The European Biennial of Contemporary Art  MANIFESTA 10  Parallel Event

VALERY KATSUBA
100 YEARS ON and MORNING

The St. PETERSBURG ACADEMY of FINE ARTS
11 June - 6 July 2014, Universitetskaya Naberezhnaya, 17

Curated by Semyon Mikhailovsky
Presented by The St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Art
Sputnik Gallery, New York
Scientific-Research Museum of the Russian Academy of Arts
Part 1. 100 YEARS ON. The Studios in the St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts 1913/14 and 2013/14

“Nostalgia, in the creative hands of Valery Katsuba, becomes contemporary art, art which is symbolic of our time.”

Frédéric Mitterand, writer, formerly French Minister of Culture

“In the late 1990’s, when I was working at the Archive of Cinema and Photographic Documents, I happened to see a 1914 photograph by Karl Bulla taken at the St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts, “Life-drawing Class in Professor Makovsky’s Studio”. The photo captured my imagination and I asked to make a copy. Meanwhile, and even before that, my imagination was being captured by the Academy itself. I remember returning from the Mariinsky Theater after its performances and every time wanting to select a route that would take me to Zamyatina Lane, which would lead me to the Neva Embankment, which opened the view onto the Academy... It majestically rose before my eyes and excited me by thoughts of what may be behind its walls.”
Thus, my two anchors in St. Petersburg, the Academy of Arts and the Mariinsky Theater, became connected in my mind. And, so on every occasion I went to them asking myself, if these “objects of my desire” weren’t in this city, would I still be here?

From time to time, I shot at the Academy and at the Mariinsky. Once, I managed to combine the objects of my desire when I photographed for Harper’s Bazaar UK the prima ballerina of the Mariinsky Theater, Oksana Skorik, in the interior of the Academy museum. But neither photographing athletes, nor ballerinas gave me complete satisfaction, and the Bulla photo would not leave my imagination. I felt that I was missing an essential element of what The Academy had. The photographs were lacking the energy of creation, the silence of labor in which artworks are born and take on their final forms.

Fifteen years have passed since I printed out that academic photo. And then by accident, I happen to bump into Semyon Mikhailovsky, with whom I have been friends since the early 1990s. That meeting happened in the summer of last year when I went to the Academy to confirm the location for the photo shoot with the Mariinsky theater solists, and before going inside, I stopped to have a smoke. Just as I lit up, I saw at the entrance Semyon Mikhailovsky, by now the rector of the Academy (which, at the time, I did not know).
That meeting became the beginning of the project “100 YEARS ON”. Exactly 100 years after Karl Bulla’s photo, I became very fortunate to have the opportunity to shoot in the studios of the Academy of Arts nude models, students and professors. I have always been interested by the relative constancy of landscapes – whether natural or architectural – and the human fates, faces and historical eras that go through them. I am interested in how, through time, our plasticity, our views, our body shape changes – or whether these things change at all. And the building of the Academy, which has remained constant through centuries, is a perfect setting for exploring these questions, especially given that besides the preservation of the walls, therein lives the memory of generations of artists and the captivating magic of creativity.”

Valery Katsuba

Photograph by V. Katsuba

Left: Drawing Class. Student Architects. 2014. Photograph by V. Katsuba
Semen Mikhailovsky, curator, rector of The St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts

“Many different photographers have photographed at the Academy of Arts: amateurs and professionals. During Soviet times, there was a laboratory here where many great people worked, not only photographing artists’ oeuvres or academic ceremonies, but also helping students develop film and printing pictures. I remember there was this old equipment and under the vaulted ceilings moths fluttered in mysterious twilight. It was Baron Clodt who first worked on opening the photo laboratory at the Academy.

It should be noted that the first photographic images – specifically three images by Daguerre – were exhibited within the academic walls of the Academy in the fall of 1839. One of the first people to receive the honorary title of Photographer of the Imperial Academy of Arts ‘for the invention of a special photographic method’ was Andrey Karelin. And we should not forget that Kramskoi and Kuindzhi earned a little additional money on the side by retouching photographs.

Thanks to photographs created 100 years ago by Karl Bulla, we know how meetings of the Council presided over by the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna took place and how Feodor Chaliapin was celebrated in our dining room. In the not too distant past, Sarah Moon, Deborah Turbeville, Fritz von der Schulenburg and Philip-Lorca diCorcia did photo shoots for fashion magazines at the Academy. They were enchanted by the Academy, and their enthusiasm inspired us.

Valery Katsuba, who photographed at the Academy for Harper’s Bazaar UK, is my old friend. When I suggested to him photographing in the studios of the Academy professors and students, instead of models, he magnanimously agreed. Katsuba appreciates and loves the Academy. His works are steeped in a sense of respect for the Academy as a custodian of classical traditions of art. He poeticizes the Academy in his works, creates a perfect image of the art school, perhaps far beyond reality, but seductively beautiful.”
“Katsuba is a master of aesthetics, and he describes the human body with the precision and elegance of Praxiteles; but within each of those beautiful bodies, he finds a beating heart.”

Andrew Solomon, writer

100 Years On, the exhibition:
7 b/w archival photographs, years 1913/14, St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts, photographs by K. Bulla and M. Breytaks, 20x30 cm

Photographs by V. Katsuba: 10 color photographs, 100 x 100 cm; 12 color photographs 50x50 cm and 7 photographs 35 x 35 cm, color and b/w
Part 2. MORNING

The heroes of “MORNING” are photographed separately, perhaps in different homes, even different cities or countries. What truly links the different characters is the awakening to a new day. Perhaps they are together, perhaps not, we can only guess and never be certain…

A woman in her shift puts on her stockings. A man in a living room with a modern lamp, a 1930s armchair, in some timeless space, doing his morning exercises. Or coming out of the bathroom, wiping his head with a towel as he greets the first light of day, opening up his wardrobe to take out fresh clothes… Tranquility, mystery, qualities that accompany the birth of each new day, are reflected here in the characters’ environment, in their faces illuminated by the morning light. Awakenings shot in New York, St. Petersburg, London, Santiago de Chile, the place is not important. New emotions are born, new longings, existing outside of time or space; these scenes balance on the divide between dream and reality, on the cusp of the departing night and the new-born day. A day that is going to be as beautiful as those newly awakened.

Part 2: 14 black-and-white gelatin silver prints, 3 color C-Prints, 60 x 60 cm
Morning. Marcia, Santiago de Chile. 2013. Photograph by V. Katsuba


Morning. Rafaela, Santiago de Chile. 2013. Photograph by V. Katsuba

Morning. Yaroslav, Moscow. 2013. Photograph by V. Katsuba
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
I was born in the village of Sergeyevichi in 1965. At that time the village was in the Soviet Union - now it is in the Republic of Belarus. Space flight was already under way, and my father liked it when my mother put on high-heeled shoes and styled her hair into a “babetta” for village festivals. My father and elder brother taught me how to work, while my mother and younger brother indulged my penchant for the arts and sciences. At school I was friendly with the history teachers Galina Drozd and Natalia Demidova. On dark winter evenings Galina would often tell me about her sailor nephew’s voyages around the world. When I left school at 16, I went to study at the Admiral Makarov Naval Academy in St. Petersburg (then Leningrad).

I graduated from the Academy with distinction, thanks to Professor Vladlen Adamenko, but I did not spend much time at sea. I met the writers Sergey Kalinin and Catherine Phillips, and began to write myself, with encouragement from the artist Bella Matveyeva.

Just before the year 2000 I became interested in old photography. My new friends, the wonderful stylist Katharina Flohr and the well-respected photographer Neil Kirk, realised the seriousness of my intentions and said “You should take pictures yourself!” I started doing just that. And my first experiments were supported by Olga Sviblova at the Moscow House of Photography and Carine Roitfeld.

Valery Katsuba currently lives and works in St. Petersburg, Russia www.katsuba.net

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS
The State Russian Museum | St Petersburg, Russia
Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art | Moscow, Russia
Contemporary Art Museum “2 de Mayo” | Madrid, Spain
Korea Print Photography Promotion Association | Seoul, Korea
Moscow House of Photography | Moscow, Russia
French National Association of Contemporary Art | Paris, France
State Archive of Film and Photo Documents | St Petersburg, Russia

SELECT EXHIBITIONS
2013 Velocius, Altius, Fortius | ArtMost Gallery | London I UK
2013 In Memory of Vladik Mamshev-Monroe | State Rusian Museum | St. Petersburg | Russia

2012 ArtIsArtIsArt | Museum of Contemporary Art | Moscow, Russia
2011 Nijinsky and the Diamonds | Anna Nova Gallery | St. Petersburg, Russia
2011 Albatross | National History Museum | Moscow, Russia
2011 Nijinsky and the Diamonds | Royal Academy of Arts | London, UK
2011 Versus | Sputnik Gallery | New York, USA
2010 Air Flight. Body Shock | GMG Gallery | Moscow, Russia
2010 Sport | State Russian Museum | St. Petersburg, Russia
2009 Art About Art | State Russian Museum | St. Petersburg, Russia
2007 Metamorphoses of the Monarch | State Russian Museum | St. Petersburg, Russia
2006 Phiscultura | Circulo de Bellas Artes | Madrid, Spain
2005 Seasons. My Friends | Moscow museum of modern art | Moscow / Russia
2001 Every Passion is Blind | XL Gallery | Moscow, Russia
2000 Christmas Skating, St. Petersburg | Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich Palace | St. Petersburg, Russia

BOOKS
2013 Velocius, Altius, Fortius | ArtMost Fondation | UK
2007 Phiscultura | Valery Katsuba | Turner Publishing | Spain

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St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts
Universitetskaya Naberezhnaya, 17
June 11 - 24, Italian Hall, Monday - Friday, 12.00 - 17.00

The Scientific-Research Museum of the Russian Academy of Arts
Universitetskaya Naberezhnaya 17, St. Petersburg
June 25 - July 6, Blue Hall, Wednesday - Sunday, 11.00 - 18.30

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Sputnik Gallery, New York
Scientific-research Museum of The Russian Academy of Arts
ProLab, Moscow (Technical Partner)
Harper’s Bazaar Art, Russia (Information Partner)