

Stars turned into potatoes



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On July 5, 2021, in front of the parliament in Georgia, the enemies of democracy dropped the EU flag and erected a cross-shaped iron structure nearby. The next day, they even burned the flag. At the same time, we learned from the City Hall that the iron construction would be maintained until the area around Parliament was renewed. In 2023, radical groups again removed and burned the EU flag with the consent of the homophobic and pro-Russian party, the „ Conservative Movement. “ If in the first case this anti-constitutional vandalism „ was directed to the Marsh of Dignity “, two years later the target was generally the non-governmental sector: pro-Russian and therefore pseudo-patriotic groups demanded „ foreign influence agents “ to legislate, In the long run, to limit and weaken the non-governmental sector and free media.

In the context of politics, for the most part, Jenny Holzer's truism is outdated, and „ everything is delicately related to each other, “ because, against the background of the country's stagnation, the time passes (will be more correct if we say so, „ The more time we lose “), the more and more obvious for a large part of the population is the identity and methodology of Russian-influenced figures, which for radical groups is often subject to Jenny Holzer's second truism: „ Use, Which is dominant in the culture to change it quickly. “ No matter how paradoxical it may be, we follow this philosophical thesis of those who do not satisfy the existing status quo.

Consequently, the question is heard: in fact, the political scandal is deviated and what is it „ Dominant Culture, “ by manipulating which we want to change those who care about the European future of the country and those like them, Who wants to return Georgia to Russian orbit irreversibly? At this time, what are the hallmarks of our – group of both – fighting tools?

One such sign is undoubtedly the cross, and the cosmology of the whole Orthodox world, which, for example, modern artists often use „ illegally “; Because of this, they are also accused of condemning God. Along with the cross, as recent events have shown, this is the EU's star flag, the iconography of which is also read in Christian motifs. In this regard, I was interested in the letter of Kakha Gogolashvili, a senior researcher at the Rondel Foundation, according to which the current EU flag is based on the 19th-century statue of the Virgin Mary in the Cathedral of Strasbourg, the host city of the European Parliament: „ And a great sign appeared in the sky: a woman with the sun of Emo, a moon with a fingertips, and a crown of twelve stars standing on her head. “ (Revelation of John, 12:1).



Statue of the Virgin Mary, Cathedral of Strasbourg, 1858. Photo: Tangopaso

In general, the profile of policy critics, among many others, can be divided into two categories: the goal of some is to absolutely demonize the object of criticism (as it is Georgian e.Ts. In the case of the Conservative movement,) has taken place, and some are trying to heal the object of criticism in their own position. Perhaps this is the main essential difference between the neo-Soviet retrograde and the Eurosceptic in the direction of reform, many of which we will meet in modern European art circles.

One of them is Fernando J. Ribeiro, whom I visited a few days ago in his workshop, Lisbon. The first thing that caught my attention was the graphic portraits of „ this country of strength “. Portraits of Angela Merkel, Emmanuel Macron, Si Dzinpin, Jair Bolsonaru, Boris Johnson, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates and, among others, even Vladimir Putin have been replaced. Five invariants of each portrait were presented: seemingly identical, but still different.



Naked Gaze #11, 2022



Naked Gaze #3, 2021



Naked Gaze 2, 2020



Naked Gaze #1, 2020



Naked Gaze #5, 2022



Naked Gaze #12, 2023

This series, on which Ribeiro has been working for three years, shows the non-existent moment when it is possible to observe these face-forces. This practice of Ribeiro is also associated with the act of meditation: when an artist, even with

the myth of Sisyphus, tries to experiment with the same thing in a certain trance (about the same as Paul Cézanne did, When he was cultivating endless variations of Mont Saint-Victor). At this time his „ ego “ disappears as an artist; And as the artist himself told me, it's like a kind of biblical sacrifice: in order to neutralize „ the antagonist “, you have to lose yourself. This series, for me, had a second explanation: as if, in the conditions of continuous reproduction, trying to identify and revise the images of the artist, transforming them into the same abundance as they themselves look at ordinary citizens.



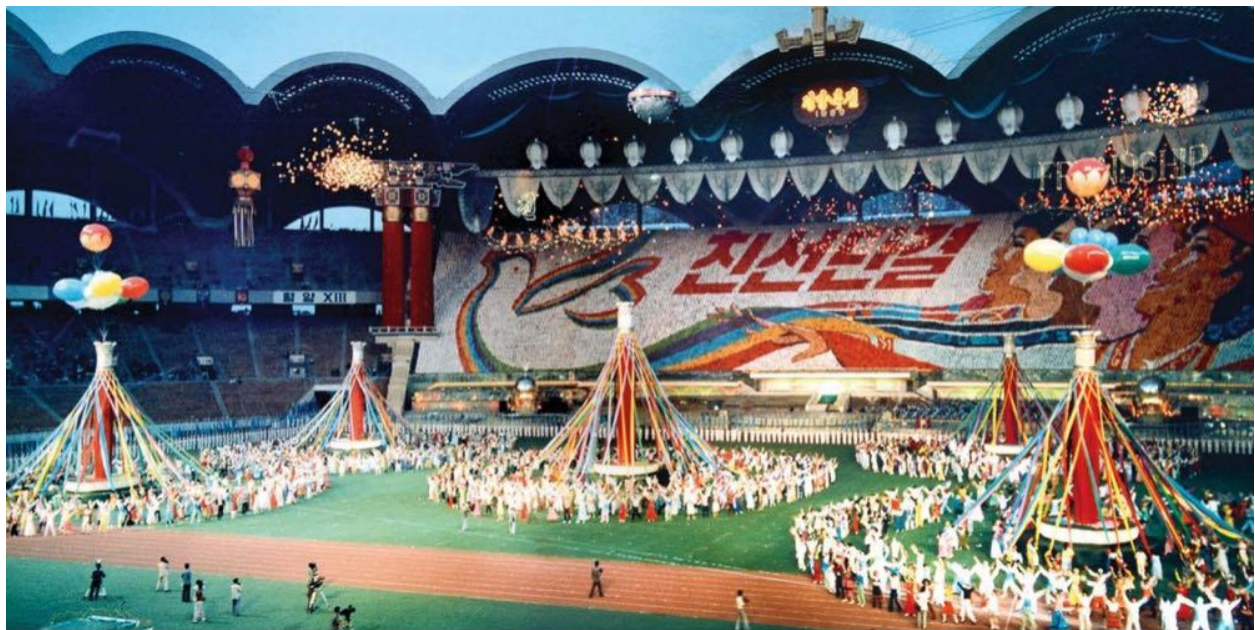
Naked Gaze #7, 2022



Naked Gaze #4, 2021

Some of the people depicted on the portraits of Ribeiro also have economic power with the political (and therefore) - money. This contextual decision is also logical, as the artist seems to be a leftist.

At one of the meetings, he also told me how he joined the International Delegation of Artists in 1989 to the thirteenth World Festival of youth and students organized by North Korea. The then President Kim Ir Sen decided to host the so -called socialist spirit artists. Even from capitalist countries. However, he was sorry when he discovered that the matter was not easy: not all left-wing-socialists carry communist ideas?! Ribeiro also recalls a few cases when, for the official Pkhenian, various delegations raised controversial banners - some focusing on the idea of a united Korean and some on the human rights crisis.



World Festival of Youth and Students, XIII Edition, Opening, 1989; Source: DPR „Korea”

It is on the basis of political ideology that we find in the artist's portfolio another series (Forever Mondrian), which are excerpts from magazines and newspapers, and their images are covered by the composition-motifs of Pete Mondrian's specific works.



Forever Mondrian (The Daily Telegraph, Friday 14 July 2017), 2020, C-print, 63x52 cm



Forever Mondrian (The New York Times, Wednesday, July 12, 2017), 2017, detail

The afterlife of Am

Although grass-roots activists have long been painted as alien agitators, a proud homegrown tradition persists.

Sarah Jaffe

The Communist, in the American imagination, has always been the ultimate outside agitator.

No matter how homegrown a resistance movement was, or how local the organizers were, the first response from those facing protest has always been to blame an outsider. This was as true for town hall protests during the February 2017 congressional recess as it was for anti-lynching struggles more than 80 years ago during the Great Depression.

For much of the past century in this country, this undesirable alien — seen as being from someplace foreign and in need of deportation back there — stood accused of invading to stir up trouble where there was none, where previously the locals had been docile and willing to accept whatever everyday inequality was their lot. Though many Communists were indeed immigrants, who would be targeted for harassment and deportation for as long as the party existed, many, too, were homegrown, born and raised in the same cities and towns as their persecutors.

The Communist Party U.S.A., founded in 1919, was closely tied to what emerged as the Soviet Union after the 1917 October Revolution, but the American party also drew on decades of local radical organizing. Many of its members came out of the Socialist Party, the labor movement and even anarchist activism, but the party also found a base among African-Americans when Communists proved willing to take on their struggles for self-determination.

Forever Mondrian (The New York Times, Friday 9 June 2017), 2017, detail

With these print collages, Ribeiro experiments on the main thesis of a modernist colleague, according to which: „ In order to achieve a certain spirituality in art, we must limit reality to it as much as possible, because the latter contradicts spirituality “. Ribeiro confronts Mondrian's visual concept in his own á-la-De Stijl works not only with reality, but also with the most rude manifestations of the latter. According to him, in this series, the paradigmatic / basic black sections

of Mondrian are translated into the texts of magazines and newspapers, which, in contrast, balances the geometric colored plane. Thus, on the one hand, Ribeiro's formalistic goal is to de-realize the media information field and uncompromising the abstraction, on the other hand, the viewer certainly does not want to „one look “ and begins a textual excavation where, again, Current political plastics are scattered for the artist: in one collage we see the tandem of ultra-right Trump and Putin, and in the other we present an article on how all authoritarian regimes in the West have turned opposition forces into communists and national enemies.

In the context of the criticism of the right-wing ideology by the artist, the series, also performed in 2009, with an alternative title – „ Horizon “, which made me think of interesting aspects in terms of research around religious themes.



Series: *Untitled (Horizon)*, 2009



Series: *Untitled (Horizon)*, 2009, at Galeria Presença, Porto

What do we see? In the classic frame, the desired flatness can no longer be broken and flowed towards us. The framework points to conventional rules and, the latter, to order and the supremacy of the hierarchy, which is characteristic not of the left but of the conventional right-wing ideology. Perhaps for the left-wing artist, this „ psychosomatic “work points to the accumulated capital and, in general, power, which, again, „ the powerful Amman “can no longer bear even in their own order zone and will be transferred to us.

Here, I think it is interesting to note the specifics of the Western-Eastern worldview: the presented installation-painting does not even develop a promising vision for Western iconography when the viewer enters the work deeply and deeply, but as if, it is based on the method of orthodoxy iconography, where the contents flow to you... comes to you... touches you...

And perhaps the saddest for me and, at the same time, one of the most landmark works in the Ribeiro portfolio was the „ Title (EU).“ We are faced with the blue matter of the flag (Satin); However, the stars are no longer here... they have disappeared, are hidden and are chipped at the bottom of the installation. The artist connects what I call the collapse with the phenomenon of celestial manna.

However, we are dealing not with divine food, but with the most characteristic global menu for masculinity.



European Union , 2012

For those who have frequent contact with representatives of the Western art space, it is not new that, even across Europe, the subject of many artists' artistic research is precisely the critique of pan-European politics and European artefacts; More precisely, Criticism of countries that make major decisions in the Union and thus create a sense of unity among the citizens of relatively weak countries, but also of a sense of proportion to the (). Some of them may even see the collapse of the European Union, but I still think that, like the population, most artists are against it. To my question, do you think that Portugal should be separated from the European Union, Ribeiro will answer me: „ No, by no means. “

Thus, in the first part of the article, I will mention two groups of critics, I think Fernand Ribeiro belongs to the second, which aims not to destroy, but to reflex and update itself; And this approach convinces the art critic, In Clement Greenberg's words: „ Western civilization is not the only one that has returned and raised the issue of its own race, although it has made the most efforts in this regard. “

I think the biggest sabotage of the Georgian Eurosceptic spirit is that with us in this regard, non-constructive leftists in the avant-garde, conservatives are self-sufficient, and in fact the neo-Soviet dystopian groups in alliance with Moscow are (because the conscious left knows that Russia cannot rely on the wealth of left-wing policy instruments not only Europe but even America).

It should also be noted that these groups are not constructive conservatives who base their ideology even on traditional orthodoxy spirit, as their center of attraction is not Georgia or „ traditional Russia, “but the neo-Soviet regime, where only 3% of the population is ecclesiastical... a regime that is a world leader in the number of abortions and where marriage and divorce rates are in the ratio of 3/2. All of this is not a defining indicator for me, as far as I do not share the right-wing conservative worldview, but from the perspective of the latter, is it clear that the stars of the star flag, not even in this order?!

Russian dissident Dimitri Savin, who currently lives in Lithuania, refers to himself as an orthodoxy-traditionalist. In an interview with The European Conservative, he says:

In order to understand Putin's system, you do not need to think about Russia's millennial history, kings, or even the church; In return, you have to remember the Soviet Union and Stalin. [People in the Soviet period] who worked under the Soviet system could not understand the ideas of freedom of speech or religion, and in order to maintain power, the Soviet system began to be restored. That is why I call Putin's Russia a neo-Soviet system. It is not a continuation of the historical [and Orthodox] Russia, but of the Soviet Union.

Eventually Rani comes out with this self-proclaimed Conservatives who are squeezing and burning EU flags, whose leaders are sharing photos taken on Moscow's Red Square in Soxel, big or not, with the pride they have. What is their political ideology, if in fact neither conservative-orthodox nor left-wing? Maybe the main thing for them is neither the stars or the cross, but the potatoes, especially if it weighs 3 kg?!



2018 Opposition Action with Potatoes; Source: Netgazeti

This article is based on my personal interview with Fernando J. Ribeiro. The article was prepared as part of The CERA Project's curatorial residence, which is funded by the European Union's EUCulture Program.