

# IN-SPHERE

a world behind curtains | august 2010

## FEATURING



CHRISTOPHER ILTH



LOUIS WAIN



FRANKLYN



DER BLUTHARSCH



MAX KUIPER



KOMAR & MELAMID



CAGE'S SILENCE



MATTHIAS BERNHARD



# N-SPHERE

## AUGUST 2010

### EDITORIAL

### TRANQUILIZERS

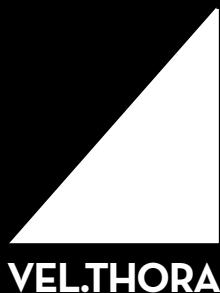
Roses are red, violets are blue, I'm paranoid and coming to kill you. However, before sifting through facets, one must break the mirrors and stare down into the shards. By piecing together the irregularities of convex surfaces of one's desires, knowledge flows into the outside world as the self finds means of existing through what is generally known as art. The human mind is not hermetically encapsulated, hence the imperfections in recreating the ego, the striving to break out of norms and the overflows into representations, be they abstract or ethereal.

Throwing together imagery and carved aesthetics, the work of Christopher Illth manages to suck in, mingle and spew out, all at the same valuable fraction of a second, the looking glass into the mind. Imperfect towards perfection, immobile while rapidly running into an abyssal distance, his pieces bring forth an opaque transparency: through the mirror shards one can see the worn out asphalt.

While gray shades fade out, on white pristine pieces of paper, Louis Wain's, Max Kuiper's and Matthias Bernhard's works add to complete a concave hyperboloid: whichever points are connected, one must travel through all four conceptions for a better view of the facets of self.

Undoubtedly, the consequences of disintegrating oneself for the sake of connecting with the outside, may produce ruptures of planes as openly hidden in Gerald McMorrow's *Franklyn* or even dissociations through the absolute and cold void, in the silence of John Cage's *4'33"*. And while the eye is distracted, bringing the ear closer to the asphalt, one can subtly catch the sounds of the underground, in *Der Blutharsch's* distant thrilling harmonies.

The world stopped making nonsense? Don't worry, we'll visit your grave... *running through the roses, scratching off our noses, ashes, ashes, we all fall... down!*



VEL.THORA

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# CHRIST

GLASS  
SHOWCASE  
**OPHER ILTH**



# »IN MAN'S SHADOW HE LEARNS TO SEE IN THE DARK«

**Name:**

Christopher Ilth

**Location:**

Chicago, United States

**Occupation:**

Junk collector, labor, gentlemen loafer, occasional show promoter, musician and artist

**Definition of personal sphere:**

»In man's shadow he learns to see in the dark« - Ilth

**Artwork in 4 words:**

Dark recess of mind

**What is inspirational for you:**

Many things... some are dreams, the unconscious and antiquity

**Currently favourite artists:**

Undecided/unknown

**Tools of trade:**

Scissors, exacto knife, glue stick, old record covers or matte board

**Current obsessions:**

Trying to pay the rent, lime

**Personal temptation:**

Groping women and punching men



photo | Christopher Illth. *Walk Down. Detail.* Courtesy of the artist



photo | **Christopher Ilth.** *Window World.* Courtesy of the artist





photo | *Christopher Illth. You Worm. Courtesy of the artist*



photo | **Christopher Ilth. Bird. Courtesy of the artist**



photo | **Christopher Ilth.** *Voyage Out.* Courtesy of the artist

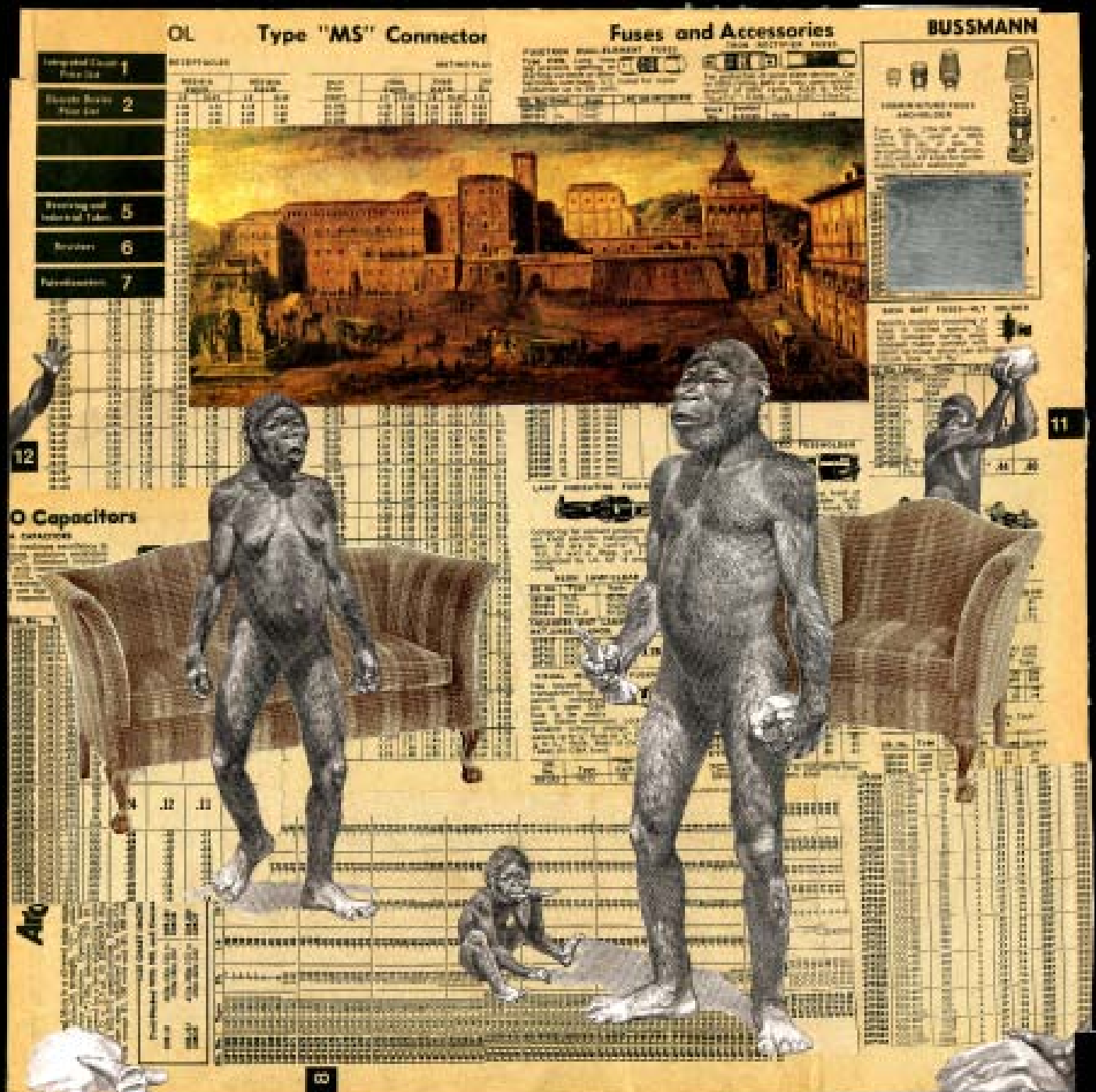


photo | Christopher Illth. Apes. Courtesy of the artist



photo | **Christopher Ilth. Cornerskull.** *Courtesy of the artist*



STONE  
SHOWCASE  
**LOUIS WAIN**



# »IF YOU CONSTANTLY CHANGE YOU AVOID DEGENERACY«

**Name:**

Louis Wain

**Lived:**

5<sup>th</sup> August 1860 – 4<sup>th</sup> July 1939

**Location:**

London, United Kingdom

**Occupation:**

Illustrator, Painter

**Influences:**

Cats, his black&white cat Peter,  
American Indian stories

**Associated with:**

Ailurophilia, Naïve Art, Schizophrenic  
Artists, Comic-strip Design, National  
Cat Club, Children Book Illustration,  
Postcard Design

**Obsessions:**

Cats, Gradual inwardness,  
Mandalas, Kaleidoscopes, Catland,  
Metamorphosis, Anthropomorphism,  
Double-nature





photo | Louis Wain. *Untitled*. Mental Clinic Series. Courtesy of the artist

T  
SEEN OF

MOVING  
SHOWCASE  
**HE HIDDEN**  
**FRANKLYN**

# WHAT SHOULD NOT THE HIDDEN SEEN



# NOT LIE BENEATH N OF FRANKLYN





When it comes to film (or art in general), the most important aspect is not the material itself (the film itself, in this case), but the relationship between the material and the viewer. It is what gives it strength. The material only triggers, but it is the viewer who reacts and expands what is triggered. From this aspect, *Franklyn* was for me a generous treat, maybe too generous to let it end the way it ended. I found myself hypnotized by the way the director worked with those to plot layers, hypnotized enough to forgive the worn-out dystopia send-up and I couldn't accept the common and cheap (in my opinion) ending. So I found something richer to hang onto: the merged narratives leading to merged planes.

The story itself isn't much: two narrative layers – one present, one future – a bunch of more or less ordinary people carrying out their more or less ordinary dramas (in the present), and some masked guy seeking a certain The Individual for purposes I will not disclose. The dystopian layer is cold and stylish in contrast with the present-time layer which is more... human. One could argue that the characters are too out there for the whole material to be of any relevance, but this

is hardly the point, because those little dramas – irrelevant or meaningless as they may be – are not the real highlights of the menu. It is only an approach, and should be treated likewise.

*Franklyn* is not saying anything about the misery of the human condition, nor is it saying something relevant regarding of how religion may or may not be a threat to society, it does not really SAY much about anything. There are no real protagonists here, not the ones we use to cherish long after the film is over, there isn't even a message, no matter how hard some may try to shadow one. There are ideas, nevertheless, but I could not help wondering if those ideas are really that important. So, why I am writing about this then? Because movies should always be about ideas, messages and characters we care about. There are only so many consumers swarming stuffed who at this point won't care about any other copy of their main course since there are already dozens of them.

We look at films for certain aspects, aspects that we can understand, things that we like to see without asking ourselves why? What difference does it make to see that many movies

using the same patterns? Are we really learning anything new, or are we just feeding our ego's need of having the illusion that we know more now than we knew a month ago? Why not carry on and get over it and admit it to ourselves that we have no value system, but only a bunch of things we feel entertained by and – as a reward – we call them good as in »this is a good book, this is a good song or a good movie«? But since there are only so many of »this is a good...«, these statements don't matter at all. Everything was already said, or everything we have seen was already said. To know more is to see more, to see more is to escape convenience, to escape convenience is to betray our comfort. After these steps we won't have that many »this is a good piece of art because I happen to like it« cheap-chat.

Having said this, *Franklyn* is not good or bad, may appeal to some, while other may find it ridiculous, but those who'll find it ridiculous and yet will bother to read this review may also consider the possibility that there is an awareness in every director, telling them that their movie may seem ridiculous to some. And, yet, this awareness is in many cases either simply ignored or answered and solved, otherwise we'll have far fewer films than



we have today. So either there are too many hacks, or they considered that in spite the afore-mentioned assumptions there are some things their movies are worth to be made for. If we are to assume the first than we also have to assume that there are other types of »hacks« that trick us with special effects and »server-on-a-plate« sex symbols to persuade us into paying for their movie. Then, we have to assume that there are the types of »hacks« that toy with some rather sharp and witty ideas, or some seeming heartfelt statements to induce us the feeling that their movie is deep, or those »hacks« who would use the most common and spicy of all comic moments to hide their inability to come up with a decent script, or those who hide behind a hyper technical approach to bat us into liking a film that has no story whatsoever. But then, what's left? Or are we even left with anything? Everything can be seen is a prank. Everything can be mocked and ridiculed in a way that may seem truthful. This can be easily done by a playful seven year old. But are we seven year olds? Convenience only attracts convenience and since the most convenient stop is six feet under, you do the math.

One can easily imagine the split narrative mechanism, it has been done

and redone, but what about the two overlapping planes: two courses of action happening simultaneously, in the same physical space? This is something rarely seen, something that for a while Franklyn manages to do, until one point... the ending, where it starts to unravel the »real things«. But the ending is not that right in your face. It shows you, *it doesn't tell you*. What is shown is still up for interpretation. Now, this is a slightly uncomfortable setup for many viewers, because they are used to giftwrapped answers and convenient positions. This is neither. It is a different way of watching and experiencing film, by being there, more than you thought you needed.

Artists use abstractions. Some artists add in their abstractions (many), others subtract. Eventually, this has something to say about the relationship between the art and the viewer, the positions one needs to take: to add or imagine things that did not happen (to have a better understanding of some puzzling plot, for example) or to remove things one considers useless or alter their meanings. In *Franklyn* this works wonderfully. Altering the ending's immediate meaning, the movie will basically expand. By overlapping narratives

on the one hand and by translating points of awakening with points in which the two realities merge on the other, one can obtain a more powerful effect. Try it yourself, try this with other movies as well - good exercise.

Now this is not a casual review, as one could easily imagine, so I was not going to discuss the technical aspects of the film, neither the acting part, but focus on these little things. Besides, sometimes it is better to alternate things a little: people become more responsive when they are facing dynamics. So this is all for tonight, try these little exercises, see what you can make of it.

Transmission ended.

text | **shade**  
photo | **Franklyn. 2008. Screenshots**

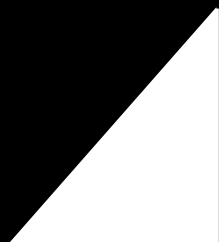
DER BL



ABUSE  
SHOWCASE!  
**UTHARSCH**

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# THE »OLD« BLUTHARSCH IS OVER, BUT... AN INTERVIEW WITH ALBIN JULIUS



**A D R I E N  
SEELEBRUDER**

*:: Considering the fact that Der Blutharsch, in following the line of your former project The Moon Lay Hidden Beneath A Cloud, releases all of its albums without song titles & known lyrics, do you perceive Der Blutharsch's releases as Eco's »opera aperta«, in which you, more or less, force the listener to find his own view & interpretation of your work? It is noteworthy that throughout Der Blutharsch's discography, the aesthetics & visual elements have been omnipresent; has there ever been a core concept or central idea that Albin Julius wanted to put forth through his music & did it change with time or was it »art for art's sake«?*

Well, first I have to say that I wouldn't consider my music art - I do not think music is »art« in its classical sense, at

least not for me. It is more emotions and shouldn't really be seen too serious as a discipline. As well, I do not see myself as an artist and I don't take me and myself too serious. I just do music because I like to do music and have the passion and something which forces me to do it.

We never used song titles, that's right; mostly because I see an album as a whole thing and not as a collection of single songs... but as well I do want people to get their own ideas and emotions about the music without any »pre-labeling« - if you understand what I am talking about...? A CD is one work for me. I take a very long time after mixing to choose the track order, to make it one piece with ups and downs.



photo | **Der Blutharsch**. 2009. *In front of Temple 451*. Courtesy of the artist

:: *Der Blutharsch's visual element is filled with historical, cultural & artistic references, mainly in the album cover/artwork field, and with wonderful photos/packaging. From what I know in the late 1980s/early 1990s you studied art history. How do you recall those student years, life in Austria and what type of music was worth a listen for you in those times. I can imagine it was quite hard to get a hold of LPs or learn about gigs and bands in general.* Yes, I studied art history, politics and communication - student life was really groovy at that time. But I have to say, I grew up in western Austria (lake of Constance) and when I was young at that time there were so many concerts going on where I lived that I was able to see at least one cool band a week. Before I was 18 I had seen such bands as *Motörhead, The Fall, Young Gods, Donovan, Fad Gadget, Miracle Workers, Legendary Pink Dots, Alien Sex Fiend* - only to name a few - this was really a great time as it was wild and interesting. When I moved to Vienna at that time there was less going on than in the countryside, but suddenly it changed and since, for at least 20 years, Vienna is an extremely interesting place for music. I go in average to at least 30 to 40 concerts a year, if not more and then I already have to choose which ones I drop. I did see so many really good bands here. I did organize concerts for some years and did bring around 50 bands to Vienna as well... and we had really good record shops in Vienna - and still have... so, in 1990 you could get every record in Vienna you wanted... even second hand!

*Back in the 1980s & early 1990s, underground/cult music scene did have a substantial originality regarding the sound, references, concepts & experimentation in general. Also the DIY attitude, word of mouth, cassette culture & cult labels. There was no internet*

*back then. Do you think something has been lost since then? Considering the fact that you release music through your label HauRuck!, how do you perceive contemporary bands, music industry and how do you choose the bands for your label?*

Yes... definitely something got lost through internet. When I was young I had to »chase« music, meaning I found out about a band via a friend who played a song to me and then I tried to get that record, which was not that always easy... I am talking about the times before living in Vienna, but even in Vienna I had to go to a record shop to ask for the music.

**»MUSIC THESE  
DAYS HAS  
BECOME MORE  
AND MORE  
A PRODUCT.  
WHEN I WAS  
YOUNG, IT WAS  
A LIFESTYLE,  
OR EVEN A  
RELIGION  
SOMETIMES...«**

We had a legendary shop called *Why Not* which was like a social meeting point. I went there 4 times a week, listening to music, talking to people - it was like a pub, you were spending the whole afternoon with the same interesting people, drinking beer, lis-

tening to music, discovering music... and then you maybe went home with a new record you found out about and the day was perfect. Now you can just find everything on the net, buy it online and 2 days later you have it in your postbox, which is not bad as well - but it was more exciting back then. Although I discovered in the past 2 years, after I lost interest in new music for a while, a lot of new bands and am again very excited to discover new music for myself.

But what really annoys me is the fact that many people download music... not only speaking as a label - but as well as a cultural thing. Music these days has become more and more a product. When I was young, it was a lifestyle, or even a religion sometimes... now it's only bits and data on the computer. People listen only to one song and that's it. I think bands like *Pink Floyd* who did really concept albums wouldn't have any chance today!

How I chose bands for *HauRuck!* - well - it's quite easy... *HauRuck!* is »Music we like from people we love!« - and I am in the really privileged position to get to know interesting people and I sometimes get really good demos. As *HR!* for me is not a business to make money but a privilege to release the music I like and I don't have to think about commercialism. I just release what I personally like, without any thoughts about sales etc. What I dislike - even knowing I could earn some good money with it - I simply don't release.

:: *Are you considering releasing a book with all of Der Blutharsch's lyrics following Alzbeth's example with the 2000 TMLHBAC book? At the present time or in the next years, how do you feel about a possible re-release of TMLHBAC's entire catalogue?*

I did a book some years ago, and maybe I'll do something again, but then not only with lyrics, but maybe



with graphics, photos and music... we will see. There are some ideas, but at the moment I am really too busy with other things. About *TMLHBAC* - I have no feelings about it anymore. I didn't listen to a song in over 12 years and it doesn't mean anything to me now... so I do not want to deal with it anymore. It was a good and a bad time of my life, but it's the past, and the past it shall remain!

:: Which are your favourite *TMLHBAC*/Der Blutharsch releases, both musically and regarding the process of creating them (writing, recording). Also, could you please name some artists/albums which influenced you in the 1990s and in more recent years.

My favourite album is always the current one... I spend so much time when doing it, recording it, mixing it etc., but as soon as it is released I never listen to it again - and then I am always falling in a hole - a deep hole, but I climb out very fast as I start doing music after it quite fast... if I have to name a favourite *TMLHBAC* album it's *A night in Fear* because it's the best and it's the first time I worked with *Lina Baby Doll*... There are so many bands I listen to, I would have to mention at least some hundreds. My musical taste is very open and I listen to a lot of different music.

:: Der Blutharsch's official site states that *WKN38* will be your final release. It seems to be a live recording of a concert in Praha. Is it the one from Nova Alternativa festival in 2009? Speaking of Praha, what are your memories of the performance at the 1995 Alternativa festival released two years later on VHS as *Sad Song Singers*? I see that your discography page lists a possible *WKN39*, Der Blutharsch and the Infinite Church of the Leading Hand 7". Will this be your last recording as a band? Also the tour section mentions no concerts until 2012. Does this mean you will continue with your

live performances and stop releasing new material? Do you plan on having musical collaborations or other projects after Der Blutharsch is over or just retire & enjoy life?

Yes, *WKN38* will be the last release of Der Blutharsch, but we will continue as Der Blutharsch and the infinite church of the leading hand - which is a personal thing, but as well a little step to make a little break in between the oeuvre of DB... it has more some emotional reasons, it's hard to explain; I feel the »old« Blutharsch is over, but as we continue doing music and we are still Blutharsch, it's more of a little mental step for ourselves.

## »THE MOON LAY HIDDEN BENEATH A CLOUD WAS A GOOD AND BAD TIME OF MY LIFE, BUT IT'S THE PAST, AND THE PAST IT SHALL REMAIN!«

The *Sad Song Singers* concert was really great and it's a great memory... and will be added as a bonus to *WKN38*. I just watched it for the editing of the DVD and it was weird, as if this concert was only improvisation... Right now we are working on a new

album which will be released next year. The fact that we won't do a tour earlier is that it's not that easy for us, we have a lot of pre-work, fly in Bain from Sydney, Alessio from Sardinia, rehearse and then play some dates to cover the costs... and it takes a long time to organize all this. As well, we have some projects in preparation: first the new album which is already recorded but has to be mixed, then we do a collaboration with *Aluk Todulo*, a drone album with 7thatspells - I will play organ for their next album - I am recording a pop album with Geoffroy D (*Dernière Volonté*), doing a few remixes for other bands... so you see, enough work!

:: Are there any particular live shows from the 1990s that you feel close to? The official live recordings from the late 1990s, like *Gold Gab Ich Für Eisen* or *The Long Way Home* have a spectacular paroxysmal & bombastic feel. Also the VHS that accompanied *Gold Gab Ich Für Eisen* fully illustrates this. Der Blutharsch continued releasing live performances in the 2000s - Live at the Monastery and Live in Copenhagen and now a third release is on the way - Live in Leiden. How do you feel about this transition from martial industrial to a more groovy/psych/trippy sound incorporating harmonium & synth, from uniforms to mushrooms? Personally I praise experimentation, especially in the direction you are evolving. Are you trying to achieve that motorik sound or is it just me? Some songs on *The Philosopher's Stone* reminded me of Stereolab.

Well. I like the old shows a lot... very special was of course the first ever in Zagreb, but then as well the one from *The Long Way Home*, as the location was very special. Very important was St. Petersburg, first time with *Marthynna* and Bain. I liked a lot the old »martial« shows, but, honest-



photo | **Der Blutharsch. 2009. Praha. Courtesy of the artist**

ly, it was more or less Karaoke with drums and a lot of posing... fine for a while, but it gets boring the longer you do it. I always wanted to perform live - I mean, playing all instruments live without backings etc. It is much more interesting as every show is different and you are much more open and it's more personal between us as individual musicians as you really have to interact. Well, being compared to *Stereolab* is not a bad thing if you ask me... =)

:: The same pattern of artistic vision & evolution can be traced regarding your splits. From the late 1990s splits with industrial/ritval ambient classics like *Deutsch Nepal* & *Ain Soph* to the most recent split featuring neo-psychedelia act *White Hills*. I knew them from a split with *Acid Mothers Temple* and the *Melting Paraiso U.F.O.*. I think an *Acid Mothers Temple*/Der

*Blutharsch* split would be the ultimate thing. Is there also a split with *Aluk Todolo* coming up? I listened to their releases and they surely have an interesting sound, melting krautrock with ritval ambient. Now I would dare to extend this transitional pattern even further and say that, for me at least, the music on the first *Der Blutharsch* releases up until *When All Else Fails* can be associated with autumnal, wintry, rainy, windy, cold days. As a matter of fact I think *When All Else Fails* should be played only in autumn months to fully experience the music. Whereas recent albums, perhaps due to a certain shift in sound are more »lively« and for sunny times. I must say I enjoy both of them. So does a particular weather, season or part of the day inspire you in your writing/recording process?

**Not really... although I mostly record in autumn/winter, but sometimes**

as well in spring. I never did see our music as seasonal music, so it's an interesting point from your side. I like to collaborate with different bands from other musical scenes as it is much more exciting. I liked *White Hills* a lot and we got in touch and got friends so a collaboration just happened, it had to be and Dave is doing a guitar track on our new album. Niko from *7thatspells* - which is as well connected with *Acid Mothers Temple* - is doing a lot of guitar work on the new album - Jörg is a huge fan of *Acid Mothers Temple*, so maybe we should do something with them one day? Could be interesting... and it would be interesting which season you would like to listen to it then.

:: Your gallery section features pictures with the band from all around the world, from tours, with friends. Besides Austria, which European country

would you choose to live in? How is a usual & unusual weekend in Austria? I don't think I would like to live in another country. I am quite happy living in Austria. Maybe a southern country would be nice - near the sea, but then Austria is really well organized and easy - so I feel very comfortable here, especially as I moved out of the city and I am living in the countryside now (still only 15 minutes by car to Vienna). There is no usual and unusual weekend, it can be weird or it can be sleazy... but at the moment it's more sleazy... maybe I am getting old...? :-)

:: Who was responsible for your 2 videos - In the Hands of the Master & So Bring Your Iron Rain Down Upon Me and for the lovely album cover of Flying High? In the Hands of the Master was shot and directed by myself (with the help of many friends) - Iron Rain was done by an Italian film artist... All covers of all records - including Flying high! were done by myself...

:: I don't know how many fans know about La Maison Moderne, a side-project of yours. Personally, I got a kick out of it, enjoyable EP. Was it born on the spur of the moment?

At least 1000 people must know it, as that many copies were sold. It was born in a very drunk moment when I just played around with some synths I bought and tried out things... it was a really spontaneous and gpt recorded in a weekend... I liked it somehow to do something totally different at that moment!

:: How are the other members of Der Blutharsch - Bain, Jörg - and your wife, Marthynna? How do they feel about Der Blutharsch's evolution & things to come? How are things with your label? I hope they are fine. Marthynna is sleeping at the moment as it's quite early in the morning, Jörg is probably partying, Bain is traveling through Asia and probably stuck in drug temple...

I feel very comfortable with DB evolving... there can be nothing more frustrating for a musician to stagnate. It is my view on doing music to experiment, trying out new things and evolve... if you won't evolve I think you are dying as a musician. At least that's what I think and there is nothing more boring than a band that always does

## **»WIENER SCHNITZEL: LECKER! BUT BETTER WITH PORK THAN THE TRADITIONAL VEAL VERSION IF YOU ASK ME... THE NEXT DAY TO FIGHT A HUGE HANGOVER!«**

more or less the same... I do not expect from a band to always reinvent themselves anew, but there is, in my opinion, nothing more exciting than a band who always knows how to surprise you! Things with *HauRuck!* are really good as well. I have 5 really good projects in the pipe... an album by *7thatspells*, an album by *Ô Paradis* with Val Denham, a new album by *Terroritmo* and one by a new German band... and a UK band which is really, really great!

:: Although you are busy with your music, the label and other matters, I'm sure you find time to listen to other

bands or read some books. What have you been into recently?

A lot, especially music and movies... as we are renovating our house and my studio this summer I didn't find that much time to read books, but to watch some good movies - I am a so called cineast - and of course music. I am looking forwards to the next weeks as some of my favourite bands at the moment are releasing new albums, such bands like *Clinic*, *White Hills*, *Black Angels*, *Black Mountains*, *Kings of the Frog Island*, *Grinderman* - it is a very good autumn!

:: 2011 will mark 15 years of Der Blutharsch and as your official site states you won't be able to celebrate with a concert. Countryside, family, friends, wine, high as a kite instead?

Is it really 2011... hmm... maybe we should then do one concert. Let's see... maybe something intimate or special in another way, or maybe I'll wait till the 20th anniversary. Time is really thy enemy! - I always knew... it doesn't feel like 15 years, but that's good in a way... and »high as a kite« sounds always like a good option...

:: Last but not least, a more or less humorous moment: how do you feel about Viennese Actionism, 1900s Vienna, *Rapid Vienna*, Ultravox's song *Vienna* and *Vienna Schnitzel*?

Who...

Viennese Actionism: funny at that time, but totally overrated!

1900s Vienna: 2010's Vienna is better for sure!

Rapid Vienna: I always see their stadium when on Jörg's toilet - at least the only Austrian club which has been German Champion.

Wiener Schnitzel: Lecker! But better with pork than the traditional veal version if you ask me... very good cold the next day to fight a huge hangover!

questions | **Adrien Seelebruder**





photo | *Der Blutharsch*. 2009. *Live in Praha*. Courtesy of the artist



NOX  
SHOWCASE!  
**MAX KUIPER**

**NAME:**

MAX KUIPER

**LOCATION:**

THE NETHERLANDS

**OCCUPATION:**

ARTIST

**WEBSITE:**

FACEBOOK: ID=1000000568655718

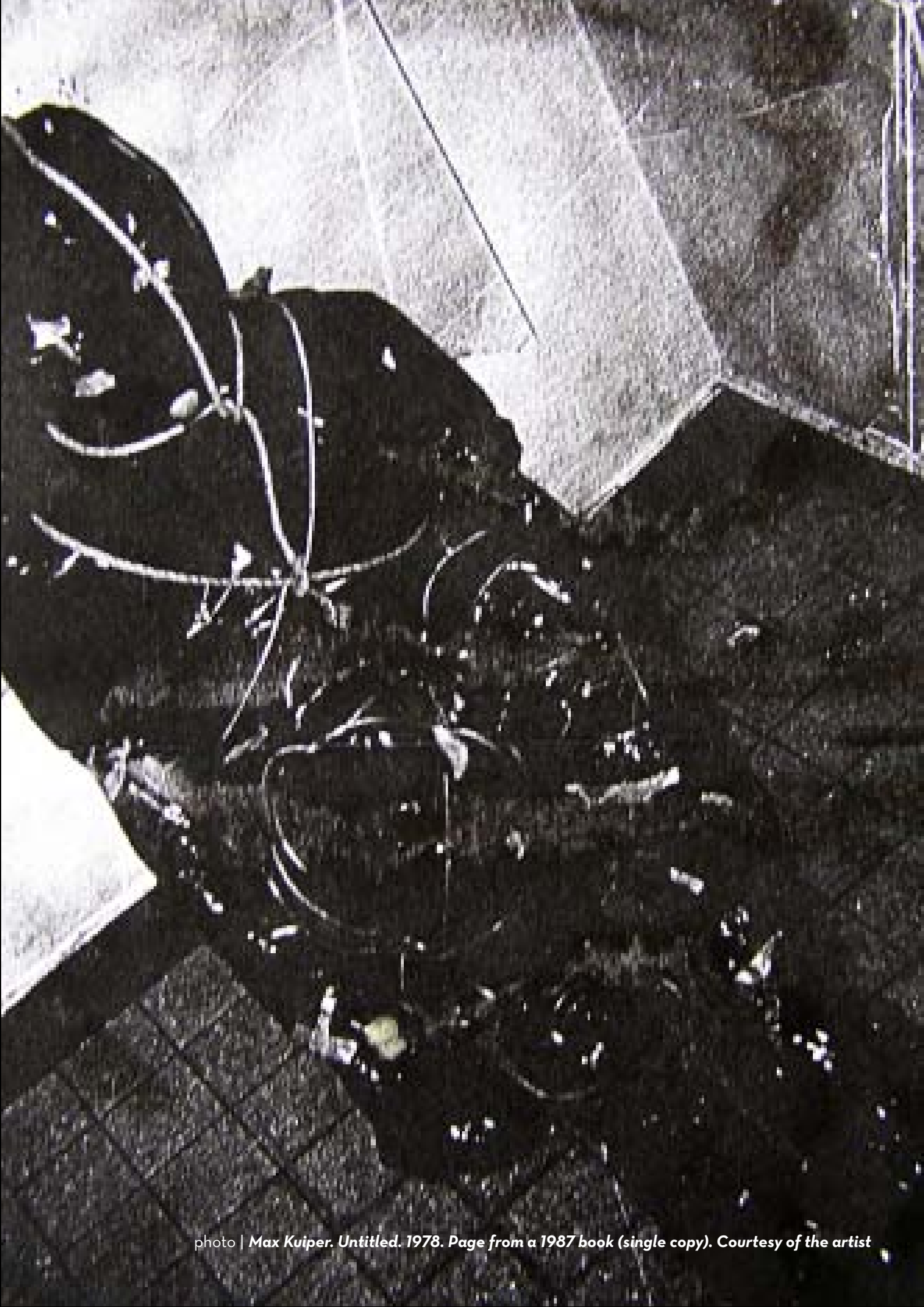


photo | Max Kuiper. *Untitled*. 1978. Page from a 1987 book (single copy). Courtesy of the artist



photo | Max Kuiper. *Untitled*. 1978. Page from a 1987 book (single copy). Courtesy of the artist

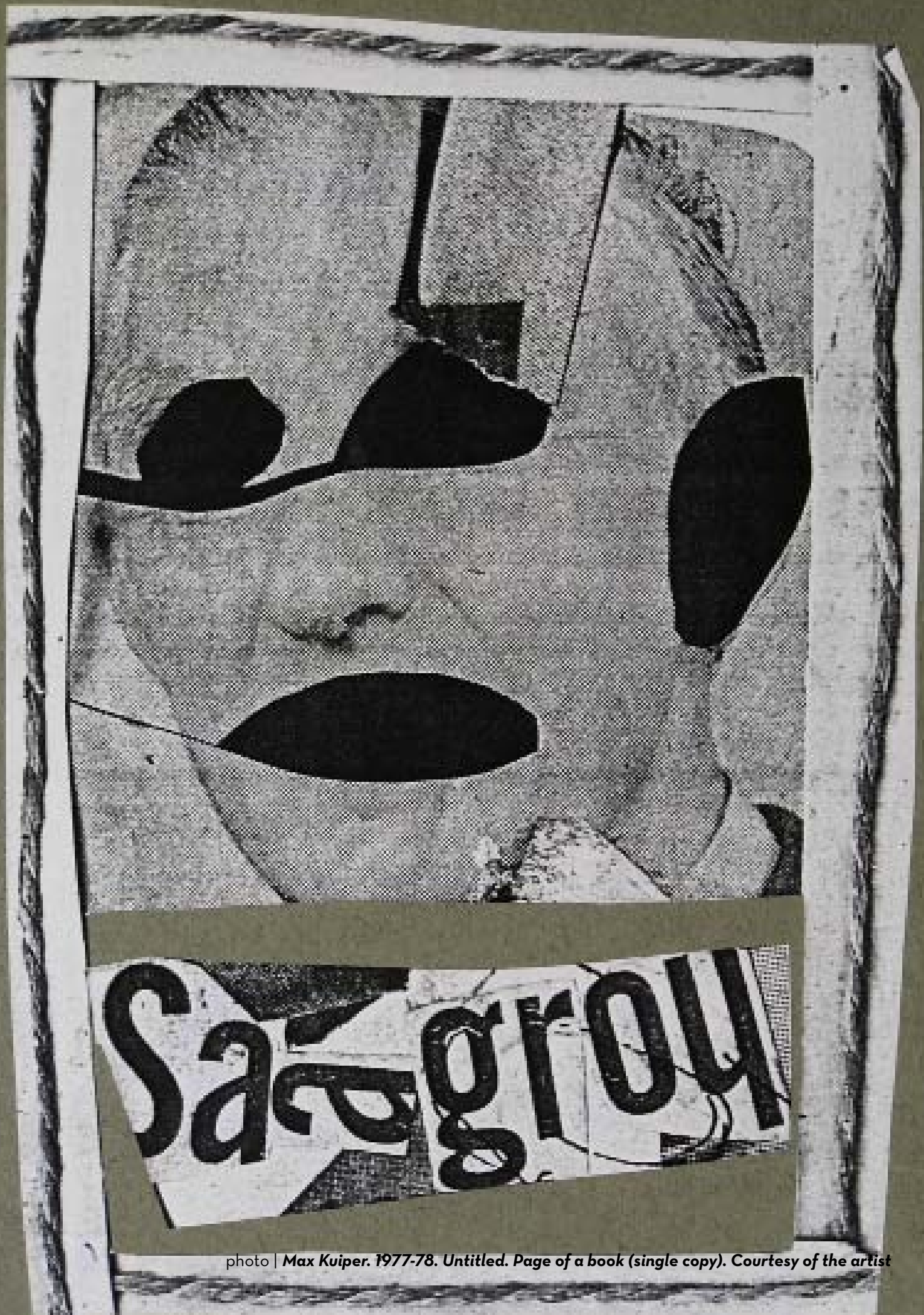


photo | Max Kuiper. 1977-78. *Untitled. Page of a book (single copy).* Courtesy of the artist



photo | **Max Kuiper.** *Untitled (wrapped body).* Page from a 1985 book (single copy). Courtesy of the artist





photo | **Max Kuiper.** *Untitled (wrapped body).* Page from a 1985 book (single copy). Courtesy of the artist

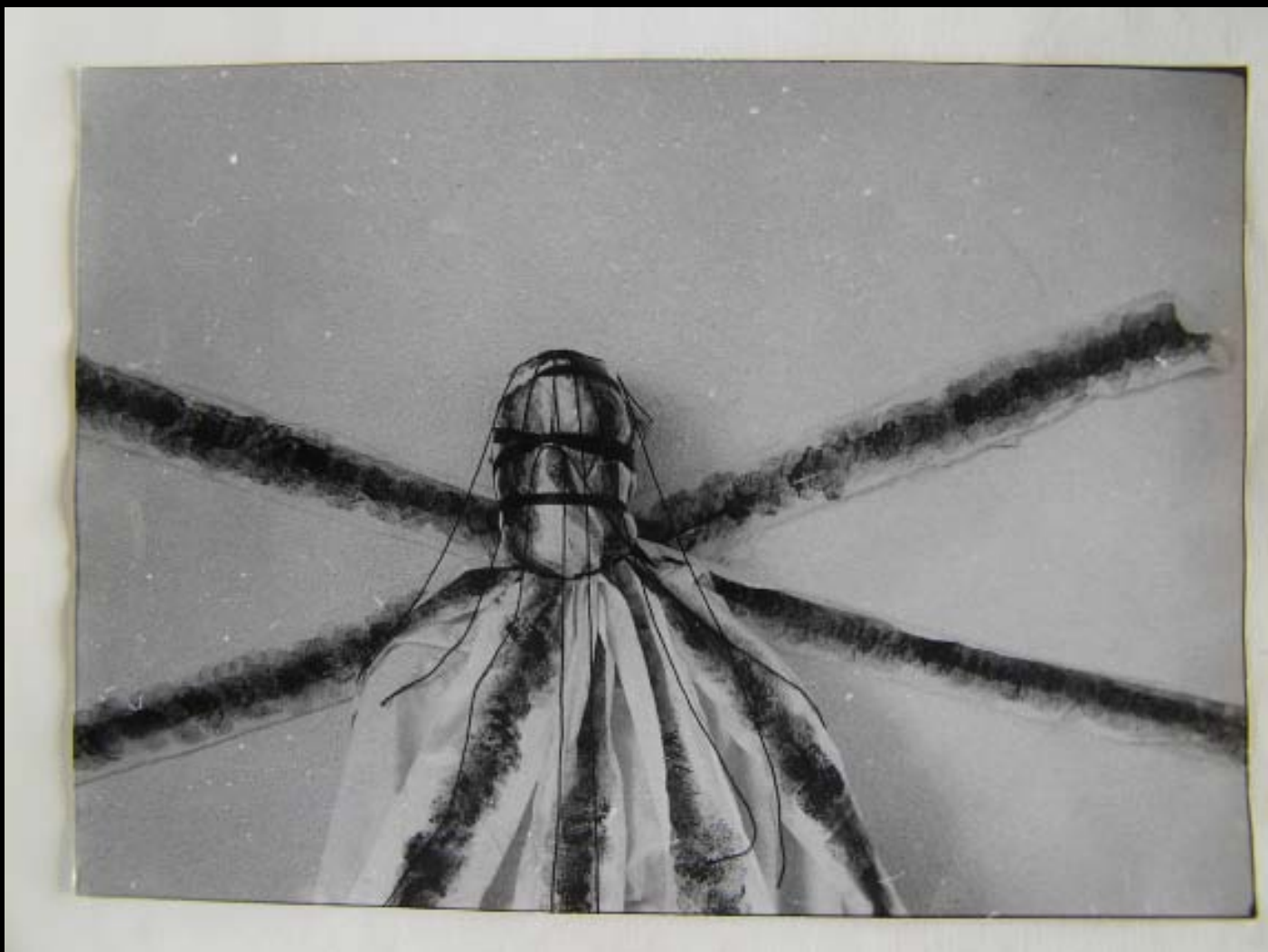


photo | **Max Kuiper.** *Untitled (wrapped body).* Page from a 1985 book (single copy). Courtesy of the artist

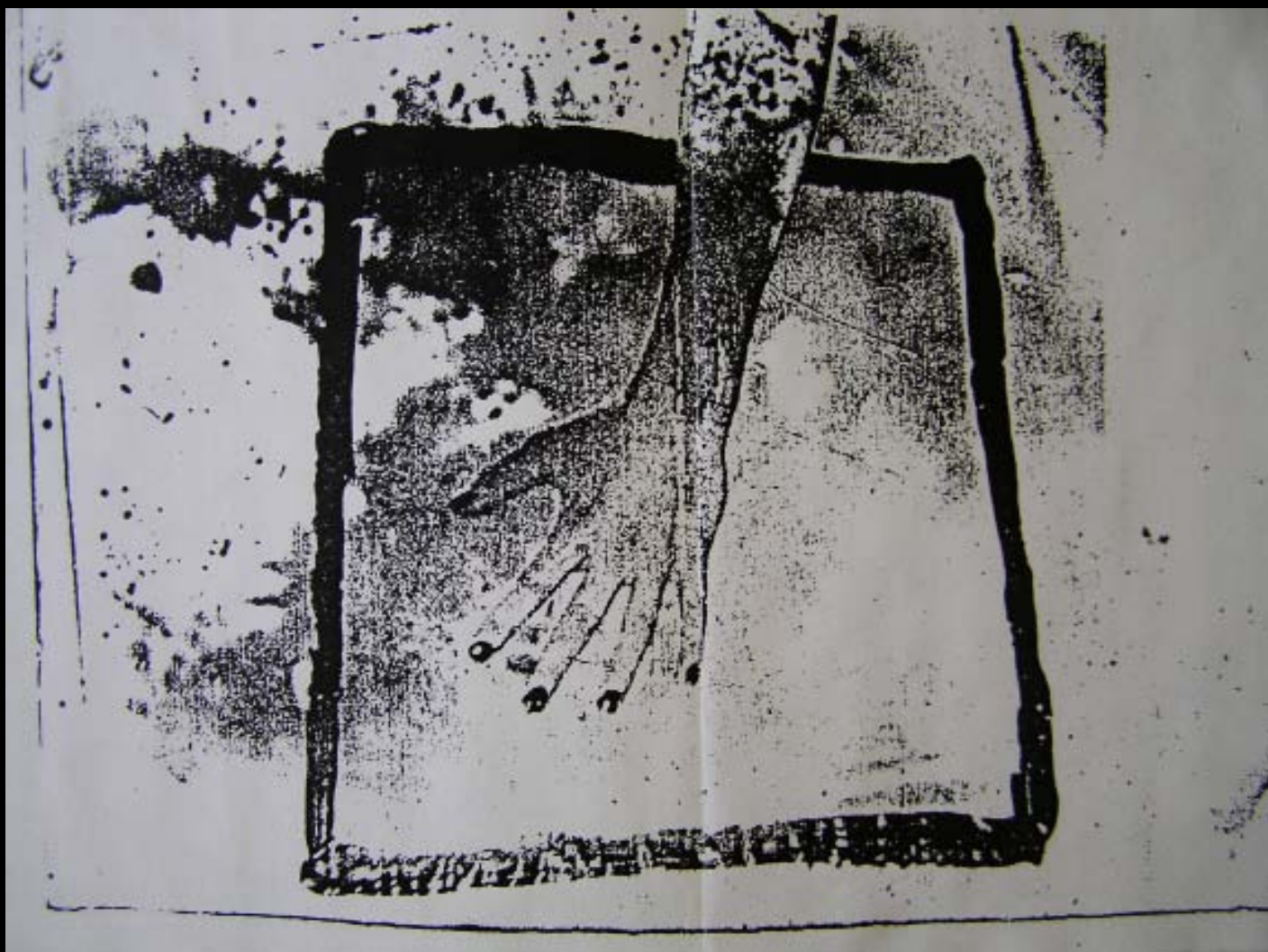


photo | **Max Kuiper. 1980. Untitled. Page from a 1987 book. Courtesy of the artist**

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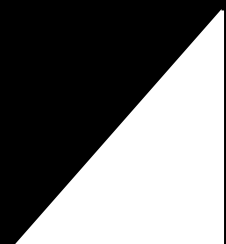
KOMAR

P

LOCKWORK  
SHOWCASE  
& MELAMID'S  
OST-UTOPIA

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# »AVANT-GARDE, STALINIST, WESTERN AND SLAVOPHIL MYTHS ARE FOREVER INTERWOVEN«



SIMINA  
NEAGU

Positioning themselves almost in competition with the Soviet totalitarian project of the '30s and '40s, Russian artist duo, *Komar&Melamid*, have tackled since the '70s virtually every possible issue one could imagine incorporated in the field of art, from the relationship between art and power and the evolution of art history, to inquiries into ecology, spirituality and politics. No stone was left unturned in their incessant process of dissecting and refashioning human experience, much like the

Stalinist regime that attempted a total (hence, a totalitarian) organization of life. The only difference was that *Komar&Melamid* were perfectly aware of the lack of innocence this artistic project implies and were no strangers to irony or self-criticism, unlike their fellow artists of the radical Russian avant-garde of the '20s. The result was the »ironical iconoclasm« of *Sots Art*, a movement that recycled Socialist Realism, exposing the incongruities of propaganda and utopian thinking. Usually compared to pop art because of its ap-

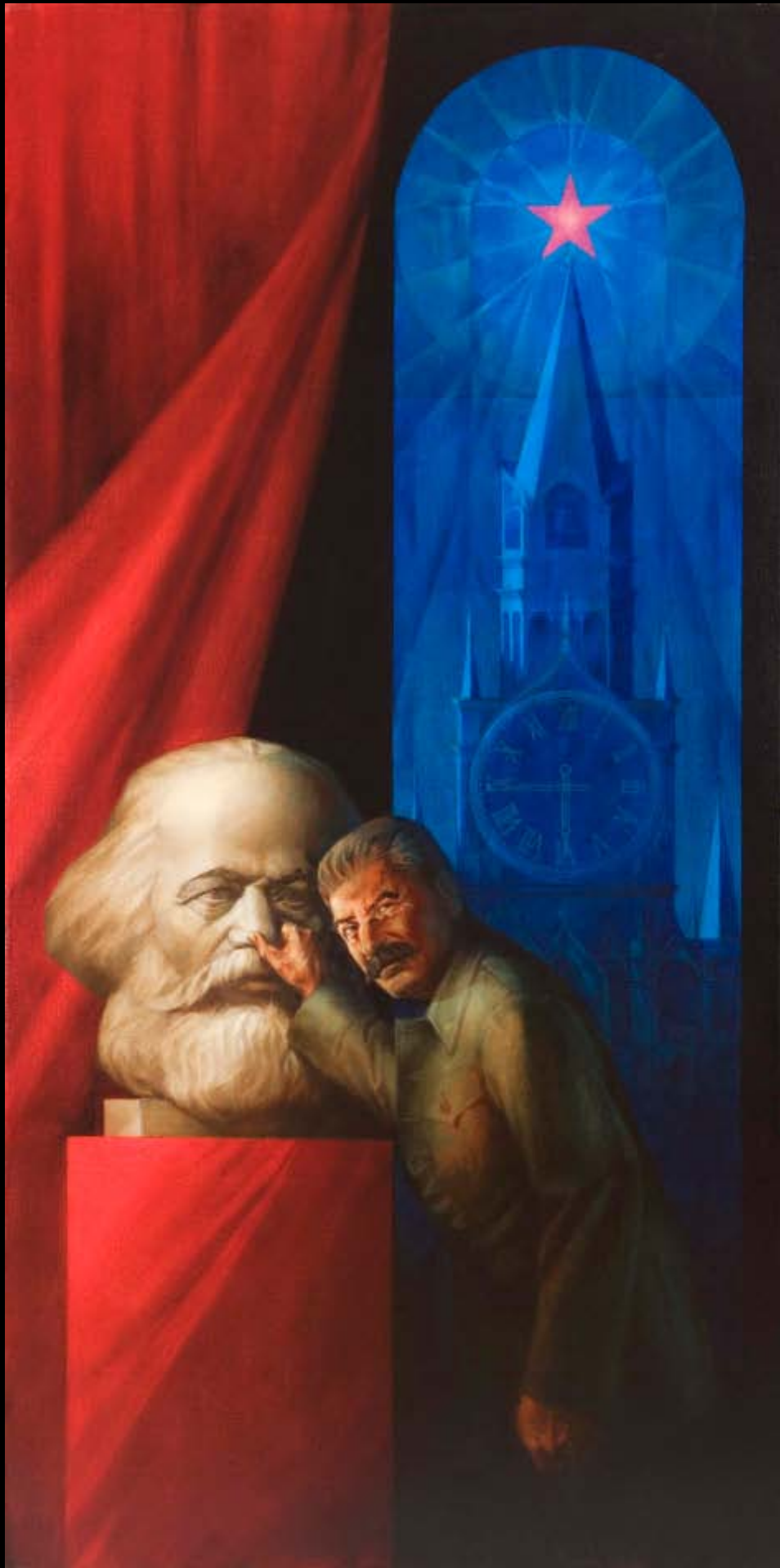


photo | Vitaly Komar. 2005-ongoing. *Stalin Contemplating the Bust of Marx*. Courtesy of the artist



appropriation of seemingly kitsch imagery, the purpose of *Sots Art* was not an assertion of critical distance and a rejection of power (as pop art satirized mass culture and the all-powerful market), but precisely an understanding of the tight relationship between politics and artistic practice, bound together by their similar will to power. Moreover, as Vitaly Komar admits, they »dreamed of making symbols that united heraldry and mandalas, irony and spirituality«. According to Boris Groys, *Komar&Melamid* wish to reveal the internal affiliations of contemporary myths, whether historical, artistic or religious. The duo pursued an almost structuralist endeavor of myth analysis, in the vein of Lévi-Strauss, that was concerned with identifying the underlying patterns of mythological thinking. *Komar&Melamid* selected bits and pieces of cultural production, demystifying and re-mystifying them, not dissimilar to another major theorist of contemporary myths, Roland Barthes. A holy trinity of Stalin, E.T. and Hitler appears in the painting *Yalta Conference* (From a *History Textbook*, 1984), referring both to the famous group photo of Roosevelt, Churchill and the Soviet leader as well as a family picture of Komar's own, thus tracing the lines between personal and global history.

But what was the source of this undertaking, what was the moment to which *Komar&Melamid* related themselves? Born and raised in the Soviet Union, the artists experienced the aftermath of an utopian frenzy of unprecedented scale in world history. Starting off with the October Revolution of 1917, Russia witnessed a tumultuous reorganization of life. The civil war, the New Economic Policy introduced by Lenin, followed by the process of collectivization and industrialization initiated during Stalin's regime, produced mas-

sive changes in Russian society. This was also the time of radical avant-garde, such as constructivism that proposed a total art in the service of revolution. During the '20s, the relationship between the communist

**»I NEVER  
IMAGINED THAT  
MY ARTIST  
FRIENDS AND  
I WOULD BE  
TRANSFORMED  
FROM THE  
SO-CALLED  
AVANT-GARDE OF  
SPIRITUAL AND  
INTELLECTUAL  
LIFE TO THE  
AVANT-GARDE  
OF THE REAL-  
ESTATE.«**

regime and the avant-garde was that of fruitful collaboration, the artists being convinced that they are the engineers of a new visual grammar for a new society. But since both sides wanted complete control and autonomy in realizing their revolutionary

projects, the avant-garde soon fell from grace, only to be replaced by Socialist Realism. Described as an art »realistic in form and socialist in content«, the style was declared in 1934 as mandatory at the first Congress of Writers Union, consequently being imposed to visual arts too. Aided by the fact that previously, in 1923, a decree was issued, stating that all artists should be organized in creative unions controlled by the communist party, Socialist Realism quickly became the only accepted style of cultural production. Its purpose was to educate and inspire the masses in their revolutionary struggle and therefore it employed a simplistic and traditional aesthetic, coupled with a pronounced didactic character.

Then, the fifties brought significant changes, initiated by Stalin's death in 1953. A general thaw was observed all across the Eastern Bloc, along with the emergence of an unofficial, yet tolerated art, mainly focused on formalist explorations of the modernist aesthetic. The communist regime adopted a conservative and nationalistic attitude, culture was de-Stalinized and the official ideology of Marxism-Leninism was reinterpreted. Artists were now free to follow their individualistic fantasies of aesthetic autonomy, as long as they were politically disengaged. But *Komar&Melamid* understood that beyond the supposedly innocent façade of abstraction lied a will to power reminiscent of previous political utopias.

This is why in 1972 they founded the *Sots Art* movement, now a more encompassing term used to describe an artistic direction. One year later, they were painting deteriorated copies of 20th century art masterpieces, including works by Warhol or Liechtenstein, as if salvaged from an





photo | Vitaly Komar. 2005-ongoing. *New Symbolism series: Lenin with Crown*. Courtesy of the artist

armed conflict, severe fire or archaeological excavation. A comment on the religion of modern art or the transient nature of culture? Nonetheless, *Komar&Melamid's* work was not favored by authorities, and in 1974, one of the exhibitions in which they participated was shut down with the help of bulldozers and water canons, in the lighthearted fashion typical of repressive systems. During the same period, they investigated notions of biography and art history, by creating fictitious characters. One was *Nikolay Buchumov*, a one-eyed 20th century artist whose nose would appear in the left corner of every painting and the other was *Apelles Zyablov*, an 18th century abstract painter. By constructing an entire archive for these two artists, *Komar&Melamid* also parodied the style of Soviet historical writing, concerned with highlighting the cultural superiority of the USSR.

In 1973, they are excluded from the youth section of the Artists Union. *Komar&Melamid* decide to emigrate, but their request is refused. As a response, they create the Trans-State, complete with a declaration of independence, constitution and passports. Finally, they are allowed to immigrate to Israel, where they publish a bible with an added section of Russian exodus. Here, in Israel, is where they first start creating artworks in collaboration with animals, a constant interest of *Komar&Melamid*. Next year, they move to New York, where they still live. The western art world welcomes them as dissidents and they quickly integrate. One of their famous actions, during which they established a corporation for buying and selling souls, was advertised in Times Square, thanks to the support of the *Public Art Fund*. Being also the first Russian artists to receive funds from the *National Endowment for Arts* and to be invited at *Documenta*

(one of the most important exhibitions of contemporary art, that takes place every five years in Kassel, Germany), *Komar&Melamid* found a haven for their art. In spite of that, they express nostalgia towards the nonconformist art of their youth, adding that »both in Russia and in the West, we have gained much, but have forgotten much too«. Will their recent explorations of spirituality be able to revive lost memories?

**For further information:**

[www.komarandmelamid.org](http://www.komarandmelamid.org)



photo | Vitaly Komar. 2005-ongoing. *New Symbolism series: Landscape with Lenin's Tomb (Triptych)*. Courtesy of the artist



photo | Vitaly Komar. 2005-ongoing. *New Symbolism series: Last Days of Job*. Courtesy of the artist

CL

HANGING  
CAGES  
**CURTAIN**  
**AIRVOYANT**

# »THEY PLAYED WITH THEIR TINY TOTEM BONES«

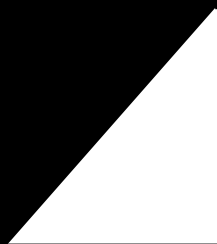
Every day, rusty scales in front of him, he offers silent prayers to the indifference of the passersby. Be it sun or rain, heat or piles of snow, you'd find him there, cursing the other side of the worldly mirror.

»You've forsaken hope, you've abandoned faith. Alas, the ferry man doesn't hear you, and as you swim across the Styx, carve incandescent truths on rotten skin, under eyes vacant of pity, and resonate the thousand heart beats you carry like a beautiful sin.« »I actually hid my secrets in the flight of blackbirds. Do they move around just the same? Or did sloth take hold of them? Nevertheless, do you like this?« »As much as I like the one who prays all day for nothing. But if you can describe the unseen geometry in the sky, I might just favor the interlude of flowers, feathers and decomposed worms you prepared for our guests.«

They played with their tiny totem bones, drawing the future, drawing the past, mocking the present, twisting the timeline as they saw fit. To an end not even them knew. A drop of poison in their ears and once again they let unspoken pain consume whatever it was left of them.

»Just for once, for a damn once in this shithole, can I desire something without the necessity to justify the need?« »No. It's much more spectacular watching your desperation. Almost inspiring. You'd make a fine comedian... And if you add the final touch of a blind tear, we will all be astonished by your performance. Isn't this what you have always wanted? To reinvent the awe of the lame and lost spectators. The recipe of real success.«

»My shy friend, you have been captive since the very beginning.«



BAHAK B

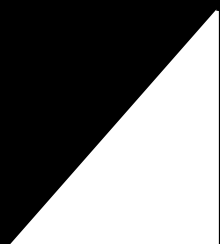


**JOHN CAG**



ABUSE  
SHOWCASE"  
**E'S SILENCE**

# »AIRPORTS FOR PARTICLES AND SHADOW; A WAY OF MAKING EMPTINESS VISIBLE.«



**ROXANA  
VASILE**

Within his contribution for a collective volume: *Qu'est-ce qu'un chef-d'oeuvre?*, chapter »Le chef d'oeuvre - un fait culturel«, Matthias Washek remarks, after examining the differences between the pre-modern and contemporary *masterpiece*, that the latter, with its capacity to escape any firm definition, may yet be regarded as the aftermath of a stance taken beyond any limit or rule, imposed by reason or common sense.

Perhaps, *4'33"*, Cage's most representative work, could easily be considered a masterpiece. In time, it certainly acquired that canonical status, which also managed to forecast the neo-avantgarde movements. Its *fait* character would call for a rather anthropological approach, questioning the history of its progressive gain of authority, its impact on the public, the context and even the audience's private sensibility. Though interest-



photo | *vel.thora.* *Interpretation in ink of 4'33"*

ing, I am going to leave all these aspects aside and concentrate on the piece's initial, intrinsic, value which revolutionised the art world. Or, in the terms mentioned above, inquire into the method used by Cage to surpass old paradigms.

The entirely silent piece, passing as a radical approach in the eyes of the general public, gained almost an emblematic status within John Cage's much diversified opus thanks to the way it concentrated the artist's ideas on art and music, and ultimately his *Weltanschauung*. Thus, his main proposal for the piece was a non-discriminatory approach to pure sounds (*let sounds be themselves*), ergo a new consideration on the way art and life interact.

In an interview with Jeff Goldberg, Cage states: *It [4'33"] has 3 movements and in all of the movements there are no sounds. I wanted my work to be free of my own likes and dislikes, because I think music should be free of the feelings and ideas of the composer. I have felt and hoped to have led other people to feel that the sounds of their environment constitute a music which is more interesting than the music which they would hear if they went to a concert hall.* I chose this particular paragraph for its clear statement-value and its insights through which one could easily guess what implications this kind of proposal may have.

Before proceeding, let me remind you that 4'33" was composed - as if composed was still the right word - in 1952. Much later, John Cage mentioned that he had started thinking about the concept (I only have to tip off his influence on the development of conceptual art) in 1948, after a conference about Oriental philosophy at Vassar College, but out of fear of misapprehension, didn't bear to

develop further on the idea. Luckily, the White Paintings, first exhibited in 1951, of his friend from Black Mountain college, Robert Rauschenberg, encouraged him to recall his plan. Cage described the paintings as *airports for particles and shadow; a way of making emptiness visible*.

**»THEY MISSED  
THE POINT.  
THERE'S NO  
SUCH THING AS  
SILENCE. WHAT  
THEY THOUGHT  
WAS SILENCE,  
BECAUSE  
THEY DIDN'T  
KNOW HOW  
TO LISTEN,  
WAS FULL OF  
ACCIDENTAL  
SOUNDS.«**

Certainly, following the Zen Buddhist system, Cage would never have considered himself an illuminated soul, yet, he made the illumination of other people his own cause: *Art is everywhere, it's only seeing which stops now and then.* So,

he required his audience to listen to silence, to perceive the sounds of the environment as music, and to focus on reality in a non-selective manner (as previously mentioned, *to be free of likes and dislikes*). Whoever followed his instructions discovered that absolute silence does not exist naturally in our world and that silence may only operate from a conceptual level. Thus, the Cagean silence stands against the traditional, western European, silence. If the latter was regarded as an interim between two or several sounds, an interruption of the initial sequence of sounds, being able to grant expressiveness or warp the architecture of a musical piece, the silence proposed by Cage acquired independence and became a musical sign of its own. The new sign received, in the mathematical sense, a negative value.

This whole redefinition of silence not only introduced a new way of perception and comprehension of sounds and noise, but requires a reconsideration of the classic definition of music. By forcing the perception of life as art, the limit between art and life may end. Furthermore, the choice to follow the oriental philosophy precept of non-action and to stand back and relinquish the responsibility of the artist - who, until that moment, had been exerting his will and power to create - entitled the audience to take part in the creative process. Therefore, through such methods, the old hierarchy between composer and performer, performer and audience becomes invalid.

This is why John Cage's 4'33" is probably the apex of a series of changes which regarded the way a work of art operates and its teleology. From similar efforts, e.g. Rauschenberg's empty canvases or Nam June Paik's

1  
LACEY

2  
LACEY

3  
LACEY

endeavours, a certain erasure of the traditional duality of form and meaning is implied. I'm tempted to perceive this as a way two process: the medium is of superior importance, thus the traditional external references become unnecessary through the osmosis of the signifier and the signified (the refusal of a referent and the traditional ways of representation were, at that time, also discussed in post-structuralist circles - see for example Derrida's *archi-écriture* theory).

Giving up the rather traditional western custom of expressing his own in-

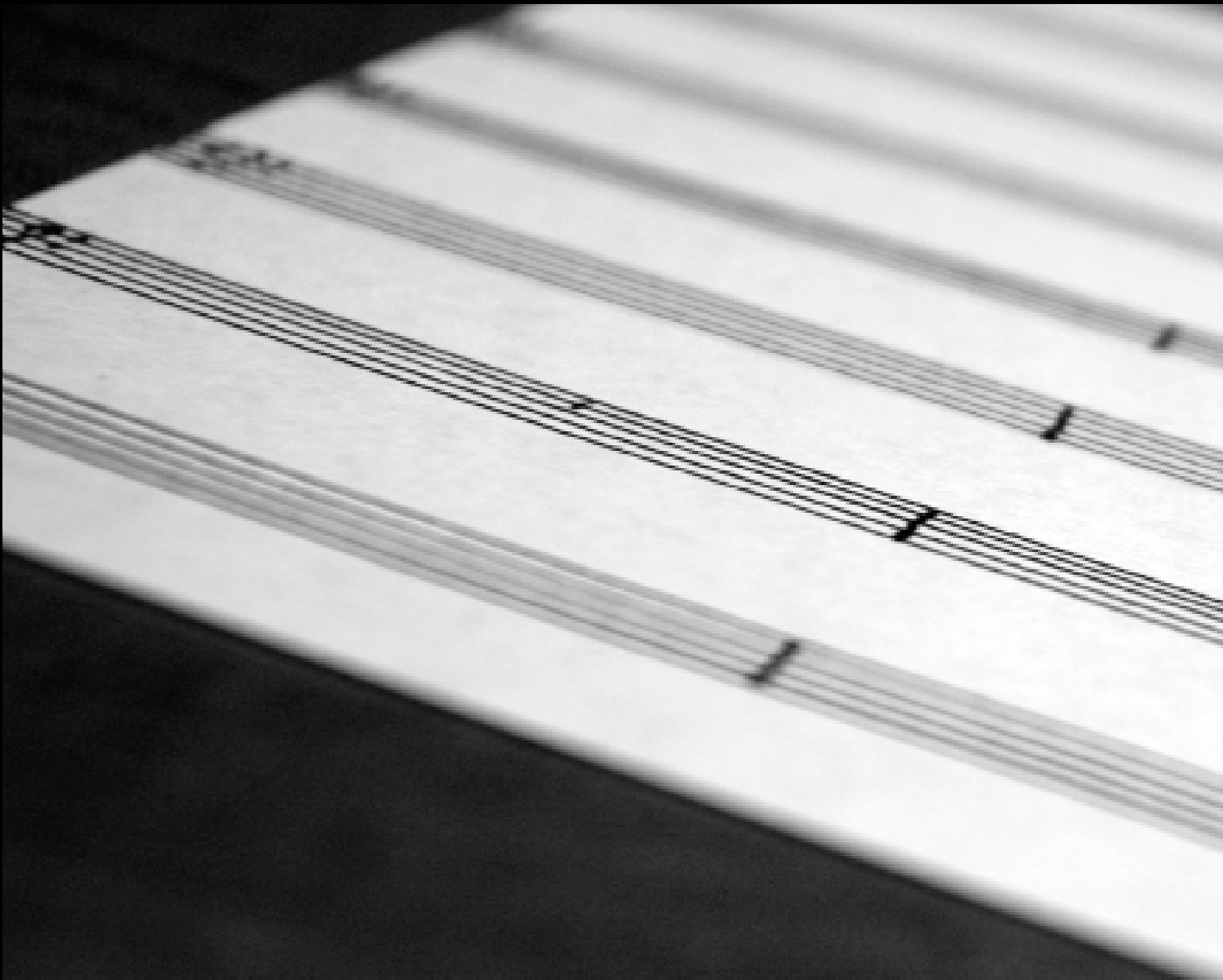
dividuality and choosing to no longer actively exercise his role as an artist are two options who may remind of the Buddhist methods of ego dissolution. After all, non-determination (different from indetermination) allows nature to manifest itself through chance, which, according to Zen Buddhist thinking, is a nature-governing law - somewhat similar to the western *fortuna*.

In a certain way, John Cage's piece is implying a »re-enchantment of the world«, from both the western and eastern perspectives. The silence in

4'33" established a new the connection with another type of silence\*, which contains and is able to generate all the possible worlds\*\*

\*void, null, absolute zero.  $4'33" = 4 \times 60' + 33" = 273"$ ;  $-273^{\circ}\text{C} = 0^{\circ}\text{K}$

\*\*West: the Prologue as aeon which precedes the activation of this world by the Logos. East: *Simultaneously there comes the recollection of a strangely grim Buddhist legend. Once the Buddha smiled; and by the wondrous radiance of that smile were countless worlds illuminated. But there came a Voice, saying: »It is not real!*



*It cannot last!« And the light passed.*  
(Lafcadio Hearn. 2008. Glimpses of  
an Unfamiliar Japan)

**Further reading:**

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*Qu'est-ce qu'un chef-d'oeuvre?*

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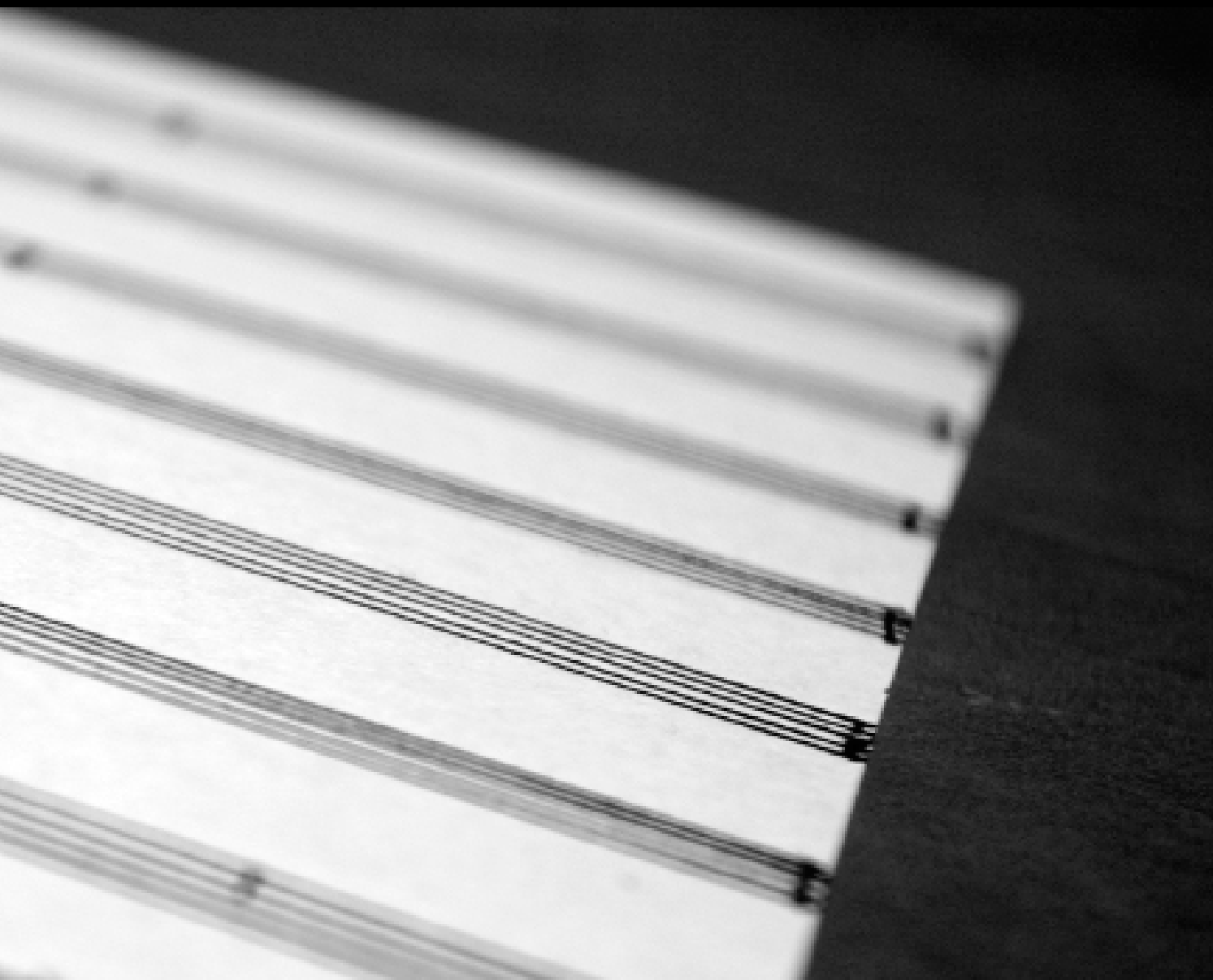


photo | **vel.thora.** *Interpretation in ink of 4'33"*

# MATTHIAS



NOX  
SHOWCASE<sup>II</sup>  
**BERNHARD**

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MATTHIAS BERNHARD

**LOCATION:**

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

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STUDENT AT THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

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photo | Matthias Bernhard. 2008. *Rudolf* (Mischtechnik auf Leinwand). Courtesy of the artist



photo | Matthias Bernhard, 2008-2009. Norilsking (Mischtechnik auf Leinwand). Courtesy of the artist

PETROLEUM - MIEZEN



photo | Matthias Bernhard. 2008-2009. Die totale Zone der Furcht. Courtesy of the artist



photo | **Matthias Bernhard**.2008-2009. *Gigant Boten*. Courtesy of the artist





photo | **Matthias Bernhard**. 2008-2009. *To the ultimate Reiz of Death - Todesdelighte*. Courtesy of the artist

# OLYMPUS MONS



photo | **Matthias Bernhard**. 2009. *Olympus Mons* (Mischtechnik auf Papier). Courtesy of the artist



# Rotzglocke



photo | Matthias Bernhard. 2008-2009. *Grande Possessive Fieberdream*. Courtesy of the artist

CHAI

NZ CISSORS

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# EYE TEASER

## MICHAELA KNÍŽOVÁ

### Slovakia

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