



The State Tretyakov Gallery presents  
Special projects

## **Modern Art Museum: The Department of Labour and Employment**

Moscow Biennale of Contemporary art

23 september 2013 — 1 февраля 2014

Krymsky Val, 10/Halls 39-42

**Curators:** Kirill Svetlyakov, Sofia Terekhova

### ***About project:***

The way in which the ideology of labour is portrayed in contemporary art is linked primarily with an attempt to maintain a critical distance in respect of the consumerist society, in which the obtrusive ideology of leisure plays a dominant role. On the face of it, this society no longer has any need for free artists, unless they are performing a documentary role, have been integrated into the entertainment industry, or provide services to existing institutions as the 'proletarians' of intellectual labour.

In the post-Industrial age, art is being turned into something akin to heavy industry, throwing up a dispiriting, endless supply of artistic forgeries, which stand alone, detached from the real problems faced by the global community or local communities. Free artists of the modern age are doomed to a perpetual search for activities in which to engage themselves, whether spontaneous or situation-based – activities which are no longer directly related to traditional artisan crafts, industrial production or even post-Industrial consumerism. Like the artists of the Early Renaissance, the contemporary artist exists in the space between 'the church', on the one hand, and 'money' on the other, and is squeezed by both sides – by modern art institutions, which perform the role of the 'churches', and by the financial structures.

As he searches for gainful employment, the artist is forced to master new fields, or fields that will act as stepping-stones – at the risk of losing his freedom of expression and, ultimately, losing his status as a free artist. But in today's world, it is by staying within the confines of art that artists risk destroying art's

autonomy. And by going out into reality, in an attempt to overcome feelings of total alienation, the artist is able to break out of the cycle of modernist cliché.

The aim of the project is to trace the history of labour in Soviet and post-Soviet art, from its industrial to its non-material forms, from the 1960s to the 2000s, and show how representations of labour, and the ways in which it is depicted, have changed as new artistic practices have evolved. The exhibition "**The Department of Labour and Employment**" gives us the opportunity to examine the types of artistic production, and the forms that the artist's employment takes, in contemporary society.

The exhibition's historical sections contain works from the Soviet period related to the "austere style", along with models and display panels created at various times by the artists of the Zhukovsky Central Aerohydrodynamics Institute (TsAGI), and these will be presented alongside the works of contemporary artists who have dealt with the subject of industry and production in recent years. The conceptual campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s, meanwhile, will be displayed in the context of photo-reports about communist-era Subbotniki (community labour that took place on Saturdays), taken from the archives of the Tretyakov Gallery.

In the official art of the 1960s and 1970s, solutions were being sought for the problems of depicting physical and intellectual labour, at a time when conceptual artists were developing a strategy for non-material production or simulating a form of socially useful labour in their sots-art campaigns. In the 1980s, as labour relations began to be devalued, 'leisure-based' art forms prevailed, and following these came a rejection of the production of things in favour of the creation of powerful effects.

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw a return to material labour, with the industrial culture of the 1960s and 1970s being revisited time and again. In many ways this throwback was linked to a desire to overcome the growing sense of alienation with labour processes, and get back to doing some 'real work' after the age of post-modernism. At the same time, young artists began to master new forms of non-material labour, such as observation, programming and exchange, and began to feel like the 'proletarians of intellectual labour', in the new lumpen proletariat of the consumer society.

The process of creating artistic works is an open system, capable of incorporating, at one and the same time, several methods of material and non-material 'processing' of artistic material – artisan, industrial, natural, computer-based, conceptual and many more besides.

A special section of the exhibition will focus on issues related to stepping outside the territory occupied by art as seen by artists, and entering the territory of art as seen by representatives of other specialist areas: surgeons, physicians and

biologists. This section will display the forms of cooperation between artists and 'non-artists' involved in developing new methods of producing art.

For the duration of the exhibition, a programme aimed at helping creative individuals to find employment will be running, organized by the Alexander Melamid Institute for the re-training of modernist artists. The programme, organized in conjunction with the Institute of Contemporary Art, will see artists being given the chance to obtain an additional qualification as a plumber, under the guidance of a qualified expert. After attending the hands-on workshop, the artists taking part will know enough to be able to connect Marcel Duchamp's 'Urinal' – a classic example of modern art – to the plumbing systems of the Tretyakov Gallery.

The project "**A museum of modern art: the Department of Labour and Employment**" hosted by the Tretyakov Gallery, requires that for the duration of the exhibition, we cease to think of a traditional museum in the usual way – as a place for storing and displaying chef-d'oeuvres – and see it as a site for the production of art and of artistic meaning.

**Участники:** *Konstantin Adjer, Nikolai Alexeyev, Yuri Albert, Vladimir Arkhipov, Maria Arendt & Mikhail Alschibaya, Maria Arendt & Mikhail Alschibaya, Ivan Brazhkin, Sergey Brartkov, Art Business Consulting” art group, “For Anonymous and Free Art” art group, “Where Do The Dogs Run?” art group, “Collective Actions” art group, “What Is to Be Done?” art group, “Soap” art group, “Recycle” art group, “Nest” art group, “The New Stupid” art group, “ZIP” art group, Dmitry Demsky, Arseniy Zhilyaev, Vasim Zakharov, Natalia Zintsova, Yakov Kazhdan, Irina Korina, Taisia Korotkova, Kirill Kto, Andrey Kuz’kin, Vlad Kul’kov, Maxim Iliyukhin, Mikhail Lylov, Diana Machulina, Alexander Melamid, Roman Mokrov, Anatoly Osmolovsky, Anton Ol’shwang, Arkadiy Petrov, Nikolai Polissky, Alexander Povzner, Andrey Prigov, Anastassia Ryabova, Maxim Roganov, Khaim Sokol, Alexander Sokolov, Vladimir Seleznyov, Tair Salakhov, Vitas Stansyunas, Rostan Tavasiev, Anna Titova, Avdey Ter-Ogagnan, Ilya Trushevsky, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Olga & Oleg Tatarintsev, Viktor Umnov, Olga Chernyshova, Anton Chumak, Stas Shuripa, Vlad Yurashko*