

# secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession  
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien  
T. +43-1-587 53 07, F. +43-1-587 53 07-34  
office@secession.at, www.secession.at

## Press release

### **Agency of Singular Investigations** ***On New Thinking And Other Forgotten Dreams*** December 1 – February 25, 2024 Grafisches Kabinett

**Press conference:** Thursday, November 30, 2023, 10 a.m.

**Opening:** Thursday, November 30, 2023, 7 p.m.

Anna Titova and Stanislav Shuripa founded Agency of Singular Investigations (ASI) in 2014 to take a stand on the dramatic changes in Russia's political reality and cultural atmosphere and to respond to the advent of the postfactual age by thinking about alternative ways of harnessing images and means of communication for the construction of identities and worldviews.

At the Secession, ASI present the new installation *On New Thinking and Other Forgotten Dreams*. It is the first part of their wide-ranging research project *The Park of Mind Revolutions*, which investigates the history of subjectivity and the forms and functions of Russia's self-image in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Organized as a dialogue between the worker Grigoriy Zamzin and a pickle about the meaning of Russia's most recent history, the installation comprises four sculptures, a sprawling wall diagram, and a blue carpet. Taking inspiration from the interwar literature of magical realism, the artists employ carefully selected fantastic elements, irrational events, and metaphors to frame a critical perspective on the complexity of their country's historical evolution. Playing with hybrid dimensions of reality and collisions between historical forces, they expose the energies that shape the psychological, technological, and social system.

***Lennon-Lenin*** (2023). The battered Lenin bust is an actual find from a garbage dump in Norilsk, a Siberian city—initially a Gulag labor camp—whose economic mainstay was and still is nickel mining; in 2020, thawing permafrost soils and insufficient maintenance led to an oil spill that ranks among the greatest environmental disasters in Russian history. Outfitting the bust with a wig and a pair of round sunglasses, the artists raise questions not only about changing idols but also, and more importantly, about the kernel of truth beneath the disguise. Presented in a cave-like window in the glass case in the stairwell, the sculpture functions as a prelude and a revenant haunting the narratives the exhibition unfurls.

***Descend (In Conversation with Grigoriy)*** (2023). At the center of the gallery, the pickle lies preserved and neglected in the murky water of an aquarium together with the model of a skyscraper, a replica of one of Kazimir Malevich's so-called *Arkhitektors*. The pickle figures as an interlocutor in the dialogue on the meaning of history: the worker Grigoriy Zamzin steps out onto the balcony of his apartment and asks the vegetable, preserved in its jar amid a jumble of half-forgotten objects, how reality came to be the way it is.

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More specifically, how did post-Soviet Russia shift from the initial liberatory impetus of Gorbachev's ideas of Perestroika and New Thinking toward today's catastrophe—the war of aggression against Ukraine, the repressions? The pickle relates the history of how the original emancipatory energy was degraded (in almost Neoplatonic fashion) by the emergence and consolidation of sociocultural and psycho-political networks in the decades after the Perestroika period of the mid-1980s.

**Grigoriy Zamzin.** The exhibition's lead character is absent as such, turning into a sea represented by the wall-to-wall blue carpet. In the artists' vision, Zamzin is an heir to the literary tradition of the "little man." In a nod to their work *Grand Project K* (2021), which negotiates a parallel reality, he once again appears as a factory worker involved, in a minor role, in a project that comes out of the 1960s Soviet megalomaniac plan to reverse the courses of rivers in Siberia to transform Central Asia into a vast fertile oasis. Zamzin's ability to foresee catastrophic events prompts him to go even further in his dreams, creating the idea of a new—and flat—Earth.

**Lavender Mist of History** (2023). The dialogue between Grigoriy and the pickle is represented in a large diagram that is executed like a child's scrawl. It visualizes a history of decline and sclerosis. The title of the work refers to Jackson Pollock's famous all-over drip painting *Number One (Lavender Mist)* from 1950. The vegetable narrates the story not in linear or hierarchical fashion but as a networked model that illustrates different perspectives on the ideas and forces operative at turbulent moments in history. Organized by decades, the diagram begins with the effort in the 1980s to build a more open and diverse world and concludes with the disaster of the 2020s and the suppression of civic protest in Russia that is also embodied by the sculpture *Dance*.

**Dance** (2023). The floating figure is a cutout, a photograph of a young woman who was brutally arrested by police during an antiwar protest in Moscow in 2022. Her pose resembles that of a dancer at a 1990s rave. In this context, the same gesture speaks to both emancipation and oppression, an embodiment of two historical periods that were not far apart in time yet now appear as antithetical, divided by the fateful reversal of freedom and hope into war and terror.

**Towards the New Flat Earth** (2023). This sculpture melds the Russian avant-garde artist El Lissitzky's *Lenin Tribune* (1920) to three illustrations showing elephants. The work refers to the fiction of the construction of a Flat Earth as the culmination of a conservative technological utopia. The material basis for this transformation consists of three giant elephant-shaped clouds of "intelligent dust." The drawings were made by Vladimir Konashevich, a well-known illustrator of the 1930s through 1950s. His distinctive style of shading introduced the modernist "flattened space" and activated the white ground so that the drawings appeared to hover above it. ASI assume that Ilya Kabakov and other artists in the Moscow Conceptualist circle, who for many years earned a living by drawing illustrations for children, were familiar with Konashevich's work, and that his spatial illusionism inspired Kabakov to extend his creations into installations in three dimensions. Russian history here appears as an open-ended succession of revolutionary visions. Meanwhile, the quotations of earlier works of art also open up a perspective on utopia as such and the potentials of contemporary forms of active engagement, artistic and otherwise.

Anna Titova (b. 1984) and Stanislav Shuripa (b. 1971) currently live and work in Paris.

Agency of Singular Investigations's work has been exhibited at the 1st Biennale Warszawa, the 5th Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art, the 1st Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art, the 1st

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Garage Triennial of Russian Contemporary Art, Manifesta 10 in St. Petersburg, and elsewhere. In 2015, ASI opened an experimental space at the Center for Creative Industries “Fabrika” (Moscow) dedicated to research into the narrative spaces between communication and artistic practice.

Titova and Shuripa teach at the independent Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Moscow, where Shuripa has held the position of rector since 2018. Their writing has been featured in a number of international publications including *Russia: Art Resistance and the Conservative-Authoritarian Zeitgeist* (Routledge, 2019) and magazines like *Paletten* (no. 327–328, 2022) and *Ord&Bild* (no. 2–3, July 2022). Since 2006, Shuripa has been a member of the editorial board of *Moscow Art Magazine*.

Programmed by the Board of the Secession

Curated by Annette Südbeck

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## **Publication**

### ***Agency of Singular Investigations***

Format: 14,8 x 21 cm

Details: Softcover, dust jacket, 64 pages

Series design concept: Sabo Day

Graphic design: Sabo Day

Text: Maria Lind (conversation)

Language: German, English

8 illustrations

Secession 2023

Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, Köln

ISBN 978-3-7533-0572-1

Anna Titova and Stanislav Shuripa founded Agency of Singular Investigations (ASI) in 2014 to take a stand on the dramatic changes in Russia's political reality and cultural atmosphere and to respond to the advent of the postfactual age by thinking about alternative ways of harnessing images and means of communication for the construction of identities and worldviews.

The publication's core is an extensive conversation between the artists and the curator Maria Lind about the political situation, the power and function of language, artistic strategies, and their exhibition *On New Thinking and Other Forgotten Dreams* at the Secession. The dustcover is an intervention by the artists and refers to two works in the exhibition. The handmade cutout shows a young woman who appears to be dancing; in reality, she was brutally arrested by police at an antiwar protest in Moscow in 2022. In the diagram *Lavender Mist of History* (2023), the artists sketch a web of events that illustrates the history of decline and sclerosis in Russia over the past several decades.

The digital publication is available for free at [https://secession.at/category/digital\\_publication](https://secession.at/category/digital_publication).

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### Current exhibitions

Hauptraum

**Tishan Hsu recent work 2023**

December 1 – February 11, 2024

Galerie

**Charlie Prodger *The Offering Formula***

December 1 – February 25, 2024

Grafisches Kabinett

**Agency of Singular Investigations**

***On New Thinking And Other Forgotten Dreams***

December 1 – February 25, 2024

### Publications

*Tishan Hsu. recent works 2023*

Softcover, dustjacket, 64 pages, EUR 18,00

*Charlie Prodger*

Softcover, dustjacket, 64 pages, EUR 18,00

*Agency of Singular Investigations*

Softcover, dustjacket, 64 pages, EUR 18,00

### Permanent presentation

Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*

*Beethoven – Painting and Music* in cooperation with

Wiener Symphoniker

### Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

### Admission

Regular € 12,00 | Students under 26 € 7,50

Seniors 65+ € 10,00 | Free admission for children under 12

### Press contact Secession

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### Press images

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## Agency of Singular Investigations *On New Thinking and Other Forgotten Dreams*

### Werkliste | List of works

#### *Lennon-Lenin, 2023*

Lenin bust, wig, pair of glasses, paint | Lenin Büste, Perücke, Brille, Farbe  
18 x 20 x 27 cm

#### *Lavender Mist of History, 2023*

Wallpaper | Wandtapete  
Dimensions variable | Dimensionen variabel

#### *Dance, 2023*

Digital print on alu dibond, laminated on both sides |  
Digitaldruck auf Alu-Dibond, beidseitig laminiert  
120 x 158 x 0,3 cm

#### *Descend (In Conversation with Grigoriy), 2023*

PLA 3D print (replica of Kazimir Malevich's Arkhitekton, pickel), white glass UV bonded with aquarium silicone, 20 l steel gas cylinder filled with CO<sub>2</sub>, bubble counter with pressure regulator, transparent rubber hose, grey rubber hose, tinted water, wood |  
PLA 3D-Druck (Nachbildung eines Arkhitektons von Kazimir Malevich, Essiggurke), UV-Weißglas verklebt mit Aquariumsilikon, 20-Liter Stahlgasflasche mit CO<sub>2</sub> gefüllt, Bläschenzähler mit Druckminderer, transparenter Gummischlauch, grauer Gummischlauch, gefärbtes Wasser, Holz  
50 x 40 x 78 cm

#### *Towards the New Flat Earth, 2023*

Milled, brown lacquered and glued polystyrene panel (replica of El Lissitzky's Lenin Tribune), polyester printed on both sides (illustrations by Vladimir Konashevich), wood |  
Gefräste, braun lackierte und verklebte Polystyrolplatte (Nachbildung der Lenin-Tribüne von El Lissitzky), beidseitig bedrucktes Polyester (Illustrationen von Vladimir Konashevich), Holz  
83 x 53,5 x 157 cm

Courtesy of the artists | die Künstler\*innen

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## Art Education Program

Wednesday, December 6, 2023; Wednesday, January 3, 2023,  
and Wednesday, February 7, 2024

### **The Secession Turns 125**

The Secession first opened its doors 125 years ago, on November 12, 1898. Come celebrate with us!  
On the occasion of this anniversary, we offer free admission on the first Wednesday of every month.

Sunday, February 11, 2024, 5pm

### **Nearly missed it?**

Join us on a last-minute guided tour of the exhibition by Tishan Hsu.

Sunday, February 25, 2024, 5pm

### **Nearly missed it?**

Join us on a last-minute guided tour of the exhibitions by Charlie Prodger, and Agency of Singular Investigations

Every Saturday

### **History of the Secession and its architecture, and current exhibitions**

Overview tours at 11am in English and at 2pm in German

Admission plus € 3,- guide fee per person.

Kids under 12 free of charge.

The guided tours are also available by appointment.

Contact: kunstvermittlung@secession.at

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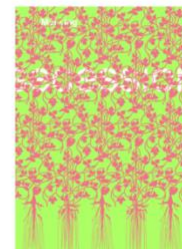
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