

ILIA DOLGOV

Portfolio

Ilia Dolgov. Artist, writer, plant grower, UI/UX designer. Born in 1984 in Voronezh, Russia. Left country after the Russian fullscale invasion of Ukraine in 02.2022. Currently resides wherever it's possible.

Co-founder of Voronezh center for contemporary art. Winner of the "Innovation 2012" award in the sphere of contemporary art, "The best regional project" nomination. Nominee of the "Kandinsky Prize" for contemporary art in 2013 and 2015. Winner of the granting program of the "Garage" museum of contemporary art in 2013. Winner of the "Credit Suisse and Cosmospow art prize for young artists 2016". Works with XL Gallery (Moscow).

For the detailed impression please visit kustism.com

Reach me via kustism@gmail.com



The existing ways of bounding humans and nature seem insufficient to me. I am bewitched by singular organic creatures as well as by the gently-intricate environments that they create. For to delicately and deeply interact with these creatures and environments, I try to find new styles of relationships that lie somewhere between art, gardening, science, and children's curiosity. Feeling the pain of losing an infinite number of complex organic environments and communities, I try to touch this complexity through my artistic and life flow, try to continue the life of this graceful complexity in changing planetary conditions.

ID

CV

EDUCATION

- 2001-2006, Voronezh state university (Russia), undergraduate in Philosophy and Psychology
- 2010 Moscow institute of contemporary art (Russia), undergraduate in Visual Arts.

RESIDENCIES

- 2022 [upcoming] Crespo Foundation at Glenkeen Garden, Ireland.
- 2022 TUO TUO Arts, Finland. Supported by Artists at Risk (AR).sdf
- 2014 Büro für kulturelle Übersetzungen, Leipzig, Germany
- 2013 Spinnerei, Leipzig, Germany.

PERSONAL SHOWS

- 2019 "Breathing"-4, Rosa House of Culture, Saint-Petersburg, Russia.
- 2019 "Metabolic Design", XL Gallery, Moscow, Russia.
- 2019 "Flaming Archipelago", Vadim Sidur Museum, Moscow, Russia.
- 2018 "Drinking Set for Irises", FFTN space, Saint-Petersburg, Russia.
- 2017 "Reef", XL Gallery, Moscow.
- 2016 "Herbarium", Peresvetov Pereulok Gallery, Moscow.
- 2013–2016. "Forest Journal", web-based research project, forestjournal.org
- 2015 "Model of Nature, Goethe's model", XL gallery, Moscow.
- 2014 "Azoikum", Büro für kulturelle Übersetzungen, Leipzig, Germany.
- 2013 "Azoic", Moscow zoological museum, supported by Gallery 21.
- 2012 "Herbarium", H.L.A.M. Gallery, Voronezh.
- 2010 "Simple Machines", in collaboration with Polly, H.L.A.M. Gallery, Voronezh.
- 2009 "Utopia is What You Need, But You is Not Utopia Has Need For", VCCA, Voronezh.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 "Xists: A Metabolic Laboratory Inspired by Solomon Nikritin", Bauhaus Museum Dessau, Germany.
- 2019 "The Most Northern Chinatown (Barents Spektakel 2019)", Kirkenes, Norway.
- 2017 "Mir: the village and the world", Main project of the XII Krasnoyarsk Museum Biennale, Ploshchad Mira Museum Centre, Krasnoyarsk, Russia.
- 2017 "Wild Flowers (wildness is contextual!)", Narrative Projects Gallery, London, UK.
- 2017 "Garage Triennial of Russian Contemporary Art", Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow
- 2017 "Elegance", Russiantearoom gallery and curating agency, Paris
- 2016 "Experiences of the Imaginary", New Holland: Cultural Urbanisation project, Saint-Petersburg, Russia.
- 2016 "Living Alive", Arsenal center for contemporary art, Nizhniy Novgorod, Russia.
- 2015 "Observation of the open space", Divnogorie national reserve and museum, Russia.
- 2014 "One Place Next to Another", Winzavod center for contemporary art, Moscow, Russia.
- 2014 "Detective", Moscow museum of contemporary art, Moscow, Russia.
- 2013 "Space Lab", Spinnerei, MITost fesival, Leipzig, Germany.
- 2012 "Strategical project", 3rd Moscow biennale of young art, Russia.
- 2011 "Practical Knowledge", GMG gallery, Moscow, Russia.
- 2011 "Phantom Monuments", Garage museum of contemporary art, Moscow, Russia.
- 2010 "Live Museum of Performance", VCCA, Voronezh, Russia.
- 2010 "Taming Time", Project Fabrika, Moscow, Russia.
- 2009 "The Next Step is Ours!", VCCA, Voronezh, Russia.
- 2004-2005 Member of art groups "Border Investigations" and "Popular Border Investigations", Voronezh, Russia.

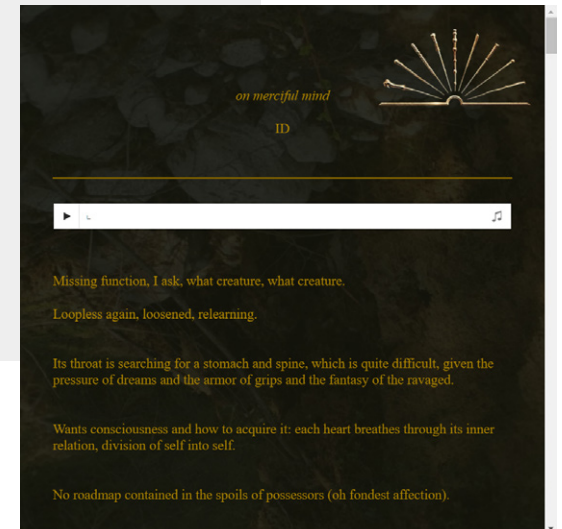
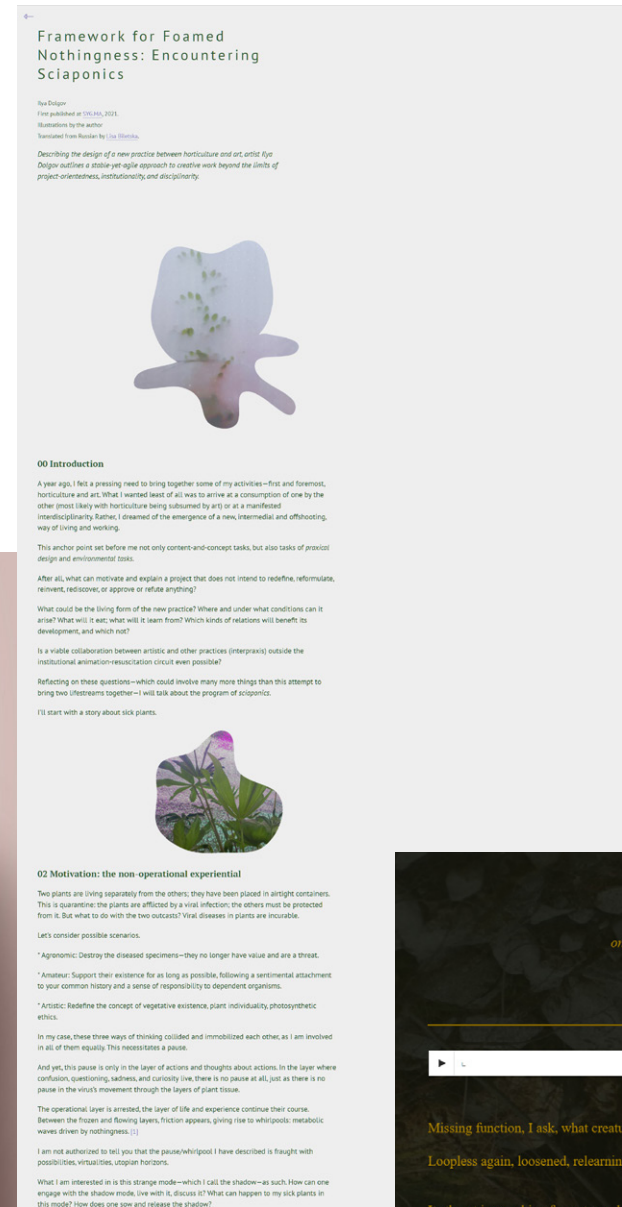
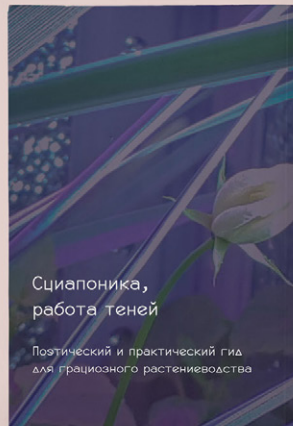
WRITINGS

Writing plays an essential role in the artist's ecosystem of experiences and processes. It is always practice-led — wherever by hiking, plant-growing, or engineering — and tends to foster for/inside this practice poetic and speculative theories.

Ilia Dolgov pays special attention to his writing style, often borrowing it from 18th and 19th C nature philosophy, romantic poetry, and nature books for children in the attempt to keep words naive, tender, and halting — as the experience itself.

This list contains stand-alone texts only, while there are more on the dedicated projects pages.

Please check kustism.com/writings.html for actual texts



SCIAPONICS

Sciaponics is a composite technology for grasping or initiating disturbing and graceful relationships between plant, human, machine, and symbolic selves.

To feed these relationships, sciaponics constructs its own cocoon between art and horticulture: a cocoon for dreamy plant-growing and grounded art.

Sciaponics is organized as a framework, a basket of found or experienced stories, metaphors, and practical solutions. These elements combine into components that become seeds for new pseudo-lives, personal or shared.

The name sciaponics comes from the Greek scia (“shadow”) and poneo (“work”), in resemblance to terms such as geaponics or hydroponics, and indicates the blend of two apparently dissimilar things: a fluttering suspension of the ordinary way of being and an engineering immersion in material pursuits.

The practical and artistic tasks of sciaponics are outlined in the text [“Framework for Foamed Nothingness: Encountering Sciaponics”](#).

The content of sciaponics can be revealed through the description of its main modules:



– *Experimental cultivation of wild plants in intimate environments*

During 2019-2022, sciaponics explored itself in attempts to grow wild plants of a temperate climate in an improvised artificial environment. An eccentric idea led to surprising failures, achievements, and a heap of accompanying experiences and reflections. All listed became one of the essential sciaponics narratives and the story of the book “Sciaponics, the work of shadows”.

Based on this experience, Sciaponics offers technical and conceptual assistance for growing unexpected plants in unsuitable situations.



– *Human meetings in sciaponic nooks*

Cultivation of wild plants gradually led to the emergence of a dedicated shady place — the studio “Flower str. 6”. It worked in a quasi-public mode and could be visited by arrangement. The guests were greeted by tea in peculiar porcelain, the murmur of power drivers for light installations, the rustle of mice, the honey aroma of flowering herbs, quiet conversations about earthworms, the Baltic coasts, ideas old and new, predatory and herbivorous mites. Something between garden meditation, encountering sciaponics, and an awkward first date. During these visits, sciaponic affects and dialogues were born and brought up; seeds, cuttings, and handfuls of compost were allocated.

Such intimate communication is vital for the metabolism of sciaponics: it unites human sensitivity, the generosity of plants, and the play of symbols in a mutually nutritious environment. Over the past two years, Flower str 6 has welcomed more than a hundred guests.

– Collective walks dedicated to unstable plant communities

Shady, quivering phytocenoses can be found everywhere, from carefully managed urban spaces to the gaps between industrial zones. Group sciaponics walks are devoted to getting to know these plant communities, developing the organs of awareness of them, and interacting with them. We have already visited high-tech city gardens, reclaimed lands, abandoned parks, weed wastelands, and forest clearings.



– Educational initiatives

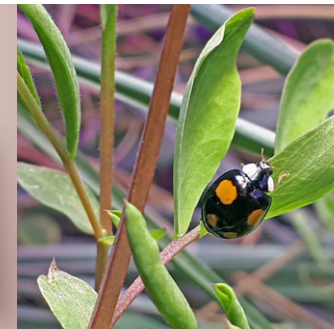
Sciaponics strongly gravitates towards the genre of “gardeners’ talk at the end of a long hot day”; it is full of stories about the life of specific plants and thriving and tragic growing cases. These stories are complemented by spontaneous, localized theories and poetic interpretations. Although the latter do not pretend to be a coherent system, sciaponics is easily transformed into educational projects of various formats: from individual talks and a traditional lecture course to a deeply engaged experimental group (all these are real examples).

The format of sciaponics — a framework — implies a readiness and even a need for its components (plant-growing, theoretical, artistic) to be pulled apart and introduced into new contexts.

– *Sciaponics, the Work of Shadows: A Poetic and Practical Guide to Graceful Plant-Growing*

This book is evidence and the result of assembling the sciaponic framework. Its genre wanders from a garden log to a set of koans, from an involved review of amateur horticulture to speculative theorizing. The writing is designed to be virulent: it doesn’t just talk about sciaponics but offers everything you need to start your own practice — like manuals for growing cacti or breeding tree frogs.

You can get acquainted with [one of the chapters](#)



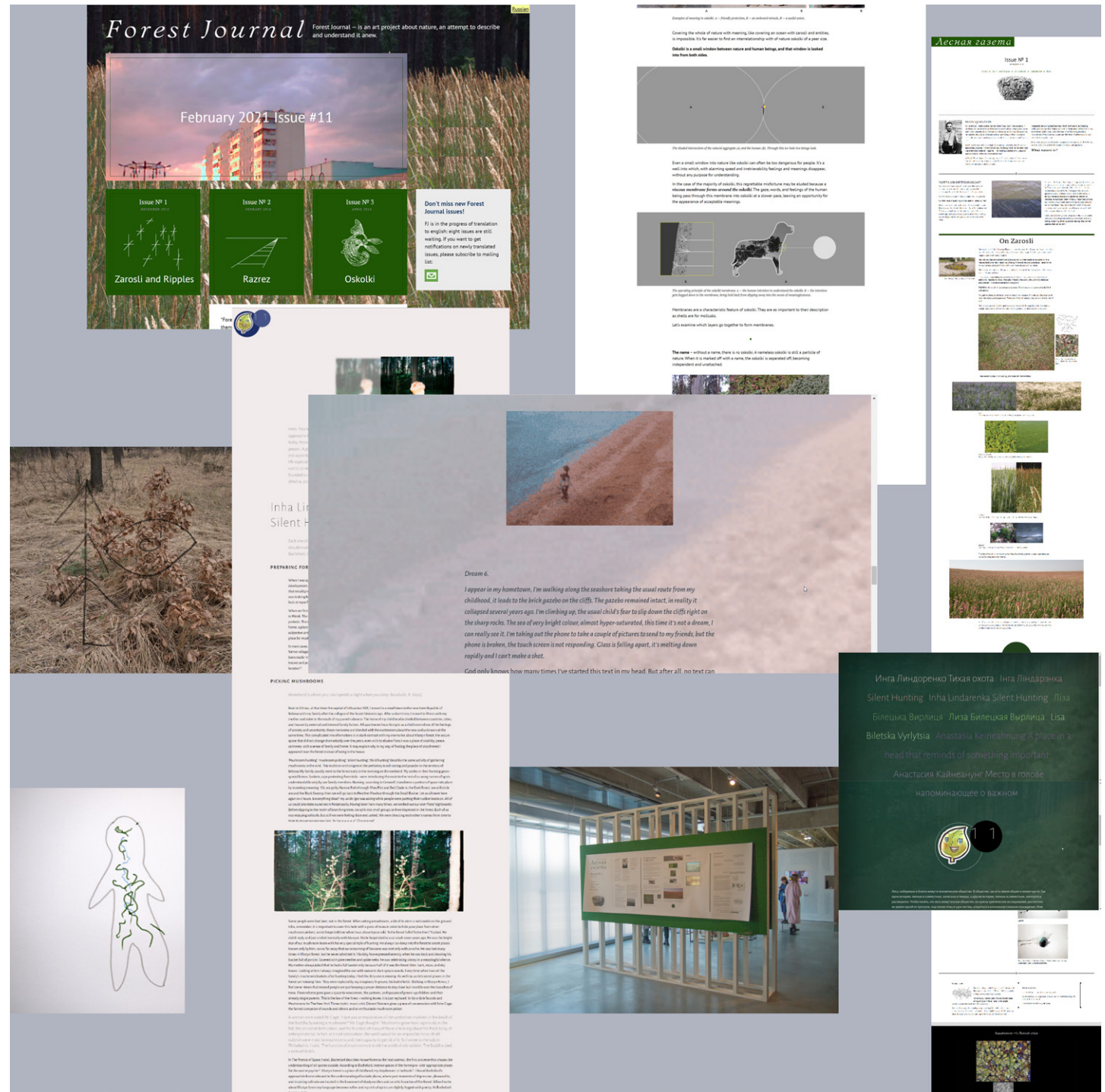
FOREST JOURNAL

2013 - ongoing
forestjournal.org/en

The online project “Forest Journal” was started in 2013 and is still ongoing. The name is borrowed from the popular Soviet book about nature for children. The project comprises issues published on the website, each dedicated to a different experience, narrative, or concept.

The artist and his invited colleagues do not give a direct answer to the central question of the project - "What is nature?" The search instead takes place through the development of various modes and shades of interaction with nature, diverse styles of discourse about it, and different positions that a human can carry in relation to nature (up to the denial of its existence). Over the years of its existence, *Forest Journal* has undergone several stages in developing its language, from quasi-scientific naturalism to symbiotic romantic poetry and careful attention to specific situations and interactions of myriad beings.

Meet FJ at forestjournal.org/en



FLAMING ARCHIPELAGO

April - May 2019, Vadim Sidur Museum, Moscow, Russia.

*Spot for establishing connections between humans and plants in urban environments;
«Seedlings school», video , 22:27, 2019*

The coastal lines of Kotlin Island have changed during the construction of the dam on the Gulf of Finland. Soil layers, accompanying building rubbish and debris have turned into a new land with an area of 1,5 square km. Cambrian clay, broken stone, silt, plastic, metal and sand – it's a strange hillocky, windswept place between a highway, water-purifying ponds, an area landfill and the bay. The locals refer to it as Patagonia.

With no stable ecosystem of its own, the 'Patagonia' has become a welcoming home for all kinds of different runaways and migrants. The clay soil has been overgrown with birches and pines, liverworts and lupines. The ponds have grown full of reed, buttercups and spotted lady's slippers. The prospect of a new life has brought here dogs, fishermen, birds and lizards. The sands have become dotted with tiny gardens the islanders laid out. These gardens must have been the place seaberry eloped from to take part in a new fragile and unstable ecosystem.

When we say 'nature', we normally think about communities with a long line of evolution and a dearly bought balance: a vast and heavy oak forest, a bright flowery meadow, a dark and crispy white-moss spruce forest. Such places are precious in many ways. As compared to them, the plant communities we meet on everyday basis – urban parks and mats of weeds, woodlands along the highways, no-one's bushes behind the concrete guardrail, community landscapes created by indifferent municipal authorities – seem pathetic, fake, illusionary.

Exactly such islands of forever-young blurred ecosystems, which gradually cover the planet, turning 'older' ecosystems into rarities, all the while keeping their reputation of secondary and inauthentic phenomena, form the Archipelago in Flame.

The Kotlin Patagonia tempts us, gently doubting its own phantom status. Temporary wilds on discarded soil can be intricate, unpredictable, independent and wilful. This wilfulness is the result of unexpected and antinomic plant communities, intent imagination of crows, children and dogs, weary and mysterious affairs of urban dwellers.

With its long thorns and beautiful silvery leaves, and its so hard-to-get eye-catching berries, seaberry easily crossing from a garden to a gully and back can play the role of a messenger of the Archipelago Aflame. This pioneering plant flourishes in the very areas where the balance of an ecosystem has been lost: pebbled or sandy barrens, frosty mountains and floodplains of aggressive rivers. It thrives no less easily on vacant patches of industrial and urban systems.

A couple of hundreds of seedlings of Kotlin seaberry running wild will arrive to the Sidur Museum to spread through novel urban ecosystems with the help of Perovo inhabitants and guests from other Moscow localities.

The Flaming Archipelago invites the domesticated urban animals to join urban plant communities. To do it they must try to establish new links with minuscule seedlings of thorny and bright plant from afar.

One may wonder about the kind of soil in Perovo, the amount of water in it and light above it. One may ask about the quiet corners safe from people with lawn-mowers. My care may help the plant new to the community to take roots in an unfamiliar world. A new strange and undesirable guest may appear in Moscow. Am I ready to enter this new, vulnerable and unclear communication?





METABOLIC DESIGN

October 22 - November 20, 2019, XL Gallery, Moscow.

Video 'Metabolic design' 29:58;

'Console' object series

in participating with Nikita Safonov

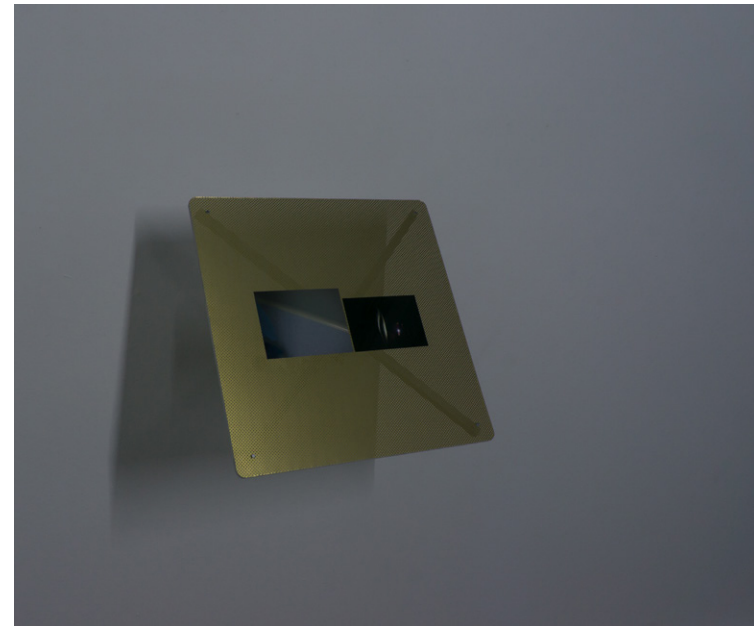
The installation "Metabolic Design" attempts to create a model of a metabolic network. The term "metabolic" is used in the project in a wide and soft way. It refers to flows, particles, relationships, and infections that do not acknowledge scale, systems, borders, or "different worlds". Those particles and flows freely glide along the membranes, form interfaces for the interaction of anything with anything, and redistribute resources and bodies according to their own algorithms. Those metabolic particles can be songs, mycosis, psychedelics, rituals, software APIs, standardized mounts, symbiotic relationships.

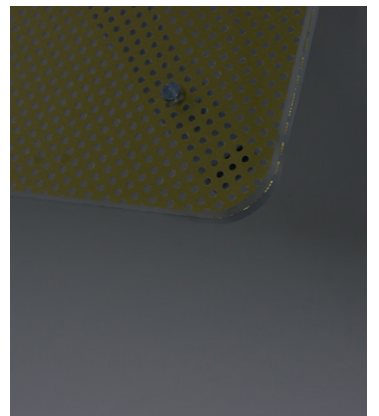
Appeal to design practice specifies a mode of interaction with this metabolic network. The artist understands design as collisions and negotiations of devices, organisms, societies, capital, technology, matter, desires. Design is an ability to feel the metabolic, to enter into respectful and subtle interactions with it.

In the same-titled video, a contour of several specific metabolic environments related to Kotlin Island is composed. Those environments are formed of phytocenoses, sound spaces, urban logistics systems, property, and infection relations.

A series of "Console" objects consists of partially found, partially constructed "devices" that combine everyday-intimate situations of metabolic interaction and the technical and material infrastructure of human nests. In Consoles this infrastructure, usually cautiously hiding its own face, discovers its participation in the creation and nourishment of various worlds.

Especially for the project, the poet, translator, and researcher of sounding Nikita Safonov developed the text object "Five micro texts about anarchitecture". The interaction of the exhibition project and Safonov's research is non-linear; they develop close but different ecosystems, intensively interacting at individual exchange points, generally trying to master a new, metabolic type of relationship between various artistic and theoretical assemblies.







ALIEXPRESSNORDGARDEN

February 2019, commission for Barents Spektakel 2019 "The World's Northernmost Chinatown", Kirkenes, Norway.

Video, duration 28:44.

In September, I brought plant seeds collected in the Sør-Varanger land. In October, parcels with orders from Aliexpress were delivered. Now we could start establishing our northern garden, the one 1000 kilometers from its north.

We:

We are the plants, sleeping in seeds, ready to begin their lifecycle, their labor with light, water, warmth, and soil. Ready to dance, extend, grow. Plants, who bring knowledge and ways of their distant habitat in their own bodies and needs.

We are the electronic and mechanic entities, both small and big. LEDs, which feed plants with light; microcontrollers, which run the LEDs; power drivers, which supply LEDs with energy; the old and good photo lens, which takes such dense and corporeal images.

We are the memories, associations, skills, care, and worries of mine, one of the humans. It is the experience of one particular travel, affection for plant-growing and material labour.

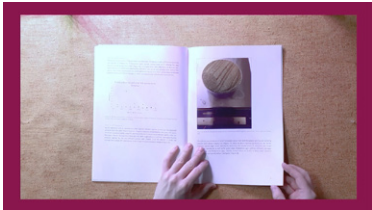


We are the endless fabrics and warehouses of China with its laborers, the ways of global retail and delivery, which entwine the whole planet, supplying our garden with its devices.

Together, we are slowing and calming down, compiling from pieces our aliexpressnordgarden.

The garden will not try to reproduce its far source or to grasp its essence — aliexpress ambassadors are against the idea of genuineness. The garden will not have any concept or message — the plant folks state that they are the concept and the message themselves. The garden will not be rooted or sustainable — the global flows pass through it as well.

We just intend to tie a knot, to make a garden, which will not be either authentic nor fake, global nor aboriginal, natural nor artificial — but still will live. Not native or intimate for anybody, it may become the new habitat for somebodies/somethings.





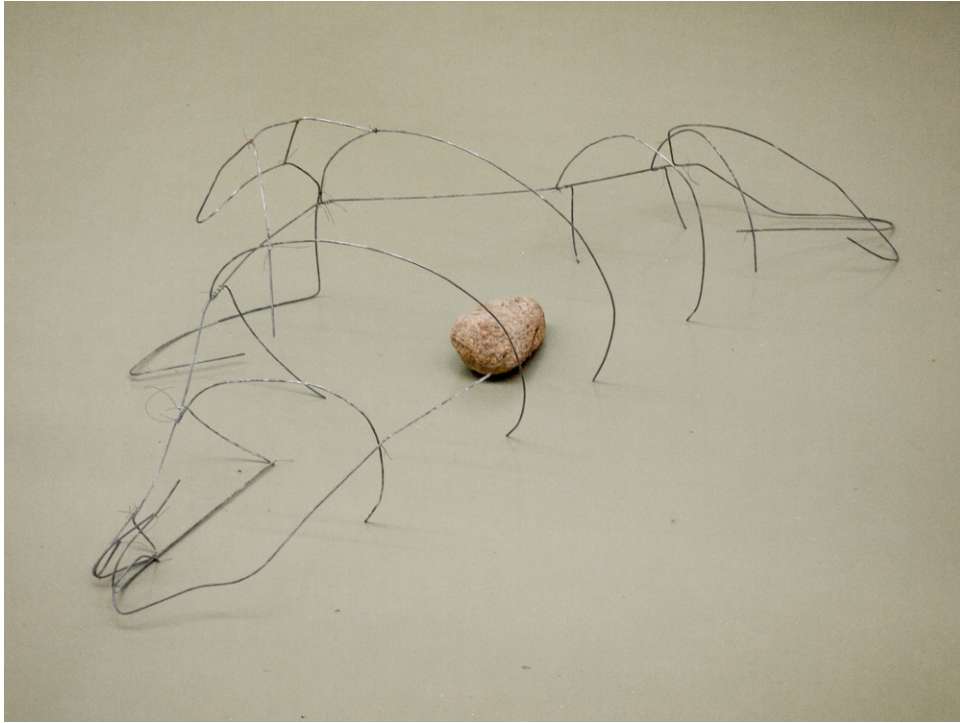
REEF'

March 2018, installation at XL Gallery, Moscow.

The project continues the 2017 installation of the same name while entirely changing the method and language.

The Reef is a training model for young five-eyed sisters. With its help (in the most general terms), one can understand and experience the metabolic scheme of the production of individuals. The existence of individuals is optional and non-guaranteed and, therefore, requires a particular explication. The model consists of interfaces hideout/trap, metabolism/us, seed/worm, production/chain.





REEF

2016, XL Gallery, Moscow

“The Reef installation imitates the space/experience in which waves of intelligent matter, twisting in turbulence, ignite the fires of consciousnesses. Consciousnesses live as long as they peek into each other, imitate each other, partake in each other in weaknesses.

A dead seal imitates a stone, an empty shell protects a hand imitating a root. The human eye became the organ of touch sensitivity and thus was able to meet the gaze of the wasp.

An exhibition doesn't want to be an exhibition; things don't want to be art. This is an attempt by an amateur with their soul and body to apprehend and retell nature. The muscles and bones of the artist were imprinted in the aluminum bars; the transparent, brittle images of the reef froze in the sails.







MODEL OF NATURE, GOETHE'S MODEL

2015, XL Gallery, Moscow

Model of Nature, Goethe's Model is an installation that collides in a spatial embodiment different methods of studying nature.

The first method refers to the artist's long-term project, the "Forest Journal," which tries to answer the question "What is nature?" through observations, natural philosophical reflections, and artistic intuitions. The natural phenomena depicted in this project become the narrative of the installation.

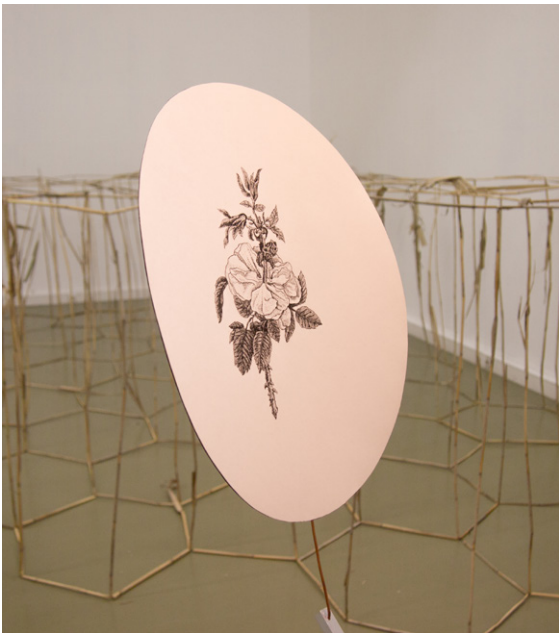
The second method is Goethe's natural-scientific epistemology, the so-called "cautious empiricism". This monistic concept of a direct connection between the observer and the observed phenomenon is manifested in the installation through the choice of materials and techniques and in the model in total.

The third method is Darcy Thompson's mathematical interpretation of biological morphology. His ideas turned out to be vital when it was necessary to unfold the narrative and matter of the first two approaches in space.

Despite the vast difference in scale and position, these methods of studying nature stand the test of space, collisions of matter, and human experience.









AZOIC

2013, Moscow zoological museum, supported by Gallery 21

Azoic is a period in the history of the Earth when the living, machine, and cultural have not yet disintegrated into separate modes of existence. This fusion point must be re-specified in modern reality. The task is to compile a list of non-humans, chimeras, and monsters who once inhabited our world first and are now returning to it.

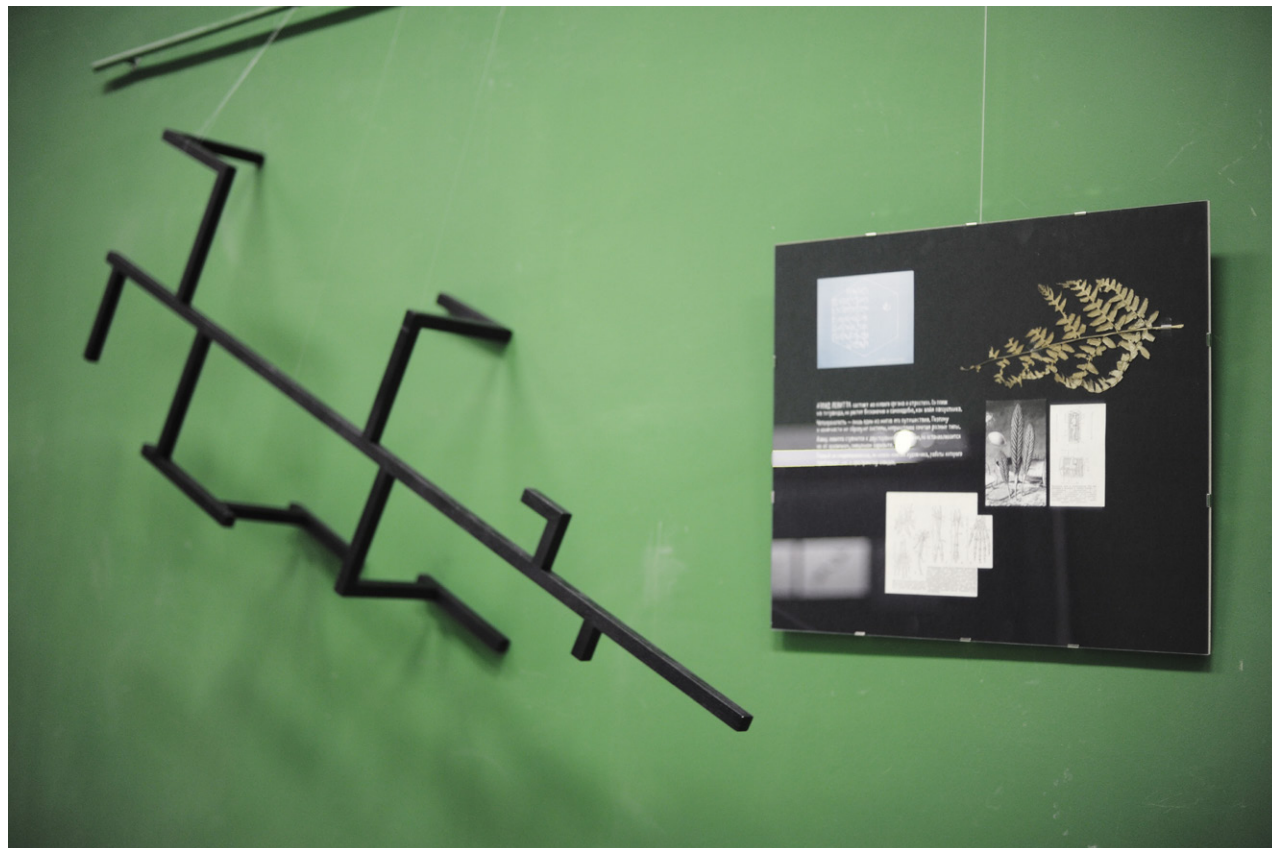
There are two ways to find these creatures.

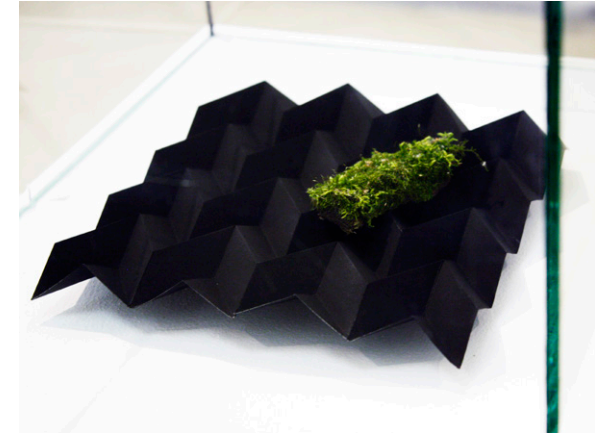
The first is isolation from the structure of everyday reality. Azoic is a watering vehicle and its operator serving a flower bed. The population explosion of river midges, blocking the work of night shops within the entire district. Parkour guys in a box of an unfinished hospital building.

The second way is to imagine and design these creatures. As a result, there are Azoids – fictional species, chimera-ancestors, schemes of life forms.

These two approaches are merged in the exposition project. Azoic is the Museum of the found and fictional chimeras. It is a field research report, artistic reconstruction, and insights coming from material analysis.







HERBARIUM

Herbarium" graphic series, 2012-2017, acrylic on paper, 30x40 cm.

2012, H.L.A.M. Gallery, Voronezh, Russia.

2016, Peresvetov Pereulok Gallery, Moscow, Russia.

In 1998, in the Graftsky nature reserve, I collected a herbarium of the most common plants of a floodplain meadow and a pine forest.

Herbarium is a unique form of knowledge. It combines a direct, almost childish experience of knowing the world and a vast analytical apparatus created by generations of diligent botanists.

I redrawn leaf-to-leaf my herbarium from the reserve, made imaginary friends among the plants, specified their genera and species. But what does this mean? This knowledge about plants (wider: the world) is not self-deception? Linnaeus believed not. But should I follow his old-fashioned path?

Looking behind my tamed herbs, I tried to understand the realm I had taken them from and its relationship with humanity.

The result of my questions to plants was a sense of nature as a tacit ocean.

The world turns out to be twice a stranger. The first time - simply because of its indifference to the human. The second time - because of modern science's marginalization of living knowledge.

Herbarium, drawing – these outdated ways of understanding allowed me to reattach to the green part of the alienated world.

I continued to gather and draw plants.

