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Artist : Kirill Savchenkov  
Title : The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night  
Date : 27/01/2024 – 24/02/2024  
Location : Galerie Allen, Paris  
Photo : Aurélien Mole  
Courtesy : the artist and Galerie Allen  
Text : Raimundas Malašauskas

A ghostly plethora of living, dead (and occasionally — undead) characters inhabit Kirill Savchenkov's world. They range from natural world creatures such as cicadas to more ambivalent shape-shifters like werewolves driven by an anarchistic impulse. There are also highly complex and hard-to-grasp algorithms where supernatural, human and AI powers meet — often sensed and hinted at, but never identified clearly. Among the more figuratively recognisable characters one can spot historic personalities such as XIX century revolutionaries Vera Zasulich and Vera Figner, anarchist Peter Kropotkin, and quasi mythic animals like Varvar<sup>1</sup>, the horse. Most of them hail from the history of Russia: the struggle of autocratic governance and the revolutionary attempts to overthrow it.

Kirill Savchenkov deals with the history of the country where he became an artist in a delicate way, nurturing intellectual nuance and taste for speculative propositions. His Sci-Fi sensibility brings improbable authors and facts together illuminating political contexts. Being a careful observer of subtle shifts of atmosphere, he registers barely noticeable signals of both past and future, often evoking a sense of anxiety, premonition and an impending doom. Those journeys in time and technological landscapes manifest themselves as sculptural essays, shaped by magpie-like skills: Savchenkov keeps collecting tiny and fragile things wherever they find him. Often those are the things that fell on the ground: tree branches, dust, bird's feathers, etc. The radio-electronics' sensibility of scanning the world as a live ether of signals gathers more material — tangible and intangible. Sometimes those signals are suspended in a dream-like indeterminacy of a certain event emerging a thousand years from now — be it in the future or in the past, or somewhere at one's fingertips, underneath one's nails, yet highly uncertain. Hence the miniature scale of Savchenkov's sculptural essays: they come as ikebana or a bouquet of propositions, a small souvenir of long non-linear unfinished thinking journeys.

Varvar, the horse, entered our conversation a couple of years ago. I had never heard of that animal before, but found it to be a rather elusive, confusing historical character that transported its load across different socio-political systems. "I see this horse as an algorithm and as an avatar" Kirill Savchenkov told me back then, "It is not a reliable one."

In fact, it was Varvar who transported tsar Alexander II after the assassination attempt in the year 1881 and it was the same Varvar who helped anarchist Peter Kropotkin to escape the prison in 1876. "No one else has had an opportunity to meet both Tsar Alexander II and Kropotkin" Savchenkov says. Should we take this fact for granted? How can we verify its trustworthiness? And if we do accept it as a historic fact — where does Varvar want to bring us? Does it remain just a horse that happened to be there or are we dealing with a certain political agency embedded in the animal? Savchenkov is fascinated by the collision of what is possible and what is probable in this world, especially of how that collision runs through a political landscape. Here Varvar is just an avatar emerging in the historic process of fighting oppression. It is clear that AI is not a neutral force — it can be employed by different sides of the multidimensional battle — today, tomorrow, anytime.

There is also a sound emanating from the speakers installed in the gallery. In fact, there is always sound in Savchenkov's world. I remember him once talking about the tension between sound and silence. He saw the growth of silence in one's lungs as an effect of autocratic regimes operating through fear, anxiety and manipulation. The role of sound could be seen as an extension of agency, or again — as an observation of a vibrant seaside landscape with wind brushing the reeds and Kropotkin telling his story of an escape from a prison: "Varvar was a beautiful racing trotter".

Meanwhile, the combination of metal string, horse and dog hair woven by Kirill Savchenkov runs from the ceiling to the floor like an emission of sparkles when highly charged matters of different nature (chemical, emotional or political) keep colliding. It is composed of many different elements coming from both natural and ultra-synthetic worlds that have passed through the artist's hands, creating jewelry-like connections. This piece is like a loose pattern of imprints of Kropotkin's escape from the prison of the Russian Empire. The anarchist was waiting for the sound of a violin (whose bow is made of horse hair that also serves as a core of this sculpture) as a signal to move. Varvar was already waiting for him.

— Raimundas Malašauskas

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<sup>1</sup> Varvar: The Barbarian in Russian

**CHECKLIST**



Kirill Savchenkov-The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-01.jpg

Kirill Savchenkov,  
The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night, exhibition view.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris

**CHECKLIST**

Kirill Savchenkov, Essay B: Escape, 2023  
stainless steel, plastic, wood and sound,  
dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris



Kirill Savchenkov- The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-02.jpg

Kirill Savchenkov, Essay B: Escape, 2023 (detail)  
stainless steel, plastic, wood and sound, dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris



Kirill Savchenkov- The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-03.jpg

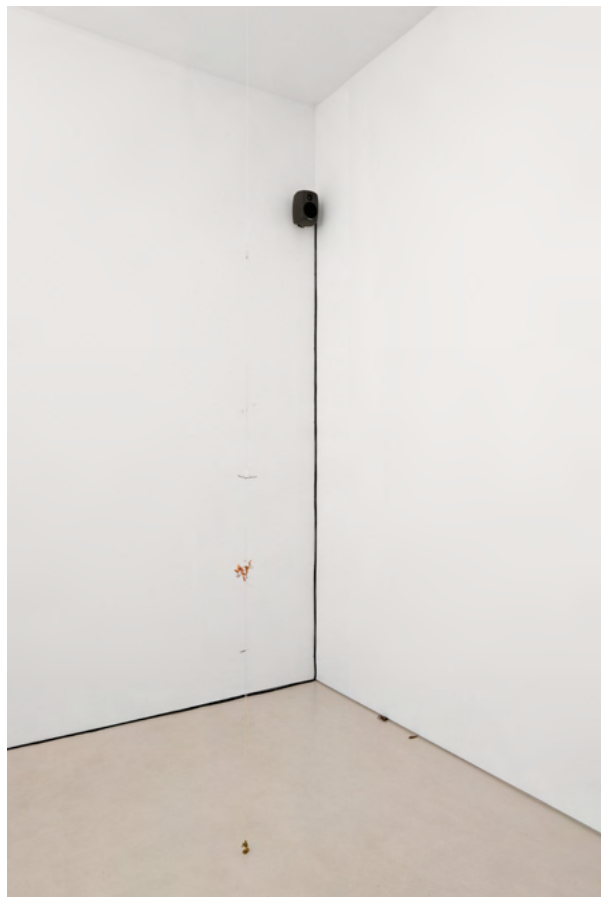
**CHECKLIST**

Kirill Savchenkov, Essay B: Escape, 2023 (detail)  
stainless steel, plastic, wood and sound, dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris



Kirill Savchenkov- The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-04.jpg

Kirill Savchenkov, Essay G: Assassination, 2023  
horse hair, silicon, stainless steel, aluminum,  
copper, matchstick, wood and sound, dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris



Kirill Savchenkov- The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-05.jpg

**CHECKLIST**

Kirill Savchenkov, Essay G: Assassination, 2023 (detail)  
horse hair, silicon, stainless steel, aluminum, copper,  
matchstick, wood and sound, dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris



Kirill Savchenkov-The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-06.jpg

Kirill Savchenkov, Essay G: Assassination, 2023 (detail)  
horse hair, silicon, stainless steel, aluminum, copper,  
matchstick, wood and sound, dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris



Kirill Savchenkov-The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-07.jpg

**CHECKLIST**

Kirill Savchenkov, Essay D: Vera's Herbarium, 2023,  
horse hair, silicon, matchstick, wood and sound,  
dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris



Kirill Savchenkov-The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-08.jpg

Kirill Savchenkov, Essay D: Vera's Herbarium, 2023 (detail)  
horse hair, silicon, matchstick, wood and sound,  
dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris



Kirill Savchenkov-The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-09.jpg

**CHECKLIST**

Kirill Savchenkov,  
Essay D: Vera's Herbarium, 2023 (detail)  
horse hair, silicon, matchstick, wood and sound,  
dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris



Kirill Savchenkov-The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-10.jpg

Kirill Savchenkov,  
Essay D: Vera's Herbarium, 2023 (detail)  
horse hair, silicon, matchstick, wood and sound,  
dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris



Kirill Savchenkov-The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-11.jpg

**CHECKLIST**

Kirill Savchenkov, Essay H: The Wolfsbane, 2023  
stainless steel, plastic, wood, dog hair and sound,  
dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris



Kirill Savchenkov-The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-12.jpg



Kirill Savchenkov-The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night at Galerie-Allen-13.jpg

Kirill Savchenkov, Essay H: The Wolfsbane, 2023 (detail)  
stainless steel, plastic, wood, dog hair and sound, dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Allen, Paris