

**GALERIE
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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Kirill Savchenkov works with various media including mediated sculpture, installation, performance, and sound. His artistic practice focuses on the dynamic distance between perception and recognition in the political, social, and technological sense. In his research Savchenkov highlight the questions of agency, political history and the affects produced by informational autocracy. The artist works with spectrum of environmental and sculptural essays that weave together shapeshifted objects from the physical, media, sonic, and cultural fields.

He was nominated to represent Russia in the national pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennial in 2022 but withdrew from the project in protest of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Over the years his works have been presented in institutions such as Le Commun, Geneva, Switzerland; Transart Festival, Bolzano, Italy; Tallinn Art Hall, Tallinn, Estonia; 14th Baltic Triennial, Vilnius, Lithuania; Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia; 5th Ural Industrial Biennale, Ekaterinburg, Russia; V-A-C Zattere, Venice, Italy; 3rd Kyiv Biennial, Kyiv, Ukraine; 12th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea; MMOMA, Moscow, Russia; Calvert22 Foundation, London, UK; Tartu Art Museum, Tartu, Estonia; BoCA – Biennial of Contemporary Arts Porto and Lisbon, Porto, Portugal.

KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Born in 1987 in Moscow, Russia
Lives and works in Paris, France

EDUCATION

2012 The Rodchenko Moscow School of Photography and Multimedia, Moscow, RU
2009 Moscow Technical University of Communication and Computer science, Moscow, RU

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2025 *Art Basel Hong Kong*, Hong Kong, HK
2024 *The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night*, Galerie Allen, Paris, FR
2022 *The Past Ripens In The Future*, Transart Festival and Museion, Bolzano, IT
914, National Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale [withdrawn], Venice, IT
2021 *LISTE Art Fair Basel*, Basel, CH
2019 *Horizon Community Display*, Alkovi/HIAP, Helsinki, FI
2018 *Ch(K)ris(tin)*. Close Air Support, Sidur museum, Moscow, RU
2017 *Office of Sensitive Activities / Applications Group*, MMOMA, V-A-C Foundation, Moscow, RU
2016 *Museum of Skateboarding*, Calvert22, London, UK
2015 *Horizon Community Workshop*, Agency of Singular Investigations, CCA Fabrika, Moscow, RU
2014 *Avalanche*, FotoDepartament, Saint-Petersburg, RU
2013 *Anabasis*, Culture Center "Vdohnovenie", Moscow, RU
2012 *The frenzied urge to struggle* (with Sasha Kurmaz), Paperworks gallery, Moscow, RU

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2025 *Props*, Galerie Derouillon, Paris, FR
Minimal Minimal, Poush, Aubervilliers, FR
2024 *Asian Art Biennial 2024: How to Hold Your Breath*, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, TWN
2023 *The Seashore of Endless Worlds*, Le Commun, Geneva, CH
2023 *Immerse!*, Tallinn Art Hall, Tallinn, EE
2021 *Baltic Triennial 14: The Endless Frontier*, curated by Valentinas Klimasauskas and João Laia, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, LT
Training Fantasia, CCA Typography, Krasnodar, RU
Assuming Distance: Speculations, Fakes, and Predictions in the Age of the Coronacene, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, RU
2019 *3rd Kyiv Biennial*, KPI Library, Kyiv, UA
5th Ural Industrial Biennale, curated by Xiaoyu Weng, Coliseum Theatre, Ekaterinburg, RU
Time, Forward!, curated by Omar Kholeif, V-A-C Zattere, Venice, IT
The Kandinsky Prize, MMOMA, Moscow, RU
Not What It Seems, Richter project space / EUNIC, Moscow, RU
Bureau des transmissions, curated by Iaroslav Volovod, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, RU
2018 *Platform blind_spot*, Basel, CH
Metageography: Orientalism and Dreams of Robinsons, The Zarya Center for Contemporary Art, Vladivostok, RU
12th Gwangju Biennale, Imagined Borders, The Ends: The Politics of Participation in the Post-Internet Age, curated by Christine Y. Kim and Rita Gonzalez, Gwangju, KR
Based on these new dependencies, we define five normal forms, D21 Kunstraum Leipzig, DE and MMOMA, Moscow, RU
2017 *Dance, Dance, Dance*, BURSA Gallery, The Kyiv International – Kyiv Biennial 2017, Kyiv, UA
Between fatigue: towards the new forms of life, Palace of culture for railway workers, Ekaterinburg, RU
4th Ural Industrial Biennale, curated by Joao Ribas, Ural Instrument-Making Plant, Ekaterinburg, RU
Metageography Space Image Action, Pushkin House, London, UK
Space Force Construction, curated by Matthew Witkovsky, Richard and Ellen Sandor, Katerina Chuchalina and Anna

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- Ilchenko, V-A-C Foundation Venice, IT
Hosting the Inhuman, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, V-A-C Foundation, Moscow, RU
BoCA – Biennial of Contemporary Arts Porto and Lisbon, Porto, PT
- 2017 *Inconvenient Questions*, Tartu Art Museum, Tartu, EE,
Toward the Source, curated by Kate Fowle, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, RU
- 2016 *Young blood*, CCA Winzavod, Moscow, RU
- 2015 *Expanding Space*. Artistic practice in the urban environment, V-A-C Foundation, GES-2, Moscow, RU
- 2015 *Metageography*, The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, RU
- 2014 *Manifesta 10*, Parallel Program, St. Petersburg, RU

CONFERENCES / TEACHING / SCREENINGS

- 2023 Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin, Paris, FR
- 2021 Knowledge Editing Division, Springs. Video
- 2020 Remote player, Garage. Digital
- 2023 Talk in the class of Petrit Halilaj, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts de Paris, Paris, FR
- 2022 Image in motion (with Polina Kanis, Andrey Kachalian, Boris Klushnikov), Tutor/Lecturer,
Moscow School of New Cinema, Moscow, RU
- 2022 Image in motion (with Polina Kanis, Andrey Kachalian, Boris Klushnikov), Tutor/Lecturer.
Moscow School of New Cinema, Moscow, RU
- 2019 - 22 Practice class “Image in motion” (with Polina Kanis, Andrey Kachalian, Boris Klushnikov), Tutor/Lecturer. Rodchenko
Art School, Moscow, RU
- 2013 - 22 Transmedia and Contemporary Photography, Lecturer, Rodchenko Art School, Moscow, RU
- 2021 - 22 Mediated sculpture and new media, Guest lecturer, Baza Institute, Moscow, RU
- 2020 - 22 Transmedia laboratory, Tutor and program developer, Sreda Obucheniya x
Rodchenko art School, Online Educational platform.
- 2012 - 20 Photography color printing (with Andrey Shagin), Tutor,
Rodchenko Art School, Moscow, RU
- 2016 Transmedia Workshop, ICA, Moscow, RU

AWARDS, GRANTS AND RESIDENCIES

- 2023 ArtExplora residency program, Paris, FR
- 2022 Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, FR
- 2018 Innovation Art Prize, “New Generation” category
- 2017 Scholarship within the program of Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in support of emerging artists
- 2014 MACK First Book Award (shortlist)
- 2011 The Silver Camera Art Prize, “Architecture” category

COLLECTIONS

Kadist Foundation, Paris, FR and San Francisco, USA
V-A-C Foundation, Moscow, Russia, RU
Stella Art Foundation, Moscow, Russia, RU

PUBLICATIONS

- 2015 Atlas, Self-published
- 2014 Iceberg, Self-published

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2024 Russia Will Not Participate in the 60th Venice Biennale, Jo Lawson-Tancred, Artnet, 7 February 2024
Russian Artist Kirill Savchenkov Reemerges with Ethereal Sculptures in Paris, Devorah Lauter, Artnet, 16 February 2024

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- 2021 Kirill Savchenkov, architect of all too real role-playing games, Silvia Dal Dosso, Domus, 29 November 2021
- 2017 Kirill Savchenkov at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Oliver Basciano, ArtReview, 22 December 2017
Vagues et tombes (Événement en trois actes), Kirill Savchenkov, Moscow Art Magazine No. 103
Kirill Savchenkov at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Oliver Basciano, ArtReview, 22 December 2017
ArtReview, Space Force Construction Matthew Witkovsky and Katerina Chuchalina, Anna Ilchenko, May 2017
- 2016 Issue 06: Boulevard Ring, Moscow, Flaneur magazine, issue 6, fall/winter 2016
To Know Russia, Tou Must Skate it, 032c, 11 August 2016
- 2015 British Journal of Photography, february'15
- 2015 Echo, Kirill Savchenkov, Anastasiia Fedorova, Svilova, 20 April-25 May 2015 (exhibition in artist-run online platform)
- 2014 Post-Soviet Suburbia: KIRILL SAVCHENKOV's "Umwelt", 032c, 13 November 2014
Calvert journal, Anastasiia Fedorova august'14
Teenage kicks in post-Soviet suburbia, Dazed digital, 17 June 2014
Calvert journal, may'14
Calvert journal, april'14
- 2013 Artchronika magazine, march/april'13
Around art, november'13
- 2012 Prism Photo Magazine #03, january'12
Afisha magazine No. 319
- 2011 Photo.Art, October'11

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Exhibition view, *Minimal Minimal*, 2025
Poush, Aubervilliers, FR
Photo: Evgeniia Chapaikina

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Exhibition view, *Art Basel Hong Kong*, 2025

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Exhibition view, *The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night*, 2024
Galerie Allen, Paris, FR
Photo: Aurélien Mole

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Essay G: Assassination, 2023

Horse hair from the violin bow, silicon, stainless steel, aluminum, copper, matchstick, wood, sound

234 x 15 x 15 cm

Sound 12 mins 35 secs

Photo: Aurélien Mole

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Essay B: Escape (detail), 2023

Violin string, stainless steel, plastic, wood, sound

240 x 10 x 10 cm

Sound 12 mins 35 secs

Photo: Aurélien Mole

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Essay D: Vera's Herbarium, 2023

Horse hair from the violin bow, silicon, matchstick, wood, sound

250 x 15 x 30 cm

Sound 12 mins 35 secs

Photo: Aurélien Mole

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Essay H: The Wolfsbane, 2023

Stainless steel, silicon, plastic, wood, dog hair

250 x 50 x 20 cm

Photo: Aurélien Mole

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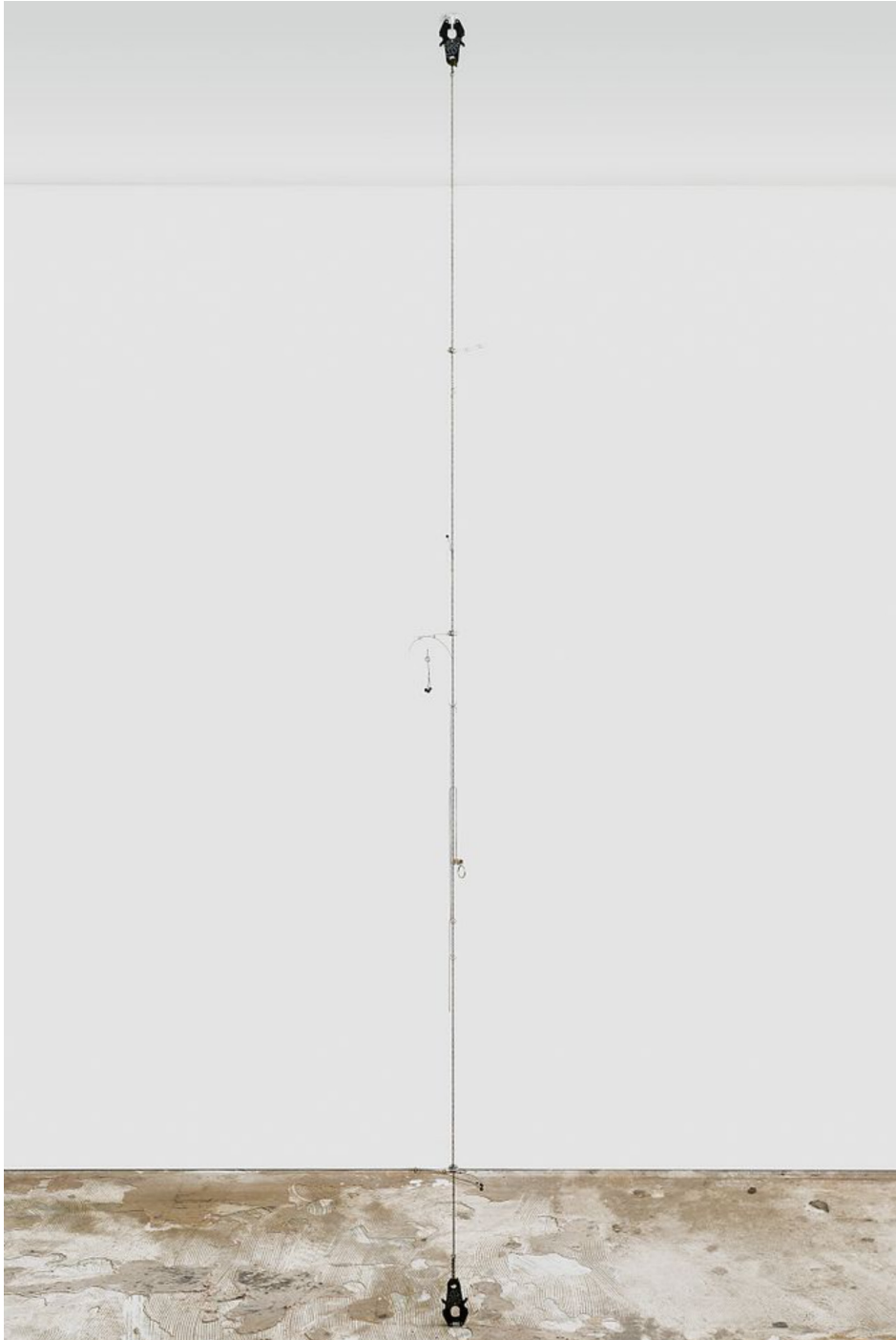
KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Essay H: The Wolfsbane (detail), 2023
Stainless steel, silicon, plastic, wood, dog hair
250 x 50 x 20 cm
Photo: Aurélien Mole

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Essay J: The Loop, 2024

Metal chain, stainless steel, plastic, plants, aluminium, directional connectors

250 x 20 x 10 cm

Photo: Anna Denisova

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Exhibition view, *The Past Ripens In The Future*, 2022

Former military base Appiano, IT

Performance, four-channel sound system, environment

Duration infinity

Performers: Anastasiia Ashman, Marta Ruszkowska, Therese Bendjus, Polina Fenko, Ekaterina Volkova, Hana Stojakovi

Curated by Transart festival and Leonie Radine (Museion Museum)

Commissioned by Transart festival with Museion, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Bolzano, Bozen, IT

Image: Transart festival/Museion, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Bolzano

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

The Past Ripens In The Future (production still), 2022

Performance, four-channel sound system, environment

Duration infinity

Commissioned by Transart festival with Museion, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Bolzano, Bozen, IT

Image: Transart festival/Museion, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Bolzano

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The Past Ripens In The Future (production still), 2022

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Photo: Tiberio Sorvillo

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Exhibition view, *Assuming Distance: Speculations, Fakes, and Predictions in the Age of the Coronacene*, 2021
Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, RU
Curated by Eksterina Lazareva, Ekaterina Savchenko, Iaroslav Volovod
Commissioned by Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, RU
Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Flat Tiger, Paper Node, Dead Hand, and Tightened Knot (detail), 2021

Four-channel sound system, tin, lead, steel cable, tears of T-1000, aluminum, copper, steel wire, plastic, rubber, cellophane, nylon, bone, plants, cotton, engraving, laser pointer

Variable dimensions

Sound 9 mins 48 secs

Commissioned by Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, RU

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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Variable dimensions

Sound 9 mins 48 secs

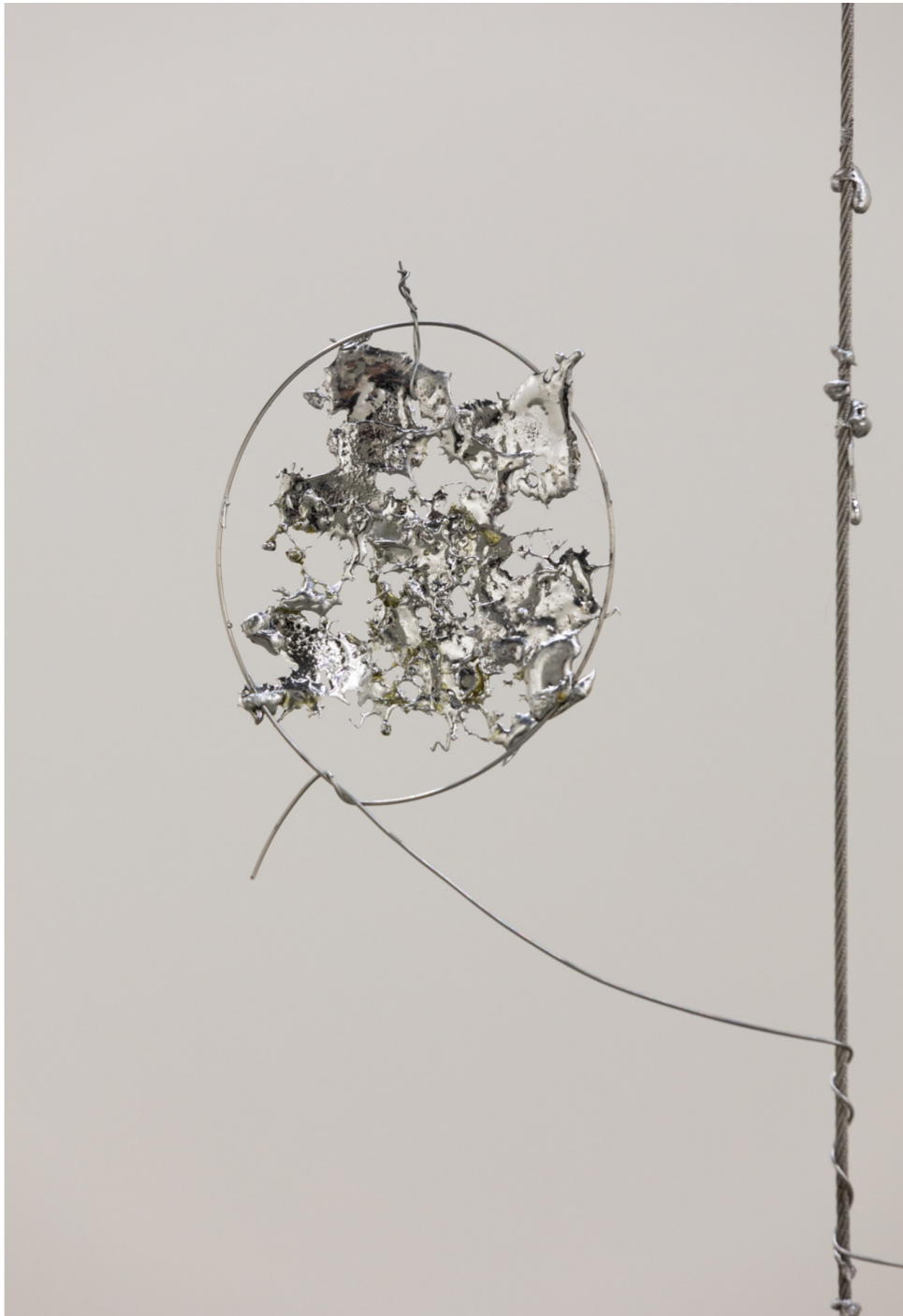
Commissioned by Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, RU

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Exhibition view, *Firework and Gunpowder: the Boiling Mist*, 2021
Typography Center for Contemporary Art, Krasnodar, RU
Live action role-playing game, equipment, environment
Performers: Anna Mayorova, Ilya Borisov, Daria Kucher
Curated by Elena Ishchenko and Marianna Kruchinski
Commissioned by CCA Typography
Photo: Lilit Matevosyan

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Firework and Gunpowder: the Boiling Mist (detail), 2021

Live action role-playing game, equipment, environment

Duration 45 mins

Commissioned by CCA Typography

Typography Center for Contemporary Art, Krasnodar, RU

Photo: Lilit Matevosyan

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Live action role-playing game, equipment, environment

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Photo: Lilit Matevosyan

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

*full down garden of purple anxiety / threat multiplier nothing is hidden from its heat /
bandwidth needs of fingertips / quantum supremacy mimics bees, 2020*

Wood, aluminum, plastic, polycaprolactone, flowers, dough

63 x 57 x 25 cm

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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*full down garden of purple anxiety / threat multiplier nothing is hidden from its heat /
bandwidth needs of fingertips / quantum supremacy mimics bees, 2020*

Wood, aluminum, plastic, polycaprolactone, flowers, dough

63 x 57 x 25 cm

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

say you remember me a loophole in the zones of active hostilities / I would have little luck / the realm of maybe enemy / If I stayed timeless time, 2020

Wood, aluminum, polycaprolactone, flowers, nylon, plastic, plasticine

49.5 x 32 x 20 cm

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Exhibition view, *Time, Forward!*, 2019
V-A-C Foundation, Zattere, Venice, IT
Curated by Omar Kholeif
Commissioned by V-A-C Foundation
Photo: Delfino Sisto Legnani and Marco Cappelletti

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Then a Kiss Is Not a Kiss (detail), 2019

Five-channel sound installation, carbon, polycaprolactone, flowers, Nylon 6, dulodulo, steel, aluminum EcoShape, Element E-lite Personal Hook Signal IR LED, glass, foamiran, carpet, hair, Ultrasonic Acouspade Classic hyper directional sound system

Sound 9 mins 30 secs

Commissioned by V-A-C Foundation

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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Sound 9 mins 30 secs

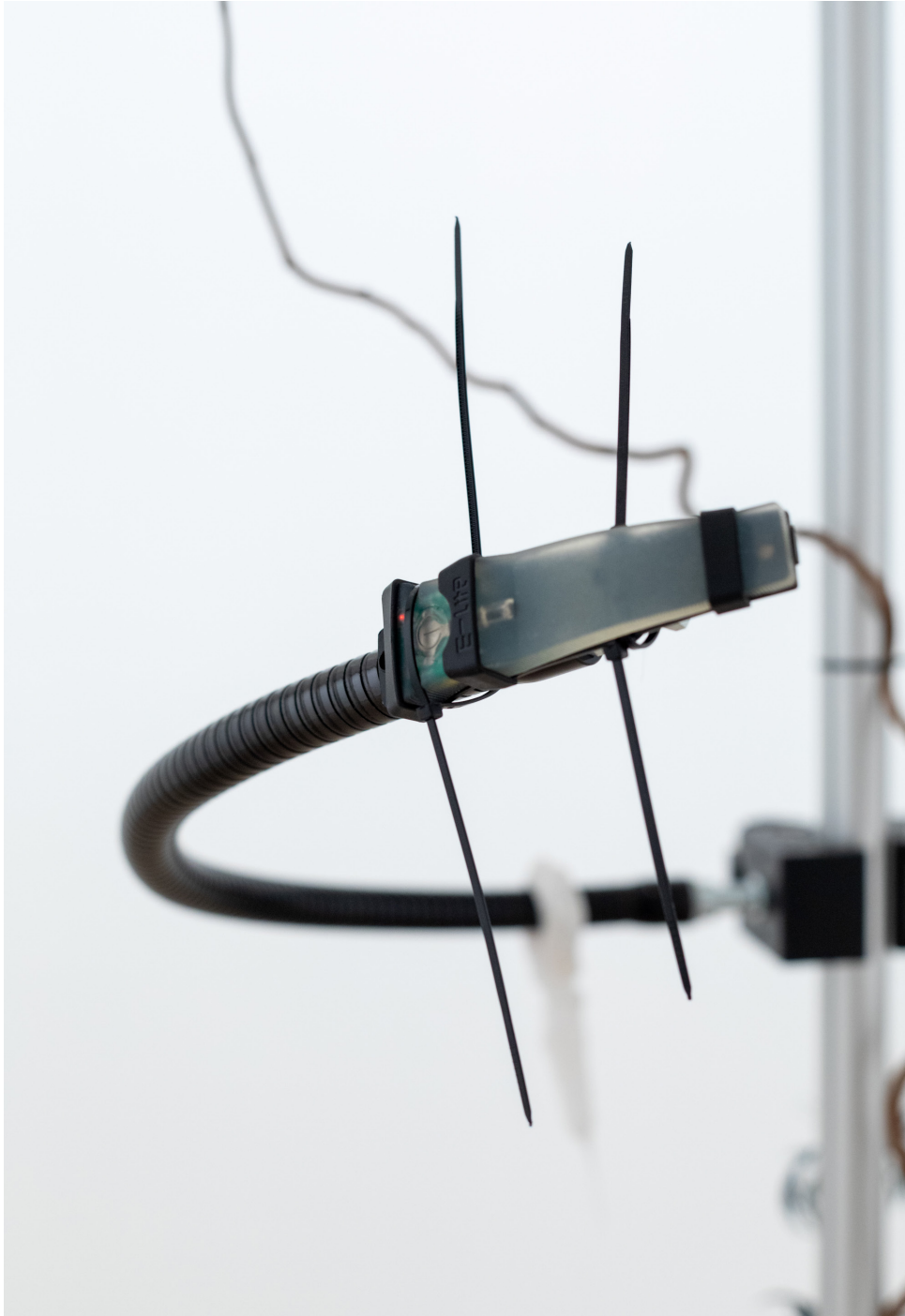
Commissioned by V-A-C Foundation

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Exhibition view, *Fireworks and Gunpowder*, 2018
Osnova gallery booth, Liste Art Fair Basel, 2021, Basel, CH
Tabletop game, installation, poem, performative mediation
Commissioned by the 12th Gwangju Biennale, KR
Photo: Osnova gallery

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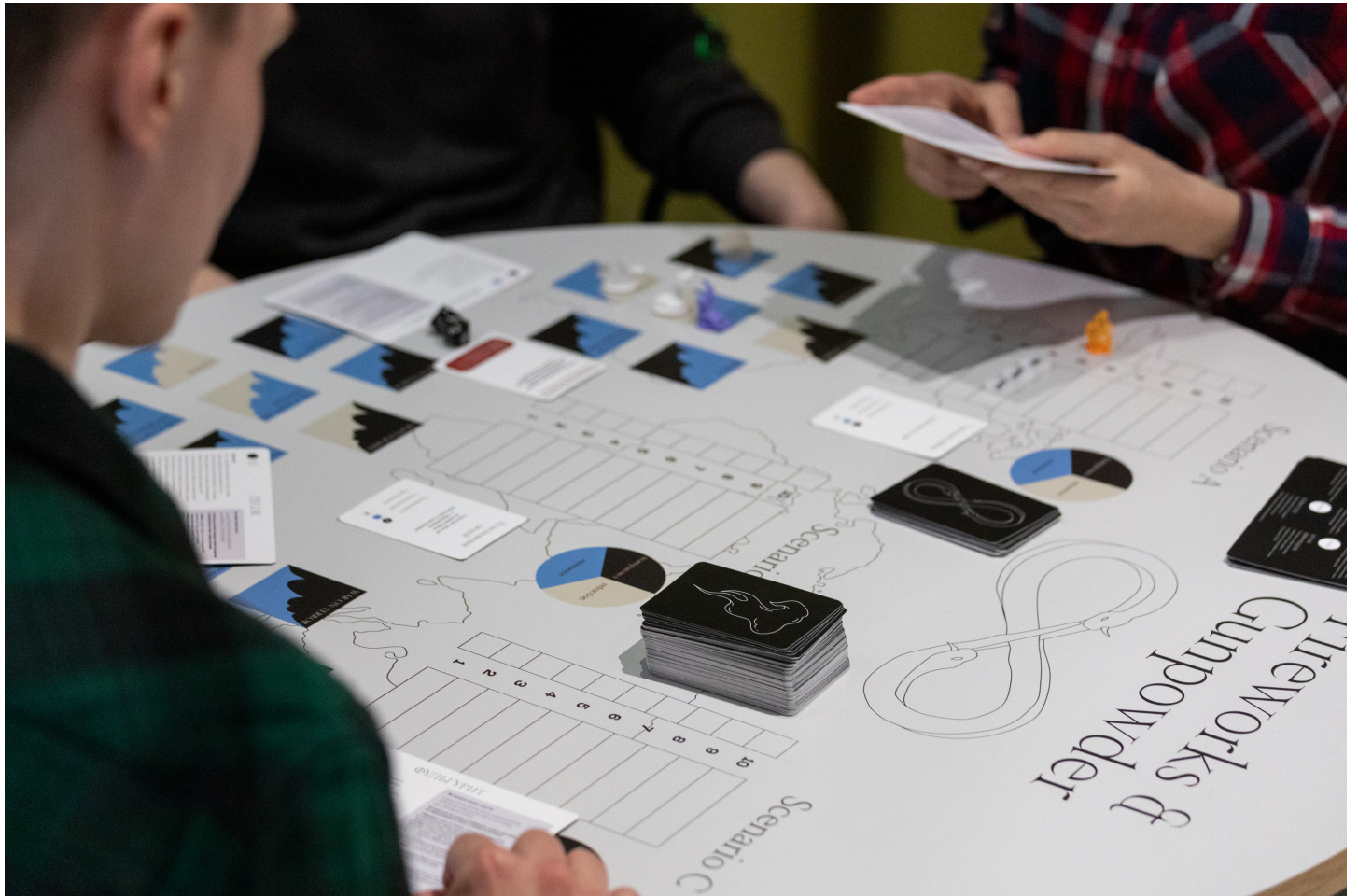
KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Fireworks and Gunpowder (detail), 2018
Tabletop game, installation, poem, performative mediation
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Photo: Osnova gallery

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Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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Tabletop game, installation, poem, performative mediation

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Exhibition view, *Cb(K)ris(tin). Close Air Support*, 2018
Vadim Sidur Museum, Moscow, RU
Curated by Yaroslav Aleshin
Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Ch(K)ris(tin). Close Air Support, 2018

Two-channel sound installation, studio monitor speakers, carpet, aluminum Eco-Shape, pyramid platform, flower, metal ring, brown light, DEVGRU SF NVG EX234, aluminum EcoShape, ceramics, carpet, brown light

Variable dimensions

Sound 15 mins 43 secs

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Ch(K)ris(tin). Close Air Support (detail), 2018

Kubotan, flowers, nylon 6, handguard, Element E-lite Personal Hook Signal IR LED Strobe Light DEVGRU SF NVG
EX234, aluminum EcoShape, ceramics, carpet, brown light

295 x 60 x 10 cm

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Ch(K)ris(tin). Close Air Support, 2018

Two-channel sound installation, studio monitor speakers, carpet, aluminum Eco-Shape, pyramid platform, flower, metal ring, brown light DEVGRU SF NVG EX234, aluminum EcoShape, ceramics, carpet, brown light

Variable dimensions

Sound 15 mins 43 secs

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Exhibition view, *Office of Sensitive Activities / Applications Group*, 2017

The Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow, RU

Performers: Daria Getmanova, Roman Glukhov, Daria Pasichnik, Alena Shapovalova, Alisa Smorodina, Daria Tokar, Anna Tsedik

Curated by Katerina Chuchalina and Maria Kramar

Commissioned by V-A-C Foundation

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Office of Sensitive Activities / Applications Group (detail), 2017
Sculptural environment, performance
Commissioned by V-A-C Foundation
Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Office of Sensitive Activities / Applications Group, 2017
Sculptural environment, performance
Commissioned by V-A-C Foundation
Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Office of Sensitive Activities / Applications Group, 2017
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Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Office of Sensitive Activities / Applications Group, 2017

Sculptural environment, performance

Commissioned by V-A-C Foundation

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Exhibition view, *Space Force Construction*, 2017

V-A-C Zattere, Venice, IT

Curated by Matthew Witkovsky and Katerina Chuchalina with Anna Ilchenko

Commissioned by V-A-C Foundation

Photo: V-A-C Foundation

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Knowledge Editing Division, 2017

Aluminum profile, wood, plexiglass, LED lighting, focus sound speakers, electronics, teleprompters,
LED TV, single-channel HD video, color, Helvetica for Theranos

Commissioned by V-A-C Foundation

220 x 170 x 388 cm

Video 8 mins 39 secs

Photo: V-A-C Foundation

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Photo: V-A-C Foundation

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Exhibition view, *Museum of Skateboarding*, 2015-2016
Calvert22, London, UK
Photo: Calvert22

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Museum of Skateboarding, 2015-2016

Metal, two-channel HD video, projection, mirror, asphalt, marble, granite, skateboard wallride traces,
manual, single-channel HD video, carpet

Variable dimensions

Two-channel video 5 mins 38 secs

single-channel video 2 mins 32 secs

Photo: Calvert22

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KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Exhibition view, *Not What It Seems*, 2019
Richter project space / EUNIC, Moscow, RU
Curated by Ekaterina Savchenko
Photo: Ivan Erofeev



KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Horizon Community Display, 2019

Poetry, vinyl

Variable dimensions

Photo: Ivan Erofeev



KIRILL SAVCHENKOV

Horizon Community Display, 2019

Poetry, vinyl

Variable dimensions

Photo: Ivan Erofeev

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Devorah Lauter 'Russian Artist Kirill Savchenkov Reemerges with Ethereal Sculptures in Paris', Artnet, February 16 2024



Devorah Lauter 'Russian Artist Kirill Savchenkov Reemerges with Ethereal Sculptures in Paris', Artnet, February 16 2024

Pin-pricked and laced together with weaver bird-like precision, these bouquet sculptures are made of found cicada wings, leaf skeletons, dried flowers, and shriveled, charred matches, along with burnt "tears of plastic," and miniature silicone mask portraits. Their web-thin parts flicker in and out of view, ready to float away, as easily as a shilling, forgotten memory. The installation is accompanied by a soundtrack that combines the sounds of a horse breathing and a violin being played with a horsehair bow (a double reference to the violin signal used for Kruvotkin's prison break).

It is impossible not to see a connection between Savchenkov's escapist meditations and his own story. He [withdrew](#) from Russia's pavilion planned for the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022, to protest the invasion of Ukraine beginning on February 24 that year. On February 27, he posted on Instagram: "There is no place for art when civilians are dying under the fire of missiles, when citizens of Ukraine are hiding in shelters when Russian protesters are getting silenced." Curator Raimundas Makušauskas, who wrote the Galerie Allen exhibit text, was also part of the pavilion artistic team who withdrew.

Around the same time, Savchenkov left Russia, his wife joined him soon after, and they made their way to France, thanks to a series of coincidences and chance meetings. Savchenkov doesn't like to dramatize his situation, preferring to call himself an "immigrant for political reasons," rather than an exile, because he is not under the kind of direct threat that Russian President Vladimir Putin's political opponents face.



Kirill Savchenkov, 'Bouquet' (2023) (detail), silicone, bamboo, dachshund, 11 x 11 x 11 cm, Galerie Allen Paris.

In fact, Savchenkov doesn't actually know what kind of danger he may be in, which the artist argues is precisely how the Russian government exercises control. It's a concept the artist explores in his practice around "hidden political narratives," and what he describes as "a new form of informal dictatorship" (which Savchenkov points out is not limited to Russia).

"My artistic practice focuses on a specific kind of political regime, which uses your emotions and uncertainty about social life," he says, and explains that doubts about factual information and fake news are used as currency to "control society."

Savchenkov is now living out the historic tradition of immigrant artists coming to Paris, often as political refugees—though he says he is not a refugee. He must remain demure, however, about mentioning artists in his circle out of concern for their safety. "It's one of the results of this manipulation," he said. "You don't know if you'll be arrested if you go back to Russia."

Savchenkov uses varied mediums to suggest how we can perceive one thing, only to notice it is in the process of becoming something else, not unlike those "hidden" political narratives mentioned. Some works, for instance, include small, burned bits

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Devorah Lauter ‘Russian Artist Kirill Savchenkov Reemerges with Ethereal Sculptures in Paris’, Artnet, February 16 2024

of plastic he calls “shapeshirting,” which look like insect waste or cocoons and are a reminder of the burned plastic remains of street protests and riots. “I try to find pinpoints,” that mark social experiences, he said, as well as where those points of contact tip into new forms.



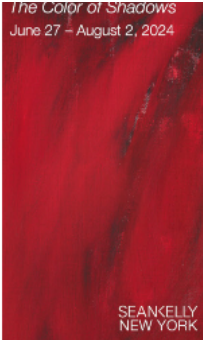
Kirill Savchenkov / *The Color of Shadows* (2023) (Detail), 19 x 14 cm, Denonow, Ex-Libris Bw artist and Galerie Allen, Paris.

Savchenkov’s past performances and sculptures have been shown in Le Commun, Geneva, the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, and the 12th Gwangju Biennale, to name a few. But his previous work tended to be more massive than these recent, lighter pieces, made last year during a local artist residency run by Art Explora and before that, at the Cité des Arts. One reason is that their storage is a lot easier while on the move.

Though he feels a responsibility to address Russian politics and the invasion of Ukraine, Savchenkov stresses that his work has a more universal message in mind. “It’s a question of how we can struggle against dictatorship – not only Russian ... And how we can understand our possibilities and our agency.”

The Russian revolutionary Vera Figner (1852 – 1942), is an example. In one sculpture dedicated to her “wordless diary,” called *Essay Dr. Vera’s Herbarium* (2023), the artist draws inspiration from her collection of plants while imprisoned in Russia’s Shlisselburg Fortress. Savchenkov threaded a silicone portrait of Figner into the piece, modeled from photographs of the revolutionary, who was also among the group who plotted Tsar Alexander II’s assassination. Like him, she eventually left Russia and settled in Paris.

“There are different kinds of agency,” Savchenkov said and pointed to Figner’s herbarium. “Your very existence, also, can be part of your agency.”



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Central & Eastern Europe | Contemporary Crisis and Dissent

A storytelling institution immersed in the narratives of Russia's history and contemporaneity

Inga Lāce and Katerina Chuchalina

June 16, 2021

*In an effort to consider the varied impacts of COVID-19—a virus with a global reach—**post** has interviewed curators and directors from vital museums and galleries around the world about how the pandemic has affected their ideas regarding programming, civic engagement, and the role of the institution. This is an interview with Katerina Chuchalina, Chief Curator at the V—A—C Foundation (Moscow and Venice).*

Inga Lāce: The V—A—C Foundation was planning to open in 2020 with a new building in the converted former site of GES-2, a power station right in the center of Moscow overlooking the Kremlin. How have you reshaped your current programs, themes, and the inner institutional workings in response to the global pandemic?

Katerina Chuchalina: Indeed, the global pandemic caught us by surprise as we were finalizing the opening program for GES-2, which was supposed to launch in September 2020. By March 2020, however, it was clear that this would not happen as the construction was inevitably delayed by the crisis. Like everyone else in the world, we began to recognize the destructive and generative potential of the virus, and we used the delay to analyze the state of our community and the ways in which the institution might support it. We used this continuous momentum to rethink the opening season. Our rapidly growing team has spent several years planning, designing, and creating the range of directions and disciplines encompassed within GES-2: dance, cinema, theater, music, a publishing program, community-based artistic practices and events, the urban studios and residency program, inclusivity and public programs, and of course, the exhibition part. This sort of planning is schizophrenic and exhausting. You need to be thinking several years ahead—imagining and designing in detail projects that will take place in a space that has not yet been built for people unaware of your existence—and then travel back to now, and amend all the projects over and over again to adapt them to the present.

This process has never been easy, but when the crisis broke, we had the time and space to rethink. As a result, we came up with the program preceding the opening of the first season of GES-2 and instigated by our desire to support local living artists and musicians, to introduce GES-2 as both a new, local venue and institution, and to show Renzo Piano's architectural project in a never-to-be-experienced-again bare state—before it is used for programs and exhibitions. A series of newly commissioned site-specific works by Russian contemporary composers created and recorded in the aftermath of the global lockdown will play for a limited period of time as a sound accompaniment to the meeting between the city and its new institution. I hope that the conditions of the pandemic and the construction of the building will allow this pre-opening program to come true.

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Inga Lāce and Katerina Chuchalina 'A storytelling institution immersed in the narratives of Russia's history and contemporaneity',
MoMA post, June 16 2021

• •

We have already designed a cycle of five seasons of programming, each including many exhibitions, performative, cinema, music, theatre and public programs entitled *Holy Barbarians: Both Are Worse*. Unfolding over the next three years, this incremental narrative is intended to engage critically with clichés and cultural tropes associated with Russia, mainly those projected from the outside, though also present within: great Russian literature, tyranny, the mother archetype, a propensity for melodrama, moral relativism, cosmos as an emblem of geo-cosmo-political superiority, etc. Among the clichés that will be explored—and the one that has inspired the title of the series—is the contradictory notion of “holy barbarism,” which embodies opposed phantasmal projections. This dilemma embodies, on the one hand, the age-old myth of Russian savagery and backwardness; and on the other, the (equally orientalist) idea of Russia's irreducible uniqueness, “chosen-ness,” or even holiness. The format of a narrative in five parts, like a five-volume novel, is in itself a performative acting-out of the stereotype of so-called Russian literature-centrism. The choice of themes is guided by the fact that the clichés, in spite of (or, perhaps, thanks to) being deeply entrenched, raise questions that are relevant in a global context.

The first exhibition in the cycle, *Santa Barbara. How Not to Be Colonized?*, will feature a large-scale commission by Ragnar Kjartansson (Icelandic, born 1976), who is known for his interest in the emotional power of music and drama, in combination with contemporary Russian works exploring the carnivalesque in Russian culture from the 1990s onward. An attempt to travel back in time thirty years, this exhibition will reimagine the foundational myths of post-Soviet Russia and look at the images, cultural values, and ideas that have ingrained themselves in its collective consciousness since then. The starting point of this conversation is *Santa Barbara*, the first Western soap opera to be broadcast in Russia and the most enduring on post-Soviet television. Airing from 1992 to 2002, the show not only presented different cultural models and inspired an urge for self-determination, it also sparked resistance to Western homogenization, a movement in which Russian artists played a role. The *Santa Barbara* decade was a time for the reinvention of the self—at once emancipatory and carnivalesque—with myriad consequences, both intended and unintended.

Next, we will look at the conception of truth and realism, which translates in Russian as “*istina*,” or scientific truth or truth as a religious category, and “*pravda*,” which is an ethical concept related not only to theory, but also to actions and deeds. *Mother: Why Motherland?* continues the inquiry into cultural representations of Russia via questions related to motherhood, such as care, labor relations, family, gender dynamics, and kinship; *Kosmos Is Ours* will explore the universal cosmological impulse as well as the colonial drive behind it; while, finally, *Barely Audible* will focus on a shift in tonality rather than in the cultural landscape, and reflect on the possibility of an institutional space as one of genuine intimacy that is free of transactional uses.

IL: Museums are also important as they are fostering communities centered on learning and discussion. Are you working on that aspect prior to the opening of the building?

KC: We started to work on that the very moment we started to develop programming for GES-2, and in the process, one thing was fundamental: the program should be conceived together with educators and community builders, and not only by curators. Exhibitions, educational programs, discussions, and community programs are proposed and debated by the larger group of curators and educators in the framework of the season. Through this back-and-forth, we intend to break the hierarchical structure of exhibitions, concerts, and education. We want to make sure that the community-building and educational programs are conceived of and thus perceived as equal to and complementary components of the narrative—as opposed to accessory or merely illustrative of the main program of exhibitions and live events.

IL: You mention that one part of the program will focus on the dynamic surrounding the Western cultural colonization of Russia in the post-Soviet period of the 1990s. Do you also envision examining the Soviet Union as a colonial project, and the historical and still present cultural, infrastructural, and political interconnections therein—that is, to think about how Russia relates to post-colonial and decolonial debates?

KC: Absolutely. The fourth seasonal program *Kosmos Is Ours* will look at who we are if we continue to expand our presence in time and space, and identify the local and plural cosmologies currently in place and now forced to unite in a seemingly possible universality by various geopolitical regimes. This conversation cannot happen without meticulous investigation of the Soviet colonial impulses and structures, which is of course not possible without inviting participation of artists and curators from the states within the former USSR.

Inga Lāce and Katerina Chuchalina 'A storytelling institution immersed in the narratives of Russia's history and contemporaneity',
MoMA post, June 16 2021

IL: Earlier this year, large-scale demonstrations broke out across Russia against the arrest of Alexey Navalny and the ongoing corruption of the current government, generating a lot of reactions in the local and international media, as well as from Western governments and Russia itself. Are the roots and objectives of these protests adequately represented locally and in the international media, in your opinion, given the complexity of the situation? How do you see the role of cultural institutions in the process?

KC: Both the mainstream Western media channels and the official local ones have oversimplified the situation. Indeed, both sides broadcast news in a predictable way, reaffirming the information warfare in a rather old-fashioned manner. And to be honest, local media channels are not that scarce now and don't sound unanimously; mostly online, some of them do offer nuanced consideration of the moment, addressing different possible futures and vectors, but this kind of analysis is outside that of the international mainstream and the official local mass media outlets.

As we all know, culture is a continuation of politics (in the broadest sense of the word) by other means, and I think an institution always aspires to contribute to creating a more nuanced portrait, to offer a mirror reflecting society's fears, biases, and internalized clichés as well as its strength and common futures. But of course, an institution is not only aiming at representation but also at creating a platform for active engagement, polemics and debates.

IL: Some of the artists you have commissioned through the V—A—C Foundation, such as Kirill Savchenkov (born 1987) and Arseniy Zhilyaev (born 1984), have been referencing visionary futures or science fiction from the past. What do you think we could draw from this sort of work in terms of thinking about the future of our museums, art ecosystem, and the planet?

KC: Both artists that you mention indeed engage with different modalities—not necessarily referring to science fiction from the past, but rather different systems. Savchenkov deals with knowledge systems and practical skills—from various cosmological systems to paramilitary, meditative and new media practices—that human intelligence can navigate and use to survive in the world bombarded by crises, global instability and in the potential conditions of the posthuman future. Zhilyaev explores existing intersections, or creates new ones between art, philosophy, and science; often these encounters take place in an imaginary institutional space, a museum, but at a moment in time that is unreachably remote from the present. It is always a reinvention of an art institution, rearranging the system components of knowledge and practice to get to some common future beyond geographies and prescribed functions. I know how difficult it may be for an institution to follow and trust artistic intuition while building a new museum, but I believe that doing so is the only way for all of us to get there.



Kirill Savchenkov at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art

Oliver Basciano | Reviews | 22 December 2017 | ArtReview Asia



Office of Sensitive Activities / Applications Group, 2017. ARA Winter 2017 Review



Moscow Museum of Modern Art (MMOMA), 9 September – 5 November

The theorist Simon O'Sullivan likens the tool of the diagram to speculative fiction – that is, it's not an illustration of how things *are*, but of how things *might be*. O'Sullivan's notion comes to mind as one walks around this solo exhibition by Kirill Savchenkov, commissioned by the V-A-C Foundation over three rooms and two floors of MMOMA, in which the young Muscovite artist presents a series of enigmatic architectural and text installations that visualise otherwise invisible phenomena and abstract notions.

An almost mazelike series of chipboard partitions spreads throughout the ground floor. On one, neat vinyl lettering reads, 'The Military Decision Making Process'. This is followed by a series of jagged bubbles containing field-command options with arrows leading from one to the next. 'Algorithm 5: Priorities, Realities, Options, Ways', reads one option (in Russian). Such flow charts, all couched in management speak, proliferate along the rough walls, leading would-be soldiers through their options on the combat field. Interrupting the texts are several metallic armatures, attached to which are items of military paraphernalia, including masks the SAS in Britain or Special Forces in the US might wear, Perspex sheets onto which are etched what might be maps or charts, and objects less obviously connected to the military theme: bits of foliage and alien figurines.

A floor work in the upper gallery, surrounded by vases of wilting flowers, attests to the often dire, and material, consequences of bad decisions. Again diagrammatical, white texts printed in Russian on grey matting catalogue the errors of the Chernobyl catastrophe. 'Telegram messages not read', reads one. 'Flammable materials in the roof' and 'The lack of protective gear for radioactive fire', read others. Decision-making is an abstract process, the work implies, but its effects are not: the former residents of the irradiated ghost town Pripyat can attest to that. Evolution, the subject of a second installation in the upper gallery, is similarly invisible, its effects recognisable only over thousands of years. Metal racks with glass shelves contain a vast array of what appear to be museum artefacts – plaster casts of monkeys, bones – each neatly labelled with an accession number. Among these, which together tell the scientific story of Darwin and Linnaeus, are stranger objects: the bust of a yeti, more aliens.

The final gallery, bathed in a pink light, is empty bar a loudspeaker, from which Simon & Garfunkel's *Homeward Bound* (1966) plays on repeat. It is a strange, dislocating experience. On exiting the pink room and returning, blinking, to the gallery containing the artist's alternative history of evolution, the light appears to have a green tinge. Everything is the same, but different.

From the Winter 2017 issue of ArtReview

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Kirill Savchenkov, architect of all too real role-playing games

Born in 1987, the Russian artist tells the cruelty of geopolitical scenarios through games, balancing the visions and traumas of his generation, and the natural human instinct for cooperation. We met him.



AUTHOR
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PUBLISHED
29 November 2021

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The gamification that today induces us to spend a few extra hours taking care of our social profiles, or that pushes us to work overtime to finish a job in the best possible way, making us excellent and competitive, is the dark degeneration of something useful and powerful: the discovery that we human beings – as many have attested and as Roberta Michnick Golinkoff also tells in her *Einstein Never Used Flashcards* – really love to play. And not only that. From an early age, playing helps us make sense of the world and life, understand emotions and social relationships.

A young Russian artist is trying to recover the ancient power of games, and especially role-playing games, to trigger healing processes and educate us to cooperation. Born in 1987 in Moscow, Kirill Savchenkov is currently preparing his exhibition at the Venice Biennial 2022, where he will be represented by the Osnova gallery as a guest of the Russian Pavilion.

In his works, he brings back visions and traumas experienced personally and by his generation. On the one hand, the feeling of being exposed to ongoing violence through a technology that turns out to be much less neutral than it seems, while the media become weapons in the service of an underground autocratic government in continuous operation. On the other, the desire to collaborate with one's own fellows and the awareness that this will require a long process of healing, through play, poetry, sharing



Silvia Dal Dosso 'Kirill Savchenkov, architect of all too real role-playing games', Domus, November 29 2021

At Liste, a satellite fair of Art Fair Basel, dedicated to new discoveries in contemporary art, Savchenkov brought *Fireworks and Gunpowder*, a work that best illustrates his ability to use a wide variety of media at will, from sculpture, material and sound installations to performances or activities of meditation and participatory exploration. *Fireworks and Gunpowder* is a tabletop role-playing game, designed and engineered by the artist, in the footsteps of the games created and used by the CIA to prepare its agents to face complex challenges, such as *Kingpin: The Hunt for El Chapa*, *Collection*, and *Collection Deck*, recently made public thanks to the "Freedom of Information Act", and which in turn inspired the famous game *Pandemic*, where players work together to eradicate four deadly diseases that have broken out in various areas of the world.

As for the games mentioned above, *Fireworks and Gunpowder* has the distinction of being a cooperative board game: players do not fight each other but work together to solve complex crisis situations, guided by a game master, through a series of difficulties and questions posed by the playing cards. Ancient and modern scenarios have been chosen as "instances of media used as a weapon". One of the most modern and complex scenarios, which Kirill likes to dwell on, perhaps because he has experienced it first-hand, is the "distribution of power and deployment of propaganda in the context of informational autocracies" or so-called hybrid regimes.

Read also: [Squid Game: gamification as design of the society](#)

The strategic alternation of media operations and violence, between electoral democracy and autocracy, which characterizes hybrid regimes such as those currently existing in Russia, China, or the Philippines, makes the villain of the game a shadowy, ambiguous enemy, very difficult to identify. If, as Savchenkov says, "contemporary hybrid regimes are tuned to employ 80% of propaganda and only 20% of direct violence", what he expects, and what we should train against by playing, is an even more confusing scenario, "60% of propaganda, 10% of direct violence, and 30% of poisoning content". Poisoning content represents the increasingly ambiguous (disruptive is the marketing term) side of propaganda, whether it is memes, fake news or troll farms, the strategy behind it is the same: using technology to build a media means capable of appealing to the emotionality of the citizen and the user. A striking example of such a strategy is the OCEAN method followed by Cambridge Analytica, which targeted "typical" psychological profiles based precisely on their emotional attitudes (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness for cooperativeness and tolerance, Neuroticism for ease of getting angry). But there are many others, from the entryism of think tanks and spin doctors in established religious or subcultural communities, to the semi-conscious ideological campaigns brought about in friendship networks, or the forms of affective loyalty to brands, all enhanced by the media thoroughness of social media.



In this gallery: Kirill Savchenkov, "Fireworks and Gunpowder", Liste Art Fair Basel, Osnova Gallery

In his five-channel sound installation *Then a Kiss Is Not a Kiss* (2019), exhibited at V-A-C Zattere, Kirill seeks to create an environment for the rehabilitation of victims traumatised by the media war, and who today suffer from depression, anxiety and the dysphoria, such as the Russian anti-fascist organisation "The Network" for years persecuted by the Putin government, or the numerous victims of the cyberbullying by the

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team of Rodrigo Duarte, currently president of the Republic of the Philippines, during his election campaign, in 2016.

In a present in which technology becomes a weapon in the hands of a few, with devastating and traumatic consequences for many, for Kirill the artist has two options today: to pursue his art "as a parable, fiction that unfolds the immaterial aspects of the technological impact, and the emotional imprint of social relations" or - as happens in his performative training work *The Elsewhere Logistics*, exhibited in Leipzig in the *D21 Kunstraum* and at *MMOMA* (Moscow) in 2018 - to employ "acoustic, performative, and material agents" to provoke a dynamic of agentivity in his own work and in those who participate in it, training us in the "neuroplasticity" and "neuro-sensibility" required to escape violence and media manipulation.

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Going back to *Fireworks and Gunpowder*, in order to emerge victorious from this adventure and media crisis, the players, following Kirill, will have to equip themselves with an "understanding of the nature and protocols of media" and a strategic cooperation that imitates the "temporary syndicates, assembled and disassembled for a specific task", similar to that which characterised "the revolutionary underground defined itself in the late 19th-early 20th century in Russia". One can imagine that it is not exactly easy for a gallery located in Moscow, as Osnova is, to choose not only to host within its walls, but also to bring first to Liste and then to Venice Kirill Savchenkov, architect of all too real role-playing games.

Kirill is currently collaborating with Alexandra Sukhareva on something new that will be exhibited in the Russian Pavilion at the Biennale. About the work "which will of course combine the approaches Alexandra and I use in our practice individually, within the shared narrative", he cannot reveal more for now.

Opening image: Kirill Savchenkov, *"Fireworks and Gunpowder"*, courtesy Osnova Gallery; Photo Liste Art Fair

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Far away so close: polaroid scenes from a would-be utopia



For Moscow-based artist Kirill Savchenkov, the suburbs are a place both mythical and real, existing in utopian visions and childhood memories. In his Polaroid series Atlas, he merges snapshots from real cities – Kiev, Yalta, St Petersburg and Moscow – to create an idealised picture of Soviet sleeping quarters from the 1980s. The project consists of more than 100 polaroids and a book so far. "I tried to gather together what could be that ideal district as I saw it in my memories and dreams from when I was young," he says. Communist- and post-Soviet-era suburbs, with their monolithic blocks of flats are a central theme in Savchenkov's work. A recent performance piece took place in the Moscow suburb of Yasenevo where he gave a walking tour to a group of visitors – connecting personal stories with the geography and history of the site. The place where I was born was near to a forest and a river, and the underground station was surrounded by blocks-of-flats standing in a wide field like megaliths," he says. "I'm gradually getting closer to bringing to life the memories in my head."

--- Return to Russian edgelands: journeys in the urban wilderness



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