GARAGE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRESENTS:

West Gallery

December 12, 2019–May 24, 2020

Put some silver in the ground—all the precious things you found: Candy wrappers, ribbons, diamonds, Pretty feathers all around, Petals, leaves, a shred of cloth. Fix a piece of glass above. Leave it covered safe and nice, like a puddle under ice.

Ivan Zavrazhin, Sekretik, 1980

Sekretiki (“little secrets”) was a popular pastime for Soviet kids. Showing your friends your collection of pretty objects buried in the ground under a piece of glass was an early experience of forming a friendship group, and looting such collections was an invasion of personal space.

Employing this game as a metaphor, Sekretiki: Digging Up Soviet Underground Culture, 1966–1985 presents Soviet underground art as a form of secret knowledge shared by a circle of friends and collaborators and requiring protection from the outside forces of ideological control and censorship. During the Soviet period, such secret activities were not limited to art but also included spiritual practices, from yoga to esotericism and alternative medicine. The exhibition, which is inspired by Garage Archive Collection, explores the human passion for mystery and ritualized “secrets.”

The complex history of underground art practices, the spiritual explorations of countercultural movements, and unofficial healing experiments in the Soviet Union during the era of stagnation are presented as interconnected ecosystems. Works of art are shown in a single semantic network alongside objects of an uncertain nature and archival materials (diaries, photo albums, and samizdat).

Unopened envelopes with self-destructing messages; buried time capsules; games with rules that have never been disclosed; artworks planted in a field like potatoes and a living artist disinterred from a temporary grave; apartment exhibitions held in complete darkness with exhibits hidden in plain sight among everyday objects—these are some of the mysterious projects of Soviet nonconformist art created by Vyacheslav Akhunov, Armen Bugayan, Rimma and Valeriy Gerlovin, Andris Grīnbergs, Collective Actions, TOTART, Gnezdo (Nest), Mukhomor (Toadstool), and Pertsy (Peppers), and other artists and groups. In the exhibition they are shown alongside experiments by samizdat thinkers and activists such as Heydar Jemal and Yuri Mamleev.
Soviet hippie and nonconformist spiritual consciousness are illustrated using documents which show the relationship with the Chinese *I Ching* (*Book of Changes*), yogic practices, and ecumenism. The exhibition also examines the influence of Soviet underground culture on Soviet society in general and explores physical practices of self-care in the collectivist Soviet Union of the Brezhnev era.

Specially for the exhibition, artist Yan Ginzburg will build *The Room of Geniuses*, an installation based on Soviet walls of honor and featuring portraits of thinkers and politicians hailed by official Soviet culture as the bearers of wisdom and true knowledge. On the reverse of this pantheon the artist will place photographs of people with abnormal facial expressions made by psychiatrist Lazar Sukharebsky in the 1960s and 1970s. *The Room of Geniuses* was conceived as a postscript to the complex history of the twentieth century and a meditation on the boundaries of psychic norms and strategies for imposing them in Soviet everyday life.


**Curators:** Kaspars Vanags in collaboration with Valentin Diaconov, Andrey Misiano, and Sasha Obukhova, Garage curators

**Exhibition architecture:** Rihards Funts

**Researchers:** Valeria Didenko, Olga Shirokostup

**GARAGE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART**

Garage Museum of Contemporary Art is a place for people, art, and ideas to create history. Through an extensive program of exhibitions, events, education, research, and publishing, the institution reflects on current developments in Russian and international culture, creating opportunities for public dialogue, as well as the production of new work and ideas in Moscow. At the center of all these activities is the Museum’s collection, which is the first archive in the country related to the development of Russian contemporary art from the 1950s through the present. Founded in 2008 by Dasha Zhukova and Roman Abramovich, Garage is the first philanthropic organization in Russia to create a comprehensive public mandate for contemporary art and culture. Open seven days a week, it was initially housed in the renowned Bakhmetevsky Bus Garage in Moscow, designed by the Constructivist architect Konstantin Melnikov. In 2012 Garage relocated to a temporary pavilion in Gorky Park, specifically commissioned from award-winning architect Shigeru Ban. A year later, a purpose-built Education Center was opened next to the Pavilion. On June 12, 2015, Garage welcomed visitors to its first permanent home. Designed by Rem Koolhaas and his OMA studio, this groundbreaking preservation project transformed the famous Vremena Goda (Seasons of the Year) Soviet Modernist restaurant, built in 1968 in Gorky Park, into a contemporary museum.

Garage is a non-profit project of The IRIS Foundation.

Adam Abdalla
Cultural Counsel
Email: adam@culturalcounsel.com

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As part of the strategic partnership between UNIQLO and Garage, a series of special events and activities are held. Garage and UNIQLO have launched UNIQLO Free Friday Nights, continuing the tradition of free admission for all visitors every Friday evening at such key art institutions as MoMA in New York and Tate in London. Garage visitors can enjoy free admission to all exhibitions every Friday between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Garage Lounge Zone opened at the UNIQLO Atrium store, Moscow, in 2017. Customers can immerse themselves in the art world with books and magazines about art, fashion, and contemporary culture. The zone is also a space for free lectures and master classes, as well as special projects by Garage.

In 2018 UNIQLO and Garage launched a joint initiative to support Russian contemporary artists the first participant being the art group MishMash.

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Ingosstrakh also insures art, historical artefacts and other valuable objects. For many years, the company has been providing insurance services to the state's biggest museums including The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, The Hermitage, The State Russian Museum and the Tretyakov Gallery, as well as many private collections.

Ingosstrakh is the Official Insurance Partner of Garage Museum of Contemporary Art for the fourth year running. For Ingosstrakh, the partnership with Garage is an important stage in expanding cooperation with leading museums in Russia and across the world. The company insures the artworks exhibited and, jointly with the Museum, implements a wide range of special programs for visitors.