ЖУРНАЛ ФЕМИНИСТСКОЙ ПОСТ-ТОТАЛИТАРНОЙ КРИТИКИ

ИДИОМЫ

A JOURNAL OF FEMINIST POST-TOTALITARIAN CRITICISM
Heresies is an idea-oriented journal devoted to the examination of art and politics from a feminist perspective. We believe that what is commonly called art can have a political impact and that in the making of art and all cultural artifacts our identities as women play a distinct role. We hope that Heresies continues to stimulate dialogue around radical political and aesthetic theory as well as to generate new creative energies among women. It is a place where diversity can be articulated. We are committed to broadening the definition and function of art.

Heresies is published by a collective of feminists, some of whom are also socialists, Marxists, lesbian feminists, or anarchists; our fields include painting, sculpture, writing, curating, literature, anthropology, political science, psychology, art history, printmaking, photography, illustration, and artists' books. While the themes of the individual issues are determined by the collective, each issue has a different volunteer editorial staff composed of members of the mother collective and other women interested in that theme. Heresies provides experience for women who work editorially, in design, and in production. Heresies tries to be accountable to and in touch with the international feminist community.

As women, we are aware that historically the connections between our lives, our arts, and our ideas have been suppressed. Once these connections are clarified, they can function as a means to dissolve the alienation between artist and audience and to understand the relationship between art and politics, work and workers.

As a step toward the demystification of art, we reject the standard relationship of criticism to art within the present system, which has often become the relationship of advertiser to product. We will not advertise a new set of genius-products just because they are made by women. We are not committed to any particular style or aesthetic nor to the competitive mentality that pervades the art world. Our view of feminism is one of process and change, and we feel that through this dialogue we can foster a change in the meaning of art.

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ЖУРНАЛ ФЕМИНИСТСКОЙ ПОСТ-ТОТАЛИТАРНОЙ КРИТИКИ
A JOURNAL OF FEMINIST POST-TOTALITARIAN CRITICISM
From the Russian Editors of *IdiomA*

The end of the colonial era has led to paradigmatic shifts in the humanities and social sciences, making postcolonial discourse a major theoretical influence. Today the collapse of many so-called totalitarian regimes calls for a similar reorientation. *IdiomA* aims to contribute to and challenge methods of cultural analysis — including feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, semiotics, discourse analysis, and others — while explicitly taking into consideration the phenomenon of totalitarian societies.

*IdiomA* has both an international and a cross-disciplinary perspective, following the conviction that contributions from sociology, political science, anthropology, and linguistics can greatly benefit cultural theory. At the same time, we believe that theorizations of culture are to be found not just in scholarly writings but also in artistic practice.

We further believe that the histories of both democratic and totalitarian societies are part of the modern project. The problematics of cultural theory in the West are largely determined by “forgetting” the cultural forms that modernity assumed in other societies, such as the ex-Soviet bloc countries. *IdiomA* will foster interdisciplinary and international dialogues by aiming to reformulate such issues as culture and power, the functioning of ideology, political systems and gender, and strategies of resistance, and by juxtaposing and comparing the cultural mechanisms at work in Eastern and Western societies.

Recent political changes in Eastern Europe made public for the first time the discussions and investigations of “totalitarian” structures in these countries. This easing of censorship, together with improved access to Western sources and historical materials, has resulted in many unorthodox writings on culture and politics, some of which are now becoming available to the Western reader [ed. note: see, e.g., the upcoming work by *IdiomA* editorial committee members Efimova and Manovich, *Russian Essays on Visual Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993)].

“The Philosophical Foundations of Postmodern Culture” workshop was the pioneer in this development; *IdiomA* continues the intellectual exchange between Western and East European scholars and critics.

The Story of *IdiomA*

Alla Efimova

The story begins in 1979 when I was dismembered by an immigration clerk at the border. While transcribing my documents into English she made a clean incision, without a drop of ink, and cut off the *a* from the end of my name. It was thrown into the sea, into the void between the two continents and two idioms. The *a* turned into *aphros* — the white sea foam — and perhaps Aphrodite was born from it and stepped out onto the island of Cyprus, but I was not informed of such an occurrence.

This was the slow sonorous *a*-a-a drawn out by my aunt when she spoke; the punctured *a*, *a*, *a* . . . of my father when he hesitated; the elevated capital *A* of Anna Akhmatova. I missed it but was learning to do without.

No, the story begins in 1989 when I landed in Moscow again. There I met the other editors of *IdiomA* and knew right there and then that my precious letter could be gotten back, although it would be only a prosthesis. We shared many *a*’s: Efimova, Kamenetskaya, Sandomirskaya. The secret *a*’s of women’s sighs, fearful sobs, painful cries, and quiet disappointments. But also the *a* of the Hebrew *aleph* and the Greek *alpha*, the allegory of beginning, the first letter of the alphabet as well as the beginning of writing and signification.

The three of us had the magic number, the magic letter, and the Devil came to us in dreams, or perhaps it was the Angel of Esperanto wearing the leather jacket of an anarchist. We traveled between Moscow and New York, we translated and mistranslated, understood and misunderstood, and finally pieced together this tower of Babel on the pages of *Heresies*. And this is where our story ends and the real story of *IdiomA* begins.

Hopefully the reader will react to it with the surprise *a*-*hal* of recognition and understanding. But if the texts remain obscure, just remember that the *A* also belongs to anti- and against . . .
История Идиомы

Алла Ефимова

Эта история началась в 1979 году, когда во время эмиграции чиновница ОВИРа лишила меня конечностей. Переводя мои документы на английский, она сделала чистый надрез, без капли чернил, и ампутировала «а» с конца моей фамилии. Букву выбросили в океан, в пропасть между двумя континентами и двумя идиомами. «а» стала афросом — белой морской пены — и может быть из неё родилась Афродита, вышедшая на Кипр, но мне об этом не сообщили.

Это было медленное, звучное а-а-а, которое растягивало в разговоре моя тётка; раздробленное а-а-а моего отца, когда он сомневался, и возвышенное Аины Ахматаевой. Я скучала по моей букве, но научилась жить без неё.

Нет, история началась в 1989 году, когда я опять очутилась в Москве. Там я познакомилась с остальными редакторами Идиомы и сразу же поняла, что моя драгоценная буква может быть возвращена, хотя бы как протез. У нас троих было много общих «а» — Алла, Ирина, Наташа. Секретных «а» женских вздохов, испуганных всхлипываний, болезненных рыданий и тихих разочарований. Но, кроме того, «а» еврейского Алеф и греческой Альфы, аллегория начала, первая буква алфавита, начало писма и значения.

У нас троих было волшебное число и магическая буква, и к нам во сне являлся дьявол, или, может быть, это был Ангел Эсперанто в кожаной куртке арахиста. Мы ездили между Нью Йорком и Москвой, переводили и перепутывали, понимали и не понимали ничего, и в конце концов собрали эту Вавилонскую башню на страницах «Херезис». Здесь кончается мы, и Идиома становится историей.

Мы надеемся, что, читая этот номер, вы испытаете «а-а-а» узнавания и понимания. Но если тексты покажутся непонятными — помните, что «а» также стоит во главе слова «анти».

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From the U.S. Editors of Heresies

How interesting this project has been, and how pleased we are that it fell into our laps! One night in the spring of 1991, with minimal notice, two women from Moscow — painter Natalya Kamenetskaya and linguist Irina Sandomirskaya — came to Emma Amos's loft in order to show IdiomA to the Heresies collective and see if we might be interested in publishing it for them so that it might achieve a reasonable level of distribution and become part of an international dialogue. Perestroika, whether one wanted to acknowledge it or not, said Irina, had given rise to real conversation and to finding out who people were as individuals. Used to concealing their stories, women had suddenly started revealing themselves, speaking out, acting out. Exhibitions, events, and articles resulted; IdiomA was created.

Irina and Natasha brought with them typeset Russian essays, English translations, slides, photographs, even color separations. In the Russian tradition of samizdat, or self-publication, they came with their material more or less ready to print. Several women they met in New York, including Heresies founders Elizabeth Hess and Joyce Kozloff, had suggested Heresies as a possible collaborator for IdiomA.

At that moment Heresies was short on funds and short on active members, but everyone who was at the meeting was so impressed and so excited that we ended up saying yes. The preponderant part of the funding came, we’re delighted to say, from the Ms. Foundation for Education and Communication, Inc. Everything else here fell into place as the situation over there, including the Soviet Union as a union, fell apart.

For our overview, Jo Anna Isaak reworked a chapter of her forthcoming book on feminist issues in contemporary art, The Revolutionary Power of Women’s Laughter (Routledge). Happily for Jo as well as for Heresies, Jo’s sabbatical from Hobart and William Smith Colleges coincided with our work on this issue. We are grateful to Jo for spending hours hunting down and labeling photographs when she could have been going fishing, and for allowing us to work in her magical hidden garden with our wonderful designer, Tina Sher. Jo also managed to spend ten days in Moscow and St. Petersburg in late November 1991, accompanied by photographer Susan Unterberg, visiting studios and photographing the work of women artists. Alla Efimova (until recently Yefimov — see her piece on the preceding pages), a member of the original Russian collective who is now pursuing a Ph.D. at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, gave hours of her time to assessing our editorial work on the original translations and to debating the fine points of translation with Heresies’ managing editor.

Bilingual readers will notice that the edited English translations sometimes involve reworking, cutting and pasting, or shortening of the Russian texts. Much
cutting, pasting, and reconstruction also had to be done on the Russian typesetting we were given; sometimes we had only xeroxes to work with. One piece, Linda Nochlin’s classic 1971 essay, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” has been printed only in Russian because it is already extremely well known in English. Jo Anna Isaak’s very long essay has been printed only in English for the sake of economy, but a Russian translation has been produced in Moscow and will be included with copies sold overseas. The production process — the hands-on final phase of putting the actual magazine together — has reflected the spirit and pleasure of connection and collaboration between East and West that has been part of IdiomA’s goal from the outset.

Last but not least, we’re happy to announce that Heresies is truly back on track again after two years of not publishing, funding cuts, disagreements over acceptance of NEA money with strings, losses of many veteran members, repopulation and expansion of the main collective, and a series of significant victories in an extremely disagreeable and prolonged lawsuit. Welcome back, readers!

Avis Lang  Jo Anna Isaak

Tennessee Dixon  Sara Pasti

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REFLECTIONS
OF RESISTANCE:

Women Artists on Both Sides of the Mir

Jo Anna Isaak

Writing in the Idiom A

Idiom A, the title of the first Russian feminist art magazine, the first issue of which you are about to read, is intended to suggest the beginning of a dialogue among women. A is the first letter of many alphabets (alpha, the beginning); in the Russian language it also indicates the feminine gender of nouns. Feminine nouns and most personal names for women end in a (Irina, Natalya, Natasha) or are formed by adding a to the masculine names (Alexandr/Alexandra; Yevgeny/Yevgenya). A woman's name is composed of a first name, a middle name or patronymic formed from her father's first name, and a last name formed from her father's last name or, if she is married, her husband's last name. Anna Ivanova Petrova would be the daughter of Ivan (her father's first name) and wife of Petrov (her husband's last name) or else the daughter of Ivan Petrov. Russians normally address adults who are not relatives or close friends by their first name plus their patronymic. Thus Russian women are daily and doubly encoded by their relationship to their fathers and husbands. A is also frequently used at the end of both masculine and feminine names to form the diminutive.

Many feminine diminutives are derogatory. Baba, depending on the context, can mean "grandmother," "peasant woman," or simply "old woman," but it is also a slang term used in a demeaning or humorous manner by males for adult females in general. Various suffixes ending in a also denote the female in occupations: bibliotekarsha (librarian), tkachikha (textile worker), uborshchitsa (janitor). These simply distinguish female from male workers. However, for the more prestigious professions, the feminine a brings with it decidedly pejorative connotations; it simultaneously names the woman and place in doubt her qualifications for the job. Inzheneresa (engineer), advokatsa (lawyer), vrachikha or doctorsha (doctor) could be either the wife of one of these professionals or a
woman who has practiced these professions but is not adequately skilled or trained. Even for some traditionally female jobs the feminine ending casts doubt upon the woman’s competence: sekretarsha (secretary) suggests someone who spends more time painting her fingernails than typing. Khudozhnitsa (artist) or poetessa (poet) suggests, as does “poetess” in English, affectation and dilettantism. No woman would refer to herself by these feminine names; for to do so would be to undermine her professional status; instead she would adopt the masculine name of the profession. Significantly, uchonyj (scholar) is a masculine noun that has no feminine form. Uchonyaya can be used only as an adjective to mean that a particular woman is a learned person, but there exists no category of female scholars as such to which she could belong. As a learned woman, she is therefore an exception. The word feministka (feminist) is another word very few women would call themselves; it is frequently used as a term of abuse. To write in the idiom a is thus to write in the feminine idiom and simultaneously to write under a sign of negation.

"To write in the idiom a is thus to write in the feminine idiom and simultaneously to write under a sign of negation.”

The project of IdiomA is to initiate an exploration of contemporary representational systems that have determined the social production of sexual difference and gender hierarchy and to raise questions about how women speak and are represented within these systems. Like the French feminists, the group around IdiomA is trying to find a voice for women, a language, “l’écriture feminine.” As Lisa Tickner has pointed out, “The major premise (and promise) of the women’s movement since the sixties has been to find a ‘voice’ for women, intelligible, yet separate from the patriarchal voice, and to reclaim the image of woman from the representations of others.” Reading how woman is constructed as sign in what was, until recently, Soviet society is like entering the futurist play The Worldbackwards. Like many letters of the Russian alphabet that seem reversed to us, the ways in which “woman” is represented is frequently the mirror inversion of the
representation of woman in the West. In looking at the image of women on the other side of this mirror, we have an opportunity (almost as we could with computer image programming) to see how our lot would differ if our image was different.

To undertake this task of writing and righting in the context of the powerful patriarchal syntax of Soviet culture is to initiate a more difficult project than that undertaken in 1968 by the French feminists or by Western feminists in general. Psychoanalytic theory, so

becomes, a woman." Without this intellectual history and without a theory of the construction of subjectivity, discussions of gender take place within the circularity of essentialist, biological paradigms, or collapse into what Irina Sandomirskaya here calls the sexual "indifference" of totalitarian androgyny.

Even among the intelligentsia and artistic groups in the Soviet Union, there is still a strong resistance to shifting the intellectual debate about gender equality away from its deadlock within binary terms and facile formulations. In a recent interview the prominent Russian writer Tatyana Tolstaya claimed that feminism was really a consequence of the commonplace habit in the West of thinking in terms of stereotypes: "You know what feminists invented: they invented the idea of phallocracy — that the world is bad because it is ruled by men. That is completely ridiculous because, for example, England is ruled by a woman." 2 Tolstaya speaks from within the limitations of essentialist thought, and her statements reveal both the limitations and the sexualisms inherent in construing femininity in these terms. The fact that her opinions are similar to those that would be expressed by the least informed and most unsympathetic members of our society gives us some indication of how widespread are the misgivings and misunderstandings about feminism.

The artist Natalya Nesterova (b.1944) was reluctant to be included in an all-women's art exhibition. She clearly felt the need to distance herself from the category "woman artist": "I haven't got a high esteem for female artists, apart from a few exceptions. Men happen to be more intelligent. Professions that require a lot of wit and intelligence should be done by men, and art is as much a matter of the mind as it is of the heart." When asked about herself, she said, "Me, I am an exception." In spite of such statements, Nesterova is not at all an unsympathetic woman. She wants only the right to forget herself as woman, but her own comments reveal that to do so she must participate in the exclusion or negation of women. Nesterova is an official artist, highly favored by the Artists' Union, to which she was admitted in 1969. Her views are commonplace among the few women who have achieved prominence within male-dominated institutions; the cost of their success can be read in such denigrations of their own sex.

Ironically, Soviet women can be the strongest proponents of male chauvinism. Galina Starovoitova is the only woman in Boris Yeltsin's administration. Rather than see

instrumental in the development of the theoretical formulations of the women's movement in the West has, until recently, been unavailable to Soviet feminist theoreticians. As a result of its suppression, they have been working without an account of the cultural construction of gender. Soviet women do not share the forty years of feminist intellectual work that followed upon Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 statement "One is not born, but rather

image
herself as a forerunner for the equitable participation of women in political life, she repeatedly refers to herself as if she were an aberration, saying that women have no place in political life, thereby making her presence as nonthreatening to her male colleagues as possible and deterring other women from entering the political arena. At the same time, there are many highly politicized Soviet women who, while being very supportive of their female colleagues, would resist being categorized as “women artists” or “women writers” and would not accept the terms of our American feminist debates. Their resistance is grounded in a complex postrevolutionary and postwar intellectual history.

Feminism stands in a particularly vexed position vis-à-vis a number of conflicting currents within both official and unofficial Soviet ideology. With the 1917 revolution came the most extensive social restructuring in modern history, one that arguably, even to this day, articulates the most progressive programs of emancipation for women. The women and men engaged in working out these reforms were not involved in feminist activism in the usual sense; they were not a disenfranchised group with little power, working to improve the condition of women in general. The women’s section of the Bolshevik party, the Zhenotdel, was not an oppositional group, but rather an integral part of the government. A separate feminist movement outside the party was discouraged on the grounds that it could lead to a contingent of labor breaking away from the common class struggle. It was under charges of bourgeois individualism that the Zhenotdel was dismantled in 1930, and these charges resonate in the lives of women today, who are sensitive to the notion that feminism (which they associate much more with current Western feminism than with their own historical women’s movement) is somehow “selfish.” While they may be acutely aware of women’s daily hardships, they are less likely to rectify those wrongs through collective action with other women than to work on behalf of their family or immediate community. Women are quick to point out that conditions are not good for men, either. Also, many Soviet women would avoid participating in a feminist movement because they have developed a deep distrust of all political movements and collective identities, seeing them as infringements on the autonomy of the individual rather than as vehicles of group empowerment. This may be particularly true for women artists and writers who have found in the activity of art making a venue for personal, subjective expression — something denied them in most other areas of their lives. The idea of organizing to secure for themselves and for other women a different kind of treatment or visibility is often seen by them as inimical to what is most important to them in their activity as artists — the exploration of their own subjectivity. I have visited the Soviet Union five times since 1981 and have made scores of studio visits; during that time I came to understand that a good deal of the art I was seeing was political, if only in its assertion of the validity of the personal.

As we become more knowledgeable about the history of the women’s movement in the Soviet Union and more conscious of the obstacles faced by contemporary feminists in these chaotic times as the Commonwealth of Independent States takes shape, our admiration for this fledgling movement associated with *IdiomA* will increase. Their movement may need to recapitulate some developments of Western feminism, including some of our mistakes; it is also possible that the dialogue *IdiomA* initiates may speed them past pitfalls in which we have floundered. On the other hand, these women may help us out of some of our own ruts. There is much to be gained from looking beyond our American or Eurocentric points of reference, to look, not for more problems, but rather for alternatives to our own practices. We know very little about cultural production in countries that are not capitalist or not, at least not yet, caught up in the machinations of commodity fetishism. Nor do we know much about areas, such as the Baltic region, where for decades women have taken the leading role in cultural production. It is only within the past ten years that the discipline of art history in the West has begun to expand its analytical perspective to include non-Western versions of modernism, such as the Russian avant-garde. Western feminist artists and art historians have not yet begun to fathom the importance of the role played by women artists in the development of that practice, nor why the roles for Western women artists were so much more circumscribed during the same period. Our concerns have been conditioned by the conversation of our own feminist community, which at times contributes to our confinement; inevitably we have worked from within a given set of intellectual, political, and artistic paradigms. *IdiomA* is an invitation to expand our conversational community, widen our frame of reference, and look forward beyond the present impasse known to us variously as late capitalism, postmodernism, or postfeminism.

“To undertake this task of writing and righting in the context of the powerful patriarchal syntax of Soviet culture is to initiate a more difficult project than that undertaken in 1968 by the French feminists or by Western feminists in general.”
Women Artists of the Avant-Garde

What amazes Western viewers when first introduced to the art of the Russian avant-garde is the women — the prodigious amount of work produced by the many, many women artists who belonged to this revolutionary art movement of, loosely, 1910–1930. It is the first historical epoch in which women were able to contribute freely as cultural workers, theoreticians, and art educators, and they did so in large numbers, producing works of exceptional merit. The reviews of the Costakis collection shown at the Guggenheim in 1981 focused on what for Western critics was a novel phenomenon: the achievements of women artists. Hilton Kramer wrote, “The Russian avant-garde was the only movement of its kind in which the achievements of women were unquestionably equal to their male colleagues . . .”25 The question that presents itself is why, at this particular historical moment, women came into the forefront of the avant-garde in large numbers and why this did not occur in the West.

Even their contemporary critics were awed by these women. Writing about the women artists of his generation, Benedikt Livshits said, “These were the real Amazons, these Scythian riders.”26 He is referring to the earliest historical references to women in Russia, invoking a legendary society of women who dominated the south of ancient Rus. Information about them comes from early Greek texts, which describe them as skilled riders and warriors as well as astute linguists. (Herodotus reports that they quickly learned the language of the men with whom they briefly consorted, while the men never mastered theirs.) It is interesting that Livshits, who himself worked with the women artists of Russia’s avant-garde, collaborating on what was to be one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of art, describes them in these mythic terms, as if they were legends in their own time.

The myth of the strong Russian woman, like all myths pertaining to women, is something to be wary of; nevertheless, it may have functioned as an enabling myth compared to the debilitating constructions of woman as the “weaker sex,” “the angel of the house,” or the “femme fatale.” In the case of women artists, these alternative constructions become particularly significant. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock have persuasively argued that in England and Europe by the nineteenth century, with the consolidation of a patriarchal bourgeoisie as the dominant class, femininity was constructed as exclusively domestic and maternal, despite the fact that more and more women were of necessity entering the labor force. At the same time, evolving bourgeois notions of the artist associated creativity with everything that was antidomestic, and the Bohemian model of the free-living, sexually energetic, socially alienated “genius” became the stereotype of the artist who was, by this definition, male.27 Art was represented as the ideal of self-fulfilling, creative activity, and its antithesis was proletarian alienated labor, but its full opposite, suggests Pollock, “is the repetitive and self-effacing drudgery of what is called ‘woman’s work.’”28 Through such constructs, artists and women were allotted almost antithetical, yet equally marginalized, roles within Western bourgeois culture.

This historical bifurcation, between woman and artist on the one hand, and artist and participatory member of society on the other, did not take place in Russia because Russia lacked a bourgeoisie of the sort that provided the impetus for developing a comparable ideology of domesticity. In contrast with the middle class in industrializing Europe and America, which had begun to idealize family life, most progressive Russians found such an ideal self-centered. The novelist Nadezhda Khvoshchinskaya spoke for many of them when she wrote that family happiness is the “vulgar happiness of locked-up houses, tidy and orderly; they seem to smile a welcome at the outsider, but they give him nothing but that snug and stupid smile. These cases are simply individual egotism united into family egotism. They are orderly, temperate, and self-satisfied — and totally self-involved.”29 This antifamily sentiment was widespread, and many Russian women began to seek out ways of participating in public life. During the late nineteenth century, numbers of doctors, teachers, artists, and other members of the intelligentsia — hundreds of them women — travelled to the countryside to work toward ameliorating poor living conditions in peasant communities. The women in particular took on this work with the altruism of a religious campaign. Utterly dedicated, living in wretched material conditions, often without the comfort of family or personal relationships, they devoted their lives to improving the lot of the Russian peasants. While these were not feminist movements (these women were more interested in improving the conditions of the peasants than in improving their own circumstances), from their activities the women’s movement emerged and resulted in advances for women in higher education, particularly medicine and education, and in the high visibility of women in leadership.
positions within later revolutionary groups.

Several artists' colonies and art schools, some established by women, were based upon a similar hybrid of philanthropic and democratic strivings. Long before the revolution, there was a well developed tradition of social commitment on the part of both women and artists. A good deal of the work made by the artists in these colonies was based upon folk art and crafts and was intended to be of use to the local population. One of the most prominent members of the early avant-garde was Natalya Goncharova (1881–1962), whose paintings of 1909–1912 depicted the cyclical life and labor of the Russian peasantry. Goncharova’s work was deeply influenced by Russian folk traditions, such as the popular wood-block print (lubok), semiabstract embroidery patterns, ancient Scythian sculpture, wood carvings, and icon paintings. Unlike the cultural appropriations of French artists, who were at this time exploring primitive art imported from France's colonies, the interest in primitive art in Russia was fueled by nationalist sentiment. Such attitudes had considerable influence on the inception of abstract art, which in Russia was to follow a vastly different trajectory from that of abstractionism in the West.

In 1913 Goncharova wrote a remarkable manifesto in which she distinguished Russian art from Western art expressly because of the West’s adherence to archaic notions of individuality and genius: “I shake off the dust of the West and I consider all those people ridiculous and backward who still imitate Western models in the hope of becoming pure painters . . . . Similarly, I find those people ridiculous who advocate individuality and who assume there is some value in their 'I' even when it is extremely limited.” One of her objectives was “[t]o fight against the debased and decomposing doctrine of individualism,
of art for both women and women artists.

Following the Russian revolution, no radical shift in roles was necessary for artists, influenced by utilitarian craft traditions, to turn their energies to such things as housing, clothing, daycare, and training in hygiene and basic literacy. They addressed themselves to mundane material domestic needs, to the petty yet pressing problems of daily life that in Russian are called byt and affect women most directly. For this reason it can be argued that a utilitarian or materialistic art practice is inherently a feminist art practice. A good number of women artists took part in this broad-based feminist activity, and it may be precisely because of their participation that the Russian avant-garde was able to move so quickly from a high art practice to the utilitarian modes of Productivism and Constructivism. Many Constructivist designs for housing, furniture, transport, etc. were never built due to lack of resources and materials, and Soviet industry did not welcome Constructivist artist-engineers. Nevertheless, those artists who addressed themselves to resolving the mundane problems of the home and workplace were the most likely to see their designs realized. Soviet art historian Ludmilla Vachtiova argues that women artists were much more successful in implementing their aesthetic principles than were their less practical male colleagues: "Logically, since a book, dress, or cup obviously appealed more directly to the next door comrade than a painting, almost all women artists in Russia ventured into the field of the 'applied arts' and industrial design... [They] never considered themselves to be heroines or the victims of a cruel fate, but were happy to assert with an unshakable grasp of the facts that they were only 'in the lines of the workers at the art front.'"12

Liubov Popova (1889–1924) and Varvara Stepanova (1894–1958) were instrumental in opening the first State Textile Print Factory in Moscow, where they designed clothing according to Constructivist principles — made from simple components, functional, versatile, easy to wear, easy to mass produce, hygienic, and undecorated except for essentials like pockets, seams, buttons, etc. The actual test of Constructivist principles was in whether or not they appealed to the consumer. In a memoir Popova recounts one of the happiest days of her short life, the day women workers at a factory outlet store selected her clothing over more traditional designs. Rather than the usual trivialization of women’s "handwork," this meant success in Constructivist terms, and it marks the distance from the individualism at the heart of the Western avant-garde.

which is now in a period of agony. . . . In the age of the flowering of individualism, I destroy this holy of holies and refuge of the hidebound as being inappropriate to our contemporary and future way of life."10

Goncharova’s critique of modernism as it was emerging in the West is remarkably similar to that undertaken in the past ten years by many Western feminists, who have worked to dismantle bourgeois notions of individuality, originality, and creativity and have begun to explore the terrain opened up by the deconstruction of the mythic figure of the auteur-artist. This work is central to the feminist project because, as Pollock has pointed out, "it is only feminists who have nothing to lose with the desecration of Genius. The individualism of which the artist is a prime symbol is gender exclusive."11 In its radical reassessment of the function of the artist, the Russian avant-garde is arguably one of the most significant manifestations in the history

TOP: Liubov Popova, work uniform designs for actors at the Free Studio of Yevgeny Meyerhold, State Higher Theater Workshop (GYMTM), 1921.

BOTTOM: Варвара Степанова Varvara Stepanova, costume designs for The Death of Tarlekin, 1922. Photo: Jo Anna Isaac.


OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Вера Мухина Vera Mukhina, Worker and Collective Farmerworker, bronze, h.163 cm., 1937. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
The Tradition of the Nude

Another difference between Russian art and Western art is apparent in the most casual walk through the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg — they do not share the same tradition of the nude. The trajectory that went from the Italian Renaissance’s glorification of the male body as closest replica of its divine maker, to the predominant use of the female nude in the eighteenth century (all those grandes horizontales in putatively mythical situations that the French academy produced in such quantity), to the nineteenth-century equation of the female nude with the sexual availability of the artists’ model/prostitute, to the frequent use of the fragmented or dismembered nude female form in the canonical works of modernism — this is not the history of Russian art. Even during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Russian art was most influenced by the French academy, there was great reservation when it came to depicting the nude body in general and the female body in particular. One notable exception to this general tendency was the proliferation of neoclassical nudes during the period of Socialist Realism. It is interesting to note that aside from the sculptors Sara Lebedeva (1892–1967), who produced a bust of the now infamous founder of the KGB, Felix Dzerzhinsky, and Vera Mukhina (1898–1963), most well known for her gigantic sculpture The Laborer and Collective Farmer (1937), Socialist Realism is remarkable in the history of modern Russian art for the lack of women artists. It may be that in its very representation of woman it precluded their participation. Recently feminist art historians have speculated that Western women artists may have been deterred from participating in the Western avant-garde specifically because so much of the work is modelled upon the distorted, debased, or otherwise fetishized bodies of women.

The European academy’s obsession with the nude functioned to deter Western women artists in another way. The ability to paint the human figure in historical, mythological, or religious subjects gradually became institutionalized as the fundamental criterion of artistic greatness, and the academies exercised control over this criterion of success as well as the means of achieving it. Young ladies were excluded from the life study classes out of a consideration for decorum. In Russia, on the other hand, the nude was not the sine qua non of artistic training; other genres, particularly landscape painting, were highly esteemed, as were the applied arts. Many artists were strong supporters of the Slavophile movement, which stressed Russian themes, particularly landscapes and genre scenes, and asserted their independence from the academy, which had always been identified with Western art, which at that time meant a stultifying neoclassicism. As early as 1840 a series of administrative reforms gradually gave Russian
women had customarily been given cows as models, Thomas Eakins was dismissed for bringing a nude male model into a female life drawing class.) The hegemony of the St. Petersburg Academy had been undermined long before Repin began to reform it. Numerous other organizations provided artistic training and exhibition possibilities. In 1882 seventy-three women painters in St. Petersburg formed their own association to support women artists.

The earliness and relative ease with which women gained access to art education in Russia meant that the women who participated in the avant-garde were the second or third generation of professionally trained artists. This becomes particularly important when we realize that artistic training in the Soviet Union is frequently passed on from one generation to another like a craft or a trade. 

_Vera Miturich-Khlebnikova_ (b. 1954) speaks of her earliest artistic training as part of a family tradition: “At a huge desk of my father’s, artist Mai Miturich, there was a special place for me. That’s how I began to paint thirty years ago. That is also how my father himself began, when the table belonged to his father, Petr Miturich, an artist and inventor” (letter to the author, April 1989). Vera is the granddaughter of Petr Miturich and _Vera Khlebnikova_ (sister of the Victor Khlebnikov) — all artists of the avant-garde. _Irina Starzhenetskaya_ (b. 1943) is the daughter of the well-known stage designer _Tamara Starzhenetskaya_ (b. 1912). For many years mother and daughter have done theatrical collaborations. The costumes and curtains Irina designed for her mother’s sets have influenced her own landscape paintings, particularly in their capacity to convey deep recessional spaces. For several decades now Irina has been working both as a painter in a contemporary mode and with the icon painters’ cooperative in the ancient church in the village of Tarusa, where she lives most of the year. In a conversation with the artist _Dzemma Skule_ (b. 1925), head of the Artists’ Union in Latvia, I learned that not only had her father and mother both been well-known artists but that her son and daughter were artists as well. When I remarked on how infrequently this occurs in the West and how common it is in the Soviet Union, she responded, with a matter-of-factness that reveals a world of difference, “Our passports call us workers, not geniuses.” Clearly the cult of genius was undermined long ago.
Woman as Sign in
The Worldbackwards

I have taken this quick run through the history of Russian art to examine the ways in which alternative somatic and social texts affect the ways in which women assume the roles of woman and of artist. Although conditions have changed greatly since the end of the avant-garde, some of these historical developments still exert considerable influence upon contemporary conditions for both women artists and women in general. When I first went to the Soviet Union in 1981, I was struck by the fact that women are not "hailed," to use Althusser's term, by ubiquitous images of women on billboards, posters, cinema marquees, shop windows, and magazines. Images of women are not used as part of the continuous barrage of exhortation and entrapment that a capitalist society needs "to stimulate buying and anesthetize the injuries of class, race and sex" (Susan Sontag, On Photography). Moreover, I am conscious that women walking in the streets of Moscow are not looked at in the same way, are not the same confection of meanings as they would be on the streets of Paris, Rome, or New York. This consciousness of not being associated with objects of property made me feel more confident, more at liberty when in Moscow. However, when my husband came with me on a subsequent research trip he complained the culture seemed de-eroticized. Ironically, as I learned more about how Soviet women perceive their construction within the dominant representational systems,

I discovered that his response was closer to theirs than was my own.

Artist/ critic Anna Alchuk has pointed out some of the images of heroic womanhood found in the Moscow metro. For example, in Baumanskaya station there is a female figure on a pedestal stepping out of a bay of red marble, wearing a wind-blown, quilted worker's jacket and girded with a holster and revolver. In one hand she holds a grenade, in the other a machine gun. All eight figures in this station, which was built in 1944, have the same
serve to control women’s sexuality and to guarantee manageability in the workplace.

This is a nation in which 92 percent of the women are fully employed and comprise 51 percent of the work force. Here the Equal Rights Amendment has been in effect since 1917. Women do not have to go to court to assert their right to jobs such as fire fighter or garbage collector, as they have done in the U.S., and women are well represented in such professions as medicine and engineering. All of this seems progressive to us, but what we want the right to do, they want the right not to do. “Emancipation is dreadful,” says Ira Zatulovskaya (b. 1954). “I am a victim of emancipation. So are all women here. I’ve tried my heart out to understand you Western women, but obviously I just can’t. In the Soviet Union it is us women who are obliged to do everything.”

Natalya Turnova (b. 1957) explains that it is particularly hard to be a woman artist “because most men think that art is secondary for a woman. Even in families where both husband and wife are artists, what time a woman has left for art is what’s left after cooking, laundry, cleaning, standing in lines, etc. Even if a woman manages to find time for art, she faces the problem of getting supplies and transportation of works. Since you are equal to men and got into this of your own free will, nobody will help you just because you are a woman, though physical strength is not equal at all. Besides, in our country you can get something only if you have certain business connections and personal contacts. It is impossible to obtain anything legally, like a studio, for example. Women are not considered business people; thus, most men with influence prefer not to deal with them. All of these things are ridiculous from the point of view of Art (with a capital A), but these things take a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money. And if, after all this, a woman still has the desire to paint pictures, they have to look as easy and as natural as those painted by a man” (letter to the author, Oct. 1989).

The word that comes up most frequently in conversations with women is peregruzhennost, “overburdening.” The myth of the strong woman, the amazon, is a myth that has recurred in different forms throughout Russian history when agrarian, economic, or military considerations have made excessive demands on the contributions of women. One woman wrote in a recent issue of Moscow News, “Yes, a woman can do everything, but she just doesn’t want to anymore,” and proceeded to compare Soviet women’s emancipation within the labor force to “Atlas putting all their load on the shoulders of...
caryatids." Although it is demonstrable that Soviet women assume more than their share of the burden of labor, the actual power exercised by most Soviet women is severely constrained to a certain familial and ideological zone.

Recently in St. Petersburg I came upon a billboard in which a bikini-clad woman assuming a standard pin-up pose was juxtaposed with an image of a computer. At first I misread the relationship between the two images, thinking the pin-up girl was the visual gambit to call attention to the computer, but the caption read, "Shaping — It is the Style of Life for the Contemporary Woman." This was a self-improvement poster addressed to women. Although the role of the computer was unclear, it could simply have been the signifier of all that was progressive, like the tractor in Soviet posters of the thirties. Now the emphasis was on the appearance of the woman, not on her work potential. In very real terms, however, this billboard was no less about women and work than were the Socialist Realist posters. As job opportunities arise in the emerging entrepreneurial sector and in Western businesses, the call is for young, attractive women to occupy predominantly low-paying, decorative jobs in the service "industry." As the free market brings unemployment in its wake, the education, training, and professional skills of women will likely be sacrificed first — at the moment of writing, 80 percent of the unemployed are women. The subliminal message of this billboard aimed at women is, "Either make yourself look like this, or you'll be out of a job."

Nonetheless, billboards of pin-up girls are still a rarity, even in the streets of St. Petersburg, which has always been the most Western-identified of the Soviet cities. While Western ads and movies are bringing with them increasingly explicit representations of the female body, pornography is not yet part of the everyday sexism of this culture. Ironically, the historical period in which Russian art drew most heavily upon the Western tradition of the nude was the period of Socialist Realism. A 1991 exhibition of Socialist Realist art at the New Tretyakov Gallery displayed more nudity in one room than can be found throughout the entire collection of Russian art in the Russian Museum. Although Andrei Zhdanov, as minister of culture under Stalin, led campaigns against the representation of sexuality, images
of nude women were nonetheless officially encouraged. Under a seemingly perverse strategy, desire was aroused in order to be appropriated. As in Germany under National Socialism, there were many images of female fecundity; bare-breasted harvesters or nursing mothers were very popular, as were nude female athletes or bathing scenes that allowed the artist to depict the nude in numerous postures. Deineka's Football, for example, depicts three nude women chasing a ball. The title provides the same pseudo-rationale for viewing these women from various vantage points as the theme of the judgement of Paris did for the painters of the French Academy. Aleksandr Samokhvalov's After Running (1934) is a classic of this genre. It depicts a female athlete drying her moist, seminude body; her panties are pulled down to reveal a little of her pubic hair. The obsession with the healthy athletic body as a form of sexual sublimation during the Stalinist period is remarkably similar to the mechanisms of libidinal alignment used

"Ironically, the historical period in which Russian art drew most heavily upon the Western tradition of the nude was the period of Socialist Realism."

on us today — twenty pounds lighter, and this girl could be in an ad for Evian water.

The Personal as the Political

For the most part, the Soviet art I saw in the 1980s was made for private reasons and was seen only by a small group of friends. Exhibition space was difficult to come by and had to be arranged through the Artists' Union, an organization that didn't seem to bestir itself too often even on behalf of artists who were members. Most of the artists I met were not members. When I first started visiting artists' studios I found a small and, at least in my experience of visiting women artists, very generous artists' community, one that was tightly knit and highly supportive. One artist would invariably take me to see the work of another. While the work suffered from lack of materials and lack of critical attention, the fact that these women were working in relative
obscurity had its advantages. As one artist put it, "No one sees this work, so it can be totally free." On the other hand, the constraints placed upon official artists manifested themselves in various ways. During the 1970s, a period of relative liberalization, a number of women artists were admitted to the Artists' Union: Tatyana Nazarenko, Natalia Nesterova, T. Nasipova, Olena Bulgakova, M. Tabaka, and A. Vint are among the most well known. No one declined an offer to join the Artists' Union; the benefits (salary, studio, and art supplies) were too great. The price paid for this acceptance was that the artist was to some degree expected to work in the service of the state. Responses ranged from identification with the institution, to small, sanity-preserving subversions.

Tatyana Nazarenko (b.1944) is a figurative painter who was admitted into the Artists' Union in 1969 and in 1972 was awarded the Komsomol prize. Like other members of the Artists' Union, she was sent on field trips to study the life of Soviet people. Her painting of the women construction workers of the Moldavin Hydro Power Station was a typical assignment, yet it shows that interesting work can be produced within the confines of the requirements of Socialist Realism. Like Leger's merging of men and machines, the tubular structure of the huge pipes is echoed in the dwarfed bodies of the women who climb amongst the pipes, patting on insulation by hand. Many of Nazarenko's works, particularly the large-scale historical paintings, can be found in the Tretyakov. In her studio, however, one can find traces of Nazarenko's resistance to her "success." Circus Girl (1984) is a portrait of herself dressed in a bikini doing a precarious high-wire act. Below her the officials of the Artists' Union politely applaud her act, which is all the more remarkable because she is working without even a wire. On her return from a recent trip to the United States, she painted a record of her experiences. Her body is served up in a large chafing dish while a strange assortment of exotic creatures, part animal, part bird, part man, stare down upon
her. A man with the head of a pig and prehensile teeth leers at her while another man, metamorphosing into an as yet indeterminate animal, starts to carve the dish with his fork. Nazarenko’s private and comic resistance to the various molds she was being fitted into is typical of the responses of the women artists who were accepted into the Artists’ Union during the 1970s.

Some of the more recent work, particularly that done by the younger women artists, is overtly political, critical, and controversial. Natalya Turnova (b.1957)

TOP:
Natalya Turnova

BOTTOM:
Елена Келлер
Elena Keller, Runes, o/c, 200x150 cm.

painted large-scale, brightly colored cartoon caricatures of the icons of the Afghan war — the soldiers and sailors and the legitimizing slogans and banners under which they marched. Seen together, everything seems to partake of the innocence and gaiety of a game for small boys. The slogans are fragmented and abstracted almost to the point of unintelligibility, yet enough remains of questions such as “Who Sold Us to Afghanistan?” or the familiar Stalinist slogans “Who Is With Me?” and “The Party Decides Everything” to cause them to be censored from a group exhibition at the Palace of Youth in 1988. In 1989 Turnova began a series of rather irreverent portraits of then-famous, now infamous, public figures. This work takes on a prophetic dimension in the context of the statue smashing and the proliferation of posters and cartoons attacking public figures that took place after the failed coup of August 1991. In her most recent work large-scale portraits are cut out and installed as freestanding sculptures throughout the gallery so that viewers can walk around them, get a sense of their flatness, even have their own photos taken alongside them. It is interesting to compare Turnova’s portraits of Ryazhsky, Voroshilov, Ordzhonikide, Lenin, and Gorbachev with Leon Golub’s portraits of powerful men — Kissinger, Rockefeller, Arafat, and so on. In both cases, the homogeneity of treatment causes the men to become almost anonymous, almost interchangeable. In both series masculinity is explored as masquerade, and power itself is revealed as a put-on. Turnova’s portraits, however, seem more provocative; in part this is a result of reducing these public icons to comic caricatures and in part a result of the context — Soviet citizens, at least until 1991, were not used to seeing their public figures “sent up” in this way. What is most disturbing about Turnova’s portraits is that they are given smiles and made to look a little jaunty, almost what in America would be called fun loving. The effect is truly sinister.

While the political content of Turnova’s work is banner bold, the messages in the paintings of Elena Keller (b.1951) are coded and arcane, more like the half-intelligible traces of a prisoner furiously trying to communicate with the outside world. Seemingly abstract paintings reveal themselves to be political allegories. A random splattering of red against a yellow background becomes, on closer examination, a map of the Soviet Union; in the center a stick figure lies in a grid, or is it caught in a trap? Is this a reference to the internment camps located throughout the Soviet Union, or is the Soviet Union understood to be one large
prison? Both map and trapped human figure are repeated in another painting called *Great Expectations* (1988); this time golden bars rain down upon the figure — a reference to Danae and the shower of gold, or a hope for some spiritual infusion from above, or are these golden bars merely hard currency coming in from the West? Readings are double, multiple, and contradictory. Often words or letters interconnect with iconic signs. To the Decembrists, *Your Affectionate Brother* is a series of red and blue markings that can eventually be read as AKATUI, the initials of the Decembrists. A Letter (1987) is a pictograph, the addressee and message unclear. At times the iconography is so personal, so solipsistic, it precludes any conversation with the outside world. What is clear is an almost inchoate desire to make a mark, to leave a trace, to let someone, anyone, know you exist. Keller is writing in the universal morphology of the human condition; the text is subject to repeated misreadings. In *Runes* (1990) the hieroglyphic markings on one side of the canvas are as unintelligible as the markings on the other side, which may or may not be human figures; what we see may be only our desire to see something formed in our image, or our desire to decipher, to find or impose meaning. In *Constellations* (1987) an intertwined couple may be locked either in an embrace or in combat. Like the game of cat’s cradle, the viewer can see either a cat or a cradle as the hands manipulate the strings. In a painting done in 1988 one can discern the epigraph to Kurt Vonnegut’s book *Cat’s Cradle* — “Give me the strength to change what I can, the grace to leave alone what I can’t, and the sense to know the difference” — which would serve well as the epigraph for Keller’s own work.

Much of the work I saw during my first visits was heavily imbedded in a conversation that Soviet people were just beginning to have with foreigners. This is a country in which many people are absent: they died in the war, they died in the purges, they died during the collectivization, they were sent to prison camps, they emigrated. Svetlana Bogatir (b. 1945) paints translucent silhouettes of people moving somnambulantly along city streets and receding into the vanishing point. These are mute tracings of those who have disappeared yet seem to have a presence, not just in people’s memories but in the streets, the worn stairways, and the thick walls of the buildings, where something of their physical being seems to linger. “I feel that in this room there have been many people here before me and after I am gone there will be others. We
in an investigation of the representation of the self. Unlike many Western women artists, they are not seeking to deconstruct the images of women that have been mass-produced by advertising. Instead, many Soviet women artists seem to be engaged in a private, almost obsessive recording of the self. For example, the bulk of the more than forty years’ work of Clara Golitsina (b. 1925) are self-portraits. In part this is a result of expediency — the artist is always available as model. It is also the result of circumstances. Other paintings have been sold or given to friends; those that remain in the artist’s small apartment are these ones done for herself. When seen together these self-portraits, tracing the narrative of a life in almost novelistic terms, provide a record rarely available to us in paint. They begin with the self-portraits of the artist in young womanhood, in which she seems to be trying to see herself as others see her. If it were not for the steadfast stare of the young woman, these works could be impressionist paintings of a pretty young woman in a sun hat. The gaze, directed at the viewer, will be a constant throughout the years. In later paintings she becomes more purposeful, more direct; the woman now addresses the viewer more confidently. Her hair is cut short, the clothes are simpler, the hat more functional than stylish. The viewer is not provided with distractions; the face fills the picture frame. There is no longer any question; these are self-portraits. Although the recording of time through the face progresses with unflattering objectivity, these are not portraits of someone obsessed with aging but with the process of painting. As viewers of Golitsina’s portraits, we are caught up in this obsession. Like readers of a narrative, we feel obliged to try to read from the repeated physiognomy, to seek the meaning of another’s life, to come to some closure. The portraits do not suggest varying emotions, with one exception — a series of expressionistic, haunting works done in the 1980s after the death of her husband. Afterward there is a hiatus. The last self-portrait I saw was done in 1988; the gaze is now directed towards a book in the artist’s hand, the hat has a colorful bow, a bird sits on her shoulder (a bird the artist found injured on her balcony that has stayed on as a pet). The face is of indeterminate age; were it not for the day on the back, this self-portrait could easily be confused with those of earlier, happier days.

Elena Figurina (b. 1955) also seems to be engaged in an extended self-analysis. Like Golitsina, Figurina received no formal artistic...
training; until recently she worked as an aircraft engineer. Figurina began painting in 1980 with a series of portraits, some of friends, one of Van Gogh, and several self-portraits. These early self-portraits were crude expressionist works, the features highly stylized and distorted, executed with broad, simple strokes. The colors, reduced to a primary palette with red and yellow predominating, are used arbitrarily, and green blotches, reminiscent of Matisse’s fauve period, appear on the face. Figurina’s explorations of the self expand to include family groupings of the artist with her mother, father, and sister. All distinguishing features are minimized, and all members of the family come to look alike. In later works this family resemblance is extended. Groups of people all resembling one another, yet all resembling the artist, are engaged in activities such as walking, picking apples, standing in fields with cows, catching birds, cleaning fish, dancing, playing in the sand, or just standing, either engrossed in quiet contemplation or looking out at us. In a painting called *Masks* (1989) four figures, carrying bright yellow masks, are as devoid of distinguishing features as the masks. Like characters in folk tales, they interact with animals, who in turn take on human characteristics, looking inquisitively or helpfully at the humans painted in the same primary colors. People and animals carry out their activities in the bright, indefinite, and timeless background of Matisse’s dancers, and like Matisse’s figures, their physical bodies are extended or distorted in such a way as to harmonize with their activity or to convey emotion. Stylistically, Figurina’s work is closely associated with Russian primitivism and the folk art revived by artists such as Goncharova, Larionov, and Malevich at the turn of the century. Her figures are engaged in the same tasks and are as simplified and nonindividualized as Goncharova’s peasants. Figurina’s paintings, however, are not a celebration of peasant life; they are engaged in the exploration of subjectivity or the contemplation of something external to the scene in which they find themselves, and they do this with the indefinite determination of characters in a Beckett play.

Vera Mitirich-Khlebnikova has been exploring family memorabilia in her recent work. As her family were all prominent members of the group of Russian Futurists, their personal papers and documents provide a fascinating record of the impact of political changes upon daily life. One collage contains Vera Khlebnikova’s (1891–1941) record book with the test results of her rifle shooting, an activity in which every good Soviet citizen was expected to excel. In a series of silk-screen prints made of Victor Khlebnikov’s correspondence with the Artists’ Union, one can discern the fate of the avant-garde: receipts for art supplies, invoices for commissions, and finally the unemployment card issued to him by the Artists’ Union in 1927, the official way of informing artists their services were no longer required.
There are no nymphets in polar regions.

—Nabokov

Historically, Soviet artists have been very reticent in the exploration of erotica or sexually explicit imagery. Not only nudity but also even sexually suggestive material had been forbidden to artists in several directives issued by the ministry of culture during the Stalinist era. Obviously the ban acted as a deterrent, although as early as 1968 Nonna Gronova and her husband Francisco Infante staged an outdoor performance in the snow in which Nonna posed in the nude while candles melted the snow castle built around her. Though using her own nude body was a transgressive act, Gronova was not exploring sexuality in her performance. While it is impossible to generalize about an entire country, it is fair to say that Soviet culture has not regarded sexuality as the locus of subjectivity. It is not so much that the majority embraced Lenin’s famous “glass of water” theory of sex, but rather that they have not been conditioned by advertising’s eroticization of everyday objects to conceptualize their subject relations in these terms — i.e., to believe that sex is the key to their individuality, the sole means of expressing their most intimate selves or understanding the subjectivity of another. Today, however, in the logic of derepression, which always considers the most censored to be the most significant, many artists are exploring this particular taboo. The representation of something called sex, in this context, is part of a process of emergence. The thriving gay and lesbian community in St. Petersburg, many of whom are artists, have effectively used erotically charged material in art exhibitions and performances to announce their existence, to counter stultifying assumptions of normalcy, to celebrate the body, and to articulate an already constituted but previously repressed set of behaviors and desires. Eroticism is explored as a locus of subjectivity, a venue by which the self may be liberated from its previous incarceration in the de-eroticized communal body constructed within Soviet ideology.
he was an hermaphrodite. In a culture intolerant of even small deviations from the norm, this was cause for an enormous scandal, especially as Vadim’s mother was a prominent party member. Bella Matveeva (b.1961) also explores androgyny and homoerotica in her paintings of highly stylized, Egyptian-looking nudes in which the male and female models seem to blend into one sex. Installations of Matveeva’s paintings sometimes include the living nudes who modelled for them. Her paintings seem uncomplicated offerings of visual pleasure in which threatening knowledge is allayed by the beauty of the images, but the presence of the actual people used in creating the work disturbs the viewer’s passive identification with the illusion of art. Matveeva’s Brechtian strategy of “distanciation” or “defamiliarization” undermines the subject positions of speculation and in doing so, disturbs what Stephen Heath calls the “safety of disavowal” to reveal how these fixed positions of separation-representation-speculation are classically fetishistic: “Think in this respect of the photograph, which seems to sustain exactly this fetishistic structure. The photograph places the subject in a relation of specularity — the glance, holding him pleasurably in the safety of disavowal; at once knowledge — this exists — and a perspective of reassurance — but I am outside this existence . . . the duality rising to the fetishistic category par excellence, that of the beautiful.”

A number of recent exhibitions in both Moscow and St. Petersburg have attempted to address issues of representation and the construction of gender. The curatorial team of Olesya Turkina and Victor Mazin have organized three such exhibitions. The first, called Women in Art (1989), was a retrospective, with sections dedicated to female students of Malevich and Filonov as well as to work from the sixties and seventies, a liberal period in which many women artists were admitted into the Artists’ Union. The second and third exhibitions focused on contemporary art. Influenced by their readings of the new French feminists, these curators attempted to address such issues as art as text, the gender assumptions surrounding textile art, fetishism,
forgery, lesbian love, and hermaphroditism. The theoretical impetus for these exhibitions came from the West, and as the participants themselves note, it is not easy to organize an exhibition about feminist issues in a country where feminism is simply absent as a social or philosophical movement.

Cultural Perestroika

In her recent work Irina Nakhova (b.1955) has been exploring the construction of gender as a by-product of all cultural production. For several years Nakhova has been examining the interstices between process and completion, between fragmentation and wholeness, between the extant and the ruined, between renewal and decay. This began with a series of paintings called Scaffolding, in which the focus was on the scaffolding itself, the process of restoration, not on what was being restored—a natural response to a culture caught up in perestroika. After her visit to Italy she began exploring the ruins of classical antiquity. The perfect beauty of classical art with all its images of the finished, completed man, cleansed of all scoriæ of birth and development, outwardly monolithic, is represented by Nakhova as inwardly riven. In her work the classical body is subject to aging and decay just like the material body. In this representation of classical art Nakhova seems to have discovered, almost as if by accident, the gender assumptions upon which it is based. In her latest works she paints pairs of male and female faces or torsos from antiquity. As classical statuary they show the effects of time upon them in chips and broken limbs, and as material beings, in sagging and wrinkles. All the pairs are cracked; in one set the cracks appear in a random pattern suggesting age or accident, in another the cracks appear along the lines of a perfectly symmetrical grid. The cracks are identical so that the viewer can exchange the pieces like a jigsaw puzzle, and in doing so, the dichotomies between the material body, with its close association to the maternal body, and the classical body, with its claims to completion and perfection, become as apparent as the differences between the male

Беля Матвеева
Беля Матвеева, diptych, o/c.
have to live on the energy produced by their own enthusiasm. Today, as in 1918, enthusiasm seems to be very rich fare. Currently there are almost no government funds to support artistic activity, yet paints, paper, and building materials are gathered, exhibition sites are rehabilitated, and volunteer labor is in abundance. As a result, this is a time rich in creative exhibitions and publications. Making a joke of their straitened circumstances and of the anxiety over food shortages, two artists put on an exhibition at the Marat Guelman gallery that included a huge table loaded with fruit, bread, and sausages they had transported from Odessa; at the opening the audience was invited to feast at the groaning board. As official art institutions flounder, independent curators and critics have been quick to take advantage of the opportunities chaos has created. At the Dom Khudozhnika, or Artists' House, in the New Tretyakov, Yelena Selina and Yelena Romanova were able to organize an exhibition of contemporary art unlike most previous exhibitions sponsored by that institution in that it was political, provocative.

and female bodies to which these dichotomies are inextricability associated.

Maria Konstantinova (b.1955) also reveals some of the gender assumptions of high art by turning painting into "women's work" — making a pillow of Malevich's Suprematist Black Square. To underscore the inversions of identities she signed this piece with both her own and Kasimir Malevich's initials: M.K.K.M. In a prophetic work of 1989 Konstantinova made a large cushion of a red star, propped it against the wall in such a way that it assumed humanoid features (somewhat like a drunk sprawled against a wall). Draped across its chest is a funeral banner that reads "Rest in Peace."

The Icon of Our Times

It is only over there they think that living means you have to eat.

— Dmitry Prigov

As the old order of art production, distribution, exhibition, and critical reception collapses, those with the requisite energy, commitment, and enthusiasm are finding that for the first time their projects can be realized. Ironically, the closest historical comparison is to the activities of the avant-garde just after the Revolution. When Lunacharsky came to Lenin for funds to support the avant-garde, Lenin replied that in such difficult times, artists would

30 Heresies/idioma
and at times very witty. The recurring motif in a number of works was food.

Yelena Elagina (b. 1949) raised the sausage to its appropriate place in the Russian collective consciousness — to the level of The Icon of Our Times. The price and availability of this item is a daily topic of conversation, discussed regularly on the radio and television as if it were one of the leading economic indicators. Elagina’s sausages made of wood are strung together and draped like rosary beads over a wooden cross. Where traditionally one would find scenes from the stations of the cross, one finds instead back-lit illustrations taken from a book distributed to food service employees during the fifties. The book is a safety manual instructing people on the proper procedure for the handling and cleaning of huge food-processing equipment. There is an implied threat to the dwarfed humans working with this equipment and consequently something suspect about the content of the sausages. In an earlier work Elagina constructed a rebus of the word прокрасное, meaning “sublime” or “beautiful” as well as “red.” Hence, Red Square is not called red in reference to its color or its association with the Bolsheviks but because it is beautiful. On the top of this sublimely beautiful red square Elagina has placed two red enamel cooking pots.

Olga Chernysheva’s (b. 1962) work also focuses on intersections between linguistics and the culinary arts. Using the recipes from The Book of Wholesome Food, a cookbook found in every household during the Stalinist era, she creates sometimes literal versions of the complex confections every good Communist woman was expected to be able to bake. Gessoed canvases coated with what look like layers of cream become sculptural realizations of such old masters as Cake Napoleon or Baiser Rodin. Using a star-shaped pastry cutter (a favorite motif in this cookbook) she makes Soviet pot pies. Along with these sculptural realizations of what was always a utopian art form because the ingredients for these elaborate dishes were never available, Chernysheva repainted illustrations from the cookbook — oddly reified and cropped photos of women’s hands and midriffs. These fragmented body parts shift in connotation from the clinical, as the hands work with strangely complex equipment, to the erotic, as they knead and shape bread dough into breast and vulva formations.

The work of husband-and-wife team Ludmila Skripkina (b. 1965) and Oleg Petrenko (b. 1964), known as The Peppers, is deeply immersed in the banality of быт. The mounds of potatoes, pots of peas, and jars of pork
overwhelm the life they are intended to sustain. In a 1991 installation of their work at the Ronald Feldman gallery in New York, eight hundred pounds of potatoes filled one small room. The walls were covered with a series of paintings devoted entirely to potatoes; potatoes, like faces in a crowd, recede into the horizon, crowding out everything else. Eruptions of peas flow out of canvases, pots, aprons, even bones and breasts. But the abundance suggests only boredom and repetition, not plenitude. The obsession nature of the activity of gathering and preserving the food destroys the idea of enjoyment in eating, just as all sense of pleasure is absent from the charts and graphs documenting such things as the number of hours people spend engaged in what would be considered pleasurable activity: reading, listening to music, going to a museum or the circus or a movie or a concert. As Shkilina explains, "They were studies made of workers in the Severski Factory in Sverdlovsky, a town I grew up in. It is an industrial town that is located at the midpoint in the Soviet Union between Asia and Europe. It is thought of as average or medium point. They were studies done to increase productivity. If a worker went to a concert, did it increase his productivity? If music was played in the workplace, did that increase productivity? Reason controls pleasure. This is not science, but pseudoscientific communism" (interview with the author, Sept. 1991). The charts are comic in their ludicrous ineffectuality and depressing if one thinks of the amount of time wasted in compiling them. Another piece involves a book about the production and distribution of electricity, embedded in an accordion. "The accordion is a comic folk instrument," Petrenko explains. "Playing it causes the book to wheeze back and forth with the old saw of productivity under socialism."

Every so often in the midst of these compilations and charts written in various registers of language, one encounters a sinister note. Diagrams documenting the breakdown of movement coordination, olfactory, and other essential faculties in a dog, caused by the removal of various parts of his cerebellum, suggests the enormous amount of damage done in the name of science. By far the most sinister are those studies done on the reproductive function of women. Petrenko discounts any feminist agenda to their work. "Many Western critics make the mistake of thinking that we are addressing women's problems when we deal with abortion procedures and use these charts of women's gynecological diseases, such as in our Types of Leukorrhea According to Madelsittam, but we are not really concerned about women's problems. We are interested in the language of science, the context in which this language is produced, and the way this language constructs an ideology." There is a certain irony in this statement, for while it may be true that the Peppers' expressed intentions were "to explore the metaphorical workings of the language of science [and] the way ideology works deep inside language," the fact remains that the most powerful examples of these interconnections come from the pseudoscientific material they have collected on the medicalization of women's bodies: the chart of "Data Concerning Discharge as Related to the Degree of Vaginal Cleanliness According to Hermin"; "Classification of Retrodeivation of the Uterus According to Elkin"; the "Diagram of Fallopian Tube Permeability with the Aid of
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The Li
Chemograms Obtained Through Insufflation with the ‘Red Guard’ Device” (the Red Guard being the name given to an actual genealogical device for examining women); “Methods of Provocation,” which seem to be ways thought to expand the cervix, including “Gégor’s Widening Device,” “Placement of Kafka’s Cover on the Cervix of the Uterus,” or “To Drink Some Beer,” are too hilarious and too cruel to be made up. They reveal what feminists in various fields have been exploring for some time: the fantasy link between femininity and pathology, an important component of the political unconscious as it developed within patriarchal configurations. Categorizing femininity as diseased, a source of contamination, or simply enigmatic serves to regulate sexual mores and to establish state policy on public hygiene and state control over women’s labor and reproductive activity. While the Peppers may not categorize their activity as feminist, their exhibition reveals that any charting of the complex nexus of language, science, and ideology has historically been mapped over the dark continent of the female body.

The Last Word

Write and right. Of course they have nothing to do with each other.

— Gertrude Stein

The work of Svetlana Kopystianskaya (b. 1950) is in a very literal sense the ongoing act of finding a language, “l’écriture féminine,” or writing in the idiom A. The subject matter of her paintings is texts — readymades of a reality already written for her, the barrage of bureaucratic language she had found herself daily overwhelmed by. “I don’t go in for political activity,” she says. “I’m very far from politics, but you see, all our newspapers and magazines of the so-called period of stagnation were absolute nonsense. It was absurd. The information they contained had nothing to do with reality, with real life. Several years ago I just copied out from a newspaper a most banal text about a communist subbotnik [someone who is a hard worker for the revolution — working on Saturdays, for example]” (interview with the author, Dec. 1989). One version she called a text with meaning, the other she called a text with no meaning. The lyrical flow of Kopystianskaya’s hand painting of the letters is the only difference. This act was not apolitical as she thought, for as her husband, Boris, points out, when Svetlana began selling her works abroad, officials were very suspicious of these textual works: “All the other paintings passed with no problems, but at the Sotheby’s auction a very high-ranking official from the Central Committee of the Communist Party came, he looked at the works with texts, and he got very nervous wanting to know what was said in the texts. Someone made a joke that the texts were significant state secrets. This just illustrates the fact that all texts are treated from the political point of view. For example, it’s forbidden to take xerox machines into the U.S.S.R., but you can bring cameras and video-cameras.”

It was in the midst of this textual overproduction and censorship that Kopystianskaya began her subversion of the constitutive power of language. In her landscape paintings, composed of handwritten texts, she reverses the viewer’s habitual relation to language — rather than looking through the printed word to the meaning it is intended to convey, the viewer is invited to look at it. In this manipulation of attention, the materiality of language is foregrounded. The movements of semantic and narrative construction are suspended or reversed; the conventional ground, the transparent medium of language, usurps the place of the narrative. Her intention, however, is not just to reduce language to its surfaces, but rather to invest the condition of any sign’s visibility. To see the landscape and to read the text are two incompatible operations that exclude one another because they require different adjustments. The texts are passages from famous Russian novels that have so described the Russian landscape it is impossible to perceive it except through this screen of language which turns all into a paysage moralisé — a landscape onto which man imprints and from which he seeks to extract meaning. It is not the “real” that Kopystianskaya intended to reclaim; rather, she was motivated by the sense that her voice, her vision, had been silenced by what she describes as “the oppressive role of literature in the Russian visual arts; literature drives the visual properties of an artwork into the background.” In Kopystianskaya’s landscapes the viewer is asked to let go of the imposed significance and focus instead upon something far more elusive, something that is only artistic transparency and without substance.

No closure to this essay is possible. As we continue to expand our conversational community, the numbers of women artists will always be in excess of our ability to provide supportive commentary. This magazine is no more than a beginning, part of an ongoing commitment “to do immediately for living
women artists what we can only do belatedly
for those in the past — write them into
history." What is hoped for is that the act of
writing will change the very history it records.
After the publication of *Idiom A* it will no longer
be possible for curators or gallery directors to
say as several have done, that they didn’t
include any women artists in their exhibition of
Russian art because they couldn’t find any. To
write in the *Idiom A* is no longer to write in the
subjunctive, but instead to write in the
conditional or future tense, an interrogative
mood that asks, “Why not?” and looks forward
to a time that will be different.

At the beginning of this century Virginia
Woolf explained women’s absence from history
and from cultural production in terms of the
metaphor of the mirror: “Women have
served all these centuries as looking-glasses
possessing the magic and delicious power of
reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural
size.” It was an important role, she argues; it
enabled men to go out on the stage of history
and do what needed to be done. We have
begun to look for ourselves in this mirror but
have found little in the way of resemblance,
only ready-made reflections. Still, the process of
looking for ourselves has revealed something
of the workings of this apparatus. In an
interesting linguistic coincidence Lacan would
appreciate, *mir* in Russian means “world.”
According to Lacanian theory, we fashion and
re-fashion ourselves through these necessary
and constitutive repeated encounters with the
mirror. There is no place else we can look for a
more accurate image than to this apparatus
that can provide only fragmentary
misrecognition. The question that feminists on
both sides of the mirror are now considering is
what the mir would look like if we were to turn
that magic and delicious power” women have
bestowed on reflecting the figure of woman at,
say, just its natural size. *Miru mir.*

1 Ulia Tzine, “Images of women and la peinture
féminine,” Nancy Spero (London: ICA/Fruitmarket

2 Tatiana Tolstaya, “An interview with Tatiana Tolstaya,”

3 Natalya Nesterova, quoted in Pauline Michelsen,
*Belles des Arts,* A *Chicken Is No Bird* (Amsterdam &

4 While the legislative reforms that took place during the
Soviet period granting women equal access with men
to education and professional training, equal
opportunities in employment, remuneration, and social
and political activity, etc., were more often proclaimed
than enacted, the very fact of having this equity
proclaimed and written into law marks an advance over
the majority of industrialized countries even now.

5 Hilton Kramer, *New York Times Magazine,* Oct. 11,

6 Benedikt Livshits, *Polutoraglayzi strelets* (Moscow/Leningrad, 1933), p. 143. For an account of the
legend of the Amazons as it forms part of the early
history of Russian women, see Dorothy Atkinson,
“Society and the Sexes in the Russian Past,” in
Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin, and Gail Warshosky
Lapidus, eds., *Women in Russia* (Stanford: Stanford

7 Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses:
Women, Art and Ideology* (London: Routledge and


9 Quoted in Barbara Apern Engel, *Mothers and
Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-
Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

10 Natalya Goncharova, “Preface to Catalogue of One-Man
[sic] Exhibition, 1913,” *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde,

11 Griselda Pollock, Vision and Difference: Femininity,
Feminism and the Histories of Art (London and New

12 Ludmilla Vachtova, “The Russian Woman and Her
Avant-Garde,” in *Women Artists of the Russian Avant-
Garde 1910-1930* (Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska,
1979), pp. 43–44.

13 Alison Hilton, “Bases of the New Creation”; Women
Artist and Constructivism,” *Arts Magazine,* Oct. 1980,
p. 142.

14 Sobko, N. P. “Russkoe iskusstvo v 1886” *Russian art
in 1886* (Leningrad: Public Library, Manuscript Division
(Fond 708, ed. ikr. 62).

15 Anna Aichuk, “The Silent Sex,” *A Chicken Is No Bird,*
pp. 49–54.

16 Ira Zatulovskaya, quoted in *A Chicken Is No Bird,*
p. 69.

17 “Angry Women Demand Change,” Moskovskie Novosti,
June 15, 1988, cited in Francine du Piessx Gray,
*Soviet Women: Walking the Tightrope* (New York:

18 See Yelena Khanga, “No Matyoshkas Need Apply,”
The *New York Times,* Monday, November 25, 1991,
OpEd section.

19 The Decembrists attempted to liberalize Russia’s
political, economic, and social systems by staging an
abortive coup in December of 1825.


21 Griselda Pollock, Vision and Difference, p. 15.

22 In a further coincidence, mir also means “peace.”
*Miru mir* means “peace to the world.”

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**TOP:**

Светлана Копытская
Светлана Копытская, Landscape, o/c with acrylic,
79 x 158 cm., 1985. Photo courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery.

**BOTTOM:**

Светлана Копытская
Светлана Копытская, Detail Landscape 1986.
Photo: Jo Anna Isaak.
ПОЧЕМУ НЕ БЫВАЕТ ВЕЛИКИХ ХУДОЖНИЦ?

Линда НОКЛИН

Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?

Linda Nochlin

Editor's note: This classic essay was first published in 1971 in the anthology Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness, edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (Basic Books). The following excerpts have been translated with permission of the author.

Почему не бывает великих художниц? Этот вопрос звучит как упрек на фоне дискуссий по так называемой проблеме женщин. Но подобно большинству вопросов, связанных с дебатами вокруг феминизма, он фальсифицирует сам предмет спора, харизматично подсказывая ответ: "Великих художниц не бывает, потому что женщины не способны на величие". Установки, стоящие за этим вопросом, весьма разнообразны и в разной степени претендуют на интеллектуальную сложность. Иногда приводят "научные" доказательства того, что человеческое существо, наделенное маткой, а не пенисом, вообще не способно создать что-либо существенное, а широкие непредубежденные умы выражают удивление по поводу того, что женщины, несмотря на многие годы относительного равенства — ведь в конце концов, у мужчин тоже бывают трудности — до сих пор не достигли никаких выдающихся вершин в области изобразительного искусства.

Влекомый первым порывом, феминизм заглатывает приманку вместе с крючком и леской и пытается ответить на этот вопрос так, как он сформулирован. В истории отмечается случаи достойных своей славы или мало оцененных художниц, делается попытка реабилитации их довольно скромных, хотя и интересных продуктивных результатов, вновь "открывается" и защищается заслуженная слава художниц натюрморта или последовательниц Давида, доказывается, что Вера Моризо совсем не в тех...
жики степени зависела от Мене, как принято думать - короче, делается все то, что обычно предпринимает история искусства, стремясь доказать важность избранного интегрально забытого или второстепенного художника. Эти попытки, безусловно, страдали ущербом, на них затраченными, поскольку расширяют наши знания и относительно достижений женщин, а относительно истории искусства вообще. Но они никак не опровергают то допущение, которое стоит за вопросом "Почему же бывает великих художниц?" Наоборот, ища ответа на него, они лишь укрепляют его скрытый отрицательный смысл.

Можно попытаться ответить на этот вопрос по-другому, слегка сместив акцент, как это делают многие современные феминистки, которые утверждают, что "величие" женского искусства совсем иного рода. Таким образом постулируется существование самостоятельного и узнаваемого женского стиля, который отличается по формальным и выражение перекрестным и основывается на особенностях положения и социального опыта человека.

На первый взгляд, в этом есть смысл. Социальный опыт женщины вообще и художницы в частности отличается от мужского; поэтому работы группы сознательно объединяющихся женщин, постепенно выделяя в группу женско-того сознания, и на самом деле можно назвать феминистским, если не женским искусством. К сожалению, хотя такое явление и возможно, в истории оно не наблюдалось. Если представителей Дунайской школы, последователей Караваджо, художников круга Гогена, "Синего Всадника" или кубистов можно узнать по ярко выраженным стилистическим и графическим приемам, то женщины в искусстве объединить общим свойством "женственностью" нельзя, так же как нельзя объединить им и писательниц [...]. Никакая общая тонкая субстанция "фемининности" не связывает искусство Артемизии Джентилески, Вижье-Лебрена, Ангелики Кауфманн, Розы Бонэр, Берти Моризо, Сюзанны Ваадон, Кете Кольвини, Барбары Хепберн, Джорджин О'Кифи, Софи Тейбер-Арп, Элен Франкенталер, Бриджет Райли, или Луизы Невельсон, не говоря уже о Сафо, Марии Французской, Дженй Остин, Эмили Бонте, Жорж Санд, Джордж Элиот, Вириджинии Вулф, Гертруде Стайн, Эмили Диккенс, Сильвии Плат и Сьюзан Зонтаг. В каждом отдельном случае женщины - художницы и писательницы, очевидно, ближе к другим писателям и художникам своего круга и времени, чем друг к другу.

Можно сказать: женщины-художницы больше погружены в собственный внутренний мир, более тонки в выбранной технике. Но что из приведенного выше списка больше обращен внутрь, чем Редон, кто умел больше работать с нюансами цвета, чем Кор? Кто более женственен - Вижье-Лебрена или Фрагонар? И разве не в этом дело, что стиль рококо во Франции XVIII века вообще женоподобен, если
его рассматривать в бинарной оппозиции муже-
ственного к женственному? Если признаками женско-
го стиля считать изящество, тонкость и изящес-
ность, то в работе Розы Бонэр "Косяя ярмарка"
нет никакой крупности, а в гигантских холстах
Элли Франкенталер не обнаружится ни изысканно-
сти, ни интригованности. Если женщины изо-
бражают сцены семейной жизни и пишут детские
портреты, то то же самое делали Ян Стен, Шарден
и импрессионисты, и не только Берта Моризо или
Эми Кассат, но и Ренуар или Моне. Проблема коре-
нится в том, что в феминистской концепции женствен-
ности, а скорее в заблуждении - разделении и широ-
кой публикой - относительно природы искусства.
Это наивное представление о том, что искусство яв-
ляется непосредственным личностным выражением
эмоционального опыта художника, переводом лич-
ной жизни в изобразительный ряд.

Искусство не имеет с этим ничего общего, а вели-
кое искусство - тем более. Искусство - это внутрен-
не логический язык форм, который в той или иной
степени, в зависимости от заданных во времени
концепций, определяется системой обозначений,
которую нужно освоить или заново разработать
- или в процессе обучения, или в ходе длительных
экспериментов. Язык искусства материализуется в
цветовом пяти или линии на холсте или листе бу-
маги, в камне, глине, пластике или металле - но он
ни в коем случае не имеет никакого отношения ни
c к выдуманным, ни к доверительному шепоту.

Однако на самом деле, как всем нам известно,
положение в искусстве в прошлом и в настоящем,
также и в сотне других областей, обесценивает
- подавляет и лишает уверенности всех тех - и
женщин в том числе - кому не повезло родиться с
белой кожей, желательно в среднебуржуазной сре-
де и, прежде всего, мужицкой. Дело не в звездах,
не в громках, не в мужественных стихах и не во
внутренних постах организма - дело в институ-
тах и в воспитании, под которым я понимаю все,
что происходит с человеком начиная с того момен-
ta, когда он входит в наш мир символов, знаков и
сигналов. Достаточно увидения на самом деле то,
что у всех превратствах женщинам (как и не-
грим) удается добиться таких блестящих успехов
по ведомству белого мужчины - в науке, политике
и искусстве.

Когда задумывается о мотивах вопроса "Почему
не бывает женщин-художниц", начинаешь пони-
мать, насколько наши представления о том, как ус-
троены мир, обусловлены - и формально формулой
самым важным вопросом. Мы не обнаруживаем в
том, что существуют проблемы Восточной
Азии, проблема бедности, проблема чернокожего
населения, а также женская проблема. Но снача-
ла важно спросить себя: как кто-то эти проблемы
и с какой целью они формулируются именно таким
образом. (Можно освежить в памяти концепцию
"еврейского вопроса" в нацистской Германии) [...]

Таким образом, проблема женского равенства в
искусстве или какой-бы то ни было иной области
не порождается относительной благополучностью,
или, наоборот, злободневностью отдельных
мужчин, нет и возникает в результате самопадает
сти или самоуничтожения отдельных женщин. Она
прородилась в самой природе наших идентификаци
нальных структур, в том мировоззрении, которое они
навязывают индивидууму. Как отмечал болееста
лет тому назад Джон Стюарт Милль, "все то, что
объясняет, представляет нам естественным. Тем
как обычай подчинения женщине мужчины принят
всеми и повсюду, любое отклонение от него, есте
ственное, кажется противостоят"[им]. В своем
большинстве мужчины, на словах выступая за рав
енство, неохотно отказываются от этого "естествен
ного" порядка вещей, сулящего им значитель
ные выгоды. Положение женщины осложняется
тем, что, как справедливо заметил Миль, в отли
ние от прочих угнетенных классов и каст, мужчи
ны требуют от нее не только подчинения, но и сам
отверженной любви. Женщина идентифицирует гре
бование общества, в котором господствует мужчи
на, попадает в зависимость от материальных благ.
Женщины среднего класса есть, что терять, кроме
своих целей. [...]"

В основе этого вопроса лежат многочисленные
наивные, искренние, некритические мнения отно
сительно создания произведения искусства вообще
а также создания выдающегося произведения иску
ства. Сознательно или неосознанно, эти пред
убеждения объединяют в один ряд имена Микелан
джело и Ван Гога, Ренуара и Джексона Поллок
и, помещая их в разряд "Великих" - почетное назва
ние, подтверждено целом рядом академиче
ских ш
Овцы его величества не сопротивлялись, по-видимому, чувству облегчения от освобождения от тяжкого бремени смерти. Вместо того они приняли братскую близость, облегченную гибелью. Многие из них остались в покое, будто бы переживая испытание в состоянии полного спокойствия и безмятежности.

В то время как овцы ни на что не реагировали, в зале начались сильные землетрясения. Даже будто бы оставшиеся в покое овцы были вынуждены подняться и бежать, чтобы спастись от опасности. Они двигались по залу, создавая впечатление хаоса и паники.

Однако, несмотря на хаос, в зале сохранялась атмосфера таинственности и загадочности. Люди и животные, находившиеся там, по-видимому, не были готовы к тому, что произошло, и их сознание было охвачено неизвестностью.

В конце концов, землетрясение прекратилось, и овцы вернулись в свое состояние покоя. В зале осталась тишина и спокойствие, создавая впечатление, что всё произошедшее было лишь галлюцинацией.

В дальнейшем, после этой необычной ситуации, овцы и люди в зале начали восстанавливать свое обычное поведение, но оставалось ждать, как дальнейшее развитие событий.

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Вернувшись к нашему рассказу, следует отметить, что события, описанные выше, оставили глубокий след в душих людей и животных. Их желание вернуться к обычной жизни, несмотря на страх и неизвестность, указывает на их внутреннюю силу и способностьправляться с трудностями.

Возвращение к нормальной жизни овцам и людям было символом надежды и восстановления после драматических событий. Это событие, несомненно, оставит глубокий след в их сознании и в истории зала.

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Среди прочих идей, которые могут быть связаны с данной темой, можно упомянуть идеи о связи между природой и обществом, о влиянии естественных явлений на человеческую жизнь, а также о роли сознания и воля в преодолении трудностей.

В целом, данное событие может стать отправной точкой для дальнейших исследований и обсуждений, связанных с темой взаимодействия естественных явлений и общественной жизни.
ное отношение к роли художника в XIX веке дово- диться до уровня антропологии. Историки искусства, критики и, в последнюю очередь, сами художни- ки придавали искусству характер религии, послед- него оплота высших ценностей в материалистиче- ском мире. Художник в житиях святых XIX века бо- рется с крайне выраженным противопоставлением семьи и общества, подобно христианскому мученику. Общество побивает его камнями и приговаривает к позорному столбу, но в конечном счете он преодолевает злую судьбу - обычно, увы, уже уйдя из жизни - потому что из самой глубины своего сущест- ва он излучает таинственное, священное чувства, связанное с индицием Ксения. Вот безумный Ван Гог совершает подсолнухи, несмотря на эпилептическую припадки и крайнюю нищету; а вот Сезан, проносит отсюда прекрасным прохождением и общественным презрением, революционизирует живопись; Гоген одним экин- ственным жестом отрицает респектабельность и финансово благополучие, удаляется в тро- пики в поисках своего призвания; а Тулуз-Лотрек, уродливый карлик и пьяница, жертвует природе павовым правом аристократическому духу, которо- го обретает в жилых трущобах.

Сейчас ни один серьезный историк искусства не принимает за чистую монету столбовой чистейшую мысль. Однако подсознание исследователей и акаде- мии, из которых он исходит, формируются именно таковой мифологией художественного творчества и сопутствующем ему обстоятельств, хотя он и огово- ривается по поводу социальных влияний, современ- ных вейн, экономических кризисов и т. п. В осно- ве самых искушенных исследований великих худож- ников - конкретно, монографий по истории искусств, которые исходят из концепции художника как первичного, а социальных и институциональных структур, в рамках которых ему довелось жить и работать, как второстепенного фоно фонового фактора - в основе их претендует теория гения как самородка и концепция индивидуального творчества как свободно- го предпринимательства. На такой основе тутс- тиве крупных достижений среди женщин формиру- ется как синтез: если бы в женщине тайлся самородок гениальности, он неизбежно проявился бы. Но он не проявился. Следовательно, женщины не оценины тим самородом, что и требовалось до- казать. Если даже Джотто, безвестный парфюмер, и Ван Гог со своими припадками добились своего, то почему же это не удастся женщинам?

Однако коль скоро мы покинем мир сказок и про- рочества, а вместе этого бросим непредсказуемый взгляд на все социальные структуры и институты, которые когда либо существовали в истории, то ожидается, что и самые вопросы, представляющиеся для историка интересом, формулируются совсем по-дру- му. Можно, например, поинтересоваться, какие об- щественные классы обычно на протяжении истории пользовали художников. Какая часть художников и скульпторов, соединяющихся из семей, в которых отец или другие близкие занимаются искусством или работают в смежных профессиях. [...] Несмотря на значительное число великих отшельцев XIX века, судьбы питаются любовь публики к мелодраме, все же приходится принять, что большая часть ху- дожников, вечно и не очень, в те времена, когда было принято игать по столам родителей, имели злые отцо- художников. В разряде выдающихся ху- дожников сразу приходят в голову имена Деррики Гольдбейна, Рфазеля и Вержини. Даже художники новый эрне - Пикассо, Джакометти и Уайтт принадлежат семьами художников. [...] Когда вопрос об условиях художественной дея- тельности задается корректно (а художественная деятельность выделяется мастером - это лишь часть сюжета, несомненно, придется обсуждать ситуации, сопутствующие работе разума, реализа- ции таланта вообще, а не только таланта художе- ственного. Школа Пиаже в учении о генетической эпистемологии утверждает, что развитие интеллекта и воображения у маленьких детей - т.е. то, что мы называем талантом - это не статическая сущест- венность, а динамическая активность, деятельность данного субъекта в данной ситуации. Далее, исследо- вания в области развития ребенка позволяют за- ключить, что способности развиваются постепенно, незаметно, начиная с самого раннего детства, и ме- ханизмы адаптации и аккомодации социализиро- ванной личности устанавливаются настолько рано, что неискаженному наблюдателю они и в самом де- ле могут показаться врожденной индивиду- альной генеральностью как движущей силы художе- ственного процесса - концепции, сознательно артику- лирована воль толь- ратер. Таки велики искуств- ность с валими непонят- ные взыскы в план втру- ется не струк- ка худож- ников, и.  привлек- Чем что ни- ве ли и равно: есть ли бы мно- можно и все они отцов- XX века ви- более с ряда- кое ху- коле- ключе- м. На фо- то пор. Бюстро; включ. Робуст изна- реи и; были д В X вимс музз.
дарованной или неосознанной — и отказаться от нее не только по соображениям метаисторического характера.

Таким образом, вопрос о том, почему в названных художницах, пришел нас к выводу о том, что искусство не есть свободная, автономная деятельность сверхдолжной личности, на которую "по-вили" художники-предшественники или, совсем неявным образом, "общественные силы". Приведенные будут утверждать, что вся ситуация в искусстве и в плане развития личности художника, и в плане качества его произведения развивается внутри конкретной общественной ситуации, являющейся неотъемлемой частью данной социальной структуры, опосредуется и определяется вполне конкретными социальными институтами, будь то художественные академии, система мезенхема, иконография боговохозяйственного творца, художника-мужчины или изгоя. [...] 

Что же та кукушка женщин, которые на протяжении веков, несмотря на все препятствия, добивались исключительного положения, если их вершин, равно Рембрандту, Микеланджело или Пикасо? Есть ли в них что-нибудь такое, что характеризовало бы их как группу и как личности? Не имея возможности рассмотреть этот вопрос во всех подробностях, я хотела бы выделить несколько свойств: все они, практически без исключений, или имели отцов-художников, или, обычно позднее, в XIX-XX веках вступали в близкие личные отношения с более сильной, доминирующей личностью художника-мужчины. Конечно, эти характеристики не исключают мужчин тоже, как уже отмечалось, у художников — отцов и сыновей. Однако для их коллег женского пола это справедливо всегда без исключений, во всяком случае до последующего времени. Начиная с легендарного скульптора Сабины фон Штайнбах, которой мы обязаны группой южно-арабского собора и кончая Розой Бавен, самой знаменитой анималисткой XIX века, включая таких видных художниц, как Мариетта Робусти, дочь Тинторетто, Лавиния Фонтана, Артемиза Дженнилески, Элизабет Шерон, Виже-Лебре и Ангелика Кауфманн — все, без исключения, были дочерями художников.

В XIX веке Берта Моризо поддерживала тесные взаимоотношения с Мане и впоследствии вышла замуж за его брата, а Мэри Кассет во многом опира- 

лась на стиль своего близкого друга Дега. Тот самый разрыв традиционных связей и отказ от освященных временем приемов, который позволил мужчинам-художникам во второй половине XIX века найти собственные направления, совсем не похоже на пути отцов, дать возможность и женщинам, без дополнительных препятствий, разумеется, также обрести собственное оригинальное лицо. Многие известные художницы недавнего вре-мени, такие, как Сюзанна Валадон, Паула Модерсон-Беккер, Кетге Колвиц или Луиза Невельсон, вышли из неартистической среды, но в то же время многие художницы нового и новейшего времени выходили замуж за коллег.

Интересно было бы выяснить ту роль в формировании женщин-профессионалов, которую играли сносиво-отцы, иногда даже поощряя интересы дочерей. Например, Кэт Хепфорд и Барбара Хепфорд свидетельствуют о влиянии своих отцов, которые сочувствовали дочерям и поддерживали их усилия в области искусства. В отсутствие точных данных, можно лишь собрать случайные сведения о том, имел или не имел места бунт против родительского авторитета среди женщин-художниц, и с чьей стороны — мужчин или женщин — этот бунт был более решительным. Однако ясно одно: для того, чтобы женщина выбрала для себя путь профессиональной деятельности, не говоря уже о профессиональной работе в искусстве, необходимо было обладать известной долей смелости. Так было раньше, так остается и сейчас. Независимо от того, восстает ли женщина — художница против своей семьи или находит в ней поддержку, она все равно должна ощущать в себе готовность к бунту, без чего ей не пробиться себе дорогу в мире искусства, но ни в коем случае не смиряться с ролью жены и матери, единственной ролью, которую автоматически предписывает ей любой общественный институт. Женщины добивались и продолжают добиваться успеха в искусстве только тогда, когда они усваивают, не признаваясь в этом, и используют себе во благо "мужские" свойства — целесообразность, сосредоточенность, упорство и самоотдачу. ■

Печатается с разрешения автора.
Перевод с английского.
Editor’s note: The following essay was written and translated within the U.S.S.R. and then mildly edited here in the U.S. to make it more readily assimilable by Heresies’ readers. In addition, Jo Anna Isaak, who wrote the introductory essay for this issue, sent the author a series of questions about the original manuscript, and we found Irina’s answers so personable and informative that we have included them, unedited, as notes.

Language is an efficient tool of power. The power of the word is exercised in poetry, in advertising, in politics, and in everyday interpersonal relations. Linguistic theory can either clarify the situation, thus performing a liberational function, or it can intentionally obscure the relationship of language to power, thus becoming a kind of esoteric discipline and promoting a magical conditioning of the mind. Both possibilities are directly related to ideology.

The mystique of naming, due to its divine origin, is boundless. No less boundless are Aз да буки - и вея наука
Aз да буки не избавят от мух
Пословицы русского народа

Язык - мощный инструмент социальной власти. Власть слова манипулятивно используется в поэтических произведениях, в рекламе, и в политике, и в практике ежедневных межличностных отношений. Теория языка или проясняет это положение, тем самым стремясь выполнить освободительную функцию, или наоборот, намеренно затемняет, становясь разновидностью эзотерического знания, способствует магическому воздействию языка на сознание. Все это имеет непосредственное отношение к идеологии.

Мистическое отношение к имени, связанное с его божественным присхождением (Бытие: 19.20), в наше время отмечается. Однако на деле советское массовое сознание по отношению к языку отличается крайним irrationalismom. Советский человек не имеет привычки вдумывать...
вать в значение имени, особенно если это имя спускается "сверху" директивным указанием. Вера в мистические свойства знака в нашем обществе неограничена: неограниченны и возможностям манипуляции словесным знаком со стороны власти.

Магия языка, особенно магия письменности, всегда была прерогативой тайного знания (ведического учения, пиthagорейская школа, каббала). В советском обществе функции тайноведения взяла на себя теоретическая лингвистика, достижение которой не известны широким массам и не приняты общественным сознанием. Языковедение ищет свой философский камень, надежно укрывшийся от профанов за сложными теоретическими построениями. Лингвистические идеи не популярны. Вокруг языковедания сложилась мертвая зона молчания - результат того, что в прошлом советская лингвистика все время находилась в опасной близости от идеологической борьбы странской против антимарри...

the possibilities for manipulating the word on behalf of the structures of power. While the magic of language, especially that of writing, has always been the prerogative of arcane knowledge, such as Vedic teaching or the Kabbala, in Soviet society these functions are performed by language theory.

The Soviet mass individual never questions the meaning of words, especially when the word serves as a directive. Nor are the achievements of language theory popularized, its metalanguage being too involved for the layperson. Yet if language is power, then language theory can correctly be defined as the theory of power, and as such it has been involved in a very complicated relationship with politics during the entire history of the U.S.S.R.

Though theoretical controversies waged within Soviet linguistics since the beginning of the totalitarian era have always had a strong political coloring, it is only very recently that the association between language and power has been brought out, as a result of the development of linguistic pragmatics and cognitive studies. Numerous semiprofessional inquiries into Lingua So Vietica as a language of totalitarian oppression have often been inconclusive, due to the lack of a relevant critical paradigm.
In the present essay I would like to analyze two matters that in fact lie at the outskirts of language theory: the role played by a new perestroika icon — the Russian letter "b" — in the transformation of gender as a category of totalitarian thinking as well as the pragmatic context of a symbol under totalitarianism. There is a rich history of Russian writing reform that goes back to the nineteenth century, and the reforms prepared by Russian liberal thinkers and effected by the Bolsheviks in 1917–18 reflect the development from prerevolutionary to postrevolutionary ideologies, a new distribution of ideologems among the sociopolitical discourses produced by different social classes and strata.
му распределила между различными слоями общества. Модель этого нового распределения для нас пока остается неясной.

ЭМАНСИПИРОВАННАЯ ОРФОГРАФИЯ

В 1917-18 годах большевистское правительство, власть которого висит на волоске, выпускает "Декрет о введении новой орфографии" в целях облегчения широким массам усвоения русской грамоты и освобождения школы от непроизводительного труда. Это был акт, символизировавший переход русской культуры на новые классовые позиции, адаптацию ее ценностей к потребностям и возможностям победивших "широких масс". В его первом пункте провозглашалась отмена "лишних" букв - ижицы, фиты, ять, и и твердого знака на конце слова.

Какие события предшествовали этому акту?

Буква "ъ" была заменена на "ь" в конце современного русского языка - церковнославянского. Но, как в церковнославянском, он утратил свое обозначаемое - самостоятельный гласный звук, вспомогательный твердый звук, употреблявшийся на конце слова, так же как правило слово не могло оканчиваться на согласный звук (букву). Кроме того, твердый знак, указанный в отличие от мягкого, на твердое пронесение предшествующего согласного, как незаметный знак, употреблялся для отделения слов при слитном их написании.

В дореволюционном литературном русском языке твердый знак на конце слова был формальным показателем мужского рода. Значимая оппозиция букв "о" и "ъ" как окончаний мужского, женского и среднего родов, соответственно, закреплялась в сознании носителей языка школьными грамматиками; эта оппозиция была актуальна и для грамматик научных, противополагавших свой подход упрощению первых.

Отсутствие огласовки - т.е. отсутствие фонемы (звука) как означаемого для твердого знака -

Александра Дементьева
Alexandra Dementieva, cover for book by Lef Khrutsky documenting the connections between the Mafia and members of the Central Committee of the Communist party.

Ecriture Emancipée

It may seem odd that one of the earliest decrees of the Bolsheviks in the fall of 1917 should have been concerned with such an unimportant matter as spelling. The new government, whose power was still very unstable, issued "The Decree on the Introduction of a New Orthography," the stated aim of which was "to facilitate the access of broad masses to literacy as well as to liberate schools from waste of labor." This action symbolized the transfer of Russian culture to a new class position: the adaptation of its treasures to the needs and possibilities of the victorious proletarian masses. The decree's first article proclaimed the abolition of five letters as "superfluous," among which was the letter ж, or yer, at the end of masculine names.

Yer — now called tverdy znak — was borrowed by the Russian language from its immediate predecessor, Old Slavonic, although even prior to the Old Slavonic period the letter had lost its signified, a special phoneme that was later designated by another letter, О. ж was preserved at the end of a word because,
according to the rules, all words were to have a vowel letter at the end. Besides, in a string of written symbols it functioned to create divisions between words.

In prerevolutionary Russian, yer at the end of the word served as a marker of the masculine gender. The opposition of the letters b, a, and o as morphological flexions for masculine, feminine, and neuter, respectively, was confirmed by school grammars and also, though not in the same oversimplified manner, by scientific grammar. The association of b/a/o with the cognitive metaphor of gender was very close. But in terms of common sense the status of b as a mute letter rendered it somewhat dubious, and as a marker it was obviously excessive. The ideological connotations were what aroused so much controversy; throughout the nineteenth century the question of whether to include or to omit tverdy znak at the end of a word was strongly colored by liberational attitudes.

It should be borne in mind that Old Slavonic was a canonical language that used a modified Greek alphabet, which had been acquired with the Baptism of Rus in the tenth century under the centuries-long influence of Byzantium. It was due to the sacred tradition that this alphabet was preserved; on the whole, all religions are characterized by the sacralization of writing — the Holy Writ — initially observed in pagan cults. The magic of a letter is ascribed to its divine origin. Chinese writing is thus believed to have been created by the god Tzan-tze; Indian writing, by Brahma; Arabian was a revelation to Mohammed by Allah. During the so-called Dark Ages, Latin and Greek alphabets were treated in Christian esoteric teachings as ideographs of the greatest myths, signifying Microcosm and Macrocosm, which can be attributed to the influence of the Kabbala. The Age of Enlightenment brought this tradition to an end, yet even in recent times there have been examples of magical manipulation with letters, as for instance in 1910, in the consecration rites for Westminster Cathedral.

State power in the Russian empire, which included the Church in its structure, was very much on guard against encroachments on the spelling tradition. As the norms of Russian language were being codified, spelling was beginning to acquire more and more political and ideological connotations. "Orthographic freethinking" became a commonplace in nineteenth-century Russian liberal-democratic discourse. The intelligentsia were constantly coming out with suggestions for writing reform, and b was under attack more than any of the other obsolete forms.

"In prerevolutionary Russian, yer at the end of the word served as a marker of the masculine gender."
С начала XIX века складывается целая библиография нетрадиционного правописания. Поначалу это были разновидности индивидуального правописания с самыми разнообразными комбинациями нововведений. С использованием индивидуальной орфографии, по воле авторов, печатаются произведения Д.И.Языков, "Од на заключение мира с готами" Н.Ф.Эмина, сочинения масонского толка. Как и в последующих, более систематических акциях "орфографического вольнодумства" (термин того времени), в подавляющем большинстве предлагаемые ранними авторами системы включают в себя т.н. "безывровое письмо" - опущение твердого знака после твердой согласной на конце слова. Бунт против традиционализма в правописании в дальнейшем концентрируется в кругах ученых - естествоиспытателей. Целый ряд работ по медицине, судебной психиатрии, психологии печатаются в системе безыврового письма. Затем присоединяются педагогические круги, историки. Наконец, повсеместно орфографического вольнодумства охватывает и филологические науки. Так, например, без "ера" печатают в 1879-80 году журнал "Русский филологический вестник". В дальнейшем, к концу 1880 года, твердый знак возвращается на свое место в педагогическом разделе "Вестника". С 1881 года твердый знак восстанавливаются и на титулярном листе журнала, а безывровое письмо сохраняется лишь в отдельных работах и, по-видимому, по особому настойчивым авторам (например, филологов Р.Ф.Брандта и И.А.Блоуана де Куртенэ).

В эпохе с "Русским филологическим "Вестником", по-видимому, отобразились перипетии не столь уж отдаленных от него идеологических сражений. Как бы то ни было, именно в это время имперские власти выпускают специальный циркуляр, запрещающий употребление безыврового письма в официальных просьбах и документах, а также в школьных и студенческих работах. Тем самым орфография бы-

Мария Серебрякова
Maria Serebriskova,
entitled collage, m/m. 1989.

The phenomenon of the politicization of spelling is, by the way, a normal thing. Spelling rules, imposed through didactic teaching in school, are one of the first manifestations of a codified social norm, an early case of social oppression. Spelling rules seem unmotivated by rational considerations, only by those of a social rite. Teaching correct spelling is to some extent teaching desirable social behavior.

Long before the nineteenth century, ideas of writing reform accompanied libertarian discourse in Russia. Peter the Great, the greatest reformist of patriarchal Rus, changed the Russian alphabet by eliminating three "superfluous" letters. Ideas of alphabet and spelling reform were put forward by Enlightenment leaders such as Vassily Trediakovsky and Mikhail Lomonosov, even
though the codification of the Russian language had not yet gone so far as to symbolize the repressive power of the state. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, orthographic protest was no longer a maniacal obsession but a scientifically based liberational ideology shared by all progressive-minded people.

In the book "Obzor predlozhenii po usovershenstovaniyu russkoii orografii" ("A Review of Suggestions on the Improvement of Russian Writing"), published in Moscow in 1865, we find a bibliography of prerevolutionary Russian works that use unconventional spelling. Initially such works use individual systems of writing incorporating various combinations of innovations, and it is rather difficult to systematize them. Some are poetry, some are translations, one is a treatise on the occult. Yet despite the differences in approach, all these individual systems are united in their omission of the letter \( b \). By the late 1840s the revolt against traditionalism in spelling shifts its epicenter to the natural sciences. A number of research papers in medicine and psychology are edited in the non-\( b \) system of writing. Then the movement is joined by historians and theorists of teaching methods. Finally orthographic freethinking spreads among philologists: in 1879–80 the philological journal "Russkii filologicheskii vestnik" is edited without \( b \) at the ends of words. The political climate soon changes, it seems, and the letter returns to where it belongs in the journal’s pedagogical papers: from 1881 on, \( b \) is restored on the front page.
of Filologicheskii vestnik and is omitted in the text of articles only on the special insistence of the authors.

The episode with Russkii filologicheskii vestnik appears to reflect the contemporary political situation — at least it was at that time that the tsarist regime issued a special instruction prohibiting the use of non-b writing in official documents and petitions as well as student essays. Through this document the writing controversy was legally defined within the framework of power, and the authorities proclaimed their right to determine its outcome. Spelling became manifest as ideology and politics. Subsequently philology did not relinquish its own claim on politics, and many special editions, including grammar reference books and dictionaries, continued to be published using unconventional spelling. Meanwhile, the ideological connotations of tverd znak became a matter of common, and not merely specialized, knowledge: for five months during 1911–12, the progressive newspaper Tverskaya Gazeta intentionally omitted this terminal letter as a stylistic device intended to express its liberal political orientation.

The ideological connotations of b came to overshadow its meaning as a masculine marker. Among the libertarians were philologists who were against its abolition, invoking the possible dangers of demolishing a historical morphological system — a position that would usually be labeled reactionary. The burden of history concentrated in this single
letter was becoming irritating, since in practice the letter was functionally useless. Thus a specialized and purely professional critique dealing with a narrow philological issue became a matter of ideological propaganda. “It is to those teachers of ours who act on the approval of the authorities that we are indebted for the bane that poisons our consciousness, not only in matters that refer to language but on the whole,” wrote the brilliant Russian linguist Baudouin de Courtenay concerning adversaries of writing reform. His “on the whole” is

meaningful, because Baudouin was a confirmed democrat, a staunch supporter of human rights and freedoms as well as the autonomy of the individual, a champion of Russia’s oppressed national minorities, and an enemy to violence. He predicted that the collapse of the tsarist regime would make no one sorry, though he conceived of revolution as only a sequence of hardships.

It was due to Baudouin’s theoretical ideas
that he happened to become the most radical social critic of the “cult of the letter,” a metaphor for the bureaucratic empire. He spared no effort to expose the administrative and educational concept of a word as just a string of letters, to unmask the worship of the written, bureaucratic word. His theory of phonemes, which he discovered independently of Ferdinand de Saussure but defined as a psychological/humanized (rather than a systemic) entity, was the result not only of a different philosophy of language but also of a different philosophy in general. The principle of phonemic writing proposed by Baudouin and later realized in the 1917 Bolshevik orthography reform undermined the stability contained in the spirit of the everlasting, authoritative letter; it was an attack on the magic strength derived by the authorities from the “spirit of the letter.” In 1904 Baudouin headed the Committee on Orthography, which approved a draft reform based on his own proposals, but before these ideas were actualized, three revolutions took place in Russia.

Incidentally, Baudouin noted the same (objectionable) spirit of the authoritative letter, though unmarked with imperial connotations, in the Futurists’ poetic projects. He criticized their theories of the “letter as such” and the “word as such”; he protested against their concept of letter as archetype. Baudouin did not recognize in their attempts the theory of structuralism, which was in search of an object that lay deeper than his own scholarly interest. Yet he did see the limitations of his and his colleagues’ activities and stressed that one of their drawbacks was “the desire for a radical destruction of many old ideas without the possibility of introducing new ones instead.”

Thus, at the turn of the twentieth century the interconnection between the power of state and the power of writing was not only identified but also confirmed by the imperial jurisdiction on the one hand and by oppositional liberal democratic scholarly discourse on the other. The idea of a new writing was appealing to the intelligentsia, thanks to the outstanding personal qualities of its proponents: people of exemplary honesty and honor, genuine humanists. Orthographic freethinking turned into a systemic and scholarly ideology of intellectual opposition. The feeling of history, which had been compromised by the reactionary official standpoint and which is incorporated in the “genetic” memory of the language, did not form part of this ideology.

The ideas of Russian orthographic liberalism came true, as we know, after the Great October Revolution. For the new political
forces in power, the act of changing spelling was not only symbolic but actual, a blow to the old culture and the old consciousness. It was intended to undermine one of the most deeply
linging cultural metaphors: gender. The abolition of *b* at the end of a word and its replacement by a meaningful zero literally nullified the meaningful opposition between masculine and feminine represented by *b:*A.³ Henceforth the masculine gender is defined through negation: the gender that is neither feminine nor neuter (traditionally associated with infants). Feminine and neuter build a meaningful context for the masculine gender, which does not exist because it is not defined; they sublimate the absent masculine marker. Here was a prototype of a completely new gender-role distribution pattern, in which infancy was a gender and man existed only as sublimated by woman. It was contrary to the age-old self-concept of the human being simultaneously existing as two oppositional, asymmetrical, and mutually dependent systems, Man and Woman. The culture-based mythologem, formerly imposed by humans on the surrounding reality of both concrete and abstract entities and used by them to learn the world through its similarity to their own kind, was now stripped of its linguistic representation. The creation of *Homo soveticus,* the ideological embodiment of what totalitarianism expects of its subjects and a model of its addressee, began with forcing androgyny on the conceptual sphere. It was also the beginning of a new language — lingua Sovietica, a contemporary form of pseudo-Russian — in which totalitarian power both addresses and models its subject.

### The Creation of the Totalitarian Androgyn

I would like to suggest that the writing reform of 1917 was the earliest indication of what was to be endured by the Soviet people in later periods — in other words, that it seems to have predetermined or programmed the entire economic, political, and social technology of the Soviet power structure, which aimed at establishing itself through the dehumanization of the people.

As Lenin underlined in one of his works, a socialist revolution renovates the world to such an extent that it cannot make use of the formerly existing institutions of power and must demolish them to build up the new socialist ones. This is true not only of the parliament and police but also of the value system preserved and nurtured by the old culture. The change of values involved in the socialist

...шое количество (приводится точная цифра) типографской бумаги и краски.

На самом деле это была акция против "старого" сознания, она была направлена на подрыв одной из самых существенных корневых метафор в картине мира. Упразднение "в" на конце слова и замена его "значимым нульом" (мужь - муж) буквально села к нулю значимую оппозицию мужского и женского рода "в:"a." Отныне значение мужского рода определяется негативно — как не-женское и не-среднее (средний род ассоциируется с ребенком).

Женский и средний роды создали значимое окружение для несуществующего (необозначенного) мужского, сублимируют отсутствие его обозначения. Отмена "в" - буквы со значением категории рода - подорвала тысячелетними складывавшиеся представления человека о самом себе как существе, реализующемся одновременно в двух противоположных, ассиметричных взаимозависимых системах - мужской и женской. Лишилась своей аномальной репрезентаций культурологизующая категория, посредством которой человек наделал антропоморфной двуединой окружения его мир предметных и не-предметных сущностей, позволяя тем самым мир в его подобию себе самому.

Совторение *Homo Sovieticus-* идеологического воплощения ожиданий тоталитарного режима - началось с наложения дуриан-андрогинности в концептуальной сфере человека. За ним последовали социальные, политические, экономические меры, выполняющиеся по программе реформа правописания 1917 года.

Вся история Советского государства - история беспрецедентного физического, экономического, политического, морального, идеологического насилия над человеком - это история сплошного физического уничтожения мужского и болевой дресуры женского населения. "Решение" женского вопроса в СССР фактически произошло за счет эксплуатации мужчины и насилистенного
revolution is the denunciation of the supposedly eternal ethical and esthetic humanitarian treasures that constitute old consciousnes and generate cultural self-identification at any given moment. Put another way, it is the abolition of b. The destruction of the old mentality in the U.S.S.R. was closely related to a new gender ideology. For seventy years building a new society has been effected through the physical extermination of man as the subject of old culture and the exploitation of once culturally marginalized woman. The Soviet androgyne was created through the negation of human values, the annihilation of the ideal of the free and fully rounded personality, the violation of human rights and freedoms, the profanation of morals, and the destruction of cultural and historical.
memory — that is, through the negation of all the positive values developed by our civilization and traditionally applied to man rather than woman.

As the male population was being exterminated in concentration camps and numerous wars, the female underwent socialist training by standing in queues for bread or queues in the waiting rooms of the National Security Committee for information about her repressed relatives, working herself to death in factories and on farms, and bringing up her children to be true leninist-stalinists who disowned their enemy-of-the-people father. The women’s GULag barracks were extreme cases of socialist education. Here the pressure was sometimes lifted enough for the women prisoners to be able to form primitive social structures, something that

Ната Коншева
Nata Konisheva,
The Alexeev Family.
would have been unthinkable in the male zones, where each man was always alone against the rest of the world.

These GULag sororities were socialistic: problems were discussed at meetings and solutions approved by a majority vote. Elected leaders (kapos) were responsible for a just distribution of labor and food and looked for possible compromises with the camp administration. Comradely collectivism, class and political consciousness were valued highly. There were unwritten codes of dignity and chastity, which were hard to observe because of the male administration, but violation was prosecuted by boycott or even ostracism. The norms of democratic socialism and socialist collectivism proved helpful in surviving.

Such patterns were typical of women and of women only, for in no man’s GULag memoirs we can find anything similar. Symptomatically, men and women described different attitudes to camp labor. For men, slavery toll at timber felling or mining was the extreme form of humiliation, an analogue of capital punishment, executed in a torturing manner, which was obviously the intention. For women, work was the only way to feel at one with God and humanity, the only means to preserve the human self. Women who survived adapted the experience of GULag socialism to their lives in freedom. What they had endured was an unforgettable school of life, and their children drank in the education along with the milk, thus adapting to totalitarianism through their mothers’ training. We should also not forget that in the late 1940s girls were separated from boys at school, which suggests the same differentiation of approach indicated by former GULag prisoners. Even women who were not imprisoned underwent the same type of social conditioning within other structures, such as, for example, the bread queues.

The evacuation of women and children to Siberia and Central Asia during World War II produced a very special education: the wartime evacuation sorority is still awaiting its sociologist, but we are always hearing our grandmothers and mothers speak about the wonderful women’s friendships they used to have before and during the war and how happy they are to have had such good female comrades despite the indescribable hardships of everyday life.

Totalitarian androgyny began as a socialist feminist utopia. It became as repressive to women as to men and was an important factor in the establishment of totalitarian control.
women had been actively involved in production, had remained purely male — vacancies involving hard physical labor, which women had to take up for the sake of the survival of their motherland, their children, and themselves, vacancies at a level where no decisions can be made and all initiative muffled. The stereotypical female petty bureaucrat is probably a sublimation of the castration complex, Soviet style, but in actuality her function is very important for the regime: ideally the Soviet people should have no needs. Women acting as petty bureaucrats or inefficient teachers or doctors (especially gynecologists or pediatricians) or salespeople in foodstores are women on whom you depend for survival, and they are positioned to say no to your basic needs. In this way Woman has been exploited as a tool of totalitarian oppression. Socialist realist art, as well as obscene antipatriotic jokes, have made her a symbol of this, and therefore much hate is directed at her.

The social conflicts of recent years are more often represented through and more played out in the realm of the iconography of power. The removal of monuments to Soviet state leaders, the disappearance of the portraits and slogans that had been used as decoration during the pre-perestroika epoch, the return to the prerevolutionary names of streets and cities: all this is evidence of the irrational attitude toward signs cultivated by Soviet power. The iconoclasm is also manifest

социального поведения и в пределах определения поведение советского человека, отвечая экспрессионизму государства и была основой репрессивной государственной идеологии. Тоталитарная власть последовательно уничтожала различия между людьми, искоренив прежде всего самое первое, самое простое — различие рода, способность одной половиной населения воспринимать себя "не такими", как другая половина. Стереотипы геоандрогинности, воспитанный в сознании советских мужчин и женщин, безусловно, можно рассматривать как определяющий фактор, на котором зиждается тоталитарная наука управления.

Освобождение советского человека от исторически закрепленной в нем дихотомии рода, режим избавил его и от исторической ответственности, от пресловутого "бремени истории", от вексовых культурных ценностей, конотативно связанных с этой дихотомией. Так сбылось в советской реальности вынужденное гуманизм демократия и декретирование "лишиший букв" твердого знака.

Социальные брохиения последних лет все чаще представляются на уровне иконографии власти. Демонстрация памятников советским государственным деятелям, отказ от официальных портретов и транспарантов, ставших неотъемлемой частью архитектуры и дизайна, возвращение к дореволюционным названиям улиц городов — все это говорит о живучести воспитанного Советской властью иррационального, мистического отношения к знаку. Перестроенное иконоборчество проявляется и в орфографии. Так что, то нам все чаще сталкиваемся с демонстрацией попытками возврата к старым правописательным нормам, еще всего — восстановлению твердого знака на конце слова. Вновь мужское окончание "ч" — самое простое правило из отмененных в 1917 году на себя функцию компенсации настроений протеста.

Сейчас стало особенно ясно, что идеогенные природы категорий...
циями власти через структуры бессознательного и через табуированную сексуальность не осмыслена в русской культуре, а соответственно - вирупурсив на приспособлен "низкими" жанрами. Пренебрежение по отношению к проблематике рода (Gender) как социального конструируемого факта, отражающего характер распределения власти в обществе, особенно и между мужчинами и женщинами в частности, отсутствия соответствующего дискурса порождает курьезную панораму в политических репрезентациях.

Так, чисто "гендерный" подход - буква "b" на конце мужского имени - приобрел свойство политической лозунга для противоречивых течений - от анархизма до анархизма. Его употребление систематически связывается с программами утверждения или утверждения угрожаемых мужскими ценностями - будь то воспоминания о мире, где существовала патриархальная Русь, или воспевание не менее либеральных успехов дореволюционной России на ниве рыночной экономики и прав личности.

При всей сбивчивости и непоследовательности идеологических течений в современной советской культуре лишь одна тенденция прослеживается ясно - это стремление к реконструкции патриархальных отношений рода, которое наиболее ярко является в себе и общественной жизни, и в дискурсе сексуальности.

Возвращение (или сублимация) некоторых исторических противопоставит их фону новой эротизации. Визуальный "клик" остро-эротический. Китаеве, сексуальные изображения божеств, встречающиеся на каждом шагу - не составляют контраста грубой порнографии, также заполняющей газетные часы, где раньше "обнаженка" присутствовала лишь в плане "объясняющих противоречий буржуазной культуры". Сексуальность господствует в умах наряду с сексуальной маниф "поиска корней". Эпоха исторического материализма сменилась эпохой истор-

“Sexuality reigns supreme alongside the maniacal search for one’s roots. The epoch of historical materialism has given way to the epoch of historical masochism. Historical guilt is experienced ecstatically.”

in orthography. Provocative attempts to restore the old spelling rules, especially the masculine letter at the end of a word, have again assumed clear connotations of social protest. Recently it has become especially clear that the ideogenic nature of gender as a category and its intimate relationship with the techniques of power, through both the structures of the unconscious and taboo sexuality, has not been articulated by Russian culture, and that the gender discourse is occupied by the "low" genres. A general contempt toward regarding gender as a social construct and a lack of appropriate discourse on the subject give rise to a curious muddle in political representations.

Thus the marker b, which is purely genetically-morphological, has acquired the characteristics of a political slogan for conflicting political trends, from monarchical to anarchism. Its usage (or rather, abuse) is constantly being associated with programs to reestablish allegedly forsaken and purely masculine values. Most often b is used to denote patriarchal Mother Rus — a contemporary Russian nationalist myth — or the no less dubious economic and democratic flourishing of capitalist Russia at the turn of the twentieth century. Though current ideological discourse is exceptionally misleading and verbose, there is one unmistakable tendency: the reconstruction of patriarchy.

Patriarchal gender philosophy now reigns in both social life and sexual discourse. The return of history (or rather its sublimation) takes place against a background of extreme eroticization. Visual culture is acutely pornographic. Kitsch fetishes of "old Rus" — sweet pictures of churches and monasteries now found on every corner — pose no contradiction to the porn mags sold openly in the same newspaper stands in which several years ago nudity could be encountered only in the context of the "naked conflicts of bourgeois morality." Sexuality reigns supreme alongside the maniacal search for one’s roots. The epoch of historical materialism has given way to the epoch of historical masochism. Historical guilt is experienced ecstatically. Newly discovered problems are being tackled in the same terms of symbolic, magical manipulation that were first suggested by the Bolshevik cultural revolution. For this reason, the program begun by the 1917 spelling reform is neither outdated nor likely to be discarded by the society in the foreseeable future.
NOTES
1 What I think is wrong with this is the means by which this was achieved. I do not think that many American feminists would admit that the ends justify the means, even if the aim is as noble as that of women's liberation. Another thing that I think is completely wrong is the idea that women's freedom was really achieved. It was only proclaimed, as I tried to show in my paper that the emancipated Soviet woman was another lie which served the aim of her ultimate enslavement — not so much to the man who became irrelevant but to the State, and to the ideology. But the word (in this case, "sexual equality"), whether it is truthful or otherwise, has the power of producing reality. The paradox is that the desired effect was reached in the long run, and Soviet men and women did achieve a sort of angélique (equality), a sexual in-difference (indiscrimination) which was forced on them by political and economic structures. The forced "angelhood" is what I call totalitarian androgyny, and I cannot think of it as a positive move. The collapse of totalitarian system brought about the end of this pseudoandrogyny.

Paradoxically, again, we used to be "equal" (equally denied of freedom of will), the effeminized men and the masculinized women. But the idea of true sexual equality has been so much compromised by the totalitarian practice that I can foretell the lack of success of any women's initiative, let alone feminist pursuit, in the present-day ex-U.S.S.R. for many years to come.

2 I used "sublimet" in the chemical sense of "converting from a solid state to vapor by heat and allowing it to solidify again in order to purify it (sic)" and I very much welcome all the semantic overtones to the metaphor, Freudian or otherwise.

3 As for the connection between the abolition of the androgyny, the attempt of the government to "deliberately" exterminate males, it depends upon how you understand "deliberate." To what extent is the logic of historical process the result of "deliberate" actions of groups of people? Can we speak about deliberate actions when interpreting historical events at all? The only thing I wanted to say is that systems of expression (and writing first and foremost) do not only reflect retrospectively but also program and determine the possible ways of future historical development. As a linguist I will insist on this kabbalistic point. The change of history was preceded (and was pre-determined, and could have been pre-dicted) by the change in the system of writing, and was later on effected in strict accordance with the alterations first introduced in writing — this was the message I was trying to convey.

4 Women's bonding and friendships were not androgy, on the contrary ideal achieved in the U.S.S.R. through severe political and physical repression. Another challenge to feminism, I'm afraid. Unfortunately, sisterhood can be used as a depersonalizing tool, for the destruction, not the creation of the female personality.

5 As for obscene jokes and Socialist Realism: The Statue of Motherland in Volgograd, one of the grandest figures of its kind, was popularly christened "kyopanaya baba" (riveted), euphemistic of and consonant to "yobanaya," which is a very taboo equivalent of the English "fucked," the one which is not reproduced in print, not even in dictionaries.

6 The return of the androgyny is not exactly the reconstruction, but rather the re-articulation (re-formulation) of patriarchy in terms of prerevolutionary male-dominated values. As a phenomenon of politics and economy, perestroika might be a reconstruction of capitalism. In terms of social order and mass culture, it is an attempt at rethinking patriarchy, of re-establishing the male in the centre of the social structure. Of course, not a single man here would admit to the fact. But I was assured of the fact once again by the observation of mass cultural behavior after the coup.

7 I don't know what the consequences are for feminists, but I am certain they are not to be neglected. I do think of myself as a feminist, but I can see that not everything is clear with feminist theory when applied to the Soviet situation. I do believe, though, that whatever problems there might be, feminism remains the only reliable analytical tool in understanding the processes that are going on. Sociologically, politically, and economically, the situation is very confused. In feminist terms, if more definite and can be interpreted as a situation of re-articulation of patriarchy in discourse.
«Близость и дружба между

"Women's bonding and friendships were

женщинами были близостью сестер—

not androgyny, they were sisterhoods — another

еще один идеал, достигнутый в С.С.С.Р.

feminist ideal achieved in the U.S.S.R. through

через жестокое политическое и

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физическое подавление. Пожалуй,

Another challenge to feminism, I'm afraid.”

еще один вызов феминизму.»
It was Sartre, and later Derrida, who referred to the unknowability of the world — and human inability to perceive in it anything beyond solo ipse — as blindness. To unfold the metaphor, one may suggest that if male perception of woman does not involve complete blindness, it at least involves a squint as the contemplating eye tries to get the picture in focus. A smugness, however, tends to accompany the squint.

Like all empirical categories, gender is conventional, and like all conventions, it stands in a certain relation to power. By force of social convention, much of what is allowed to a man is taboo for a woman. It is the notion of femininity that serves to conceptualize the taboo on woman's self-realization. In order to preserve male privilege, patriarchal philosophy cultivates gender as "natural," "innate," "transcendental." The male gaze demonizes and mythologizes woman, ascribing to her name the semantics of the intentional object. Adam, endowed with the power of nomination, introduces limitations to woman's being with the help of a closed-curve frame. Realization of woman's abilities is confined to elementary geometry: the family circle, the vicious circle, the love triangle. To Homo symbolicus, woman is the eternal Other, the non-I of the world. The intentional context/connotations imposed on woman against her will (e.g., the "feminine mystique") alienate her from truth. Woman vainly attempts to prove to herself as well as to others the objectivity of her own existence, and her unverifiable ego results in vanity.

For Gerostratus, therefore, the feminine gender is suicidal. Female suicide is an attempt at destruction of the common cultural property, the symbol. Brandishing an axe, a militant suffragist rushed at Velasquez's Reposing Venus in 1914 (the same year a Russian Jew attacked Repln's masterpiece Ivan the Terrible Killing His Son), thus committing an act of autoagression and leaving on her own accord the world of higher values for that of the tabloid anecdote and madness.
The whole of Western culture has been bred on the symbolization of the female body. Western ethical and aesthetic ideas of the high and the low, as well as the beautiful and the ugly, are simply categorizations of woman’s physical image. We have the Virgin who bore (that is to say, verified) the body of the Savior; projection of guilt onto the sinful female body in the ecstatic self-flagellation and phallic narcissism of sleazy erotica; fear of enslavement (castration) by the very flesh that begat oneself; and the beloved artist’s model, the naked alter ego, an attempt to objectify a man’s own existence and heal his split identity. Western patriarchial culture poses androgyny as an asymmetrical opposition of the objective male ego to the subjective female id.

In the classical European tradition the female is customarily dismembered and visualized “from the neck to the knees.” By contrast, the Russian tradition stresses the woman’s soul through radiant eyes, delicate fingers, thorn-wounded toes. Russian Carnival is not the lowering of the high but primarily the raising of the low, the spiritualization of the animal, the idolization of the whore. The object of physical desire is uplifted to the level of transcendental inspiration. Logos and Sophia, the spiritual counterparts of male and female, mate in astral marriage (Vladimir Solovyov). The eyelike aperture on the head of the male organ looks directly into the Cosmos (Vassily Rosanov). Russian religiosity, Russian nationalism, and Russian statehood are all viewed as feminine (Nikolai Berdiaev): Russia would stifle her own child in her sleep — could sleep him to death, as the saying goes — and not even notice. The Russian “Silver Age” of religious philosophy brilliantly spiritualized male impotence in, for example, Alexandr Blok’s “beautiful lady,” the famous turn-of-the-century family triangles, even Mayakovsky’s Cloud in Pants. To quote Maximilian Voloshin: “Because just as the female being is impregnated by the male in the physical world, so should the male element conceive by the
female in the world of the spirit, to realize itself in creativity. Hence the role of female inspiration in the life of every artist.”

Symbolizing creative energy as a female was to have far-reaching consequences for Russian culture. On the one hand, it paved the way for women’s involvement in the avant-garde aggression of the 1910s and 1920s against traditional culture. On the other, it inspired more than one monumentalist of Socialist Realism to mythologize totalitarian oppression as a victorious female, as in the Motherland, the Party, and so on. Generally speaking, male impotence could be regarded as a principled stance of the Soviet intellectual toward the “Sophia Vlassyevna” (as a popular Soviet song referred to the Soviet power). It was the Russian idea of the spiritual woman that determined the situation of the real woman in art. While in the West the woman is the artist’s model, in Russia she is his muse. In both contexts, however, the female personality must overcome the symbolic power of her sex in order to be included in artistic activities.

The female invasion of the art scene in the West and in Russia was effected through different strategies. In European art history the female identity is established through the conflict of the couple: the genius and his admirer, the teacher and his pupil, the father/husband and his daughter/wife. As Linda Nochlin demonstrates, such a couple is an important institution that socializes the women in the art world and provides a redistribution of artistic influences. Russian women artists chose to overcome the imperative of the symbol not in familial conflicts but rather as part of the social movement for emancipation, against a background of growing self-consciousness. It was rather early that Russian women stopped making concessions to the romantic babble of male professionalism. And while a downtrodden schoolteacher allowed the inexhaustible practical joker Voloshin to turn himself into the mysterious poetess Cherubina de Gabriac, thus assuring her success in the predominantly male literary world, this type of artistic mentorship was being disowned by the sixteen-year-old Marina Tsvetaeva. It was she who first declared her rights in the masculine gender (“I am a poet”). In neither Russian art of the early twentieth century nor that of the Soviet period are there women artists or authoresses or poetesses; there are only artists, authors, and poets, though many of them are women.

Which method has proved more effective, the western European or the Russian? Gunther Veist provides some statistical data: In all of art history only 2 percent of artists were
Женщины реальной в искусстве. Если на Западе она модель художника, в России - его Муз, причем в духе исканий прогрессивной интеллигенции, это Муза "направлением", Муза гражданственная. И в том, и в другом случае, для того, чтобы включиться в художественный процесс, женщина прежде всего властель ее символизированного пола. Очевидно, что в Европе и в России женское вторжение в мужской мир искусства проходило разными путями.

В европейской истории искусства собственное значение женщины утверждается в конфликте пары: таланта и поклоннице, учителя и ученицы, отца и дочери, мужа и жены. Линда Нокки убедительно доказывает важность подобной пары как общеевропейского института, в рамках которого проходит социализация женщины-художницы и соответствующий передел сфер художественных влияний.

Русская художница преодолевала императив символа не в семейном конфликте, а в волнении гражданского движения, на порожденного самосознания. Русская женщина рано перестала делать уступки романтическим бредням мужской профессиональной среды. И если забытая школьная учителница еще позволяет на сторожевому мистификатору волшебную сделать из себя такую же мудрую, как и Габриэль, то П.Я. Штейнберга такого водителя по отношению к себе уже не просит. Это она провозгласила себе в мужском роде "... я - она...". В русском искусстве наставника - так же как в советский период - нет художницы, поэтессы, писательницы, а есть художница-поэтесса, писатель, драматург и художник-артист, хотя женщин среди них очень много.

Что способ эффективнее - европейский или русский? Гончаров приводит статистику. В советской истории искусства женщины составляют 2% художников в России 10-х - 20-х гг. - 10%. По сравнению с Германией, где еще в 1918 году 7 художественных академий из 10 не

"While in the West the woman is the artist's model, in Russia she is his muse. In both contexts, however, the female personality must overcome the symbolic power of her sex in order to be included in artistic activities."

women. In Russia of the 1910s and 1920s they constituted 20 percent. In comparison to Germany, where in 1918 seven out of ten art academies accepted no women students, Russian women were early to engage in art professionally. Women's participation can be considered indirect evidence of political freedom. The end of the Weimar Republic saw 30 percent women in art; during the Nazi regime the figure decreased to 10 percent. In contrast to the 20 percent women in Russia during the 1910s-1920s, the epoch of Socialist Realism produced no women's names but Vera Mukhina's, though there were quite a number of women making art during those years, all of them forced into the sphere of applied rather than "real" art.

Today numerous women receive an education in art, but only the select few manage to rise above obscurity. The contemporary post-totalitarian artistic environment in Russia is saturated with extreme sexism, an ideology shared by women themselves, who mistake open male chauvinism for sexual equality. The experience of women artists who belonged to the avant-garde and achieved complete independence within the art world is forgotten as soon as the tide of "revolutionary renewal" diminishes. Women have a choice in which both alternatives are essentially wrong: either to be considered second-rate men (a standard compliment being that one is a woman artist [but] possesses the heart/wisdom/logic of a man) or to drop out of the context altogether. In both cases the self must be sacrificed. Women find themselves in a condition of oppression no matter which attitude is held by the men, whether that of the Western or the modern Soviet phallicocracy or that of the Russian absentee male of the early twentieth century.

The contradictory situation of the Soviet woman artist became manifest during ZEN: Woman as Subject and Object in Art, a feminist art exhibition that took place in Moscow in March 1990. The title of the show is the root of zhenschchina, the Russian word for woman, written using the metalanguage of international transcription symbols. The term ZEN on the one hand cosmovoliticized that favorite symbol of Russian patriotic pride, the Russian woman, and on the other, in a sort of oriental interpretation, expressed a contempt for the Soviet ideology of femininity as a forced form of woman's existence.

For the first, Leningrad variant of ZEN, curators Olesya Turkina, an art critic, and Victor Mazin, a philosopher, put together a conceptual collection of textiles, including artifacts by Leningrad underground artists of both sexes
created especially for the show as well as objets trouvées contributed by their dextrous babushkas. All works, independent of the sex of the author, were signed with suggestive female pseudonyms, and the public was given the opportunity to attempt a sexual attribution according to the supposedly natural artistic features suggested by their own stereotypes.

"Textile," declare Olesya and Víctor, "is and, at the same time, is not a work of art. In contrast to painting, where canvas is concealed beneath a layer of paint, textile is handmade and natural, an extension of the human body whether it serves as clothing or as a detail of interior design. A painting is earthly in its claims to be transcendent, while cloth is transparent and sincere, transparent both semantically and physically, a veil. The veil as an element of female attire creates a zone of tension between the eye and the object of perception. The veil disperses the phallicentric male gaze and makes the woman a dim object of desire, yet a man, too, can be hidden under the veil. Thus the use of a material that is supposed to be alien to male creative art may deceive the observer. Textile is a chador for men. Text-il and text-elle are interwoven in the heterogeneous cloth of the exposition and assume new meanings in its context. Voilà."

The show succeeded in deconstructing the art-critical preconception of women’s art as being decorative, though the problem of women’s situation in art was secondary to the graceful handling of the idea of androgyny. Text-Veiled Art from Leningrad was actually an exhibit of the very refined art of etiquette.

The Moscow part of ZEN, curated by art critic Valery Sergeyev, was a group of paintings and objects in which women artists were in the absolute minority. Here the subject/object relation set by the exhibition’s subtitle sounded a lyric note of perestroika disappointment (the opening of the show took place by chance on International Women’s Day). The curator saw his task as “equating the man’s and the woman’s rights to existence.” The idea of equality was to be conveyed as if through a compound syntactic construction with the coordinating conjunction and, as in Woman and History, Woman and Politics, Woman and Sex, Woman and Form, and so on. Yet instead of an expected mutual refinement in the meaning of the coordinated nouns, what emerged was the ambiguity of the conjunction: the connective relation and broke down to produce the adversarial but. It was a violent attempt to include woman into the context of masculinist fixations. One saw here the same absurdist effect of the mutual annihilation of values through the and construction that was
ный или современный советский
вариант фаллоратического
насИСм или русский мужской
абсентизм начала века. Проти-
воположное положение и женщины
на современной советской артис-
титической сцене вызвилось, не-
смотря на отсутствие прецеден-
тов, в первой же феминистской
выставке, проводившейся в Моск-
ве в марте 1990 г. ("ZEN: Женщи-
на как объект в искусстве").

Название выставки - корень
русского слова "женщина", запи-
саный метаязыком транскрипци-
ей - с одной стороны, космо- по-
лянтированное излюбленный сим-
бий "национальной гордости ве-
длороссов" и, в ориентиро
вленной ментали
ции - обозначало ее как
желательное выражение пренебре-
жения до отношения к советской
идеологии женственности как вы-
нужденной форме существова-
ния женской личности.

Ленинградская коллекция на
эту выставку (кураторы - искус-
ствоведы Олеся Туркина и фило-
соф Виктор Мазин) представляла
собой концептуальную экспози-
цию текстиля (артефакты работы
ленинградской художественной
тюкки, обоего пола созданные
специально для первого - ленин-
градского - варианта выставки по
заказу устроителей с добавлени-
ем объектов трофеев из числа подар-
ков любимых бабушек). Все рабо-
ты, и мужские, и женские, были
подписаны прозрачными (для
целей прикола, но не для знач-
ения рода) женскими псевдони-
мами. Зрителям предоставлялось
знакомиться с "текстуальным
искусством Ленинграда" и, памя-
тать о феминистской направлен-
ности выставки, провести сексу-
уальное (а также, в ряде случаев
скандальное) атрибуи-
цию с помощью устроен
ных жестов и вопли. "Ткань", - ут-
верждают Олеся и Виктор, - одно-
временно является и не является
произведением искусства. В отличие от картины, холста, принятых
с идеями на срезы краски, она руко-
творна и сущест
венно в своем про-
должении человеческого тела
будто то одежда или часть домаш-
него интерьера. Ткань прозрач-
на и искренняя. Произведение
characteristic of totalitarian Soviet lifestyle
propaganda, as in the periodical titles Science
and Life, Culture and Life, Soviets and Life,
Moral and Law, or Temperance and Culture.

The use of the coordinating conjunction
seems justified, however, in the October 1990
Moscow exhibition Femininity and Power, in
which the presupposition of oppression was
common to both nouns. Presented here were
works by a group of women artists who claimed
no feminist invasion of the male language of
artistic forms but stood for the woman artist's
right to be called by her own name, to be
possessed of her own viewpoint, and to be
positioned independently in the art world.
The exhibition was an act that communicated a
relationship to power and oppression; it was
a visual gesture counterposed to the pressure of
public opinion.

The mother, the lover, the nun, the
housewife, the beautiful gardener, the fortunate
teller, and the witch are carnival roles that the
public attributes to the woman artist. So it was
that the works were, like masquerade
costumes, carefully hung everywhere in the
space on dress hangers - the concept of Oleg
Kulik, the exhibition designer. A huge belt
hanging down from one of the empty hangers
constituted the male designer's commentary.
"Man creates history out of his phobias,
manias, and other pathologies," says Kulik.
"For women who want to be involved, weakness
is impossible. A woman must always be armed
and buttoned up. When she lets others into the
sanctuary of her wardrobe, she makes a
voluntary demonstration of her own weakness,
she gives up the idea of violence as a form of
cooperation." On the other hand, the principle
of presentation chosen by Kulik emphasized
the work-box associations that usually arise in
the mind of the viewer when a work of art is
labeled with a woman's name. Clothes
hangers, hooks, and ribbons are popular
symbols of femininity, and such a concept of
femininity, innocent though it may once have
seemed, is in fact the stronghold of antifeminist
attitudes, a kind of gallant ideological
oppression that discourages the woman artist
from self-identification with the Feminine. The
hangers and pretty bows were a means to
emphasize and thus eliminate from the viewing
equation the subtle contempt associated with
what is supposed to be the woman artist's
"natural" interests. This tinge of antifeminine
sentiment thus excluded, one can see in every
work an attempt at building one's own
staircase to heaven, and if circumstances
make the woman artist raise this staircase not
from her studio — the temple of Art — but from
the kitchen, nursery, bedroom, or barn, then it

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is not she who is to blame but rather the very concept of artistic creativity. The collection of work on view was deliberately chosen to preclude a stereotypical identification with any particular style or genre. For a woman artist to be aligned with a nameable trend is like changing her name in marriage: both recognition and success depend on the social weight of the -ism. Attributing art by a woman to the -ism of "women's art" or "typically feminine art" (in other words, relegating it to the anti-artistic and the low) is commonly attempted, and the primary idea of the exhibition was to break with this stereotype. What follows is an overview of some of the work in the show.

Olga Astafyeva's objects happen to condense numerous semantic areas being (картина) вещественно в своей претензии на нематериальность. Ткань - материя, обладающая смысловой и реальной прозрачностью: вуаль.

Вуаль, являясь предметом женского туалета, создает пространство натяжения между гла- зом и объектом наблюдения. Можно сказать, что вуаль рассекает фаллосцентрический (муж- ской) взгляд на женщину, пре- вращая ее в "смутный объект жела- ния". Иногда под вуаллю скры- вается мужчина. Так использова- ние якобы несвойственного мужскому творчеству материала может обмануть наблюдателя. Тек- стиль - параданда для мужчины. Текст-й и Текст-elle сплетаются в гетерогенную ткань экспозиции, обретая новые значения в контексте выставки. Voila.

Деконструкция искусствоведческой установки на декоративно-прикладное предназначение женского искусства была проведена достаточно убедительно. Вопрос же о субъективной позиции женщины-художницы отступил на задний план перед поставленной супругами проблемой антропогенности. "Текстфильм" "Ленинград" представлен в перерождением как изысканный образчик искусства этикетажа (ар- тромы, специфический для го- рода на Неве).

В московской части экспозиции (куратор - искусствовед Ва- лерий Сергеев) были честно показаны живопись и объекты, среди которых женщинам принадлежало абсолютное меньшинство. За- данная названием выставки субъек- тивно-объектная конструкция прозвучала лирической нотой пере- строенной разочарованности (открытие выставки случайно совпало с празднованием Международного женского дня). Автор экспозиции видел свою задачу в попытке "уравнивания женщин в экузинсичальных правах с мужчиной". Идеальной формой такого уравнивания ему пред- ставляется сложнобиологическая синтаксическая конструкция со- юзом "и": женщина и история, женщина и политика, женщина и секс, женщина и бытие, женши
explored separately by other women artists. She has discovered a visual classeme, a prototypical visual signifier in the shape of an egg. The egg is a model of the universe; the starting point (ab ovo) and the culmination of the man-woman relationship; the localization of male and female potency. The egg can be nature’s creative plan or its sterile dietary product. It can be a metaphor of priority, as in the learned argument of what came first, the chicken or the egg. The philosophical egg is the key to the truth. An egg eaten away is pure form, art for art’s sake. Here the viewer is invited to look in small round mirrors, Venus’s attribute, hanging inside net eggshells.

Whereas Astafyeva’s pieces suggest the spectrum of women artists’ concerns, the works by Aleksandra Korsakova seem to place the question of femininity and power in art into a temporal dimension. Korsakova, as one of the avant-garde women artists and also the wife of Vladimir Tatlin, had to bear the burden of not only ideological and political persecution during the era of Socialist Realism but, in addition, that of patriarchal attitudes in art interpretation. There is not a single device in Korsakova’s artistic store that would not be interpreted as having been borrowed from one male artist or another, which must have been the reason why, by the end of her life, she had

Александра Курсакова
Aleksandra Korsakova
given up artmaking. Her pastorals are reminiscent of the kitsch sold at any market in Russia and cultivated as folk art. Badly put together and casually made from whatever materials were at hand, these works deny the very idea of artistic heritage. Her works “about nature” as well as her “literary” series seem both random and contrary to the generally accepted notion of a plot; in them one can see exemplified the controversial situation of the woman artist in terms of both nature and culture — a controversy that is not eliminated but only disguised by art-critical discourse, when the woman moves from art proper into art history.
развитие в себе семантические комбинации. Осмысление ассоциаций обеспечивается не только через визуальные образы, но и через текстовые элементы. Масштабность ассоциативных сетей приводит к существенному расширению информационного поля и обогащению восприятия. В целом, ассоциативная связь обеспечивает устойчивость восприятия и позволяет строить более глубокие и сложные структуры мышления.
was to Christ entering Jerusalem. The artist, the eternal child, as Korsakova once said, presents the public with his [sic] favorite toys; thus Kornilova's Camel was put on props and pulled around the room as if it were a toy horse.

Culinary art is the conceptual game of Olga Chernysheva — a girl making sandpies that could tempt the likes of Humbert Humbert. Her pictorial cakes are made of gessoed canvas coated with layers of cream in accordance with the recipes of the Old Masters, inducing the visitor to poke a probing finger into them and taste the high art. The process of culinary treatment refreshes bedraggled and extinct artistic ideas — Cake Napoleon, Baiser Rodin — and revives the artistic appetites of overfed viewers. The vocabulary of art criticism and the Stalin-era best-selling Book of Healthy and Wholesome Food concern themselves equally with consumption. The former deals with artistic
taste, the all-devouring passion for art, the artist being consumed by ideas or eaten up by creative ardor. Consumption is prescribed as a way of artmaking and art perceiving. A male artist would typically be engaged in preaching on the subject, while the woman artist experiences the situation personally, for in her daily life a woman is constantly being eaten up. Consumption and its offshoots — parasitism, waste, and pollution — are a direct threat to women’s very existence.

Iliona Gansovskaya’s ecological art, whether invoking a stone lying on a deserted

shore, a horse, a cat, or a desecrated and half-drowned church, is first and foremost a defense of her own inner world, a world in which historical catastrophes follow with the same inevitability with which a cat periodically grows new whiskers. The virginal intactness of this world is carefully preserved. Passion becomes slaughter. A cow’s skull looks out from the red banner in The U.S.S.R. in the Struggle for Implementation of the Food

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Илона Гансовская
Iliona Gansovskaya
Паразитизм и потребительство, бездарный перевод энергии в отбросы, загрязнение среды для здоровья представляются прямой угрозой её собственной природе. "Экологическое" искусство Илоны Гансовской - это защита прежде всего своего внутреннего мира, куда принадлежит и камень на пустынном берегу, и лошадь, и полузатопленная погруженная колокольня. В этом мире исторические катализмы смещают друг друга с той же неизбежностью, с какой выпадают и смигаются новыми кошачьи усы, и по сравнению с их обновлением социально-политическая новация - это ничто. Целостность, нетронутость этого мира сохраняется как, так и остается холодная небесно-голубая гармония действительности. Страсть - маски. Король череп глядит на нас с красного знамени ("СССР в борьбе за Продовольственную программу"). Мы лишь объяханы на Пиршестве Жизни, а мы и думали, что это мы пируем.

Поруганная чистота восстанавливается в буквальном понимании стирой белья на полотнях Людмилы Маркеловой. Страшная простота в руках у прачек, след свершившегося насилья - то ли покров первой брачной ночи, то ли знак наступления женской зрелости, то ли канни на печать... Суд и судьба, вина и невинность в руках этих корытных, безликих старух, в них же и - как моление о Чаше - надежда, на то, что кто-то другой (другая) примет на себя труд Очищения. Маркеловский трюптит "Узла", в котором художница преодолевает посредством фигурации - это признание личной ответственности в мире предельной несвободы, это скручивающаяся в кольцо, сплетенная в неразрываемый узел, выхаждая уверенной и сильной рукой мандала женской судьбы.

Название работы Татьяны Петровой - "Идущие", "Уходящий", "Отдых в пути" - компромисс имени и предиката, момент статичности в непрерывном движении, динамика состояния. Художница пишет состояние "до" - "до жизни, до судьбы", когда творче-
categorical carcass. Backs to the viewer, the indistinct figures mark only the starting point and the general direction of the movement away from the here and now. Europa sits on the back of the bull swimming toward the edge of the canvas; we cannot see her face, and her figure is barely discernible. She will get her flesh, features, and colors only when she has gone out of the picture and into the space of myth. In another work, incorporeal seated figures pause in their journey. They seem ready to have other artists develop their characters, and these artists will indeed follow them until the personages end up in the blind alley of a happy embrace or against an insurmountable stone wall. Meanwhile [as in Goethe’s Faust], Gretchen asks to have the moment prolonged, the appointed day postponed.

Time is a theme in Natalya Turnova’s work as well — time falsified and imposed by the ideological dictatorship of history. Totalitarian oppression is conceived as a male face, a stereotypical political persona. The genre of the political portrait is here revised; its decorative function as a symbol of totalitarian bureaucracy is deconstructed through the festive brightness of the colors. Turova refers to her caricatures as self-portraits. The primitivism of her works has the simplicity of narcissist dogma. Here are grandaddy Lenin with a good-natured smile on his lips, the brilliant strategist Voroshilov playing chess, and Ryazhsky (who on earth is he, we try to recall) wearing his military gear and a little five-cornered star painted on his cheek, just the
way preschool-age boys identify Soviet tanks when playing war. Evil assumes a surprisingly dull appearance, the unpretentiousness of absolute power that comes from everywhere and nowhere.

In her deconstruction of power the woman artist does not confine herself to political icons. Natalya Kamenetskaya investigates its astral archetypes. In her work, carnival, mirror, labyrinth, and Tower of Babel are occult folklore, a collection of symbols of delusion, an ideography of crooked paths. Dead metaphors of the Holy Word, they conjure their eternal witchcraft, generating still more ersatz worlds, still new gray spaces, and populating them with evil spirits that mock humanity’s favored subjects — love, childbirth, friendship, faithfulness. In Kamenetskaya’s Battle Between Angels and Giants the right side and the wrong are equally dangerous and wicked; as they reflect each other, they symmetrically redouble. It is a transformation that occurs on a regular basis: from the luminous way into The Luminous Way (a classic of Socialist Realist filmmaking) and on into Cendero Luminoso. The symbol produces new and deadly creatures; it bursts at the seams and wrinkles with inhuman pressure from within, and the Virgin with her babe in arms flees from the kingdom of Herod.

1 See Alla Yefimova’s alternate translation of this same text in “Text- Veiled Art from Leningrad” elsewhere in this issue.
ТЕКСТУАЛЬНОЕ ИСКУССТВО ЛЕНИНГРАДА

"Мужчина не может быть свободен до тех пор, пока не освобождена женщина"
(Шиздун)

Можно ли говорить о выставке женского искусства, если на ней не представлены работы мужчин? Присутствие мужчин на "женской выставке" вуалируется тремя поворотами скрывающего:
- количественным (мужское представительство минимально)
- именным (работы не подписаны мужскими именами)
- тематическим (изображаемое так или иначе связано с темой пола).

Через растоечное художникам предоставлена возможность, не прибегая к инкогнито или миметике, войти в процесс становления женщиной.

Характер выставки, представляющей женское творчество в Ленинграде, определяется материалом — ТЕКСТИЛЕМ. Изготовление традиционно считается искусством, предназначенным для женщин. Платье, платье нить Судьбы, может быть, являются наиболее загадочными и, вместе с тем, наиболее притягательными образами ткачницы.

"Материальная культура" Ленинграда имеет также и богатую отечественную традицию: от контральтфёв Татлина до росписей по ткани Любови Поповой. Кроме того, "материальное" так и не получило в нашей стране эквивалента, равноценного пять, остающейся по сути единственным продуктом обмени.

Ткань одновременно является и не является произведением искусства. В отличие от картин, холста, причитается под словами краски, она рукотворна и суща в своем продолжении человеческого тела (будь то одежда или часть домашнего интерьера). Ткань прозрачна и искренна. Произведение (картина) вещественно в своей претензии на непровозможность. Ткань — материя, обладающая смысловой и реальной

Dealing with Gender: Two Shows

Olesya Turkina & Victor Mazin, curators
Олеся ТУРКИНА, Виктор МАЗИН

Text-Veiled Art from Leningrad

"Men cannot be free until women are liberated."
Mao Tse-Tung

Do we speak of an exhibition being devoted to women's art if it does not include any works by men? The presence of men at this "women's exhibition" is veiled by three levels of concealment: the qualitative (men's work is represented minimally); the nominal (works are not signed with male names); and the thematic (images are in some way relevant to gender issues). Such disguises give men the opportunity to experience the process of becoming a woman without having to rely on mimicry or mimesis.

The character of the exhibition, which
represents the work of women artists in Leningrad, is defined by material, that is, textile. Weaving is traditionally considered to be a woman’s art. The Parkas spinning the thread of Fate provide perhaps the most mysterious and the most appealing image of textile workers. The “material culture” of Leningrad also evokes a rich national tradition that ranges from Tatlin’s counterreliefs to Lyubov Popova's textile paintings. Besides, in our country the “material” still has no equivalent in value to fabric, which remains a consumer product, an object of exchange.

Fabric is and yet is not a work of art. In contrast to a painting — a canvas hidden under layers of paint — it is a tangible, natural continuation of the human body, whether as clothing or part of a domestic interior. Fabric is transparent and sincere. While a work of art — let us say a painting — aspires to immateriality, fabric is material that exhibits both a semantic and a real transparency: a veil.

A veil, being a feminine garment, creates a field of tension between the eye and the object being looked at. One can say that a veil disperses the phallocentric (male) gaze, turning a woman into a misty object of desire. Sometimes it is a man who hides under the veil, which is how the use of a material atypical for men’s art can fool a viewer. Textile is a man’s chador. Text-\textit{il} and \textit{text-elle} are interwoven into the heterogeneous fabric of this exhibition and acquire new meanings in its context. \textit{Voilà} the exhibition’s subtext.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Clever Little Hands}
\end{center}

The text is mine. (V.M.)
The project is ours.
(O.T. & V.M.)
The curator is Olesya.
The \$\$ sponsor is Mustafa.
Where: Leningrad,
a certain mansion
(once a brothel, now the Club Mayak).
When: 1990.05.17
(Olesya’s birthday).

\begin{center}
\textit{Clever Little Hands} is the last in a three-part cycle of exhibitions dealing with gender. The gender differences of the first exhibition \textit{(Woman in Art, Leningrad)} disappeared under the chador of the second \textit{(Text-Veiled Art from Leningrad, Moscow)} and finally dissolved in the anonymity of the third \textit{(Clever Little Hands, Leningrad)}. The anonymity allows us to
\end{center}

прозрачностью: вуаль.

Вуаль, являясь предметом женского туалета, создает пространство натяжения между глазом и объектом наблюдения. Можно сказать, что вуаль рассеивает фаллолентрический (мужской взгляд на женщину, превращая ее в "смутный объект желания". Иногда вуаль скрывается мужчина. Так использованное языком несвойственного мужскому творчеству материала может обмануть наблюдателя. \textit{Текст-} - ПАРАНДЖА ДЛЯ МУЖЧИНЫ: Текст-\textit{il} и \textit{текст-elle} сплетаются в гетерогенную ткань экспозиции, обретая новые значения в контексте выставки.

\begin{center}
\textit{Voilà}
\end{center}

"УМЕЛЬЕ РУЧКИ"

\begin{center}
Ира, привет!
Дико тороплюсь, поэтому \textit{no comment}:
Текст — мой (В.М.)
Црекст — наш (О.Т. и В.М.)
Организация — Олеся (О.Т.)
Соц. обслуживание --- Мастер 
Место проведения 
Ленинград, небольшой 
(б. публичный дом, ныне 
клуб "Майк")
Время — 17.05.90.
(День Рождения Олеси)
Целуем, Олеся & Витя.
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbf{УМЕЛЬЕ РУЧКИ} замыкают 
третий цикл выставок, обра- 
щенных к полу. Половые разли- 
чия первой выставки ("Женщина в искусстве", Ленинград) сокры- 
лись под паранджей второй 
("Текстуальное искусство Ле- 
нинграда", Москва) и, наконец, 
сторожествуют в анонимности 
третьей ("УМЕЛЬЕ РУЧКИ", 
Ленинград). Анонимный хара- 
ктер позволяет декоммерциализи- 
ровать отношение к Имени, По- 
лу, Объекту. Присвоение больше 
н невозможно.
\textbf{УМЕЛЬЕ РУЧКИ} делают собст- 
венно произведение искусства, 
они без идеологического посред- 
ника порождают мир объектов.
\end{center}
decommercialize the relationships among Name, Gender, and Object. Appropriation is no longer possible. Here there are no labels. In the previous exhibitions everything was ciphered into pseudonyms, all men castrated themselves with female names, and now there are no names at all. The death of the author has arrived, and it is now impossible to determine the artist’s gender. Everyone is saying that all of us are lesbians, one way or another, regardless of gender, age, or character.

Clever hands make the work of art; they give birth to the world of objects without ideological mediation. In creating works of art they give life to humans. The human being is a product of art. Homo habilis contra Homo sapiens.

Clever hands are fully responsible for the result of the alienated process of production (the readymade) as well as for the anarchic, spontaneous gestures of artists who generate nonart objects (tachisme).

Clever Little Hands is the total materialization of the idea of art, its transposition into the sphere of the tactile. The readymade palace context is sensual, tactile, and the objects placed within it are sensual as well. Palpability is arousing; the hands of Lesbos and the hands that feel the object (of art). It is not the object of desire but desire itself that turns out to be the intention of a creative act.

Clever hands are extended toward each other: she + she. The ideal of noncommercial relations of artificial exchange is dissolved in the reality of gesture. The love of art demands no answer. I offer you my hand and I ask you for yours.

Clever hands liberate the object, leaving only the desire. Objects of art evade the power of the one who defies/desires. Products of exchange (works of art and/or women) begin to interact (object to object, woman to woman) without the mediation of the desiring eye: defetishization. An object is reflected in another object as a woman is reflected in another woman. The place of economy/parsimony/preservation-of-the-phallus is now occupied by the economy of total expenditure. Shortages — the lack of phallos — are compensated by manuality.

Clever Little Hands disengage themselves from privileged relations: symmetrical, as in man + man, and asymmetrical, as in man + woman. Nonhierarchical lesbian relations reject social constraints and betrayal of gender. With You as with Myself. Not “I want to love you” but “I love you.” The birth of You. Ruth.
In September 1990 an all-woman exhibition, *The Working Woman*, opened in Moscow, the first self-proclamation by a group dedicated to women's issues and one of the first exhibitions based on feminist discourse to emerge from Moscow conceptualism. Participants included Anna Alchuk, Yelena Elagina, Sabina Fensgem, Vera Khlebnikova, Maria Konstantinova, Irina Nakhova, and Alona Shakhovskaya.

Specific to contemporary Russian feminist discourse is women's desire for cooperation and acceptance rather than radical separatism. Perhaps the deeply-rooted Russian patriarchal tradition which prescribes a clear place for women within the family structure, is responsible for this tendency. The rise of feminism during the 1920s and 1930s, and the resulting ideological pressure to equally weight the feminine and the masculine, was oriented toward women's liberation, which in...
позволяющее объединить некий пластический деструктив, полифонию индивидуальных проявлений, с одной стороны, и с другой — определяющее характер исследования: работу с идеологическими клише, социумом.

Московский концептуализм, в лице представителей мужского пола, работал на периферии советского культурного пространства. Участники выставки исследуют периферию этой периферии, где располагаются сугубо женские фантомы социалистического сознания. Пропуская их через себя отчасти отождествляясь с ними, они выступают своего рода медиумами советской реальности. Контаминация много творческого "Я" и материала исследования работает на выявление женских коллективных комплексов. Анна Альчук актуализирует традиционную "кухонную" тематику: "Kinder, Küche, Kirche" — по-советски. Социум, подавляя присущую женской природе эротичность, переакцентирует ее с объекта на процесс, иными словами, мужчина в женском сознании вытесняется упорной борьбой за каждодневное наслаждение. Возникает фетишизация одного из инструментов этой борьбы, где в "конце туннеля" мерцает слабо выраженный фаллический отросток, теряя свою актуальность благодаря погружению в сон. Процесс. Объектам М. Константиновой, представленным на выставке, также присуще смещение акцентов. Ее эротика проецируется на идеологическое, причем последнее переживается как глубоко ипостасный акт полного подчинения и сплочения с объектом "вожделения". Прекрасное Е. Елагиной читается как глубокая мечта "томо советикус" женского практика practice turned out to be, only hypothetical. This period plunged women into an abyss in which their sense of self was suppressed daily. To the pressures of the patriarchal style of Russian life was added another kind of pressure: a social pressure elevated by Soviet ideology to the status of an ideal, requiring of women the independence and ability to support themselves and their families. An exalted image of the hard-working, androgynous woman became the symbol of liberation, fostering a conflict between the demands of national tradition and the realities of social life.

For over a decade, working on the periphery of Soviet cultural life, Moscow conceptivist artists (predominantly men) have been exploring the crippling legacy of Soviet-style socialist consciousness. The Working Woman participants are working on the periphery of this periphery, the margins of these margins — tiptoeing in the space where the specifically feminine phantoms of socialist consciousness dwell. Working through these phantoms and partially identifying with them, the artists function as the "mediums" of contemporary Soviet life.

The exhibition is an exploration of the inner conflicts experienced by contemporary Russian women, and its title successfully brings out the duality of their concerns. The Working Woman reflects, on the one hand, the striving for individuality and independent expression, and evokes, on the other hand, the ideological cliché that historically turned this striving into the very means of women's oppression. Thus the title refers to a collective complex of sorts, the symptom of which is the unshakable feeling that the personal, creative "I" has been ideologically contaminated. Each artist approaches this phenomenon in her own way.
Anna Alchuk renders traditional "kitchen" subjects — kinder, küchen, kirche — in a Soviet fashion. For Alchuk, everyday life suppresses women's sexuality and deflects it from the male love object to the process of the daily procurement of food, from sexual satisfaction to the permanent struggle for nourishment. This idea of the social deflection of female erotic energy is also present in the work of Maria Konstantinova. Here ideology becomes the object of desire and is imagined as an intimate act of complete and abandoned union. Yelena Elagina explores a different object of desire — the domestic comfort ever unattainable for a female homo soveticus.

Irina Nakhova's installation is based on the game of "secrets" that is so popular among the girls of Moscow. In both spring and fall they bury all sorts of brightly colored candy wrappers in the earth, cover them with pieces of glass, and then search for the caches that others have buried — their secrets. The principle of Nakhova's installation is similar. She has placed the paintings of Alona Shakhovskaya inside plexiglas boxes, covered them with glass, and strewn soil over them. As viewers look for the paintings and thus uncover the secrets, they are brought back to memories of their own childhoods. Though a parody, the installation is lyrical as well. In the context of the exhibition, Shakhovskaya's voluntary sacrifice of her work can be interpreted as an allegory of the Russian female consciousness — submissive, self-denigrating, and self-sacrificing.

Vera Khlebnikova collages the print from old newspapers as if weaving lace, but behind the textual delicacy of the collages lies a harsh fable, since her raw material is time and history. This series walks the border between historical research and a purely decorative use of text, and successfully evokes the enigma of a Soviet ideology that managed to combine totalitarian strictness with aesthetic self-containment.

Although Sabina Hensgem can hardly be called a native Moscow artist, her work fits well into the context of this exhibition. Her piece is based on a play on the word Sophia, which refers both to the name of a Moscow restaurant and to the female personification of wisdom. In the oscillation of meanings the sacred is brought down to the level of the profane, and the everyday takes on the glow of grand symbolism.

The participant-planners of The Working Woman are to be congratulated for this beginning, and we await their upcoming interventions.
The Revolt of the Daughters

A Personal Recollection of Aleksandra Korsakova
As Told to Irina Sandomirskaya by Olga Petrochuk

Editor's note: Olga Petrochuk, a Moscow art historian, was a personal friend of Korsakova's for several decades. Elsewhere in this issue are biographical notes and a transcription of a conversation among Korsakova, Sandomirskaya, and Petrochuk that took place in Moscow in the spring of 1990. The following translation has been edited for the sake of both conciseness and clarity; the Russian version includes, among other things, more discussion of film and of Conrad von Veidt. We have tried to preserve the sense of Petrochuk's exuberance and of her (as well as, of course, Korsakova's) involvement in the art world of Moscow during the earlier years of this century.

When I try to understand what Aleksandra Korsakova's origins were and what she means to me, I always recall her drawings based on Dostoevsky, which are to my mind her pinnacle. After she died I took pictures of these
Александра Корсакова
Aleksandra Korsakova, Rodion Raskolnikov from Dostoyevsky’s Crime and Punishment, pencil on paper, 60х48 cm., 1970s.

очень точные такие. Не скажу, что фотографические, потому что слишком тонко, просто очень точные интонированные собрания. С интервалами и так далее. А вот тогда же, в тридцатые, за исключением своего рисованного дневника, который мне всегда был очень интересен, она еще пыталась иллюстрировать — да какие вещи: "Отелло" Шекспира, например. Но это было незаурядно, это было совершенно не найдено. Тогда она не нашла еще. Видимо, ей надо было пережить, во-первых, тяжелую жизнь с Татлиным и, во-вторых, войну, чтобы в ней что-то пробудилось. Может быть, она делала после этого более искренние вещи, но более глубоких, чем достоевский цикл, она, конечно, уже не смогла сделать. Такое, действительно, однажды бывало.

И в театре она работала. Только, по-моему, не в это время. Она как раз в театре начала работать после знакомства с Татлиным. После 40-го года. Может быть, немного раньше - мне это точно не известно. Декорации, костю-
чательного, очень сложного ге-  
роя. И надо было обладать уж  
очень большой гениальностью,  
чтобы заставить любить не поло-  
vительских героев, а именно от-  
рицательных.

Вот этот самый гипнотизм - ис-  
неодольный, природный.

После 33-лета - после того, как  
я в Голливуде сделал фильм о  
Роспине - Фейдт поехал в Анг-  
лию играть еврея Зюсса.

Именно в этом фильме она  
посессовании узнала свою люби-  
мую татлинскую башню.

И она узнала ее в виселице, на  
которой в фильме казнит Зюсса.

Это была та самая конструкция,  
после просмотра я ей достаточно  
подробно ее описала. Забыть эту  
виселицу невозможно и невоз-  
можно забыть, как она утихаются  
по диагонали в небо. Небо чер-  
ное, ночное и идет снег - то ли  
снег, то ли звезды падают - не  разберешь, и вот эта дикая диаго-  
наль, и по ней ползет клетка с  
Зюссом. И я все думала, как же  
ov будет читать это свое "адо-  
мню". Мне казалось, что безумно  
красиво, как он иногда мог, но  
оказалось - ничего подобного, го-  
dостаю, гораздо проще улучшаемо.  
Очень-очень натурайно, на гра-  
ни...

А в 28-м году началась, наобо-  
род, вторая волна эмиграции, вы-  
сылка Михаила Чехова, вообще  
вторая волна волнений на культу-  
ру под лозунгом "Долой буржуаз-  
ный хлам". И вот под этим лозун-  
gом большинство фильмов Фейд-  
ta и сняло в Госфильмфonde.

A после войны у нас появи-  
лись его звуковые фильмы,  
сняженные русскими субтитра-  
ми. Они были предназначены  
нам, специально подарены англи-  
занами с целью пачкой других  
книг. Чуть ли не самолично  
Серому это все было показано.

Я вот эти вещи были перечеркну-  
tы и запрещены для показа.

И мое увлечение им - в свое  
время оно мне много дало и для  
искусства, и для писания.

По-моему, то, что ее первый  
муж Шихман научил Александ-  
рь смотреть эти фильмы, - я ду-  
му, что Шихман в первую го-  
лову научил - это ее удержало от  
константной дегуманизации.

"Korsakova had to survive a  
hard life with Tatlin as well  
as survive the war before  
something creative inside  
she woke up. Perhaps she  
did some exquisite things  
later in life, but she never  
went any deeper than her  
Dostoevsky series."

drawings, and I always have them before my  
eyes — after the nightmarish experiences she  
caused me following her death, they’re the only  
thing preventing me from being utterly  
disappointed in her.

What was she for me? At first I worshipped  
her. Then there emerged a critical attitude, at  
times bordering on hatred. In the end I was just  
interested. My love for her was gone long ago.  
After that I had feelings of duty, of pity, and  
always of expectation and hope that perhaps  
she could soar again — for she was so gifted,  
she could still do something.

You came too late to see her as the person I  
loved, the person of the period when she lived  
in a cramped hovel in the old Moscow street  
Bolshaya Molchanovka. She was poor then,  
and I would have continued to help her eagerly  
if she had remained so. But the Devil had a  
part in all this, although I admit there is  
something in me that was also present in  
Korsakova: a sort of extreme, childish  
maximalism. Basically we were very different;  
we were similar only in our hunger for what is  
meant by that profaned word spirituality. Art  
and Faith are not the same thing, but they have  
a lot in common.

It is very difficult to make a statement about  
Aleksandra Korsakova, because she managed  
to shroud herself in mystery. There was an  
unfortunate, disgraceful scandal surrounding  
her death and confusion surrounding the  
beginning of her artistic career. Nothing has  
survived of what she did in the 1920s. As for  
her works of the 1930s, I have seen some,  
and they’re skillful but lacking in the individuality  
she developed in later years. She did a lot of  
book graphics — poems by Anthal Gidas, all  
sorts of revolutionary stuff. Once I came across  
newspaper clippings with her drawings of  
memorial places of the Revolution. They were  
extremely precise. I wouldn’t call them  
photographic — they were much better than  
that, just very accurate, true-to-life sketches of  
interiors and so on. Apart from her graphic  
journal, which has always been of great interest  
to me, she also tried at that time to do  
illustrations to great works of literature, for  
instance, Shakespeare’s Othello. They were no  
good, but apparently she felt she needed to do  
them. Korsakova had to survive a hard life with  
Tatlin as well as survive the war before  
something creative inside she woke up.  
Perhaps she did some exquisite things later in  
life, but she never went any deeper than her  
Dostoevsky series. Things like this happen  
only once in a lifetime. Every artist evolves very  
slowly, and for a woman it is even more  
complicated — incredibly hard. Certainly you  
must know how hard it is to link one’s creative
work with family life. My own attempts to start a family were shattered chiefly for that very reason. You can never have the strength for everything. Something always goes wrong.

When I think of Korsakova I remember the old German expressionist films and the famous actor Conrad von Veidt. German intellectuals developed a craze for Dostoyevsky, and during the 1920s German expressionist films, especially those starring von Veidt, became a craze in Russia. All those houses, entrances, streets — even faces, manners, and habits — were purest Dostoevsky, but it was a new art. In the Russia of the '20s it was unthinkable to do anything of this kind, but in Germany it was still possible. There it all ended in 1933.

Many films starring Veidt were shown in the U.S.S.R., far more than those with Mary Pickford or Douglas Fairbanks. Veidt played Ivan the Terrible, Paganini — he starred in the famous Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, which was neither his best role nor his best film. Women here liked the antihero that he played. It was a case of natural hypnotism. Having starred in a 1933 Hollywood film about Rasputin, Veidt then left for Britain to play Zuss the Jew. It was in this very film that Korsakova later recognized Tatlin’s tower in the construction of the gallows on which Zuss was executed. It is impossible to forget the gallows and how they cut diagonally into the black night sky. It is snowing, or maybe it is the stars that are falling down. You can see this dreadful diagonal and beneath it the ascending cage with Zuss in it. And how Veidt cried, "Adonai": the voice of a man being suffocated.

In 1928 a second wave of emigration began in the U.S.S.R., and a new tide of cultural persecution rose up. The motto was "down with bourgeois trash," and under this slogan all films starring Veidt, "the decadent moron, the aristocratic degenerate," were shelved away to rot somewhere in the Gosfilmofond archive. After the war Veidt's talking pictures appeared, furnished with Russian subtitles, a gift from Britain. Reportedly, Stalin himself saw those films, which he then banned.

I'm not a Veidt fanatic myself; it's just that I like true artistry wherever it may be found. It was Korsakova's first husband, Schikman, who seems to have imparted humaneness to her and who taught her to appreciate Veidt's films. In a manner of speaking, this appreciation is what prevented her from the ultimate dehumanization that came to characterize all our dear avant-garde. Let's look the truth in the face: leftists who understood film-making, like Mayakovskiy, used to call Veidt pseudo-psychic. They called pseudo-psychic everything that had anything to do with

"In 1928 a second wave of emigration began in the U.S.S.R., and a new tide of cultural persecution rose up."

Александра Корсакова
Aleksandra Korsakova, Portrait of Dostoyevsky, pencil on paper, 50x30 cm., 1990s.


А она — Александра — вертелась между "левыми" и "правыми". И она мне рассказывала — хоть, возможно, сгущала краски и меня подразнивала, — что ученики Федорова — она называла пару фамилий, но поскольку эти фамилии мне не знакомы, они вы- верились из моей памяти — рабо- тавшие в Румянцевской библио- теке, ужасно, ужасно хотела её "развивать" — она казалась им та- кой одухотворенной.

Но она на своих долговязых ногах от них просто бегала. Как несколько позднее бегала от ужа- живших товарища Татлина. По- тому что в двадцатые-тридцатые годы они шапочны были знакомы,
psychology. But what else was there that opposed the mechanistic formalism of the avant-garde, which told us that God is a machine, that we have become machines, that nature is a machine, too, so the hell with nature, damn all culture, let humanity be confounded — and long live machines, the screws and the bolts!

You remember Popova. At the beginning she is ever so alive, and at the end, on Meyerhold’s stage, she is all screws and wheels, although her wheels were so fascinating, and they still are, they seem alive. But these were the first steps, and later on there was such deadness, such decay. Now we can see how the whole thing ended up like a cross between a morgue and a rubbish dump. Of course the early avant-gardists weren’t rubbish at all — they were excellent designers. But they tore nature into pieces and entirely dismembered the old culture. Korsakova liked to tell stories in her later years about how Tatlin studied the techniques of icon painting, which is true, but he did so after undergoing his period of persecution. Korsakova herself dangled between the right and the left.

Once Korsakova told me, in an exaggerated way, obviously wanting to tease me, that the pupils of the occult philosopher Nikolai Fyodorov were willing to “develop” her because she seemed so awfully spiritual to them but that she just ran away from them on her lanky legs, the same way she used to escape Tatlin’s courting. Tatlin and she had had a nodding acquaintance back in the ’20s and ’30s, but she didn’t care for him and his clumsiness. So, the pupils of Fyodorov did their best to develop her soul.

Our generation — and yours, too — grew up with an enormous yearning for somebody to teach us, but we ended up having to dig things up on our own. It was only later that I realized why in my teens I was so eagerly fishing out of the Moscow slums the remnants of the prerevolutionary intelligentsia. These old men and women attracted me more than children my own age! It seemed quite eccentric to me that I at the age of fourteen should share an understanding with someone so ancient — not with Korsakova, who was not so old at that time and whom I came to know much later. No, the people I’m talking about had already died by the time I met her, and they were what remained of the old culture — the culture of humanism, not of the machine. Korsakova never sought such acquaintances. It was the reverse: they were seeking her. And I can imagine a highbrow intellectual taking aim at her with his butterfly net; I envision him as a likeness of Fyodorov and her as a butterfly or a

"You remember Popova. At the beginning she is ever so alive, and at the end, on Meyerhold’s stage, she is all screws and wheels, although her wheels were so fascinating, and they still are, they seem alive."

но ей было плевать: хватит какой-то долговязый, у которого руки с ногами и узел перевязывают.

Так вот, федоровцы ее всячески духовно развивали. Конечно, она рассказывала это, немного меня дразнила. Мы — и наверно вы тоже — мы росли в дикой жажде, чтобы кто-нибудь уму-разуму нас поучил. А мы были полные беспризорники. Мы должны были сами где-то копаться, и я, например, только потом себе отдал отчет в том, зачем мне нужно было в мои 16-15-14 лет вылавливать в московских трудоблах обломки дореволюционной московской интеллигенции, дворянства, купечества.

Эти старики и старухи тянули меня больше чем сверстники — зачем? Тогда мне казалось, что я это делаю исключительно из души противоречия, чтобы мне не долдонили взрослые, мол, ты все время со сверстниками. Мне казалось жутко оригинальным, что я в мои 13 лет, обладаю взаимопониманием с какой-нибудь девочкой — не с няся, она тогда древней не была, я с ней гораздо позже познакомилась. Я имею в виду как бы ее сверстниками, которые поугнали уже тогда, когда я с нею познакомилась. Так вот это были обломки той самой очевидной культуры, а не ома-ширенной. А она не искала подобных знакомств — они за нею сами гонялись. Я так и вижу какой-то дурацкий сачок, который на нее надевает какой-нибудь высоколобый интеллектуал, сам похожий на Федорова — а она в виде бабочки или стрекозы, уташивает в свою биомеханику — и упархивает. Она ведь занималась биомеханикой и танцевала у сего Голейзовского — правила, в здешних рядах, потому что была очень высокая.

Очень трудно теперь судить о том, что она из себя тогда представляла. У нее чудная была привычка, которой большинство женщин лишины напрочь — вообще о своей жизни очень мало рассказывать. Это здорово, очень трудно и почти невозможно. Я, во всяком случае, так не могу. Как большинство нашей сестры, правда ведь? А она это умела.
"Starting at age fourteen she was hanging around the theater, leading a grown-up life with a retinue of admirers, even though she was a mere child, even physically. I suspect that she was absolutely cool and rather cruel toward men."

dragonfly, dancing away from him into her biomechanics.

Yes, she did biomechanics in her youth. She was even a dancer in Golevoytsky’s company, but she was always placed in the back because she was too tall. It’s very hard to judge now what she was like at that time. She had an odd habit, one that most women lack absolutely: she did not like to speak of herself or her life. So I go by what she told me herself and also the photographs taken by her father when she was sixteen or seventeen, which her niece showed me after Korsakova’s funeral. I was expecting to see a girl who looked like the 30s film stars Yulia Solntseva or Tamara Makarova, since Korsakova had told me that people used to say she resembled them. In the photographs she looks a bit plain and vulgar — and somewhat mincing, in keeping with the fashion of the early years of the century, because by the 1920s it was no longer fashionable to be mincing or affected. I imagine Aleksandra Korsakova was very unserious and worldly as a girl. She told me once that it was only after the age of forty that she first read Dostoyevsky, and she often said that deep in her heart she remained a little girl, which is very akin to my own feelings. When I was twenty, people mistook me for a thirteen-year-old. I did my best to prolong my childhood, and I’ve never regretted it.

Well, there was something childish in Korsakova, too, and the reason is that it was so early that she lost her innocence — literally, not in any higher sense. It must have happened when she was something like fourteen or sixteen. Starting at age fourteen she was hanging around the theater, leading a grown-up life with a retinue of admirers, even though she was a mere child, even physically. I suspect that she was absolutely cool and rather cruel toward men. Later in her life she grew softer; in her youth, however, it seems she was pitiless, but they had only themselves to blame for that. Also, she never had children, and these two circumstances combined seem to have created excruciating nostalgia — not so much for having a child of her own but rather for having lost her own childhood too much before the natural time. The little girl of her drawings was not grief about a motherhood that was not to be but rather about her own childhood, which, by the way, was not at all unhappy. She was a spoiled baby. She loved to boast that her ancestors were Old Believers, but she gave up her patriarchal family just the way other silly little talented fools of her generation did.

Korsakova must have realized what she really was when she sprained her foot and had to give up dancing. Her legs had worked too
hard, while her brain had been idle. The enforced end of her career as a dancer helped her become an artist. People — especially women — gain wisdom due to circumstances, you know. Korsakova also worked as a theater designer, which she began to do after she met Tatlin — after 1940, maybe earlier. They did stage design and costumes. I believe this was a job done mainly under orders, during the darkest period of our history. Take, for example, Aleksandr Kron’s Deep Reconnaissance, a very conformist Socialist Realist play. Tatlin was responsible for the stage design and Korsakova for the costumes.

Men did influence Korsakova artistically, but by and large they were in the way, and their ailments, especially, brought burdens. Even though she was always a gifted artist, she attained true artistic quality only after Tatlin died. It is impossible to guess the extent to which she depended upon him and whether or not he was her idol, as everyone says he was. I’m afraid that if he was, he became so only after his death. Her memories of him were highly contradictory; some of them shocked me as being rude and cynical. Her flashes of cynicism did not become her, and though they were rare, they were bitter and spiteful. Sometimes she vented apologetic recollections, but mainly in the presence of a third party; sometimes she talked about good memories that were just very human and very nice.

Once she called me to help her deal with her canvases in the storeroom, and before I arrived she took some kind of medicine or liquor and, just to tease me, started pretending that she was more drunk than she actually was. It was curious, but it was also frightening. I was shocked. She was stumbling along behind the wall, stopping now and then at the door of the storeroom and muttering deliriously, in a very Dostoyevskian way, “Ah, where are they all? I wish some of them were here! Vladimir Yevgrafovich, at least ...” The worst thing about it was her manner: simple, sweet, and horrifying all at the same time, like falling in love with somebody no longer living.

As for Veidt, it’s such a pity that he never played anything of Dostoyevsky’s. His popularity was enormous, but now he is forgotten, and this shows how degraded the masses have become since the beginning of the century. Everywhere there reigns what Dostoyevsky referred to as “the street” and “the mediocr.” The lower you fall, the closer you are to your idol. It’s like Hitler and Charlie Chaplin — now nobody can tell which of them played whom.
A Conversation with Aleksandra Korsakova
(1904–1990)

Editor's note: The original conversation among Korsakova, Irina Sandomirskaya, and Olga Petrochuk took place in Moscow in the spring of 1990, shortly before Korsakova’s death. The question-and-answer portion of the following piece is, properly speaking, a recollection rather than a transcription of the conversation, since the tape was stolen out of a parked car in Manhattan before its contents were safeguarded — a precaution the Russian visitors never imagined would be necessary. Please also see Petrochuk’s “The Revolt of the Daughters” elsewhere in this issue.

Introduction
Irina Sandomirskaya

Upon her death Aleksandra Nikolayevna did not immediately leave the earth where she had lived for nearly ninety years. Several days before her body was finally found in her apartment, someone allegedly saw her in the town of Yaroslavl, while somebody else assured us she had gone to Düsseldorf. On the day of her death, the tape containing our interview with her vanished mysteriously, as we later discovered, from a car parked at the other end of the world, in a thieves' district of New York City. Ominous coincidences continued to trouble her few relatives and friends long after she was dead.

As usually occurs, a note was found beside her. Written in a steady hand, it said that nobody should be blamed for her death. The telephone receiver had been taken off the hook, perhaps against intruders.
The Conversation

Q. Women’s art is usually understood to arise from the purely corporeal difference of sex. But we are interested in differences in the spiritual nature of women’s artistic self-realization and whether these differences become manifest in art.

A. Yes, they do, and now they are more significant than in any other period. The most important thing for the woman artist nowadays is first and foremost her child, her motherhood — bearing a child, cherishing a child. A woman dreams of herself in her child; she makes her art as she bears an infant. I know a young painter who decided to have a child and is raising him all by herself. She’s having a hard time, because her son is not physically strong, and she has to work a lot to provide for her child and herself. But she looks happy. Yes, there can be different circumstances in life, but it would take us too far afield if we explore that in detail. What I am speaking about now is the most general trend: that the formative factor for the contemporary Russian woman artist is her child.

In fact, an artist always remains a child deep inside. I still feel the childhood in myself as if I were a little girl in the arms of my parents or out in the countryside in spring. I made a series of drawings in which the main character is a little girl living in a city during wartime, sitting in an air raid shelter and dreaming of herself as Joan of Arc. This girl is also me, and in my heart I am still like her.

Back in the twenties everything was so
At that time artists were never labeled as men or women.
Rather, you saw that some of them were artists, while others were mere designers.
— Aleksandra Korsakova

Q. However, in discussing, say, Popova, mention is always made of her having been a pupil of Malevich. Do you think she was talented enough to have established an art movement of her own?

A. Of course. She was an absolutely excellent artist.

Q. Aleksandra Nikolayevna, one sometimes gets the impression — though it is impossible to prove — that those in power were trying to control creative women by blackmailing them with the well-being and security of their children. This was the case with Akhmatova and, to some extent, with Tzetayeva as well. Did you feel that having children at that time was simply dangerous?

A. That is very true. This was how it was. What I’ve been talking about so far was the surface of life, but deep inside it was tragic...
Q. Did you feel yourself that you were being controlled in this way?

A. Goodness no, never. I always did as I liked. I have always been a troublemaker. Even now I work passionately, with nerve. I tear paper and break coal. I was in the avant-garde then, and I am now. Twice I was expelled from the Artist’s Union; I was forbidden to exhibit my works, and they were taken down from public displays. Well, what of it? I reveled in my work again.

And now those young girls you see in the streets, with their painted faces, poor things. You look into their eyes and, good gracious, what an abyss of suffering you see there! Poor, poor creatures — and what is there for them to see? I was staying at an artists’ retreat in the country where children from Armenia were also living. I could not bring myself to look into their eyes. I just ran away. It was unbearable to see so much suffering, such misfortune, and yet at the same time such divine beauty. Dear God, dear God...
Femininity & Power: Participants’ Statements

What is femininity from the point of view of art? Is it an innate characteristic of an artist or a conventional evaluative category? Who is the woman artist — a variety of man, woman, or artist? The Russian members of the IdiomA collective suggested that all the artists included in the Femininity and Power exhibition answer the following questions:

1. Who was your first teacher and how did s/he influence your art?

2. Are there other artists in your family, and in what way does the family influence you?

3. How did you choose the profession of the artist?

4. How do you evaluate the art education you obtained? Was it necessary?

5. What can you say about your professional environment?

6. What professional advice are you usually given? Is there any you cannot accept? Why?

7. How would you define the genre/style/trend to which your work belongs?

The following statements are the artists’ answers.
Olga ASTAFIEVA
Born 1957
Graduate of Moscow Institute of Architecture

1. My first teacher was myself. Therefore, the influence is immense.

2. No, not at all.

3. The principle of proof by contradiction. All my life I tried not to do what I didn’t feel like doing. Thus, the path of least resistance has led me to my profession.

4. I graduated from the Institute of Architecture. Artistic education has done me no harm, though it can do harm if a person is unable to see and think independently and grows into the structure, losing their own identity and becoming part of the system.

5. My professional surroundings are amorphous and inconstant. There are uneven edges and an unsound core, and mostly chance contacts with chance people — poets, artists, philosophers, passers-by, etc.

6. As for professional advice, I usually listen to it. Most often I use it right on the spot. Sometimes I ask for advice myself. As for unprofessional advice, I usually ignore it.

Once a man who did occult science advised me to give up doing my objects altogether, as they reminded him of magic devices that can affect the metaphysical spheres with unpredictable results. He also advised me against abstract painting, which he thought of as “theurgic magic.” Of course, I continue to design my objects, but the occultist’s advice was not lost on me. It helped me understand the connection between art and magic, to see clearly the direction of contemporary art and my own way. I realized that the artist who, with God’s help, recognizes universal aesthetic laws can penetrate such depths and create such things (for the well-being of the people, incidentally) that even an occultist has neither time nor fantasy enough to do.

Now I am developing safety measures for interacting with my objects. I am stricter now in my approach to the screening structures that before I used to build intuitively inside my installations.

So, there can be no advice that would be completely unacceptable.

7. It is difficult for me to give an exact name for The style or trend or genre I work in. There are various definitions: conceptual art, magic, “enigmatic topology” (a term used by M. Mayatzky, a philosopher), an installation, an object, a concept-object . . . .

"All my life I tried not to do what I didn’t feel like doing."

... there can be no advice that would be completely unacceptable."
проникнуть в такие сферы и создавать (причем, на благо людям) то, на что у оккультиста не хватило или фантазии, или жизни. Сейчас я разрабатываю технику безопасности взаимодействия с моими объектами. Я стала строить от организации защитных структур, которые и раньше строила интуитивно, внутри моих конструкций. Так что вообще неприемлемых советов для меня не бывает.

8.
Мне самой пока сложно дать точные наименования стиля, направления, жанра, в которых я работаю. Существуют различные определения: концептуальное искусство, магия, "эпиграмматическая топология" (это термин принадлежит философу Мих.Манцо-му), инсталляция, объект, концепт-объект...

Ольга ЧЕРНЫШЕВА
Род. в 1962 г. в Москве
Окончила ВГИК
1. Мой папа. Он научил меня рисовать вид на залив спереди и сзади. Когда я овладела всеми премудростями этого рисования, то поняла: я - художник.
2. Семьи у меня две. В одной я живу. В другой - жена и мать. В первой мне не мешали рисовать, помогли поступить в художественный институт, не давали никаких профессиональных советов, т.к. "вид на залив" был верхом профессионализма. Во второй работать мешали оба (и продолжаю), институт был объявлен рутиной (правда, праведливо), и место непосредственного рисования заняли споры об искусстве, творчестве и т.п.
3. Художник - понятие, которое для меня ближе к слову состояние, чем профессия. В этом случае важно каждое обстоятельство (точнее - любое).
4. Никаких. Знаю отдельных художников.
5. Всякое. Стараюсь забыть.
6. См. 5
7. Работа. Другие затрудняются.

"Artist is a word that, for me, denotes a state of mind rather than an occupation."

Olga CHERNYSHAEVA
Born 1962 Moscow
Graduate of All-Union Institute of Cinematography
1. My father. He taught me to draw "Rabbit (Front View)" and "Rabbit (Rear View)." After I mastered the technicalities of the rabbit, I realized I was an artist.
2. I have two families. The first is the one in which I am the daughter; in the second I am the wife and the mother. In my parents' family nobody ever interfered with my drawing. They helped me enter college, and they never gave me professional advice, as "Rabbit" was the acme of professionalism. In my own family I was and am constantly hampered in my work. The college was declared to be a waste (which it is), and instead of drawing there are endless arguments about art, creativity, and so on.
3. "Artist" is a word that, for me, denotes a state of mind rather than an occupation. If so, then every (any, to be precise) circumstance is of importance.
4. None. I am acquainted with only a few artists.
5. Any I am given I try to forget.
6. I define it as work. Others find it difficult to define. ("Cookery" is a disguise, a pretext. If I could explain why I do it, then . . . .) It started with the work Patties on a Griddle. Basically I would like to stop making cookery works, but I can't.) In the whole process there is only one exciting moment: it is when . . . .

Ilona GANSOVSKAYA
Born 1955 Moscow
Graduate of Surikov Art College
For as long as I can remember I have been fond of drawing. I remember long walks with my father in the dunes of the Baltic seaside, the unforgettable first time I ever saw the sea. Father said, "Now imagine how the primitive men threading their way through the wilderness listened to the roar of the sea without yet understanding what it was. And then all of a sudden they found themselves facing the boundless water." As a little girl I started seeing the world through the eyes of prehistoric people, awe-stricken and solemn. Gradually I learned not to concentrate on myself and to accept any phenomenon of nature and life as being equal in significance to my own existence.

My father, Sever Gansovsky, was not a professional artist, but he used to paint from life when he was a young man. He was fond of dotted drawing and tried to invent a dotting machine. His family descends from Polish nobility and Latvian middle-class townsfolk. In his family it was obligatory to be able to play Chopin and...
8. “Кулинария” — это скорее вывеска, потому будь я могла это объяснить, то Не видимо, решил, в этом, чтобы объяснить, почему я делал свои работы, не помогая кулинарную тему. Все началось с ней работы “Нижний” на протяжении всего года, я хочу прекратить делать “кулинарные” работы, но никак не могу. Во всем процессе работы есть только один захватывающий момент — это кого...

“To me the human essence of the work is much more important than form or style.”

Илона ГАНСОВСКАЯ
Род. в 1935 г., в Москве
Окончила Художественный институт им. Сурикова
Я начала “видеть” и рисовать — как себя помню. В далекие прогулки с отцом по дюнам Балтийского моря. Незабываемый первый раз, когда увидела море. Отец сказал: “Теперь представь себе, как Первобытные Люди, пробираясь вдоль диких лесов и пространств, слышат грохот прибой и не понимают еще, что это. И вдруг выходят к бесконечной воде...”
Тогда девочкой я стала видеть глазами первого человека — страшно и торжественно. Это стало навсегда. Появилась постепенно способность любые явления Природы и Жизни принимать как одинаково значительное — наравне с собственным существованием. Не сосредотачиваться на себе.
Отец Гансовский Север Фелюкович не был художником в профессиональном смысле. Но он в молодости писал с натуры, делал рисунки “точками”. Изобрёл машинку для “точкования”. За границей и у нас его книги выходили с собственными иллюстрациями. Его семья происходила из полских аристократов и латышских мещан (городских людей). Считалось обязательным играть, Шопена, рисовать и многое другое. Само собой, после революции все родственники оказались сосланы и расстреляны. Его мать, моя бабушка, погибла в тридцатых годах в Лагерях. Отец рассказывал, как в Ленинграде стоял в бесконечных очередях в квартальный окошке: узнать где за что!

Без дома, без бывших блокад, Ленинградского фронта, тифа, как многие люди того поколения — на развалах — тем большим упорством стоят возрождать духовную линию своей семьи, стал писателем, собирал библиотеку, в том числе по искусству, и вложил в меня Долг — продолжать... Писатели: Ленинцев (иранец), Моисеев, Чехов, Платонов, художники: Вася Гош, немецкие романтики. Конечно — Шень...

Эти абстрактные причины повлияли на выбор моих занятий живописью, а не какой-то конкретный учитель. Конечно, учителем в основном был — отец.
С момента, когда себя осознал, я поняла, что быть женщиной в нашей художественной среде (в институте, на выставках) и стать “выигрывать” — безнадежно. В любых ситуациях тебя готовы воспринимать как женщину, но не как художника или, скажем, интересного человека. Например, ученица до последнего времени не была друзьями мужчины и к этому страдала. С одним московским поэтом поставили эксперимент: попробовать просто дружить. Распалаюсь: ему не интересно, в его мужской голове — неинтересное “завоевывать”. Может быть, мне просто не везло на компанию: огромное количество “закомок”, но “среды” — нет. По всем годам сквозит мотив профессионального одиночества. Восьмидесятые годы, опа окончил институт, тяжело твориться. Хотелось выставляться, работать со всем пылком юности. Работы не было, уникальные приходы к улицы в издательства, даже и довольно тяжело работая в театрах. На выставки жилось не принимали. В течение десяти лет высушивала такие оценки: “Это не живопись, это какие-то жизненные картины”. М. Иванов, художник, председатель выставочного комитета, выставил, мы не говорим вам, что нуж-
Наталья КАМЕНЕЦКАЯ
Род. в 1959 г., в Москве. Окончила Московский текстильный институт.

Моя сестра. Она рисовала девочек и мальчиков (пример для подражания) и рассказывала мне страшные сказки. Они вызывали у меня протест - хотелось, чтобы сказки рассказывались другие. С тех пор мои картинки рисовали мне такие же истории и также вызывали протест. Что касается рисованных девочек и мальчиков, то все на месте.

Моя художества были столь настойчивы, что в конце концов пробудили тщеславие семьи, и меня отдали готовиться к художественный вуз. И далее отменили что-то ожидали постоянно.

С профессиональной средой отношения дружеские. Сейчас иногда можно получить полезную информацию. Раньше еще интересно было поговорить, а также выпить.

В разные творческие периоды советы получала. Последний за- помнившийся совет - что цена зависит от размера. Последние два года, с тех пор, как все уехали в Америку, типичных советов не получаю.

Свой жанр определяю как вполне реальный. Другие мало того, что стараются определить, но даже иногда говорят вслух. Вообще я предпочитаю дать высказаться своим картинам. Мое дело угадать их и определить правильное место в миропорядке.

important than form or style. It sometimes happens that the three happily coincide in one picture. I am not very interested in artistic exploration of individual forms, nor do I care much for cheap conceptualism or for the way an artist makes a gift to the viewer of his/her ego — all this is the way I see it stilh. I see these approaches as somewhat unreliable. The brilliant conceptualist and personality Gunter Uecker does not demonstrate himself but rather his unique understanding of the universe.

I would say that what I do is not painting but work. If it moves someone as oil on canvas, I am happy. But if it were possible to achieve real, rather than make-believe, environmental control in our country, I would have chosen some other means. As it is, painting is the only way for me to show my love and to make others love whatever it might be: myself, the stone, the tree, the bird, the snake, or the rain.

In the West vegetarianism for humanitarian reasons, asylums for homeless animals, and various other ecological projects were "invented" long ago, and we can see the results both in the world and in relations among people. But in our brutal reality I still think it worthwhile to make paintings like mine. The most difficult thing is to stay within the territory where a canvas is no longer a mere painting but is not yet literature.

Natalya KAMENETZKAYA
Born 1959 Moscow
Graduate of Moscow Textile Institute

1. My sister. She liked to draw pictures of boys and girls (thus setting me an example) and to tell horror stories. They created a feeling of protest in me; I wanted a different sort of story to be told. Since then my own pictures have been telling me the same kind of tale and evoking the same protest in my soul. As for the boys and girls, they are also present.

2. My artistic activities were so persistent that they awoke ambitions in my family. I was sent to a teacher to prepare for entering an art college. Since then my parents have constantly been expecting something of me.

3. I have friendly relations with the professional environment. Even now one can obtain useful information. Before it was sometimes interesting to talk and have a drink together.

4. I have received advice during my different creative periods. The last piece of advice I remember was that the price of the picture depends on its size. During the last two years, when everybody left for America, I haven’t been receiving any professional advice at all.

5. I define the genre I work in as quite real. Other people not only try to define it but sometimes
even say it out loud. In general I prefer to give the floor to my pictures, to let them speak for themselves. My task is to guess their message and determine the proper place for them in the public realm.

Yekaterina KORNILOVA
Born 1957 Moscow
Graduate of Surikov Art College

My first teacher was Boris Birger, who used to speak about the precious quality of the painted surface and considered it to be the necessary condition of any picture. Now I like this quality only in Old Masters. When I was seventeen I was a student of Tatiana Selivinskaya’s, and I love her now. At college my teacher was Salakhov, who was never in the way.

During my childhood when I was in bed with a cold, my mother often gave me art books to keep me busy while she was doing something around the house. This was how it started. When I was twelve my father took me to Birger’s studio. Now I have a family of my own that constantly prevents me from working.

Lately I have been very much in need of a professional environment, but I cannot find a circle of my own. I feel isolated and cannot see the reason why, and I don’t like it either. Maybe it is this way because I became an artist; my father is a poet and many authors used to come to our house. My husband, an artist as well, often tells me I should have become an author. Whatever advice I am given I listen to with eagerness; I am always impressed, but somehow I always return to where I stood before.

I am absolutely unable to classify the genre I work in. It might be “the ruins of realism.” It is interesting to test it for durability. I would say I belong to the Moscow arrière-garde, which is extremely nonconceptualist art. I often use children’s drawings in my works. Plagiarism is a sort of creative method. I use my daughter’s pictures as if they were a balloon to fly.

Lyudmila MARKELOVA
Born 1959 Moscow
Graduate of Moscow Institute of Polygraphy

There were no artists in my parents’ family, but I am married to an artist whose father is a sculptor and whose grandfather, Nikolai Kupreyanov, was well known for his graphics. My first art teacher was the painter Volodya Braynin, whom I met by mere chance. It was he who showed me how to mix colors and what a palette was for. He strengthened my will and taught me how to see and understand painting. I was lucky, because after going through his training I had no problems at college. Actually there was no real professional

"I am absolutely unable to classify the genre I work in."

Ekateryna KORNILOVA
Rodyl’sya v 1957 g., v Moskve, otkonchiла Institut izo. Surikova.

Moy pervyi uchitel’ - Boris Birger. Oi lubil’ goworit’ o dраго-
ценности живописной поверхностi и cчитал ее непременным ус-
ловием всякой картинки, а мне сейчас это нравится только у ста-
рых мастеров. В 17 лет я училась у Татьяны Сельвинской и очень
ее любила. В институте училась у Салахова, который мне не мешал.

В детстве, когда я болела и не
ходила в детский сад, мама мне
сбрасывала на постель все альбо-
мы по живописи, а сама шла за-
ниматься делами. Так все и нача-
лось. А папа, когда мне было 12
лет, отдал меня учиться к Бирге-
ру. Теперь у меня есть своя
семья, которая перманентно ме-
шает. Своим существованием.

Испытываю последнее время
большую потребность в професси-
ональной сфере, но не нахожу
своего круга. Чувствую себя в
изоляции, а почему - не знаю. И
мне это не нравится. Возможно,
это произошло потому, что мой
отец - поэт, и в нашем доме всег-
да собирались литераторы. Поэто-
му мой муж - художник мне сове-
tuet: “Надо было стать литератором”.

Вообще, какие бы советы я ни
получала, я всегда выслушиваю
их с благодарностью. Они меня очень
впечатляют, но я всегда, как
Ванька-Встанька, возвращаюсь в
неконцептуальное ис-
кусство.

В последнее время я часто ис-
пользую в работе детские картинки,
плагиат - что-то вроде худо-
жественного метода. Я пользовался
рисунками дочери как воздушным
шаром - для отваги.
training when I became a student; rather, we learned things from one another. The only interesting thing was a course in art history given by A. A. Dorogov.

I always wanted to be a professional artist and never even gave a thought to what being an amateur is. When my friends who are artists look out of my windows, they often say they could live here their whole lives. My husband’s typical advice is that I should paint compositions, earn hard currency, and never put my elbows on the table.

In my latest works I have been trying to investigate the knot. It is a complex symbol. A knot can be tied up, tightened, disentangled, untied, or cut. There can be knots made of ropes or rags or relations. There are taut, loose, round, square, and noosed knots. A knot on the suicide’s neck. A knot on the shoelace. A coquetish bow. A knot of despair, and a necktie knot undone. Clasped hands, a bun on the nape of the neck, an intricate plot in the story as well as a railway junction, our Savior’s cross, nodes of eternity in an ancient ornament. The birth and the first knot on the umbilical cord, bodies entwined in an embrace. All of life until death is an endless chain of knots, with their conscious and unconscious tying and untying.

Tatyana PETROVA
Born 1957 Moscow
Graduate of Surikov Art College

My first art teacher was my great-grandmother, who brought me up until I was five years old. She told me stories about her prehistoric, prereligious life; she taught me half-Christian, half-pagan prayers; she taught me her own harmonious relations with nature, which she took as being part of her own self. She created the very possibility of my becoming an artist — that is, the ability to see the world in my own way.

My parents are not artists, but they were very helpful and attentive to me. I don’t remember myself as anything but an artist; I never doubted my choice, because it isn’t my occupation but my very essence, however high-flown that might sound. When I was seven I attended an art class taught by a very good and pure person, the professional artist Ye. A. Serykova. She always had faith in me, and this also played an important role, even though I never actually chose what I would do in life. It simply all happened so that I am what I was intended to be.

I continued my training first in art school and then at college. Maybe it was too much, for schooling must add to personal qualities, not vice versa.
Татьяна Петрова
Род. в 1955 г., в Москве
Окончила Художественный институт им. Сурикова
Мой первый учитель в искусстве была бабушка, который восприятие меня до пяти лет. Рассказами о своей доисторической, до-революционной жизни, молитвы на ночь полукриками и полуязыческим, органичностью своей, отношениями с природой как с частью себя самой. Она влияла на сущность возможность стать художником, т. е. воспринимать мир по-своему. Так я думаю.
Мои родители не художники, но всегда поддерживали меня и отнеслись ко мне внимательно. Я не помню себя в другом качестве, никогда не сомневался в выборе профессии, потому что это не столько профессия, сколько мое существования, как бы высоко-парно это ни звучало.
Семь лет ходила в студию к хорошему и честному человеку, профессиональному художнику Е.А. Сержиковой, которая всегда верила в меня, что тоже сыграло большую роль в выборе пути, хотя я и не выбирала никогда, все шло само собой, и я там должна быть. Хотя всякий путь имеет протяженность...

"... I never actually 
chose what I would do in 
life. It simply all happened 
so that I am what I was 
intended to be."

Художественное образование продолжала в Московской художественной школе и в институте. Я думаю, что все это надо было пройти, хотя, может быть, не в таком количестве, потому что школа должна быть в дополнение к личности, а не наоборот, не смотреть, а раскрывать. Но что было, то было.

В моем окружении и мужчин, и женщин, хотя талантливых женщин я встречала больше, уж не знаю почему. Не всегда понимаю и принимаю чужие советы, хотя бы и профессиональные, потому что никто не может знать то, что я делаю, даже и я сама. Я это чувствую. Я сама увлекаю себя в такие рамках, направления, стили и не хотел бы этого делать, потому что это считать это важным, и потому еще, что все мы сами по себе. Хотя иногда хочется приблизиться к чему-нибудь близко. В моих работах нет законченного образа, это действует продолжается, оно имеет свойство перетекать из одного холста в другой. Их названия - "В пути", "Иду", "Уходящие" - очень условны: это то, что имеет протяженность, продолжение, как моя жизнь, например, они об одном и том же. Но они имеют начало, поэтому эти образы архивны.

Татьяна Спасоломская
Род. в 1950 г. в Москве
Окончила Суриковский художественный институт
Я не могу сказать, что кто-то был моим Первым Учителем. Студен-ткой я училась у Татьяны Сел-виской - мы все тогда работали "под нее". Это было общие с Мастером - то самое, от которого потом отрывались и идешь в противовес. В институте был Михаил Михайлович Кирilloв - коллекционер, человек подлинной культуры. Я помню то культурное поле, которое он создавал вокруг себя. В принципе, черпаешь не в человеке, а в философии, особенно в философии через литературу. Очень люблю читать Достоевского, люблю тут прозрачную бездну, которая открывается не в мире его персонажей, а в мире за ними.
Мой отец не был художником, и хотя в семье были скульпторы, в артистической среде я в детстве не жила. Папа очень внимательно относился к моему рисованию, собирал рисунки на папочку. Дух искусства я ощутила через него.
Сейчас у меня сложился свой круг, чаще всего это мои друзья-художники. Но когда я работаю, я не на кого не ориентируюсь, "другие" начинают мешать.
"You cannot keep using the same device when you work with different themes."

Natasha TURNOVA
Born 1957 Kabul, Afghanistan
Graduate of Stroganov Art School
1. I did not have a teacher at all, but a lot of influences.
2. My family’s attitude did not play any role in my choice of profession. Nobody expected me to be an artist, but later on, my mother gave me support in whatever I did. Without her help I could have been a failure.
3. I believe artistic environment influences the artist rather strongly. As a rule, without the influence, what one does comes out archaic, timeless, and addressing nobody.
4. As for general professional advice, it does not exist. Advice that is worth considering is concrete in every case. I simply forget all the rest. Any advice is useful, because someone has taken the trouble to think for you. It remains only to see if it is correct or not.
5. As for genre or style, I try to abstain from self-identification as long as possible, to leave myself the illusion of freedom to do what I like. Political portraiture for me is an attempt to join a concrete impression of the contemporary world with an individual approach to each face. My method is to use traditional painting, meaning the tone, color, texture, brushwork — whatever the viewer would like to see.
Women in Poverty

Our Summer 1992 issue explores poverty as a women's issue. An array of social structures function to 'set women up for poverty', and many women — as single parents, as Native women, as elderly widows, as homeless, as disabled, as immigrants — are forced to get by on too little. This issue provides a provocative analysis of the issues surrounding 'the feminization of poverty'. It documents the lived experiences of some of the women who are struggling with poverty and discusses strategies for fighting back, including community health care, caring for the homeless and new ways of approaching single motherhood and child poverty. The issue is an invaluable resource for those who are trying to overcome poverty themselves, and for those who are committed to assisting them in their struggle.

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BATTERED WOMEN'S SHELTER VICTIMIZED
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IN DECEMBER 1991, the Counseling Coordinator of the Iowa City Domestic Violence Intervention Project, Beth George, was arrested for alleged interference with a custody order. She was held without bond for seventeen days. Her children were returned to their father and she was not allowed a visit in the six months following her arrest.

Several years prior to this incident, Beth had fled from her husband fearing for her safety and the safety of her children. She eventually came to Iowa City with a new identity for herself and her two children. She took this action to protect herself and her children.

In February 1992, an Iowa City attorney mounted a media attack on the Iowa City DVIP. This lawyer belongs to the same law firm that was retained by the children’s father to claim his children. Shortly thereafter the County Attorney ordered an investigation of the shelter by the Division of Criminal Investigation. The DCI’s investigation alleges that the shelter is connected with a national underground railroad. DCI investigators have interrogated shelter staff, their families, volunteers and clients. This has undermined the mission of the shelter and infringed upon the statutory right of confidentiality between staff and clients.

Beth George was subsequently arrested and charged with perjury and tampering with public records for altering her driver’s license. If convicted the maximum sentence is seven years and/or a $7,000 fine. She has been threatened with more charges if she does not waive her statutory right to confidentiality and talk about the shelter.

BETH GEORGE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT. The legal fees are devastating and mounting. Please send your contribution to:
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Edited by Judy Seigel

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Advocates for more research on, and greater funding for, breast cancer awareness and prevention.

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Organizes to defend clinics under attack from Operation Rescue throughout the metropolitan area, from Atlantic City to the mid-Hudson Valley and Long Island. Outreach to local groups is a crucial part of this group's work.

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The Frontlines newsletter staff solicits articles, graphics, and photographs covering ongoing WHAM! activities and other educational information relating to women's health care.

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Plans benefit parties and raffles to raise money for WHAM!

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Promotes self-help and herbal healing. Also solicits articles, herbal success stories, and self-help tips for its newsletter, The Urban Herbalist.

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Martha Alsup, member of the Heresies "Great Goddess" collective, was murdered with her lover, Susan Galvin, on a beach in Angola on November 28, 1988.

The women were stabbed and beaten to death by a seventeen-year-old boy who was out on probation at the time for a previous assault on an American woman. He was subsequently found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment.

In 1976 and 1977 when we on the Goddess collective knew her, Martha was just recovering from her first brush with death. She had been hit head-on in a car crash and had lived for more than a month in a coma. She had sustained severe injuries and was beginning to rebuild her life.

The Winter Solstice of the year we were together, the Great Goddess collective gathered to share a ritual and bonfire for the longest night of the year. Martha was ecstatic that night. She flew on the flames. She looks, in retrospect, like an angel. Here are Martha's own words, excerpted from her piece in the Goddess issue:

It's so important to see all the leaving. Don't let them hide the knowing from you. To see clearly you'll have to see through your pain. It gets so beautiful when you admit what's real. To die is no sadder than anything else.

Donna Henes

Heresies Collective, Inc. wishes to thank Arlene Boop and Daniel Alterman of Alterman & Boop, P.C., for their assistance and support.

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Строго говоря, ИДИОМЫ - это дитя глашатей, ныне покойников, мы не успели оглянуться, как оно открыл в историю и превратилось в эпоху. И теперь можно написать редакционное поступление и даже вразумительно объяснить, откуда взялись ИДИОМЫ и зачем.

Гласность не столько разрушила, сколько растерзала и разделила прежний общественный дискурс. В то время мы не знали, чтобы сидели на обломках прежнего мышления, и скорее свободно дрейфовали среди остатков смысла, хаотически двигаясь вокруг, потерявших свой контекст, своего, казалось бы, неотъемлемого и единственно возможного абсурда и ординарности. Это была дискурсивная вакханалия, бесформенная, легкая принимающая, которая, казалось бы, одного, то другого, этому ей нравящемуся. Дискурс утратил свойство твердости (solidity), ранее принадлежавшее ему кристалличности, стал смутным, но гораздо более светопроницаемым.

Информационное построение открылось для проявлений вида, но вновь поступающие сигналы никак не упорядочивались.

Вспомнилось, как мы были, по обе стороны света - к открытым в себе и в мире несогласованности в общих гнездях этого русского слова (химеризация и наращиваемость), гласности или информационной открытости и гласности как виртуальной гармонии внутренних языков, отличных от согласованного глагола (идиомы) при поступлении глагола.

Мы открывали в мир и в себя новые роли - гласности, идеологии, интеллектуализации, философии... Тут, что я, как изначальный ИДИОМЫ возникла как результат противоречий, обнаружившихся в микрокосмосе, сидевших в безысходности, но независимо. Тем ценнее для нас участие тех людей и женщин-авторов, которые еще воспринимали на наш призыв - кто из любопытства, кто из солидарности, кто из любви ко всему новому.

В сумятище, опять ИДИОМЫ явился опять прикладной лингвистикой. Размышляя о природе социальной инновации, мы понимаем решающую роль нового слова. Хайдеггер и Гадамер писали о предыдущем (Verdenken), предназначении, предопределении (Vor-что?) как своеобразной, обеспечивающей основное функционирование коммуникации и механизмов понимания. Мы думаем, что основная идея, которую следует видеть в предельности - заключенности в языке как в едином знаке градусом исторического изменения. Возможности этого изменения порождены самим алюзивом, в системе которого пишется дискурс. Благодаря дискурсивному анализу и особенно его предложению в феминистской критике, стало ясно, что влечение всегда посвящает на манипуляцию дискурсом, но стремится закрашивать алфавит. Революционное изменение, наоборот, нацелено именно на символическую систему. Цель ИДИОМЫ - теоретическое осмысление этого положения, но осмысление, прежде всего как практическое действие по отношению к системе символов, конструирующих женщину личность в терминах запланированного нативарного дискурса.

Love again,