Accepted for publication by Afterall on 18/07/16 - http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/aft/current

Submission to *Afterall* magazine, July 2016

The Kabakov Effect:
'Moscow Conceptualism' in the History of Contemporary Art

Peter Osborne

> … *starting in the late 1960s* … [the Moscow conceptual] *circle of artists became an engine in the development of aesthetic and conceptual models that, while reflecting on local issues, also fit successfully into the discourses that were being developed by their contemporaries in the West. Indeed, it can be claimed that the 1970s and 1980s were the last era when a channelling of local contexts into an international language was effectively realised, just as in the period of the historical avant-garde.*
> – Margarita Tupitsyn[1]

> *The term 'Moscow' is heavy enough to outweigh any Western term like 'futurism' or 'conceptualism'.*
> – Boris Groys[2]

These two statements raise a series of interesting historical and methodological issues about the emergent discourses of a global art history and of histories of contemporary art in particular. Taken together, they highlight the tension internal to the phrase 'Moscow Conceptualism', in which a Western category ('conceptualism') is conjugated with a purportedly Eastern name ('Moscow') in order that the latter may

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This is a revised version of a talk presented on 6 November 2015 at the V–A–C Foundation in Moscow.

[1] Margarita Tupitsyn, curatorial statement for the Russian pavilion of the 56th edition of the Venice Biennale (2015), in M. Tupitsyn (ed.), *Irina Nakhova: The Green Pavilion*, Moscow: Stella Art Foundation, 2015, p.35. By 'the period of the historical avant-garde', we may take Tupitsyn to mean the period from the outbreak of the First World War to the rise of fascism in Germany and of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, that is, 1914–33. For the concept of the 'historical' (as opposed to the 'neo-') avant-garde, see Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974, trans. Michael Shaw), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

[2] Boris Groys, 'Introduction', *History Becomes Form: Moscow Conceptualism*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010, p.7.

be raised to the power of an established 'international' art discourse, whilst at the same time expanding and re-inflecting that discourse towards a more geo-politically comprehensive set of artistic practices.[3] The history of conceptual art has been at the forefront of this kind of revisionist historiography, and 'conceptualism' has been the main category through which its unity has been sought.[4] Within this field, though, Margarita Tupitsyn and Boris Groys offer conflicting standpoints.

Tupitsyn takes the aesthetic and conceptual models developed by the Moscow conceptual circle to 'fit successfully' into the Western discourses of conceptual art by some kind of pre-established historical harmony. While Groys considers the designation 'Moscow' to be sufficiently singular to 'outweigh' *any* term of Western art history. It is thus by virtue of its differential singularity (rather than its discursive fit), for Groys, that twentieth-century Russian art is to become part of an international art history. This is the internationalism of an aggregative unity of self-contained art nations, rather than that of either an expansionary Western discourse or a received Soviet one (with Marxism-Leninism as the language of a Communist International, of communism as internationalism).

What neither Tupitsyn nor Groys considers is the possibility that 'Moscow Conceptualism' might re-inflect (or might already have re-inflected) the Western discourse of conceptual art to the point of its critical transformation. This is the

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[3] The idea that Moscow is an 'Eastern' name is, of course, a distinctively Western one. Within Russia itself it has for a long time stood for a certain 'Westernising' imaginary.

[4] See, in particular, Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver and Rachel Weiss (ed.), *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s* (exh. cat.), New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999; and L. Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007. For an alternative attempt at a historically based, *internal* expansion of the notion of 'conceptual art' itself, see Peter Osborne, 'Survey', in P. Osborne (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, London: Phaidon, 2002, pp.14–51.

interesting possibility: the critical transformation of the discourses of conceptual art by the term 'Moscow'; a critical transformation that is at the same time a key mediating moment in the constitution of the category of contemporary art as a postconceptual art.[5] It is here that the original terms of Groys's invention of 'Moscow Conceptualism' become germane. For the subsequently suppressed, conceptually differentiating, middle term in Groys's initial analysis was, of course, 'romantic' – 'Moscow Romantic Conceptualism' in the title of his now well-known essay of 1979, published simultaneously in Russian and English, in France.[6] Retrospectively, with its dual columns and passport-type photograph of its author, this essay itself appears as something of a conceptual piece, effecting a certain auto-fictionalisation of Groys as a character in his own story. Writing this story, Groys recounts, he 'used the word "Romantic" precisely to indicate the difference between Anglo-American conceptual art and Moscow art practices'.[7] At that time, Conceptual art was associated with a relatively narrow canon of mainly New York-based artists, and the critical literature was dominated by the 'analytical' self-understandings of those artists, rooted in mathematical and linguistic analysis: Sol LeWitt, Joseph Kosuth and the British group Art & Language in particular.[8] So the term 'Romantic' – used by Groys for 'a

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[5] For the critical claim that 'contemporary art is post-conceptual art', see P. Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, London: Verso, 2013, pp.3 and 46–53 in particular.

[6] B. Groys, 'Moscow Romantic Conceptualism' (1979), reprinted in B. Groys, *History Becomes Form*, *op. cit.,* pp.35–55.

[7] B. Groys, *History Becomes Form*, *op. cit.,* p.7.

[8] Indeed, this remained true into the new century. The most comprehensive anthology, published at the turn of the century – *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), edited by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson – contains no reference to conceptual art practices in Moscow. Its only references beyond the Anglophone world and Europe are to Latin America. For the range of philosophical positions within even this narrow band of practices, see P. Osborne, 'Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy', in Jon Bird and Michael Newman (ed.), *Rewriting Conceptual Art: Critical and Historical Approaches*, London: Reaktion Books, 1999, pp.47–65.

combination of dispassionate *cultural* analysis with a Romantic dream of the true culture' – had a radically differentiating effect.[9] During the 1980s, however, the qualifying term was soon discarded; 'Moscow conceptualism' came to be adopted as a primarily geo-political label encompassing a larger group of artists in Moscow than the more strictly 'Romantic' ones – while aspects of the stricter artistic characterisation in fact apply equally to artists from Leningrad and Odessa, who may have passed through Moscow but whose practices derived from elsewhere.

The weight of the term 'Moscow' in Groys's analysis turned out to be heavy enough to outweigh – or at the least, to incorporate – the term 'Romantic' too. *Happy Moscow*.[10] This weight is not just the weight of the city as a metonym for the country of which it is the magnetic capital, itself metonymic for the empire; ultimately it is the weight of the term 'history' itself. 'Through the art of Moscow conceptualism', Groys writes, 'a certain period of modern history – namely, the history of realisation of the communist project – finally becomes form.'[11] Following Groys, 'Moscow Conceptualism' thus became a metonym for the artistic expression of everyday life in the Soviet Union. It thereby became a relay connecting the specific body of (Russian) work to which it originally referred to a far wider body of Eastern European art, the framework for the unity of which it thereby provided: everyday life under Soviet communism.[12]

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[9] B. Groys, *History Becomes Form*, *op. cit.,* p.7; emphasis added. Of the first generation of canonical US conceptual artists it was really only Dan Graham who based his practice in a form of cultural analysis. See D. Graham, *Rock My Religion: Writings and Art Projects, 1965–1990* (ed. Brian Wallis), Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993.

[10] Andrey Platonov, *Happy Moscow* (trans. Robert and Elizabeth Chandler), New York: New York Review Books, 2012.

[11] B. Groys, *History Becomes Form*, *op. cit.,* p.3.

[12] In fact, the very concept of everyday life (*byt*, in Russian) has one of its main genealogical starting points in the Soviet debates of the 1920s. See John Roberts, *Philosophizing the Everyday: Revolutionary Praxis and the Fate of Cultural Theory*,

At the same time, it was the 'conceptualist' component of the phrase that allowed for the integration of that broader body of work into what Tupitsyn calls the 'international language' of 'the discourses that were being developed in the West': that is, the emergent genre of what is now known as the 'history of contemporary art'. There are thus two distinct kinds of 'international language' at play here: the language of Marxism-Leninism, of communism as an internationalism – a central textual and imagistic component of the everyday life of Soviet communism – and the art historical languages of 'conceptual art' and then 'contemporary art'.

Groys does not mention the difference between 'conceptual art' and 'conceptualism' as critical and historical terms – although it was the silent choice of the latter over the former that allowed him to dispense with a comparative analysis of the relations of the Russian art in question to the 'founding' conceptual practices in New York in the 1960s. The 'ism' term marks a looser affinity, to the point of a critical slackening, in those relations. In this regard, conceptual*ism* functions as a mediating term between 'conceptual art' and 'contemporary art', as critical categories – generalising the former, whilst specifying the latter. And during the 1990s, it was 'Moscow Conceptualism' – alongside 'Latin American Conceptualism' – that came to play a central geo-political role in that mediating movement of generalisation. In fact, there is a serial development of critical art historical terms and concepts at stake here, which runs: conceptual art; conceptual*ism*; conceptualism*s*; contemporary art; post-conceptual art. This is a serial development with a narrative logic that retrospectively overdetermines the conceptual dynamics of the series.

London: Pluto, 2006, chapter 1; and Christina Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005, chapters 1 and 2.

Retrospection plays a constitutive role, to the point of retroactivity, in art historical narrative here. (Retrospection is an epistemological category – call it hindsight. Retroactivity is a temporal-ontological process by which what Walter Benjamin called the 'afterlife' (*Nachleben*) of a work comes to determine what it *is*, and hence also what it *was*, although, paradoxically, it could not be that in its own time.) The retroactive constitution of critical categories dictates that the term 'Moscow conceptualism' means something more now than it did when it was first coined in 1979. In particular, the meaning of 'Moscow Conceptualism' has become overdetermined by what we might call a Kabakov effect.[13] For it is Ilya Kabakov's role in the development of the installation form in the West, from the mid-1980s through to the end of the 1990s, that retrospectively overdetermines the meaning of 'Moscow Conceptualism' as a privileged moment in the transition from 'conceptual art' to 'contemporary art', and hence as a *signifier of the conceptual character of contemporary art itself* – a character that is actually best grasped, I have argued elsewhere, by the idea of post-conceptual art, or the post-conceptual character of contemporary art as such. First, however, before we look at the structure and mediating function of the field of conceptualisms, it is necessary to reconnect what is perhaps the most enduring of the 1960s interpretations of conceptual art to its suppressed Soviet lineage.

Dematerialisation: A Soviet Genealogy

As is well known, the term and the concept of conceptual art in its founding and still hegemonic Anglo-American sense (representing, like 'minimal art', a small *set* of

[13] See the *October* magazine special issue on Duchamp, *The Duchamp Effect, October* 70 (Fall 1994).

competing practices) can be traced back to 1967–69, in its distinction from Henry Flynt's earlier 'concept art' (which was a medium-based category), in the famous essays by Sol Lewitt ('Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', 1967), Lucy Lippard and David Chandler ('The Dematerialization of Art', 1967/68), Art & Language (introduction to *Art-Language: The Journal of Conceptual Art*, May 1969) and Joseph Kosuth ('Art After Philosophy', 1969).[14] (Of course, some of the practices to which the idea refers clearly predate its formulation, going back to at least 1961 in the immediately pre-Fluxus conjuncture in New York, as well as much further back to early Duchamp).

There are two things of significance to note about the early critical discourse of conceptual art in relation to the category of Moscow conceptualism. The first is the *singularity and universality* of the claim made by the idea of conceptual art in its strongest 'analytical' forms. The second concerns an intriguing historical contingency in the background to one of its main, and most enduring, interpretations: the idea of dematerialisation, through which conceptual art appears as part of the afterlife not of Duchamp but of 1920s Soviet Constructivism.

The 'universality' of the idea of conceptual art derives from its claims for a redefinition of art as such; most famously, in Kosuth's statement: 'All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually.'[15] Art & Language had a similarly strong programme. Of the critical founders, LeWitt alone was more constrained: he thought of conceptual art only as a particular kind of art, among others. These are critical philosophical claims. The most widely disseminated

[14] See A. Alberro and B. Stimson (ed.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, *op. cit.*, pp.12–16, 46–50, 98–104 and 158–77, respectively.
[15] Joseph Kosuth, 'Art After Philosophy', in *ibid.*, p.164.

– and also immediately contested, by Art & Language for example[16] – has been what is now thought of as Lucy Lippard's 'dematerialisation' thesis, although it first appeared in Lippard and Chandler's previously mentioned short article, written in late 1967 and published in the February 1968 issue of *Art International*. This essay provided the basis for the first subtitle of Lippard's famous 1973 anthology *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972: a cross-reference book of information on some esthetic boundaries: consisting of a bibliography into which are inserted a fragmented text, art works, documents, interviews, and symposia, arranged chronologically and focused on so-called conceptual or information or idea art with mentions of such vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth, or process art, occurring now in the Americas, Europe, England, Australia, and Asia (with occasional political overtones) edited and annotated by Lucy R. Lippard*. Surely one of the greatest book titles of all time.

The source of this notion of dematerialisation, I would like to suggest, lies not merely in an intuitive sense of the process-based immateriality of the results of the art practices of the mid-1960s, and their relations to language and performance in particular, but much further back, to the Soviet avant-garde; specifically, to El Lissitzky's 1926 essay 'The Future of the Book', the English translation of which appeared in *New Left Review* in 1967 – a few months before Lippard and Chandler wrote their essay.[17] In Lissitzky's essay, dematerialisation is associated not with language, concept or mental representation, but with *energy*.

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[16] As excerpted in Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object, 1966–1972* (1973), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, pp.43–44.
[17] El Lissitzky, 'The Future of the Book', *New Left Review*, vol.1, no.41, January/February 1967, pp.39–44; first published in the *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, Mainz, 1926–27. I am grateful to Juan Rinaldi for pointing out this translation to me in the course of his research on media art in Argentina in the 1960s, where the influence is explicit. See J. Rinaldi, 'Art and Geopolitics: Politics and Autonomy in Argentine

> *The idea moving the masses today is called materialism, but dematerialisation is the characteristic of the epoch. For example, correspondence grows, so the number of letters, the quantity of writing paper, the mass of material consumed expands, until relieved by the telephone. Again, the network and material of supply grow until they are relieved by the radio. Matter diminishes, we dematerialise, sluggish masses of matter are replaced by liberated energy. This is the mark of our epoch.*[18]

There follows a tabulated comparison of forms of transport with those of 'verbal traffic':

Interventions in the field of verbal traffic	**Interventions in the field of general traffic**
Articulated language……	Upright gait
Writing……..	The wheel
Guttenberg's printing-press……..	Carts drawn by animal power
? ……..……..	The automobile
? ……	The aeroplane

Blank topological spaces appear, already reserved for the computer and the digital. In the meantime, before the generalised replacement of the book by 'auto-vocalising and kino-vocalising representations', a new international graphic language was taken to be required: the international 'hieroglyphic book', as opposed to the national 'alphabetic book'. This universalism was thus radically 'non-national', in contrast to the 'language' of Art & Language, which was, of course, English, albeit standing in for a mooted philosophically ideal language of propositions. In this respect, we can say that in its founding manifestation, 'conceptual art' was indeed *Anglo*-American, even

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Contemporary Art', doctoral thesis, London: Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (CRMEP), Kingston University, 2013.

[18] E. Lissitzky, 'The Future of the Book', *op. cit.,* p.40.

though many of its main practitioners were Japanese (Yoko Ono, On Kawara), European (Hanne Darboven, Bas Jan Ader) and South American (Hélio Oiticica).

The prioritisation of energy over language as the means of 'dematerialisation' considerably broadens the scope of 'conceptual art' (acted out in its extensive definition in Lippard's anthology) and prefigures the critical expansion of the notion in the course of the subsequent decades. With regard to Seth Siegelaub's famous photograph of New York conceptual art's 'gang of four', for example, it suggests the priority of Robert Barry and Douglas Huebler (on the left) over Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner (on the right) – an inversion of the way that history has usually been written. It is interesting to place this rock-band-style photograph besides the famous image of the Collective Actions group used by Tupitsyn in the vestibule to the Russian pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2015, to produce a dialectical image of the identity in difference of conceptual art in Moscow, for today.

However, rather than an immanent expansion of conceptual art as a critical category, what happened in most of the curatorial and critical literature from the end of the 1970s onwards (emblematically in Groys's 1979 essay), leading up to the 'Global Conceptualism'[19] exhibition at the Queens Museum of Art in New York in 1998, and beyond, was an increasing deployment of the more generalised '-ism' term, conceptual*ism*, in a historically generalised manner, to cover a geo-politically expanded range of artistic contexts. Meanwhile, a mimetic and often jokey neo-conceptual art developed in the practices of a new generation of artists in the 1990s in

[19] 'Global Conceptualism' was an extraordinarily important exhibition for its idea, even though curatorially it was a highly restricted one because of the state of the generalised knowledge and availability of works at the time. See L. Camnitzer, J. Farver and R. Weiss (ed.), *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s*, *op. cit.*

the UK and the US, for which the portmanteau term 'conceptualism' was also frequently used, further loosening the remaining critical purchase of the latter.

Conceptualism: Two Critical Strategies

The category of conceptualism is a part of the afterlife of Conceptual art from which the concept of conceptual art itself must nevertheless be critically distinguished. For the extended pluralisation of practices inherent in the structure of the 'ism' presupposes the necessary failure of the strong analytical version of the conceptual programme. In contrast to the claimed universality and singularity of 'conceptual art', this pluralisation is necessarily a relativisation. The main form taken by the pluralisation of conceptualisms was a multiplication of relatively independent national contexts: Moscow conceptualism (standing in for 'Russian conceptualism'), Latin American conceptualism (more specifically, Argentinean and Uruguayan conceptualisms[20]), Polish conceptualism, Czech conceptualism, Chinese conceptualism, etc.

This raised two issues: first, the legitimate range of applicability of the label in even its most extended sense ('Is there such a thing as African Conceptualism?', Okwui Enwezor asks in a well-known piece);[21] and second, the theoretical mode of its global totalisation and purely geospatial unification, as projected in the 'Global Conceptualism' show. Responses to each issue have tended to be polarised. With regard to the applicability of the label, on the one hand, there is an export/import model of influence; 'Who was reading *Artforum* and *Studio International*, where, in

[20] Although, interestingly, not Brazilian conceptualism – historically, as a national category, within this particular moment in the literature – because of the specificity of the post-neo-concretist lineage, perhaps.

[21] Okwui Enwezor, 'Is there such a thing as African Conceptualism?', in Salah Hassan and Olu Oguibe (ed.), *Authentic/Ex-Centric: Conceptualism in Contemporary African Art*, Ithaca, NY: Forum for African Arts, 2002, pp.72–82.

the mid-to-late 1960s?' being the leading question. (More artists than you might think, in fact.) On the other hand, there is a model of independent multiple paths to broadly similar destinations. The former leads to a totalising method of the aggregation/accumulation of new national contexts for the artistic elaboration of a single idea, while the latter tends towards a perspectival pluralisation of universals, requiring that we view the whole history, in each instance, from the standpoint of a distinct geo-political context, as Luis Camnitzer does in his book *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation*, for example.[22]

So how do 'Moscow Conceptualism' and 'Moscow Romantic conceptualism', in particular, fit into this history?

As we have seen, Groys's essay is distinctive in attempting an art critical specification of the geo-political label, via the term 'Romantic'. Despite the 'weight' claimed for the term 'Moscow', it is the 'Romantic' that carries the methodological burden of discrimination, with the term 'conceptualism' acting as little more than a silent, abstract ground enabling the comparison. However, if one digs deeper into the philosophical history of early German Romanticism, one finds arguments for the philosophically 'Romantic' status of conceptual art tout court, as the philosophically oriented practice of a *generic* (non-medium based) conception of art. Or, to put it another way, if one rereads philosophical Romanticism genealogically, from the standpoint of contemporary art, what one finds, retroactively, is the anticipation of conceptual art.[23]

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[22] See L. Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation, op. cit.*

[23] See P. Osborne, *Anywhere or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, *op. cit.*, chapter 2. Furthermore, with regard to the missing theorisation of conceptualism as an 'ism' (as opposed to conceptual art), there is in this particular instance a more submerged philosophical logic, with an independent genealogy. This is the logic of conceptualism not as an art historical or art critical category but as a purely

What is at stake here is the continuing priority of poetics over aesthetics. This is why Ranciere is so very, very wrong in his insistence on what he calls the 'aesthetic regime'. This Romanticism was expressed negatively in now classical Anglo-American conceptual art in its campaign against the aesthetic institution of the spectatorship of 'the beholder', as theorised in particular by Charles Harrison of Art & Language.[24] It was expressed positively by more explicitly Romantic US conceptual artists like Robert Smithson, and explicitly in conceptual art practices in Moscow, as theorised by Groys. Groys, we might say, stands to Kababov and Collective Actions as Harrison stood to Art & Language: playing the double game of being simultaneously a native informant and international mediator. As Groys puts it, in a passage about Lev Rubinstein, life becomes lived as something to be 'read': in 'life as existence in the impossible space of literary language ... things become signs in a poetic sequence'. It is this poetic sequence that ties conceptual art (*all* conceptual art) and the conceptual aspects of *all art*, to narrative, and in particular to storytelling as an oral tradition.[25]

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philosophical position: broadly, the theory that universals can be said to exist, but only as concepts in the mind. It is a modern version of scholastic nominalism. If you look up 'conceptualism', even on Wikipedia today, for example, you won't find an art movement or an art critical category – all you will find is a description of this philosophical position. Belief in the conceptual character of art does not commit you to any philosophical position on the status of concepts. But it is allied to, and has affinities with, the more psychologistic and 'spiritual' philosophical self-understanding of some, rather than other, conceptual art practices: LeWitt as opposed to Kosuth, for example; and also the more scientistic versions of the mystical strand of Moscow Conceptualism (cosmicism), within which science and mysticism are in no way simple opposites.

[24] Charles Harrison, 'Conceptual Art and the Suppression of the Beholder', *Essays on Art & Language*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, pp.29–62.

[25] B. Groys, 'Moscow Romantic Conceptualism', *op. cit.,* p.42. See also P. Osborne, 'Image, Information, Story: Akram Zataari After Conceptual Art', forthcoming; and in the Russian context, Maria Chehonadskih, 'Forma Iskysstva kak oposredovanie: istoriya i povestvovanie do i posle kontseptualizma' ['Art Form as Mediation: History and Story-telling Before and After Conceptual Art'], forthcoming.

The Corridor of Two Banalities

In the alternative institution of the apartment as exhibition space in Moscow, 1982–84, everyday life was retold through the accumulation and re-staging of its objects, so that the apartment itself quickly became not just the scene of the exhibition but part of the *narrative structure of the exhibited object* itself. Such 'apartment art', or APT ART as it became known, was both the stage for the creation of characters, in which visitors such as Kabakov invested their productive subjectivity, and the site of a constructed world inhabited conjointly by APT ART artists and their works.[26] In its role as an enclosed fictional environment in which artists acted out various personae, the Moscow apartment was the mediating form of the transition to installation art as a dominant genre of contemporary art immanent to 'Moscow Conceptualism'. Works by Kabakov emblematic of this transition include *The Man Who Flew Into Space from his Apartment* (1985; first shown in New York in 1988) and *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* (*The Garbage Man*) (1988, permanently installed in the old Norwegian national bank building in Oslo that forms part of the Nasjonalmuseet/National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design). (Garbage was a central theme in Kabakov's *rota* paintings of the early 1980s, such as *Carrying Out the Slop Pail* (1980).) *The Man Who Flew* and *The Man Who Never* are transitional works between Kabakov the Moscow Conceptualist and Kabakov the international installation artist of the 1990s, a trajectory that has led up to such vast works as the 2014 Monumenta installation in the Grand Palais in Paris, within which a series of separate rooms/buildings were constructed to produce a multiplicity of installation spaces.

[26] See Ilya Kabakov, 'Artist-Character' (1985). APT ART is the focus of a forthcoming title in Afterall's *Exhibition Histories* series, *Anti-Shows: APT ART 1982–84*, edited by Margarita Tupitsyn, Victor Tupitsyn and David Morris, which will include Kabakov's essay, to be published in spring 2017.

This transition also involved an explicit mediation of Kabakov's work with the canonical New York conceptual art of the late 1960s, in the form of *The Corridor of Two Banalities* (1994), a joint work/installation with Kosuth at the Centre for Contemporary Art at Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw.[27] This exhibition staged the dialectical identity and difference between 'New York' and 'Moscow' in the afterlife of a certain conceptual art as installation art. It is precisely here, after 1989, that those 'local issues' to which Tupitsyn refers are 'channelled into' in a new international (soon to become globally transnational) art language. The work is made up of texts (and in Kabakov's case, a few postcard images): fictional texts of the agendas and minutes of the meetings of residents of collective apartments, on the Moscow side, and of quotations from famous figures that approach the status of Jenny Holzer-type 'truisms', on the New York one – the vacuous rhetoric of a certain international politics.[28] These are two geo-politically very different kinds of banality, dialectically identified in the mutuality of their banality as such. Kabakov seeks his place in an international lineage; Kosuth seeks the critical redemption provided by historical meaning.[29] Here, the specificity of 'Moscow Conceptualism' ('the artistic expression of everyday life under Soviet communism' – the Constructivists would have said: 'The material expression of communist structures!') is at once communicated and internally negated by a generic art format, of which it was partially constitutive, but which now wholly overdetermines its artistic effect – in the transition from Moscow

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[27] *The Corridor of Two Banalities* (25 April–3 September 1994) was curated by Milada Slizinska.

[28] The generic model within Kosuth's own work for this practice (taking up a well-known trope of Walter Benjamin's) is his 1968 'Editorial in 27 Parts', published in the first issue of the New York School of Visual Arts' journal *Straight*, which Kosuth himself edited. The most recent and largest enactment of the Benjaminian literary fantasy of a book composed wholly of quotations is Kenneth Goldsmith's enormous *Capital: New York, Capital of the 20th Century* (London: Verso, 2015).

[29] Kosuth was at this time reinventing himself as a Hungarian-American artist – the US-identity-politics route to historical meaning.

conceptual art to a proto-global contemporary art. Under these conditions, rather than being a carrier of Soviet history, the fictionalisation of the Soviet erases the hinge between history and fiction, leaving history engulfed by fiction; or, to put it another way, leaving Soviet history engulfed by Western art. 'Moscow', shed of its 'weight', is no match for the Western term 'contemporary art'. This is the Kabakov effect.