

The background is a monochromatic blue illustration of a utopian city. It features a tall, cylindrical tower with a spiral staircase, a flying car in the sky, and a woman in a long dress walking with a child in the foreground. The scene is lush with trees and foliage.

Utopian Realities

100 Years of Now with Alexandra Kollontai

HAU

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With “Utopian Realities – 100 Years of Now with Alexandra Kollontai” HAU Hebbel am Ufer inquires into the topicality of political and artistic developments that became possible for a few years following the 1917 Russian Revolutions. It liberated utopian thinking by bringing it from a distant dream into the effective realm of everyday life. The first attempts to create a new world were made, but the potential of the political upheaval turned into its opposite in Stalinism only a few years after the revolution.

What is the significance of the utopias of that time, and don't many of these past ideas still appear future to us today? As part of the four-year project “100 Years of Now” by the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, HAU is working with international artists to present four new productions, two different discussion formats, a music programme and installations, which will look backward to measure the distance to the past in order to understand current society in its political form and to update its own positionings. The work, the writings, and the life of Alexandra Kollontai (1872-1952) are the productive inspiration here. The Soviet revolutionary and feminist turned the body, love and sexuality into a political topic, developing new models of family and educational policy.

Utopian Realities is a co-production of HAU Hebbel am Ufer and Haus der Kulturen der Welt and takes place as part of “100 Years of Now”. Supported by Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien. Curated by HAU Hebbel am Ufer.



Contents

“Against Dispair” Annemie Vanackere	5
“Eternal Russia” Marina Davydova and Vera Martynov	6
“A Revolutionary Feminist Living Many Lives” Gisela Notz	11
“We Love You the Way You Are, We Hate You the Way You Are...”	
Sandra Noeth in dialogue with Lina Majdalanie	14
“I’ve had enough, I’m going to the movies.” Silvia Fehrmann in dialogue with Mariano Pensotti	18
“Is Europe Still a Valid Prospect?” Alex Demirović	24
“Everything Fits in The Room” Simone Aughterlony and Jen Rosenblit	28
“Thinking the Possible” Annemie Vanackere in dialogue with Vlatka Horvat	31
Biographies	34
Register of illustrations and Imprint	35
Programme overview	37
Festival calendar	39

Against Despair

“Utopian Realities – 100 Years of Now with Alexandra Kollontai” is the result of a longer process of exchanging thoughts and ideas with Berlin’s Haus der Kulturen der Welt. In the context of “Hundred Years of Now,” a project spanning the following four years, HAU Hebbel am Ufer sought to make a contribution that would reflect its experience as a place for international theatre and artistic production. This invitation inspired an – indeed almost utopian – cooperation, as it turned out to be generous, trustful, and lacking all unnecessary complications.

With the conceptual frame of the century in mind, one cannot but look to the Russian Revolutions of 1917: world-historic events did not only indicate political subversion and turmoil. Political change also went – at first – hand in hand with thorough societal changes, and was accompanied by a cultural revolution. A new way of artistic thinking emerged and inspired, among other things, the Russian Futurists, who became Europe’s most radical avant-garde. While Italian Futurists continued to discuss contemporary topics with a traditional mode of representation in mind, the Russian artists drew their world into their art by approaching its materiality in wholly new ways: the material came to determine the form – a new ethical imperative that became political in the wake of 1917. Material as priority; this new agenda turned artists into constructors. It was this very thinking that enabled the Russian avant-garde to justify their artistic actions politically, which they did up until the late 1920s. The thus newly created spirit of optimism, which the new beginning sparked, could not only be felt in the cultural sector, but in all sectors of life, and especially in radical projects that sought to change traditional concepts of the family or gender relations. Alexandra Kollontai stands as a paradigmatic example for these revolutionary ideas; for her, the emancipation of women was a crucial part of the more general struggle for liberation. As the first female top diplomat, she fought for and personified her political goals forcefully. By taking a look back, we would like to reflect on our distance to the past and at the same time debate its current political relevance. This

is why we would take this chance to return to the feminist perspective, the thoughts and actions of the Russian revolutionist, which we will not only discuss in depth, but which we will also hold up against the views that determine our perspective today.

For our Festival “Utopian Realities,” which dedicates itself to the political and artistic developments in the aftermath of the Russian revolutions and the short phase of a sexual-political departure that followed from it, we will engage in a productive exchange with the participating artists and present these innovative co-operations. And this is exactly where the “utopian moment” of our self-understanding manifests itself: we have actively encouraged artists to enter unfamiliar territory, build unusual alliances, explore both new forms and new contents, and in doing so step onto very thin ice.

In their first artistic-scenic collaboration, the Russian curator and critic Marina Davydova and the stage designer and artist Vera Martynov will use the course that is built into their performative installation “Eternal Russia” to remind the audience that, next to the political, artistic, and sexual departures that were instigated by the 1917 revolution, the century was also imbued with a nostalgic desire for the pre-revolutionary Russian empire. Inspired by the works of Alexandra Kollontai, the Argentinean theatre producer Mariano Pensotti will present a poetic piece that oscillates between puppet show, film, and a theatrical performance featuring women in all main roles. The visual artist Vlatka Horvat bases her first production for the stage, “Minor Planets,” on the research she conducted on the Russian revolutions as well as on her personal experience of the disintegrating Yugoslavia in the 1990s. In a setting that can best be described as a mix of cooking show and construction scene, Simone Augterlony and Jen Rosenblit use their first collaborative performance “Everything Fits In The Room” to explore queer-feminist politics and utopian spaces.

Rotterdam’s Studio Jonas Staal will initiate its new long-term project “New Unions”: together

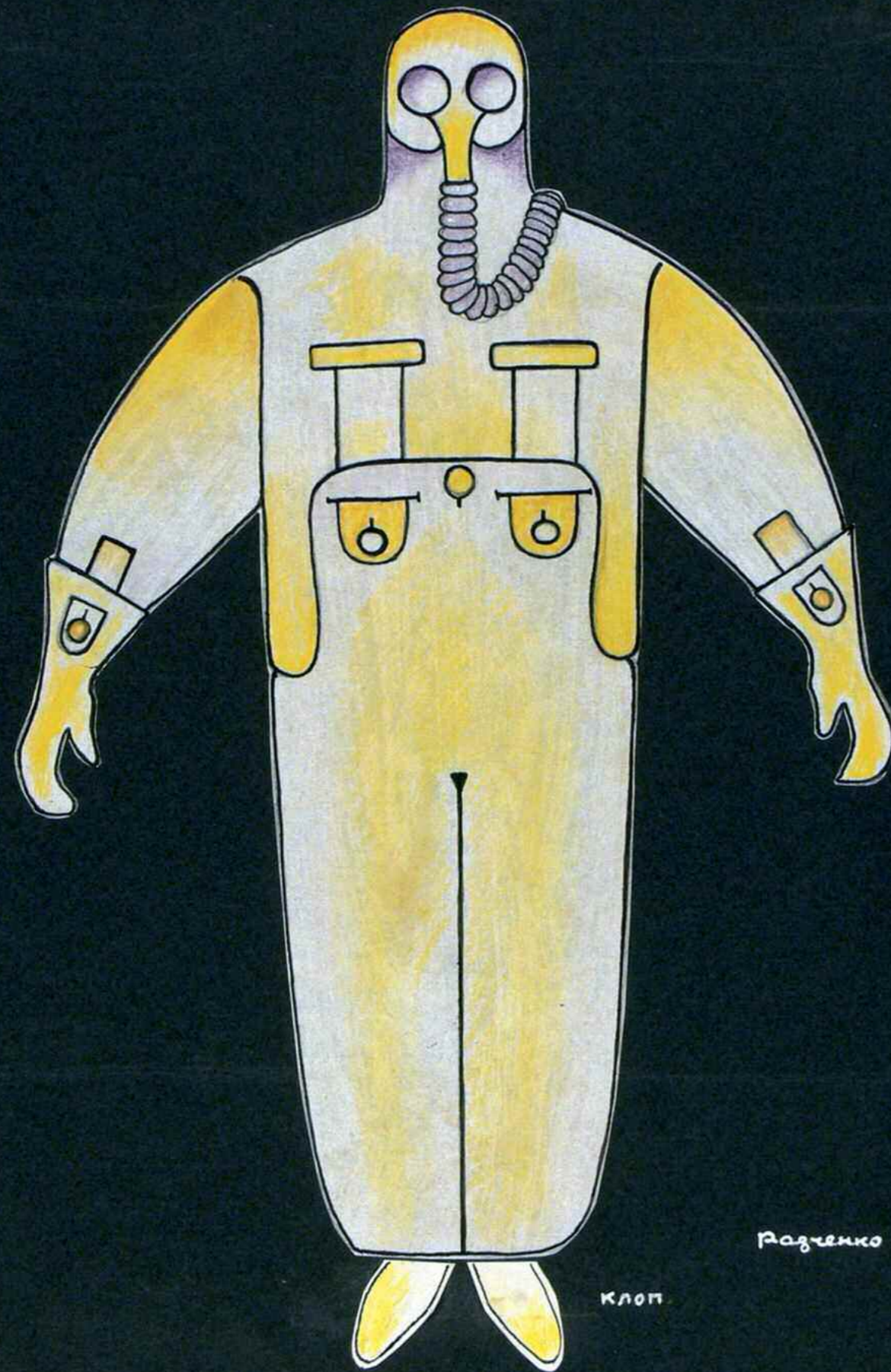
with international and Berlin-based guests, they will present their ideas on how to form new communities and how to find ways out of Europe’s current lack of an imaginary vision. In the salon “Relatively Universal,” Lina Majdalanie will draw from her experiences in Beirut and Berlin when re-evaluating culture-relativistic assumptions from a feminist perspective.

Today, utopias do not have the best of reputations. In our day-to-day talk, ‘utopian’ is often synonymous with ‘unrealistic.’ And yet utopias were always radical designs that sought to counter a seemingly unbearable social reality. Even if they were projected onto isolated islands or the far future, they were always drawn in reference to the particular situation of the present. In doing so, they testify to the strength to insist on the constructedness of our historical narrative. They stand, in other words, for the courage not to despair. Without this sort of utopian thinking, without the insistence on the possibility of a better future, we cannot exert any political influence.

This festival is dedicated to proving that one does not have to move back and forth between the binary poles of a story that resonates either progress or decay. That our present time cannot merely be that which the past imagined as its future. That we can think these thoughts together with our artists and audiences, that we have the room and means to realize the critical power of utopian thought in artistic works that revive it, is a reality that may, for many people today, already seem like a highly utopian vision. Yet it is, at the same time, also a reality that is closely entwined with the critical potential of utopian thought: it emanates from our decision to face an almost unbearable situation and counter it with an optimistic glance into the future, daring to develop a vision of communally yielded change. ■

*Annemie Vanackere
and the team of HAU Hebbel am Ufer*

Translated from German by Mieke Woelky.



Eternal Russia

Invited by HAU Hebbel am Ufer, critic **Marina Davydova** and stage designer and artist Vera Martynov will use their collaborative piece “Eternal Russia” to take a look back onto several centuries of Russian history. The performative-installative course that they thought up presents the short but rather glamorous interplay between the political, artistic, and sexual awakening after 1917. In a text-collage, Marina Davydova reminds us of the supposedly failed revolution of 1905, without which the February and October revolutions of 1917 would not have been possible. The revolution of 1905, which appeared as a sudden and momentous event in a country then often associated with governmental barbarity, surprised and excited not only the Russian and entire Western intelligentsia; it also led to new departures, which only appear illusory in retrospect. In her text, Marina Davydova switches into a fictional narrative mode that is, however, modeled after historical reality. The audience will recognize the underlying referential model when taking a journey through time, through the images and utopias of “Eternal Russia.”

Hello, welcome! Come along, take a seat!

You are in a club, a club that resembles the one, which Alexander Rodtschenko designed for the exhibition in Paris in 1925. The club that is described in this project was never in fact built in Russia. It is, one could say, a utopian space. It is just as much a utopia as the Leftist ideas, which excited so many people in our country. I was myself excited by this idea. But I do not want to talk about myself here. Not about myself ... I am just saying ... I hope you understand ... With this story, you could start from the very beginning. It all started long before Rodtschenko and the three Russian revolutions.

(...)

At just about the time when you – or should we say we – entered the stage of history, Europe was facing, as Marx claimed, the specter of communism.

(...)

At the beginning, however, the Russian revolutionists' relationship to Marx and Marxism was not a particularly warm one. In 1869, the great anarchist Michail Bakuni translated the “Manifesto of the Communist Party” into Russian. He even became a member of the First International, which Marx had founded in London, but immediately began to speak out against Marx' claims. As a consequence, he and a second important anarchist, Peter Kropotkin, were expelled from the association. (...) They proclaimed that they did in no way believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat. In addition, Bakunin wisely anticipated that such a dictatorship would prove even more dangerous than the czarism had preceded it.

(...)

How could such a dictatorship of the proletariat even be established in a country that did, in the 19th century, neither have a proletariat nor a capitalistic structure? More than 80 percent of the population consisted of illiterate farmers that could, up until the 19th century, be bought and sold like commodities. Economically, Russia was far less developed than the countries farther west. The mortality

rate was alarmingly high due to epidemics and contagious diseases, in fact up to seven times as high as in the farther developed countries of the west. At the same time, the Russian army was, at least in body count, the largest in the world. Enormous Russia, with its vast land and its millions of slaves and soldiers was a senseless, immobile, and inhuman construct.

The only possible form of a revolutionary struggle in Russia – the immediate uprising of its entire people.
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To Russians, Bakunins' anarchism was more familiar than Marxism. Bakunin propagated the only possible form of revolutionary struggle in Russia – the immediate uprising of its entire people.

The Russian people readily accepted his ideas. In what other way could a social revolution have taken place in a country that lacked a normal political life; that had never seen public demonstrations, and did neither have a parliament nor a civil society? The only possible form was that of an uprising, and of complete self-sacrifice.

(...)

October 1905

And finally we – we of all people – succeeded in sparking the flame of a revolution in Russia. In October 1905, two million people all over the country participated in a general strike. That was huge in comparison to 1912, when not more than 100.000 people had demonstrated on the streets of Moscow!

(...)

What we did was no longer an imitation of political life, this was actually existing political life. And it happened not solely at the very top, among those exerting power.

The beginning of the 20th century is the only period of time when you could see the emergence of a civil society in Russia.

In firms and factories, social unions sprung up spontaneously. Soon, they were called “workers councils.” Initially, they had thousands, later ten- and hundreds of thousands of members. They were formed as grassroots initiatives and their democratic character is astounding, even from our perspective today. The councils elected women, representatives

The rights, which the women of the Russian empire managed to enforce, were a dream for feminists all over the world.
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from various nations, and members affiliated with different political parties – the latter being a particularly noteworthy aspect.

They arranged their own economic and political agenda. Their organization of social life expressed, essentially, the dream of a state that is not weighed down by a bureaucratic apparatus. All these things happened in Russia prior to the first Russian revolution. The country had never seen anything like it.

February 1917

What then followed was the great February of 1917, the resignation of Nikolaus II., the overthrow of the monarchy, and everything that followed in its wake. (...) Who still remembers today that Russia became, right after the February Revolution, one of the most liberal countries, perhaps in fact the freest country that existed at this point?

What Russia proclaimed was nothing less than that which Europeans had fought for decades ago – freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of assembly and even the right to organize strikes. All constraints pertaining to questions of class, religion, and nationality were eliminated. A militia of the people whose leadership was elected democratically replaced the police. The workday was cut down to eight hours.

Most importantly, they immediately began to prepare the elections of a constituting assembly

that had the task of redefining the country's state system. It had been decided that everyone above the age of 20 was eligible to vote, disregarding of the person's gender, wealth, nationality, or social class. The thus introduced election system was more egalitarian and liberal than any other at the

time. The rights, which the Russian women had fought for and which were enforced after the February Revolution of 1917, were a dream to feminists all over the world. In France, the same rights could not be enforced before the end of the 1940s. And yet these were difficult times. World War One was still in full swing. And Russia's national debt grew into the billions.

The members of the provisional government, which was in charge until the constituting as-

sembly was elected, changed permanently. And I do not even want to go into details about the discord and disagreements within the individual parties, among them also the party of the Social Revolutionists. And yet the constituting assembly could have turned Russia into the most progressive country of the world. There was a real chance for that.

October 1917

But then the Bolsheviks entered the stage of history. Who were they? Who even knew them? They were a group of outsiders, the extremist wing of the social-democratic party that had previously not even been represented in the Russian parliament and had also not been included in any provisional government (...) Suddenly, they were there – like a genie in a bottle.

At first, the Bolsheviks overthrew the provisional government using the slogan “all power to the councils.” Previously, they had won the sailors and soldiers for their cause. They erected their own government and gained power over Saint Petersburg. It is rather ironic that it is this very upheaval, which happened in October 1917, that later became known as the Great October Revolution. It was, after all, nothing other than a counter-revolution! But not everyone was immediately aware of it. And yet the Bolsheviks could not prevent the elections of the constituting assembly. This

election took place two weeks after the October overthrow. The Socialist Revolutionary Party, the country’s most influential leftist party, won, of course, the largest share of votes. Because a constituting assembly governed by this party was, however, not what

the Bolsheviks had in mind, they once again relied on the support of sailors and soldiers as well as on their battle cry “all power to the councils” in order to dispel the Socialist Revolutionists. Now, they only had to transform the councils into the purely decorative facade of

their new government in order to fully install themselves as the new dictators. They did not wait long before taking this final step. In the chaos of war, Lenin’s companions could of course not simply eliminate all of their political enemies and competitors – some of them emigrated, others were incarcerated or even shot.

As soon as the Bolsheviks had solidified their power and turned their party into the dictating power, they revoked all of the October Revolution’s promises and proclamations. In a first step, they discarded the slogan, which they had previously borrowed from the Socialist Revolutionists: “all land to the farmers.” Under the rule of the Bolsheviks, Russian land was not handed over to the farmers, but to

The constituting assembly could have turned Russia into the most progressive country in the world.

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the state, and thus to the Bolsheviks themselves. In a similar way, the factories did not go to the workers, but to the state instead. In addition, they declared all political party work that did not regard the Bolshevik party as illegal. They regularly shot people without first granting them a trial or a criminal investigation. This form of state terror differed fundamentally from our current form of individual terror.

Soon enough, Russia was once again devoid of either a parliament or political parties, it was lacking in both a civil society and the freedom

that defines it.

And yet, the October overthrow could of course not abolish all the accomplishments that were gained in the February Revolution. Some smaller achievements could be retained, for instance the right to public education and some fundamental women’s rights. Nevertheless, I would argue that the revolution in Russia ended in October 1917. And even for those who supported the Bolshevik movement, it ended irrevocably twenty years later when Russia sank into ultimate darkness.

(...) ■

Translated from German by Mieke Woelky.





A Revolutionary Feminist Living Many Lives

Gisela Notz clarifies that it was through her confrontation with class conflicts that Alexandra Kollontai, one of the most important Russian revolutionaries and feminists, realized that the fight of the working class could not be won as long as it did not address its women and included the 'woman question' in its programs. Kollontai dedicated her entire life to this issue.

Alexandra Kollontai was born on March 19th, 1872, in Saint Petersburg. She was the daughter of a landowning family. Against the will of her parents, but following her passionate feelings, she married the penniless engineer Wladimir Kollontai in 1893. The couple had one son together. Because she was not satisfied with her task as a mother and a wife, Kollontai left her husband and child in 1898. She soon turned to Marxism; the 'social question' became her

Kollontai became the first female top diplomat in the world.

main concern. She studied national economics in Switzerland, became a member of the illegal social-democratic party in Russia and devoted her life to the working class and the struggle for the emancipation of women. After her father died in 1901, she lived together with her son Mischa and Soja, a close friend from her childhood days, until the failed revolution of 1905 forced her to leave Russia.

Together with her fellow comrades, she founded the first workers' club in 1907. That same year, she traveled to Stuttgart to support Clara Zetkin in her effort to found the first Socialist Women's International. In 1908, she organized the first Russian women's congress. However, she never got to present the lecture that she

She was known as a communist revolutionary, who had in addition spoken openly about the free love practiced by emancipated women.

had prepared for the congress, having to flee after the threat of being detained by socialist police forces. After she left the country, she lived in various European countries and the United States, where she met leading figures of the international struggle of the working class. She returned to Russia after the February Revolution of 1917, became a member of the Bolshevik party, later a delegate of Petrograd's workers and soldiers council, and participated in the armed resistance that gathered in November 1917. Under Lenin's revolutionary government, she became the first female minister in any parliament of the world. During the conflicts sparked by the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk, she stood with those who were against Lenin. In March of 1918, she resigned from her office as a sign of protesting the peace treaty. She was co-founder of the workers opposition, which fought to include workers in the processes of economic decision-making.

In 1922, Lenin encouraged a transfer and moved the former comrade to the Russian embassy in Norway. She became the first female

top diplomat worldwide. Although she had become more careful in the then emerging era of Stalin, she was already branded as a communist revolutionary who had, in addition, spoken openly about the free love practiced by emancipated women. With sure instincts, she directed the Russian representations in Norway, Mexico, and Sweden until 1940. She fought for an end of the winter war between the Soviet Union and Finland in 1939/40. In 1945, her poor

health forced her to return to Moscow. She was the only one of the communists belonging to the group of the workers opposition who survived the purges. She served as a consultant for the foreign ministry of the Soviet Union up until her death in Moscow on March 9th, 1952.

"The people of today have no time 'to love.'"

Kollontai fought for free love, for the abolition of the bourgeois concept of marriage and the family, and for women's equal rights. She was convinced that it was necessary for men and women to find new ways of living together equally because she believed that "the truly liberated woman has to be financially independent from men and must be relieved of the obligations associated with motherhood." According to her utopian vision, the isolated nuclear family should be replaced by a life in a communally organized commune where all members shared the workload and engage in the tasks of household chores and child education.

With regard to the question of a new sexual morality and an innovative eroticism, she belonged to the most radical wing of the party. Her views often earned her criticism and ridicule within her own party. People were, above all, shocked that she went so far as to practice the principles of the newly formulated sexual morality.

In her book "the new morale and the working class," she criticized the concept of romantic love and denounced the traditional way regarding people as personal possessions. She called for a new morale: "the new women do not want exclusive possession when they love. They demand to be respected for the freedom of their own feelings." Convinced that a revolution was necessary in order for the working class to ob-

tain power, Kollontai became an advocate of a women revolution, which, however, would only become possible as a "result of the victory of a new societal order." A society based on competition would leave no room and no time for cultivating a sensitive and ambitious "Eros." It was, so she thought, time for fundamental changes; and yet the people were obviously not ready to take the necessary steps into the right direction.

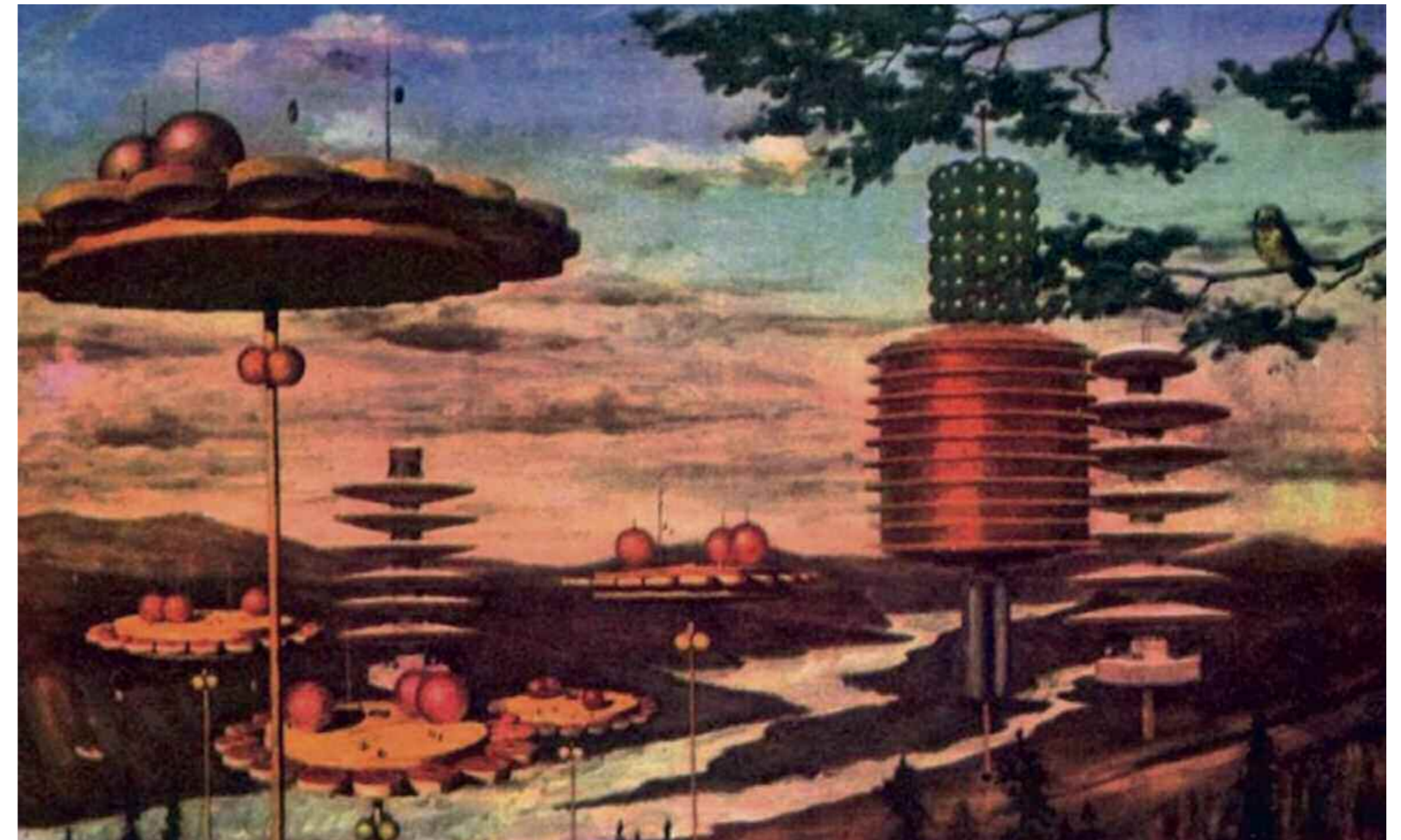
What happened to the "romantic spirit of the revolution"?

Immediately after the October Revolution of 1917, Soviet politics moved into the direction of Kollontai's utopian vision. The traditional marriage law was abolished and men and women became officially equal. The state's power was reduced; it was now merely supposed to protect the interest of children. In a similar way, the church altogether lost its influence. Marriage and divorce became a purely formal transaction that merely had to be registered at the municipality. Legitimate and illegitimate children were considered equal, maternal leave was complemented by measures of financial and material support. In November 1920, Kollontai's call for a legalization of abortions was finally heard. The development of new housing public childcare projects, laundry shops, and soup kitchens were supported by decree.

These measures did, of course, neither realize Kollontai's utopian vision of fully eradicating the nuclear family structure nor did they lead to the desired sexual liberation. The structures that turned the nuclear family into the smallest economic entity remained, even within the working class, more resistant to change than Kollontai had initially assumed. Despite the exhaustion and stress that rendered a normal family life almost impossible, most socialists held onto and wanted to maintain "the small and inherently intricate trinity - man, wife, and children" (Lily Braun). The 'private' realm remained mostly private.

It was, therefore, anything but difficult for Stalin to retract many of the achievements that had previously been made and to once again propagate the concept of the patriarchal nuclear family. In 1936, it was made more difficult to file for divorce, and both abortion and homosexuality were once again made illegal.

Kollontai was far ahead of her times. Her dreams and political practices were rediscovered by more recent feminist movements, particularly



the '68ers returned to her texts. They, too, criticized the structure of the nuclear family with its fixed gender roles, its claims of ownership and its repressive form of rearing children. Like Kollontai, they fought for the right to choose whether to have children or not, and to make free choices in pregnancy. They founded the Action Committee for the emancipation of women, established communal living and independent childcare projects, set up communes and women clubs.

Kollontai was far ahead of her times. Her dreams as well as her political practices were rediscovered and taken up again by the '68ers.

The 'private,' so they demanded, should also be political. Many could no longer imagine a form of practiced socialism that did not include a feminist agenda. Many incentives that grew out of these movements were included into the social structures, became integrated into main-

stream society, and were thus gradually depoliticized. While small successes could thus be achieved here and there, the '68ers never realized the utopian vision of a peaceful society of men and women, who recognize each other as equal partners. Familialism and patriarchal power structures proved more resistant to change than most activists had assumed.

Was Kollontai far ahead of our time?

Despite the fact that we can today observe more diverse ways of life, we also witness a retreat into the traditionally bourgeois, heterosexual nuclear family. Alternative ways of cohabitation and practiced forms of a utopian vision are often stopped short by the desire to meet

certain normative expectations. The wish to fit in may result from our precarious living conditions, and from our fear to get lost in the maze of a society that prioritizes self-optimization. The fear of not belonging anywhere leads, apparently, to our desire for steady relationships, which is why young people long for romantic partnerships and bourgeois family structures that resonate with a strong sense of security. Conservative parties calling for more drastic abortion laws and warn against the supposedly imminent "foreign infiltration" of our nation state gain force because they present supposedly "easy solutions" to complicated issues.

The desire for future utopias, for a liberated society consisting of free people living together in communities without oppression and violence must not be given up. ■

Gisela Notz, Dr. phil., social scientist and author, lives and works in Berlin. Her works include: "Kritik des Familialismus. Theorie und soziale Realität eines ideologischen Gemäldes," Stuttgart: Schmetterling 2015. She is an editor at Lunapark21. Zeitschrift zur Kritik der globalen Ökonomie.

Further literature:
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Translated from German by Mieke Woelky.

We Love You the Way You Are, We Hate You the Way You Are...

On Self-criticism and Lina Majdalanie's Salon "Relatively Universal"

Lina Majdalanie and Sandra Noeth are familiar with the artistic practices of everyday life in Beirut and Berlin, respectively. Their conversation touches on political analysis and critique, emancipatory acts of solidarity, the waning of historical consciousness as well as the difficult relationship between universalist dominance and relativist indifference.

Sandra Noeth: In collaboration with HAU Hebbel am Ufer, *Relatively Universal* has been conceived in the format of a salon. What were the reasons behind this curatorial decision?

Lina Majdalanie: For some time now, I've been missing a particular form of exchange. In Beirut we used to have gatherings among a group of friends, intellectuals and artists from a variety of fields. We met regularly for a number of years in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. Every week we would get together to discuss a book, an article, a current political problem, or our own work. In doing so, we tried to redefine our roles as contemporaries, as citizens,

leftists, artists. Even if we never managed to find all the answers, this was an important time for all of us. After the civil war (1975–1990) was over, we began to encounter new people, some of whom came from abroad and some of whom we had not been able to see while East and West Beirut were divided during the war. This was also when Lebanon began to see its first alternative art projects, like Pascal Fehali's festival Ayloul or the association Ashkal Alwan, which was founded by Christine Thomé. We stood at the center of these developments, making art, but also providing theoretical reflections that accompanied the projects: What are we to do? What ideas and concepts can we use to best understand our work and continue to be productive? What should be called into question? Is there such a thing as "Lebanese art"? After a while we began to drift apart, geographically and otherwise, and our group gradually dissolved over time.

SN: Is it possible, in all this, to separate aesthetic and discursive concerns from your identity as a citizen?

LM: In Lebanon, art has always been political. But we would have to think about what "political" means in this context, what comes with being a citizen at a certain historical moment. It's not only about bearing witness or acknowledging the trauma of war, it's that the world itself has changed: the breakup of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the demise of the global Left. How can we think all this anew? How and where can we position ourselves, especially in a context where the relations of power are nebulous and hard to define? And in what ways are we, consciously or unconsciously, complicit in the preservation and reproduction of the structures

that exist today? The changes we have seen have brought about a caesura in our relationship to political art in Lebanon. They inform our self-critiques and our critiques of the Left.

SN: This need for self-reflection seems to me particularly acute at a time when all of us – including us Europeans – are once again faced with profound shifts in the global order.

LM: Apart from economic crises, terrorism, social tensions, sexism, homophobia, acrimonious and fanatical ideas about identity, civil and uncivil wars—the list could go on—we are confronted today with the rise of the Right. These are often described as essentially cultural problems

rather than economic or political ones. I have also noticed that even in the West, democracy, freedom, human rights, and the separation

of church and state are being called into question again, by the Right as well as the Left. I am equally troubled by the suggestion that these values should be considered the cause of our problems and by the notion that they are "Western" values, which therefore need not be extended toward "other" cultures. After all, these are achievements that many people paid a high price to attain. If the Declaration of Human Rights cannot be enforced always and everywhere, does this mean that the ideals it represents are no longer valid? When it comes down to it, how are we really handling the integration of refugees, those who are excluded and deported because of racism, indifference, and ignorance? What's horrible about this is not only the kind of brute racism that is openly stated but also the subtler forms of dismissive tolerance. It's not enough to place official sanctions on homophobia and racism, in an effort to change mentalities overnight. This is work that we will have to do for decades.

SN: Behind all this, there is also the question of how to think the "other," in conceptual as well as in practical terms.

LM: What worries me is that we have gone from saying, "cultural differences should not be demonized" to saying, "this is culturally specific and therefore taboo." I find this problematic because it constitutes a form of positive racism. "Everything's alright the way it is, go ahead and stay the way you are." Such a stance does not help people

evolve and attain true autonomy, independence and sovereignty. What should truly be inviolable is the human being itself; cul-

"How and where can we position ourselves, especially in a context where the relations of power are nebulous and hard to define?"

"I am troubled by the notion that democracy, freedom, human rights, and the separation of church and state should be considered the cause of our problems and that they are "Western" values, which therefore need not be extended toward 'other' cultures."



tures, as important as they are to me and others, come second. Likewise, public discussion of these matters should not only focus on violent and intolerable practices, which exist in every culture. Cultures are never static or homogenous. What are we talking about when we speak of an “Arabic culture”? There are several Arabic cultures: Muslim, Islamic, and “Islamist” cultures, which differ between states, between urban and rural areas, between classes, between siblings... Furthermore, even if the ideas that inform modern human rights are the products of a specific historical context, the values they endorse are not exclusively “Western,” as if they were part of some genetically preordained order.

This is where the discourses of different political initiatives and parties as well as of some academic debates really begin to resemble one another, even if their intentions vary. More often than not, we end up with the same gesture: “we love you the way you are” or “we hate you the way you are,” but in any case, “stay the way you are,” so that we don’t have to change a thing about our hegemonic situation. And this despite the fact that there are concrete historical, political and economic problems that, in the Arab world, have stood in the way of the renewals that

begun in the mid-nineteenth century. Colonialism, wars of liberation, the dictatorships we’ve had and their cozy relationships with the Western powers, being located at a very specific geopolitical site—all these things are only tangentially related to the question of culture.

SN: If we transpose these observations onto contemporary Germany, we come upon the question of hospitality, of practices of invitation and coexistence.

LM: Yes, my own utopia would aim for a situation in which we could talk to one another as human beings, without drawing any borderlines between Western and non-Western, between Us and Them—a situation in which we could also speak about things that are hard to admit or hard to express because we have our own taboos as Leftists, as people who make art or move in the circles of the art world. Let’s make things political again, instead of culturalizing them! Let’s establish solidarities beyond national and political boundaries.

“Let’s make things political again, instead of culturalizing them! Let’s establish solidarities beyond national and political boundaries.”

SN: What role might theater play in this process of repoliticization?

LM: In my work with Rabih Mroué I try to steer clear of patronizing attempts to explain the situation in Lebanon to the audience. Instead, we work with the complexity of facts and circumstances, operating on the assumption that our audience is emancipated, curious, and intelligent enough to observe and understand, even if they do not know all the facts. In doing so, we are neither interested in self-justification, taking an exotic, folkloric, orientalist position, nor in spreading a kind of

relativistic counter-propaganda that would direct blame at the “West” or the “other.” We do our work as citizens, which means that we proceed from a critique of ourselves, as individuals, as Leftists, with an eye toward the political condition of our society, our country, our state, and all that ails these structures. The best way of saying “we are the same” is to be self-critical.

“We try to steer clear of patronizing modes of explanation and work with the complexity of facts and circumstances instead.”

SN: Perhaps the role of art is precisely to defamiliarize and renegotiate what has become quotidian and familiar, to tolerate contradictions while acknowledging inconsistencies.

LM: Exactly, that’s what it’s about: defamiliarizing what has become all too familiar. Here I am also drawing on Hanna Arendt and her thoughts about how we can make the unfamiliar familiar and vice versa. ■

We encourage and invite everyone who attends the festival to participate in Lina Majdalanie’s salon. For dates, please see the end of the magazine.

Sandra Noeth is a dramatist, curator, and an international lecturer in cultural studies whose previous teaching engagements include, among others, the Stockholm University of the Arts, Ashkal Alwan Beirut, and the Theaterakademie Hamburg. Her theoretical-artistic research projects and publications provide ethical and political perspectives on practices and theories of the body, non-Western cultures of corporeality and movement as well as dramatic composition in dance and choreography.

Translated from German by Julian Henneberg.

“I’ve had enough, I’m going to the movies.”

How does an Argentinean director living in the 21st century relate to the story of a female Russian revolutionary? Invited by HAU Hebbel am Ufer, **Mariano Pensotti** uses his current theatre project to explore the political and social changes that the visionary **Alexandra Kollontai** enforced precisely 100 years ago. In dialogue with **Silvia Fehrmann**, he thinks about the potential of assuming a rather radical perspective.

Silvia Fehrmann: your piece “Loderndes Leuchten in den Wäldern der Nacht” tells the story of three women. How do these three relate to each other?

Mariano Pensotti: Their stories could be compared to a set of Russian matryoshka dolls: they are fictions stacked inside of fictions. The first part is a show of puppets on a string. The puppets have a very realistic appearance: their faces and costumes resemble those of the actors playing them. With and through them, I tell the rather bourgeois story of a lecturer from the University of Buenos Aires who teaches a class on the Russian Revolution and who, in the process of doing so, begins to question her own motives because her life is so much more conservative than the subject matter of her class would suggest. On top of that, her husband begins an affair with a much younger woman. These conflicts gather momentum until they reach a climax: the woman attempts to commit suicide. Her friends talk to her and say: calm down, let’s go out – let’s go to the theatre. The puppets then sit down and watch a play that is acted out by the actors who previously played the puppets. The play tells the story of a young European revolutionary who leaves her family behind in order to join the fight of the FARC guerilla in Columbia...

SF: ...and whose figure was inspired by Tanja Nijmeijer, who became a member of the FARC in 2002?

MP: Yes, although I am currently rewriting that particular part. Initially, it was supposed to be the story of a Dutch woman, now she will probably be either German or Belgian. The important point is: she returns home after having fought for FARC, and then encounters her impoverished family. Some of her family members encourage her to teach a class on the po-

litical uprising to the employees of a computer company. International firms pay for their employees to attend such classes, simply because it will increase their sales figures. It is at this point that the depicted conflict reaches a new climax and the protagonist concludes: I’ve had enough, I’m going to the movies! All characters then sit down in a movie theatre, yet the film that they begin to watch features the same actors that acted in the play up to this point. The film tells the story of a young journalist who works for a political TV show that has just received additional funding. In order to celebrate the good news, the journalist becomes a sex tourist and joins two colleagues on a trip to the province of Misiones, where the descendants of Russian immigrants live. Here, young men make a living by sleeping with middle class women from Buenos Aires. After the film ends, we are returned to the play. We gradually learn that the film changes the European revolutionary’s perspective; she now begins to find new meaning in her return home. And at the very end, we return to the puppet show and learn that the play, which was incorporated in the film, also changed the university lecturer’s life.

SF: The university lecturer from Buenos Aires goes on to write a doctoral thesis about Alexandra Kollontai. How does an Argentinean director living in the 21st century relate to the story of a Russian revolutionary whose autobiography is entitled “autobiography of a sexually emancipated communist”?

MP: That story seems both very close and very far away. It is certainly true that a few of Kol-

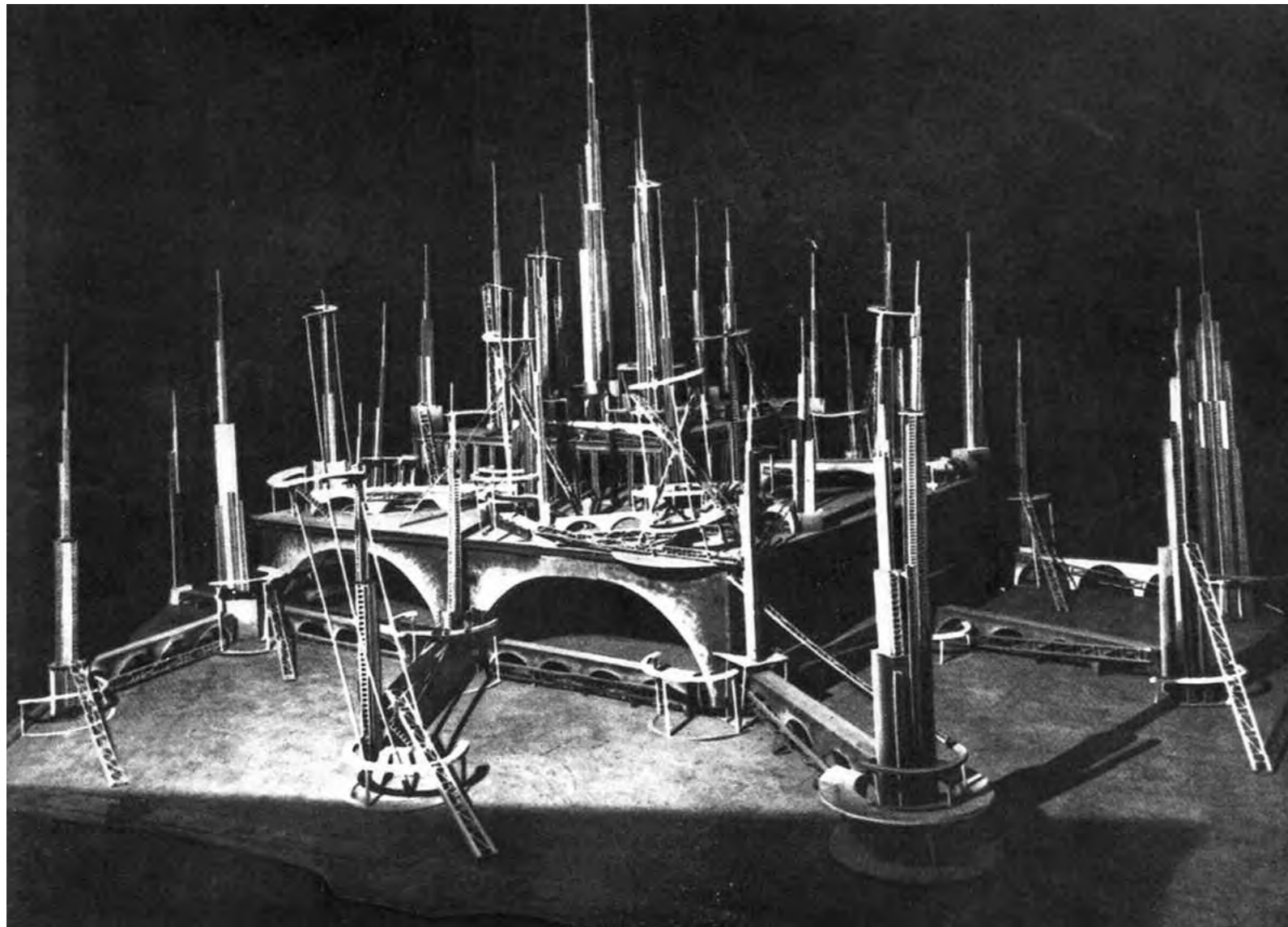
lontai’s texts seem rather dated – and dusty – today. At the same time, they raise many questions that are of immediate concern to us today. Kollontai for instance ties gender questions directly to the issue of class: she regards both as separate things that are, however, connected in a rather terrible way. That was one aspect in Kollontai’s works that spoke directly to me. In addition, I have always been very interested in the idea of utopias. I am the child of two political activists who were particularly active in the 1970s, which is why my childhood and youth were steeped in pure Marxism.

“Today, there are no signs of the emergence of anything more radical.”

SF: Did you go to Cine Cosmos 70 in Avenida Corrientes to watch Russian films?

MP: Of course, I watched all of the arthouse films as soon as they came out. I also watched Czechoslovak short films and films from the GDR. I was a young communist growing up

in a country that was as capitalist and brutal as it gets. I am 42 years old now, part of my youth coincided with the end of the dictatorship and the beginning of the new democracy. In Germany and other countries of the former Eastern bloc, the legacy of the oppressive structures within the socialist state is a widely discussed issue. In Argentina, many people died under a capitalist government. Today, we have reached a point where it seems almost impossible to draw a utopian vision of society. More than ever, we tend to take the ruling societal and economic form of governmental organization for granted, apparently unable to think up an alternative. We should take the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution as an invitation to ponder our current situation, to evaluate what we have, and what we



had – not just the ideas we once shared, but also the political and social problems that sprung from these ideas. Particularly the problems that have remained the same, or have even gotten worse.

SF: Russians have always played a special role in Argentina, even before the Russian Revolution...

MP: The presence of Russians since at least 1880 helped to bring anarchist, socialist, and communist ideas to the Río de la Plata. One wave of Russian immigrants, mostly but not exclusively of Jewish heritage, mixed with people from Germany or Ukraine to found agricultural colonies, often in rather inhospitable areas of Argentina. Misiones is a province in the Northern region of the country. Known for its unbearable climate, it was not cultivated before these immigrants began to settle there. To me, it is particularly interesting to reflect on the lives of

“A more radical option could just as well be reactionary, nationalistic, or even racist. What can we do against such tendencies?”
.....

these Russian immigrants. They came into the country with a sack full of socialist ideals; many of them sought to cultivate the soil in a collective effort – but could they really realize these plans? In my play, the descendants of

these Russian immigrants work as strippers and prostitutes. That part of the story is, of course, pure fiction. The point is, however, that it could have happened in this way.

SF: Your last piece “El museo y la representación de la memoria” already pondered

the question of how we write history, and of how our historical narrative can grasp the bigger picture. Is that also a concern of your current work?

MP: For me, it is important to know that my figures are embedded in a specific time and a specific place, and that the history of that time and that place exerts an influence on their per-

sonal story – and vice versa. When I think about these connections, Tolstoi and Balzac come to mind. I think about how they made use of the events that structure an ordinary person’s daily life and mixed it with much larger historical and political events. They were convinced, in perhaps an exaggerated way, that a true work of art could carry everything within it. A novel carrying the whole world. I like to take up this very idea. And yet my way of using different formats, a puppet show, a play, and a film, arose from my idea of the body, which essentially carries the entire piece. An actor transforms into a puppet whose movements are, however, directed by the actor himself. The audience first sees the physical body of the actor in the play, then the same body reappears in a more mediated form in the film. We are, therefore, invited to think about this body and ponder the question of who, in fact, guides who here. What happens to the body in these different contexts, especially when seen from the protagonist’s or the viewer’s perspective? At the same time, I would also like to pay a tribute to the classic

avant-garde of the 20th century. Sergej Eisenstein was part of a theatre group and his last piece ended with a film that was integrated into the play. Just imagine how crazy it must have been when, in 1923, a play ended with a film!

SF: What is your take on the possibilities of political and aesthetic activism in Argentina today?

MP: In many plays that are directed by people from my generation, you can now observe a re-emergence of political issues. It seems as if people are today increasingly aware of the possibility to use theatre as a way to discuss their utopian visions, to ponder the possibility of a revolution or a transformation of our life’s organization. The last few years have proven that compromises cannot replace lasting solutions. All reformative efforts face the cruel reality that they can all too easily be undone after eight years. And yet, there are today no signs of the emergence of a more radical movement.

SF: Or no signs that something more radical would prove more liberating?

MP: A more radical option could just as well be reactionary, nationalistic, or even racist. What would we do to resist such tendencies? Don’t get me wrong, I do not mean to say that we should go ahead and storm the Winter Palace. I simply want to stress how important it is that we once again ask what we should do. And what we can do. On an artistic level, I have always been skeptical of regarding art as a platform for social change. Just like Fassbinder, I believe that art has a greater impact on those who make it than on those who behold it. Our current piece is our group’s most ambitious project to date. We produce 35 minutes of film, we set up a puppet show ... such undertakings can certainly fail. And yet I think that this is precisely our political message: let’s get ourselves in trouble. Let’s enter unfamiliar territory and step into a context that will provide less

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Translated from German by Mieke Woelky

funding, that will be less interested in radical stories, but let us not retreat, let us instead see how far we can take this.

SF: Schlingensiefel followed a beautiful credo, he understood “failure as chance” ...

MP: That is a good point! With our current project, I step onto thin ice: feminism, revolution – that is territory where a single comma can change the reception of the entire piece.

SF: In this sort of situation, your parents’ generation would have probably put the revolution before gender equality, don’t you think?

MP: That is a big mistake that the history of the political Left has to live with. It became particularly bad in the 1970s, when the issue of gender was already widely known. And that is also why Kollontai is so important. Her texts prove that a classless society has not necessarily or automatically resolved its gender question. At the same time, Kollontai has also demonstrated that a bourgeois answer to the gender question does not lead to a society that is more equal and more just.

SF: How would you describe the theatre company that you work with?

MP: It is a multi-disciplinary group so that all members have a very specific role. The group consists of stage designer Mariana Tirannte, producer Florencia Wasser, musician Diego Vainer, and lightning technician Alejandro Le Roux. We follow a rather horizontal work ethic. Although I am the one who writes the texts and directs the plays, we often discuss ideas and everyone contributes their personal opinion regardless of their specific task in the group. What is unusual about our group is the

fact that the actors, whom we work with, differ from one project to the next. The group’s cohesion does therefore not so much result from the close interaction of individual actors, but is instead produced by the creative collaborations taking place off-stage.

SF: In that way, you differ from other Argentinean directors whose work emanates from the actors that they work with.

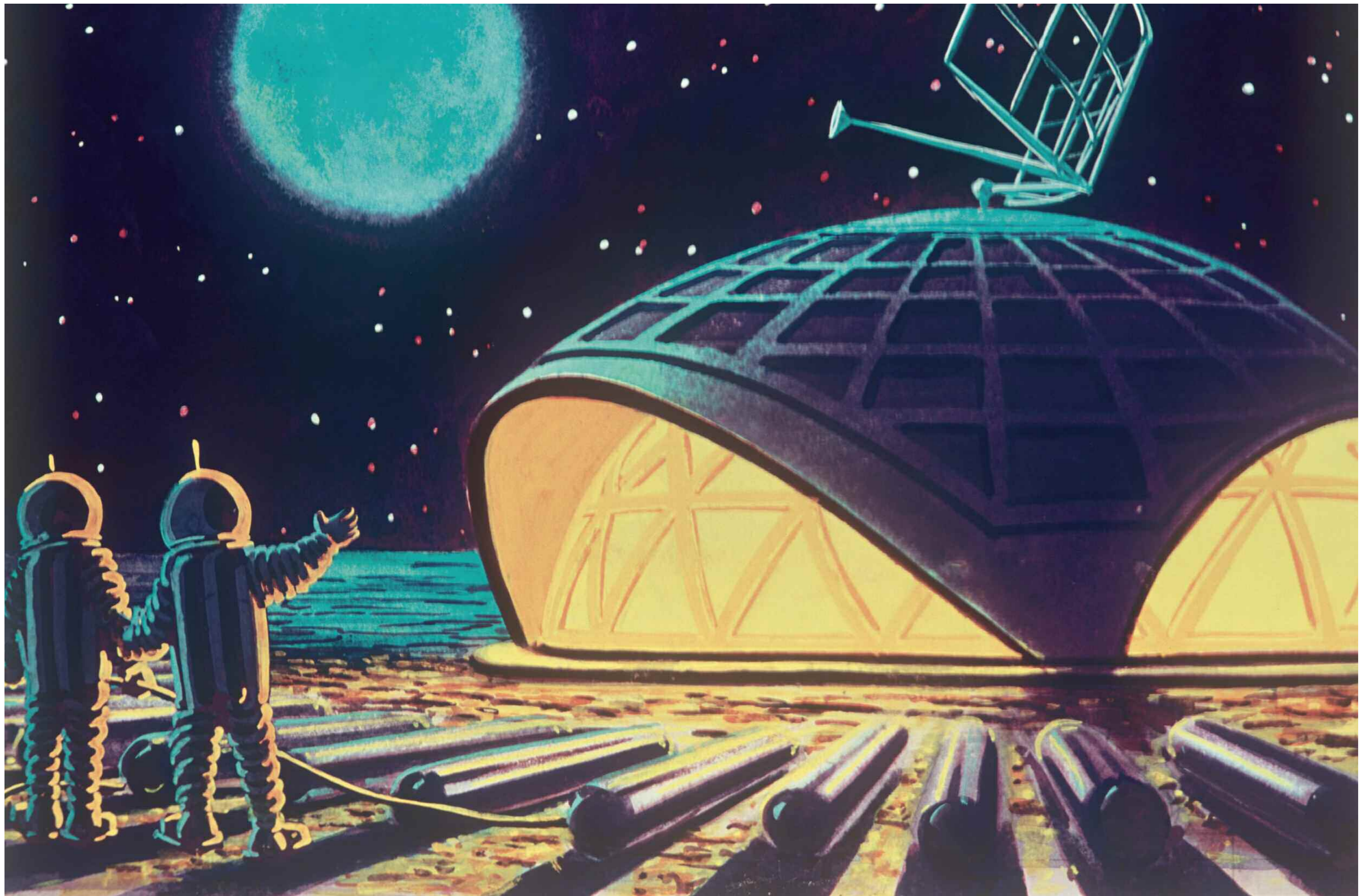
MP: We do not employ the concept of a collective creative process, which does not mean that we do not adjust texts in accordance with the respective actors. The point is that I have, from the onset, a pretty concrete idea of

what I am doing. That is why I do not in the end change a whole lot of text during rehearsals.

SF: How do you feel about the fact that your piece will premiere abroad, in another country?

MP: We have already had plays that premiered abroad. And yet it remains a strange experience because I essentially conceptualize my pieces for the local context. My plays come with a lot of text, they are full of references, and demand quite a lot from their audiences. It is almost as if my brain had not yet quite grasped that these plays will also be shown in other countries. In addition, the supertitles can become a problem in this context. At the same time, I like the idea of first presenting the play at a place that is less predictable than Argentina and will perhaps produce other readings. In other countries, I feel a greater amount of artistic freedom. Here, I can adopt a different perspective and take a new look at what we do. ■

“I was always skeptical of regarding art as a platform for social change. Just like Fassbinder, I also believe that art has a greater impact on those who make it than on those who behold it.”
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Is Europe Still a Valid Prospect?

Europe seems to have become a kind of non-place. However, in many regards it is not nearly as bad as other places, which is why great numbers of people try to flee or migrate to Europe in search of a better life that offers peace, the rule of law, the chance for an education, a livelihood, a future. **Alex Demirović** directs our attention to the paradoxes and ambivalences implicit in this vision of Europe; in doing so, he touches on the kind of questions that also occupy Jonas Staal in his project “New Unions”, which premieres during the Utopian Realities festival at HAU Hebbel am Ufer.

European integration has been characterized by a number of inconsistencies and contradictions. Points of contention have been the powerful positions of Germany and France, the lack of supranational integration and the persistence of national interests, the level of bureaucratization, uncertainty regarding the European Union's plans for expansion and consolidation, and the irresponsibly slow pace with which it develops its common economic administration and—perhaps even more importantly—its

democratic institutions. In the 1990s expectations were raised of the European Union as a social democratic alternative that might exert a civilizing influence on the global capitalist competition between world regions. Yet constitutional projects and treaties that enshrine the values of competition and free-market liberalism bar this opportunity. Thus the future is tied to an undemocratic model of order, while present-day policies are dedicated to deregulating labor and social security, to privatization, to low interest rates for businesses and the wealthy, and to an export-orientated economy.

In the name of Europe, an authoritarian bureaucracy has been forced upon the people in the southern part of the continent, the people of Greece in particular. A politics of austerity willingly accepts that millions of young people either live in precarious conditions or have no work and no prospects at all, even in

the centers of the European Union itself. The results are numerous peripheries characterized by poverty, unemployment, and little or no access to housing, education, culture, care, public transport or communication.

Demagogues try to incite the workforce against the unemployed, the young against the old.

Those who are older or unemployed are made to feel that they are superfluous, a burden on society. What could be a humanitarian success and a form of social wealth—an increase in life expectancy and in leisure time that people might use to pursue their interests—in-

stead changes into its opposite, torturous degradation and poverty. New technologies lead to an immense increase in the production of goods, so that fewer workers are needed to satisfy consumer demand. Demagogues try to incite the workforce against the unemployed, the young against the old. State pension plans no longer suffice; everyone is told to make their own provisions for old age, which is next to impossible, and the big insurance companies are

the only ones that profit. Under the rubric of “Europe,” a giant gift economy is being installed for the benefit of the rich and the super-rich, whose numbers are growing steadily.

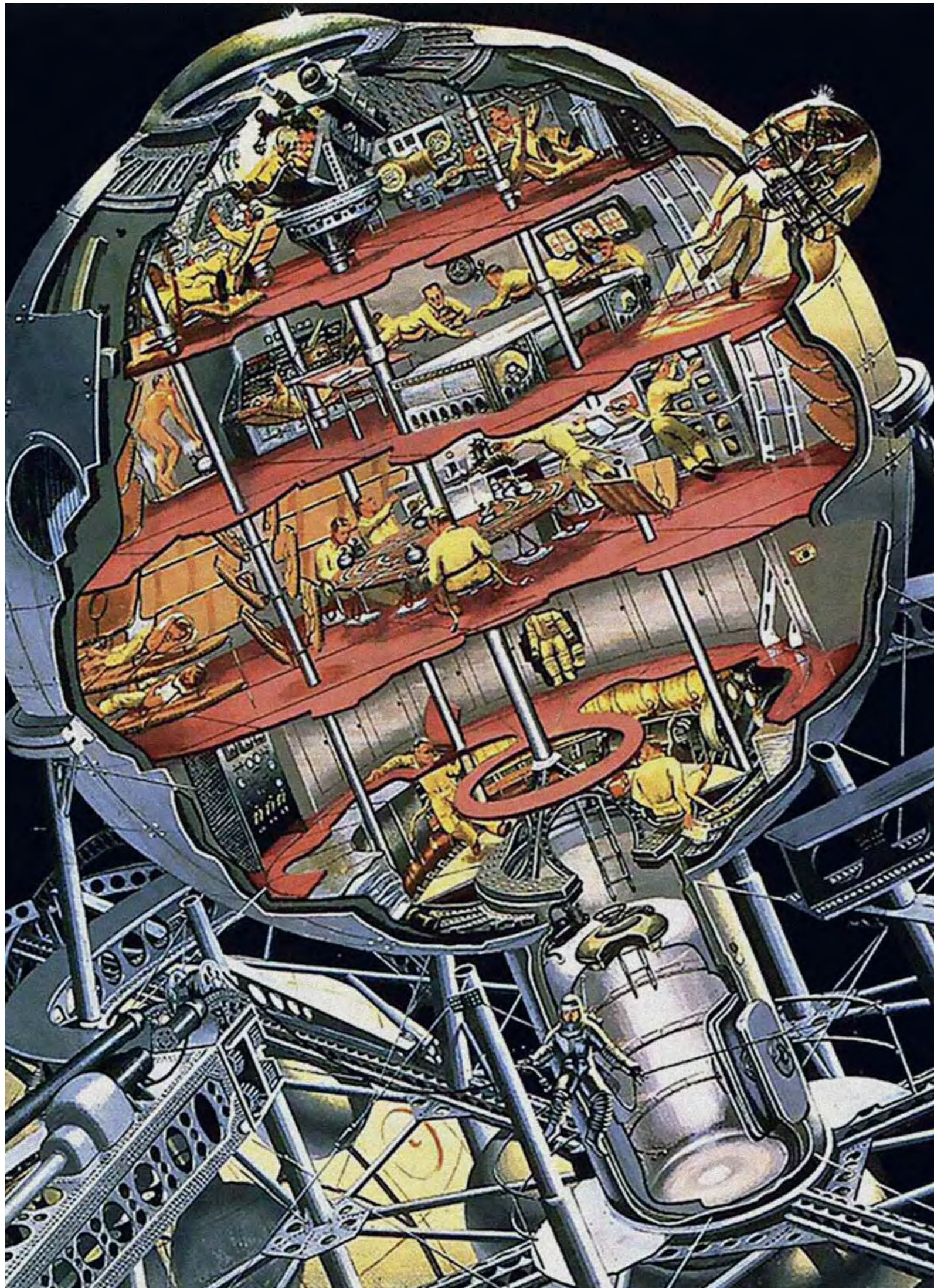
It is not unwarranted that we hold politicians and institutions responsible for these devel-

opments. They are no innocents and therefore should not complain too loudly about their bad reputation or the populace's growing disenchantment with politics. After all, many among them openly advocate policies that increase poverty, diminish democracy, and incite hate against precarious or minority populations (Sinti and Roma, migrants and refugees, Jews and Muslims, the LGBTIQ community). Many of those who pretend to care about the concerns of the people and try to convey hope instead of fear nevertheless allow themselves to be caught in trickery, lies, and incompetence. Those who live at the bottom are well aware that their problems fall upon deaf ears; their everyday experience is characterized by degradation and a lack of prospects. It is understandable that they distrust the reigning powers.

So why should we stick to the European project and argue for its continuation?

Critical attitudes toward Europe now prevail in many EU member states. People feel as if their freedom is being restricted, even if they profit from visa exemptions, subsidies, or the structural and regional aid of the European Union. Their desire to leave

the EU is encouraged by authoritarian and populist parties. In light of power relations that clearly favor the interests of capital, the Left harbors its own concerns, which have only increased in the age of austerity. Nevertheless, many people would like to remain in the EU instead of returning to the nation state. The membership question divides national



societies; for the moment, indecision reigns supreme.

So why should we stick to the European project and argue for its continuation?

History is propelled by its contradictions, and often its darker aspects provide the impulse for change. We cannot hope, as Kant still did, that history follows an invisible path leading from poverty, war, and suffering through

colonialism and slavery to a happy end. However, resistance and struggle produce the very projects that make it possible to imagine a future in which humanity may be at peace with itself. Europe, which has long considered itself superior, should not be granted a privileged position in such a scenario. But Europe is a member of the global community and should do its part to acknowledge and address the great challenges facing the world today. The idea of the “white man’s burden” should be retired; after all, the white man has caused the people of all continents much harm over the past centuries. A tragic aspect of our history is that Europe has tended not to listen to, but instead mock, banish or murder those who criticized Eurocentrism, colonialism and racism, the monstrous technologies of disciplinary and state power, the exploitation of human beings and the environment. But if the European Union is complicit with the current hegemonic situation, is also marked by its inherent contradictions. Historically, the EU represents a degree of socialization that cannot be scaled back to the level of the local community or the nation state. The European Union is neither a utopia nor the solution to the global problems humanity is confronted with. But it does need to face

up to these new challenges. As a political entity, an expression of political will operating within certain historical and geographical boundaries, it can now collaborate with the large number of people not living in Europe to

“The European Union is no utopia, but it does need to face up to new challenges.”

take on problems that European societies have had a hand in producing. This does not mean buying into illusions but focusing on a realm of possibility that is endangered and can be eliminated only too easily. It means coming up with a new perspective, perhaps even one that could be called utopian. For this, too, has been a European tradition spanning 500 years: using marginalized but still existing practices of knowledge to imagine and sketch out something completely different, seeking out paths leading to places that have yet to be discovered. Needless to say, this is not the exclusive prerogative of Europe or the EU. Europeans should use their knowledge, their resources and their capabilities to accept the consequences of their actions instead of externalizing and shifting the responsibility onto others. It is the EU’s responsibility to stand up for a new, non-imperial way of life, for social, ecological and democratic sustainability, for a democratically organized mode of production and consumption, and to do what it can to counter global power games and establish worldwide social solidarity. Existing resources of wealth need to be dedicated to a restructuring that prevents a further lapse into poverty. With its European Social Charter,

“For this, too, has been a European tradition spanning 500 years: using practices of knowledge to imagine and sketch out something completely different.”

of participation, consultation and counsel within a public sphere that is controlled by the state and a handful of corporations. It means reconstructing our institutions so that people can make decisions about the problems affecting them when and where they arise. It means open and free communication on all platforms and public participation in decision-making processes. It means fostering political and democratic competencies where they do not already exist. To achieve this, societies need time. They must learn to recognize their members’ participation in their own affairs as a good in itself. Europe and its current political framework, the European Union, represent decentralized spaces in which democratic renewal and the problems facing humanity need to be negotiated. If they join together, projects both small and large might achieve this utopia. ■

the Council of Europe has put forward explicit norms for the redistribution of productivity toward the citizenry. This includes the right to work, the right to vocational training and professional development, the right to an education as well as the right to cultural participation in society. Combating corruption and guaranteeing legal certainty are crucial preconditions of democracy. To achieve these, it will be necessary to reform the police force and the judicial system as well as the system of legal training. A radical democratization is needed in order to awaken and incorporate the imaginations and the potentials of the many. Democratization means more than voting rights, party membership, the semblance

of participation, consultation and counsel within a public sphere that is controlled by the state and a handful of corporations. It means reconstructing our institutions so that people can make decisions about the problems affecting them when and where they arise. It means open and free communication on all platforms and public participation in decision-making processes.

It means fostering political and democratic competencies where they do not already exist. To achieve this, societies need time. They must learn to recognize their members’ participation in their own affairs as a good in itself. Europe and its current political framework, the European Union, represent decentralized spaces in which democratic renewal and the problems facing humanity need to be negotiated. If they join together, projects both small and large might achieve this utopia. ■

Alex Demirović, an adjunct professor at Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main and a senior fellow at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, specializes in theories of democracy and the state. His newest publication is: Mario Candeias / Alex Demirović (eds.): Europe – What’s Left? Die Europäische Union zwischen Zerfall, Autoritarismus und demokratischer Erneuerung (forthcoming).

Translated from German by Julian Henneberg.

Every- thing Fits In The Room

Simone Aughterlony and Jen Rosenblit's transversal thoughts about their engagement with the work of Alexandra Kollontai. The context: current forms of queer-feminist politics, stigmatized bodies, utopian spaces, and their performance "Everything Fits in the Room," produced for the "Utopian Realities" festival at HAU Hebbel am Ufer.

1.

What interests us about Alexandra Kollontai is her argument for a re-ordering of the family. In her manifesto she discusses the ideal of a new woman, whose societal responsibilities—marriage, motherhood, labor—are to be reconceptualized so that they are shared with the state. Women would then be able to freely decide whether they want to dedicate their productive energies to raising a family, just as they would be able to have children without having to shoulder the responsibility of caring for them alone. In this model domestic labor is reassigned between the sexes and transformed into a source of income, a way to make a living.

But equality here also means adaptation and adjustment. The new woman is expected to adapt to the demands of the masculine work ethic. Thus Kollontai's vision of the new woman is by no means purely innovative; it also includes certain renunciations.

In her other writings Kollontai assigns marriage a position within the economic order that is equal to prostitution. Her radical views about the economic independence of men and women deny the potential of the female body and foreclose the liberation of the new woman. We in the contemporary world do not subscribe to this sharp separation between a sexual and a domestic economy. Neither is simply "given," both are products of the long history of female servitude. Not only does Kollontai reject transforming prostitution into a legitimate means of making a living; she argues for its complete abolition.

"Prostitution continues to exist and threatens the feeling of solidarity and comradeship between working men and women [...]. It is time that we found ways and means of ridding ourselves once and for all of this evil, which has no place in a workers' republic." (Kollontai, "Prostitution and Ways of Fighting It," 1921).

We read her work against the background of a long line of feminist discourses and take offense at this systematic marginalization of the unruly female body.

(...)

Kollontai's radical plea for the sexual self-determination of women and her idea of "erotic friendship," an argument for equality between the sexes, contrasts sharply with her views on prostitution, which in the final analysis remain indebted to bourgeois morality.

2.

How do we deal with loss of memory? How can we direct our attention toward the marginalized and the hidden if we don't know where to find it? Caring for the obscure is a crucial aspect of a spatial ecology. One will see things one has seen before.

We follow the widespread desire to achieve a structure that unites bodies and ideas. We are interested in the accumulation of objects as

a process that aims to exclude nothing. We detect a contradiction in the essence of a manifesto that demands renunciation in order to bring about congruence with an imagined utopia. Here our spectrum of possibilities is limited in the name of progress. We know this conventional approach all too well, and we also know that without a reservoir of abundance, systems of domination are bound to take over. Extraordinary things are always the result of intensifying or expanding things that were already in emergence.

3.

To us, the figure of the witch represents a recurrent habitation for the stigmatized body. The witch, just like the queer, is deviant, out of sync with socially accepted desires. Her body feeds off her intimate knowledge of the ungovernable. Her practices derive from nature, they effect unity with the fruits of the earth; they are sexually liberated, nameless like an eremite, self-healing and unfettered.

The ability of this figure to move outside the normative structures and institutions of church, marriage and family, to gather knowledge, to shape and care for things derives from undomesticated energies that acknowledge intuition as a logical principle.

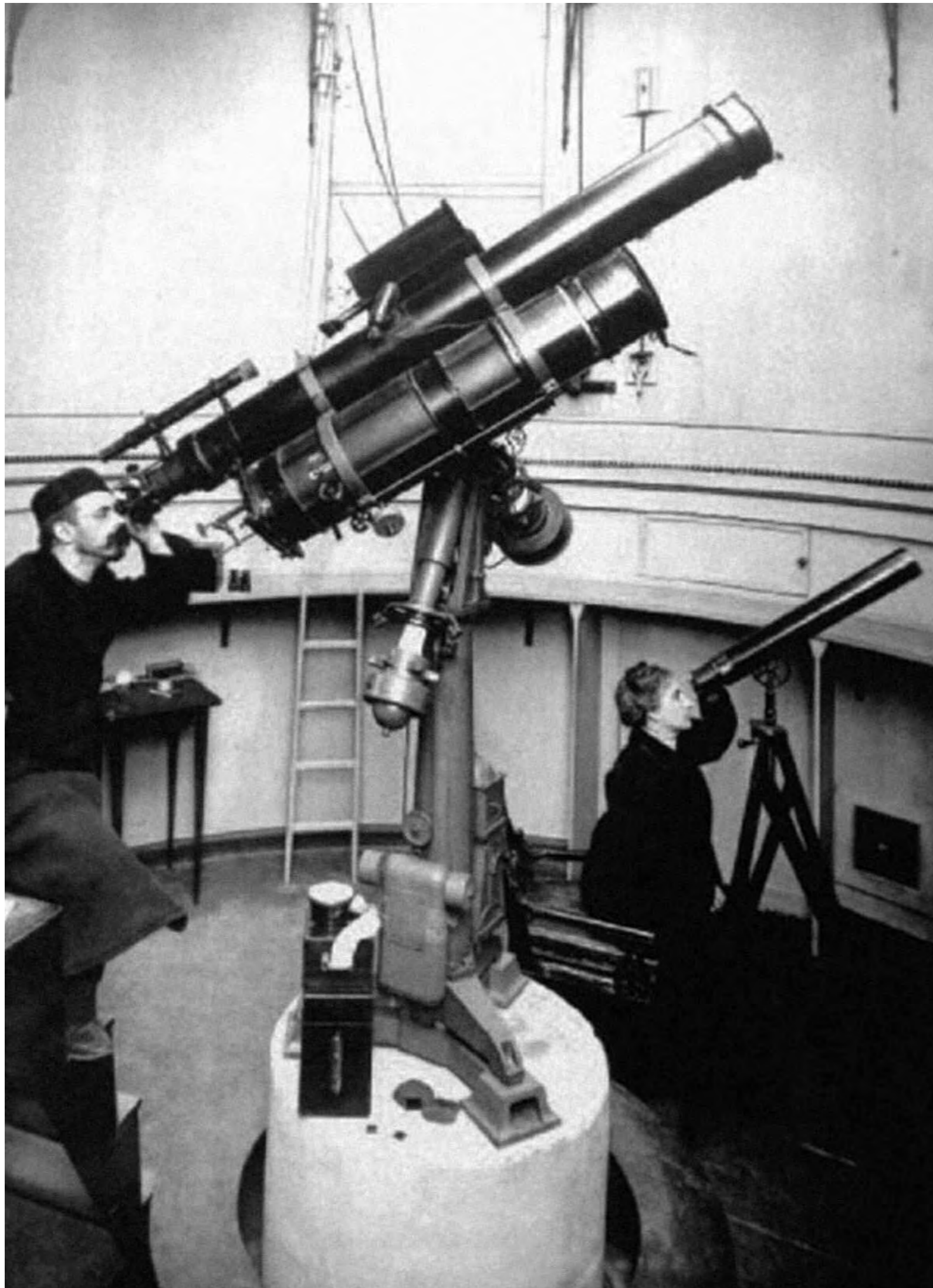
The witch was seen as a danger to society, she was persecuted, marginalized and murdered. And yet we glimpse her potential in certain roles within society, where her structures of knowledge are directed at the relation between objects and the self. We see the witch in the midwife: a companion in pregnancy who ameliorates the pain of giving birth. Even the therapist can be seen as a modern shaman, someone whose counsel we seek in order to navigate our own intuitions and our entangled, accumulated and contradictory energies. As we struggle against our fears and our own defenses, the figure of the witch teaches us to recognize that organization is a tool of annihilation: a highly problematic legacy.

4.

Riots could be considered the work of witches: unnamed events that know no goal, that only manifest briefly and then sink back down again into obscurity, fleeting glimpses of the invisible. We see here an indeterminate correspondence to the way that rituals used to captivate us—the absence of any aim apart from the process itself, no desire for success, no fear of failure.

Looking at the witch in the transition from heathen to Christian ideologies, we realize that the pure, fundamental function of everyday practices has been replaced by a structure of faith that assumes an almighty will. Function itself disappears; in its stead, we have the representation of functions. Faith does not only replace function but becomes the epicenter of all stages of life. Every thought lasts a lifetime. The faithful never waver. ■

Translated from German by Julian Henneberg.



Think- ing the Possible

Change is a fact of life for **Vlatka Horvat** – after all, the country she grew up in no longer exists. In *Minor Planets*, her first full production for the stage, the Yugoslavian-born artist examines strategies for times of chaos and collapse. She spoke to **Annemie Vanackere** about acts of resistance and the possibility of utopian thought.

Annemie Vanackere: For 100 Years of Now, we collaborate with the Haus der Kulturen der Welt to examine the legacy of the Russian Revolution. A starting assumption is that historical events remain indelible components of the world we live in today. Our collective history shapes utopian visions and hopes, but also their failures and frustrations. To what extent does such a historical framework inform your own artistic practice?

Wlatka Horvat: In my work I'm often drawn to the question of how people negotiate the historical, social, political and spatial frameworks they operate in. By this, I mean the different structures that contain us and inform our actions as well as the imaginary or conceptual frames that we use to understand and give shape to our experiences. I'm fascinated by the resilience of these structures, but also by their fragility. In my work I look for ways of addressing these rather abstract ideas through very direct and material images and events; I'm drawn to the meeting points between ideas and the everyday. Over the last 100 years, we've seen alternating waves of action and reaction, of the emergence of progressive ideas and their dismantling. In this kind of unstable context, people find ways to adjust, to resist, or to stubbornly persevere, to simply keep going. These struggles, which are sometimes foolhardy, sometimes humorous, and quite often doomed, are very much at the heart of my work.

AV: In what ways would you connect this analysis to your own experience of the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s?

VH: I was a teenager at the time, and I had just moved to the U.S. a few months before the war started, so I experienced it from the perspective of a semi-outsider. I felt invested in the events as they were unfolding, because of my family, my memories, and the sense that I belonged to something that was rapidly disintegrating, but at the same time I watched it all from a distance. Since the 1990s, nearly all the countries that used to comprise Yugoslavia have been caught in a political pendulum effect. The early '90s saw an awakening of a collective sense of national identity and the

emergence of far-right governments. These were eventually replaced by reformed ex-communists, who had turned into centrist neoliberals but proved just as disastrous (though arguably somewhat less corrupt). Then the pendulum swung back to the right. With each political shift, new historical narratives were needed to suit the agendas of those in power, so history is continually rewritten in new versions, along with official views of the nation's identity and its place in the global narrative. I'm interested in how the institutionalized and state-sanctioned mechanisms of forgetting and repositioning trickle down to the level of the individual, whose personal memory, experience and sense of self within the social and historical context has to contend with and adjust to these

shifts.

AV: For the 15th Extraordinary Congress, which you have already organized at a number of venues, you invited six women who have emigrated from former Yugoslavia. The women, whose experiences have been left out of official historiography, are thus given the chance to reclaim the authority of their own memory. Was this an issue of concern to you, especially from a feminist standpoint?

VH: The women I invite to take part in each iteration of the 15th Extraordinary Congress were all born, like me, in a country that no longer exists. We all live somewhere else now for a variety of reasons, but before the war, we shared a time and a place. In the Congress we look back to that moment, but in doing so we do not search for a congruence of perspectives or a consistent version of the past. Official historiography tends to reduce the complexity of different events and experiences to a single, linear story that provides support for a specific agenda and is often told, as you point out, from a male

perspective. In the 15th Extraordinary Congress, on the other hand, I'm interested in unofficial histories, i.e., personal narratives, which are often dismissed as unreliable—even more so if they come from women. It is precisely because women tend not to start wars or lead revolutions—though in the latter case there are counterexamples, like Alexandra Kollontai, or the amazing Anti-Fascist Women's Front formed among the ranks of the Yugoslav partisans in WWII—that I approach their voices as a form of resistance: resistance against patriarchal structures and frameworks, but also against erasure.

AV: How did you come up with the title *Minor Planets*?

VH: In preparation for my new performance work for 100 Years of Now, I did quite a bit of research on the Russian Revolution and the artistic practices that it gave rise to. In this context I was drawn to a particular practice of several Soviet astronomers, who would name small planets they discovered after great Russian poets, some of whom were neglected or shunned by the new regime. So there are minor planets named after Anna Akhmatova, Marina Tsvetaeva, and Boris Pasternak, among others. I'm drawn to this act of naming partly because of its memorializing function and partly because it establishes something like an equivalence between objects and subjects, between persons and things. This is an area of interest and a common thread in my work, especially in the zone between sculpture and performance. Evoking planets in the title of my piece is also a way to suggest that things and people exist in a system, with marginal objects orbiting around a central, more important entity, which dictates their trajectory and affects their movements. In the piece we look at people on the periphery of larger events, which

are deemed "more important" than their lives. We approach the periphery both as a site of marginalization and as a site where things can happen that are simply not possible in the center. These spots of semi-darkness, remote from the bright lights of the center, provide spaces in which practices of resistance can be devel-

oped, not least because here one operates at the edge of visibility.

AV: Have you been directly influenced by the texts of poets who, during the Soviet era, were simultaneously revered and repressed?

VH: I read a lot of Russian poetry as a teenager and it was great to revisit some of those texts in preparation for this project. In general, I approached the Russian Revolution and my own experience of the breakdown of Yugoslavia as a springboard of sorts, to bring me closer to the question of how people survive in times of radical, all-encompassing change. One thing from my research that has stuck with me particularly is a scene the poet Anna Akhmatova describes in her memoir. It's the time after the Revolution, she has been stripped of everything—her possessions, her social status—and she is standing in a bread line with everyone else. And while she's waiting, a woman recognizes her as a famous writer. Akhmatova describes the glimmer of hope, "something like a smile" on "what used to be her face," as the woman turns around and asks, "Can you describe this?" And Akhmatova says, "Yes, I can." I've been thinking about this sense of agency that comes from be-

ing able to conjure up aspects of one's experience, whether it's by putting it into words, or by reflecting on it in some other way. There is an inalienable agency that comes with having a voice, resisting oblivion, wresting a narrative from the chaos. In a sense, this ability to reflect on, or even find humor in, one's own predicament also constitutes a refusal: the refusal of invisibility, of silent acceptance, of history's way of dividing us into winners and los-

ers. To observe, to think back but also ahead, to reflect on experience and on possibilities seems like a political act in itself.

AV: Some things we are unable to enunciate explicitly, which is why we may want to see and understand them on the stage instead. In your piece, do you attempt to translate the scene described by Akhmatova into the physical space of the theater?

VH: Not in any literal sense, no. I tend to do a lot of research, but at the point of making something another kind of process takes over. In the studio we work with a set of improvisatory structures and frameworks for action—images and things to do, simple and complicated at the same time. I'm always look-

ing for different ways to approach the concerns and questions that I have—this time, I have created a landscape that the performers can inhabit, negotiate and transform. When we began to work on the piece last year, the refugee crisis and the plight of people fleeing their countries was very much in the spotlight of public interest. It was around that time that I began to think of movement itself as a means of survival. This is why in this piece we work a lot with gestures of relocation and replacement—of objects, bodies, and places—and why we draw different kinds of trajectories in space, ones that go from point A to point B, but also ones that loop around in circles and spirals. This mode of almost perpetual movement is imbued with many contradictory aspects and

inflections. There is hope, which may come from having a destination, but there is also a kind of paralysis or stuckness. Then there is an acute restlessness, as if the process of relocation becomes a way of life. Lastly, movement may also signal a kind of empowerment—the ability to act—and become a form of embodied disagreement with the facts on the ground. I'm thinking about the body's revolt against stasis: in a sense, movement engenders the possibility of change.

AV: But what happens to change when it becomes a "utopian reality"? The latter, the history of revolutions teaches us, is always tied to violence and death. Therefore, I would like to focus on the kind of utopian thought that can teach us resilience as well as the ability to reflect on the things that need to change. What role does this kind of thought play for you?

VH: Utopian thought means being able and willing to think about possibilities, about the question, "what if?" There's a sense of agency in the ability to describe things as they are, or at least as we see them. But a parallel, or even an oppositional, gesture consists in imagining things as they are not. I'm intrigued by this idea of an imagination that is not bound by the rules and constraints of our physical and material realities. To me it offers the potential for a different kind of change. I'm interested in the mechanisms that keep us going, that enable us to continue inventing, resisting, making do, getting by, coping in the face of adversity. I think all these things are capable of producing small, but significant transformations. ■

"In this kind of unstable context, people find ways to adjust, to resist, or to stubbornly persevere, to simply keep going. These struggles, which are sometimes foolhardy, sometimes humorous, and quite often doomed, are very much at the heart of my work."

"A parallel, or even an oppositional, gesture consists in imagining things as they are not"

"These spots of semi-darkness, remote from the bright lights of the center, provide spaces in which practices of resistance can be developed."

"I'm interested in how the institutionalized and state-sanctioned mechanisms of forgetting and repositioning trickle down to the level of the individual, whose personal memory, experience and sense of self within the social and historical context has to contend with and adjust to these shifts."

Short Biographical Sketches

Simone Aughtlerlony

Born in New Zealand, choreographer Simone Aughtlerlony lives and works in Berlin und Zurich. Having earned a degree in dance from New Zealand School of Dance, she began to dance for Meg Stuart / Damaged Goods. In addition, her work as a choreographer led to collaborations with Richter, Stefan Pucher and Niklaus Helbling. And since 2003, she has regularly put out her own productions. Aughtlerlony's works revolve around the transformative potential of the body and other central aspects pertaining to the process of choreographing dance. They are motivated by the crucial question of how humor and the mystery of desire heighten theatre's political impact. Next to numerous other productions, she developed a trilogy that, co-produced by HAU, included her pieces Show & Tell" (2013), "After Life" (2013), and "Supernatural" (2015). In 2015, Aughtlerlony was awarded the Swiss Dance Prize (Schweizer Tanzpreis) for outstanding dance. Most recently, HAU Hebbel am Ufer presented her co-production "Uni * Form" (together with Jorge Léon).

Dakh Daughters

The Ukrainian theatre-, performance-, and band-collective Dakh Daughters was founded by the actresses of Kiev's Dakh Theatre in 2012. Their performances combine Ukrainian folklore, Punk, cabaret, prog-rock, classical music, and rap. During their performances, the collective's seven members all play various instruments and sing in different languages. Their lyrics are inspired by authors like Charles Bukowski and William Shakespeare. The video that accompanied their first song "Rosen / Donbass," a collage of a Shakespeare sonnet and Ukrainian folk songs, already earned them wide-spread recognition, as did their performance during the Maidan protests in Kiev in 2013. By now, Dakh Daughters perform on stages all over the world. They released their first studio album "If" in 2016.

Marina Davydova

Marina Davydova is a theatre critic, historian, and producer. She has held the position of Senior Researcher at the Institute of Art Studies, taught classes on the history of Western European theatre at various universities and led workshops on theatre criticism at the Russian State University for the Humanities. She is author of "Ende einer Theaterepoche" (2005), a monograph that looks at Russian theatre in the last ten years, and editor of the book "The History of West European Theatre since Renaissance Time until the End of the XIX Century." As a critic, she writes for papers like "Iswestja" and in addition serves as chief editor for the magazine "TEATR." Davydova is artistic director of Moscow's Net-Festival, writes a regular column for Colta.ru and was, in 2016, in charge of the program at Vienna's Festwochen. She has been awarded numerous prizes including the Stanislawski award for best book publication. She developed "Eternal Russia," her first artistic piece, in cooperation with Vera Martynov.

Vlatka Horvat

Vlatka Horvat, who was born in Čakovec (Croatia), has been living in London (Great Britain) for more than 20 years. Her work spans across disciplines, ranging from sculpture and installation to drawing and performance. It explores how the body relates to objects and the spaces that surrounds them, and further the social and physical frameworks that determine it. Her art has been featured in numerous solo exhibitions, for instance at CAPRI (Düsseldorf), Galerija SC (Zagreb), Disjecta (Portland), Boston University Art Gallery (New York City), and Bergen Kunsthall. The artist was commissioned to develop artworks for institutions such as Bunkier Sztuki (Krakow), Kunsthalle Osnabrück, MGLC Ljubljana, VOLT Bergen, 53rd Oktober Salon (Belgrad), "Greater New York" at the MoMA PS1 (New York City), and the 11th Istanbul Biennial. Horvat's artistic work is represented by Annex 14 (Zurich) and Rachel Uffner Gallery (NYC). Galerie Zak | Branicka represents her artistically in Berlin. In 2015, HAU Hebbel am Ufer presented "15th Extraordinary Congress: Berlin." "Minor Planets" is Horvat's first production for the stage.

Lina Majdalanie

Lina Majdalanie, who was born in Beirut (Libanon), is an actress, director, and author. She has conceptualized numerous productions, including "Appendice" (2007), "33 RPM and a few seconds" (2012, with Rabih Mroué), and "A drop of sweat" (2015). Her "Lina Saneh Body-P-Arts Project" is a digital project as well as an installation. Majdalanie was a member of the selection committee for the Home Workspace Program Ashkal Alwan. She has taught at the Haute Ecole d'Art et de Design in Genf, at Amsterdam's University of the Arts, and at Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität Frankfurt. In 2009, she was the recipient of a scholarship from the International Research Center "Interweaving Performance Cultures" at Freie Universität Berlin. In her works, Majdalanie explores the variations of political language in our times of globalization and digital technology. She curated the program "Beyond Beirut" at Künstlerhaus Mousonturm Frankfurt am Main in 2016. Most recently, HAU Hebbel am Ufer presented a great collection of her and Rabih Mroué's works as part of the exhibition "Outside the Image Inside Us."

Vera Martynov

The artist and director Vera Martynov served as artistic director of Moscow's Gogol Centre theatre from 2012 to 2015. Since 2015, she has begun to work more independently at theatres, museums, and galleries. In 2016, she became the artistic director of the New Space Theatre of Nations. In addition, she is not only a co-founder of the Dmitry Krymov Laboratory, but also serves as its stage and costume designer as well as an actress. In 2012 and 2013, she worked at the Robert Wilsons Watermill Center. Martynov received numerous awards, among them the Golden Triga Award of Prague's Quadrennial, the Edinburgh International Art Festivals Award (together with Dmitry Krymov Laboratory), and the Golden Masque Award for best stage set. Martynov has taught at MHAT School-Studio, the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts (RATI / GITIS), and the British Higher School of Design in Moscow. "Eternal Russia," a collaborative work that she developed together with Marina Davydova, is her first work for HAU Hebbel am Ufer.

Maru Mushtrieva

Maru Mushtrieva was born in Kysyl-Syr (Russia), but has lived in Berlin since 2006. She studied Comparative Literature at Freie Universität Berlin. Since 2011, she has been working as a translator, author, and an artist, yet she also contributed to a number of film and art productions, for instance for the art collective Slavs and Tatars or Britta Thie's "I'MDB – ein Live-Drama über die Tragik des Ratings." Currently, she is a production assistant for documentary on refugee camps in Greece.

Mariano Pensotti

The author and a director Mariano Pensotti is originally in Buenos Aires. Yet his group Grupo Marea, which he co-founded together with stage designer Mariana Tirantte and musician Diego Vainer, travels the world for performances all over the globe. They have performed at places such as Kunstenfestivaldesarts (Brussels), Theaterformen (Hannover), Tempo Festival (Rio de Janeiro), Rotterdamse Schouwburg, and Redcat (Los Angeles). In addition to productions for the stage, he also develops locally specific pieces in public spaces. His works are often inspired by cinematic composition strategies and always carry the imprint of his collaboration with the involved actors. Within the past ten years, he has developed more than 15 productions. HAU Hebbel am Ufer recently presented: "Cineastes / Filmemacher" (2013) and "Cuando vuelva a casa voy a ser otro / Wenn ich zurückkomme, bin ich ein Anderer" (2015). Her commissioned piece "Arde brillante en los bosques de la noche / Loderndes Leuchten in den Wäldern der Nacht" is Pensotti's first premiere at HAU Hebbel am Ufer.

Jen Rosenblit

Jen Rosenblit lives in New York City (USA). Her performances engage with the body and further explore the concept of desire and autonomy. Her choreographic work is based on improvisation techniques; it searches for possibilities of coming together in supposedly impossible places. Her most recent works include "In Mouth" (2012), "Pastor Pasture" (2013, together with Jules Gimbrone), "a Natural dance" (2014), which earned her the Bessie Award for Emerging Choreographer, and "Clap Hands" (2016). In 2015 and 2016, Rosenblit was artist in residence at the Movement Research program. Her work was included in the exhibition "Greater New York" at the MoMA PS1 in 2015. She has already collaborated with numerous artists, for instance Simone Aughtlerlony, Young Jean Lee, Ryan McNamara, Yvonne Meier, Saša Asentić, Anne Imhof, Miguel Gutierrez, and A. K. Burns. She currently works on a new piece, "Swivel Spot" (together with Geo Wyeth), which will premiere in New York City in 2017. Collaborations with Young Jean Lee ("Untitled Feminist Show") and Simone Aughtlerlony ("Uni * Form") have already brought her work to HAU Hebbel am Ufer.

Jonas Staal

Jonas Staal is a visual artist whose works range from publicly staged interventions and exhibitions to theatrical pieces, print publications, and lectures. Moving back and forth between these media, he explores the relation between the arts, democracy, and propaganda. Among his most recent exhibitions were "Art of the Stateless State" (Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, 2015), "New World Academy" (Centraal Museum Utrecht, 2015), and "After Europe" (State of Concept, Athens). His artworks could be seen at venues that included the 7th Berlin Biennial (2012), 31st São Paulo Biennial (2014), and the Oslo Architecture Triennale (2016). The artist's studio, located in Amsterdam, is also home to Younes Bouadi and Renée In der Maur. Staal takes part in the PhDArts program (University Leiden) and is in addition a member of the National Academy of Arts. In 2015, he got together with Florian Malzacher and Joanna Warsza to organize, in co-production with HAU Hebbel am Ufer, the congress "Artist Organisations International."

Ultraviolet

Ultraviolet is the alias of Eva Lee, a DJ, producer, and graphic designer living and working in San Francisco (USA) and Los Angeles (USA). For more than 15 years now, she has been a vital part of these cities' Drum'n'Bass and Dubstep scene. Lee is founder of the Trap City San Francisco club, where artists like Heroes x Villains, Baauser, gLAdiator, UZ, Valentino Khan, TWRK, and Trap-Aholics have had legendary performances. In 2013/14, she was elected best DJ by the "San Francisco Bay Guardian." In addition, she has already shared a stage and performed together with E-40, Los Rakas, Mary Anne Hobbs, Excision, Datsik, Dieselboy, Reid Speed, LTJ Bukem, Lazer Sword, KOAN Sound, Bassnectar, AC Slater, 12th Planet, UZ, and Eprom.

::vtol::

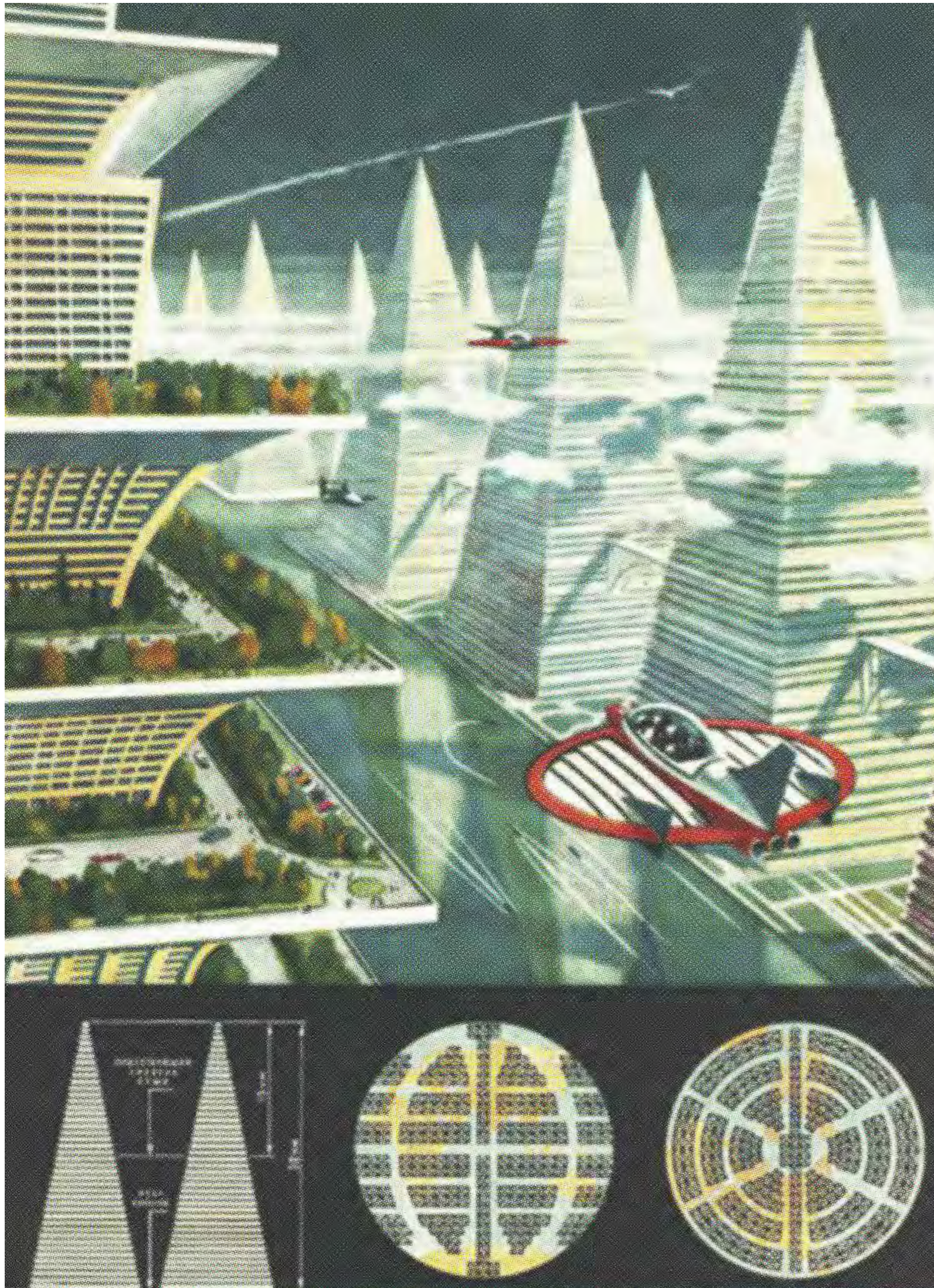
::vtol: is the alias of Moscow-based media artist Dmitry Morozov, whose work engages with various forms of electronic art, ranging from robotics to sound art and science art. Morozov was included in the 4th Moscow Biennale for contemporary Art and the Archstoyanie Festival (Nikola-Lenivets). In addition, he was invited to the CTM Festival – Festival for Adventurous Music and Art. His works have been shown at renown institutions such as NCCA (Moscow), MMOMA (Moscow), Laboratoria Art & Science Space (Moscow), Electromuseum (Moscow), Garage – Museum for Contemporary Art (Moscow), ZKM (Karlsruhe), and the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art. He received the Sergei-Kuryokhin-Award (Moscow, 2013) and the Prix Cube (France, 2014) as well as an honorable mention at the VIDA 16.0 competition (Spain, 2014) and the Ars Electronica (Linz, 2015).

Register of illustrations and photos

Cover: Jewgenij Saweljew, "Mittag, 2017" / Page 4: Alexander Rodchenko, Costume design for Bedbug, 1929. © A. A. Bakhrushin State Central Theatre Museum / P. 10: Alexandra Kollontai at the speaker's desk of the 2nd international conference of the female communists, June 1921. Illustration from: Alexandra Kollontai: Ich habe viele Leben gelebt. Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen. Dietz Verlag Berlin. 1982 / P. 22/23: "Moon house" by Andrei Konstantinovich Sokolov. Reproduktion. akg-images / Sputnik. © Andrej K. Sokolow / VG Bild-Kunst. / We made every effort to find out the copyright owners of all the images used in the series of this publication to request the printing permission. In case we did not indicate a source correctly, please contact HAU Hebbel am Ufer.

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Programme overview

Mariano Pensotti Arde brillante en los bosques de la noche / Burning bright in the forest of the night

THEATRE

12.-15.1. / HAU1 / Premiere

Spanish with German and English surtitles / category B

Three women are the protagonists of "Burning bright in the forest of the night". A professor teaches seminars on the Russian Revolution at the university and is confronted with the fact that revolutionary thoughts have not played any role in her life for a long time. A revolutionary who was part of the guerrilla struggles in South America for many years returns to her birthplace in Europe, where everyday life has become unfamiliar to her. The journalist of a political television programme celebrates a promotion by taking a trip to the north of Argentina, where descendants of Russian emigrants who had fled the 1917 Revolution work as sex workers for women from the middle class. A cinematic narrative style connects the different stories to one another. How can political ideals be translated into ordinary life today? Which ideas from the Russian Revolution still apply today? What effects have they had on present-day Argentina?

The world premiere is part of the festival "Utopian Realities". A commissioned work and coproduction by HAU Hebbel am Ufer. Production: Grupo Marea (Buenos Aires). Coproduction: Complejo Teatral de Buenos Aires, Kunstenfestivaldesarts (Brüssel), Maria Matos Teatro Municipal, House on Fire with support by the Kulturprogramm der Europäischen Union.

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION PERFORMANCE

12.-15.1., 19.-22.1. / HAU3 / Premiere

Russian with German and English translation / category C

"Eternal Russia" is a glance at a few centuries of Russian history. The curator and critic Marina Davydova develops together with the stage designer and artist Vera Martynov a performative, installation-like parcours, which will spatially make accessible the connection between Russian history and the present. The project presents the very short but bright interlude of the political, artistic, and sexual awakening after the revolution of 1917. Why could these ideas not be implemented in the long run? The piece is an attempt to explain the barbaric change of Soviet socialism, which just ten years after the revolution was transformed into totalitarian dictatorship, skillfully hiding behind Communist slogans. Furthermore, it deals with one hundred years of longing for the pre-revolutionary Russian Empire. An image of the great Russian utopia arises.

Eine Auftragsarbeit und Produktion des HAU Hebbel am Ufer. Koproduktion: Theatre of Nations (Moskau). Unterstützt durch: Club 418 (Moskau).

Studio Jonas Staal New Unions: Act I-V

DIALOGUE INSTALLATION

Act I: *Feminist Union Baharan Raoufi (Feminist Initiative, Sweden)*

Act II: *Stateless Union Seher Aydar /Red/Solidarity with Kurdistan, Norway)*

Act III: *Communist Union Mireia Vehí and Quim Arrufat / Popular Unity Candidacy, Catalunya)*

Act IV: *Asymmetric Union Robin McAlpine (Common Weal, Scotland)*

Act V: *Internationalist Union Despina Koutsoumba (Antarsya, Greece)*

13.-15.1. / HAU2

English / 5 € (The proceeds of the events go to "Tribunal 'NSU Komplex auflösen")

"New Unions" is an artistic and political campaign developed by Studio Jonas Staal in collaboration with frequent collaborators such as architect Paul Kuipers, designer Remco van Bladel and the HAU Hebbel am Ufer curatorial team.

New Unions departs from the current political, economic, humanitarian, and environmental crisis of Europe with the aim of assembling representatives of transdemocratic movements and organisations in order to imagine alternative unions. New Unions rejects both ultranationalist parties that demand separation from the European Union and seek to return to a mythical notion of the nation-state, as well as the political/economical functionary elite that has used the EU for its austerity politics.

The Berlin edition has been developed in collaboration with emancipatory political parties and platforms across Europe, namely Antarsya (Greece), Popular Unity Candidacy (Catalunya), Common Weal (Scotland), Feminist Initiative (Sweden), The Red Party & Solidarity with Kurdistan (Norway), each of which will confront the crisis of the imagination that keeps Europe hostage today by proposing new scripts for new transdemocratic unions to be discussed with guests and the public alike.

"New Unions: Act I-V" is a project by Studio Jonas Staal in cooperation with HAU Hebbel am Ufer and part of the festival "Utopian Realities".

"The first day of revolution, that's women's day"*

DIALOGUE

Talk with artists of the festival

18.1. / HAU2

English / admission free

The Russian Revolution was not just a political uprising, but was accompanied by a profound social upheaval that also encompassed culture, family and gender relations.

*quote from the daily paper *Prawda*

Dakh Daughters All girls freak cabaret from Ukraine

MUSIC PERFORMANCE

18.1. / HAU1

Ukrainian with English surtitles / category B

With provocative-political statements and a unique appearance at Kiev's embattled Maidan, the women band caused quite a furore. The Dakh Daughters (daughters of the "Dakh" theatre, one of Kiev's most important avant-garde stages) sing of the borderland of an empire, of post-Soviet tragedy, of Donbas, the contested industrial region in eastern Ukraine. A performative-musical slugfest with 15 instruments.

Houseclub presents: Franziska Seeberg Beginners

19.+20.1. / Aula Hector Peterson School / Admission free

With pupils of the Hector Peterson School

German

There are some experiences in life that in retrospect we would like to change the course of. Using their own experience, students ask themselves what would it be like if they could start all over.

Simone Aughterlony & Jen Rosenblit Everything Fits In The Room

19.–22.1. / District Berlin / Premiere

District Berlin: Bessemerstraße 2–14, 12103 Berlin

Category C

Aughterlony and Rosenblit navigate current forms of feminist politics beyond manifestos. Unpacking the phenomenology of utopias solicits the fear that all things will not fit in the imagined path. A free-standing wall sits in the middle of the room offering possibilities to adjust, fix and reattach materials. Crushed nutmeg and pine needles entice the senses. Rhythmic sorcery drives the effort to organize the ingredients, despite their un-governability. Is this a cooking show or a construction site? The room offers an expanded horizon, encouraging disruptive practices by way of leaks and cracks inside architectures for gathering. fbox

The world premiere is part of the festival "Utopian Realities". A commissioned work and coproduction by HAU Hebbel am Ufer. Production: Verein für allgemeines Wohl. Coproduction: Gessnerallee Zürich, Arsenal Lausanne. Supported by: Stadt Zürich, Kanton Zürich Fachstelle Kultur und Pro Helvetia – Schweizer Kulturstiftung, Tanzhaus Zürich, ImpulsTanz Wien, Ernst Göhner Stiftung, Georges und Jenny Bloch-Stiftung, Fête de la Danse – Genf, District Berlin.

THEATRE

PERFORMANCE DANCE

Lina Majdalanie Salon – Relatively Universal #1–3

20.-22.1. / HAU2 / Admission free

English

In a salon-like setting the actress, theatre director and author LinaMajdalanie will subject the concept of cultural relativism to a feministcritique. The starting point is our current international political situation, in which war or terror and the strengthening of right-wing populist movements have reached a new dimension. What role do values like democracy, secularism and human rights have today? What forms do they assume? What meaning is bestowed to cultural attributions? Against the backdrop of her life experience in Beirut and Berlin, Majdalanie will seek to defend these values and work against forms of division. During three days everyone interested is invited to take part in the discussion along with selected guests, with Petra Klug, Sarah Mandour, Hengameh Yaghoobifarah.

The participants will be published at www.hebbel-am-ufer.de

A project by Lina Majdalanie in cooperation with HAU Hebbel am Ufer.

DIALOGUE

Vlatka Horvat Minor Planets

20.–22.1. / HAU2 / Premiere

English / Category C

In “Minor Planets,” five performers work to make sense of themselves and their relation to each other as they traverse an impoverished landscape of detritus, wooden planks and fabric scraps. Using these inadequate resources and locked in a decaying set of rules and mischievous games, the five negotiate a place for themselves, making and re-making the world they inhabit. Beginning initially with research into the Russian Revolution, Vlatka Horvat’s “Minor Planets” draws on her own experience of living through the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and its legacy of confusion and opportunism. Looking at how people deal with structural collapse, the piece also speaks to the broader landscape of uncertainty that marks current events. Created especially for “Utopian Realities,” “Minor Planets” is Horvat’s first stage production.

The world premiere is part of the festival "Utopian Realities". A project by Vlatka Horvat. Commissioned work and a coproduction by HAU Hebbel am Ufer. Support and Research: PACT Zollverein, Essen.

PERFORMANCE DANCE

::vtol: Electrification

Objects and sound installations

12.1., 20:00–22:00, 13.–15.1., 18.1., 20.–22.1., open one hour before the performance begins / HAU2 / Admission free

Each of 7 objects represent and abstract fantasy and reflection which use recognisable images, objects or artefacts. Some of the objects suggest interaction with spectator, others are autonomous. Each of them is constructing an illusion of imaginary utopian reality, in which they act as independent cybernetic creatures.

INSTALLATION

Ticket prices

Category A: (30,00 €) / 25,00 € / 20,00 € / 15,00 € / (10,00 €), red. 10,00 € / Category B: 20,00 € / 15,00 € / (12,00 €), red. 10,00 € / Category C: 15,00 € / (12,00 €), red. 10,00 € / Category D: 13,00 €, red. 8,00 € / Category E: 8,00 €, red. 5,00 € / Reduced tickets for pupils, students, trainees, unemployed, welfare recipients, severely disabled persons / prices in parentheses are depending on the event

Thu 12.1.

18:00 / HAU1

Reception and festival opening

19:00 / HAU1 / Premiere

Mariano Pensotti

Arde brillante en los bosques de la noche /

Burning bright in the forest of the night

THEATRE / Spanish with English and German surtitles

21:00 / HAU3 / Premiere

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

Fri 13.1.

17:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

19:00 / HAU2

Studio Jonas Staal

New Unions – Act I / DIALOGUE, INSTALLATION / English

21:00 / HAU1

Mariano Pensotti

Arde brillante en los bosques de la noche /

Burning bright in the forest of the night

THEATRE / Spanish with English and German surtitles

21:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

Sat 14.1.

17:00 / HAU2

Studio Jonas Staal

New Unions – Act II / DIALOGUE, INSTALLATION / English

17:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

19:00 / HAU1

Mariano Pensotti

Arde brillante en los bosques de la noche /

Burning bright in the forest of the night

THEATRE / Spanish with English and German surtitles

21:00 / HAU2

Studio Jonas Staal

New Unions – Act III / DIALOGUE, INSTALLATION / English

21:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

22:00 / WAU

Russian gangster songs – Blatnyak, songs from

the backyard, squeezed from the soul /

Maru Mushtrieva (DJ-Set) / MUSIC / Admission free

Sun 15.1.

15:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

17:00 / HAU1

Mariano Pensotti

Arde brillante en los bosques de la noche /

Burning bright in the forest of the night

THEATRE / Spanish with English and German surtitles

17:00 / HAU2

Studio Jonas Staal

New Unions – Act IV / DIALOGUE, INSTALLATION / English

19:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

20:00 / HAU2

Studio Jonas Staal

New Unions – Act V / DIALOGUE, INSTALLATION / English

Wed 18.1.

18:00 / HAU2

“The first day of the revolution,

that’s women’s day”

Talk with artists of the festival

DIALOGUE / English / Admission free

20:00 / HAU1

Dakh Daughters

All girls freak cabaret from Ukraine

MUSIC, PERFORMANCE / Ukrainian with English surtitles

Thu 19.1.

17:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

18:00 / Aula Hector-Peterson-Schule

Houseclub presents:

Franziska Seeberg

With pupils of the Hector-Peterson School

Beginner / THEATRE / German / Admission free

20:00 / District Berlin / Premiere

Simone Aughterlony & Jen Rosenblit

Everything Fits In The Room / PERFORMANCE, DANCE

21:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

Fri 20.1.

11:00+18:00 / Aula Hector-Peterson-Schule

Houseclub presents:

Franziska Seeberg

With pupils of the Hector-Peterson School

Beginner / THEATRE / German / Admission free

17:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

18:00 / HAU2

Lina Majdalanie

Salon – Relatively Universal #1

DIALOGUE / English / Admission free

20:00 / HAU2 / Premiere

Vlatka Horvat

Minor Planets / PERFORMANCE, DANCE / English

>>> Fr 20.1. go on on the right

::vtol: Electrification

Objects and sound installations

12.1., 20:00–22:00, 13.–15.1., 18.1., 20.–22.1., open one hour before the performance begins / HAU2 / Admission free

20:00 / District Berlin

Simone Aughterlony & Jen Rosenblit

Everything Fits In The Room / PERFORMANCE, DANCE

21:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

Sat 21.1.

17:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

18:00 / HAU2

Lina Majdalanie

Salon – Relatively Universal #2

DIALOGUE / English / Admission free

20:00 / District Berlin

Simone Aughterlony & Jen Rosenblit

Everything Fits In The Room / PERFORMANCE, DANCE

20:00 / HAU2

Vlatka Horvat

Minor Planets / PERFORMANCE, DANCE / English

21:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

22:00 / WAU

A Tribute to Mata Hari:

The Feminist The World Wasn’t Ready For

Ultraviolet – The Hum (DJ-Set) / MUSIC / Admission free

Sun 22.1.

15:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

17:00 / HAU2

Vlatka Horvat

Minor Planets / PERFORMANCE, DANCE / English

18:00 / HAU2

Lina Majdalanie

Salon – Relatively Universal #3

DIALOGUE / English / Admission free

19:00 / HAU3

Marina Davydova & Vera Martynov

Eternal Russia

INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE / Russian with English and German translation

20:00 / District Berlin

Simone Aughterlony & Jen Rosenblit

Everything Fits In The Room / PERFORMANCE, DANCE

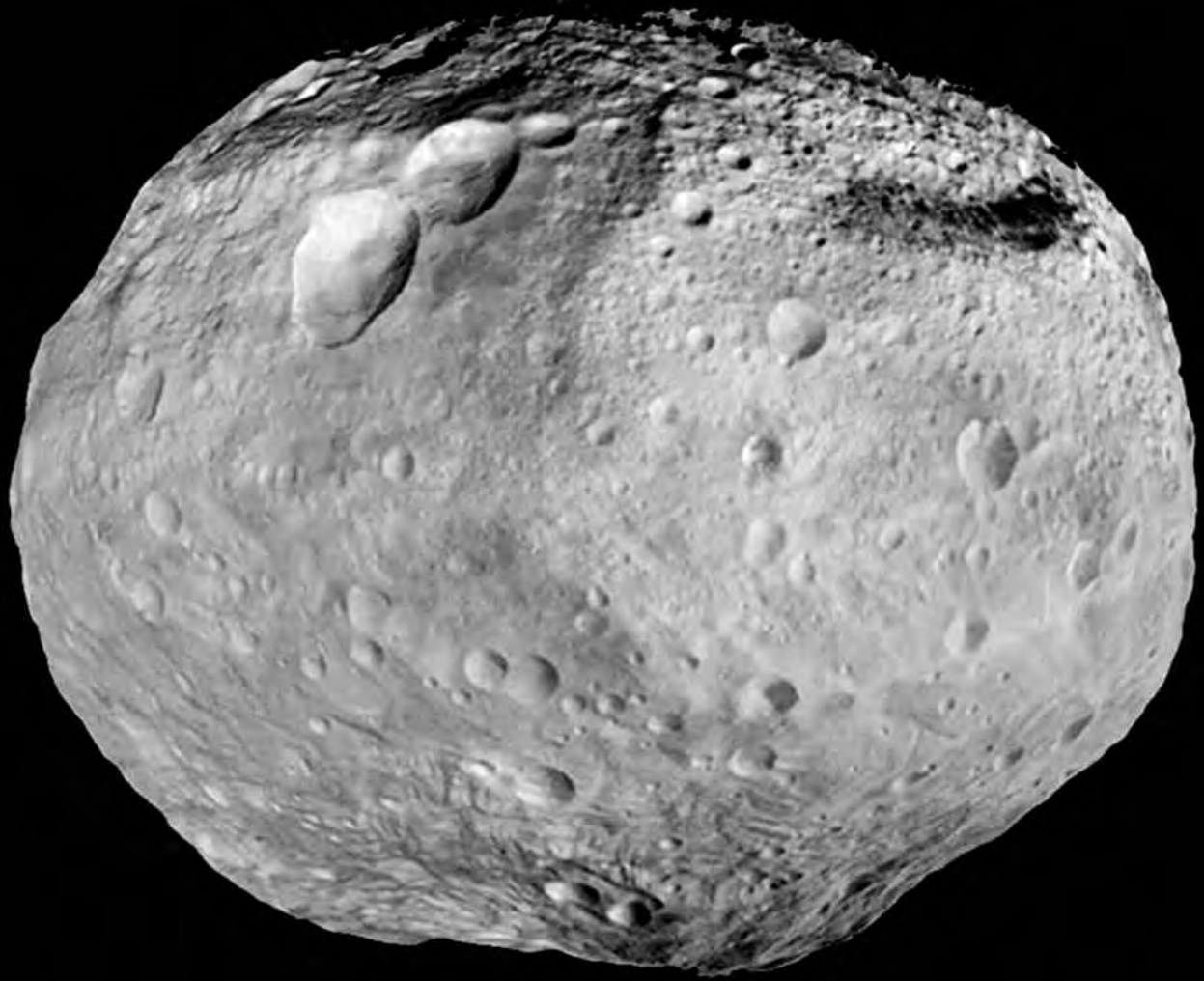
Festival pass: 3 performances for 30,00 €, red. 20,00 € (freely selectable 12.–22.1.)

Box office

Box office at HAU2 (Hallesches Ufer 32, 10963 Berlin) / Monday to Saturday from 3 p.m. until one hour before the performance begins, on days without a performance from 3 to 7 p.m. / Closed Sundays and holidays / Phone +49 (0)30.259004 -27 / Online-bookings: www.hebbel-am-ufer.de

Locations

HAU1 – Stresemannstraße 29, 10963 Berlin
HAU2 and WAU – Hallesches Ufer 32, 10963 Berlin
HAU3 – Tempelhofer Ufer 10, 10963 Berlin
District Berlin – Bessemerstraße 2–14, 12103 Berlin



www.hebbel-am-ufer.de