



**GARAGE**

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# Bureau des transmissions

Today, the activities of most museums are determined by a hierarchy in which education programs are secondary to exhibition projects. Despite such asymmetry, the role of education in contemporary culture has dramatically increased since the mid-2000s, which has allowed art theorist Irit Rogoff to speak of an “educational turn in curating.” Parallel to this turn, new hybrid practices are emerging and being employed actively at the intersection of art and education, for which artist and Director of Adult and Academic Programs at MoMA Pablo Helguera has coined the term “transpedagogy.”

An experimental project developed by the Museum’s Education and Exhibition departments, *Bureau des transmissions* is not only a test lab or an intuitional exercise to improve cooperation between museum departments, but also an attempt to produce an alternative model of relations within the museum and in its social environment. By creating a free and open space—a welcoming environment whose mobility is reflected in its modular architecture—the project encourages and fosters practices that explore interhuman relations (in particular, cooperation and engagement). Presented as a forum with artists’ interventions, *Bureau des transmissions* functions as a continuous performance, a game, a theater piece, a platform for encounters between communities, a program of masterclasses, and a series of meetings with the artists and educators involved in the project. Through this variety of activities, it encourages visitors to look at educational strategies as an integral part of the life of the contemporary museum.

*Bureau des transmissions* marks ten years of education programs at Garage. During this period, the Museum has organized numerous lectures, discussions, masterclasses, and reading groups, and in 2018 it launched a long-term collaboration with the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, which will educate a new generation of museum professionals. This project has been inspired and informed by French philosopher Jacques Rancière’s *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987), which encourages educators to see students as intellectual equals, and the ideas of absolute academic freedom and “university without condition” suggested by Rancière’s compatriot, poststructuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida (*Without Alibi*, 2002). Borrowed from the art historian Claude-Hubert

**March 8–May 15**

Tatot, the original French title—which means “signal office”—refers to a place where important, usually military, information is communicated. Invoking telegraph, radio, fiber optics or any other means of generating vital connectivity, the title suggests that contemporary museums have to be competent in a variety of fields: as well as research centers and incubators for new art they act, as platforms for educational experiments.

Our prediction is that future museums, like universities, will be organized as campuses, where artists act as experts, art as teaching aids, and education takes on the role of social activism. The increasing focus on education in contemporary museums is not surprising if one looks at their structure. Unlike classical museums, they are not based on royal or aristocratic collections, but gravitate toward the university tradition of displaying objects. It is in university collections, with their conceptual classifications, where knowledge is freed from pleasure and aesthetics as such, that the prototype of the museum of contemporary art can be found, and not in nationalized depositories of luxury (regardless of whether collections have been expropriated or donated to the public). As Indian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty points out in *Museums in Late Democracies* (2002), contemporary art museums are increasingly moving away from scientific rigor, academic dogmatism, and didacticism. They are structures which rely on lived experience and admit non-theoretical knowledge, operating outside strict entry quotas.

This booklet presents the voices of artists who have contributed to *Bureau des transmissions*: some polyphonic, retaining the traces of live speech, and others which are thoroughly academically balanced. These meditations present an overview of current ideas on contemporary artistic practices, the role of the viewer, the function of museums, and the importance of education strategies in art.

Iaroslav Volovod,  
Olga Dieva



# Linda Vigdorčika

Museums undoubtedly are changing and through this change, I feel, they are becoming increasingly important not only as institutions that house the information about culture of past and present, but also serve as a platform for self-discovery, reflection, and realization, alternative education and cultivation of creativity and expression, and for public discussions and events on subjects that are important for the local community. It has to be noted though, that most of these things in museums are achieved through means offered by educational programs. This is why, I think, educational programs have come into focus and are so important—through mediation, art can become a powerful tool to inspire learning, social engagement and create a place that fosters empathy and understanding, which are especially important in modern day society. The complexity of ideas and context in contemporary art create opportunities for various opinions to coexist and empowers people to voice their thoughts, creating space for important conversations.

One of the reasons that draws me as an artist to the educational program is the very personal interaction with my viewer. I don't see myself just as the producer of art—I am also, at the same time, one of the viewers of it and as such it is important for me to reflect about it in a social manner. There is, for me, a great value in this exchange. It gives me opportunities to see new aspects of the themes I'm discussing and to place various ideas in a broader context. As an artist I create the work, but I'm not isolated from the viewer—and just the same—the content of my work is not isolated from the experiences of the viewer.

Art isn't there to just be looked at—art is meant to be experienced, talked about, obsessed over, and puzzled over. And, in my opinion, the task of an educational program in a museum is to create opportunities for this very personal interaction between an artwork and a visitor to happen.



# Arseny Zhilyaev

Education runs in my family. Both of my parents have worked in schools—and my mother still does. I've always been interested in learning and I find it easy to teach people. So, from very early on in my career, I saw education and self-education as a possible element of the artistic gesture. I guess, my most education-oriented project was *Pedagogical Poem*, which took the shape of an education program at the former Museum of the Revolution in Moscow (currently Presnya Museum). There, the opportunity to share knowledge and think together itself was the artistic gesture—not a new one, but newness as such was not so important to us—we were more interested in the ethics of engagement and openness and the democratic value of art as a medium of co-development. Later, it made sense to me to try and bring a new meaning to the Museum of the Revolution as a medium with a huge potential. *Pedagogical Poem* was meant to be a collectively produced work, a work with no single author. And I was happy to see that the community that emerged through it stayed together for several years after the active phase of the project was over.

In general, my interest in the legacy of Soviet experimental museology has helped me see how didactic displays in non-art museums could be used as conceptual narrative installations today. Later, I added role-playing games to installations. Structurally, they are quite similar to installation art but let's say they project installations into a performative dimension. I first attempted to do things with this medium six or seven years ago. I did not have much success with immersive theatre (primarily because of how conservative theatre is). Then I started several contemporary art projects that got cancelled for reasons beyond my control. Luckily, last year me and my collaborator from the world of games Asya Volodina finally presented our *NII SOVRISKOPT* project at Garage. At the moment, my artistic method is based on the use of total installations, whose interactive part is actualised through role-playing games. I believe, although it might be in a lab kind of setting, this allows for a search similar to the life-design projects by the Russian constructivist artists and the life-creating work of the Russian cosmists.



# Olga Jitlina

People often describe what I do as social art or art activism, but to me the humanitarian or human rights agenda in my work is, perhaps not secondary to—but at least inseparable from human emotional needs. Sometimes you're trying to help someone sort out their paperwork or get the delayed pay from their employer and to them it's more important to give you a chocolate bar they bought with their last money.

I try to test political axioms with affect; understand how exceptions happen through love or its absence and how equality and fraternity correlate with the possibility of friendship, emotional generosity, and intense experiences of beauty. I do not believe in community art, but I believe in encounters similar to the one Julio Cortázar describes in *The Distances*.

In this short story, the encounter takes place on a bridge that connects the two unconnectables and like the bridge, this encounter spans two continents, two social groups, two lives, and two personalities.

Such encounters with the Other and with oneself in the Other are dangerous: demanding openness and putting you in a vulnerable position, they can take you to a point of no return, leading to a complete loss of self. I believe that the openness to such encounters and loss of self—along with the ability to seize the moment where this experience can be communicated—is what constitutes an artist.

## Saint Petersburg



**Bogota, Colombia**

# Laagencia

What do we want to learn?

There're so many things we want and need to learn. Maybe that's why we have a school, the garage school, a space that is thought not as a place for teaching and learning art but as somewhere to produce and share knowledge in collaboration with others through art thinking.

Currently as Laagencia we are focusing on learning how to think with (and through) our bodies, both individually and collectively, and that actually requires a big amount of unlearning. Our bodies are so colonized that in order to start moving towards that objective we need to decolonize them, the way we perceive and move through the space, how we dance, even our gestures.

What do we want to teach?

Again, we prefer to think in terms of creating knowledge rather than teaching, is much more interesting, valuable, and pertinent than the simple operation of transmitting.

Recently we've come to know that in one of the indigenous languages from the Amazonian region of Colombia there isn't an equivalent for the word "learn" because of way in which their culture understands the transmission of knowledge; as daily activity that takes place during everyday activities, in their houses, in the kitchen, in the jungle and river while they hunt and fish. So, in that sense we would like to build or even better generate dispositives that somehow create tools and spaces to come together and produce experiences and knowledge that can help us and others to solve, understand and/or answer our needs. Maybe what we will/would like to teach, is how to build Garage Schools.



## Karoline H. Larsen

How does new appear? How can we use the museum space for a rediscovery of ourselves and the world around us? How can I, as an artist, inspire people to rediscover themselves within the museum space? How can we use the museum for a rediscovery of space within ourselves and space between us?

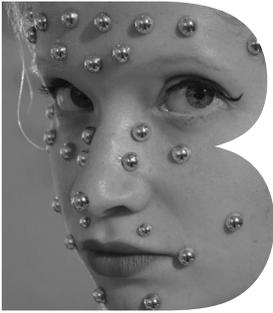
When I work on art as an artist, I am alone with material; physical and mental. Coming deep from within my body I explore this substance in connection to me and to the world. There are no boundaries. Every substance is connected. Thus everything is possible. It's a deep feeling of Joy. For some people the mind is fluid and ever changeable in this moment. For some people this open space will feel too threatening with all possibilities laid out in the open. For others it will feel very joyful.

The creative strategies that we each carry with us and the role of an artist in discovering it, the reinvention of museum space as an actual space of participation giving "an opportunity to renegotiate how each individual can be part of a community." The power of presence.

*Collective Strings* is a physical ever changeable dynamic space open during all exhibition period. It is an invitation for the museum guests to work with their intuitive emotional actions that normally is suppressed by the daily formalized society structure. At all times artists have played the role of political revolutionaries in society. Therapy of the society. Therapy of the museum. Therapy of the public space. Through body and mind actions in the museum space One can create the art work in co-creation.

*Collective Strings* disrupts bodily patterns of movement in the museum space, literally by inviting everyone to track colored traces of ribbons/string in the space. People are offered new pathways in their biochemistry by turning themselves upside-down and getting in touch with each other.

—and it is okay to feel deep joy when participating.



# Lera Lerner

I make socio-poetic art: I explore the origins, ethics, and poetics of spontaneous communication in public spaces.

My method is based on mutuality. Whatever happens within every project happens through shared interests and mutual liking. People I talk about have chosen me to translate their experiences at the margins of society for the museum space. All of my projects are devoted to communities with blurred borders—communities that are hard to define—which encourages viewers to engage in the practices I describe.

People I work with are artists. An artist is a person who has discovered their own way of retelling the world. I believe it is crucial that an artist is honest with themselves in pinpointing their trauma as the key to their artistic method. It is essential to get involved and involve people who are close to you in your projects along with other participants—and start with yourself when you try to revisit what is normal.

I turn to the museum for legitimization, to seize power. The museum is a place where archiving and education take place, and whatever has been museumified becomes a culturally significant phenomenon. My projects are monuments to the creative ambitions of people who often remain invisible to "big culture." I help give their faces back to people who have nourished modernism and continue to generate ideas for contemporary art but are not involved in its production processes. I offer to those switched off from this communication an opportunity to make themselves heard. My projects bring together communities inside and outside of the museum. My main point of focus is the viewer's bias. Then, the changes [made through the project] return to the participants indirectly as people start treating them differently in the city. In my practice, the museum becomes a space for shared inner freedom and empathy towards otherness.

I believe that in future, museums will be less the museums of things and more the museums of ideas to which we try and give material shape. Museums should develop the performative dimension, create spaces for cooperation, and engage visitors in the making of art.

**Saint Petersburg**

# Lera Lerner

In the space of GPS coordinates, constant online presence, check-ins, and googleable things, I value the miracle of chance, and I believe in the need for unplanned spontaneous gestures. I believe that in education we should pay attention to subjectivities and the logic of imaginary solutions; we should give space to practices that are getting lost and support unnecessary research. Artists, participants, and the audience—we all exist in a space of exchange. People I work with are my best teachers. They can control the flow of crowds, cure themselves with color, and hear with their palates... What they offer is unconscious miraculous education driven primarily by love and admiration.

We should learn from natural thinkers and discover superpowers within us. We should develop our inner freedom; learn to accept the world's paradoxes and to enchant the world. In a space like that, knowledge will find you itself if you are attentive and have an open heart.

**Saint Petersburg**



# microsillons

Since the beginning of our existence as the artists' duo *microsillons*, we have searched for contexts from which to experiment how certain norms and rules imposed by the contemporary art world can be challenged. Doing so, we aim to extend the borders of the cultural discourse's field of production and to reflect on the social and political role of art institutions.

Observing that trying to define art usually doesn't lead to more agency for anybody, we prefer to play with it, criticize it, hijack it, use it as a pretext.

In that process, the collective developed the ambition to make the notion of "gallery education" more complex and to question the supposed neutrality and pacifying function of "médiation" by coining the oxymoron of "médiation agonistique", which literally translates as "agonistic mediation".

Doing so, we borrow the term of "agonism" from Chantal Mouffe. For Chantal Mouffe, conflict, confrontation of different political ideas, are not only unavoidable but are also a constituent component of democracy. Thus, she defends the idea of an agonistic pluralism, meaning a radical democracy in which different positions can really confront and live together. She writes:

*[...] rather than trying to conceive institutions which, through supposedly "impartial" procedures, would resolve all conflicts of interest and of value, democracy theoreticians and politicians should work toward the creation of a vibrant "agonistic" public space of contestation [...].*

We are engaging our energy in the creation of such agonistic public spaces where differences and divergences are neither flattened nor becoming excuses to stop a dialogue. We are trying to work with diverging opinions and conflicts rather than to solve them because it is often exactly in those divergences that real questions are raised. Doing so allows us to build a critical relationship toward some key terms that are omnipresent in the gallery education field, like, for example, the subdivision of the public in "target groups". We refuse to consider a group of participants as homogenous simply because the people composing it would share a characteristic (an age or a special need for example). Rather, for diverging opinions to be spoken and confronted in the institution, the gallery educator/

# *microsilions*

## **Geneva, Switzerland**

mediator must be able to set up a context in which everyone feels confident enough to speak, without trying to reduce diversity with the engaged group. The setting up of this common space is a key dimension of our practice.

This term of “agonistic mediation” echoes a tension that is at the heart of our practice and of the practice of many gallery educators of socially engaged artists. It evokes the uncomfortable, sometimes unbearable position of having on the one hand, to respond to the political injunction of justifying the financial support allocated to culture in showing that many people from many different backgrounds are visiting the museums and, on the other hand, the desire to transform those institutions and their discourses in criticizing the cultural status-quo and in making cultural institutions places where agonistic pluralism can be applied (transforming them into spaces where new democratic forms can be experienced before their application are extended in other parts of society). The museums or art centres can thus become a laboratory to transform not only culture but also the broader society.



# Ekaterina Muromtseva

Museums are no longer merely depositories for art—they have become platforms for encounters between art, people, and knowledge. They do not simply show art, but try to explain it to the visitor, provide a broader context and teach people to see a world in a soup can—in this case, the world of the post-war American consumer society. In this context, the artist is not so much a person who provides works for an exhibition, but a mediator between art and the public. As an artist I am very much aware of this situation. On the one hand, I have my projects, but on the other, I act as an educator showing museums and art to people who have had no opportunity to learn about them. This is reflected in my work: when I make something, I do not envisage it as an abstract idea in an ivory tower, accessible only to art professionals, but I ask myself what grandma Zhenya from a Russian village would see in my work and whether I would be able to explain it to her.

*Bureau des transmissions* not only falls in line with what I do as an artist, but also as generally with my life. Over the past six years I have been “translating” contemporary art for elderly people who live in remote areas of the country. Garage will become another place where we can meet and take part in each other’s lives: come up with “Our Response to Kabakov,” organise an artist talk with grandma Zhenya, see young artists’ studios or shoot a video with an elderly ladies’ ensemble.

**Moscow**



# Kirill Savchenkov

When dealing with concepts like *institution*, *viewer*, and *artist*, it is important to envision the ecosystem of relations between them and determine the place of mediation within it. These concepts will also be informed by current cultural policies and the artistic agenda. I think the relations between them are closely connected to *acts of translation and interpretation and transversal policy process*. Through these acts and practices, we can clearly discern the current understanding of the institution, the viewer, and the artist.

The contemporary art museum is one institution whose transformation into a complex space that produces interdisciplinary knowledge in arts and humanities becomes visible. This begs the question of what the viewer sees at the museum—what perspective on the complex reality around us the museum can offer—what the museum can tell us about the cultural policy of the state. Practices of interpretation and translation, the building of associations is often connected with performative mediation that takes place within the spaces of contemporary institutions. It is through this interaction between the spectator, the mediator, and the artwork that a certain optics is developed and therefore knowledge is produced and distributed.

Thus, radically new opportunities for art and encounters with artworks arise—opportunities that are not always suggested by the work itself but come forth in affects. In *institutional scenography*, which at times offers controversial forms of engagement, the viewer can get involved (in the positive and negative sense at the same time) in the production of cultural, political and social scenarios—a kind of *virtuality*. As they try to be inclusive and open to the audience, such spaces also become zones where multiple coordinate systems co-exist and overlap. This implies that the viewer should be prepared for *volatility* in case the axes of the coordinate systems are misaligned, or close coordinate grids become viscous (the beginning and the end cannot be established), which creates the possibility of radical shifts in the interpretation of works, and therefore in artistic experience. The direction of these shifts is determined by a redefinition of the relationship between politics and technology, the body and the mind, what is given and manufactured, *fact and fiction*; the fact that the Internet equals global surveillance; irregular warfare; and the rise of *hybrid political regimes*.



# Anna Tereshkina

I call my method “engaged drawing.” As opposed to automatic recording of events, it is based on how I feel about the people I work with and about myself. Drawing usually implies a certain distance, a subject-object relation between you and what you draw: I’m talking to a person but I see a model, a type or an image. I would like to try and move away from this distanced perspective but from my experience it’s really hard.

At *Nasreddin in Russia* meetings I have to maintain a balance between wanting to get involved in a conversation or a debate, share my experience—and the need to focus on my drawings. But drawing can also be a shield that protects me from conversations I do not want to take part in.

If I were Nasreddin’s sister and came to Moscow from Siberia to work, I would get a job at Garage as a mediator and sneak in everyone I like, if they can’t afford a ticket.

**Saint Petersburg**

# Event schedule

## **March 7–May 15**

*Collective Strings*: Participatory installation  
by Karoline H. Larsen

*microsilions* collective: *The Ladder Café*

*Translation Wardrobe*: A game installation  
by Linda Vigdorčika

## **March 7, 18:30–19:30**

## **March 8, 16:00–17:00**

## **March 9, 13:00–14:00**

Workshops with the artist Karoline H. Larsen

## **March 15, 19:30–21:00**

"Pedagogical Poems." A lecture  
by Arseny Zhilyaev

## **March 21, 19:30–20:30**

Stage performance of the short story "Adar",  
director Olga Jitlina

## **March 23, 18:00–19:30**

Artist talk over a cup of tea with Olga Jitlina  
and Anna Tereshkina about their project  
*Nasreddin in Russia*

## **March 24–27**

*1597 Seconds*: A game invented  
by Arseny Zhilyaev and Asya Volodina

## **April 3–May 15**

*Fireworks and Gunpowder*: A board game  
invented by Kirill Savchenkov

## **March 30, 15:00–16:00**

Workshop with the artist Linda Vigdorčika:  
"An Interview with Another Me" 12+

## **March 31, 13:00–14:30**

Family workshop with Linda Vigdorčika:  
"Family Stories" for children, grandmas  
and grandpas. 12+

## **April 5, 19:30–21:00**

"Converting a bream into a shoulder":  
Artist-talk with Lera Lerner about  
non-institutional knowledge

## **April 6, 15:00–17:00**

"Introduction to making participatory clothes":  
A workshop by the artist Lera Lerner

## **April 19, 19:30–21:00**

"Beta version of 'the' museum":  
Public talk by the Laagencia bureau  
of artistic projects

## **April 27, 17:30–19:00**

Artist talk with Ekaterina Muromtseva  
about pedagogical practice and participatory  
creative projects involving elderly people

For more information, please visit the Museum's  
website [www.garagemca.org](http://www.garagemca.org)

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