

My work can be described as a combination of artistic, theatrical, literary and anthropological practices. It evolves around long-term projects exploring the politics of historical narratives and the agency of dreams and imagination in processes of legitimating the power. Their outcomes usually manifest as performances, installations, scenographies, and texts.

During the last years, I became increasingly interested in historical narratives and characters, who operated outside the official discourses, were seen as troublemakers, and excluded from the mainstream systems of knowledge. I am fascinated by the indistinguishable personal and political in the lives of these parrhesiastes, and the academic confusions their stories evoke. I propose seeing them as proto-artistic-researchers even though most of these people did not perceive themselves as artists, yet, I suggest their modes of operation to be comparable to those of some contemporary artists working today. I apply the methods of forgery, speculation and provocation in combination with established anthropological research methods in order to create a shared space for fictitious realities and factual ones.



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7 DREAMS WITH IMPLICATIONS: DREAM ON AN ARTIFACT

INTRODUCTION

It all started with my concern with the mysterious extinction of the medieval Khazar culture, which had once existed between the Caspian and the Black Seas. Living by the laws of ethnic and religious diversity and the wisdom encoded in dreams, Khazaria, possibly, was the most tolerant empire of all time. Dreamhunting – an advanced religious practice – was cultivated by a sect of the most talented and respected priests. The art of dreamhunting enabled one to enter other people's dreams, and have agency there; it was the key practice for making state decisions.

The Khazars have been reported to keep snakes around their waists, sleep with their heads turned south, wash their feet without taking their shoes off, and carry birds inside their shirts to keep warm. They believed that all things followed one rule on the rise and another on the fall; that contracts did not apply in the same way before and after a victory; they used to say: after an earthquake, even plants grow in a new and different way. Besides Khazars, there were Turks, Finno-Ugrians, Slavs, Jews, and others living in the territory – each of them practicing their own languages and religions. Various communities were represented in the legal system and took part in the advanced state's adhococracy, hierocracy, ideocracy, and bureaucracy.

The Khazar king, or khagan, was based in the capital Itil at the mouth of the Volga river, where the Russian village of Samosdelka is now located. The controversial discovery of the ruins of Itil was made in 2003, when the history teacher of the Samosdelka high school found his pupils throwing stones at some ancient pots aligned by the school fence. The khagan also had a summer residence in a marble palace called Sarkel, which stood facing north, close to nowadays Volgograd. Mikhail Artamonov, who is credited as the founding father of contemporary Khazar studies, excavated it in the 1930s. In 1952, Stalin decided to flood it, the most fascinating archaeological discovery of the century, in order to create the largest industrial body of water in the USSR – the Tsimlyansk Reservoir. Today the fully submerged Khazar remains provide

power to the Tsimlyansk hydroelectric station and an irrigation system for crop fields, including wheat, rice, cotton, maize, grapes, and vegetables.

The fatal event in Khazar history occurred sometime in the ninth century, commonly referred to as the Khazar Polemic. All began with the khagan's dream, where God told him: "I am not pleased by your deeds, but by your intentions." The sovereign summoned the most prominent dreamhunters and asked them to explain what God had meant. They said: "You must choose one of three biggest religions, Christianity, Islam, or Judaism, and convert your whole nation to it." The khagan then invited the most prominent scholars of each religion to lead a debate and convince him, which religion to choose. The debate lasted an eternity and was followed by the extinction of the whole empire. Curiously, not enough historical sources survived to prove which religion the Khazars had adopted. Nor do we know how the collapse of the empire occurred, or what happened to the Khazar people.



After the conversion, the wisest of Khazar poets – princess Ateh was condemned to forget her language and all her poems. She even forgot the name of her lover. But before all this had happened, princess Ateh, sensing the danger, requested a large number of parrots, which could imitate human speech. Each of them was taught a poem in the Khazar language. The birds flew away into the forests, where they taught their poems to other parrots, and these taught them to others, until Khazarian was only known to parrots.

The unprecedented disappearance of the whole nation has become one of the most debated polemic throughout human history and has been transformed into an exceedingly speculative subject. Starting, with the twelfth century, through the Orientalists of early modern times, and up to historians and ideologists of today. The lack of proof as to who are the direct descendants of Khazars has inspired a wide range of forgeries of historical documents and relics. In many cases it is impossible to distinguish the artifact from the artificial.

DREAM ON AN ARTIFACT

In 2017 I travelled to the ancient Khazaria – nowadays Russian republics of Kalmykia, Dagestan and Chechnya, the Astrakhan region, North Ossetia and northern Georgia. I came back with 24 archeological artifacts taken from the Khazar capital Itil – they were waiting there for the Volga river to rise and carry them to the bottom of the Caspian Sea. Archaeologist Dmitry Vasiliev, who has been excavating Itil for the past 24 years, presumes they are 1000 years old.

I wished I could read the dreams that these artifacts carry. I gave them to 12 artists accompanied by following instructions: 1) put the artefact under your pillow before going to sleep 2) dream of something that could cause legal implications afterwards 3) tell and record your dream when you wake up 4) share it with me.

I provided artists with the dreamhunter's blanket.

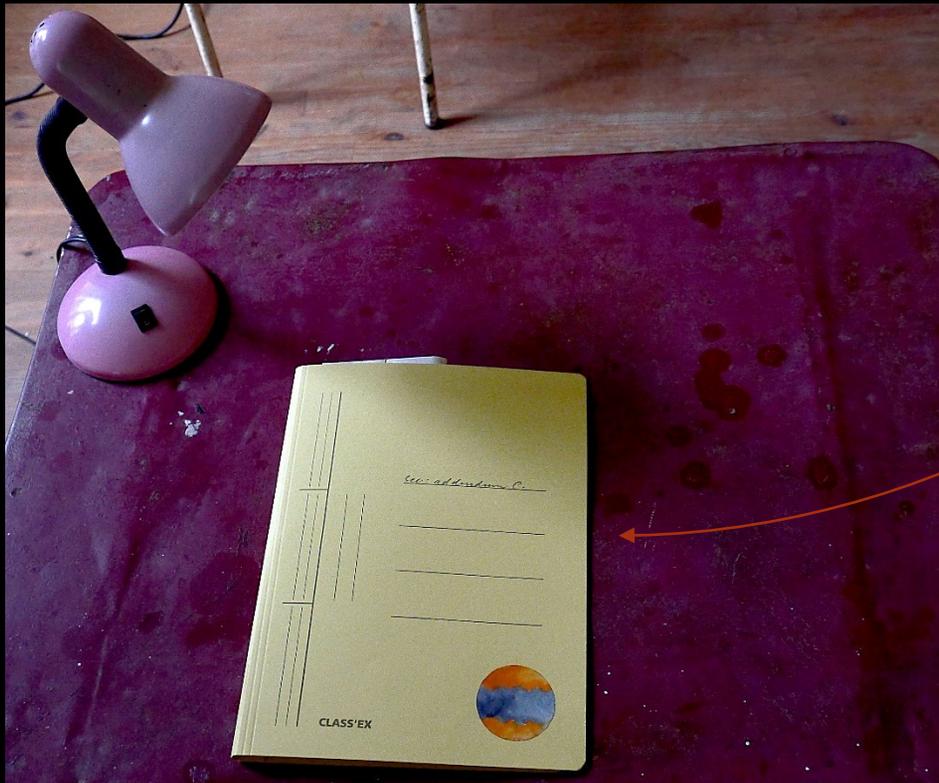
KHAZAR MYTHOLOGY

Dreamhunter's blanket was created as a part of the performance-installation "Khazar Mythology" (produced in collaboration with Aaron Kahn and Monika Lipšic) 2017, and exhibited in a group show "The Future is Certain It's the Past which is Unpredictable" in Calvert 22 Foundation, London (curated by M. Lipšic).



7 DREAMS WITH IMPLICATIONS: LEGAL RESEARCH CASE

I presented my research as a series of legal cases with a plaintiff, defendant and a set of laws each. The cases consisted of: The Khazar Dream Case, The Jewish State Dream Case, The Anarchist Dream Case, The Collaboration and Love Dream Case, the Artistic Research Dream Case. Two of the proto-artistic-researchers were introduced there – Avraham ben Shmuel Firkovic and Mikhail Bakunin. I asked a group of people to spend time with the cases and inform the proofs of evidence, which I collected, by writing notes on them.

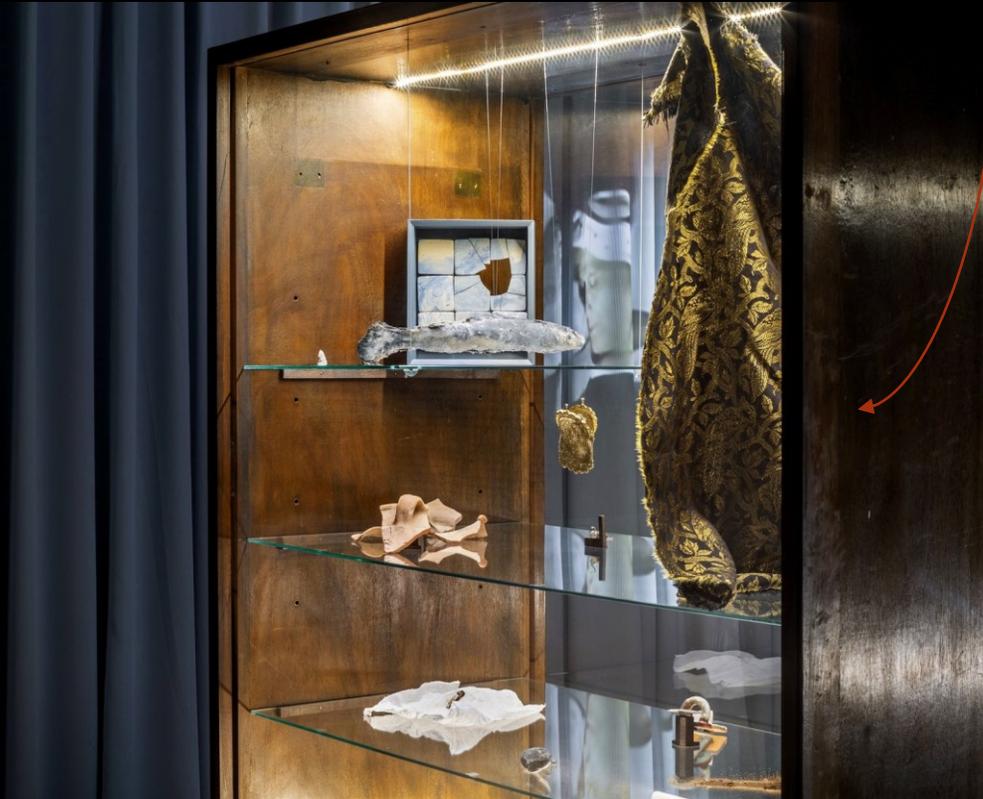


LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF A DREAM

Some of these evidences were transported to Israel and contributed to my solo show “Legal Implications of a Dream,” which was held at the RawArt Gallery in Tel Aviv and Art Cube Artists’ Studios in Jerusalem (curated by Leah Abir). The exhibition included my texts, sculptures, artifacts, film, sound works and a performance. Essentially, the exhibition questioned the mechanisms used to write and rewrite history and make politics. It was based on my long-term ethnographic and artistic research.

More about the exhibition:

<http://www.rawart-gallery.com/exhibition/goda-palekaite-legal-implications-of-a-dream/>





Goda Palekaitė
Legal Implications of
a Dream

גודה פליקאית
השלכות חוקיות של
תלום

—
20.01.2018 - 12.12.2018

—
Curator: Leah Abir

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אוצרת: לאה אביר

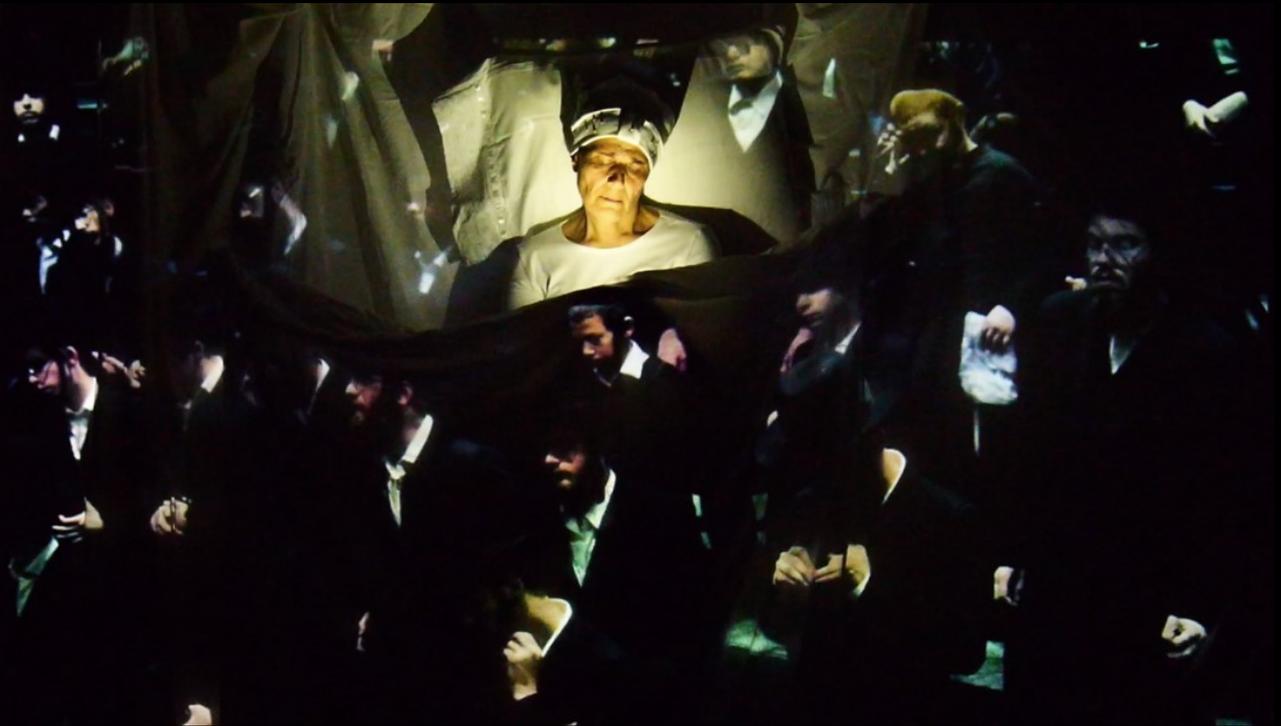


ELINORA'S DREAM

Video piece “Elinora’s Dream” was created for the exhibition “Legal Implications of a Dream.” This film resulted out of the Jewish State Dream Case and was centered on the women’s conditions in Jerusalem’s Jewish ultra-orthodox community. I conducted the fieldwork in 2018, where I met a Jerusalem-based artist Elinora Schwartz. Being a member of the ultra-orthodox community strictly dominated by men and religion, Elinora has to pursue her art practice secretly.

In the film she is seen recounting several dreams, which reveal different accounts: match-making, marriage, child abuse, and sexual coercion of women. Documentary material is projected over her sleep-talking body – clips that we together shot in various communal spaces in the ultra-orthodox neighborhoods of Jerusalem.

“Elinora’s Dream” has been presented at the Art Cube Artists’ Studios in Jerusalem, RawArt Gallery in Tel Aviv and Vilnius International Film Festival “Kino Pavasaris” in Vilnius.



7 DREAMS WITH IMPLICATIONS: WHAT TO DO WITH 3000 EUROS?

In 2018 I was selected to participate in the “JCDecaux Prize: Dignity” exhibition at the Contemporary Art Center in Vilnius. The prize, funded by the biggest advertising company in the world, was 3000 euros. Inspired by Mikhail Bakunin, I proposed a project which would advertise anarchism. In order to create the project, I invited a group of artists and researchers to collectively decide what to do with the 3000 euros in case it would win the prize. In the feverish debate my colleagues refused to make decision upon the 3000 euros, instead, they discussed the ethics of my proposal. This debate became my central material in writing the script for the performance “Advertising Anarchism.”





The performance and installation, exhibited at the Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius in the “JCDecaux Prize: Dignity” exhibition 2018, was accompanied by my texts and an ongoing provocation for a discussion about commercial corporations as support structure for the contemporary art, as well as competition versus collaboration as its driving mechanism. In the beginning of this process I engaged in a discussion with the JCDecaux leadership and proposed to organize an Anarchist Committee within their company (consisting mostly of JCDecaux employees). This committee would have met regularly and discussed what is the best way to advertise anarchism. However, the CEO refused my proposal. As a reaction to that, I initiated a fictional Anarchist Committee and exhibited its program and a fictional documentation of its debates. When visiting the exhibit, the audience always encountered an undercover performer who spoke as a JCDecaux employee and a member of the committee.

anarchistinis komitetas

steigimo aktas
2018 m. spalio 21 d. vilnius

visuotinis steigėjų susirinkimas, susidedantis iš 32 (trisdešimt dviejų) narių, toliau – steigėjai, vadovaudamasis transnacionaliniu kodeksu, europos žmogaus teisių ir laisvių konvencija ir kitais tarptautinės teisės aktais, skelbia viešosios įstaigos, toliau – anarchistinio komiteto įsteigimą.

i. bendrosios nuostatos

1. anarchistinis komitetas yra ribotos civilinės atsakomybės viešasis juridinis asmuo, kuris savo veikloje vadovaujasi šiais įstatais, transnacionaliniu kodeksu, europos žmogaus teisių ir laisvių konvencija ir kitais tarptautinės teisės aktais. įstaiga gali gauti ir teikti paramą, labdarą.
2. įstaigos teisinė forma: komitetas.
3. įstaigos veiklos laikotarpis neribotas.



nesilaikant šio termino, jei su tuo sutinka visi steigėjai.

3. visuotiniame susirinkime kiekvienas steigėjas turi vieną balsą.
4. visuotiniame susirinkime sprendimai priimami konsensuso principu. veto teisę turi kiekvienas visuotinio susirinkimo narys.

iii. įstaigos veiklos tikslai ir sritys

įstaigos veiklos tikslai: skleisti ir plėsti politinio anarchizmo idėjas ir veikimo principus, įskaitant, bet neapsiribojant, politinio aktyvizmo, feminizmo, environmentalizmo, pacifizmo, kolektyvumo principais; atlikti meninius socialinius ir akademinis tyrimus, susijusius su paminėtomis sritimis; perteikti rezultatus į visas visuomenės koegzistavimo formas; dokumentuoti ir archyvuoti veiklos procesus ir produktus; skatinti ir vystyti transnacionalinį anarchistų bendradarbiavimą, siekdamą savo tikslų, įstaiga gali vykdyti šią ūkinę-komercinę veiklą:
a) politinė veikla;
b) įrenginių eksploatavimo veikla;
c) privačių agentų veikla;
d) edukacinė veikla;
e) kūrybinė, meninė ir pramogų organizavimo veikla;
f) kino filmų rodymas;
g) reklama;
h) aktorių parinkimo veikla;
i) knygų mažmeninė prekyba specializuotose parduotuvėse;
j) muzikos ir vaizdo įrašų mažmeninė prekyba.

steigėjai

anarchist committee

act of incorporation
october 21, 2018 vilnius

following the transnational code, the convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and other international legal acts, the general meeting of the participants consisting of 32 (thirty two) participants, establishes a public entity, further – anarchist committee.

i. general provisions

1. anarchist committee is a limited civil liability public legal entity that acts under these articles of association, the transnational code, the convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and other laws and legal acts. the entity may receive and provide support and charity.
2. legal form of the entity: committee.
3. duration of the activities of the entity is unlimited.



general meeting of the participants may be convened in derogation from this term, provided all the participants express an agreement.
3. each participant shall have one vote at the general meeting of the participants.
4. decisions of the general meeting of the participants shall be adopted by the principle of consensus. each participant has a veto power.

ii. bodies of the public entity

1. the bodies of the public entity are the general meeting of the participants. there is no sole governing body (director).
2. the general meeting of the participants shall be convened at least twice a month. all the participants shall be responsible for convening of the general meeting of the participants. the

iii. objectives of the public entity

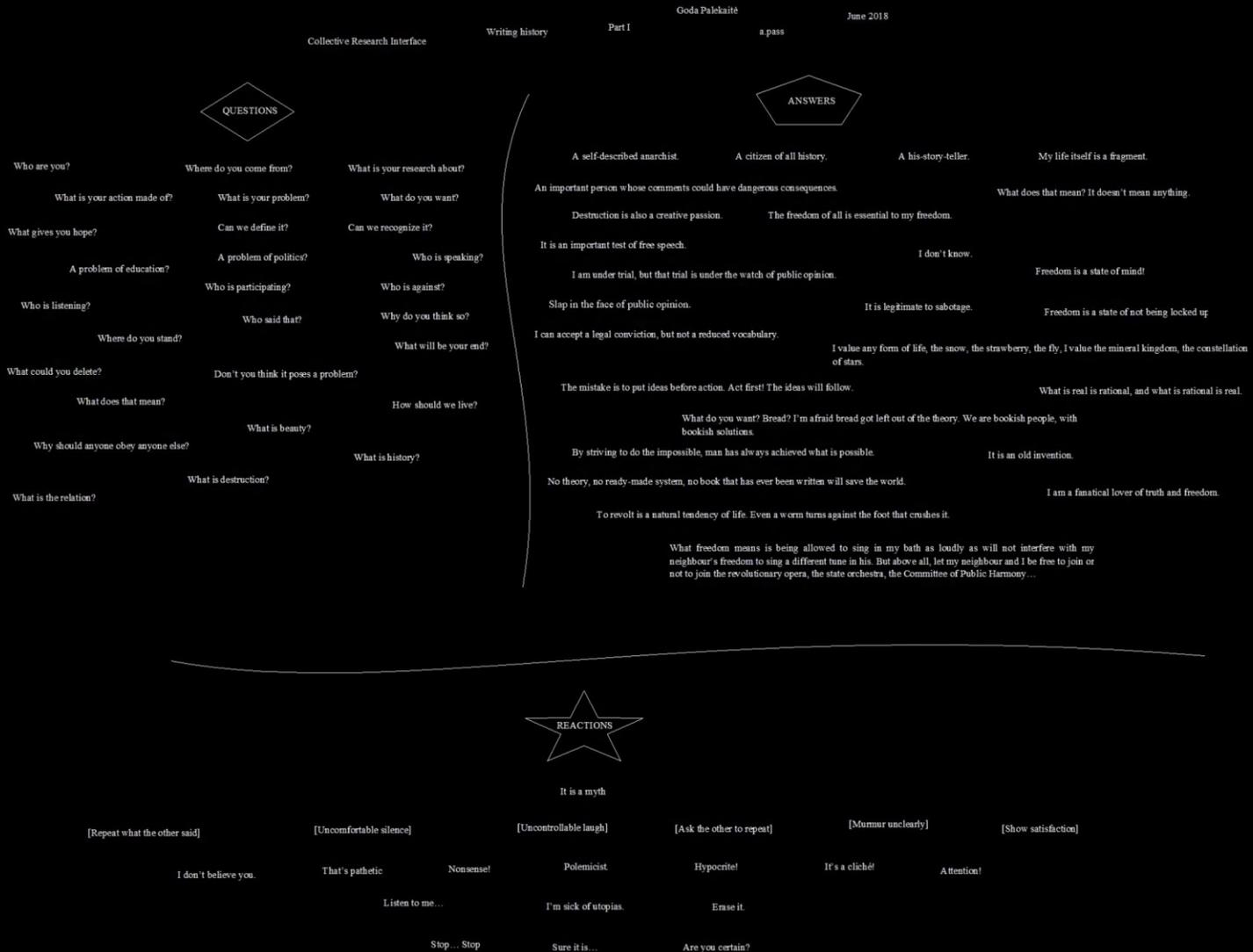
operational objectives of the public entity: to expand and communicate the ideas and principles of political anarchism, including but not restricting itself with the principles of political activism, feminism, environmentalism, pacifism, collectivism; to perform social, artistic and academic research related to the activities mentioned; to convey their results to all forms of human coexistence; to document and archive related processes and products; to promote and develop transnational cooperation among anarchist figures. in pursuing its objectives, the public entity may fulfill the following economic-commercial activities:
a) political activity;
b) operation of facilities;
c) activities of private agents;
d) education;
e) creative, arts and entertainment activities;
f) motion picture projection;
g) advertising;
h) casting activities;
i) retail sale of specialized products;
j) retail sale of music and video recordings.

the general meeting of participants

ADVERTISING ANARCHISM (The act of incorporation of the Anarchist Committee) in the "JCDecaux Prize: Dignity" group exhibition 2018, Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius (curated by Monika Kalinauskaitė and Adomas Narkevičius)

7 DREAMS WITH IMPLICATIONS: CASTING FOR A REVOLUTIONARY

I invited a group people to participate in a casting for a revolutionary. Each of them had a chance to be among the jury as well. During the casting one had to convince the jury why one is the best revolutionary of our times. The conversation was made out of a pool of questions, answers and reactions.



PUT WORDS IN MY MOUTH

L – T dialogue for mutual introduction

L

L: Where do you stand?
T: [...]
L: The snow, the strawberry?... The mineral kingdom?... By striving to do the impossible, man has always achieved what is possible.
T: [...]
L: Who is speaking – yes... Who is speaking?
T: [...]
L: A storyteller maybe. Or a detached philosopher. Where does he stand?
T: [...]
L: Maybe freedom is a myth?
T: [...]
L: I don't know. But who are you?
T: [...]
L: Could you erase it?
T: [...]

L: [uncomfortable silence]
T: [...]
L: That became a cliché.
T: [...]
L: What does that mean? It doesn't mean anything.
[uncomfortable silence]
L: Who is listening to us?
T: [...]
L: What do you want?
T: [...]
[extra long silence]
L: This interface we are busy with is mythological machinery.
T: [...]
L: It is an old invention but I am not sure whether the problem is a problem of politics.
T: [...]
L: Yes, a problem of education if you think about the way this dialogue is built.
T: [...]
L: Maybe we don't have to learn anything from it.
T: [...]

PUT WORDS IN MY MOUTH

L – T dialogue for mutual introduction

T

L: [...]
T: You see, the mistake is to put ideas before action. Act first and the ideas will naturally follow... See, I value any form of life. The snow, the strawberry, the fly, I value the mineral kingdom, the constellation of stars. I do.
L: [...]
T: Mmmhh... Who is speaking?
L: [...]
T: And who is listening?
L: [...]
T: At the side of freedom?
L: [...]
T: Probably it is... What gives you hope?
L: [...]
T: My life itself is a fragment.
L: [...]

T: What could you delete?
L: [...]
T: As I said, the mistake is to put ideas before action. Act first. And the ideas will naturally follow.
L: [...]
T: Might be. But what do you want? Bread? I'm afraid bread got left out of the theory. We are bookish people, with bookish solutions.
L: [...]
[uncomfortable silence]
T: [...]
T: I don't know...
L: [...]
T: To say other words than those that are written here.
[extra long silence]
L: [...]
T: Yes, it is an old invention.
L: [...]
T: A problem of education?
L: [...]
T: Mmmhh.
L: [...]
T: No, I don't think so.

7 DREAMS WITH IMPLICATIONS: PUT WORDS IN MY MOUTH

For the a.pass presentation of my Collective Research Interface at the ZSenne art lab (curated by Pierre Rubio) I asked people who hardly knew each other to come to me in couples. I gave them scripted dialogues for mutual introduction, which were composed by other couples beforehand. People were asked to have an intimate scripted conversation with its content ranging from poetry to revolution.

BAKUNIN

The performance “Bakunin” was based on the life and thoughts of the most influential Russian anarchist thinker Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876). Bakunin’s critique was his life: he left Russia to study philosophy in Germany but never came back as a free person. He traveled through most of European countries giving speeches and initiating revolts. Every state he came to prosecuted him. He was given two life sentences in prison and sent to jail in Russia where he spent 5 years and lost all his teeth from scurvy. Nevertheless, he managed to escape through Siberian rivers to Japan and USA, and finally came back to Europe to continue his deeds.

My interest arose from the fascination with this specific historical figure and from the fact that political anarchism has developed in the act of public speaking, i.e. in performance (in contrary to e.g. bookish Marxism). As part of my research I travelled to Bologna and Turin to conduct interviews with the anarchist communities there. Research methodologies described above, “Casting for a Revolutionary” and “Put Words in My Mouth” contributed significantly in writing the script. In summer 2018 I directed the show in Venice and Turin; Mikhail Bakunin was performed by Stefano A. Moretti.

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/302485098>





BAKUNIN

“Bakunin” premiered in The Venice Biennial for Architecture 2018 at the Lithuanian pavilion (“The Swamp Pavilion”). It was further performed at the Laboratorio Artistico Pietra in Turin, and Vilnius International Theatre Festival “Sirenos” (photo: Alicja Khatchikian).



7 DREAMS WITH IMPLICATIONS: VODKA SALT

“Vodka Salt” was a personal encounter between a visitor, a historical character and myself. The audience was invited behind a curtain – to the backstage of a collective a.pass show entitled “Unsettled Study” and presented at the Kanal Centre Pompidou as a part of Performatik 2019. The 20 meters long curtain was taken from a space in a.pass and installed there to create a backstage for historical and political narratives and identities, where the agency of imagination is active in processes of truth-making. There, my methods were forgery, speculation, conversation and intoxication. Seeing history-writing primarily as colonialist, imperialist and nationalist practice, I find it relevant to question how an artist can contribute to reshaping asymmetrical systems of knowledge and discourses of truth and objectivity.

VODKA SALT

Instructions for one-two visitors at a time: 1) find a researcher with a red military jacket 2) tell her the keyword you chose to activate the performance: Vodka or Salt.

Each visitor had a chance to encounter 1/2 of the performance accompanied by either vodka or salt, and a historical character. The space behind the curtain became a popular hideout from public gaze for both, performers of the event and the audience. Unexpected drunk encounters took place.



“Vodka Salt” at the Kanal Centre Pompidou in “Performatik” (The Brussels biennale of performance art) 2019, in the context of a pass “Unsettled study” (curated by Vladimir Miller)

For the Virtual Body Institution (a.pass event, which took place at Hacktiris, Brussels 2019), I wrote a script and directed a performance-conference where three historical characters meet. The debate took place between the ancient Greek female poet Sappho, a controversial Jewish-Muslim writer and journalist Essad Bay, and a 19th century Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. This semi-scripted debate manifested as three lecture-performances and a live discussion between three contemporary artists and researchers whom I encountered within the context of a.pass, and whose work I see as a contemporary continuance of the aforementioned characters: Nicolas Y Galeazzi, Marialena Marouda, and Sina Seifee. They embodied the characters, yet contributing with their own practice. The debate was accompanied by the sound artist Adomas Palekas who performed the alter-ego of the Russian avant-garde composer Arseny Avraamov.



Lately, I encountered many thoughts and methods applied by other artists, researchers, authors and curators. These significantly shaped my trajectory becoming my inspirations and references. Thank you all for your time and thoughts:

Adomas Palekas, Adrijana Gvozdenovic, Alicja Khatchikian, Amelie van Elmbt, Antonio Senta, Arseny Avraamov, Avraham ben Shmuel Firkovic, Chloe Chignell, Caterina Mora, Christina Stadlbauer, Deborah Birch, Diego Echegoyen, Eleanor Ivory Weber, Elen Braga, Elinora Schwartz, Ekaterina Kaplunova, Essad Bey, Esther Rodriguez-Barbero, Eszter Nemethi, Eunkyung Jeong, Femke Snelting, Flavio Rodrigo, Hoda Siahtiri, Geert Vaes, Kate Rich, Kobe Matthys, Kristien Van den Brande, Laura Pante, Leo Kay, Leah Abir, Lilia Mestre, Luisa Fillitz, Marialena Marouda, Mathilde Maillard, Maurice Meewisse, Michel Leiris, Milorad Pavic, Mikhail Bakunin, Monika Lipšic, Muslin Brothers, Nassia Fourtouni, Nicolas Y Galeazzi, Pia Louwerens, Pierre Rubio, Philipp Gehmacher, Richard Wagner, Sappho, Shervin Kianersi Haghighi, Signe Frederiksen, Sina Seifee, Stefano Moretti, Steven Jouwersma, Sven Dehens, Valerio Del Baglivo, Vanja Smiljanic, Velimir Khlebnikov, Vladimir Miller.