

Wetlik

VOLODYA

At the first seminar of the day, Ann Mirjam notices a new guy who wasn't there the day before. Flashy clothes - who goes around in a goddamn waistcoat in July? Well, the weather is on the cool side. Bearded, Doc Martens, very modern, some sort of Peaky Blinders vibe. Only his socks are weird - an ugly beige colour, old man's socks.

The new guy introduces himself to everyone as Volodya, and he speaks more or less perfect German. He has a background in sociology, and decided to do his master's degree at the art academy. His parents must be rich if he could pull that kind of stunt. Ann Mirjam looks at how Volodya thinks and listens. Volodya quickly claims the role of class clown, raining down peals of infectious laughter at his own and others' jokes. Back in her hostel room, Ann Mirjam thinks about Volodya's jokes. Later on, she chats with Szymon, discussing an up-coming project. Ann Mirjam mentions in passing that some new guy joined the group today. The name strikes Szymon as familiar, he wrote about their previous exhibition or something like that. Or did Szymon go out drinking with him in Venice? Who knows. We probably should cut down on the booze, the two of them decide.

The next day after field work, Ann Mirjam finds herself sitting next to Volodya in the cafeteria. Totally by chance. Volodya asks questions, takes an interest, smiles, smells of expensive perfume and Orthodox churches. Pleasant. When he leaves to make a call, Mirjam realizes she'd talked about herself the whole time and Volodya hadn't been able to say anything about himself. Fuck, rookie mistake, Ann Mirjam thinks. She should have let him speak, men like that.

That evening at the hostel, Mirjam walks down the hallway. A door is ajar. Mirjam peers in. Volodya is in there, sitting naked on the bed. His body is covered with tattoos and scars as if someone had tried to flay him alive. In front of Volodya, on the carpet is an uncut piece of granite. Volodya is speaking Russian to the stone. He prays for the souls of ancient pioneers, he prays to the Sun that it never set, Volodya prays for the proletariat to awake and see. One of his eyes is laughing and the other is crying.

Like in bad vaudeville, someone slams the door shut at the other end of the hallway. In a second, Volodya is at the door and pulls it open. With superhuman strength, Volodya pulls Mirjam into the room, his eyes no longer laughing or crying. He drags Mirjam to the bed, kisses her, Mirjam resists weakly. Volodya's tongue in her mouth feels strangely dry, like paper. Everything happens fast, Volodya knows what he is doing. Mirjam stumbles away from him. She realizes that something is very wrong, but is too tired to deal with it. She wants to sleep, wants to get into her own bed, she is drained.

Szymon sits at the detective's desk at the precinct house. "That's not her," he tells the police official. "Mirjam is 27. You showed me some old lady, I don't know how she ended up in that room. It's some freakish trick. Find that damned Volodya!" - "There is no Volodya. No one remembers anyone by that name, there's no trace of him in the summer school database," intones the investigator patiently. "Could you please calm down, and instead try to remember where else you may have seen that five-pointed star painted on the deceased's chest. Would you like some water?"

Text:

Wetlik

Artist:

Szymon

Ann Mirjam

Naviten

Ann Mirjam Vaikla & Szymon Kula
The Monument of (R)evolution

Please read this text carefully before you start your experience. If you have any questions or are not sure about anything, ask someone.

Keep this text in a safe place, you may want to read it again.

What constitutes *The Monument of (R)evolution*?

A juxtapositional correlation; a certain parallel, which includes a monumental Lenin (ca 1950) and a sculptural megalith/monolith as its active agents. The premise for its agency is the frequently unfounded and more often misguided assumption that the East appears to be copying the West (here conceived with a primarily Eurocentric focus). There's no need to give answers, yet one has to know when to initiate doubt. Who then is the copying one? How does it relate to progress and development; to the overall way of things?

What is the recommended dose?

The recommended dose depends on the perspective. It is recommended to gain a repeatedly multifaceted perspective. Avoid immoderate swiftness. Moderate swiftness is permitted. This is not a game. Plenty is not too much, yet little might be too scarce.

When should you be extra careful while experiencing *The Monument of (R)evolution*?

If you consider yourself to be from the West or from Scandinavia. If you think that the former East is indeed *former* and not at all anymore. If you are a globalist, or if you are a great admirer of Lenin. If you have no clue at all who Lenin is or where a boulevard named after him was located in Tallinn. If you truly believe you belong to the West, or that America does not really exist. If you think you are situated in an individual temporality, or are longing for unrealized futures and for the presents that never became.

What happens if I forget my dose?

If you forget to take your dose, remind yourself as soon as you remember. Try to recall the times before you were born. Then go on as before. Repeat.

What are the possible side effects of *The Monument of (R)evolution*?

Vertigo, eyestrain and misapprehension that what is depicted is a yet-to-be-finished or half-done statue of Lenin. You might think that Lenin and monolith are characters from two different films projected onto the same screen, whose monologues are somewhat by chance, though nevertheless meaningfully, synchronized.

If you are concerned about these or any other side effects, talk to someone.

Text:

Artist:

Esko

How

A monument to Lenin once stood here. Lenin was larger than life already in his lifetime, to say nothing about after the fact. The monument and the large white building later erected of concrete panels behind it have been talked about as one of Tallinn's few spatial ensembles that give a truly totalitarian impression.

Then, Lenin was removed. Nothing was supposed to remind us that Lenin was once here. This place was supposed to become a normal space. Normalcy was the primary goal both upon and after dismantling. But the big white building stayed, and then it became a different place and it gradually became normal. The totalitarian space surrounding the building stayed as well, for where else could it go. It stayed as the frame, and the middle of it was emptiness, the potential deliberately left unused.

Now there is a boulder here in which we can discern Lenin. But it is not a monument to Lenin but something else. The megalith was copied from France, from a place where one of the authors of the work, Szymon Kula, lives. Lenin was copied from Narva, where the other author of the work, Ann Mirjam Vaikla, lives, and where for some reason, the Lenin monument survives as a museum exhibit. Working digitally, the artists fused a copy of the monument whose content is remembered (some of it all too well) to a copy of a monument whose content no one remembers to form a history that connects recent history and prehistory and leaves the effect of a boulder. This history started yesterday, or why not today, because after all, morning tooth-brushing, snow from two winters ago and the peak period for crustaceans is all in the past. Vaikla and Kula place this boulder-like history into the middle of a spatial ensemble inherited from totalitarianism - into a frame that has been waiting to realize its potential. They place an original work born of copying into a totalitarian space that was born as an original work, and which is now an unrealized copy of the planned impact of that space. Excalibur into a grey stone. Can a totalitarian space be reused without bringing its original effect back to life?

Artist:

Text:

Kaunistoru

Ann Mirjam Vaikla

Szymon Kula

Hanna Larva

Running my hands over the rugged surface of the cold boulder, the fingertips distinguish depressions and ridges. Here, over the course of millennia, rainwater has etched deep trenches into the stone. Here, the deceptively soft breeze has filed away the surface, shaping its expression. Fingers are unable to penetrate the stone and the rock is difficult to grasp for the short-lived human mind. Yet over time, behind closed eyes an internal image, though unstable, takes form.

The boulder is in itself an interweaving of multiple generations. As an amalgamation of species it represents unison between minerals and once living organisms, in which an individual life cannot be differentiated from the collective. Shift in weather, that which is experienced, is imprinted into the body on the threshold of form and formlessness as impressions. Erosion is a force that creates by way of destruction. That, which destruction brings to life, lacks lexical bridges, is absent-minded. Those who remember do not commemorate. Those who cannot remember *postremember*.

Gradually, out of geological abstraction, an anthropomorphic image begins to come forth. Ancient riverbeds suddenly appear as wrinkles of a tired face. Eye sockets and cheekbones emerge from the curves of the stone. Each line is interwoven with ancestral rage and fear, feelings which have, like crutches, carried indigestible pain. Now - one hand on the painbody frozen as stone, the other on your forehead brimming with life - listen and imagine.

Afterword

Marianne Hirsch, professor of Columbia University, has coined the term *postmemory* referring to the process by which the younger generations relate to the personal, collective and cultural trauma of previous generations. Here, connection to the past is not created through the act of memory but rather the imagination. For the "generation after", trauma that defies comprehension appears indirectly, through the vessel of stories, images and behavioural patterns; the events of the past echo, as a copy, in the present through its descendants. *Postmemory* is a deliberate desire to embrace the pain of the past.

1 www.postmemory.net

Text:

Kaljo

Artist:

Symon Kula

Joanna

As a child of the 90s, I remember the frantic decade well – the first McDonalds in Tallinn, *Titanic*'s premier in Estonia and being obsessed with the Spice Girls. I even owned a t-shirt with the picture of Leonardo DiCaprio on it. Me and my cousins would eat an endless amount of crisps and drink Fanta. That finally western influences had reached us was beyond our grasp. A different, earlier Soviet Estonia was something we didn't have first hand experience of.

I'd say the best way to discuss Western descent upon 1990s Eastern Europe is via pop and consumer culture. That's why I pondered for a long time about history of sculpture and historic geography. I'm not an expert of either but I learnt something about both at school and at university. When I went to high school, ancient civilisations hadn't become an elective yet, they were the compulsory part of the history curriculum. Later, I taught art history myself. And I have some trouble understanding how exactly has East been copying West.

The development of Europe or the Western world was directly influenced by the Orient and by the North African cultures. Western art history normally starts with Mesopotamia (largely on the territory of contemporary Iraque) and Ancient Egypt. But European history is further complicated by the currently familiar nation states that are a relatively recent phenomenon, appearing only in the last 200 years. Beforehand, the territory of Europe was divided between variously sized empires with shifting borders, equally powerful in Eastern and Western Europe.

Already in ancient civilisations, a main goal for both profane and sacral art was to demonstrate power, to glorify it and to subject others to it. In totalitarian societies, art and architecture are in the service of those in power and in Eastern Europe, during the 20th century, the Soviet Union along with its Lenin monuments was no exception. The same device has been used worldwide for millenia. In that sense, we can indeed talk about consistency and persistently repeating patterns in human history. It's somewhat depressing even, especially when aware of the current political trends.

Artist:

Text:

Hoffmann

Anna Hoffman Hoffmann

Anna Hoffman Hoffmann

Magdalena

My grandmother told me how she had once, in the late Soviet period, walked past the Lenin monument on Lenin Avenue. She had found God and been saved a short time earlier. Standing there by the Lenin monument, she suddenly had an irresistible urge to do something. Some higher power told her to run seven times around the statue and shout: "In God's name, you're coming down!" And although she startled some passersby, she heeded this command.

Under the areligious Soviet regime, such a Biblical Jericho-storming ritual must have looked pretty bizarre, even dangerous if witnessed by the wrong people. But that didn't deter my grandmother. Telling me that story time and again, she always cheerfully and proudly stated how this little old lady with a handbag ran seven times around the statue and called upon God - and see? soon the Soviet Union collapsed. Thank you for that, grandmother.

Monuments are the physical and material realization of our beliefs, values and convictions. They may exist as an object for millennia, but their importance and position in their own contemporary society depends on changing conditions.

Ann Mirjam and Szymon both grew up at a time when the Lenin monument had been removed from Lenin Avenue, when the Lenin images that had been produced en masse all over the USSR had suddenly lost their importance and sacredness, the bronze and stone Vladimirs were all out of a job. Because they don't have any personal association with the statue and didn't experience it in its own times, the status and influence of Lenin has faded to just a washed-out image in a history textbook. It is as emotionally distant for them as some prehistoric megalith. By placing both of these giant cult objects on to a two-dimensional lenticular board, the artists free them completely of the sacredness, turning them into something like a hybrid disco parody - megalenin or lenilite. They don't think twice about the connotations that the work's location could mean for people a generation older or what memories it could engender. And there is no need to think about that: the monument as such is important. And the decline of the monument in history. No matter how robust, gigantic and strong, it is hard for all of them to withstand time. If there are no revolutionaries, rebels or grandmothers to topple them, oblivion will get the better of every monument at some point.

Artist:

Text:

Maasik

Ann Mirjam Szymon

Szymon

Let's start with a joke. What anniversary took place in 1974? Answer: 50 years without Lenin.

In the work Ann Mirjam Vaikla and Szymon Kula created for the Artishok Biennale, *Monument to (R)evolution*, the artists examine Soviet-era relicts - namely, monuments to Lenin. The monuments recall the enigmatic objects that strike artists as uncanny, recalling a society in which they did not participate themselves.

Born in the 1990s, both artists believe that their generation lacks a unifying collective memory in regard to monuments to Lenin and that the past in post-socialist countries is neither related to the present day nor a preparation for the future. Out of their desire to make the past more accessible for their own generation, they create a monument as a moving picture, in line with the aesthetics of the internet - a hybrid of a boulder and Lenin.

For these artists, a monolith is a symbol that might best convey the internet generation's vacuum and void on this topic. And yet the technical execution of their idea is realized from another relict - a children's calendar with a moving lenticular image. I see it as a very solid memory link connecting two young artists from Eastern Europe.

For the Artishok Biennale, a lenticular print measuring 1.2 × 3.6 m, will be displayed during a performance on Iceland Square. But what can this 10-15-minute-long performance - a quick flash of Lenin on a boulder - communicate in the public space? Is the message that what happens in the physical space is no longer the only layer in our reality? That visual memory from what is experienced only on a screen is biased? That a streaming society can't have a common past or future, duration or continuity? Without having seen the performance, it is hard to say but one more joke in closing. Why did the Tegur rubber factory start producing Lenin figures? Answer: so that anyone could inflate them as much as their heart desired.

Artist:

Text:

Ann Mirjam Vaikla

Szymon Kula

Maria

It's scorching hot weather. The sun shines intrusively into my eyes, no matter where you direct your glance. The sky doesn't even have a memory of clouds. It's just one big blue. The city is dry and dusty, it's thirsting. My skin is glistening and sticky with dust. On such merciless days, I walk aimlessly about until sundown. Looking for shelter from the sun and myself, pushing on. On the left side of the street, across the way, towers a building. It has more or less an oblong shape and it's certainly oppressive looking. Weary, soulless. Especially in the penetrating sun. In front of the building is Iceland Square. An extraordinarily beautiful and comforting name. Thinking about that, I feel cooler, nourished.

Across the street from the building are some trees, benches and a greensward bordered by a low green hedge. I lean against a rough tree trunk and eye the silent building in front of which unexpectedly lively clamouring can be heard. Everyone's eyes are turned to a big poster on which a stone is prominent. A lone megalith towering in the hard northern sun. The scene with a giant chunk of stone and surrounding hubbub has a soporific, distant effect on me.

On a nearby bench sits an older woman, wearing a crisply pressed outfit and hat. Something about her demeanour suggests that she has been surveying the goings-on for some time, with a thoughtful expression, serious but resigned. A leisurely curiosity overcomes me and I take a seat next to her.

"Has this been going on a while?", I ask, looking at the scene.

"Yes," she said, not looking up, "for a while. It dies down for a bit, then picks up again. Since the morning."

Looking at the poster closer, I notice that the image on it has changed. It now has a discernible head, arms and legs. The expression is serious, the eyes fixed on the horizon. Wearing a suit, a bald pate. Lenin.

"It changes from time to time?" I ask, taking more and more interest in the developments.

Her reply is friendly but terse. "It depends where you look, from here you can make out both viewpoints."

"A weighty symbol," I venture, shaking my head.

"A symbol has power only if you believe in it, if you feed it. I don't believe anymore. When you get old, you understand: it's just stone or metal. It doesn't make time and deeds come to stop, people just keep on looking for something to hold on to with their memories and thoughts."

Text:

Artist:

Amiriyam Yarbka

Szymon Kula

Luiga

Vitamiin

Siim Preiman:

It might be a critical note to start with but to discuss a generation based East vs West topic by putting a 6500 years old rock on the one side and Lenin to the other side... I wonder whether 6500 years ago East and West even existed? That megalithic structure is by no means western. The people who erected it might have been completely unaware that eastwards, there are others living nearby a different rock. But it might well be that you and I still remember that indeed, there was a Lenin, whereas when our children get shown a menhir or a dolmen and then Lenin, they will have no idea what the difference between them is.

Lilian Hiob:

Lenin becomes another symbol from the depths of history, just like the erected rock. It simply takes time for the image of Lenin to reach that point. The format of a transforming picture that Ann Mirjam and Szymon are using, is a figurative attempt to pack Lenin away into the realms of history. To free his image of the emotion that it has always brought about. I was also thinking how after some time, the few remaining monuments will become more significant.

SP:

Yes, we might not agree with these monuments as their purpose is to plant a bygone ideology. We might not be proud of them but if we hide them, then what do we do... deny that what they represent happened altogether? That would totally wipe out our memory! I wonder if someone understands that Lenin is being put back to its original location in Tallinn by some 30-year-olds?

LH:

I mean I don't know. Lenin even gets put onto t-shirts. Only a few years ago, Adidas came out with t-shirts with CCCP written on the front. Distance is key...

SP:

Exactly. It feels like blending Lenin with the monolith could signify some hope for the East. Or fear. It depends on whether you want to forget or whether you are afraid of forgetting. But looking from the West, it is all a historic mish mash and it doesn't matter - you can put Lenin as well as a rock onto a t-shirt.

Text:

Artist:

Ann Mirjam

Szymon

Bogie

echo *n, pl -oes* **1** ^A the reflection of sound by a solid object ^B
a sound reflected by a solid object **2** a repetition or imitation
of someone else's opinions **3** something that brings back memories:
an echo of the past **4** the signal reflected back to a radar
transmitter by an object > *vb -oing, -oed* **5** (of a sound) to be
reflected off an object in such a way that it can be heard again
6 (of a place) to be filled with a sound and its echoes: *the church
echoed with singing* **7** (of people) to repeat or imitate (what someone
else has said): *his conclusion echoed that of Jung* > **echoing** *adj*

echo *n* **1** = reverberation, ringing, repetition, answer,
resonance, resounding **2** = copy, reflection, clone, reproduction,
imitation, duplicate, double, reiteration > *vb* **5,6** = reverberate,
repeat, resound, ring, resonate **7** = recall, reflect, copy, mirror,
resemble, imitate, ape

** Entries from the Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus Essential
Edition, Glasgow: Collins, 2020.*

Artist:

Text:

Dracastel