

# Diana Salakheddin's Diary

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**Diana Salakheddin** (b. 1999, Moscow)

Member of Garage's first edition of Teens Team in 2015, I also was an intern and worked as a moderator and guide on the project *Art Experiment* in 2018 and 2019. At present, I am studying Art History at NRC HSE and at Moscow Museum of Modern Art's Open Workshops. I curate small independent shows. My interests include contemporary architecture, art, and postcolonial African culture.

During the shifts I have done, there were a few quite captivating conversations. If I had to systematize the received information, I would distinguish several issues touched by the visitors: the Museum's accessibility for children, its openness for the public, the influence of cell phones on the perception of art, and the role of the Internet. Many visitors, especially older ones, go to see *Bureau des transmissions* aiming to "check" how comfortable the project is for their children, with some of them promising to come back. Speaking about my observations of children in the space, I can sense that they feel comfortable enough in this environment: they interact with the installations (make Linda's dolls and tie Karoline's ribbons together), move tables and pedestals, climb the tower. Children's parents point out that after visiting exhibitions where the kids' mobility is limited, a space like this becomes especially valuable. On the other hand, some adult visitors identify the space as "infantile" immediately upon entering it, which is why in the beginning they feel skeptical.

By the Museum's openness to the public I mean a number of situations. First of all, at the *Ladder Café* installation I discussed with visitors how vitally necessary it is to have freedom of choice in getting information. One of them recalled the exhibition of Marcel Broodthaers where there were no panel texts, and the accompanying booklet served as an additional material rather than explained anything. In the visitor's opinion, had the booklet contained some facts about the works or elements of the artist's philosophy, the show would have become much clearer (and if someone wished to get their own view of it, they would've simply avoided reading the booklet). The absence of any explanatory texts in the *Bureau des transmissions* project is also embarrassing for some people, but when they learn about the role of mediators, they realize why there are no texts. Some visitors, especially from the regions, are surprised to get involved in interaction. Over the course of my shifts I have talked to quite many visitors from various Russian regions, and everyone wished to have a space like Garage in their home city (they have named the quality of exhibitions and projects like *Bureau des transmissions* where interaction with the museum's staff is allowed, among unique features about Garage). Also, one day I had a series of conversations with foreigners. During a talk that happened in *Ladder Café*, a female visitor from France, when asked how art mediation operates in Western museums, said that in many German and French museums participatory approach exists as a goal in itself. There's so much of it everywhere, and it doesn't necessarily have intellectual meaning, but being trendy, it is included into all museum programs today.

Most of the visitors I talked to come to *Bureau* after seeing the shows, so our dialogues are built around their impressions thereof. Some noticed, especially commonly—during Uniqlo Fridays, that they are very irritated by people making selfies in exhibitions spaces (in particular, in the rooms of Pavel Pepperstein's show). There are several causes of this irritation. Firstly, visitors who make selfies/ take pictures of themselves or of the artworks obstruct other

visitors' view or walking routes. Secondly, people also get irritated because such visitors only take photos without looking at the works or examining them. In someone's opinion, for such people a visit to a museum turns into a form of social approval which is impossible without documentation. We even received suggestions that using cell phones in the exhibition space should be prohibited, although their authors realized the contradiction between the idea of a museum as a space of freedom and the authoritarian logic and practice of taboo.

Overall, looking abstractly at the contents of the dialogues and moving toward my personal attitude to mediation, I feel myself very inspired and it seems to me that sometimes this inspiration transfers to visitors. I get involved in each dialogue at the *Ladder Café* installation, while interaction inside the space is less intense, because not all visitors are ready for engagement. But there is also a huge problem which I still don't know how to cope with: I feel emotionally burnt out after the shifts. Obviously, the possible solution—to get less involved in the process—doesn't work here, as it would mean bad mediation in that case. We're going to discuss this issue with colleagues when we meet.

## Anna Yakushkova's Diary

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**Anna Yakushkova** (b. 1994, Yalta)

I graduated in Practical Cultural Studies from NRC HSE's partner program with the Polytechnic Museum. My academic essays and the thesis study film, leisure, and love. Since 2017, I have been coordinating volunteers working at documentary film programs at the Moscow International Festival. My interests focus on the issues of conscious consumption and re-use technologies in art and design.

**12.03**

The first shift of the project and my first "field" mediator's experience. I worked together with Zhenya, there were not so many visitors, so we had time to chat. There were foreign students (mainly Americans) who had chosen Garage among other venues to visit during a short stay in Moscow. Over a cup of tea, I discussed emoji with a young female psychologist, although initially she was telling me about her life near Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia and, generally, about living in a prestigious district and looking at tourists every day.

I know that my personal tastes dictate the way of I emphasize certain aspects about the artworks on display at *Bureau des transmissions*. Perhaps, with time I will be able to devote more visitors' attention to the project of Tereshkina and Jitlina. But as of now, I can't relate too much with their piece for the show. Although obviously I understand why we have this project here.

I enjoy seeing adults and children being surprised by the fact that the ribbons can really be thrown, and it is EVEN permitted to climb the tower. Linda's *Translation Wardrobe* attracts much fewer people even though it is an interactive piece. Visitors rarely try on the masks. Are they afraid of looking funny?

A girl came with her family. She worked as a mediator at the Riga Biennial and was very happy

to explore *Bureau* because everything is so “cheerful and active there”. Her children threw ribbons and made dolls. Cool that each family can enjoy doing something.

### 13.03

It is difficult to communicate with people, sometimes reminds me of a mine picking game, but visitors give you so much energy and impulses, that it remains unclear who is a greater contributor to the process. Today I talked to a girl who is an interpreter and ornithologist (well, where else could interest in communication with people or birds lead oneself?) about politics in art, about the left, and that everyone should start with themselves and change others acting like a soft force. I was shocked to learn that in her student years the girl decided to try the life of a homeless person and slept at the Kursky railway station aiming to experience how it feels to be a homeless individual in Moscow. She was astonished how many university professors there are among the homeless. We discussed who is responsible for these people. The state? Ourselves? Why are we so lost, and why do protest movements degrade so often (take even Occupy Wall Street from one of our cups)?

The most complicated communication is with old people. They sort of wish to set you up and expose your ignorance. But this is how art mediation becomes an even more compelling game.

#### My third and fourth shifts

Quiet afternoon hours. Few visitors, which allows to pay more time to everyone. Children with their mother make dolls and even spiders. The mom recalls making similar dolls with her grandmother, while her own kids are doing it for the first time perhaps.

A man comes, wanders on his own, the cups. Here we start a conversation, and I’m having difficulties. I would label him “skeptical”. I explain the ribbons concept to him—he notices, sarcastically, that he is reading the messages, many of which sound like having come from street walls. Then he climbs the tower to throw ribbons. And why do I feel so good because of this gesture of his?

On Friday the weather is nasty, so the visitors, one after another, prefer to drink some tea. We discuss whether spectators should be allowed to touch museum items, how contemporary art helps women interact with their children, and how a visit to a museum can inspire and make you stronger (whether art transforms life, using the words of *microsilons*). Can a museum change the life around for the better? This is the topic of another tea-drinking ceremony. And very soon, we begin talking about GULAG with one of the visitors, and if there is freedom in today’s society. Funnily, I’ve already talked to several interpreters on this project. And this is the case when I get more than give.

While drinking tea I was watching, out of the corner of my eye, a couple who spent probably one hour making dolls in Linda’s *Translation Wardrobe*. The guy was sitting on one of the ear-flapped fur hats from that wardrobe. I think this is why I love being part of this project—it allows you to meet infinitely amazing and very different people.

**Anastasia Shestak** (b. 1997, Moscow)

I am a Cultural Studies student at RSUH, my specialization being European Studies. My interests include research in the field of visuality, especially “observation techniques” and various spectators’ strategies used inside and outside of the museum. I write on stereophotography and the ways it is being exhibited today. I also took part in the family festival *Garage Under-18* and in *Art Experiment. The Miracle of Light*.

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## Notes on Mediation

### March 10

The mediation experience is unique. Everyone’s got their own one. A different one. One cannot mediate simultaneously with the rest. When there are a lot of people, you choose one or several visitors involved in the project to interact with. And this experience remains unique for everyone. For some, a talk with a stranger is a nightmare taking one out of their comfort zone. They would run away from it. Others, on the contrary, constantly look for a person to talk to. Mediation is both an inclusive and exclusive experience.

From a conversation with visitors at *Ladder Café*: “Voting is always manipulative to a certain extent. The freedom of choosing between several given options always means omission, exclusion of many other positions.”

### March 14

On the one hand, my personal attitude to the installations. Your own emotion. On the other, speech patterns that you develop and fix on.

Visitors spend different amount of time at the installations. Perhaps, they would spend more time at the project that you tell them more details about.

### March 17

Today I’ve had a unique mediation experience, when the role of the leading narrator was taken over by my interlocutor. It is important for us to build horizontal relationships, but still, I almost always remain the one who knows everything about the project, and speaks about it, while the visitor listens and shares their opinion. But today, the girl I was talking to, started asking me such questions: would I myself come to a venue where it is allowed to create handmade things? And if it were a permanently transforming artist’s studio? And the like. And while I was reflecting on her questions, she made me some tea (!).

Is it possible then, that visitors can teach museums, and not vice versa?

From a conversation with visitors at *Ladder Café*: “Is an authentic impression possible today, when we have access to the Internet, social networks, and so on? When we can read reviews, descriptions of a performance or exhibition via social networks, check various selections at the Village and Afisha, Telegram wall texts and reviews which we haven’t even asked for... When there are trendy directors and curators, as well as projects that everyone has already praised or blamed. Is it still possible today to elaborate an authentic attitude toward an artwork?”

### March 24

Today I had visitors who came for the second time. A young man who has already been to this space, came back with friends. He asked for ribbons to throw from upstairs, extending Karoline H. Larsen’s installation. Throughout that day we had been throwing the ribbons a lot, so by the evening we ran out of them. Only small-size fabric debris were left for inscribing wishes and tying them to other ribbons. So, this is what my guests did. I was intrigued by the fact that the visitor who had already been here, could not repeat his experience, and couldn’t share it with his friends either. Returning somewhere aiming to live through an identical experience: is it really possible? In what circumstances? Interestingly, the young man brought his friends along to share it with them. Which he did, but the experience turned out to be different. And it is different for every visitor.

### March 27, Arseny Zhilyaev and Asya Volodina’s board game

Arseny Zhilyaev's board game appeared to me visitor-oriented and inscribed into our project with amazing precision. After discussing the last, fourth session of the game, one of the participants said that she had only had two options in the process: either doing nothing, as she did not understand the rules and what exactly was going on or improvise without knowing the limitations. She chose the second.

When the players were moving up to Status 2, they received from Asya a given situation and "a lot of freedom". The way the game would turn next, how captivating and exciting it would be, depended on the players alone, on their wish to cooperate with each other, to open up, and fantasize. The game's stages developed depending on their communication.

Another participant noticed during a collective discussion that, after returning to the carpet in the Status 2 stage, the players discussed Status 1 players as objects, which is implied by the game's plot. But the same happens in real life: a subject can perceive the other as an object, and this is wrong. It made me think how a museum actually sees its visitor. Is it possible that a museum perceives visitors as objects, just as it does with the exhibited items?

## Natalia Timofeeva's Diary



**Natasha Timofeeva** (b. 1996, Moscow)

I am a teacher at Garage's Inclusive Programs department and a sign language translator. I study at Moscow City Pedagogical University, specializing in two directions: working with people with hearing and vision disabilities, and working with people with speech problems. I am interested in museum and feminist pedagogics, and explore the museum's educational potential through its work with visitors with disabilities.

I am a teacher. Before this project, "mediator" was a substance for transferring impulses from neuro cells for me. But basically, what happens between teacher and children is the same as what mediator does with visitors. Impulses that instigate new reflections and questions.

An incident with a boy and girl, both around thirteen years old.

"Why genuinely beautiful and realistically precise images are no longer popular, why do strange, ugly and scary things attract the eye? Are people getting worse?"

Two female students, soon-to-be art historians. They discussed meanings of works that are not immediately evident, e.g. Takashi Murakami: nice flowers and mushrooms with eyes conceal a terrifying story. Nice blue anime-style eyes—radiation.

Why hide real problems in a beautiful package which not everyone is even able to unwrap?

An unusual young man: "Space! Everything is connected with outer space. We depend on it."

"What would an urn with ashes become if installed in a museum—a contemporary or classic art object? Would it be 'normal' to create a composition using urns with ashes? In Holland, they even organize tours around cemeteries. Where is that borderline between the 'norm' and

'too much'?", says a girl who came to the museum earlier today to "hook up" with a guy.

## Yana Sidikova's Diary



**Yana Sidikova** (b. 1994, Yekaterinburg)

Mediator at the III Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art, Yekaterinburg (2015) and the *Portal Zaryadye* exhibition project at Schusev Museum of Architecture, Moscow (2018), I am a second-year master's student at the Cultural Studies School of NRC HSE. My scope of interests is based around the art museum as a space that builds a variety of connections between the artworks, the modern context, my questions, and someone else's stories, each time leading to some new, often very subtle, intersections. Whether it is possible to use them in the future remains an open question, an answer to which I will be looking for at *Bureau des transmissions*.

It is exciting to keep a diary that someone is actually going to read. By the time I began putting this text together I had done five shifts at the venue, but here I'm going to record my observations without references to dates—this way it is easier to put an incoherent flow of thoughts, bits of conversations, and some actions in order. I've been drowning in it recently (a lot of things seem obvious or superficial), but I'll try to remember how to swim as soon as I can, and how to hold breath under water.

Another important remark: there are going to be dialogues in this script that in fact are not a precise transcription of my conversations with people. They are merely "puzzles" composed from many different talks echoing each other. In my opinion, they also intersect with my own observations.

But you are free to disagree with me, of course.

### The space

It seems interesting to me how the work *Collective Strings* invokes very opposite types of emotions: from joy and child's delight (indeed, isn't it great to throw ribbons, wrap them around everything, scream with pleasure and feel free and relaxed?) to estrangement and, perhaps, even rejection. One wishes to enjoy the colored threads and play with them forever, but at some point (not always of course) this cobweb reminds of a tumor that rapidly invades a healthy body. On the one hand, the "strings" create physical obstacles: block the way, catch hairpins, take away the time required to put the piece back in order. On the other, their "colorful mop", like the tender voice of the fairy-tale mermaid, spellbinds or distracts, prevents oneself from concentrating on the discussion of serious topics, forces the poor "sailor-traveler" follow it. And visitors themselves begin to notice that the museum is not a "museum" anymore, that, because of these ribbons, it looks like an attraction park, or a kids' room in a shopping center.

This is neither good, nor bad. The artist's work is already a success if it instigates to build various chains of interpretations and throw in new questions.

This is how, gradually, *Collective Strings* transforms a set of metaphors concealing the subjects of a “beautiful package”, a Moscow traffic jam, lingering time, useless/meaningless labor, and, finally, the myth of a liberated museum space. The latter only further supports the idea that freedom doesn’t equal chaos. Even a very open museum should have rules and limitations, which is normal.

But some would disagree.

*A visitor takes a cup from the microsillons project and reads:*

- “Every year the audience is offered the chance to conquer Garage for one day. Festive atmosphere governs in the Museum.” Great, I love it!
- Do you think it is true?
- Sure, this is how it should be.

It would be interesting to continue the dialogue, but the visitor goes away.

...

People play a lot in the space of *Bureau des transmissions*, as if the venue is meant for games. And whereas the work *Translation Wardrobe* is openly intended at play (the artist deliberately leaves various toys in the wardrobe and remembers her favorite childhood games), *Ladder Café* also loses its natural mode at a certain point, turning into a game—a game in the form of a café.

- What kind of tea do you prefer: green or black?
- Green.
- And which questions have you chosen?

Visitors sort of seem to feel that their presence here is part of the planned scenario, their answers—fragments of the artwork/performance based on a script and implying a beginning and ending (even though we do not follow any strict scenarios left by the artists as backup plan, instead we choose the topics and questions that really interest us).

— I’ve chosen the cup with the question “Can art transform our life?” because I’m absolutely sure that yes, it can.

*He finishes his tea, puts the cup back and prepares to leave.*

At such moments the question comes up again: why are some conversations are short and not really meaningful? Do they have to be developed, or does it mean your interlocutor is simply not “your type of person”? And what is your type of person then? Should we look for new communication tools in such situations?

Another note or thought that I would like to develop further in the future.

## **The art**

Of course, it’s not always like that: sometimes the border between “game” and “reality” is torn, and a passionate conversation breaks out.

- But? Wait, does art necessarily have a positive effect? For instance, yesterday I saw an exhibition after which I wished I could wash myself.
- Really? What kind of exhibition was it?

There are also visitors who believe that “contemporary” isn’t equally good as “high” art, since “high” art is beautiful and improves our life, while “contemporary” is about something evil, is unable to change anything, as it only critiques (and put this way, not everyone eagerly admits that it can also propel changes).

I suggest discussing these topics more often over a cup of tea at the *microsillons* “ladder”.

## **The visitors**

Returning to Linda's games, one of them resembles Jenga. The participants are a group of people, while their task is to pull, using porcelain sticks, one by one other porcelain sticks from a pile. The game assumes there has to be a winner, so it is interesting to follow the interaction between the players who know each other well. Someone is ready to sacrifice their position aiming to help the others: s/he deliberately rakes the pile in order to create new possibilities for the rest of the players (according to my observations, this role was once played by a father who came with his family). There are players who put the stick back after a failed attempt, so that during the next round another participant wouldn't get it. Others, on the contrary, try to pull a different stick ignoring the favorable combination left after the previous player's move.

On the other hand, games have for a long time been considered absorbents of social relations, so is there any use in saying that such cases could help to study some social topics?

...

I do not always wish to explain *Ladder Café* directly, because the visitor can offer their own vision of this work.

– *No, it doesn't look like a ladder at all to me.*

– *Then what?*

– *It's a Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but bigger.*

– *Great! It is about needs, indeed! So, let us think what human needs can occur in a museum space, and why people need museums at all.*

Let us think?



## Oksana Rodina's Diary



**Oksana Rodina** (b. 1997, Moscow)

I am a Cultural Studies student at RSUH and did an internship in China. I am attracted to the Chinese language and culture, contemporary art, and curatorial practices.

My first day at work was the first day that the project was open to general public. The real challenge was the necessity to balance between keeping the venue under control and communicating with the visitors. The bright and eye-catching piece by Karoline H. Larsen made them stop and stay at that location for a while, with some visitors leaving afterwards, without proceeding to observe the rest of the projects. This is why sometimes I had to switch from moderator to guide mode, in order to have the opportunity to tell people how many other interesting things we have on offer.

Many visitors asked what would happen to *Collective Strings* after the end of the show.

During a conversation about the possibility to run a museum in one's apartment, young female artists shared with me their idea of a collective art project to be displayed inside the elevator of their dormitory.



Visitors mainly choose unpaired cups which allowed discussion of more subjects that seem compelling.

“The only place in the museum where everything could be touched”, one spectator said about the project.

## Alina Ponomarenko's Diary



**Alina Ponomarenko** (b. 1995, Zvenigorod)

I studied at the British Higher School of Design where my fascination with art, especially painting, began. But soon after falling for oils and canvases I realized that they are not enough for interpreting all my ideas and emotions, and found a way out of it via writing my own texts, both poetry and prose. People are an important source of inspiration for me.

Day one: exhibition opening for patrons, partners, and GARAGE cardholders.

The project *Bureau des transmissions* was a place where people came to have some fun, throw ribbons, or discuss an interesting topic suggested by the mugs (the participatory project *Ladder Café* by the *microsilons* collective). I can say the day was hard, either because of the new experience, or due to the intense mode of conversations.

A man was talking about feminism and the spirit of America, which was very interesting. Another one, with the Asian type of appearance and who spoke English, discussed art and politics with me.

That evening I realized how much energy people can take from you via an ordinary conversation. But they give so much information and emotions in return leading to oversaturation anyway that it takes several days to recover.

Following two days of discoveries, I realized that I was tired. Although one would wonder why, after just a few days and not so many visitors.

I can say that I fully immersed into work only on March 18, i.e. during my fifth shift. I began understanding more or less what's going on there. It was then that I realized that such an intense exhibition project is useful primarily intellectually, and the profession of a moderator is not that easy at all. I also started reading Nina Simon's book *The Participatory Museum*, which helped to form an internal understanding of what I am doing in this museum and at this particular show, and what I can contribute while working in this space to make the Museum “better”. I was looking at people trying to understand what they wanted, why they came here. I realized that most of the visitors are very shy because they don't understand what's going on and what they're supposed or allowed to do here in this space.

As soon as I was getting more and more involved in the process, it became easier for me to talk to people.

I remember two girls around 15–16-years-old who took photographs of themselves like grownups—using a big camera with a large lens, posing and pretending that nothing interested them except each other and the process of posing. But then I caught the eye of one of them and quickly pointed toward the tower upstairs saying that it's cool there. Her eyes grew wider with a child's delight, and she smiled. The girl seized her friend by the hand, and they went on to spend half an hour in the tower. Taking photos. Then they descended and me and my colleague “seduced” them to make dolls using yarn. It took us around an hour, and it was a great experience of working with teenagers who look so independent while being very young at the same time, so willing to tie bows on the dolls made of thread and choose the color of their arms or hair with serious faces.

I enjoy being in the Museum because it allows me to get to know very different people which I consider a way to realize myself.

And I can say that talking to someone for even a minute helps to understand really a lot. Depending on the way the person looks at things to what they say, it is even possible to guess what their occupation might be! Another advantage of this work is that it improves my observation skills and intuition. Yes, I'm talking about myself again and would like to share the impression that working as a moderator in a museum is a magical thing, because the better you understand who comes to you the better you can interact with them and pull information about the museum, the show, and generally about art more effectively out of them.

Once I had a visitor who was quite critical about the project. I was unable to persuade him in the opposite, so he left. It made me think that people actually come to a museum to get very diverse emotions and with very different goals. While some wish to hang out and just sit and relax, others look for self-representation, and there may even be those who want to experience negative emotions. I am sure everything I realized during those days will be helpful for the work of the Museum, for its future projects. I mean, I not only improve myself doing this job—but make the life of the Museum better too. And it inspires me for further development!

## Maria Mozgovaya's Diary

**Maria Mozgovaya** (b. 1998, Moscow)

I am completing my BA (Hons) in Fine Art at the British Higher School of Design this year. I have been involved in the work of Garage's Education Department for two years now. Combining fine art classes with teaching, I read lectures and deliver workshops. In my own artworks I investigate cultural and physical aspects of clothing, engaging visitors in this process.

Even though the entire project is aimed at building horizontal relationships within the museum space, moderators still play a significant, if not crucial role in shaping the visitors' perception of works. I experimented a lot of times with the way I deliver information about what's going on within the territory of *Bureau des transmissions*, and each time it was evident in which direction it takes the visitor's thought. Depending on the order in which I introduced the projects, the whole picture also changed. Moderators are agents between the artist and the viewer. This setup endows us with certain power and responsibility. We plant grains in people's minds and



try to grow them together in the process of conversation. And it is important to choose proper “water” and “fertilization”, so that the experience of presence on the territory of *Bureau* turns out useful for everyone.

Every time I personally sympathized with some projects, it passed on to visitors. My tiniest emotional reaction, e.g. I smiled while talking, or gave a bit more information, instantly focused the person’s attention on certain nuances of the works.

It is very interesting to watch people who wander across the *Bureau* space independently first, when moderators have no opportunity to come up and start a dialogue about the whole project. When I’m busy at any of the spots, I always watch out of the corner of my eye what such independent viewers do. Sometimes from afar one can notice that some people restrain themselves from the slightest physical contact with any objects on the territory. Several times visitors who showed interest in the *Nasreddin* project came up to me, to *Ladder Café*, and asked whether we could discuss racism too. And the same people suggested that the strings are a part of some Mexican or Indian festivity. After grasping the idea of one work, they started building links with the rest of the pieces, and those “filters” often times were very unexpected. Some viewers would immediately rush to throw the ribbons and construct something, as they saw people sitting by the tables and simply wanted to join them. This process of silent understanding of what and why is happening here is the most magical and essential thing about the project as a whole for me.

I always feel surprised how much people enjoy communicating with strangers!

## Alina Izmaylova’s Diary

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**Alina Izmailova** (b. 1992, Ufa)

I received my Master’s degree from the Faculty of Geology of Bashkir State University and worked at the Academy of Sciences. I am into travel photography which stimulated my move from Ufa to Moscow. Currently I collaborate with various contemporary art exhibition venues as a manager, lecturer, and artist.

March 15, 2019

Today I’m going to do my third shift, which starts at 16:30. It is a public talk with Zhilyaev, and I would like to extract my thoughts over the first couple of days before they are absorbed by the power of and impression from the meeting and work with such a monstrous figure on the same project.

First day, morning shift, March 8.

It was great to return to Garage to work again. A bit gray-ish outside, but it doesn’t affect my mood at all. I remember two very nice girls who worked together with me. We did well with them supporting each other. Not a bad compatibility, although none of us went beyond working matters and some general interest. The first visitors began entering the space very cautiously, but I saw that those sleepy people were not ready to discuss anything

enthusiastically, even over a cup of tea. All of them sort of paved their way into the Museum. One of the mediators came up to a female visitor, smiling, but had to retire quite quickly, since this is the first thing a mediator should sense very well—the mood of the visitor who enters our space. It was wrong to superimpose the wish to demonstrate her communication skills so openly. But it turned out to be okay, because right afterwards came a couple who were looking for some quick and easy fun. It's not so bad then that they didn't proceed to the mug projects.

I was watching how that same girl, after carefully examining the part with the drawings and folders, went up to the table and started looking at the cups, modestly, not daring to examine them on her own. So, I decided to come up to her, and for a start, I simply encouraged her to look at the mugs together and explain her some details about the installation. Her first phrase and reaction was to close in herself, but then she agreed. The same happened to my invitation to have some tea. We talked for a long time, she is an artist and feminist activist. Even though our cups were about the concept of the "ladder", of course we discussed a lot of stuff, including, and this is what I really liked, her viewpoint on the importance of the subject of migration that we touched upon. She has an active civil position and even does things that help to materialize these legal needs. We talked about the possibility of affecting the Museum's work, and she mentioned the ticket prices... We remembered the early stages of the Soviet Union marked by serious intentions and real steps towards equality, the notable performance of female artists, and how it all soon dispersed.

Generally, we were lucky due to the coincidence of the date, her interests and the topic suggested by the mug, which instigated, in this or another way, a talk around the possibility of being independent and responsible for one's own life and the wish to do so which come people have, while others don't. She was heading to one of the events taking place that night, so we said goodbye after adding each other on Facebook. There were more activities on that day, more tea-drinking, but it wasn't as important.

March 10, evening.

Immediately after I came, I was asked to wash the mugs. Ok. But of course, I had a program full of impressions on that day. The very first happened at the *Ladder Café* installation. A man came up to me, slightly embarrassed and lost, as if not only the museum space was new to him, a place he never visited before, but also, perhaps, the life itself... He said he wasn't against having some tea, although he usually drinks expensive tea which he orders. He was interested in communication however, so we decided to choose the mugs and sit with them, with a good reason for a conversation. He had seen our museum before from afar, but this was the first time he decided to go in. He rarely goes to museums, the last time he went to an ethnographic museum (a reconstruction of a village) in Bulgaria, primarily because he was on an excursion tour there, and usually, he prefers walking around the city on his own instead. It came out to be that his passion for natural walks derives from the vegan philosophy, lifestyle and... his passion for walking barefoot whenever he is. So, as we burst into a dialogue, I directed him from time to time back to the topic of museology and tolerance, and then he asked, slightly awkwardly and with a timid smile, whether he could take off his shoes, because his feet were wet. I was a bit embarrassed too but full of museum liberalism. In fact, it's not a crime. And he continued to smile all the time. Said he had already taken them off and would like to observe the exposition and come upstairs to the second floor. I let him walk around the space on his own, inviting him to come back afterwards and share his impressions of the shows.

After a while, when I am already busy with another visitor, I see him. He says he wasn't allowed to go upstairs without a ticket.

On the same evening I had the chance to get acquainted with the young Ermé (Эрме). He is half Turkish. Very curly and kind. He was accompanied by equally small, although not curly girls. We lay covered by the ribbons and talked about their colorfulness, and that it was as if a from the colorful skies poured down upon us from the colored skies. Then we ran toward the tower and the entire carousel of fun. The girls soon fell behind and disappeared. I went up to Linda's wardrobe, to play masks with Ermé and write a message in Turkish on the ribbon. And make an amulet in the form of a giraffe. So little time we had to spend together! His mom came. He asked when I'm going to work next time, and whether we could see each other again later that day...

I looked around. I was alone: everything was living and moving in the green of this place.

March 15

Erme came with his mother and sister right to the opening time. The most important thing, he said, is that there exists zone 25 in human brain which is responsible for controlling bad mood, and if this function is broken, the person will always feel depressed. But the conversation originally began with the question if anyone could become an artist. He said yes, but only provided that the person has inspiration. And inspiration is born from a special human feeling, it is something “special”, but “still light-colored”. He judges by himself. Btw, the info about zone 25 is taken from the Smeshariki cartoon.

Later, even his dad came to the Museum. The adults didn't like the show though.

Towards the end of the day, I met a girl of Asian descent who was very touched by the subject of migration we raise. Especially by what the young generation of migrants who have grown in labor environment has become. She slightly critiqued them. She would like to see a continuation of the project and looked forward to the meeting of Jitlina and Tereshkina with real CIS representatives at Garage. A few young guys joined our conversation. And by what they said I recognized in one of them a visitor who I had a two-hour long discussion with at Elena Nikonole's artist talk last summer at Garage, when he explained with ease all of the key principles of her work with neural networks. Back then he was still a high school graduate. He said it was his second time at Pavel Pepperstein's show now, and that he would come and check the *Ladder* as well. And he did!

We discussed that, in accordance with physical laws, when doing anything, including the making of art, substance makes a transition from one condition to a different one, leading to the release of heat, the expansion of the universe and, ultimately, to its death.

Part 4

I've had my fourth shift today.

1. A man came who said that it's his third time in a contemporary art museum. Following the second, unsuccessful, attempt he thought there still might be some good examples. He accidentally saw a program featuring Gutov and Belov which inspired him to go to Garage. Dmitry Gutov caught his attention so much that he watched a lot of other stuff with him, including the lecture *Contemporary Art in 90 Minutes*. And it forever changed his attitude to contemporary art. He was puzzled with what he saw at our project. BUT! He accepted it as an opportunity for reflection instead of refusing to comprehend.

2. It turns out that so far, I've only met visitors with a positive reaction toward the project of Jitlina and Tereshkina. BUT there is a different reaction too. Other mediators told me that.

3. I've got the contact of a teacher based in Leipzig who was really interested in the work by Jitlina and Tereshkina, as she is currently writing an academic paper dedicated to comics. She was really delighted about getting in touch with them.

## Diana Ezugbaia's Diary

**Diana Ezugbaia** (b. 1990, Ochamchire, Georgia)

I am an art mediator and guide. I received my MFA degree from Lomonosov Moscow State University in 2017. My Master's thesis is dedicated to the genre of installation in the context of Russian art of the recent decades. My academic tutor was art historian and critic Andrey Kovalev.

The projects I've taken part in include: the exhibition *Here and Now*, Moscow Manege (2018), III Biennale of Street Wave Art *Artmosphere*, Winzavod Moscow Contemporary Art Center (2018), *Viva la Vida. Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. Paintings and drawings from museums and private collections*, Moscow Manege, Moscow (2019), IV Moscow Cultural Forum, Moscow Manege, Moscow (2019).

I enjoy working with ideas and people. I decided on my look at the age of five by cutting a fringe with my own hands, and have been making decisions and taking responsibilities for them since then.

## Memoirs of a Geisha, or the Art of Communication

– What's your occupation?

– I am a mediator.

– Sorry, can you say that again, please?

Few people, even among those who are closely connected with art, would know what an art mediator is. This is a relatively new phenomenon, especially in modern-day Russia. This is why, in order to introduce the visitor with the topic, I describe my occupation the following way: "For sixty to ninety minutes I become your close friend, as we discuss the exhibition, the artworks, and, unlike a guide, I'm interested in hearing your opinion." According to my experience, the visitor instantly understands my role and tasks. The reader would perhaps be embarrassed with the idea of "a friend for an hour", but this strategy allows the mediator to forward the conversation in the right direction before switching to free floating without the need to spend time on constructing the roles. When the interlocutor is emotionally ready it is possible to start discussing the subject the dialogue is based around. The mediator should be a good psychologist, should feel their visitors, infiltrate their essence—in order to find an individual approach to their heart and mind. Therefore, to set out on a journey into the world of Ideas, it is important to attract the listener intellectually from the very beginning.

It was during the project *Bureau des transmissions* that I began associating myself with a geisha. It may sound odd, but it is really so. Feminists, please, forgive me for this comparison, it is purely subjective. Young people can also be art mediators, and there are a lot of them among my colleagues. The work on this project has its specificity because of the tea-ceremony element suggested by the group *microsilons* in their piece *Ladder Café*. Here I feel myself a hostess of a tea house where several habitants co-exist: the string cloud by the Danish artist Karoline H. Larsen, the spellbound wardrobes by Linda Vigdorčika, and the touching albums of Olga Zhitlina and Anna Tereshkina.

The very etymology of the word "geisha" is helpful, allowing for comparisons with the functions of an art mediator within this project, since the word is composed of two hieroglyphs which mean "art" and "person" respectively. A geisha has to be educated and have good skills and manners. In this relation, I should mention that people wishing to become mediators make a long journey before becoming interesting interlocutors.

I am used to working at large venues where one can move from room to room and wander across the space. But it feels different in Garage's LAB area which is cozier and more accessible for good control of the space. So, being surrounded by art works, I meet travelers from other worlds and introduce them to my own one via the practices of tea drinking, looking at albums, playing games, and tying up ribbons.

### On Bureau des transmissions artworks

Artworks displayed as permanent items (throughout the exhibition) can be approached from the viewpoint of temporal categories: the past, the present, and the future. The past is represented by Ekaterina Muromtseva's video piece about the experience of engaging people

of “the third age” in art. The video medium itself implies the documentation of an event that has passed, and the screen shows us people who have lived most of their lives already. Zhitlina and Tereshkina’s newspaper *Nasreddin in Russia* and albums refer to the present and past at once. *Ladder Café* by *microsilions* exists only in the present moment, during the tea ceremony, and once this process is over, the action also falls into oblivion. Linda Vigdorčika’s *Translation Wardrobe* and Karoline H. Larsen’s *Collective Strings* relate simultaneously to all temporal modes. The participatory aspects of these works express the present, collective memory, and contemplation—the past, while the projection of the future is evident in the inscriptions on the strings and dolls with wishes inscribed by people.

The arrangement of the works across the LAB space at Garage suggests a spiral a metaphor for the mechanism used in the production of any artwork. Ideas are not being born from scratch, since there exist such things as experience, heritage, and insights (the video work by Muromtseva). They penetrate the present, including the moment of the emergence of an idea, and that of its discussion (*Ladder Café* by *microsilions*). Next, the idea is transferred to paper for further development (*Nasreddin in Russia* by Zhitlina and Tereshkina) which then entails realization (Linda Vigdorčika’s *Translation Wardrobe*). The resulting piece is a complete artwork highlighting the categories of heritage, implementation and aspiration (Karoline H. Larsen’s *Collective Strings*).

**ИНФОГРАФИКА**  
 Этапы создания произведения на основе проекта «Бюро переводов»



- INFOGRAPHICS
- Heritage
- Idea
- Development
- Realization
- Artwork

**My communication experience**

During the opening shift, my guests were two interesting young people who observed the installation *Collective Strings* with pure admiration. We had a conversation together over a cup of green tea, whereby I learnt that one of them was a chemist. On that same day, I had learnt about Garage’s policy of waste and paper sorting and decided to ask his opinion about it. The young man pointed out that since many materials are toxic, each needs individual approach, and therefore his attitude to waste sorting and the reuse of plastic is positive. In this context he also shared an interesting episode from his life experience.

He studied at school which promoted the idea of waste sorting and had special containers installed everywhere. But once, from mere curiosity, he opened the lid of the biggest among them and was shocked to find garbage of all types mixed with each other in the same box. The chemist concluded that waste sorting policy in our country remains in its infancy. I suggest

wrapping up this story with the question: where are the limits of an institution's control, at what stage do institutions lose the power to control, and to what extent are they responsible for it?

Amazingly, sometimes people were not able to interest me at all. This is what I was horrified to discover during my second shift, when talking to a girl who turned out to be mouthy and empty. It seemed that she didn't really need me, erupting words into the air. She was like an engine emitting steam non-stop and sending it somewhere in the nowhere.

## Evgeniya Bereza's Diary



**Evgeniya Bereza** (b. 1990, Moscow)

After graduating from the faculty of journalism I worked as an editor on TV for ten years— before realizing at one point that work didn't inspire me anymore, that I wanted to interact with people via some more universal language. Art appeared to be that kind of language. Giving birth to my daughter helped me to overcome the fear of everything new, and I decided to try the museum sphere for myself. A year ago I came to do an internship at Garage, where I felt fully confident in making that decision. This fall I am going to the USA to do a Master's in Museum Management.

Hello, diary! Forgive me for not writing for such a long time, but you should understand me: it's spring and youth time...

Now to business. Below is my resume of four shifts, two morning and two evening ones.

The first, on March 6, was not a typical one, like an after-party rather than a shift proper. At some point, when the guided tours upstairs ended, we saw a lot of visitors coming to us, wishing to chat. It was that lucky moment when you learn from the audience (many visitors were museum workers or other representatives of the art milieu) more than you're able to give. It was a cool experience. I would like to underline two conversations "on the stairs". The first was with a spectator who mentioned *Pravo na Otdyh (The Right for Rest)*—a theater act staged by the Brusnikin Studio and based on the verbatim report of Alexander Galich's expulsion from the Soviet Writers' Union. In this interactive performance the spectators themselves can become members of the board and receive the script prior to the start if they wish. I was genuinely surprised to learn that participation in this play changes the mind so much that you begin to believe in the fairness of what's going on in the process. The system cannot be mistaken, even within the genre of a theater spectacle its weight is critical. I am not sure if it is appropriate to share my thoughts instead of what actually happens between the visitors and me during the conversations, but I would like to touch upon the topic of the power of art. The power that is able to bring about good as much as evil (which is also quite relative). The power of the museum as a history book representing events in one light or another. How much does the visitor trust the museum? Do they consider it an agent of genuine knowledge? Have there been episodes where museums abused the trust of their audiences by instilling false truths?

The second dialogue was with a pretty smart sixteen-year-old guy. Wrapping up his views, adults should not impose "big art" on children from early age. He told me that parents always



took him to the Tretyakov Gallery when he was still a preschool kid. So today, all the masterpieces that are kept there invoke nothing but irritation. He's bored with them. He wishes he could have acquainted with them much later, like, nowadays, in order to have the chance to enjoy them. I should put it like this: is it necessary to introduce children to "high" art from very early age? What pros and cons does it entail? Adding from my own experience, my parents were really radical and would take me to the Hermitage and leave me there for hours. Perhaps, this is why my road to museum work was bendy, and I avoided a closer contact with museums for a long time. But it may also be that the early baptism of fire has borne fruit twenty year later, who knows. Another thing is that I introduce my four-year-old daughter to museums very carefully now. Using short but regular visits, after an agreement with her and a special preparation (we discuss in advance what is awaiting inside and why it might be interesting). Obviously, even the most "austere" museums today incline toward inclusion and realize that space has to be attractive and friendly for everyone. So, I wish in the future, museums will no longer be somewhat of a punishment for children.

## Alevtina Anisimova's Diary

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**Alevtina Anisimova** (b. 1995, Petrozavodsk)

I graduated in Pedagogical Education: English and German Languages from Petrozavodsk State University. I have been a Garage intern since September 2018. I worked as a moderator on the project *Art Experiment. The Miracle of Light*. Currently my main interest is the potential possibilities of using pedagogical education in a museum environment.

Since I joined the project later than the rest of the mediators, I was a little bit (in fact, a lot) scared. The fear of getting someone into trouble, or failing to cope with my work, etc. is always there in my head, especially when I'm overthinking too much (in this particular case, I mean thinking about what a mediator should be like, and how well I fit this role at all). With every shift however, it got slightly better and easier, as I gradually realized that not all of the visitors eagerly engage in dialogue, not everyone is ready to share their thoughts with a stranger, and some simply don't have enough time to spend in the Museum, and therefore I shouldn't blame myself for all these things. Obviously, it is really nice to meet with people who initially wish to communicate—in my case, for instance, a dialogue over a cup of coffee is usually initiated by the visitors. This is why these conversations happen not so often, but it doesn't make them less valuable. Frankly speaking, I feel more comfortable when talking to people "outside of the stairs", and such dialogues are usually more intense, since people don't feel tied to a certain issue—but rather see that their opinion is interesting as such, not within a selected project.

It is quite amazing that people make Linda's puppets so enthusiastically! And it is equally amazing how their opinions about her workshop vary. For example, one woman, when sharing her thoughts with me, said that participatory projects should not be temporary. Roughly speaking, a person should be able to come to a museum and see what they left there ten decades ago. She also noticed that our space helps people concentrate too much, and when it happens, people tend to do what they already can do, instead of discovering their creative potential. She made me think about it.

One man suggested an interesting way of engaging the audience, somewhat of the Chinese

whispers game: the mediator talks to a person, tells them about the project, etc., and then leaves. The person cannot leave until they pass this knowledge to someone else, and so on. But then there is the question why we need mediators at all, if visitors can interact with themselves. And whether we should control such interaction.

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