

**Leonid Bazhanov & Irina Gorlova**

**Intersection in Tallin**

[Translated by Tiina Laats]

[483 words]

**Russia**



EUROPSKA PRIJESTOLNICA  
KULTURE



This text was archived at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Zagreb collection, as part of the **Research project** conceived in 1997 by a SCCAN – Soros Centers for Contemporary Art Network, funded by the Open Society Foundation, New York.

The purpose of the project was to select, collect and disseminate texts on contemporary art practices in the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, around Soros Centers for Contemporary Art, written in and about art of the 1990s. The coordination of the project was carried out by Janka Vukmir, SCCA – Zagreb, today the Institute for Contemporary Art, Zagreb.

We did not intervene in any of texts more than just correcting obvious typos and spelling. On the occasion of collecting texts, we were given permission from all authors, to rightfully use them. If anyone now has different instructions, please, contact us at the [info@institute.hr](mailto:info@institute.hr).

All of the texts we have collected at the time have been later published on the website of the I\_CAN, International Contemporary Art Network, the short-lived successor of the SCCAN.

On the occasion of the exhibition **90s: Scars**, revisiting the art practices and social and political context of the 1990s in the postcommunist countries, the Institute for Contemporary Art is now reoffering a collection of **89 texts and a comprehensive list of then proposed further readings**, on the website of the Institute for Contemporary Art, [www.institute.hr](http://www.institute.hr).

The exhibition 90s: Scars is curated by Janka Vukmir and organized by the Institute for Contemporary Art and the MMSU – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka, on the occasion of the **European Cultural Capital Rijeka 2020**. Originally planned to open May 14, 2020, at the MMSU in Rijeka, due to COVID-19 crisis, is postponed until further notice.

## Leonid Bazhanov & Irina Gorlova

### Intersection in Tallin (March 1–22, 2002)

The exhibition that the National Centre for Contemporary Art in Moscow brings to Tallinn displays the work of three artists. Gathered in one room, it will force us into the suffocatingly paranoid atmosphere of a prayer house. Whereas Sergei Shutov's recent solo exhibition was titled *Strangers Don't Come Here*, the suitable name for the Tallinn exhibition, paraphrasing Shutov, would be *Everybody Comes Here*.

As for their concept of creativity, the artists of this exhibition are contradictory in many ways. Vadim Zakharov, author of the video film *The Lake of Oblivion* represents the Moscow conceptualism that in his treatment resembles a religious sect. The mouthpiece of the sect is the journal *Pastor Zond*, the artist himself acts as pastor, and the Moscow conceptualists, scattered all over the world, make up the congregation. The film advocating Zakharov's sectarianism has found material in contemporary religious sects and prophets that we have been shown in the media. Speeches, baptisms attended by crowds, meditations and ecstasy are gathered on one tape, and have such an impact on the viewer that he is imperceptibly drawn into sacral rites and sprinkled with modernised "opium for the masses".

Sergei Shutov's installation, displayed at last year's Venice biennial, seems to be inspired by the same idea. The viewer witnesses a praying session with a group of prayers covered with black cloth. The names of a variety of gods uttered in different languages blend into one eulogy. At the same time, the ironic undertone of Zakharov's work varies, regarding humankind as a mindless crowd, and the author as a mere observer. With a laconic gesture of an artist, Shutov seems to illustrate well-known ideas of human togetherness and separation, unity and alienation, division into friends and strangers. The third work is a film, produced by Dmitri Gutov on the basis

of the performance recorded by the group Radek in August 2000. In the very heart of Moscow, on the Sadovaya roundabout with the heaviest traffic in town, a few pedestrian crossings were chosen where crowds halt to wait for the green light. The participants stood patiently among the throng, holding pieces of rolled-up red canvas with absurd slogans: Microbe – the President’s Murderer!, 99 % Free, etc. Stepping on the crossing, they unfolded the canvas so that the unsuspecting pedestrians all became participants of a staged demonstration. The video film records this original way to include masses in art.

The displayed works are not united by the religious flavour alone, but also by the authors’ wish to marshal the viewers into the action, make it quite impossible to remain indifferent on-lookers or readers of coded texts. The exhibition does not declare any novel trend in Russian art or try to force the participants into the same category. Rather, it offers the viewers a performance that is co-ordinated in a most fascinating manner.