

M HKA V—A—C

LENA KOLESNIKOVA IS SELECTED FOR PRESENT CONTINUOUS, M HKA / V-A-C ACQUISITION PROGRAMME

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp (M HKA) and V-A-C Foundation are delighted to announce this year's winner of Present Continuous, an annual scheme set up to support and promote the new generations of Russian artists. A graduate of KICA (the Krasnodar Institute of Contemporary Art), Lena Kolesnikova's work, titled Co-op Sunrise, looks at people's lives in the country's growing "garage cooperatives", a new underground phenomenon spreading across the country's regional areas in particular, whereby people are converting these containers, traditionally used for parking, into small businesses.

Present Continuous is an annual scheme set up to support and promote the new generations of Russian artists living and working both in Russia and abroad, and to open up Russian contemporary art to the wider world. A further objective of the project is to provide a platform for open reflection and critical debate about emerging Russian artists and to raise the issue of existing collecting policies, thereby bridging the gap between aspiring young artists and artists whose works are typically represented in museum collections. Established as a joint initiative of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Antwerp (M HKA) and V-A-C Foundation, Present Continuous further develops a major objective of both institutions: V-A-C is dedicated to the international presentation, production and development of Russian contemporary art all over the world, and its mission is to encourage and promote homegrown talent; while M HKA is the only European museum to consistently work with Russian contemporary art today, as part of its Eurasian perspective, collaborating with other international institutions in the same field, making M HKA a primary starting point for post-Soviet art in Europe.

Present Continuous had to be organised slightly differently this time due to the current restrictions, but not being able to meet face to face led to the advantage of deciding to focus on the expanse of Russia. M HKA and V-A-C invited four grass roots institutions from four different corners of Russia to each nominate one artist. The institutions are KICA (Krasnodar Institute of Contemporary Art), PubLab, part of the Peace Square Museum Centre, in the region of Krasnoyarsk, SOEA (School for Engaged Art) from St Petersburg and VSCA (Vladivostok School of Contemporary Art).

The final list of nominees for this year featured **Lena Kolesnikova**, **Aleksey Martins**, *neofeminist group Nadenka* and **Milana Pestereva** (see attached for details of their research and work).

Their work was considered by permanent jury members, **Bart De Baere**, Director of M HKA (the Museum of Contemporary Art of Antwerp), **Teresa Iarocci Mavica**, Director of V-A-C Foundation; and this year's guest jury member, German curator and writer **Anselm Franke**, Head of Visual Arts and Film at Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW). After a productive discussion, the jury decided to award **Lena Kolesnikova** for her consistent study of sociocultural ties between architecture and man. Her winning project *Co-op Sunrise* will become part of M HKA's already rich collection of Russian contemporary art.

Kolesnikova's work brings architecture back to the deeper, more reflective sphere in which it belongs - as a formative part of society. She uses a broad range of media, ranging from interviews with inhabitants to hand drawn images of the buildings, resonating with the casuistic reality of individual actions adding value to the garages. *Co-op Sunrise* will not only go into the Museum's collection, but a component of the project will also serve as a future residency space for local artists, and M HKA and the artist will work together to develop the right way to conserve the work and have it ready for future research and activation.

"This is one more bright facet in the collection of art from Russia in Antwerp, coming from a cultural field in which different traditions may flow into one another because they are driven by societal meaning rather than formalism. We welcome this mode of research architecture as a fully-fledged part of the field of visual art. An important part in the decision from our side to go for this project is the attention of M HKA for such reflective architecture; The key actor on our side is Luc Deleu, often seen as a utopic architect, pleading since his 1970 manifesto for Urbanism (thinking urbanism on the scale of our globe). As part of his reflection on the relation between systemic decision and individual liberty, Deleu sabotaged the legal obligation in Belgium that building permission requests could only be submitted by architects: as a matter of principle, he signed any plan brought to him by any person wanting to build. The garage cooperative project is beautifully within this line of reflection. In this way, we link up Deleu with the long and magnificent lineage of architectural reflection in Russia."

Bart De Baere

"In a situation of closed borders and weakened partnerships, it was crucial for V-A-C and M HKA to proceed with Present Continuous. Institutional participation, systemic support and solidarity remain an urgent need. Present Continuous has always been a project about the hope for change and the search for a new future. In this current climate, we decided to focus on collective production and action. The installation of Elena Kolesnikova was created with the active participation of citizens and colleagues of the artist, which shows her ability and readiness for dialogue. The primary responsibility of modern cultural institutions today must be to provide opportunity to creatives from all regions of the country."

Teresa Iarocci Mavica

"It was not easy to choose a winner among such strong and promising nominees. However, it seemed to us that Lena Kolesnikova's work, her involvement in urban issues, most clearly reflect the zeitgeist. And the narratives about the connection between man and the system generously enrich our understanding of the complexities of everyday life and creativity."

Anselm Franke

"I am so pleased that my work will go into the collection of the M HKA Museum, as the project 'Co-op Rising' is a socially significant story that has become a cultural one that reflects other similar processes taking place in all modern cities, not only in Russian, but all over the world – something understandable and familiar to all, regardless of geographical location. For me personally, it is a great success in the work, inspiration and support for future research."

Lena Kolesnikova.

"We are all very happy for Lena Kolesnikova. In our opinion, Lena's works are not only connected with the local context, but also interesting and important on an international level. Supporting artistic processes outside Moscow is very important. We strive for decentralization and we hope that other programmes will follow suit and allow many other artists from different Russian cities to become visible in the Russian and international context."

Stepan Subbotin (Founder of the SIP artist group and KICA, *the Krasnodar Institute of Contemporary Art*)

For more information on Lena Kolesnikova, please see v-a-c.ru

NOTES TO EDITORS

V-A-C Foundation produces new culture together with artists and audiences alike. It is a platform for open discussion aimed at redefining the contemporary landscape. Working with local communities, V-A-C promotes its exhibition, publishing, performative and learning programmes beyond all disciplinary boundaries and thus constantly resets the coordinates for dialogue within a new global geography. This methodology is applied in all V-A-C initiatives, taking place in its Venetian space, through international, cross-institutional partnerships and in its future home for arts and culture in Moscow, GES-2.

v-a-c.org

M HKA is the Flemish museum for contemporary art, film and visual culture, based in Antwerp. It takes the international post-war avant-garde as a base to engage with the art from the contemporary multipolar world. M HKA connects artistic issues and broader societal issues, international and regional perspectives, artists and audiences, tradition and renewal, reflection and presentation. It positions itself as a Eurasian museum, interpreting Eurasia in the vein of Joseph Beuys and Jimmie Durham. It organized substantial exhibitions of Russian art and has a major collection of contemporary art from the former soviet sphere.

muhka.be