

Alexandra Sukhareva

COMB IN THE GRASS:

Small Descriptive Models That Have Turned into Action

The project by Alexandra Sukhareva (b. 1983, Moscow) focuses on the Siege of Leningrad (September 8, 1941 – January 27, 1944). In her research, the artist's objective is to investigate the variety of channels and spiritual domains through which people sought something to confide in the face of uncertainty. Sukhareva's research is focused on documenting traces of human experiences that signify how hope could initiate alternative ontologies capable of influencing the blockade life: prolonging it, pulling out of psychic dystrophy, or redirecting its entire course. According to the author, the blockade vision and sensibility find their place in our times.

The project took a shape of a library archive: four boxes keep the documents and mention personalities representing the Gnostic mythologeme of the blockade. concern is to explore the variety of channels and spiritual outlets through which people sought something to rely on in the face of the uncertainty.

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The 872 days of the siege — or the blockade as it is also known — traumatized an entire generation, causing many events to be repressed in the collective memory. With sporadic access to information from the outside world in the first months of the blockade, the city's inhabitants began to look for alternative ways of understanding and constructing reality, which brought about a major shift in people's daily preoccupations and rituals. Sukhareva's research focuses on documents of human experiences that show how hope can produce a different kind of reality, exploring the way we process information at the time of social convulsions.

Since the launch of the project, Sukhareva has conducted extensive research in public and private archives and institutions, including the State Hermitage Museum; the Museum of the Defence and Siege of Leningrad; the Roerich Family Museum and Institute; the Central State Archive of Political and Historic Documents in St. Petersburg; the Moscow Theosophical Society; the Museum of Sadriddin Ayni in Samarkand; and the State Museum of the History of the Timurids in Tashkent. Many of the materials found in the process of research are gathered here in the shape of six folders or archival "volumes", as Sukhareva refers to them. Each volume contains a selection of documents relating to one subject, person or event. Two of them will remain closed at this stage of the project.

The first volume tells the story of Olga Obnorskaya (1892–1957), a member of the group of theosophists who lived in the village of Guarek, near Sochi, in the 1930s. Obnorskaya was a medium and continued hearing voices and seeing visions after she left Guarek, including while living in besieged Leningrad. The second volume examines objects that belonged to Helena Roerich (1879–1955): her brooch and a weathered silk rose, which were among the objects that witnessed and survived the siege in the house of Lyudmila Mitusova. The third volume is centered around a drawing made by schoolboy Misha Mironov, who walked out of the besieged city in 1941 in an attempt to be reunited with his relatives in Moscow and was never heard from again. The fourth volume opens with a late-eighteenth-century Masonic image that entered the collection of the State Hermitage Museum in 1941. The meaning of the image is not clear even today, but it is surprisingly contemporary.

In addition to the "volumes", artist presents an object defined as "impossible". A wonderboard is almost unimaginable in Leningrad at the beginning of the 40s, but the artist reinvents and plants it in the context of her study. For Sukhareva this object is an effect of distortion of the historical narrative, in the folds of which the trauma stays hidden.

Description of Volumes:

- 1.** This volume includes previously unpublished photographs from a number of personal archives in St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as excerpts from Olga Obnorskaya's writings and artist's reconstructions. It was compiled with the assistance of Andrei Gnezdilov, Elena Shestopalova, and the Moscow Theosophical Society.
- 2.** This volume features barite paper photographs of Helena Roerich's silk rose from Lyudmila Mitusova's house, which is now the Roerich Family Museum and Institute, as well as photographs of a table mirror and a woolen travel blanket. It also contains excerpts from Helena Roerich's letters and photographs of her in Kullu, India, in 1942, wearing a similar silk flower.
- 3.** This volume features a copy of the 1941 drawing Future Moscow and Misha Mironov's letter of October 5, 1941.
- 4.** This volume features a copy of the Masonic drawing provided by the State Hermitage Museum and related documents discovered in the course of the research.
- 5. 6.** Two volumes remain closed to the public at this stage of the project.

Project installation includes :

6 archival volumes;
1 reeder (digital version);
communicator (optional);
audio guide in English.

Project organised with the support of Garage Museum of Contemporary art

Alexandra Sukhareva (b. 1983, lives and works in Moscow and Dubna) - an artist, author of process-oriented works, often affecting the phenomena of the mutual influence of matter and cognitive gestures on each other. Participant of many international exhibitions: "Things, words and consequences", MMOMA (2012), dOCUMENTA (13), (2012), "Human Commonalities", V.Sidur Museum (2016), 1st Triennial of Russian Art, Garage Museum (2017) and others. Participant of the Garage Museum Grant Program, 2016. Her works are included in the museum collections of Tate Modern (London), Castello di Rivoli (Turin) and private collections in Mexico, Italy, Saudi Arabia, UK and Russia.

Education

2008 – 2010 Valand school of Fine Arts, Gothenburg

2007 – 2008 ICA, Moscow

2000 – 2006 Moscow State University for Arts and Industry, Moscow

Selected Exhibitions and projects

Upcoming 2022 nation pavilion at Venice Biennale

2021 Avoidance, curated by Dina Akhmadeeva and Adomas Narkevičius, CCA FUTURA, Prague

2021 Our Other Us, The Art Encounters Biennial, curated by Mihnea Mircan and Kasia Redzisz

2021 The 13th Gwangju Biennale – Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning

2020 "We Treasure Our Lucid Dreams." The Other East and Esoteric Knowledge in Russian Art

1905–1969 Garage Museum, Moscow

2019 «2016-19» – Osnova gallery, Moscow

2019 Time, Forward! – V-A-C, Palazzo Zattere, Venice

2018 Landis Museum – Glasgow International Glasgow, Scotland United Kingdom / CCA Derry, Northern Ireland

2017 Solo exhibition – Liberating Knowledge: Progress Report II – Garage Museum, Moscow

2017 1st Triennial of Russian Art – Garage Museum, Moscow

2017 Omnipotence – Marso Gallery, Mexico city

2016 Experiences of Imaginary – New Holland, Saint-Petersburg

2016 Human Commonalities – Vadim Sidur Museum, Moscow

2015 and ongoing Display permanent collection, Castello di Rivoli, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli, Torino, Italy

2015 Witness – Grebnevo estate, Moscow region (published by V-A-C-press and Mousse Publishing)

2015 The Rose has teeth in the mouth of a beast – A Palazzo Gallery, Brescia

2014 Manifesta10 – General Stuff, St.Petersburg

2013 Fusiform Gyrus – Lisson Gallery, London

2012 Things, words and consequences – MMOMA, Moscow

2012 Counter-illusions – 3 International Biennale For Young Art, DK ZIL, Moscow

2012 The Way of Enthusiasts – Palazzo Tre Oci, Venice

2012 dOCUMENTA (13), Aue Park – Kassel

2011 From the Field of Practical Knowledge – GMG Gallery, Moscow

2011 Solo exhibition – Eurauraga – Project Fabrika, Factory "Oktober", Moscow, Russia

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