimental Pop-up theatre, is keen on playing with the viewer's perception and finding new ways of presenting text. His *Presence* performance staged in 2013 at the Taganka theatre is an experiment at the intersection of theatre and art theory; his one-man show *Fuel*, based on an interview with the IT-entrepreneur David Yang, plays with the rhythm of speech — that is, experiments both with the form and the content at the same time. There is no fiction in his performances — on the contrary, he tries to capture reality by means of art.

Another Museum, 2016
Sound Installation
Photo: Maria Bystrova



SEMYON ALEKSANDROVSKY

(b. 1982, Perm, Russia) — stage director, actor, founder of a Pop-up theatre. Graduated from St. Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy (studio of Lev Dodin). He has been awarded prizes of the New Siberian Transit festival (2012, 2014), the Tekstura festival (2012), the Breakthrough festival (2012) in the categories “Best Stage Director”; nominated for the Golden Mask Russian Theatre Award in the categories “Experiment” (2014, 2015) and “Direction” (2015).

**Another Museum, 2016**

Sound Installation

Photo: Maria Bystrova

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Translators **Natalia Deryabina,**
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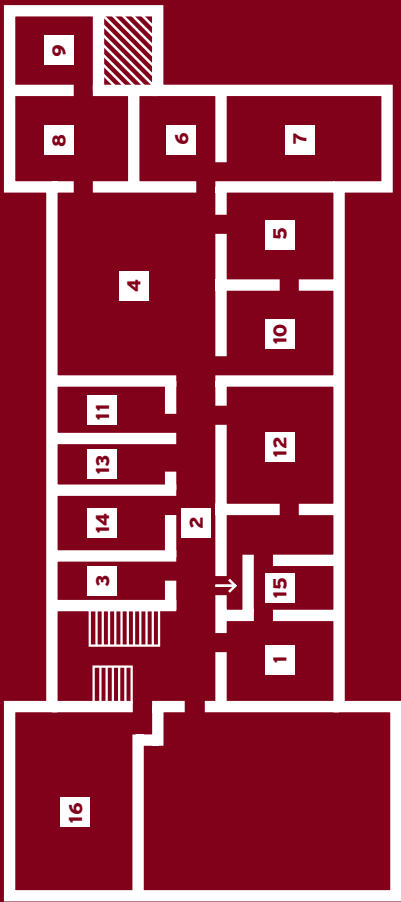
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