

A programme of exhibitions and talks at the GULAG History State Museum in Moscow

Process.
Case Studies at the Museum

23 September 2016 – May 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 presents Process. Case Studies at the Museum from September 2016 to May 2017 at the GULAG History State Museum.

The programme aims to explore the museum's collection and ideas around historical representation through the display of international contemporary works and a series of talks. It will highlight themes and intersections of interest and expertise 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.

Process. Case Studies at the Museum opens with a new work by Mikhail Tolmachev, *Pact of Silence* (23 September – 6 November 2016), a research project based on a photo-album of images taken at the Solovki prison camp. It is one of three surviving photo-albums of the Solovki camp and a recent acquisition by the GULAG History State Museum. Tolmachev looks at how we can engage with this photo-album today, in the absence of witnesses and the personal story of the album's owner, and with its new status as a museum object. Tolmachev records reflections on the album from people connected with its recent history, including researchers and museum specialists.

The programme will explore subjects including: the role of the witness and testimony in an era of new technologies for data collection and analysis; the documentation of judicial speech and the media's representation of the court; a critical understanding of monuments; the importance of documents and archives; and the political and economic capacity of visual landscape.

Displays feature video installations by Hito Steyerl, *Leibniz' Skull* (2012), and Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman, *Mengele's Skull* (2012), which look at the connections between material evidence and forensic examination. Rossella Biscotti's performance *The Trial* (2011–2016) re-enacts a selection of Italian courtroom recordings from 1979, while Judy Radul's multimedia installation *World Rehearsal Court* (2009) investigates the role of video observation in courtroom sessions.

Centred on questions around landscape, the displays include Urban Fauna Lab's video installation *New Leaders of Regional Development* (2014) and David Gissen's lecture performance *The Mound of Vendôme*. The programme closes with Kristina Norman's documentary film, *A Monument to Please Everyone* (2011), researching Estonian identity through the construction of the Victory Column of the War of Independence.

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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

Hito Steyerl Leibniz' Skull (2012).

Video, 2-channel installation

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

Video, installation.

17 December – 13 January 2017

Rossella Biscotti The Trial (2011-2016).

6-hour performance.

18 January – 11 March 2017

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

Video installation.

March 2017

David Gissen The Mound of Vendôme.

Lecture performance

March – 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.

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Mikhail Tolmachev (b. 1983, Moscow) is an artist interested in politics and the technology of military surveillance, its mechanisms of image production and the relation between forms of perception and representation. His work has been featured in the V-A-C exhibition IK00: The Spaces of Confinement, at the Casa Dei Tre Oci in Venice and solo project Beyond Visual Range, at the Central Armed Forces Museum in Moscow (2014). He has also participated in projects at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art and the Grassi Museum in Leipzig, where Tolmachev currently lives and works.

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 wellknown 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.