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# The Escape Route's Design: Assessment of the Impact of Current Aesthetics on History and a Comparative Reading Based on an Example Close to the City of Berlin

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## Enunciation

The following speculative exercise aims at surveying the impact of current Aesthetic Theory, of a certain Contemporary Aesthetics in particular which proposes as fundamental the denomination of what is Art, in its application to History; to, that is, the re-evaluation of past events, eventually to the re-evaluation of incidents whose occurrence is considered solely possible in the Past and from whence a political and social significance could emerge. The present exercise is to be understood as comparative, and the nature of the survey is defined by its exemplificative or exemplary character in the displacement of the object of aesthetical reasoning from a specific object (Art) to a specific occurrence (History). To this end, we ground ourselves in a modern conception of the Individual and in the aesthetic judgment inherent to it, as well as in the admitted possibility of a continuous re-evaluation and social redistribution of its interpretation. The methodology here proposed for an aesthetic re-reading of historical events is thus rendered beyond the factual evaluation of History; it is independent from it without however disrespecting its existence per se; it does not approach the causes and effects involved in the unfolding of a given event, or attempt the explanation or consolidation of points of view on the political and social relations potentially associated with it. Nevertheless it equally presupposes the interpretation of those same historical events in order to formulate a differentiated possibility of reading and understanding the event in itself; it is, and must be, conscious of the social surroundings of the event under consideration, even if it does not propose to approach them directly. Consequently, this supposed possibility does not aim at rethinking a historical interpretation of a particular event, but to revolve the event in its subjective possibilities of value.

Through its inextricable association with the Individual, aesthetic judgment necessarily and intrinsically confers its freedom to judge any occurrence as Art. Or, as we prefer, to judge any occurrence as object of referential or substantive value, capable of a communicative bond and exemplarity. This referential or substantive value would then be repositioned equally, simultaneously, and inevitably in the sphere of the individual and of communicative and communitarian socialization. Towards an operative end, and within the historical lineage of philosophical thought concerning the

COMPARATIVE TABLE #1:

BETWEEN ELEMENTS A [ART] AND E [EVENT], RESPECTIVELY THE PALACE OF PROJECTS, BY ILYA & EMILIA KABAKOV (1998), AND ATTEMPTS AT CROSSING THE BERLIN WALL UPON ITS VERTICALITY (1960's - 80's)

\*the situations following below are just a small group of examples and many more can easily be found in the above cited sources.

THE PALACE OF PROJECTS, BY ILYA & EMILIA KABAKOV

PROJECT 'A ROOM TAKING OFF IN FLIGHT',  
BY COL. SABIROV, VITEBSK

Change in the stagnancy of an apartment through the partial removal of the floor with the intent of obtaining lightness of body and mind. The presence of the newly opened ditch will afterwards enlarge the perception of the space and the relation of the individual with the immobility that surrounds him.

PROJECT 'A LOW FLIGHT ABOVE THE EARTH', BY N. SALOMATKIN, CHAUFFEUR, KISHINEV

Creation of energetic corridor in rural landscape through the exact and equidistant disposal of several metallic posts throughout the site. The concentration and will of the participants will afterwards be sufficient to the execution of a low and brief human flight.

PROJECT 'TO ESCAPE FROM ONESELF',  
BY N. LIBELS, PHOTOGRAPHER, MOGILEV

Temporary liberation of oneself through the nude permanence of the individual in a previously chosen site for approximately 45 min. during three consecutive days. The clothes of the proponent must be placed in circle around him in a total diameter of 2 m. and a half, and equally distributed in relation with each other.

PROJECT 'THE DIGGING OF CANNALS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE COUNTRY',  
BY V. STOZHAROV, RETIRED, LENINGRAD

Communitary construction of irrigation canals throughout the territory with the intent of a just economical, ecological and psicological benefit for all.

PROJECT 'HORSE ON THE STAIRS',  
BY G. RUMYANTSEV, LAWYER, SERPUKHOV

Placement of horse in the stairs of a building meant at the disruption of the quotidian of the tenants. The attempt at solving the situation will then, hopefully, reinforce and stimulate the creative potential of the tenants of the building in question.

PROJECT 'THE EARTH IN A DIFFERENT TOPOGRAPHICAL SYSTEM', BY O. KATS, ACCOUNTANT, NEW YORK

Change in the topographical understanding of the world to a vertical conception.

COMPARATIVE TABLE #2:

BETWEEN ELEMENTS A [ART] AND E [EVENT], RESPECTIVELY THE PALACE OF PROJECTS, BY ILYA & EMILIA KABAKOV (1998), AND ATTEMPTS AT CROSSING THE BERLIN WALL UPON ITS VERTICALITY (1960's - 80's)

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ATTEMPTS AT CROSSING THE BERLIN WALL UPON ITS VERTICALITY

1960's

Recurring use of Isetta model (1953; Turin), commonly called in German as das rollende Ei (the rolling egg) or Sargwagen (coffin on wheels); small sized automobile rarely inspected by frontier security when crossing the Berlin wall due to its small hidden and usable free space left for battery and heating system.

SPRING 1962

Three Soviet uniforms, to be dressed by men, are sewed by a seamstress. The men act as Soviet guards and attempt passing the border by car. Special conduct is required: each should take care to greet appropriately the border guards and act without arousing suspicion. The seamstress in the meantime hides below the front seat, escaping with the rest of the crew.

OCTOBER 1964

Conclusion and use of subterranean tunnel with entrance (East) at a backyard bathroom and exit (West) in an out of use bakery shop - Bernauer Strasse. The construction of the tunnel lasts around six months, with a total extension of 145 m., 12 m. deep and 70 cm. of inner height. About 57 fugitives use the construction.

1965

A cable wheel is adapted as temporary shelter for one person only. Four people, separately and at different times, make the trip being rolled through the border. The process is uncovered by frontier security at the fourth round.

1965

Escape of family of three by way of cable attached from the roof of the "Haus der Ministerien" and thrown over the Berlin wall. The descent is afterwards executed by a rolling mechanism.

1968

Construction of small sized submarine from auxiliary bicycle engine and subsequent escape through the Baltic sea to Denmark in total of 25 km in five hours.

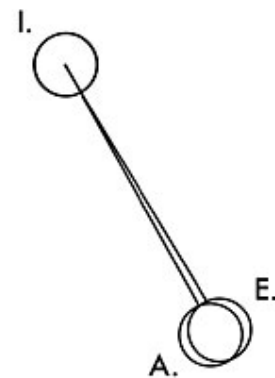
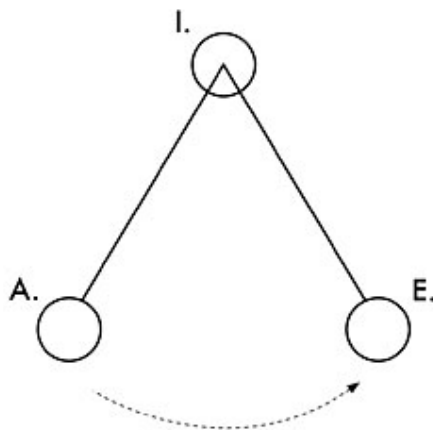
subjectivity of value, the displacement of the aesthetic judgment for its free application is here stated, reaffirming the preposition that this judgment, defined by its occurrence in a predominantly subjective and individual regime, proposes an intrinsically social, albeit specialized, universal validity.

In light of this, the Kantian supposition that any social other might also recognize and share any event as such (Art/value), the redirection of the object of aesthetic judgment is fundamentally legitimized by not presupposing the artistic object as an a priori element. Furthermore, the entailment of the free attribution of value to the subjective individual is also associated with the modernist avant-garde movements, in particular, Surrealism, Dadaism, and Russian Constructivism. In the sequence of proposed ruptures, these movements progressively pointed, deliberately or not, to an enlargement of the significance of Art by its reassessment of value; that is, the disengagement of value from religious or royal representations of power. This disengagement would establish a regime of exchange that is, if not democratic or communist, fundamentally egalitarian with respect to creation, production, and reception of signification. From this

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horizontal notion of the functioning of Art, or of a referential value capable of bonding, comes the conclusion that any reading is ultimately done in the position of the spectator. This portrays the spectator as a subject of power, therefore capable of voluntary aesthetic emancipation and effective action in the world through this particular capacity of judgment and re-evaluation, but not necessarily of reordering the objects and/or phenomena involved in the unfolding of the historical process. From our perspective, then, this could be understood as an attempt to respond to the increasing crystallization of History and its constitutive elements, of which the results are the loss of the necessarily intrinsic potentiality of the Individual in its constructive relation to the present and future, the loss, that is, of a critical grounding for collective identity.

To illustrate the displacement that is sought here, with the assessment of its operative possibilities as our goal, an example of a work considered as Art will be taken and juxtaposed with a particular group of actions relevant to the city of Berlin and considered of historical significance. As such, the suggestion of a hypothetical triangle, the vertices of whose base are the two cases A (Art) and E (Event), duly



I. = Individual    A. = Art    E. = Event

crowned by the Individual, might be of use for this purpose. The displacement of the Aesthetic method (the side of the triangle defined by the vertices Individual $\longleftrightarrow$ Art) towards the Historiographic method (the side of the triangle defined by the vertices Individual $\longleftrightarrow$ Event) originates in the transference of the line Individual $\longleftrightarrow$ Art to its application to and co-existence with the line Individual $\longleftrightarrow$ Event. This will inevitably result in the dissolution of the triangular form. Placing particular examples – a signed work and registered events in the journals of History, respectively – on points A (Art) and E (Event) is meant to, although not exclusively, facilitate the understanding of this scheme, and hence the visualization of the picture sketched below.

Therefore, this reading is merely a possibility amongst others available to the Individual-Reader, who may freely pursue this survey on his/her own, as it necessarily includes and implies him/her. The Individual is intrinsic to the aforementioned apparatus; solely through the activation of the Individual's intervenient potential is the aforementioned transferability permitted. The possibilities for conjunction between one and the other vertices are innumerable: theoretically, as many as there are, or can be, and as many as could have been, or were. Therefore, we do not propose a beginning and an end to this joint initiative, or indeed the direction or accumulation of knowledge aimed at a productive extraction of conclusions. The exercise aims above all at repositioning proposals, at a productive re-evaluation, which is the main exercise in the egalitarian negotiation of value, eminently redundant and ultimately reinforcing the legitimacy of the act, the proposition which supports it, radical in itself and desperately civic.

### **Demonstration of a Utopian Proposition: *The Palace of Projects*, by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov**

For a valuable re-reading of the chosen historical events, originally occurring in the city of Berlin and to be elucidated below, we here consider the proposal of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, particularly the proposals that constitute the totality of *The Palace of Projects*, a permanent installation exhibited in the city of Essen<sup>1</sup>. In this Palace the visitor is given on average seventy sets of instructions, framed by the tri-partite objective of the authors: 1) *Projects concerning the improvement of the life of other people*; 2) *Projects stimulating creativity, helping the creation, the emergence of the projects themselves*; 3) *Projects aimed at perfecting*

*oneself as an individual*.

Following the logic of previous works, these seventy projects, some of them previously presented in other contexts, are enclosed in a two-story architectonic structure which resembles Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International*, although distinctly different in spectacularity and movement. Nevertheless, as in the *Monument to the Third International*, *The Palace of Projects* also takes from the architectonic context its openly monumental function of guidance and symbolic aggregation through the eyes and/or movement of the spectator. The direction, although spiral, is in both pieces fundamental and explicitly vertical. This direction links both monuments to a tangible functionalism, that is, an adjustment of the symbolic form to an objective bureaucratic function, product of the negation of the purely propagandistic character of the monument. In the *Monument to the Third International* this is accomplished through the deliberate tri-partitioning of the rotating spiral structure in a cubic base intended for discourse presented in the form of conferences, readings, congresses, and so forth; an intermediate conical structure intended for administrative functions; a cylindrical peak for the propaganda center. In *The Palace of Projects* it is addressed by adopting the ascendant spiral form for the tri-partition of projects and accommodating these on two stories (*projects concerned with the improvement of the life of other people and projects stimulating creativity, helping the creation, the emergence of the projects themselves* on the ground floor; *projects aimed at perfecting oneself as an individual* on the upper floor), as well as by carefully guiding the spectator along its interior, roughly mimicking a museological display for the presentation and reception of work, even if in the form of a project.

The project proposed below is precisely this kind of "Palace of Projects," projects which for the most part may be naïve and unrealizable, but in their concepts and intentions they have definitely earned the right to wind up in such a "Palace." An enormous quantity of similar "palaces"-monuments exist in our world: "Palaces of Transportation," "Palaces of old Technology" where lathes and electric machines are exhibited, "Palaces of Ship Building," with amazing boats – everywhere there are things that had received their material form and were formerly realized and functioning in their own time. But it is no less important, and perhaps more so, to create a unique museum of dreams, a museum of hypothesis and projects, even if unrealizable. In many of them, the visitor to such a "Palace" will encounter stimulus of his own tasks, will awaken his imagination, and the main



Image from Rainer Hildebrandt, *It Happened at the Wall*, (Berlin: "Haus am Checkpoint Charlie" Publications, 2006).



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thing, will provide the impulse for his own creative activity in a “positive direction.”<sup>2</sup>

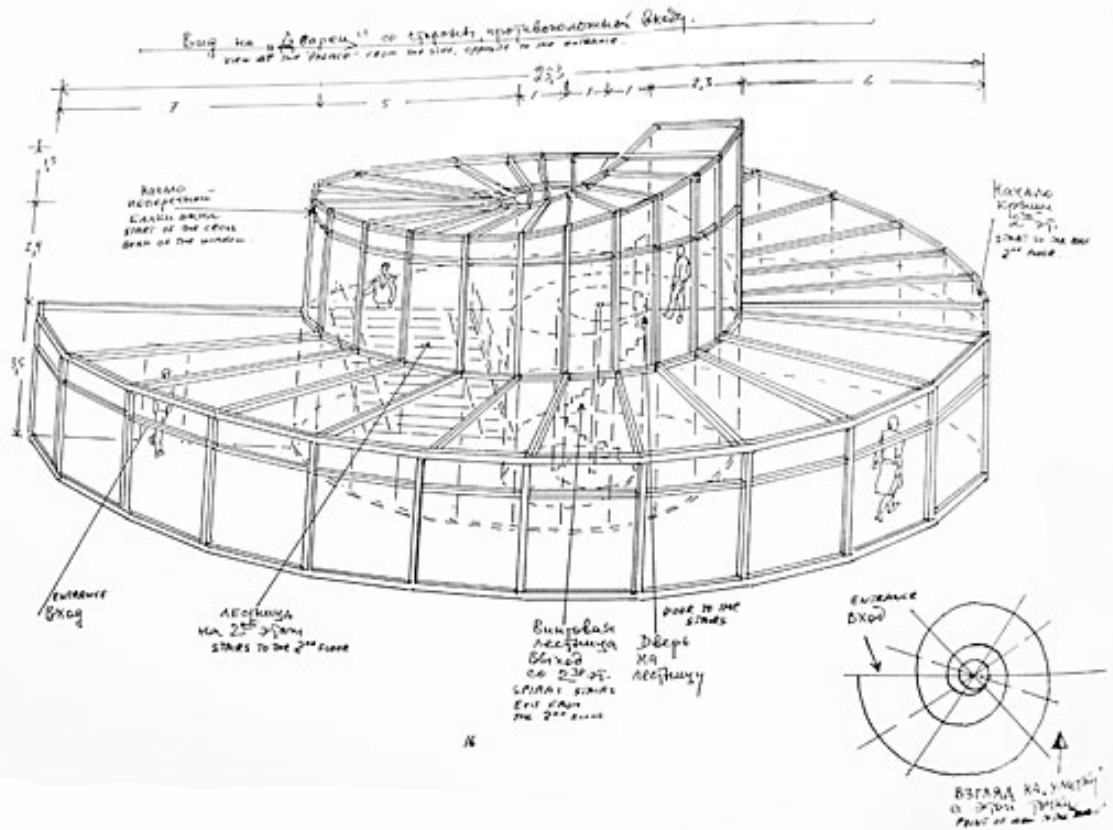
Consistent with the museological nature of the display, each of the exhibited projects presents a modular structure in the form of a model, an illustration, and a written announcement which the Kabakovs open up to the possibility of execution by using the concise language of an instruction manual. The relationship is significantly reciprocal: between the modular structure of each project and the form of the Palace. These instructions for the effective realization of the projects, which in each case schematize its execution in 4–6 points, presuppose general access to the proposals, even if while doing so the exposure of the possibility of their realization might render them ridiculous. Furthermore, by juxtaposing: 1) *Projects concerning the improvement of the life of other people* and 3) *Projects aimed at perfecting oneself as an Individual* in the same installation, under the roof of the same Palace, under the form of a manual, without prioritizing the viability of each one, that is, by juxtaposing projects of easy execution directed at the Individual with projects for which the addressee must necessarily be collective or social, the Kabakovs opt to submit the first to the logical field of the second and consequently to a field of communitarian action, perhaps articulated, but not necessarily guaranteed or possible, in the direction of a positive future. This logical and bureaucratic conflict, of the institutional organization of the Palace in the form of a multi-floored exhibition intended as a homogenization of the Individual and the collective, is further expressed by the fact that a number of proposals, precisely the quasi-totality of the proposals intended for a preferably active addressee, evoke actions in the realm of the fantastic and/or metaphysical, viable solely thanks to a global entity or unviable without its overall support.

Thus the Kabakovs’ work constitutes itself precisely in the space between the realizable and the unrealizable, or, more specifically, in the formulation of the realizable solely as possibility opposed to its effective realization in the world, that is, the permanence of truly viable proposals as incomplete. Accordingly, one could advance the notion that the device that makes the instruction manual touching is the displacement of the realizable examples towards the unrealizable; by means of a manual, the permanence of the realizable projects in the form of a model, thus being transferred to the same metaphysical field of the other projects. This makes 3) *Projects aimed at perfecting oneself as an individual* proposals for a social, general, resolution; it clarifies that its proposal,

although addressed to the Individual, aims at a potentially public significance. It is the non-consideration of the possibility of proposals which permit the evocation of an ideal, of an aspiration to which can be attributed the adjective *utopian*, just as it is with regard to this precise characteristic of possibility or impossibility of a proposal, even if the conditions for the occurrence of the first option are already structured, that the idea of utopia is established.

Nevertheless, this idea of utopia does not here concern so much the concept of utopia in the strict sense of a thing *to come*, that is, of an overall state of things to which one aspires for a vector direction leading to its hypothetical end, but the idea of a concrete utopia, susceptible of realization now and onto another now (a Present-Present relation), as opposed to an effectuation in the present directed toward a posterior point in time (a Present-Future relation – the institutionalized definition of utopia). The difference is, precisely, temporal. The first hypothesis of utopia concerns a present act<sup>3</sup>, but a present act directed at another, *to come*, seeking through the present a future accomplishment; a linear relation, vector *a* leading to vector *b*, therefore a narrow and/or dogmatic utopia—this constraint, caused by its subsequent direction, is here bipolar; the future constrains the present, by the precise will to install it(self), and the present auto-constrains itself in regard to that same precise vision of the future. The second hypothesis of utopia equally concerns a present act, although an act that is not so much intended as another, *to come*, as with interplay, often disarticulated and/or accidental, of the action with itself and its surroundings. It is, therefore, the possibility of effective realization, in the present into the present; a noncommitment to the formulation of future hypotheses, thus transferring this effective realization to a concrete variation of the real and contact with the Other. As if necessity or possibly chance, necessity driven by chance or chance driven by necessity, impelled the first hypothesis onto the second, as with *the man who flew into space from his apartment*, who “didn’t want to wait until the whole of the rest of society was ready for utopia; he wanted to head up for utopia there and then – flying out into cosmic space where he would no longer be tied to a particular place, a particular topos, a ‘non-place,’ weightless, floating free in the cosmic infinitude.”<sup>4</sup> By doing so, *the man who flew into space from his apartment* took into his own hands the effectuation of a concrete utopia; by launching there and then and not further ahead he brought the Other to himself.

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Ilya & Emilia Kabakov, "The Palace of Projects," Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Londres: Artangel, 1998.



### Point of Inflection

The above-mentioned enlargement of utopia is thus beyond (or before) an enlargement of reality via the field of future possibilities, of aspirations to viability, but rather concerns the effective enlargement of reality via the field of present possibilities (Present-Present relation). The Kabakovs' proposals, voluntarily directed at the sphere of possibility or exemplary enunciation, are thus simultaneously deviated from an imminence and an eminence; they carry the state *to come* to a now, they update it, and by doing so annul the above-mentioned bipolar direction, or, in other words, they deport utopia from its institutionalized position. Therefore, this possibility of utopia nevertheless remains, in the Kabakovs' Palace, entangled in its own enunciation, in the supposition of a hypothesis awaiting activation, or, in the perspective of the authors, solely valid, because the realizable is enmeshed with the unrealizable, as supposition.

The foundation derives, precisely, from the Kabakovs' attribution of an authorship to each of the exhibited projects: the potential execution of any project by a possible real and credible author sustains the method by which the elaborated proposals are stated, or, in other words, how the proposals are individualized and, simultaneously, universalized in their performative potentiality. The inferred completion of each project within *The Palace of Projects*, achieved by presenting each one under the form of a manual or through the attribution of an authorship, credible or incredible, to each, legitimizes the social nature of the exhibited proposals. Therefore it is implied that only through a given authorship and its consequent execution by the implicit singularity of the author could an intuitive genuine making of these same projects be promoted – the transference of the proposal to practice or the effectuation of the proposal in the world. It follows that solely through this authorial, attributive tactic could one expose the intrinsic utopian intention of the projects or presumably unlock the latent potential they contain. However, even if individualized by a possibly real authorship, these projects are not capable of extrapolating the field of supposition or narrative demonstration, remaining nevertheless, and solely, in the field of a hypothetical utopian action.

The Kabakovs' refusal is obvious – entangled in the preposition of an aspiration. Although clearly representative of a potential utopian effectuation, this effectuation is kept nevertheless helplessly directed. As in Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International*, *The Palace of Projects* remains inexorably illustrative,

model-like, and thus ultimately symbolic. The potential and supposed practicality or functional utility of both monuments is then transferred to an exhibition, *solely* inspiring or demonstrative of intentions. The model becomes the monument; it embodies its possibilities of edification, the symbolic empowerment inherent in it. It is projection, but a projection, through the refusal of edification, charged by posterity yet to come. *The Palace of Projects* represents the varied – as varied as the number of projects contained therein – possibilities of present effective utopia; but due precisely to this same character of representation it does not effectively become so. The represented does not gain autonomy from what it represents; hence the presented utopia is not permitted and has not the possibilities it suggests. The collection of projects demonstrates a possibility, or a variety of possibilities, to be effected, but it is not in itself this effectuation. This non-realization owes as much to a narrow utopia as to a potential utopian effectuation, or, in other words, as much – by the demonstrated possibility of utopia in the present – to an effective present utopia, as – by this same (exclusively) demonstrative character – to a narrow utopia, directed by and to a state of things *to come*.

Accordingly, and in view of the state of democratic negotiability of value mentioned above, one is confronted with a situation in which history seems to reply retroactively to the proposals elaborated by the Kabakovs' authors, precisely by the particularity of the attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall in its verticality. The cases of escape from the Soviet regime, perpetuated by numerous people during a determinate period in time, by transgressing the boundary of the Berlin Wall, is equivalent to an equal or corresponding innumerability of projects, whose conception and realization, of individual or collective design, could then constitute an answer or a historical counterproposal to the Kabakovs' projects. This response, as counterproposal, is given by its exemplary character in opposition to the previously cited demonstrative enunciation of the artist. Put differently, the character of the aforementioned events imposes precisely and necessarily the will or act of taking the design in hand, no longer understood as a project or model but as the physical actuality of an act in its simplicity of idea. With a multiplicity of common objects used for and during its concretization, it does not cease to propose its execution to each inhabitant, individually and without exception.

Thus the juxtaposition of the attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall and the Kabakovs' proposals – allowed by freedom – offered within the rhetoric outlined here: the free displacement



Image from Rainer Hildebrandt, *It Happened at the Wall*, (Berlin: "Haus am Checkpoint Charlie" Publications, 2006).



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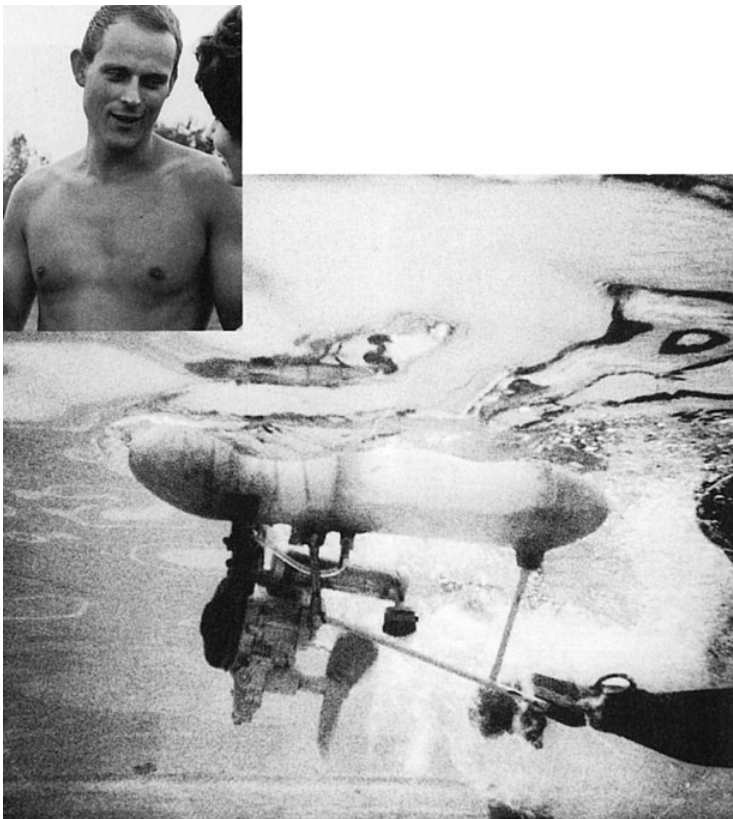


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*It Happened at the Wall*, (Berlin:  
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Publications, 2006).

of both elements, in short, and schematically, of the triangular vertex E juxtaposed to the triangular vertex A by the displacement made by the Individual in vertex I, for the purpose of reconnaissance, review, and reshaping of the historic condition of a particular event, namely A: *The Palace of Projects*, and E: consecutive attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall. The methodology in both cases is relatively reciprocal, the Kabakovs' projects + attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall, enabling as such the displacement.

Inherent in, if not constitutive of, the attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall, is the necessary appearance of casualness (the use of disguises, hiding places in cars and baggage, electric cable spools) and/or the concealment of the executed action (construction of tunnels), these attempts being furthermore surrounded by a variety of plausible situations (credible to and unsuspected by the frontier control), or, at least, by a degree of invisibility. This plural act, invisibly performed either through the casualness of unsuspected appearance or in a covert manner, is the escape route's design. Both points, A and E, thus enunciate a transformation of an overall state of things, simultaneously dis- and re-functionalizing common and/or established materials and actions, aiming at the enlargement, beyond the delineated, of the space of action. Equally binding A and E is a latent performativity, already demonstrated in the case of the projects within the Palace, and further necessitated by specification of the juxtaposed events. The attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall, understood as actions independent of each of its actor's intentions and of the weight of personal motivations, inevitably ended, although without public knowledge, in the submission to an audience, not in the sense of the spectator implied in its physical presence, as understood by the performative arts, but to those through whom the diffusion of its report could confront themselves with their own possibility of and for action: a deferred audience, posterior to the given action, which could consequently read each crossing as demonstrative and construe – or not – for itself, individually, within the freedom of its will, the exemplary character of each crossing.

The performative character of these events would then simultaneously translate into a non-commensurable action, a production of meanings and free spaces, conditions and acts of self-identification, precisely through this absence of an intentional audience, the absence of a predefined performative structure; therefore of a demonstration understood as conscious and intentional, as is frequently the case in the production of artistic value, quantifiable and

quantified by law. This exemplary character is then paradoxically extracted from its own characteristics of *un-example*, namely its unformed and undetermined characteristics, foreign to any commensurable regulation in the effective making of the action. The plurality of the proposal, or the activation of the proposals in the world, to the subject who thus understands it, cannot and could not have shape or structural principles because it is/was independent of any proposal of social organization found to the East or West of the Berlin Wall, and as such, although eminently social in its understanding, cannot and could not be understood then as a solution aimed at the Other to come.

The spontaneity of the action as performativity is fundamental, and solely constituted and unleashed by the personal will of the Individual and by his position in the context that, at a particular moment, surrounds him. The effective act of crossing the Berlin Wall distances itself thus from the *Palace of Projects*, given that only when the monument, itself a symbol of aspiring potentiality, is effectuated through the attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall, is it accomplished in Life. Nevertheless, this recognition of the symbolic diluted in life, that is, unrecognizable as such while it occurred, would implicate the negation of the proper identity of monument, its understanding as such, given that the permanence of its status would necessarily make its de-signified establishment in the world impossible. Solely by denying the monument its proper self-referential status as monument could it perhaps, differentiated by this precise negation, permit its own dissolution in the life-world, precisely because the event – as shown by the displacement and juxtaposition of A (*Palace of Projects*) and E (attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall) – disengages itself through its action from symbolic reference or property.

In this sense, the placement of the triangular vertex A on the triangular vertex E – enabled by I, that is, the re-articulated and repositioned dimensions of the aforementioned events, assisted by the proposals and elaborations signed by the Kabakovs – proposes that the possibility of utopia, merely enunciated by the authors as project, has already and in effect taken place. That the meaning found in the Palace's proposals would have been extrapolated in their unfinished condition and consequently demonstrated a real existence of these individual gestures of social significance, in that the referred projects would have already, truly, at a given moment, and even if in another time and by other means, been effectuated. We find ourselves thus and again confronted with the second, aforementioned, case of utopia constituted by the disarticulated or accidental

enchainment of the action with itself and with its surroundings. It is here understood that the attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall have taken the place of the proposals elaborated by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov in the world, even if without their knowledge or intrinsic necessity, given furthermore by their temporal antecedence to the regarded proposals. This would allow then a renewed perspective on the Berlin events. These events would henceforth be charged with a utopian affectivity: allocated, present, and rooted in a now. In this perspective, Utopia would no longer be in question, but by its differentiated concretization here and now we would find ourselves automatically updated to a post-utopian situation – the obvious proof of the viability of utopian revolution obtained not by its accomplishment in the present but through the rereading of the past through the prism of free attribution of value, kaleidoscopic in form. One could therefore advance that Revolution – albeit an unnoticed revolution, in invisibility – has, vividly utopian in occurrence, already taken place in the past. This post-utopia withdraws itself consequently, and diametrically, from the commonplace notion of post-utopia that discredits or abandons the possibility of utopian realization in the present, or, for that matter, in the future. It is therefore the precise literal meaning of a post-utopia; of living in its posterity. This would be another or differentiated notion of a post-utopian condition, literal with regard to the use of the term *post* and no longer associated with a narrow utopia, established as the crystallization of a condition at the end of History, given that it emerges from a permanent or capacitated-to-repeated-recurrence utopia.

The understanding of a past utopia by the Individual therefore derives from the free usage of the method of theoretical discourse towards the reconfiguration of the concept of utopia. But a utopia with the past as its center would necessarily imply an etymological and social review of the term; a review of different and distant characteristics from that of the strictly formatted utopia, given the fact that it originates from a notion which proposes and/or concludes its effectiveness, and by this conceives spontaneity or chance as predominant elements for this same effectuation. By incorporating spontaneity, randomness, and/or chance into the term, the idea of revolution, already accomplished or in process, would dissolve itself in the possibility of the unconsciousness of the event while lived by its actors. In other words, from here would derive the equation, of inverted proportionality, in which the utopian effectiveness of an event could correspond to the invisibility of the revolution.

One last paradox should be addressed. Only

through this temporal inversion of meaning and historical position would the effectuation of the Kabakovs' proposals – understood up to this point as solely proposal – be possible, displacing them from their potential position to an activation that would thus cease to be demonstrative. More importantly, this activation would imply a double meaning: the activation of the example (model) which, through its activation, restructures the understanding of the event. This is, that the effectuation of the Kabakovs' proposals is possible only through the given past event (attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall), while the position and form of the given past event is inevitably submitted to a necessary restructuring. But with this assumption of the realization of the Kabakovs' utopia, its own proposal would be sacrificed. By this we mean that for the actualization of society to a post-utopian condition through the rereading of the Kabakovs' work, one would have to afterwards and consequently dismiss the work's poetic value, grounded in the incompleteness of its proposals. Its body of work would have already, historically, been accomplished, hence the Kabakovs would discover, and even demonstrate, the act after its effective occurrence, knowing nevertheless that solely by the initial incompleteness of the projects would the reading of the attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall in their intrinsic utopian value be made tangible. Thus reading the Kabakovs would send the value of their proposal back to a point of origin, the point of departure of aesthetic judgment, through the social and critical re-qualification of the events of the Berlin Wall.

The Kabakovs are here, therefore, the indispensable element for the formulation of this historical answer; they enable the assumption that becomes the origin of judgment, even if through the process their suggestion of utopia is displaced by an effective concretization found in the attempts at crossing the Berlin Wall that question the authors' poetics. The method presented here consequently implies that the artists' piece, understood as Art, is turned instrument to provoke a new historic reading and understanding of a common past. The Kabakovs then become the critical point that enables inflection, whilst knowing that this same capacity of and for inflection is in the criticality of the beholder, vertex I. The fruition of the piece would then be beyond the reign of the sensible associated with aesthetic experience; and henceforth, entangled in its inherent liberty of the sign, close to an eminently political function. The attribution of value to a work named Art, in the state of democratic and free attribution of value opened to the Individual, would deviate from the exclusive function of nomenclature, the

attribution of meaning and property to the word Art, to a critical significance, transgressing disciplinary and thus also geographic, historic, and temporal boundaries. In other words, the transgressive potency of the aesthetic judgment would cease to be limited to the possibility of the attribution of the word Art to a particular phenomenon, displaced hereafter from the free possibility of attribution of value to a critical capacity of the attributive act aimed at the self-recognition and reflection of the Individual in History and to the consequent restructuring that this change of nomenclature in History could effect.

To end, the assessment of the method should open up to inquiry what would result from the reiteration and repetition of attribution of value; in other words, from the continuous affirmation of the possibility of exchange value beyond the gathering of consensus or multiplicity. Which consciousness and position would convey the inference in the relation of the social whole with itself, hence of everyone with every other and of each as a potent agent in the historical and in the natural world. What would the act in itself allow the Individual beyond the already valuable affirmation of its constitutive right and of its active role in the social sphere, in its redundancy, in its repetition and insistence, in its dissolution or translation raised to the extension of a present society.

X

This text is a revised version of "The Escape Route's Design," a bilingual Portuguese/English artist book, edited and designed by Mariana Silva and Pedro Neves Marques, and first presented in Berlin at Sparwasser HQ, June 12–14, 2008. The book launch featured a model which acted as a schematic sculpture loosely appropriating concepts from the book. The event was conceived as less an exhibition than a three-day presentation meant to end when the last booklet was given away.

Mariana Silva is an artist currently living and working in Lisbon. Since 2007 she has participated in several group exhibitions including "Eurásia" (Casa Museu Anastácio Gonçalves, Lisbon, 2007) and "Antes que a produção cesse / Before production ceases" (Espaço Avenida, Lisbon, 2007). In 2006, under the coordination of Vanda Gorjão, Mariana Silva co-edited, with Raquel Feliciano and Rita Roberto, the second issue of MArte, an art theory magazine of the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon, dedicated to "Legitimization in Art." Mariana Silva was one of the winners of BES Revelação prize (Serralves Museum, 2008). She is currently co-programming "States-General," a four-month cycle of shows and events based at Arte Contempo and several other places in Lisbon.

Pedro Neves Marques is an artist currently living and working in Lisbon. He has participated in several exhibitions since 2007, including the solo shows "Abridged Imageries" at Galeria Pedro Cera (Lisbon, 2008), and "The Wandering Chief" at Espaço Avenida (Lisbon, 2009), as well as in collective shows such as "A river ain't too much to love" at Spike Island (Bristol, UK, 2008) and the "BES Revelation 2007" art prize show at Serralves Villa – Museum of Contemporary Art (Oporto, Portugal). He has co-produced several projects in Lisbon, such as the shows "Antes que a produção cesse" (Espaço Avenida) and "Eurasia" (House Museum Anastácio Gonçalves). He is currently co-programming "States-General," a four-month cycle of shows and events based at Arte Contempo and several other places in Lisbon.

1

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, *The Palace of Projects*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, December 13, 1998–April 15, 1999.

2

Neither  
to act nor to make do proper justice to the Portuguese term *fazer*.  
*Fazer* would literally translate both the verb to do and the verb to make, necessarily implying in either case the temporal, and effective, notion of action. But such a translation must be cautiously made; *fazer* unconjugated, in the infinitive, is entrenched in abstraction, enlarged by the defined undefinition. It does not imply so much the action – construction, let us say – but the will to act elevated to the condition of an infinitive:  
a potent, and latent, universal self-defining abstraction. We have thus opted here for the careful and related usage of the words *act* and *making* as a proper translation of the term.

3

Boris Groys, *Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Flew into Space from his Apartment* (London: Afterall Books, 2006).