

V-A-C Foundation presents performances, installations and talks by Rossella Biscotti, David Gissen and Urban Fauna Lab at the GULAG History State Museum in Moscow

Process.

Case Studies at the Museum

September 2016 – April 2017

GULAG History State Museum

1-y Samotechniy Pereulok 9, Building 1

Curated by:

Katerina Chuchalina

Anna Ilchenko

Maria Kramar

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V-A-C Foundation and the GULAG History State Museum present Rossella Biscotti's *The Trial* (18 December 2016 – 13 January 2017), followed by *New Leaders of Regional Development* by Urban Fauna Lab (Alexey Buldakov and Anastasia Potemkina) and David Gissen's talk *The Mound of Vendôme*, as part of the programme *Process. Case Studies at the Museum*.

Process. Case Studies at the Museum looks at ideas around historical representation, from the capacity of objects and images to embody reality and the limitations of the documentary form, to the complexity surrounding the depiction of historic trauma and violence. It is divided into sections which focus on subjects including evidence, hearings, landscape, observation and monuments. The range of international contemporary works on display, alongside the series of talks and accompanying newspapers, raise questions and stimulate wider discussion.

The presentation of Rossella Biscotti's *The Trial* (2010 – 2016), supported by the Mondriaan Fund, is the third in the series of exhibitions at the museum. In April 1979 a group of Italian militants and intellectuals (including Antonio Negri), former members of leftwing movements *Potere Operaio* (Workers' Power) and *Autonomia Operaia* (Workers' Autonomy), were arrested on charges of terrorism in Italy, the creation of the Red Brigades and the kidnapping and murder of former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro. The majority of those prosecuted were held in preventative prison from 1979 until the trial ended in 1984.

This trial and its reenactment lie at the centre of Biscotti's work. On the 17 December a six-hour reading of original courtroom recordings by Russian participants will take place in the exhibition space, translated live from Italian to Russian and transcribed by a typist. The performance draws attention to the specific language used in the trial, from the witnesses to the attorney. Biscotti reconstructs the work differently each time, rethinking it in a local political context. The exhibition (18 December 2016 – 13 January 2017) features remnants from the courtroom, including wooden benches where visitors can watch a silent film of a past performance of *The Trial* staged inside the original Italian courthouse. Video documentation of the 17 December reading will be available on the 5th floor of the museum, alongside a Russian translation of the original verbatim report from the 1982–84 trial, published here for the first time.

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Coming up in 2017, Urban Fauna Lab's video installation *New Leaders of Regional Development* (2014) (18 January – 12 March 2017) and David Gissen's talk *The Mound of Vendôme* (2012 – ongoing) (March 2017) will explore the political, social and economic issues surrounding historic landscapes.

The landscape of the territories of former Gulag forced labour camps have been left to the process of natural decay, as well as economic development in more recent years. Urban Fauna Lab present a business proposal for the reclamation of these sites, subversively responding to their past and potential future. Using the harsh conditions and vast spaces of the tundra, they propose a social and biological utopia – the development of an eco-friendly data centre and source of thermal energy, leading to the initiation of a spontaneous self-organisation of biological life.

David Gissen's research project *The Mound of Vendôme* focuses on a key episode in French history when in 1871, the Paris Commune voted to take down the Vendôme Column, declaring it "a symbol of brute force and false glory, an affirmation of militarism, and a negation of international law". To protect the streets and surrounding buildings from the impact of the column falling to the ground, a mound of sand, dirt and straw was created. In his talk at the GULAG History State Museum in March 2017, Gissen recalls this forgotten structure, examining the way we view contemporary cities and how the urban environment changes under the impact of external social and political conditions.

Process. Case Studies at the Museum aims to highlight themes and intersections of expertise and interest between the art community and historians, archivists and other specialists working in this field and form the basis for an ongoing art and theory platform. It is part of V-A-C's long term programme to introduce contemporary art to non-art museums, as a way of dialoguing with the structure, exploring its identity and contents, and of encouraging many different audiences to engage with contemporary art.

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ROSSELLA BISCOTTI studies social and political past events, tackling the problems of collective memory and identity. She works with archives, audio recordings, found materials and historical documents. In her projects, Biscotti criticises the methods of representation of historic events, as well as highlights the ambiguity and subjectivity of interpretations of the past. Biscotti has taken part in major international exhibitions including 55th la Biennale di Venezia and 13th Istanbul Biennale (2013), DOCUMENTA 13 (2012), and Manifesta 9 (2012). Her work has been presented in solo exhibitions including Wiels, Brussels (2014), Sculpture Center, New York (2014), Vienna Secession (2013) and e-flux in New York (2013). Biscotti lives and works in Rotterdam.

DAVID GISSEN is a historian, theorist, curator, and author of texts on landscape, urbanistics, the surrounding environment and architecture. He is a Professor of Architecture and Visual and Critical Studies at the California College of the Arts, a visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Columbia University, and a visiting critic at numerous schools in the United States and Europe.

URBAN FAUNA LAB is an interdisciplinary platform for artists, scientists and architects, founded in 2011 in Moscow by Alexei Buldakov and Anastasia Potemkina. They explore parasitic and symbiotic relationships in the urban environment and their associated adaptations. The artists research the social and cultural status of animals and plants, as well as the economic, architectural and political aspects of the coexistence of different species. They have participated in a range of Russian and international exhibitions including the 4th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, The Way of Enthusiasts as part of the 13th International Architecture Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia (2012), Monday Begins on Saturday, the First Bergen Assembly (2013), and IK-00: The Spaces of Confinement, Venice (2014).

V-A-C FOUNDATION is dedicated to the international presentation, production and development of Russian contemporary art – across a multitude of forms and within the framework of an invigorated and informed exhibition, education and publishing programme. Particularly important to the new generation of artists in Russia, V-A-C's focus is on practically supporting and expanding the platform for home-grown talent, giving artists the opportunity to experience, engage with and interrogate international cultural practices whilst developing an authentic and autonomous artistic language. It is deservedly considered as one of the key proponents in opening out contemporary Russian culture to the wider world, and practically supporting and developing emergent artists through finding new international platforms for exhibition and opportunities for commissions as well as ways of encouraging cross-cultural exchange – especially important in the current climate.

GULAG HISTORY STATE MUSEUM was founded in 2001 by Anton Antonov-Ovseenko, a well-known historian, writer and public figure, who himself survived 13 years in forced labor camps. The museum collection comprises a documentary archive, letters and memoirs by former GULAG prisoners, their personal belongings and a collection of artworks by former GULAG inmates and contemporary artists offering their own vision of the subject.

GULAG History State Museum's exhibition is dedicated to the history of the rise, development and decline of the Soviet labor camp system, an instrumental and integral part of the Soviet state machinery in the 1930s – 50s, and its political, administrative and economic role.

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THE MONDRIAAN FUND is a publicly financed fund for visual art and cultural heritage. It supports innovative projects and activities by visual artists, intermediaries (curators and critics), museums and other heritage organisations, art institutions, archives, galleries and commissioning parties. All grants are awarded with a view to promoting the production and presentation of relevant Dutch visual art and heritage in the Netherlands and abroad, where a commercial market is (yet) undeveloped.

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23 September - 6 November 2016

Mikhail Tolmachev Pact of Silence (2016).

22 photographs and a 7-channel audio installation

11 November – 11 December 2016

Distinguishing Features

Hito Steyerl Leibniz' Skull (2012). Video, 2-channel installation

Thomas Keenan, Eyal Weizman. Mengele's Skull (2012). Video, installation

16 December, 19.00

Rossella Biscotti - Artist Talk

17 December 2016, 14.00

Rossella Biscotti - The Trial Performance

18 December 2016 – 13 January 2017

Rossella Biscotti The Trial

18 January – 12 March 2017

Urban Fauna Lab. New Leaders of Regional Development (2014). Video installation

3 March 2017, 19.00

Urban Fauna Lab - Artists' Talk

March 2017

David Gissen The Mound of Vendôme. Talk

30 March – 30 April 2017

Judy Radul World Rehearsal Court (2009). Multi-channel video installation

April 2017

Kristina Norman. A Monument to Please Everyone (2011). Video

Further details of the upcoming programme and artists'
biographies available upon request.