

# The *Buried Alive* Manifesto

Maxim Komar-Myshkin, 2004

1. We were born into the great cannibalistic Russian culture during the carnivorous era of communism. Later on, Russians found other ways of eating themselves up. We then left that bloody turf.
2. We left our bloody land for an entirely different bloody land. We landed in the oriental Jewish State, mostly because it would let us slip in. But that place demanded us to change, to transform, to evolve, to learn a new language and accept new values – to assimilate. How ridiculous! We disavowed our identity, sure, yes, of course – but we have no intention of assuming another!
3. The global village? America? Zionism? All are foul folly! The only thing this Middle-Eastern lot has going for itself is the warm weather.
4. We shall write, create and perform only in Russian. Our films, plays, songs and paintings will ignore what surrounds us. Let there be no mistake: we hate Russian culture, thus we hate ourselves. But our hatred is democratic and universal: we believe all societies equally deserve our hatred.
5. We are living Russian corpses, a pack of spiritual zombies. We intently buried ourselves in the Middle-East, but we are still living our Russian past. We are *the Buried Alive*.
6. We live in our secluded grave, equipped with water resistant shutters, acoustic walls and whole cupboards crammed full of products and substances. We take what we need from the

outside, so as to go outside as little as possible. The grave aims for self sufficiency, for we shall never trust the communities around us. We are willing to receive payments for whatever reason, but we hold no wish for company, thank you.

7. We shall never trust anyone who says “we,” for we witnessed how vile each “we” becomes once a “we” has any power. Thus, saying “we,” we do not trust ourselves.

8. Our grave is a ghetto, our ghetto is a gallery, our gallery is a grave.

9. We are the descendants of earlier packs of inconspicuous people, secretly producing in underground autarchies. Our grandparents: *Oberiu*; our parents: the Moscow's unofficial artists.<sup>1</sup> We inherited the gifts of surreptitious spectacles, hidden performances, silent sound.

10. But we are different than these glorious ancestors. They forged their poetry coffins and art graves as a form of defiance, sovereignty and liberation. But we were not buried alive by others. We freely imprisoned ourselves in our grave. Thus, we have no emancipatory hope or liberating vision, and we certainly cannot offer any to others.

11. Our ancestors imagined themselves emancipated through art. Our ancestors, through their despair saw a horizon ahead of them. Our ancestors imagined futures when imagining futures was still possible. We no longer possess a sense of a future. We know all too well how old and stale the future is. Nothing ages as grotesquely as the future.

12. Being that we are living our deaths, our future is behind us. We thus always look behind.

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1 *The Oberiu Group* was a literary avant-garde circle that produced exhilarating and horrifying absurd texts, which was suppressed and persecuted under Stalin. Its members, Daniil Kharmis, Alexander Vvdensky and Nikolai Zabolotsky were forced to write in secrecy, and their production was published only decades after they have perished. The Moscow unofficial artists, such as Ilya Kabakov, Victor Pivovarov and others, not recognized as artists in the USSR of the 60s-80s, created a closed and secret artistic scene in which they were their own audience, critics, gallerists and historians.

Our future is the past. We look backward, to the past, for our upcoming actions. We search the past for trends, innovations, fashions and merchandise. The garbage is fresher than the products on the shelves.

13. For us, the piles of rubble that are the past are dynamic compared to the present. The past makes the present seem like it belongs in the past.

14. Our enemies are not terribly smart, but they have their moments of genius. In such moments, they realize that the past is the future, and they twist, rape and exploit the past. Think of Vladimir Putin, who ingeniously revived both the red color of the communist past, and the Tsar's emblematic double-headed eagle to forge an ultra-nationalistic (if somewhat absurd and imbecilic), sense of pride and might. There's a lesson here: upcoming wars happen in the past. Those are the fronts where we barricade our bunker graves.

15. Being dead, past and buried, we vow to use only obsolete media. We shall use cameras, video, software and web tools, but only of the outmoded sort.

16. We shall use all media, we shall perform and make films. As behooves corpses, we shall be fecund. Nothing produces as much as a corpse. But our modes of choice shall be geriatric and senile, and our medium of choice, without a doubt, shall be painting - that astonishing zombie who would not lie down.

17. There is no meaning. Everything is senseless chaos. Yet this senseless chaos is the hotbed for evil intentions and conspirations. Paranoia is justified.

18. Within the futile muddle of life, there is magic, yet it only occurs under self-contradictory conditions; this can be perceived as the safety valve of magic against those who would aim to

exploit it. The first kind of magic is that which occurs only against the will of the magician. The second kind of magic appears at will, even though rarely and through great effort: it is pointless magic. It can serve no aim, but attaining it leaves the magician exhausted. The third kind of magic happens unexpectedly, and only when good-hearted people use it for evil purposes. We are good, and we shall strive to use all three kinds of magic in art.

19. We are friendly, but with friends like us, you don't need enemies. We laugh, and with our laughter you don't need tears.

20. Usually, you cannot see us, and that is our strength. When you do notice us, we appear weak, and that is our strength.

21. We are the Living dead. When we pass near you, regular folks who believe they are alive, you, who forge yourselves as landlords, when we brush against you we seem almost invisible, hardly a nuisance. Yet you feel a slight chill creeping up your spine. In sensing our presence, something in you discovers, for a brief spell that you are like us: displaced, irrelevant, lost, and already dead. Being that we are dead alive, we are a chilly reminder that you are like us, alive but dead.

22. We are the alien hidden inside who sucks your blood like a mosquito while you are sleeping, and like a mouse that makes your house its own. When you'll wake up, if you ever will, it will be too late. Either you have already become us, or we were long gone, seeking for other hosts to exploit. You shall then realize that we were you, and that you are lost.