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The Brotherhood of New Blockheads (1996–2002)

February 16 until May 26, 2019

Media Conference: Friday, February 15, 2019, 11 AM

Opening: Friday, February 15, 2019, 6 PM

Press Release

Between 1996 and 2002 the artists Vadim Flyagin, Igor Panin, Sergey Spirikhin, Inga Nagel, Vladimir Kozin, Maxim Rayskin, Oleg Khvostov, and Vladimir Lyashko undertook around one hundred smaller and larger performances. This art was chock-full of laconism and absurdity, modesty and exaggeration, humor and tragedy. At first glance, the actions appear pointless, irrelevant, dilettantish, and hopeless, which is why the performances went little-noticed at first. In reality the performances were engaged, intelligent, humanist, and full of eccentric purpose. Art, as it is practiced here, has high demands without overestimating itself. Everything happened in the moment, without any thought about how these actions could be turned into something more. It was art teeming with life and thoughts, with all its abysses. Thanks to these performances one is able to fathom the chaotic 1990s in Russia for the first time. The Soviet Union was disintegrating, unregulated capitalism was spreading, and yet, hope in democracy persisted. Visibly, this was also a fundamentally physical experience, one unabashedly retraced in the artists' performances.

All this, but also the obvious humor, the contradictions, abundance and the seemingly lacking form are reflected in the exhibition at Kunsthalle Zürich. It is accompanied by a booklet, consisting of descriptions of the performances as remembered by the New Blockheads in 2016.

The exhibition is curated by Peter Belyi in collaboration with Kunsthalle Zürich.

Kunsthalle Zürich is supported by:



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