

## PRESS RELEASE

Arseniy Zhilyaev  
Rational Egoism

15/07 – 04/09/2010

Private view: Wednesday 14 July, 6 – 9 pm

REGINA Gallery is happy to announce a solo show by Arseniy Zhilyaev, a leader of young art in the Moscow art scene. Most Zhilyaev's research projects correlate in a way with the notions of utopia and nostalgia. Being aware that he belongs to the post-Soviet reality, the artist manipulates the theme of history through the opposition of the utopian hopes of the past and the present situation.

*Rational Egoism*, a new project of the artist, is quite an unexpected turning point in his oeuvre. Judging by its title borrowed from the heritage of Chernyshevsky, romanticism goes over the top here. This quotation from the oeuvre of the Russian revolutionary and democrat is not accidental, and it is not the first time when it inspired Zhilyaev (his previous project was *Vera's Fourth Dream*). "The book written by Chernyshevsky in prison was crucial for the development of the Russian revolution, being Lenin's Bible. This novel describes a new type of people, the future revolutionaries who strive to embody the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, and their enthusiasm gave birth to one of the most important events in the new history 50 years later," says the artist.

The project is based on a detective story in Neo-Noire manner. A young artist of 2000s, lamenting the tragedy of the radical art of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, tries to find the lost utopias of Avant-Garde in the discourse of post-Soviet art criticism. According to the author, he "played the part of a private eye, quite unexpected for himself, who is on the mission, ordered by History, to find the lost Avant-Garde." Other characters of the story, besides Avdey, are young conquerors of the Moscow art scene at the moment, the first people who officially left the underground in the literal sense of the word. According to Zhilyaev, these are three main personages here – Osmolovsky, Kulik and Ter-Oganyan senior. Other people the main character encounters on his way have also been listed by the expert community as the best among the living art figures of the 1980s-1990s.

All the socio-cultural situation of that period is analyzed by Zhilyaev through the "Avant-Garde gesture of rejection in the territory of art." Every scene of this narrative studies the momentum and the cause-effect relations resulting in the emergence of the vacuous artistic statement. All the episodes of the narrative are mainly presented through the documentary material which has already been compromised today, classified as failures, be it Osmolovsky's *Against Everybody* project which actually turned into a small gear in an ethically unacceptable political game having nothing in common with liberation, Oleg Kulik's idea of *Transparency* which transfers personal connections into business, or the reiteration of Avant-Garde gestures by Avdey Ter-Oganyan who transformed radical art into a sort of industry.

The most interesting thing in the life of main characters is the romantic loneliness that urges artists to radicalize their life in the territory of contemporary art, forming a line of history, a metaphor of the main plot of investigation. Photographs, emptiness and loneliness, evidence and flashlights, bitter fate of desperate personages and the private eye disappointed with the present – all this is nothing but the basic points in the synopsis of the project which cannot exhaust its visual component. The formal solution of display reminds the viewer of great Carl Andre's oeuvre who also made an Avant-Garde gesture once, but he did it in the western scene which was more prepared for it.

The existence of a text statement in the form which is visual rather than verbal is a self-expression of non-being suggested as a refrain in *Rational Egoism*. Visual constellations and sound poetry – that is what can bring the young contemporary artist, and his viewer, to the profound awareness of the value of the Avant-Garde gesture. Words become forms, sounds, anything, except designations of meaning. The investigation fails. The last Russian artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will soon forget radicalization, revolutionary urges of youth and the Avant-Garde gesture of rejection. The situation that influenced their development has become history, and the characters themselves realize that not only Chernyshevsky had "rational egoism", Ayn Rand also had it. But it has nothing to do with this case. It is already closed.

Arseniy Zhilyaev was born in 1984 in Voronezh. Graduated from the Valand Fine Arts School, Göteborg, Sweden, and the Institute for Contemporary Arts, Moscow, Russia. Artist, curator, winner of the 'Soratnik 2010' ('Companion-in-Arms 2010') award, nominee for the 'Innovation 2009' state award in the sphere of contemporary art. Participant of such group shows as The Lesson of History (2010) at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (curated by Joseph Backstein); Russian Art: Paradoxes of History (2008), Sofia, Bulgaria; Digital Media 1.0 (2008), Valencia, Spain; Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2007, 2009), Biennale of Young Art (2008), Art International Moscow Fair (2008, 2007, 2006), etc. Zhilyaev's works are presented in museums and private collections of Russia and Europe.

The show runs from 15 July till 4 September. Curated by Andrey Parshikov.

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