

INTRODUCTION

Which is also a speech read over a battered corpse that had been removed from a noose and laid out to rest in a fine ditch.

The *Gallows* is simultaneously about, and is a product of, slippery “vacation vision.” We began and are now finishing it at a time of necessary travel, its accompanying disorientation, and the claustrophobia of weighty and unwanted leisure. Mexico City and Kiev are the end-points of our itinerary, and in-between are several months of extorting materials from friends and comrades in New York, our actual living place.

In this publication we attempted to follow and describe the trajectory of a glazed and nervous eye, which takes in the textures of things, and all the associations that they give birth to, but fails to understand their function. We gathered several accounts of such suspended, disassociative perception without celebrating, but also without condemning them. Rather, our intention was to consider the broad spectrum of “checking out”: its poetry, its stupidity, its cunning, its rebellion.

We do not want to praise distraction for distraction’s sake. Instead, we would like to remind about the necessity to historicize it. To treat it as a tactic.

Contributions to the *Gallows* are clustered around several semi-clandestine, semi-subcultural groups and movements – the Spanish Movida of the 1980s, the OBERIU of the 1930s Soviet Union, the Anti Banality Union (working in the context of 2012’s movement of the squares) and et al. artists’ group of today. Each shares a common method of invention, forcing attention to slip onto secondary things, to undo and reconstruct perceived reality by magnifying details and building from them a new whole.

Louie Dean Valencia-García provides an article on **la Movida**, a cultural movement that despite its Romantic stock of fascinations – drugs, vampires, childishness, sleep – was crucial in ushering neoliberal culture into stagnant post-Franco Spain. La Movida is an example of the prolonged childhood of an entire generation, a symptomatic lethargy and oblivion that liquidated a static culture into something more pliable, and yet paved the way for the anemic images of capitalism.

An interview with **et al.** artists’ group also balances between wanting to undo capitalist entertainment and celebrating with complete abandon an alternative spectacle built from its refuse and scraps. After extensive tourism around closed and decaying North American cinema palaces, et al. built their own Blue Balcony cinema, an imagined fragment of one such theater. The Balcony, planted in the Lower East Side’s garden of Le Petite Versailles in March of 2013, was a cinema stripped of its screen. Those who attended were led into a small, intricately decorated room housing a set of fourteen seats, which faced directly at a cement wall. Film soundtracks floated over the installation, while variable pulsations of light from sirens or passing cars revealed the termite proliferation of cracks on the wall before disappearing and rendering it whole again.

Bradley Eros' writing about narcolepsy continues the line of meditations in a Romantic key about virtues of passivity and rites of resistance done by not quite paying attention to what is happening on screen.

Leonid Lipavsky's *Investigation of Horror* is translated here, in fragments, as a sample of OBERIU's thinking about the geometry of parallel enchanted worlds. This association of writers, formed in the Soviet Union by Daniil Kharms and Alexander Vvedenskiy in 1927, obsessively pursued the practice of "zooming in" on mundane objects, cataloguing the seduction and horror of their sudden swoon.

The political repression that most OBERIUty suffered for their absurdist poetry, circus-like performances and mysticism, very much against their intentions, endowed their gestures, in legacy, with a genuinely counter-cultural valiancy. While delivering closing statements during the trial of Pussy Riot in August of 2012, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova called her group the "students and heirs of Vvedenskiy." Once again, a rather childish and "disoriented" act, against all intentions, illuminated the tragic depth of the absurdity of the repressive state.

The **Anti-Banality Union** provides an internal monologue in the form of a self-conducted interview on the function of cinema. And why cinema? "Maybe because we like to talk in, during, and through movies. It was always this way, for the first thirty years at least, that the theater was a popular site of collective indiscipline, and the screen was something to be analyzed and attacked, if not ignored, together." The Union, like hecklers in the darkness, use their anonymity to make totalizing claims, to attack without rebuttal, and to speak for a "we" without location. Their entirely detoured output plucked from blockbuster films seeks to populate its own archetypes in the darkness of the crowd.

Stewart Uoo, Chris Maggio, Eduardo Haro Ibars, Anastasiya Osipova, and Matthew Whitley offer visual art, photography, poetry, and prose that require no background introduction.

Finally, by way of a post-script and a dedication of sorts, we would like to mention **Jerry Koch**, a young anarchist who, in May of 2013, while we were working on this publication, was put to prison for resisting to testify in a grand jury investigation. Jerry is accused of no crime. His silence and his "suspension" from normal life and education are of a wholly contemporary and political nature. For Jerry passivity itself is the transgression.

- Anastasiya Osipova & Matthew Whitley

August 2013

D.F./Kiev/St-Petersburg/NYC