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# Pickle Bar presents Slavs and Tatars

With Apparatus 22, Andrius Arutiunian, Anatoly Belov and George Babanski, Giulia Cretulescu, Selin Davasse, Ana Gzirishvili, Zishi Han and Wei Yang, Tang Han/Xiaopeng Zhou, Nikolay Karabinovych, Olga Micinska, Shalva Nikvashvili, Afrang Nordlöf Malekian, Goda Palekaitė and Jonas Palekas, Paola Revenioti, Filipka Rutkowska, Anhar Salem, Ala Savashevich, Bojan Stojčić and Olia Sosnovskaya.

Exhibition: 08.12.2023 — 17.03.2024

Opening + performance: 'Transliterative tease' by Slavs & Tatars: 08.12.2023, 20:00 — 24:00 hrs.

Location: West Den Haag in the former American Embassy, Lange Voorhout 102, The Hague

**'Pickle Bar presents' at West Den Haag is the first large-scale presentation of Slavs and Tatars' work in The Netherlands. The artist collective will present a new commission alongside existing works addressing the politics, materiality, and volatility of language. Through Slavs and Tatars' Pickle Bar initiative, works from fifteen artists in their network will be paired with a performative program by 5 international artists.**

Since its founding in 2006, the art collective Slavs and Tatars has demonstrated keen insight into polemical issues in society, paving new ways for contemporary discourse through their unique form of knowledge production, which includes popular culture, spiritual and esoteric traditions, oral histories, modern myths, as well as scholarly research, all focused on an area East of the former Berlin Wall and West of the Great Wall of China, known as Eurasia. Starting as a book club, Slavs and Tatars has developed a distinctive practice around in-depth research cycles, which spans historical and cultural enquiries, academic research and translates them into various forms of creative expression, such as artworks, lectures, performances, and literary works. Over the past five years, Slavs and Tatars have expanded their already capacious practice of exhibitions, lectures, and publications to include a mentorship and residency program for emerging professionals from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. A further initiative has been Pickle Bar, both in its permanent space in Berlin as well as pop-ups worldwide, expanding their Eurasian platform beyond the confines of traditional institutions.

Slavs and Tatars has developed over the past years an extensive art practice and knowledge production. Their cycle of research 'Pickle Politics' looks at fermentation as an evolving process of creative agitation which produces works, events, experiences and knowledge by feeding off itself. This dynamic lends additional depth to their exhibition at West Den Haag, an art institution located in the political heart of the Netherlands. It's precisely the symbiotic process that Slavs and Tatars exemplify which offers a new context for the polarized political opinions and inventories that arise in modern times due to fear of change, acceleration and impermanence in both public and private spheres. Resulting in increasing demand for homogeneity, national identity, stability, and tradition. A Slavic version of the aperitivo bar serving simultaneously as a performance space, Pickle Bar was

launched by Slavs and Tatars in 2020, seeking to delve into the practices and symbolism associated with fermentation to construct a political narrative using the notion of decay, rotting, and sourness, as a key to a different, less pasteurized account of modernity.

Thanks to modern interventions, from the fridge to preservation with food additives, our food can be purified from its living environment, and the risk of contamination can be tightly controlled, extending its shelf life. Alternatively, rich traditions of fermentation, which the region of Eurasia in particular is known for, offer yet another relationship to the food. Acid-producing and decomposing bacteria alter the initial character of the food product, enabling it to undergo souring and transformation, making each product unique in taste and enriched in healthy probiotics. Embracing change and decay rather than avoiding them, the process of fermentation always seeks to create new living environments.

In the Pickle Bar, the artists and public engage in a dialogue through anything concerning the tongue, from ingestion to speech.

From this context, the installation 'Pickle Plaza' at West becomes a departure point from which to reflect on notions of hospitality and regionalism critical to the collective's works. The contributions of Pickle Bar alumni extend further the collective's interest in ingesting and vocalizing political agendas within the regional remit of Eurasia. From the subversion of language to the use of attire as a political statement, each work looks at the limits of ideologies and the edges of belief systems within the sour, if not salty, setting of Pickle Bar.

**Slavs and Tatars** (Germany) is an internationally renowned art collective devoted to an area East of the former Berlin Wall and West of the Great Wall of China known as Eurasia. The collective's practice is based on three activities: exhibitions, publications, and lecture-performances. Their work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, NY, 2012; Vienna Secession, 2012; Kunsthalle Zurich, 2014; Salt, Istanbul, 2017; Albertinum, Dresden, 2018; Neubauer Collegium, Chicago, 2022; Humboldt Forum, Berlin, 2022; Centre Pompidou-Metz, 2022 and CHAT, Hong Kong, 2023 among others. Slavs and Tatars has published more than ten books to date, including 'Wripped Scripped' (Hatje Cantz, 2018) on language politics; as well as a translation of the legendary Azerbaijani satirical periodical Molla Nasreddin (currently in its 2nd edition with I.B Tauris, 2017). In addition to launching a residency and mentorship program for young professionals from their region, Slavs and Tatars recently opened Pickle Bar, a slavic aperitivo bar-cum-project space a few doors down from their studio in Moabit, Berlin.

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**Apparatus 22** (RO) work between Bucharest, Brussels, and the SUPRAINFINIT utopian universe. They see themselves as a collective of daydreamers, citizens of many realms, researchers, poetic activists, and (failed) futurologists interested in exploring the intricate relationships between economy, politics, gender studies, and social movements to understand contemporary society.

**Andrius Arutiunian** (AM/LT) is based between Paris and The Hague. Arutiunian works with hybrid forms of music through installations, film, sculpture, and performances. Marked by hypnotic and enigmatic forms, the artist's works often study the notion of political and musical attainment.

**Anatoly Byelov and Gosha Babansky** (UA)

Lyudska Podoba is the first Ukrainian pop-queer band formed in 2012. Since then, the project has undergone several changes in its composition, but vocalist and songwriting Anatoly Byelov and musician Gosha Babansky constitute the core duo.

**Giulia Cretulescu** (RO) is based in Bucharest. Her works are part of her long-term artistic research into the ergonomic designs of protection, prosthetics, and tools that silently shape the body and diminish or amplify its vulnerabilities.

**Selin Davasse** (TR) lives and works in Berlin. In her research-based performance practice, she repurposes disparate literary and performative techniques to envision and enact the ethics of alternative presents and speculative futures.

**Ana Gzirishvili** (GE) is based in Tbilisi. Ana's experimental practice spans across different mediums such as film, CGI, drawing, painting, poetry, reading performances, installations, and sculptures. In her works, she often examines in-between spaces through working with poetry and translation as well as thinking about the verge of material and immaterial realms.

**Zishi Han** (CH) probes masochistic attachment to power structures through installation, sculpture, video and drawing. Drawn to forms that hold and let through, he constructs possessed and perverted apparatuses to dismantle previous relations and incubate unexplored desires.

**Wei Yang** (CH) explores human beings as a geographic subject in diasporic spaces. He layers collective memories to create hybrid images through myths, history and personal landscapes, which serve as sites of resistance against grand narratives and archival neglect.

**Tang Han & Xiaopeng Zhou** (CN) are based in Berlin. Across the mediums of film, video, installation, painting, Tang's practice questions the validity of things that have been taken for granted in everyday life through subtle approaches of storytelling and perception. Xiaopeng focuses on the practice of recording in art projects through reportorial drawing, to explore learning processes.

**Nikolay Karabinovych** (UA) is based in Antwerp and works across various media such as video installation, performance, sound, and sculpture. He explores the social histories of Eastern Europe, approaching collective and personal memory through analytical, conceptual, or interventionist tactics.

**Olga Micińska** (PL) is an Amsterdam-based visual artist. Also trained as a woodworker, she collaborates with various craft studios and has initiated The Building Institute, an experimental, non-formal platform that supports the professional development of female builders.

**Goda Palekaitė** (LT) is an artist working in the intersection of contemporary art, performance, artistic research, literature, and anthropology. Her practice evolves around projects exploring the politics of historical narratives, the agency of dreams and imagination, and social conditions of creativity.

**Jonas Palekas** (LT) is a chef and food artist whose practice and research interests include performative dinners, experimental food system design, speculations on food futures, advocacy of ecological relations, and microbiological activism.

**Shalva Nikvashvili** (GE) is based in Germany. His multidisciplinary practice spans painting, sculpture, performance, film, and costume design. In a provocative manner, his work explores the theme of personal identity and the freedom to choose it.

**Afrang Nordlöf Malekian** (IR/SE) puts historicity into use as a form of documentation and aspiration that calls for improbable and impossible futurities. It examines how narratives, hierarchies, systems, and language disappear, return, and transform in the most unexpected ways.

**Paola Revenioti** (GR) is based in Athens, Greece. Although active in the Greek LGBTIQ+ movement since the late '70s, Paola does not identify herself as an activist. Paola began publishing KRAXIMO, a trans-anarchist zine of 'revolutionary homosexual expression', in 1981. In recent years, Paola has been directing documentary films, dealing with historical and sociopolitical topics, often from the so-called 'margins' of society.

**Filipka Rutkowska** (PL) is based in Warsaw. Her work consists of performances, drawings, and installations that aim to understand 'the common' from a non-binary perspective. She also runs a column in Vogue Poland called 'Filipka and the big city,' where she explores a queer view of femininity and society.

**Anhar Salem** (YE/ID) Her artistic practice explores, documents, and reveals private spaces to the public realm through themes of everyday life, the body, and social media. Working primarily with video, Salem draws an emphasis on new forms of communication that critique video as a medium.

**Ala Savashevich** (BY) is based in Wrocław. Ala works in a wide range of mediums, including installation, photography, video, and performance art. Interested in memory as an object of historical analysis and heritage, the artist explores personal and collective experiences related to social changes and borders – both external and internal.

**Olia Sosnovskaya** (BY) is based in Vienna. Her textual, performative, and visual practices intertwine the notions of festivity, collective choreographies, and the political within the post-socialist contexts and beyond.

**Bojan Stojčić** (BA)'s works address the topics of autocolonialism in the meta-Yugoslav space. Using humor, poetical and geopolitical references and research, Stojčić explores the traces and transformations of the present and questions both the collective and individual perspectives on the peripheral 'Other' and the self.

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