Sometimes Ballerina, Sometimes Priest, in Reality, a Murderer
Karlo Kacharava's Sketchbooks and Paintings
Curated by Irena Popiashvili

9 October – 29 November 2025
Bury Street, SW1

Modern Art's second exhibition of Karlo Kacharava features previously unseen drawings from his sketchbooks, created between 1991 and 1992, alongside paintings from 1988 to 1993. The show, titled *Sometimes Ballerina, Sometimes Priest, in Reality, a Murderer*, quotes the artist himself having been scrawled on one of his drawings. This exhibition provides a glimpse into Kacharava's automatic writing approach to the artistic process, seamlessly intertwining text and visual elements. Recurring phrases written in Georgian, such as "Dreams of Mzhavanadze" – a reference to Vasil Mzhavanadze, the first secretary of Georgia's communist party from 1953 to 1972 – reflect his wry sense of humour and the chaotic information consumption. Alongside these Georgian phrases, Kacharava references German Neo-expressionist painter Helmut Middendorf, as well as James Ensor, Francesco Clemente, and Norwegian writer and journalist Ivar Enoksen among others.

In addition to the drawings, the exhibition presents paintings from 1992, including *Poet who Burned his Poems* and a series of portrait drawings. These works show Karlo Kacharava's curiosity and exploration of diverse characters, captured through their poses and facial expressions, which he later integrates in his paintings. While each drawing is striking in its own right, the piece titled *Anarchist's Dream* with its evocative text inscribed above the figures, stands out particularly. This drawing when compared to its corresponding painting reveals that none of the figures from the sketch appear in the final painting, which has an intriguing mix of texts in French, Georgian and German. These multilingual element adds a layer of complexity, suggesting a dialogue between different cultures and ideas.

There are also several drawings that serve as preliminary sketches for the painting *Train Station*. Despite the fact that the painting was never realised, these sketches offer insight into Karlo Kacharava's creative process. They illustrate his exploration of themes and compositions that never fully materialised, showing us the artist's willingness to experiment. These pieces are inspiring documentations of the evolution of his ideas, making the viewers consider the connections between intention, creation, and the final work of art.

– Irena Popiashvili, Curator, Karlo Kacharava Estate, Tbilisi

A cult figure in Germany and throughout the Caucasus, Karlo Kacharava (b. 1964, Samtredia – d. 1994, Tbilisi) was a fixture of Georgian artistic and intellectual circles before his untimely death from a sudden brain aneurysm at the age of thirty. From 1981 to 1986, he studied art history at the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts, afterwards joining the Chubinashvili Institute of the History of Georgian Art as a researcher. Alongside and between his visual art and activities with Tbilisi's Tenth Floor Group, he produced numerous works of poetry and critical theory. In 1990, he left the USSR for the first time, relocating briefly to Cologne. During his lifetime, Kacharava participated in up to 40 exhibitions. In 1997, he was posthumously awarded the Giorgi Chubinashvili State Prize for his contribution to Georgian art history. In 2017, a major retrospective was organised by Irena Popiashvili at the Georgian National Museum. Kacharava's works are held in collections including; the Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi; He Art Museum, Shunde; Kolodzei Art Foundation, Highland Park; MARe/ Muzeul de Arta Recenta, Bucharest; The Rachofsky Collection, Dallas and Tate, London. In December 2023, S.M.A.K Ghent mounted the first museum exhibition of Kacharava's work outside of Georgia.

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