

# Specters of Communism: Contemporary Russian Art

Curated by Boris Groys

## Exhibition & Programs

Alina and Jeff Blumis  
Chto Delat  
Keti Chukhrov  
Anton Ginzburg  
Pussy Riot  
Anton Vidokle  
Arseny Zhilyaev

The James  
Gallery

e-flux

Specters of Communism:  
Contemporary Russian Art  
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Alina and Jeff Blumiss  
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Wed, Feb 11 – Sat, Mar 28

e-flux  
311 East Broadway  
New York, NY 10002  
[www.e-flux.com](http://www.e-flux.com)

Free and Open to the Public  
Tue to Sat, 12–6pm

Sat, Feb 7 – Sat, Mar 28

The James Gallery  
The Graduate Center, CUNY  
365 Fifth Avenue at 35th Street  
New York, NY 10016  
[centerforthehumanities.org/james-gallery](http://centerforthehumanities.org/james-gallery)

Free and Open to the Public  
Tue to Thu, 12–7pm  
Fri and Sat, 12–6pm

## Rewinding the Revolution

Russia remains in many ways a blind spot for the US. And it is probably the influence of the Cold War that has left many parts of the Western world with a sense that Russia is too remote to add much to the popular myths that described the Soviet Union decades ago. And yet Western capitals are full of Russian artists struggling to reconcile—not so much their estrangement from a home country, but more the many phases and promises of structural and economic changes that have reformatted life for Russians over the past century, often rendering it unfamiliar even to itself.

The urge to create fictional or highly subjective histories is well known in the context of Eastern European art in the 1990s and 2000s, but takes on new significance in terms of Russia's current extreme reversion to conservative religious belief systems and tsarist nostalgia. While many former communist and socialist (or socialistic) countries have opened to the EU, to business and real estate speculation, Russia took a very different tack of closure and consolidation through the '90s and 2000s, losing its alluring promise as an alternative to the hegemony of a neoliberal world order. Now Russia is beginning on a course of geographical rather than economic expansion based on historical fables. Russian artists can be said to have a peculiar way of working, as if no distinction exists between conceptual polarities that are commonly considered in the West to exclude one another. For instance, metaphysical and material realities are often understood to be fundamentally interchangeable, or at least not mutually exclusive. Conceptualism and realism blur into one another. Similarly, premodern belief systems often flow into modern or postmodern ones, and vice-versa. New belief systems can still be invented. Thinking beyond Enlightenment bounds of discipline, if there was never a clear break with modernity or premodernity, the sensibility of an earlier or later era is not inaccessible. This can be very confounding to the way knowledge is typically organized in the West.

Accessing this organization of knowledge and belief systems via artworks is particularly valuable in New York City at this moment of new political arrangements between Russia, the European Union, and the United States. A wide community of Russian artists exists here in New York, whose conceptualism shares more similarities than differences to the conceptualism of the '60s and '70s in Europe and the US. The similarities in practices of conceptual art as it developed in Russia, the United States, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Latin America are striking considering the difference in contexts and histories. In Russia, it was important that the artistic gesture was imperceptible as art per se in a society of full surveillance and strict dictates that expression adhere to the rules of the authoritarian state. In Russian conceptualism, art had to be ephemeral with no evidence, and took shape in one of two forms. The first were actions in remote locations that were barely perceptible but spurred extended artistic conversations, which developed a vocabulary and rapport about the cultural production. Otherwise they manifested as fantastical stories as with Ilya Kabakov's works that may not on their face seem connected to the political situation.

This is in keeping with conceptual art in the West that was primarily based on language and ideas with no prescribed art object output. Still it was not immaterial, and did not take on dematerialization because of a move against the market as in the West. These artists were not operating for a market, or even contrary to a market but for shared analysis, commentary building an art community out of dialogue. The actions of the Russian conceptualists of the 1960s and 1970s created an important slit in hegemonic global systems, which has only grown in recent decades. Art's relationship to power is complex in any system—whether artists are imagined as outsiders or as historical agents.

Bringing a Russian Constructivist mode into the present day, the contemporary group of Russian artists represented in "Specters of Communism" produce themselves as historical societal agents. The conceptualism of these contemporary works does not demonstrate

local or national idiosyncrasy; rather, the artists here draw on a mix of conceptualism from East and West. The realism of these contemporary works is not a formal method but rather shows their grounding in the present reality of the situation in Russia. In "Specters of Communism," the connections between the works are not formal as the art and their methods of production range from installation, sculpture, theatre, video, and photography. They cohere in addressing social and political situations in Russia today with an approach and viewpoint otherwise missing in news media, scholarly discussions, and current political discourse.

— Katherine Carl and Brian Kuan Wood

## Russian Post-conceptual Realism

### Boris Groys

After twenty-five years since the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a new generation of Russian artists have taken a central position on the contemporary Russian art scene. Their artistic attitude can be characterized as post-conceptual realism. Like their contemporaries around the world, these artists shift their attention from individual artworks or artistic performances towards their social and political context. In the times of the historical avant-garde, and especially the Russian avant-garde, the slogan "art into life" was understood as an attempt to change life in its totality. As Marshall McLuhan has said: "the artists moved from the ivory tower to the control tower." Today, the artistic interventions into life are not aimed at achieving total control over life processes. Rather, these interventions have the goal of provoking reactions and responses inside the social milieu in which these interventions take place. Thus, the new realism does not passively represent the image of external reality but rather intervenes in this reality—and documents the results that offer an insight into its inner structure. In this respect, this contemporary realism uses artistic means that were developed by conceptual art of the 1970s. Conceptual art had already begun to use the medium of installation to reflect on the contexts of art and conditions under which art functions. Contemporary art uses the same technique outside of art spaces to turn reality itself into a kind of artistic installation. Of course, such a life installation cannot be shown, only documented. So here one can speak about documentary realism because the unified realistic image becomes substituted by an arrangement of texts, photos, videos, and so forth that can be potentially extended, modified, or transferred to other media. The artistic form becomes variable and open. In this way, it is compatible with the internet and other contemporary information networks.

The artists whose works are represented in the framework of this exhibition live in Russia (Arseny Zhilyaev, Keti Chukhrov, the artists forming the groups Chto Delat, and Pussy Riot)

or in New York (Anton Vidokle, Anton Ginzburg, Alina and Jeff Blumis). But even if these artists live in different places, they share the same cultural space. This space is defined by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Thus, contemporary Russian artists do not only react to the current social and political situation in Russia, but also undertake a reappraisal of the Soviet past. Indeed, such a reappraisal seems unavoidable because contemporary Russian culture is a haunted place—haunted by specters of its communist past.

These specters become especially active when somebody attempts to manifest leftist, critical attitudes in the context of contemporary Russian society. In today's Russia, leftist positions in politics and art appear highly suspect and become almost instinctively rejected by the majority of the Russian cultural class. Namely, these positions become immediately associated with nostalgia for the Soviet Union—nostalgia that is compromised by its many unpleasant neo-Stalinist, nationalist, and xenophobic protagonists. The majority of Russian critics of the contemporary Russian political and economic system criticize it precisely for its "Soviet leftovers" (*sovetskie perezhitki*)—exactly in the same way that Soviet society in the 1920s and '30s was criticized for its "bourgeois leftovers" (*burzhuaiznye perezhitki*). According to these critics, all the problems of contemporary Russian capitalism are merely effects of Soviet leftovers like authoritarianism, bureaucratic control, and corruption. So the only remedy seems to be to introduce "normal capitalism" in Russia—even if it remains unclear what shape this normalization process should take and what its goal could be. Indeed, such normalization does not seem very promising if one looks at "normal" Western-style capitalism. The central problem of contemporary Russia is extreme economic inequality that resulted from post-Soviet privatization. But the growth of economic inequality and the gradual disappearance of the middle class are also characteristic of contemporary Western societies. Even if the Soviet Union was indeed historically unique, contemporary Russia is not. Under current conditions of Russian life, to be on the left simply means seeing Russian capital-

ism merely as a particular case of global capitalism. And it also means being able to reuse the tools and methods of the critique of capitalism that were produced and accumulated by the intellectual tradition of the left throughout its long history.

Here one must say, though, that during the Soviet time this critical tradition was ignored and not downright suppressed. The Marxist and, in general, leftist tradition has two components that do not always correlate perfectly with each other: a critical one, and a utopian, “life-building” one. Under Soviet conditions the life-building component triumphed. The goal of theoretical discourse was seen not to criticize the status quo, but rather to develop a vision of the communist future and prepare society for its arrival. If they wish to continue the leftist critical tradition, contemporary Russian intellectuals or artists have to go back in time to the first decades of the twentieth century or appropriate the Western critical tradition from the Frankfurt school to recent French philosophy. But at least in one respect, contemporary Russian artists can continue a much more recent tradition—that of Moscow conceptualism of the 1970s and 1980s. The Moscow conceptualists, as well as so-called sots artists, practiced critique of ideology—not only of the official Soviet ideology, but of every kind of ideology. And they also developed artistic devices and methods that allowed them to reflect on the Soviet reality that surrounded them. In this sense their art was already realistic and critical. The protagonists of Moscow conceptualism combined art practice and theoretical writing because they did not trust any interpretation of their work coming from outside. The new generation of Russian artists also continues this tradition of self-interpretation.

In his installations, Arseny Zhilyaev documents suppressed aspects of Russian and Soviet history but also comments on the functioning of a contemporary Russian media space in which sensational news about UFOs and meteorites circulate together with depictions of Putin’s quasi-artistic actions, like kissing a tiger or finding antique amphorae at the bottom of the sea. Of course, by interpreting Putin as one of Russia’s contemporary performance artists,

Zhilyaev produces an ironic effect—similar to the effect Russian artists of the 1970s produced as they interpreted Stalin as an artist. But at the same time, this treatment shows the difference between the two leaders: Stalin acted behind the scenes as a hidden puppeteer whereas the contemporary leader takes center stage as a showman, a hero of mass culture. Thus, Zhilyaev’s installations allow Russian spectators to grasp their own time in relation to the previous, Soviet time. Here it is important to say that Zhilyaev is not only an artist but also a curator and writer. He writes on artistic and political topics in left-wing magazines and the appropriate websites, and curates exhibitions of other contemporary Russian artists.

The same can be said about St. Petersburg’s group Chto Delat, which comprises not only artists but also philosophers and poets. The group works primarily in the medium of video. Every video the group has produced functions as a documentation of a theater performance. The individual pieces thematize the cultural and political issues with which the left is confronted in the contemporary world in general, but more specifically in Russia. Here the theater functions as a substitute for the absent political agora. Characteristically, every performance is structured as a succession of monologues in which different personae present their worldviews, moral concerns, emotional motivations, and political attitudes. One can situate these videos in the tradition of Brechtian theater, though they are less didactic. One can say they are not only Brechtian but also Bakhtinian: every protagonist’s monologue presents his or her own “truth” that is contradicted but not negated by other monologues. At the end of every piece, the spectator has an impression of having acquired a certain knowledge—the knowledge of the contemporary situation of the left and the existential options that this situation offers to its potential participants.

Keti Chukhrov is also interested in theater—her poetic and poignant video *Love Machines* also looks like a documentation of a theater performance. Chukhrov works as a philosopher, writer, poet, and art critic. She writes not only theater pieces but also theoretical texts on theater and performance. However, her artistic

and theatrical performances are not so much presentations of certain ideas and attitudes. Rather, they demonstrate a gap between the intellectual attitudes of the Russian leftist activists and their real social behavior. In a certain sense her video is reminiscent of Dostoyevsky’s novels that thematized the conflict between the progressive ideas to which the protagonists of these novels were publicly committed and their deep, often conflicting psychological makeup.

But if these artists create the political agora by means of the theater, the group Pussy Riot turned the whole of Russia into the stage for their performance *Punk Prayer*, with which they became internationally famous. In many ways, Pussy Riot continues the tradition of Moscow actionism of the 1990s. At that time independent Russian artists and curators had access to the public media, which they lacked during the whole Soviet period. They began to organize their performances in the most publicly visible places, including Red Square in Moscow. These performances were politically provocative and often obscene. However, nobody went so far as Pussy Riot did when they staged their *Punk Prayer* in the country’s most prominent church—the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. The Cathedral has a long history. It was initially built in the nineteenth century to celebrate the victory over Napoleon. Then it was destroyed in Stalin’s time because the leadership had planned to build the Palace of Soviets in its place. The Palace was never built—and the Cathedral was restored after the end of the Soviet Union. In other words, the Cathedral functions in the contemporary, post-communist Russia as its main symbol—and also as a symbol of the restored power of the Russian Orthodox Church. It is precisely this alliance between the Orthodox Church and the new Russian state that *Punk Prayer* was directed against. The leading members of the group were put in prison for some time, but the court procedure gave them an opportunity to publicly make their point and start a discussion about the new role of the Church in contemporary Russia—a discussion that was long overdue but avoided by all potential participants. Here the political conflict was not merely staged but also powerfully unveiled.

The New York artists Alina and Jeff Blumins are also looking for an audience beyond the art system. But they do so not in a politically provocative manner, but rather an intimate way. Their project of offering an artwork in exchange for a dinner nostalgically refers to the apartment exhibitions during the Soviet 1960s and ’70s organized by unofficial Russian artists for their families and friends. Here the art economy is brought back to its pre-market state—the artwork loses its status of commodity and becomes a gift met by a counter-gift. The artists cease to be isolated from the art consumers by the cold, impersonal machine of the art market. It is this return to intimate reactions and relations to art that the artistic practice of Blumins provokes, demonstrates, and celebrates.

However, these contemporary artists rediscover not only the critical and realistic but also utopian and life-building traditions of the Russian left. This utopian tradition should not be too simply identified with the official communist promise of economic equality, collective well-being, and realization of the principle of everybody “working according to one’s abilities and consuming according to one’s needs.” This promise was, in fact, often accused of being too consumerist and petit-bourgeois. And it was especially criticized by many Russian authors at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for, as every consumerist ideology, ignoring the problem of death. Indeed, how can a society be called happy if it is still reigned over by death? At the end of the nineteenth century Russian philosopher Nikolai Fedorov proposed the project of the Common Task. According to this project, the goal of modern society must be to achieve victory over death, including the artificially produced resurrection of all men who lived in the past. Only liberation from domination by death can make the society of the future truly happy. And the promise of immortality should also be extended to previous generations, because otherwise the present society would be based, as every other society before it, on inequality between the living and the dead. According to Fedorov the resurrected dead should be spread all over cosmic space—so that the cosmos can become the true home of immortal mankind. Here a political

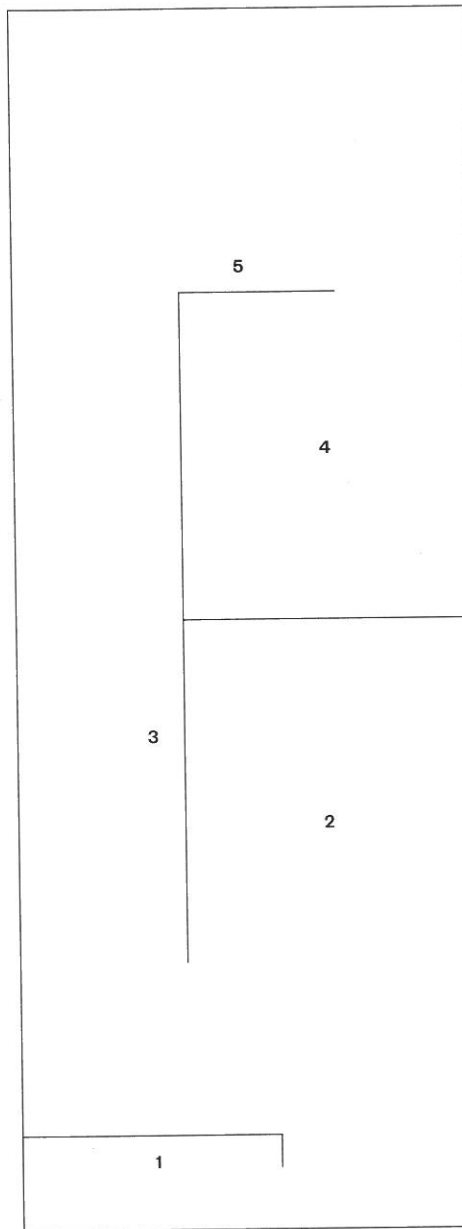


and technological project is substituted for the transcendent Paradise promised by the Christian faith. Russian Cosmism is utopian but its utopia is materialist, realist.

The ideas of Cosmism deeply influenced many writers and artists of the Soviet avant-garde. At the beginning of the 1920s there was even a political party—the party of Biocosmists-Immortalists—whose goal was to make official the right of every Soviet citizen to rejuvenation, immortality, and free movement in cosmic space. Alexander Bogdanov, one of the creators of the Bolshevik Party, founded an institute for rejuvenation through blood transfusion, and Konstantin Tsiolkovsky planned for the first Soviet rockets to bring the resurrected dead to other planets. Today, Anton Vidokle rediscovered in his videos the radical utopian projects of Russian Cosmism and looks for the traces that these projects left after the end of the Soviet Union. Indeed, even if these projects themselves were abandoned, they consciously or unconsciously motivated the Soviet space program and the fascination with the cosmos that was especially characteristic of the Soviet 1960s. The same attempt to change and reshape the material conditions of human existence also motivated the huge late-Soviet irrigation projects that aimed to reverse the course of the great Siberian rivers toward the deserts of Soviet Middle Asia. In his videos, Anton Ginzburg finds the remnants of the gigantic “earthworks” of the Soviet era and compares them to works of American land art.

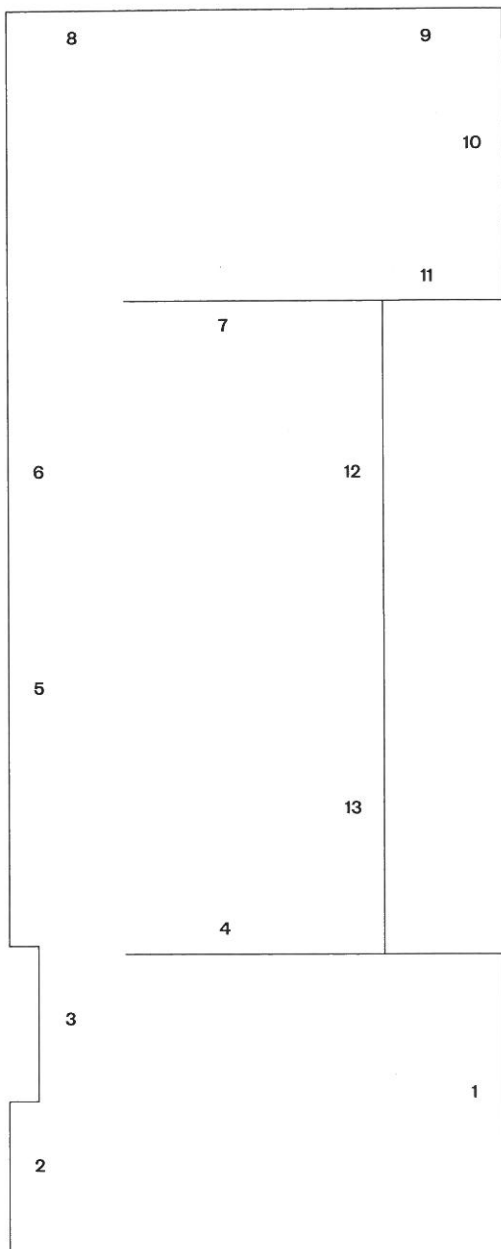
The artists in this exhibition continue the tradition of the Russian avant-garde as well as its critical analysis in the works of Moscow conceptualism of the 1970s and '80s. Already this artistic genealogy brings these artists into conflict with current official Russian cultural politics. This politics is deeply conservative. It appeals to the values of pre-revolutionary Russia and condemns all forms of liberatory aspirations and movements as ultimately leading to bloody revolution, collapse of the state, economic misery, and political terror. Time becomes ideologically suspect again. In Soviet times, Russian avant-garde and unofficial artworks were suppressed or ignored for being politically unreliable and aesthetically non-

conformist. Today, they are condemned again by the dominant conservative ideology for being too pro-communist or too Soviet. The current cultural conservatism brings Russia back to 1913—to the historical period preceding the wars and revolutionary upheavals of the twentieth century. But the denial of communist modernization also leads to the denial of modernity as such. Indeed, the Russian avant-garde was an integral part of the global modernization process of the twentieth century. When contemporary Russian conservative ideologues are confronted with the history of Western modernization they discover worker movements, Western communist parties, avant-garde art influenced by Malevich and Tatlin, and literary writing and philosophy influenced by Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky. In other words, in the West they find all the things that they hate in the history of their own country. And so they begin to hate the West for, as they say, “imposing on them” Russian and Soviet modernity. Thus, contemporary Russian intellectuals and artists can enter the contemporary international cultural context only if they welcome the specters of their own past. The artists presented in this exhibition did precisely that.



## James Gallery Exhibition Checklist

1. Ketī Chukhrov  
*Love Machines*, 2013  
HD Video with English subtitles  
42 minutes
2. Anton Vidokle  
*This Is Cosmos*, 2014  
HD Video  
31 minutes
3. Arseny Zhilyaev  
*RCC YHV Home for Resurrecting Museums*,  
2014 *Resurrecting Museum*  
Mixed media installation *Let Home*  
Dimensions variable
4. Chto Delat  
*The Excluded. In a Moment of Danger*, 2014  
HD Video  
57:40 minutes
5. Alina and Jeff Bliumis  
*A Painting for a Family Dinner*, 2008-13



e-flux Exhibition Checklist

1. Anton Ginzburg  
*Walking the Sea*, 2013  
Digital video, sound, 30 minutes
2. Anton Ginzburg  
*Aral Sea tapestry: sea-cotton-image*, 2013  
Tapestry: cotton, silk and golden thread  
26.5" x 162"
3. Anton Ginzburg  
*Subnotes*, 2013  
Photographic contact silver prints  
8" x 10" each
4. Vladimir Putin  
*Pattern on the Frozen Window*, 2009  
Acrylic on canvas  
Collection of the Voronezh State Center for Contemporary Art
5. Arseny Zhilyaev  
*Putin's action*, 2013  
Collection of the Tretyakov Gallery London
6. Vladimir Putin  
*Amphora*, 2011  
Performance documentation  
Collection of the Tretyakov Gallery London
7. Vladimir Putin  
*The Inauguration*, 2012  
Video, 8:17 minutes  
Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York
8. Pussy Riot  
*Documentation and research station*  
Print outs, paper, video, photography, found objects
9. Pussy Riot  
*Kropotkin Vodka*, 2011  
Video documentation, 1:34 minutes
10. Pussy Riot  
*Mother of God, Drive Putin Away*, 2012  
Video documentation, 1:52 minutes

11. Pussy Riot  
*Death to Prison, Freedom to Protests*, 2011  
Video documentation, 1:16 minutes
12. Vladimir Putin  
*Cat Seen from Behind*, 2013  
Performance documentation, digital image  
Collection of the Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art
13. Arseny Zhilyaev  
*New Paths to the Objects*, 2013

## Artists

Alina and Jeff Bliumis are New York-based artists whose work concerns the politics of community, cultural displacement, migration and national identity. Jeff (born Kishinev, Moldova) and Alina (born Minsk, Belarus) began their collaboration in 2000. The artists' 2014 New York solo shows include *Thank You Paintings Exchange* at Denny Gallery and *Casual Conversations* at the Laurie M. Tisch Gallery. Their work has previously exhibited internationally at venues including the Bronx Museum of the Arts, Centre d'art Contemporain in Meymac, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Chto Delat (What is to be done?) is a collective that was founded in 2003 in St. Petersburg, and counts artists, critics, philosophers, and writers from St. Petersburg and Moscow among its members. The collective grew out of an urgent need to merge political theory, art, and activism in Russia. Its activity includes art projects, educational seminars, public campaigns, and ranges from video and theater plays, to radio programs and murals. The collective also publishes the Russian-English newspaper *Chto delat?*, which covers questions of culture and politics in an international context. Most recent exhibition venues include Secesion in Vienna, the 2014 San Paulo Biennale, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid, Tate Liverpool, and the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin.

Keti Chukhrov (born in Sukhumi, Georgia, lives in Moscow) is Associate Professor at the Russian State University for Humanities. She is the author of *Pound & £* (Logos: 1999), *Just Humans* (Translit/Free Marxist Publishers: 2010), and *To Be to Perform* (European University Publishers, St. Petersburg: 2011). Her play, *Afghan Kuzminki*, was featured at the Theatre.doc, in the 2011 Moscow Biennial and at the Wiener Festwochen in 2013. She most recently participated at the Bergen Assembly, showing her latest video-play, *Love-machines*.

Anton Ginzburg (born in St. Petersburg, lives in New York) received a classical arts education before immigrating to the United States in 1990. He earned a BFA from ParsonsThe New School for Design in 1997 and a MFA from Bard College in 2014. His work has been shown at the first and second Moscow Biennales and the fifty-fourth Venice Biennale, as well as the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston, the Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, and the Palais de Tokyo, among others. His work is represented in the permanent collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, as well as private collections around the world.

Pussy Riot is a collective of artists and activists based in Moscow, Russia. In August 2012, two of its founding members, Nadezhda (Nadya) Tolokonnikova and Maria (Masha) Alekhina, were imprisoned following an anti-Putin performance in the Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and were released in December 2013. In March 2014, the pair announced the opening of the Mordovia office of Zona Prava (Zone of Rights), their newly created organization advocating for transparency and humane conditions within the Russian justice system. The following September they launched their independent news service, Mediazona, which focuses on courts, law enforcement, and the prison system in Russia. Tolokonnikova and Alekhina are the 2012 recipients of the LennonOno Grant for Peace.

Anton Vidokle (born in Moscow, lives in New York and Berlin) has exhibited work internationally at venues including Documenta 13, the Venice Biennale, the Lyon Biennial, and Tate Modern. As a founder of e-flux he has produced *Do it*, *Utopia Station* poster project, and organized *An Image Bank for Everyday Revolutionary Life* as well as the *Martha Rosler Library*. His other works include e-flux video rental and Time/Bank, co-organized with Julieta Aranda, and Unitednationsplaza—a twelve-month experimental school in Berlin as a response to the unrealized Manifesta 6. He is a co-editor of e-flux journal along with Julieta Aranda and Brian Kuan

Wood. Recently, Vidokle was a Resident Professor at Home Workspace Program (2013–14), an educational program organized by Ashkal Alwan in Beirut where he initiated the exhibition *A Museum of Immortality*. Most recently, Vidokle exhibited films in the Montreal Biennale (*2084: a science fiction show with Pelin Tan*) and at the Shanghai Biennale (*This is Cosmos*).

Arseny Zhilyaev (born in Voronezh, lives in Moscow and Voronezh) creates artwork that proposes new approaches to the tradition of Soviet museology. His recent artistic projects include the *Museum of Proletarian Culture. Industrialization of Bohemia* (Tretyakov State Gallery, Moscow, 2012) and *M.I.R.: Polite Guests from the Future* (Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco and Paris, 2014).



Fri, Feb 6, 6–8pm at the James Gallery  
Tue, Feb 10, 6–8pm at e-flux  
Exhibition Reception

## Specters of Communism: Contemporary Russian Art

Artists: Alina and Jeff Blumis, Chto Delat,  
Keti Chukhrov, Anton Ginzburg, Pussy Riot,  
Anton Vidokle, Arseny Zhilyaev.

Curated by Boris Groys, Professor of Russian  
and Slavic Studies, New York University.

In contemporary Russia, where official political and cultural attitudes have become increasingly conservative, a new generation of Russian artists continue the critical tradition of the Russian Left and utopianism of the Russian avant-garde. Taking up this desire to change reality by means of art, they explore ideals of equality and social justice, radical politics, secularism and internationalism, without forgetting the long history of post-revolutionary violence. Guest curated by Boris Groys and held at both the James Gallery and e-flux exhibition space downtown, this exhibition includes the works of artists from Moscow, St. Petersburg, and New York.

This exhibition is organized in collaboration with e-flux.

Opening at e-flux: Tue, Feb 10, 6–8pm  
8pm: Anton Vidokle, *The Communist Revolution was Caused By the Sun*  
e-flux location of the exhibition on view:  
311 East Broadway  
Wed, Feb 11 – Sat, Mar 28

*Cosponsored by the PhD Program in Theatre.*

Mon, Feb 9, 2–6pm  
Symposium

## Specters of Communism: Contemporary Russian Art

Claire Bishop, Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Katherine Carl, Curator, The James Gallery; Keti Chukhrov, artist; Kate Fowle, Garage Center for Contemporary Culture; Boris Groys, Russian and Slavic Studies, New York University; Dmitry Vilensky, artist; Arseny Zhilyaev, artist.

This lively symposium accompanies the exhibition of the same name curated by prominent philosopher, art critic, and media theorist Boris Groys, the exhibition explores the ways contemporary Russian artists have responded to the utopian vision of the October Revolution and Russian avant-garde art, while grappling with the violent realities of a post-Communist state. Join exhibition artists from St. Petersburg and Moscow in conversation with Claire Bishop, Kate Fowle, Boris Groys and Katherine Carl about the current state of culture in Russia and the importance of performance in contemporary art today.

Room C204/C205

James Gallery will open at 10am for symposium visitors.

This symposium and the exhibition is organized in collaboration with e-flux.

*Cosponsored by Public Programs Public Programs and the PhD Program in Theatre.*

Tue Feb 10, 8pm  
Performance at e-flux

## *The Communist Revolution Was Caused By The Sun*

Anton Vidokle, artist.

Following the exhibition opening at e-flux from 6–8pm, artist Anton Vidokle will read a selection from the screenplay for his second in the *Cosmos* series of videos, which are shot mainly in Kazakhstan. The ideas of cosmism deeply influenced many writers and artists of the Soviet avant-garde. Today, Anton Vidokle rediscovers the radical Utopian projects of the Russian cosmism and looks for the traces that these projects left after the end of the Soviet Union.

e-flux exhibition space, 311 East Broadway

Tue, Feb 24, 6:30pm  
Gallery Tour

## On Art and Politics in Contemporary Russia

Alyona Valerie Dybunova, Art History, Hunter College, CUNY.

This tour will focus on the power and weakness of art in the context of current political and economic changes in Russia. These changes—both products and consequences of certain moral beliefs and customs—form a narrative that fuels and activates the works of contemporary artists, including those in *Specters of Communism*. What does it mean for an artist in Russia to be politically engaged? How do we measure involvement? And who is the audience for these expressed concerns?

The James Gallery

Thu, Mar 3, 6:30pm  
Gallery Tour

## Art and Communism: A Love-Hate Relationship

Alise Tifentale, PhD Program in Art History.

People who have experienced communism tend to dislike it. People who have not experienced it tend to like it. This tour will trace the 'specter' of communism in the works on view, while also engaging in a broader discussion of the complex legacy of Karl Marx's original observations about nineteenth-century Manchester. The spirit of communism was responsible for many contradictory events: it inspired the historical Russian avant-garde, supported the oppressive regime of Stalin, fascinated the students of Sorbonne in 1968, and supported Mao's Cultural Revolution. Together we will practice Marxist dialectics in order to consider both sides of this "specter."

The James Gallery

*Cosponsored by the PhD Program in Art History.*

Programs

Fri, Feb 13, 6:30–9pm  
Conversation

## CAA Panel: Educational Outliers and Education as Art Practice

BFAMFAPhD (Susan Jahoda, Blair Murphy, Caroline Woolard), artist collective; Sonia Gonzalez, ITP Certificate Program, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Michael Mandiberg, artist; Beverly Naidus, University of Washington, Tacoma and Arts for Change; Gregory Sale, Intermedia & Public Practice, Arizona State University; Hallie Scott, Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY; The Wassiac Project; Joanna Spitzner, Art Department, Syracuse University; Alexandra Sterman, College Art Association.

Join us for a two-session conversation between artists about if, when, and how education becomes art practice. New nontraditional learning scenarios are emerging in many academic disciplines, especially in the arts, but somehow the proposition that education could be a medium for art-making provokes strong reactions. This colloquium invites several artists who are protagonists in educational experiments to explore and question the implications of education as an art practice.

This conversation is paired with a session on the same topic to be held earlier in the week at the College Art Association conference.

Martin E. Segal Theatre

*Cosponsored by the Interactive Technology and Pedagogy (ITP) Certificate Program; College Art Association.*



Tue, Feb 17, 7:00pm  
Screening and Conversation

## Right to the City Film Series Presents: *My Brooklyn*

Kelly Anderson, Director, *My Brooklyn* & Film and Media Studies, Hunter College, CUNY; Sharon Zukin, Sociology, Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center; Sara Martucci, PhD Program in Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Pilar Ortiz, media artist.

*My Brooklyn*, a documentary by Allison Lirish Dean and Kelly Anderson, follows Anderson's personal journey, as a Brooklyn "gentrifier," to understand the forces reshaping her neighborhood along lines of race and class. While some people view these development patterns as ultimately revitalizing the city, to others, they are erasing the eclectic urban fabric, economic and racial diversity, creative alternative culture, and unique local economies that drew them to Brooklyn in the first place. It seems that no less than the city's soul is at stake.

The Right to the City Film Series features five films which focus on processes of urban development defined by inequality—expulsions, redevelopment, and gentrification—and their results in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Newark, Detroit and Istanbul.

The screening will be followed by discussion and Q&A with filmmakers and CUNY scholars.

Skylight Room (9100)

*Cosponsored by the Center for Place, Culture and Politics and the Center for Urban Research.*

Thu, Mar 5, 6:30pm  
Conversation

## Red Kant: Stephen Wright & Michael Wayne in Conversation

Gregory Sholette, artist, Queens College, CUNY; Michael Wayne, Brunel University; Stephen Wright, writer.

Immanuel Kant's strict distinctions between beauty and purpose of objects have undergone many heated discussions in 20th-century art. It is time to reassess his delineations and consider anew their applications to contemporary culture. For instance, how can the connections between Kant and important Marxist concepts such as totality, dialectics, mediation, and production be traced and discussed in relation to contemporary art, digital technology, and social art practices that are continually interested in immersive methods and experiences? Join writer and theorist Stephen Wright with Michael Wayne, author of *Red Kant: Aesthetics, Marxism, and the Third Critique*, in debate and conversation with artist Gregory Sholette, Professor of Art, Queens College.

The Skylight Room, 9100

*Cosponsored by the Mellon Seminar in Public Engagement and Collaborative Research in the Humanities.*

Thu, Mar 5, 7:00pm  
Screening and Conversation

## Right to the City Screening Series Presents: *Rezoning Harlem*

Tom Agnotti, Urban Affairs and Planning, Hunter College and The Graduate Center, CUNY; Tamara Gubernat, Director, Rezoning Harlem; Sara Martucci, PhD Program in Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Pilar Ortiz, media artist.

*Rezoning Harlem* follows longtime members of the Harlem community as they fight a 2008 rezoning that threatens to erase the history and culture of their legendary neighborhood and replace it with luxury housing, offices, and big-box retail. A shocking expose of how a group of ordinary citizens, who are passionate about the future of one of the city's most treasured neighborhoods, are systematically shut out of the city's decision-making process, revealing New York City's broken public review system and provoking discussion on what we can do about it.

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Doctoral Students' Council Lounge (Room 5414)

*Cosponsored by the Center for Place, Culture and Politics and Center for Urban Research.*

Thu, Mar 26, 7:00pm  
Screening and Conversation

## Right to the City Screening Series Presents: *The Rink*

Brenden Beck, Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Sara Martucci, PhD Program in Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Sarah Friedland, Director, The Rink; Ryan Joseph, Director, The Rink; Pilar Ortiz, media artist, Calvin John Smiley, Justice Studies, Montclair University.

Branch Brook Park Roller Rink, located in Newark, NJ, is one of the few remaining urban rinks of its kind. This concrete structure is nestled in a public park bordered by public housing and a highway. Upon first glance, the exterior resembles a fallout shelter; however, the streamers and lights of the interior are reminiscent of 1970s roller discos. This 55 minute documentary depicts a space cherished by skaters and a city struggling to move beyond its past and forge a new narrative amidst contemporary social issues.

The Right to the City Film Series features five films which focus on processes of urban development defined by inequality—expulsions, redevelopment, and gentrification—and their results in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Newark, Detroit and Istanbul.

Doctoral Students' Council Lounge (Room 5414)

*Cosponsored by the Center for Place, Culture and Politics and Center for Urban Research.*



Thu Mar 26 and Fri, Mar 27  
Conference

## Stuart Hall: Geographies of Resistance

Ruth Gilmore, Geography, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Bill T. Jones, New York Live Arts; Katherine McKittrick, Queens University, Kingston Ontario; Eric Lott, English, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Prathibha Parmar, Film, California College of Arts; Robert Reid-Pharr, English, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Anjalika Sagar, The Otolith Group; Françoise Vergès, Collège d'études mondiales.

In this two-day symposium we will examine the legacy of the late scholar and activist, Stuart Hall. Paying careful attention to the ways in which his writing and research prompted a reinvigoration of the study of diaspora, hybridity, trans-nationalism, and multi-disciplinarity, we will focus on how his ideas have traveled throughout Europe, the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa. We are particularly eager to showcase those activist artists who are expanding Hall's legacy by continually pushing the boundaries of their forms.

Proshansky Auditorium, Elebash Recital Hall. See [centerforthehumanities.org](http://centerforthehumanities.org) for details.

*Cosponsored by the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean; the Advanced Research Collaborative; Revolutionizing American Studies.*

Fri, Mar 27, All day  
Conference

## Speculative Realism, Accelerationism and Aesthetics

Miguel Abreu, art dealer and publisher, Miguel Abreu Gallery; Jane Bennett, author and political theorist; Anselm Franke, House of World Cultures, Berlin; Matilde Guidelli Guidi, PhD Program in Art History; David Joselit, Art History; Margaret Lee, artist and dealer, 47 Canal; Jonathan Patkowski, PhD Program in Art History; Sydney Stutterheim, PhD Program in Art History; Anicka Yi, artist.

In a global context of financial speculation, data circulation, ecological catastrophe and political paralysis, speculative realism and accelerationism have emerged as significant challenges to modes of thought and action grounded in the experience of human subjects. By focusing on ontology rather than epistemology, speculative realists consider modes of existence and agency of things beyond of anthropocentric frameworks. Accelerationism refuses nostalgic modes of Leftist resistance to imagine the progressive potential hidden within capitalist technologies that appear to shatter traditional forms of identity. What are the implications for artists and curatorial practice of non-anthropocentric aesthetico-critical strategies?

The keynote speakers for this conference will be Jane Bennett (political theorist) and Anselm Franke (House of World Cultures, Berlin).

C198

*Cosponsored by the PhD Program in Art History; The Speculate/Accelerate Seminar in the Humanities.*

The Amie and Tony James Gallery is located in mid-town Manhattan at the nexus of the academy, contemporary art, and the city brings a range of pertinent discourses into the exhibition space through innovative formats. While some exhibitions remain on view for extended contemplation, other activities such as performances, workshops, reading groups, roundtable discussions, salons, and screenings have a short duration. As a space for artistic and discursive activities, the gallery works with scholars, students, artists and the public to explore working methods that may lie outside usual disciplinary practices.

e-flux is a publishing platform and archive, artist project, curatorial platform, and enterprise which was founded in 1998. Its news digest, events, exhibitions, schools, journal, books, and the art projects produced and/or disseminated by e-flux describe strains of critical discourse surrounding contemporary art, culture, and theory internationally. Its monthly publication e-flux journal has produced essays commissioned since 2008 about cultural, political, and structural paradigms that inform contemporary artistic production. The exhibition program at e-flux presents solo and group shows by artists such as Gustav Metzger, Hito Steyerl, Mladen Stilinovic, Martha Rosler, Adam Curtis and many others.

Co-sponsors of the presentation at The James Gallery are e-flux and the Center for the Humanities at the Graduate Center, CUNY.

Exhibition Curator: Boris Groys  
James Gallery Curator: Katherine Carl  
James Gallery Exhibitions Coordinator:  
Jennifer Wilkinson  
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The James  
Gallery

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