We Treasure Our Lucid Dreams. The Other East and Esoteric Knowledge in Russian Art 1905–1969

January 31—May 10

"We Treasure Our Lucid Dreams." The Other East and Esoteric Knowledge in Russian Art 1905–1969 is the result of a major research project undertaken by the team at Garage together with art critic Alexey Ulko (Samarkand) and artist Alexandra Sukhareva (Moscow/Dubna). The quote in the title is from Andrei Bely’s 1901 poem “To Sergey Solovyov.” Bringing together over 150 artworks, artefacts, and archive documents, the exhibition takes a close look at the creative projects of artists who were members of secret societies or constructed individual practices informed by their esoteric interests. Many among these bearers of “secret knowledge” fell victim to Stalin-era repressions: they were executed, sent to prison camps, abandoned their beliefs or lost their archives.

Reflecting on the ways in which “secret knowledge” is preserved and passed on, the structure of the exhibition follows the symbolic cycle of “golden age” and “exile.” From the blossoming of various esoteric practices before the Russian Revolution to the banishment and execution of artists in the 1930s and 1940s; from the spiritual revival of the 1920s in the Soviet East (where many representatives of the Soviet creative intelligentsia went to work, for various reasons) to the arrests that followed and a period of “quiet” creative work thereafter.

The art presented in the exhibition dwells on the periphery—far from the great victories of modernism and the radical Soviet avant-garde—and has remained largely secret and invisible (including to art historians) because it was produced not as an aesthetic experiment but as an artefact of spiritual revelation. The logic of documents has also played an important role in structuring the show: a two-year research project included work in public and private archives and as a result the team reconstructed—from criminal cases and police records of searches—several biographies that had seemed irretrievable, such as that of the artist and anthroposophist Rimma Nikolaeva.

Personal and creative histories form a complex map of direct or indirect connections between the exhibition’s protagonists. Anthroposophy was an important element of the Russian cultural scene before the revolution, primarily due to Rudolf Steiner’s devoted followers, including Andrei Bely and Margarita Sabashnikova. There were also other spiritual groups and societies (some people were members of three or four groups), and together they made up a system of sincere friendships and creative relationships that persisted throughout the years of exile.

Alexandra Sukhareva’s works co-exist alongside the main narrative of the exhibition and are not in direct dialogue with works by Andrei Bely, Asya Turgeneva, Daniil Stepanov or other artists. Her Communicator and Séance revisit esoteric experiences, bringing them into the museum space and offering visitors the opportunity to build a personal relationship with the “secret” history of Russian twentieth-century art.

The exhibition architecture was developed by GRACE architects and is inspired by the Italian architect and designer Carlo Scarpa. It features three types of exhibition spaces—the shrine, the archive, and the museum—each featuring a different angle of display surfaces covered in pleated fabric. These three types sum up the experience of the research team and reflect an alternative
approach to art history, one outside the main paths of modernism that revives interest in esoteric practices and various forms of “secret knowledge.”

The performative part of the project focuses on esoteric movement and dance practices and includes performances by the anonymous artists of VASYARUN (Moscow), whose works are partly based on George Gurdjieff’s Fourth Way, and by eurythmist Martje Brandsma (Netherlands/Switzerland), who offers her interpretation of the ideas of Rudolf Steiner’s school of eurythmy.

*Curators: Katya Inozemtseva, Andrey Misiano*

*Research team: Daria Bobrenko, Oksana Polyakova, Anastasia Chebotareva*

*Research advisors: Alexey Ulko, Boris Chukhovich, Oleg Shishkin*

*Exhibition architecture: GRACE (Ekaterina Golovatyuk, Giacomo Cantoni, Ksenia Bisti, Ivano Viceconte)*

*Artists:*


**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

UNIQLO

UNIQLO designs functional, innovative, and affordable apparel. The LifeWear line’s DNA is high quality, simplicity, longevity, and trendiness regardless of a person’s lifestyle or style.

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.

INGOSSTRAKH

One of the leading Russian insurers, Ingosstrakh has been a major player in both the Russian and international markets since 1947.

Ingosstrakh is authorized to handle all types of property insurance, private medical and accident and health insurance services specified in Article 32.9 of the Insurance Law of the Russian Federation, as well as reinsurance services. The company has branches in 251 locations throughout Russia, as well as branches and subsidiaries worldwide.

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.