РИФФ.ДАВИД /
RIFF.DAVID

What is to be Done?

ANTE: Can you describe what is Chto delat?

DAVID RIFF: Chto delat is a collective platform that is devoted to creating a space between theory, art, and activism. The goal of making this space is to politicize all three types of praxis. The platform is coordinated by a group of artists, philosophers, and writers based in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. The group consists of artists Dmitry Vilensky, Tsaplya (Olga Egorova), Gluklya (Natasha Pershina), the philosophers Artem Magun, Oxana Timofeeva and Alexei Penzin, the poet and critic Alexander Skidan and me—critic and translator.

In the early summer of 2003 the group began to put out a newspaper of the same name dedicated to the politicization of cultural production, and how this global problem plays out in the post-Soviet context. The project was interdisciplinary from the very beginning, and we are committed to examining the links between the disciplines on a micro-political level. We believe that every "link" is a potential politicon and also a subject of antagonism and even enmity. In some ways, the whole point is that we often cannot agree [on what is to be done] although we all probably agree in terms of a general direction. For me, working in this collective-antagonistic mode has led to a deeper fascination with Marxism, but I am reluctant to make this appraisal for the group as a whole.

The name of the group is Chto delat which means, "What is to be done?" This is a classic Russian question (the other is *Kto vinovat*, or who's guilty?). While basic, the question has a long cultural legacy. *What is to be done?* is the name of a utopian socialist novel written in 1863 by Nikolai Chernyshevsky. Its reception was controversial and angered anti-socialists like Dostoevsky, whose *Notes from the Underground* opens with a veiled critique of this novel. This same title was later used by Lenin in his seminal essay, widely regarded as THE modernist primer in revolutionary politics. Both writers ask how politicization should constitute itself under hostile (authoritarian, early capitalist) conditions. Dostoevsky says that this is impossible, that spleen and salvation (through national religion reborn) are the only answer. But we do not subscribe to the negativity of this position. The question remains: If you are under extremely hostile conditions how do you act? What do you do? What do you build? How do you self-organize? How do you overcome all the polemics and fragmentation?

It is symptomatic that most people in Russia today would only ask this question ironically. Cultural practice needs to find new ways of making "theoreticians of the human senses," as Marx famously put it in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. The question is how? Chto delat is committed to asking this question both in terms of theory and praxis and also through artistic practice.

In Chto delat's first published editorial in 2003 you evoked a need for a new radical social engagement and a call to "take back the languages that define reality." As part of your practice you choose to publish a bilingual newspaper in Russian and English. How does language function and how does the issue of translation affect your newspaper?

Translation into English entails paranoia. You are translating into a dominant language. This problematizes even the more satisfying aspects of translation, such as mimetic uses of the target language to reproduce literary or rhetorical voices. The worst thing about this paranoia is that it blocks the translator's virtuosity which otherwise possesses an inherent potential to describe a new reality. You could define this potential as utopian, and really, what if it were possible through some feat of virtuosity to speak multiple languages all at once? Wouldn't this be like a utopia with the immediacy of communicating an absolute idea in real time?

The problem of cultural translation has become central to contemporary art over the last ten or so years, and not only in a metaphorical sense. One can conceptualize contemporary art as a machine for "ultra-rapid translations" (see Sarat Maharaj), and an industry of contextualization, which is clearly subordinated to different ideological projects but at the same time does continue to have a utopian potentiality.

This is not as abstract as it sounds given how Russian culture historically has been so removed from the global market's translation "machines." Our newspaper is in two languages because we want to develop an alternative to isolation, to speak our own "global language," to capture an important means of production, and to harness all the positive things about heightened mobility and rapid communication. One of these is contact with people in different places who either move through the channels of contemporary art or political activism. By translating and distributing their work, we hope to achieve a tangible example for how new forms of solidarity can arise from *within* the growth of global communication, and its inherently post-colonial (neo-imperialist) framework. This is our attempt to continue the project of internationalism.

Is there something that can't be translated regarding Russian art or the Russian experience? Is translation a valuable hermeneutic for framing Russian art (ists)?

In my opinion, there is always something untranslatable about not only artistic texts but the everyday. Both are part of a reality that can produce truth without ever being known. So of course, translation is one if not the hermeneutic for understanding both life and art, precisely because it reveals moments that cannot be translated. These are, in my view, the central points that structure reality. This idea is pretty banal, a trivial version of Walter Benjamin plus apophatic theology, but it has a background. And it's the view you'll tend to take if you do a lot of translating and are faced with the ethical dilemma of how and what to say. It also shows you that your translations are inventions that make a particular reality, their distance/proximity from/to the

Interview by
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САМООБРАЗОВАНИЕ | SELF-EDUCATION

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(unknowable) "truth" is an index of your own (implicitly political) responsibility.

In my opinion, the most untranslatable part about living and working in Russia is the role the Soviet past plays on all levels of life. This Soviet culture is both slowly sinking like Atlantis and all around. These spaces are utterly unique. How to chart, to describe them? How to answer questions as to the various "dark ages" and "bright spots" in Soviet reality? Something that is unimaginable today (real communism) seemed very close to becoming *the truth*. This is what is so disconcerting about reading Lenin, Lukács, and even Mikhail Lifshitz talk about the *truth*, not to mention standing before all of those metro-stations, constructivist ensembles, skyscrapers, and apartment stairwells. They are here. They were part of the movement. And now, for very complex reasons, the movement is over (and only just beginning again). And the same time, the course of the movement itself—or so Marxist thinking claims—was *true*, for all its perversions. Just as our micro-movements are also still *true*, though this (much smaller) truth is something we cannot comment on. It is something that must unfold in time.

ANTE: What is the Soviet intelligentsia and how did it affect the development of an avant-garde in Russia?

DAVID RIFF: This is one of those classical Russian questions; the definition and role of the intelligentsia has always been a subject of heated debate. I can't summarize this debate here fully. What I'll offer is a very basic sketch.

Since there are so many social ruptures, one cannot speak of one Russian or Soviet intelligentsia. In general, the term "intelligentsia" indicates an "enlightened" stratum that emerged in the early 19th century and began to imagine itself as a pillar of civil society. Even though the "intelligentsia" tried to come to terms with modernization through critical debates (Slavophiles vs. Westernizers), they found that their advice was repressed by the state.

By the 1870s, the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia was falling apart. Its dissent appeared impotent and senile, as satirized by the character Stepan Verkhovesky in Dostoevsky's *Demons*. Dostoevsky's "demons" were a social stratum known as *raznochintsy*. Now here's a word that really is impossible to translate. What it means literally is "people from different estates," though it has a slightly derogatory connotation. One could identify the *raznochintsy* with an embryonic multitude—a mottled strata of mobile intellectuals and experts, impoverished nobles, emancipated serfs, Jews from the Pale of Settlement.
Lenin was such a central figure in revolutionizing this vital stratum because he was able to tap into two central potentialities. The first is political antagonism, a quality reflected in Lenin's language which is patched together from high philosophy and caustic, often vulgar interjections. The other is the communitarian principle which became central as the *raznochintsy* searched for common points of social cohesion. It is this search for unity that Lenin was trying to politicize with his model of revolutionary cells: the self-learning micro-communities, that would eventually form a new mode of self-governance, i.e., soviet power.

These two principles were crucial to the emergence of the avant-garde, which needs to be understood as a cultural field of *antagonistic communities*. Their political and aesthetic debates centered around the issue of what to do with the 19th century, whether to smash or to appropriate the legacy of the intelligentsia. As Stalinism took hold, this debate was cut short and a "Soviet intelligentsia" emerged which had internalized both the avant-garde and intelligentsia, both antagonism and community. Both schools of thought were vital to the dissident culture in the 1950s–1960s that emerged following Stalin's death.

How did art figure in these later communities?

The curator and art critic Ekaterina Degot has written that the "non-conformist" art of the 1960s–80s was a paradoxical realization of council communism in an artistic milieu that is typically thought of as dissident and, more frequently, depoliticized. I would take such appraisals with a grain of salt. Ideology was important, and most of the later Soviet intelligentsia were either westernizing liberals or Slavophile nationalists, reverting to this "eternal" split in the country's elite. But Degot makes an important point: many of Soviet culture's most positive aspects came from this semi-dissident intelligentsia. Communitarian kitchen politics eventually turned into a second culture of *samizdat* and it is against this backdrop that the earliest examples of genuine contemporary art emerged.

In the 1990s the Soviet intelligentsia's micro-communities broke apart. All the political potentiality they thought they had accumulated evaporated within the first five years. Marginalized, they faced a clear choice: either be lumpenized or join the planetary (petit) bourgeoisie.

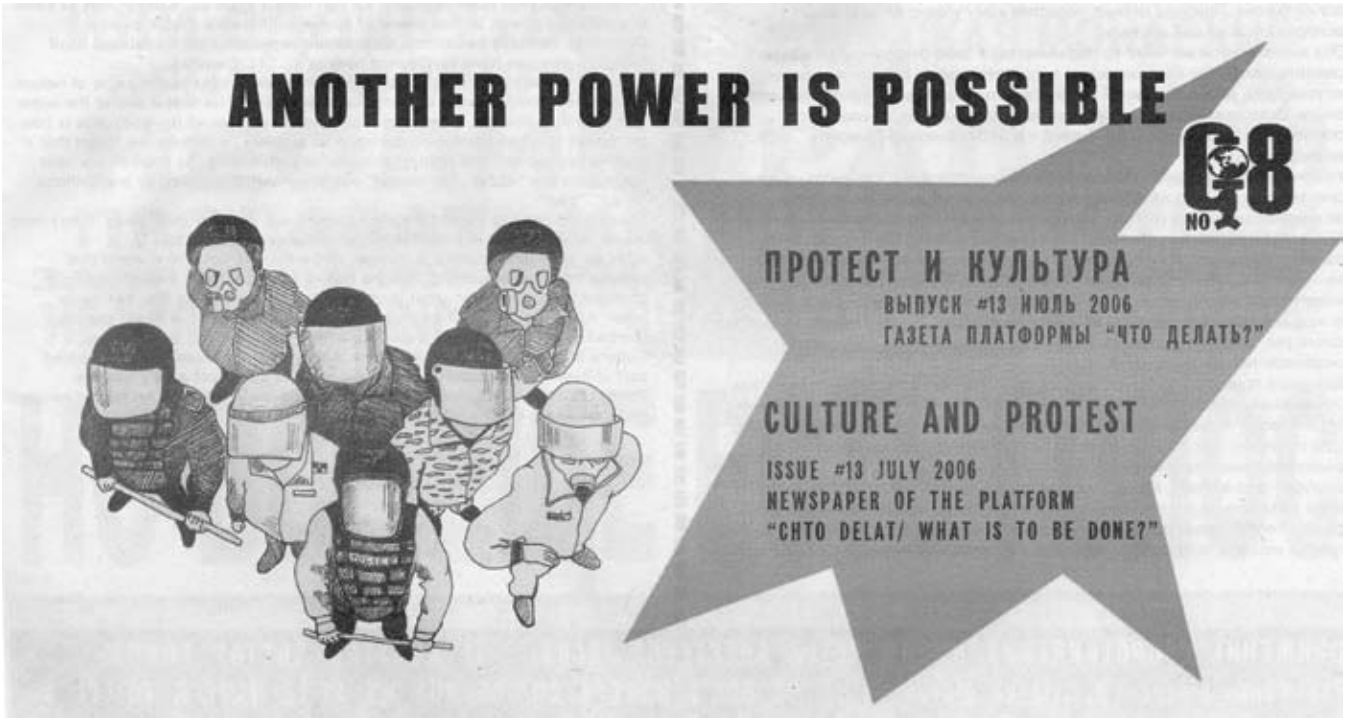
Beginning in 1990s, many of our older colleagues met this dissolution with experimental discourses in post-disciplinary culture, never really losing sight of the "Russian madness" of alienation and disorientation that was spreading. Some like the curator/ critic Viktor Misiano dreamt of a new emergent "organic intellectual," but also documented and analyzed the undeniable fact that the communities of the Soviet epoch had devolved into an alienated sociality, a *tusovka* or "in crowd" of cultural figures. As Viktor's most brilliant texts show, the *tusovka* has a totally anti-intellectual, bio-political logic—the main thing is to be included in the right place at the right time. This means a kind of sequential communality where you migrate from one scene to another, alienating yourself completely in the process. Viktor's curatorial work in the 1990s tried to capture this logic, and to reconstitute some kind of post-intelligentsia by taking hold of the bio-political and making it into a principle, and in doing so developing a kind of post-Soviet translation of Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics.

To be fair to Viktor, and to take what by now is a cheap shot at Bourriaud, I should say that Viktor's work was never as infected by the latent glamour that has made relational aesthetics so moot as of late. Instead, it is a melancholic reflection of mistranslation. In a way, Viktor's work insists upon the fact that contemporary art is somehow almost impossible in post-Soviet Russia, that it lacks all institutional and communitarian preconditions, and is doomed to becoming an export-product, a bad re-translation back into the language of the original. More directly it mourns the vast social dissolution of the communitarian principle, the end of the intelligentsia. So translating Misiano's work was a very melancholic experience because what it really pointed at was another version of the same Hegelian "death of…" something or another, which is really just a re-functionalization that inevitably takes place in the process of bourgeois revolution. Today this death is something very tangible and many former members of the intelligentsia community (and even some prominent artists) have basically become nouveau riche socialites whose lives are pale imitations of *Sex in the City*, utterly irresponsible in a country with an average income of roughly 250 dollars a month.

Is it somehow easier to be radical in Russia? Are Russian artists limited by a degree of romance for the avant-garde?

This is an interesting question that I've heard on several occasions. No offense, but I think it betrays a certain neo-colonial orientalism. The assumption is that post-Soviet Russian conditions are not yet as advanced as those in the West, that Russian artists are stuck in a modernist paradigm, and worse yet, that their "avant-garde tradition" (a contradiction in terms) is deeply linked to the "Russian soul." This image of the Russian spirit has been prevalent in stereotypes of the European East since German romanticism. Some Russian artists have worked with it quite well, posing as representatives of various forms of Russian madness, thereby not resisting but aiding their own translation by conforming to a popular stereotype.

But truthfully it is hard to be radical in Russia, like anywhere else. Nothing much can provoke any real scandal because urban reality in Russia is totally spectacular, scandalous and melodramatic by itself.



This is something many post-Soviet artists only started to realize about six or seven years ago. Until then, many projects were provocations that worked a lot like PR (and often were instrumentalized as such). This is why the type of performance actionism by artists like Osmolovsky, Brener, or Kulik no longer really works. This kind of contemporary art looks like a loudmouth with a thin voice and most younger educated people ignore overt radicalism as a fake, and scoff at neo-avant-gardism as old hat. In fact, many don't like contemporary art at all. What's more, they are even more suspicious of refined, non-spectacular forms. Even if we take a very tame (almost lame) reflexive approach, we are accused of being provocateurs, grant leeches, parasites, and bores.

On the contrary there is the artist Dmitri Gutov, who could be understood as a real soft-spoken radical. I've worked with Gutov quite extensively not only as a translator but also in artistic-theoretical collaborations. Gutov has devoted the last decade or so to rehabilitating a forgotten Marxist thinker named Mikhail Lifshitz. He's even founded a Lifshitz Institute, a kind of Marxist monastery. In Gutov's version Lifshitz represents a classical Marxist ideal that once, paradoxically, was reality. According to Gutov, this aesthetic wore the mask of conservatism; it rejected the avant-garde for its irrationalism, its naturalism, and its vitalism, inventing a very strange, heterogeneous form of Marxist historicism to do so. Lifshitz himself wrote several key texts against cubism, pop art, and modernism in general and Gutov turns this critique against contemporary art.

Gutov's work is often understood as a post-modern provocation or deconstructivist hyper-identification because everyone loves to hate Lifshitz (just like people in New York love to hate Greenberg). Gutov's "quiet" practice is seen as aestheticizing politics and as fake. Of course Gutov insists that he is perfectly serious, that it's not just about being radical, and follows suit by studying Marx and devoting himself to painting the same canvases endlessly, calling upon the Left to do the same, to study the "scriptures." People think that's a provocation too, though I think in some way it's just about as radical as you can get, perhaps even too radical for my liking.

The point is that no one takes Gutov's radicalism (if that's what it is) seriously. So even beyond the "romance of the avant-garde," which both Lifshitz and Gutov reject entirely, (much more than Chto delat) the limitation is obvious. It's not just a Russian problem. You can't really be as radical as the reality that negates your radicalism.

You have written about how Russian elites use contemporary art as a cosmetic makeover for the social problems in Russia. Is art for hire?

It is hardly surprising that the drastic social changes after the end of the Soviet Union have faced elites with a serious problem vis-a-vis self-representation. The current "stabilization" is all about legalizing "primary" accumulation based not on grabbing traditional commons, but stealing from an existing corporation, the Soviet state. An elite cannot survive for long if it looks so criminal. Contemporary culture sometimes (though not often) plays a role in making the post-Soviet elite look more solid, or as a means of declaring its sovereignty.

A striking example can be found in the efforts of the oligarch Vladimir Potanin, whose company Interros has holdings in major banks, manufacturing, and the metallurgy industry. This billionaire comes from a party-apparatus background, which might explain why he has had an easier time keeping his assets. He has the "proper corporate culture," as they say, and seems smart enough to fuse a late-industrial national economy with post-industrial elements of media capitalism. Aside from taking over major media outlets like *Izvestija* and *Moskovkij komsomlets*, Potanin's company puts a lot of money into cultural production, including representing Russia abroad, a task that traditionally belonged to the state.

The Potantin Foundation paid for the Guggenheim's *Russia!* show which was a success (in terms of marketing), and it also has started an extensive publication series on contemporary and historical art, called the Interros Bookpublishing Program. Ostensibly, the goal is to create "impressive," perhaps even spectacular compilations of historical Russian and Soviet-era visual culture for both domestic and foreign markets. The point may be to divert attention from social ills, but it is also to imbue the current elite with a sense of legitimacy. Apparently, now Interros has decided to

change course somewhat by also investing money into contemporary art… so clearly they view art as an expedient strategy.

More broadly, the new Russian elite still doesn't quite know how it wants to look and has no scale for measuring the adequacy or salience of any particular project. Does it want to gild itself in historicism, or does it yearn to be "contemporary" and chic by owning pieces by Damian Hirst? It doesn't really know. It is clear that there are some valuable resources around (such as the legacy of the late Soviet period, the avant-garde, or even contemporary art), most of which are "common," but what should be privatized, and how? What is better for self-representation? Stalinist potpourri? Or the First Moscow Biennial of Contemporary Art?

So yes, art is for hire. Like everywhere, but with a post-Soviet note. Some artists have played with the logic of this fact quite well, such as the painters Dubossarsky and Vinogradov, whose monumental canvases of "bad painting" frame themselves as (fictional) commissions for the new elite.

ANTE: Are artists a modernizing force in contemporary Russia?

DAVID RIFF: It depends on what you mean by modernization. If today, modernization means the transition from classical, late industrial Soviet modernity to post-industrial globalized post-modernity, then artists are inevitably among those who introduce new forms of production, as are other media and culture workers. This is simply because contemporary capitalism rests so heavily upon the immaterial production of marketing schemes, brand representations, and performances. The distinction between "high art" and "mass culture" remains nominally intact, but the culture industry's function is changing. Also, the industry is becoming global, so that ideas and images circulate at lightning speed. Contemporary artists who travel broadly and participate in this ultra-rapid flux of discourses and images understand this quite well but run the risk of getting cut off from local developments, which are the real concrete material (resources) that the industry inevitably wants to capture.

On a more concrete level the role artists actually play in the establishment of a post-Soviet (post Fordist) culture industry is surprisingly small (though it is not much smaller than in the West). Some contemporary artists appear on TV once in a while, like Vlad Mamyshev-Monroe, who plays with the figure of transvestitism and operates much like a fashion host, or Oleg Kulik, who used to bite foreign art audiences in the persona of a wild dog, and now prefers to style himself as a latter-day Tolstoy in rocker-garb. Or take the *Blue Nose Group*, whose *Monty-Python* type sketches are sometimes shown on TV. But in general, all this rarely reaches prime-time. Kulik's fifteen minutes of fame are likely to come after 10 o'clock at night.

Of course, there is also another aspect of art's role in what you call "modernization," namely the development of critical narratives and forms that might make sense of not only the ruptures and revolutions but also the continuities. I said before, making sense means "making theoreticians of the senses." Not only telling people how to think but giving thought a palpable, concrete form. In this field, one cannot help but notice that contemporary art is in a deep, global crisis, and that truly adequate forms or narratives are missing, much more than they were in earlier periods.

Almost all contemporary art—even the most glamorous— considers itself critical of contemporary conditions. This sounds great but obviously more often than not contemporary art fails to mount a rigorous critique. I think we all see it but most people are complacent about this failure.

From my perspective, many Russian aesthetic vocabularies, especially in design and architecture, are quoted by Western artists. These artists seem to be nostalgic for a kind of Russian fashion without any understanding for the deeper context. Is this a failure of translation?

I don't know. At MoMA/ PS1 this past spring, some of us saw the work of an Israeli artist who had rebuilt Rodchenko's workers club in blue Styrofoam. There were voices on a soundtrack, arguing antagonistically. About what I don't remember. I was there with Gutov and started talking about the very question you just asked. The guard was a Russian lady. She heard us and said to us in extremely coarse Russian, "I'm so sick of hearing this shit, I don't even know what it means, and you can't even sit down on the benches." Right on, Gutov and I said. That's exactly what it is, lots of meaningless talk about politics and the impossibility of something that once seemed possible, and that is no longer understood, though it has entered the classical canon.

But later I got to thinking that maybe this Israeli artist was exploring the very *potentiality* that seems so impossible to translate. Approaching its ineffable truth, though unconsciously, touching something that has a strong energetic charge, a resource that wants exploiting, but reacting like to the touch of Styrofoam? Maybe his approach is just as adequate as Gutov's or mine? Does it produce anything of lasting value? I don't know. But maybe the point is to focus on this, and not the ephemeral (totally unreal) aspect of Soviet visual culture and reality. Maybe it makes more sense to think of Soviet reality as a mode of production—very real, not at all "impossible"—that is currently being reconfigured and not just a fashion as you suggest.

What role does Russian art have internationally? Is this very different than how it functions within Russia? Is the audience strictly international/ Russian or is there a vestigial Soviet consciousness/ character?

The role of Russian art internationally has changed considerably over the last fifteen or so years. We could identify several phases, roughly speaking, after the reception of the avant-garde.

The first was the boom of late Soviet non-conformist art (dominated by romantic Moscow conceptualism) that started around 1988 and lasted into the early 1990s. In the USA, Germany, and France, late Soviet non-conformism actually prepared this boom with an extensive grass roots networking during the Cold War. Since the 1970s different people had been pushing for dialogue with artists and intellectuals outside the official post-Stalinist mainstream, perhaps not so much with the goal of consolidating the power of the CIA-sponsored avant-garde, but of finding a common human language.

The boom of the late 1980s/early 1990s erased a lot of that older reception, though it has lived on in the more widely received works of Ilya Kabakov and a few others.

The second phase occurred in the 1990s, when Russian art began to seek points of connection to a multi-cultural network of "contemporary" (read transnational) institutions, which ultimately gave rise to the system of big art fairs and biennials. Artists played with national identity in spectacular performances: Oleg Kulik, Alexander Brener, and later even the Blue Noses were new Russian punks, grotesquely expressing the carnival anomie that had set in over the deep Russian wilderness. At the same time, other post-Soviet artists were also beginning to circulate at the biennials: Gutov and Osmolovsky, but also Zvezdochiotov, Koshlyakov and Dubossarsky/ Vinogradov were more intent on continuing some aspect of the Soviet (conceptualist) legacy than Kulik or Brener. This phase had some radical highpoints: Kulik was arrested in Sweden at the Interpol Exhibition, Brener spent time in a Dutch jail for spray painting a dollar sign onto Malevich's *Suprematisme*. And slowly but surely, Russian artists were participating in big international exhibitions.

The third phase lasted from 2000 to 2003 and precipitated a new wave of interest in Russian artists. With a slew of publications, group shows, and contributions to Manifestas and biennials artists like Olga Chernysheva, Viktor Alimpiev, Elena Kovylina, ESCAPE Program, Lyudmila Gorlova, Radek Community, the Factory of Found Clothing, and the Blue Nose Group made their names in this period. In Berlin all things Russian became really fashionable, there were a bunch of Russian

nightclubs, lots of immigrants and exiles, some of whom were successfully promoting late Soviet and early post-Soviet pop culture as a fad somewhere between the Buena Vista Social Club and the fashion for Balkan beats and—do I really have to say it—spirituality, vodka, and sex. Politics were more in the background. (I joined Chto delat against this backdrop. It seemed like a great alternative to ethnokitsch.)

But with more and more representative group exhibitions (the most pompous being *Russia!* at the Guggenheim), the fourth phase began. The latest shift has changed from diffusing Russian artists into the global biennial network to consolidating a new version of a national tradition or (more sympathetically) a post-communist condition.

On the one hand, representation through art became a state function, as in the more moderate Moscow-Berlin (2003-4), the confused Moscow Biennial (2005), or the proto-nationalist *Russia!* (2006). On the other hand, post-Soviet artists come into contact with alternative networks and modes of dissemination that lay claim to a grass-roots counter-culturalism and repoliticalization. Without getting too carried away about the potentiality of such networks, it presents at least some alternative to the image of Russian art as an exotic luxury commodity.

Who's your audience?

I have some trouble with the question. In my view, all Soviet and post-Soviet art finds its audience in people who are not indifferent to the fate of communism as a political and cultural project. The problem is that this central issue has been depoliticized. Communist culture appears as a dead language or a national speciality. The audience largely refuses to talk about the perspectives and problems of what Marx—and not Stalin or even Lenin—called communism. This is what makes the entire reception of communist and post-communist culture seem so absurd, a periphery with an empty center. Which is why the Russian state can now interpolate itself into the process and strip-mine the legacy of the past to create so many national, increasingly neo-conservative projects. It's like the key to the past is missing, because communism has no future.

This is an idea that Chto delat rejects. We think that there are people all over the world who are not only trying to come to terms with the political and cultural legacies of 20th century communism, but are also looking for political and aesthetic ways forward. Many people see that capitalism, in its present form, is untenable, and would like to find venues for engagement and solidarity. This is happening all over the world. So it's very important to engage and involve both local and international audiences in the search for new forms of solidarity, whilst reflecting on the communist past. In the ideal, these "audiences" would join us in political and aesthetic praxis, moving to the (empty) center of debate, rather than remaining as observers on its periphery. But in reality, this particular form of public needs to be *invented*. Personally, I have to say again that translation is one praxis that leads to such an audience's invention.

I have been told that increasingly Russian artists are not interested in adressing an international audience, that there is enough interest and money within Russia. Is this true?

This question is a source of agony. Whoever told you this was right on the money. Literally. As oil dollars flush the economy more and more people are trying to cater to the local elite, while the trends of the international world seem to go in the wrong direction for any "organic" reception of Russian art.

One objective reason is that the institutions of social democracy are being privatized and focusing more on developing their national market. Also, while Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and the Baltic States, and even Ukraine and Georgia are being integrated into EU exchange programs, Russia has been isolated on an institutional level. Increasingly institutions in the West are less and less interested in Russian art. It's hard to find funding. The market for Russian classical painting is quite good, and even the nonconformists are selling. But contemporary art has yet to find its market niche, as the poor sales at Sotheby's first ever Russian [contemporary] auction showed this past summer in New York.

So, indeed, cultivating money and interest on a domestic level is a good alternative, especially since some of the tycoons and businesspeople are taking a more active interest. The problem is that artists here are becoming too uncritical of the elite they had previously rejected. Because, as you put it, art is for sale. So you suspend judgment. Plus, the modernist paradigm of criticism is really collapsing, choking on its own contradictions. So art becomes more and more affirmative and glamorous, overtly serving corporate culture. Unfortunately, that's what many artists (all over the world) do, when they are given a shot at gold. They don't ask what kind of new national project they are (unwittingly) participating in. /