

VADIM ZAKHAROV



Vadim Zakharov, *BAFF BAFF! What Are The Politicians Talking About* (2021), HD video performance, color, sound, 4'20"

Vadim Zakharov's *BAFF BAFF! What Are The Politicians Talking About* is a sharp, tragicomic parody of political discourse - a performance in which meaning itself collapses into noise. Wearing a crisp white shirt and tie, Zakharov stands before the camera like a statesman ready to address the nation. Yet instead of coherent speech, he delivers a torrent of onomatopoeic absurdities: *CRACK! CLIRR! BLIEP! KAROMMS!* - exclamations scavenged from German *Mickey Mouse* magazines and comic classics like *Tintin* and *Asterix & Obelix*. These cartoon outbursts, once used to illustrate slapstick catastrophe, now resound as the soundtrack to our contemporary geopolitics.

What begins as humorous quickly turns sinister. Zakharov's nonsensical rhetoric mirrors the hollow performance of power: the endless talk shows, press briefings, and televised debates where language no longer communicates but conceals. Meaning is replaced by soundbites, conviction by performance - a symphony of empty noise that drowns out human suffering. In the artist's words, the piece is both parody and poetry: a lament for the death of meaning in public speech.

Within the framework of *Art from Elsewhere: DEEP THROAT*, Zakharov's work becomes an emblem of the "obscene theatre" of contemporary geopolitics - a grotesque spectacle in which truth is weaponised, outrage is choreographed, and the machinery of governance runs on performative noise. His absurd incantations echo the guttural language of power today: the barking of pundits, the algorithmic churn of media feeds, the hollow slogans of moral authority.

By replacing political rhetoric with the vocabulary of comic violence, Zakharov exposes the childishness of real-world power games. The explosions, crashes, and bangs that punctuate his monologue could just as easily be the soundscape of our news cycle - war zones televised in real time, diplomacy reduced to meme. Yet there is also a strange poetry in this absurdity: a sense that, when language fails, nonsense might be the only honest response left.

In *BAFF BAFF!*, the artist turns gibberish into critique. His mock-political performance transforms farce into philosophy - revealing that in an age where politics has become pornography, the babble of authority is itself the obscenity.

*"In the video performance, non-verbal words are read aloud, most of which have been found in the magazines "Mickey Mouse" (German editions) and also taken from the books "Tintin The Mysterious Star" and "Asterix & Obelix The Laurels of Caesar". The words collected in the non-verbal vocabulary have no meaning, but only phonetically reflect certain events: someone has fainted (BLIEP!), a glass has broken (CRACK! CLIRR!), a helicopter has crashed into a cupola (KAROMMS!), a museum has collapsed (CRACK! THUNDER! CRIME!)."*

*The Reader (Vadim Zakharov), wearing a white shirt and a tie, recites these words seriously and forcefully. The image of a politician is created, a public figure who professionally and convincingly is ready to say something on any occasion. At the same time, we see that these are just empty words – bubbles that float away as soon as they reach our ears. The film highlights the absurdity of what we see and hear every day on television and the internet.*

*At the same time, reading non-verbal words can be perceived as reading poetry..."*

- Vadim Zakharov

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**Vadim Zakharov (b. 1959 in Dushanbe, UdSSR (now Tajikistan). Lives and works in Berlin and Cologne, Germany.)**

Vadim Zakharov is an artist, editor, archivist of the Moscow Conceptual art movement, and collector. Since 1979 he has participated in exhibitions of unofficial art and collaborated with such artists as: V. Skersis, S. Anufriev, I. Chuikov, A. Monastyrski, Y. Leiderman. In 1982–1983 he participated in the AptArt Gallery, Moscow. Since 1992 till 2001 he has published the "Pastor" magazine and founded the Pastor Zond Edition. In 2006 he edited book "Moscow

Conceptualism". His retrospective was held at the Tretyakov Gallery in 2006. He represented Russia at the Venice Biennale in 2013 with the project "DANAE". In 2016-2020 Zakharov organized the exhibition space "FREEHOME-Artist to Artist" in Berlin.

Selected honors and awards include: Griffelkunst-Preis, Hamburg (1995); Renta-Preis, Kunsthalle Nürnberg (1995); Soratnik Prize, Moscow (2006); Innovation Prize, Moscow (2006); Joseph Brodsky Memorial Fellowship Fund, American Academy in Rome (2007); Kandinsky Prize – Best Work of Year, Moscow (2009); Kaissering Art Prize – Germany's most prestigious art award (2023).

In addition to numerous solo and group exhibitions, Vadim Zakharov has participated in many biennales of contemporary art, including: the 49th Venice Biennale, "Plateau of Humankind", (Director Harald Szeemann, Arsenale, 2001); 1st Thessaloniki Biennale, "Black Birds" installation (Museum of Byzantine Culture, 2007 ); 55th Venice Biennale, Vadim Zakharov, "Danaë", Russian Pavilion (2013); 5th Moscow Biennale, Vadim Zakharov, "Dead Languages Dance. Fall collection", (TSUM, 2013); "2014. Space Odyssey", CAFAM BIENNALE, Beijing (2014); 3rd Biennale of Bahia, Museum of Modern Art of Bahia (2014); 14 Krasnoyarsk Museum Biennale, Russia (2021).

Vadim Zakharov's works are held in many prestigious public collections, including: Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA; TATE Modern, London, UK; Modern Art Museum, Frankfurt, DE; Deutsche Bank Collection, Frankfurt am Main, DE; Kupferstiekkabinett, Berlin, DE; Ludwig Museum, Aachen, Budapest; Saint Petersburg, RU; Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers USA; Museum of Art at Duke University, USA; Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, HU; Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, DE; Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, RU; Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg, RU; Museum of Modern Art, Moscow, RU; Moscow Collections of the NCCA, Moscow, RU.