

<< world of estrangement >>

What a strange time, right? Strange, alienated, weird.

Remembering the words of Graham Harman:

"Philosophy must be realist because its mandate is to unlock the structure of the world itself; it must be weird because reality is weird."

– Graham Harman, "On the Horror of Phenomenology: Lovecraft and Husserl," *Collapse* (2008), 4, 334.

With the COVID pandemic, our reality became even weirder than it was before. Its structure became unpredictable and drastically changed our routine and perception. The real reality transformed into virtual. Our communication, sense of tactility, or togetherness was ruined, and then slowly we adapted to the new circumstances. From the physical collapse of the social and political system to the psychological impossibility of knowing the right direction to take within the nature of these irresistible forces. The emotional impact of the pandemic is too strong and we may never get back to normal life. Normal became abnormal and I think the main aim of humanity now is to adapt to our new world of estrangement and to create the right strategy of living, adequate language, working conditions, lifestyle etc. I think that this extraordinary time demands us to be particularly sensitive to all that's happening, to rethink our ideas of care and empathy, and to be strong and realistic.

The sociological project "World of Estrangement" is referring to the concept of «estrangement» that is the artistic technique of presenting common things in an unfamiliar or strange way, a basic law of art in the modern and postmodern times. The current circumstances with the pandemic and its subsequent online lifestyle, reversed the situation in the art world; if before the artists tried to alienate the audience, now the artists are alienated by the world and how to exist/create/exhibit whilst in lockdown.

"World of Estrangement" is a modest attempt to collect thoughts and feelings on pandemic times by the art community, that can be seen as a blueprint to contemplate the changes in our world/art world, to that of something more liveable, yet still meaningful.

From a poetic reflection on the time of confinement to practical advice on how to cope with the pandemic, the 15 generous contributions that are presented below share very personal experiences of existence, sensibility, contemplation and empathy, ways of accepting and adapting to the present, and thoughts of an uncertain future that is full of hope.

– Dasha Birukova

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Dasha Birukova (b. 1985, Moscow, Russia) is a curator and writer based in Lisbon. She graduated from the Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russia, art history department and at the Russian State University of Cinematography (VGIK), Moscow, Russia, cinema history department. Her specialisms are experimental film, video, media and sound art.

Birukova curated the “New Media” programme at the National Centre for Contemporary Arts (Moscow); co-curated the Festival of Media Art “VideoFocus” organized by NCCA and the exhibition “Error Message” that was part of the 4th Moscow International Biennale of Young Art, 2014. In 2016, Birukova joined the team of the project “Geometry of Now” curated by British artist Mark Fell, organized by the VAC Foundation in Moscow.

In 2017, she curated the exhibition “Pink Flamingos” at the art space BLEEK in Belgium. She was a co-curator of the Corpora Aliena regular events at Iklectik art lab (London).

In Lisbon, she curated the screening programme “Formula for Fantasy” at Quadrum Gallery, and the exhibition in 6 sessions “Pink Flamingos” at Rua das Gaivotas 6.