



SERGEI SVIATCHENKO

Mirror by Mirror
Homage to Andrei Tarkovsky

”Mirror by Mirror” by Sergei Sviatchenko

A personal tribute to Andrei Tarkovsky, one of the greatest poets of cinematic art.

The exhibition **”Mirror by Mirror”**, as well as the publication accompanying it, take the film “The Mirror” by Russian film director Andrei Tarkovsky as their starting point; a film that has strongly influenced the understanding of art and visual formation of Danish visual artist and architect Sergei Sviatchenko. Ukrainian born living and working in Denmark for more than 20 years, this exhibition traces a path back to the roots of Sviatchenko’s visual training at the school of architecture in Karkov Ukraine.

Since Sviatchenko’s teenage years, Tarkovsky’s profoundly poetic and dramatic pictorial universe has nourished Sviatchenko’s art and philosophy of life. **”Mirror by Mirror”** crystallizes the essence of a never physically realized meeting between two artists, who, from their respective places in history, deal with images combining, at the same time, the distance of the imposing with the presence of the detail in urgently insistent and relevant attempts to comment on and describe the world, as well as the many physical and mental spaces that people enter throughout life. By mirroring his own work in Tarkovsky’s, Sviatchenko stages his individual narrative as autonomous visual statements, borrowing from and referring to “The Mirror”.

In search of inspiration and as a preliminary to the exhibition **”Mirror by Mirror”**, Sviatchenko went on a study tour to Moscow in June 2008. Receiving invaluable help from Irina Tchmyreva, curator and ph.D. in Art History, he got the chance to meet the author of a number of books on Andrei Tarkovsky: Tarkovsky’s sister, Marina. She was deeply touched by Sergei Sviatchenko’s visit, describing his art as both profoundly original and fully in accordance with the spirit of Andrei Tarkovsky: a striving towards the sublime and a particular sense of capturing and maintaining a momentary meeting between the conscious and the unconscious. Another major event for Sviatchenko in Moscow was his meeting with his former professor from the school of architecture in Kharkov, Victor Antonov, whose text on the meeting with Tarkovsky in the Soviet Union during the 80s is a special treat for the readers of the exhibition’s extravagant catalogue.

Laying the groundwork for the way in which the exhibition was created, the study tour is one of the reasons that **"Mirror by Mirror"** will be displayed in Russia. The exhibition is accompanied by a broadsheet catalogue in three languages composed of documentary film material from the shooting of "The Mirror" and Sviatchenko's graphic adaptation of this material. The catalogue presents texts by Marina Tarkovskaya, Irina Tchmyrva, Victor Antonov, Mark Le Fanu and Per Carlsen, Danish Ambassador to Russia. The publication is made of several types of paper, colours, sizes and different type fonts created by London based graphic designer James Greenhow. Furthermore, Marina Tarkovsky has helped select the collage works included in the exhibition and in the catalogue.

His Excellency Mr. Teymuraz Ramishvili, Russian Ambassador to Denmark, and Marina Tarkovsky, author and sister of Andrei Tarkovsky, opened the exhibition in Arhus.

Trine Rytter Andersen curated the exhibition in Arhus and is co-curator together with Gunther Dietrich in Berlin.

The exhibition in Arhus was sponsored by the Royal Danish Embassy in Moscow, the Danish Arts Council, the Board for Visual Arts under the Danish Arts Council, Palads Hotel in Viborg, X-Print in Aarhus, Jensen Huse in Viborg, Den Gyldne Okse in Viborg, Arcografisk in Skive, Vesterhavs Hotellet and Kjærs Boghandel i Viborg.

Exhibitions:

Image Gallery, Aarhus, Denmark 9 October – 16 November 2009

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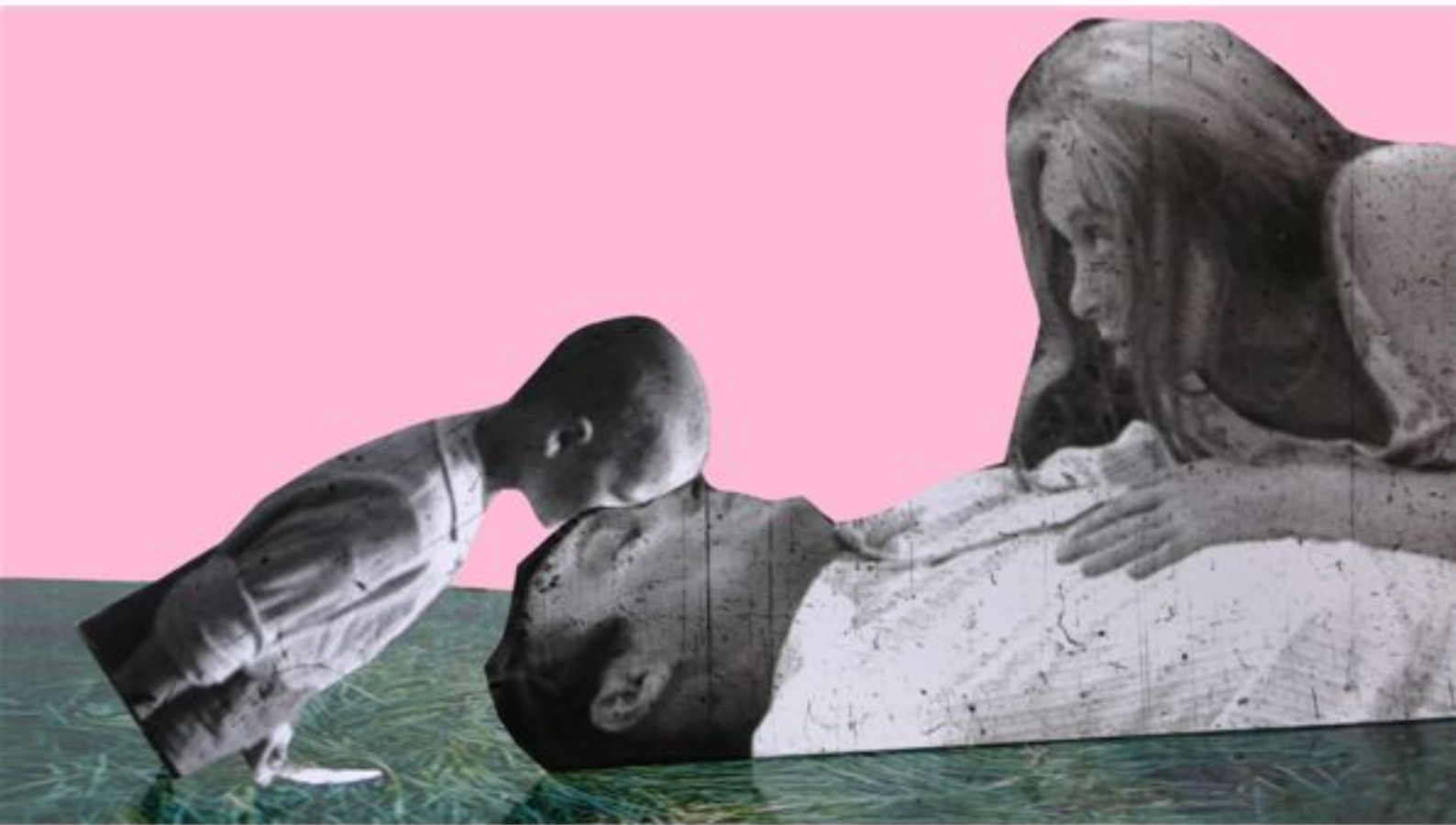
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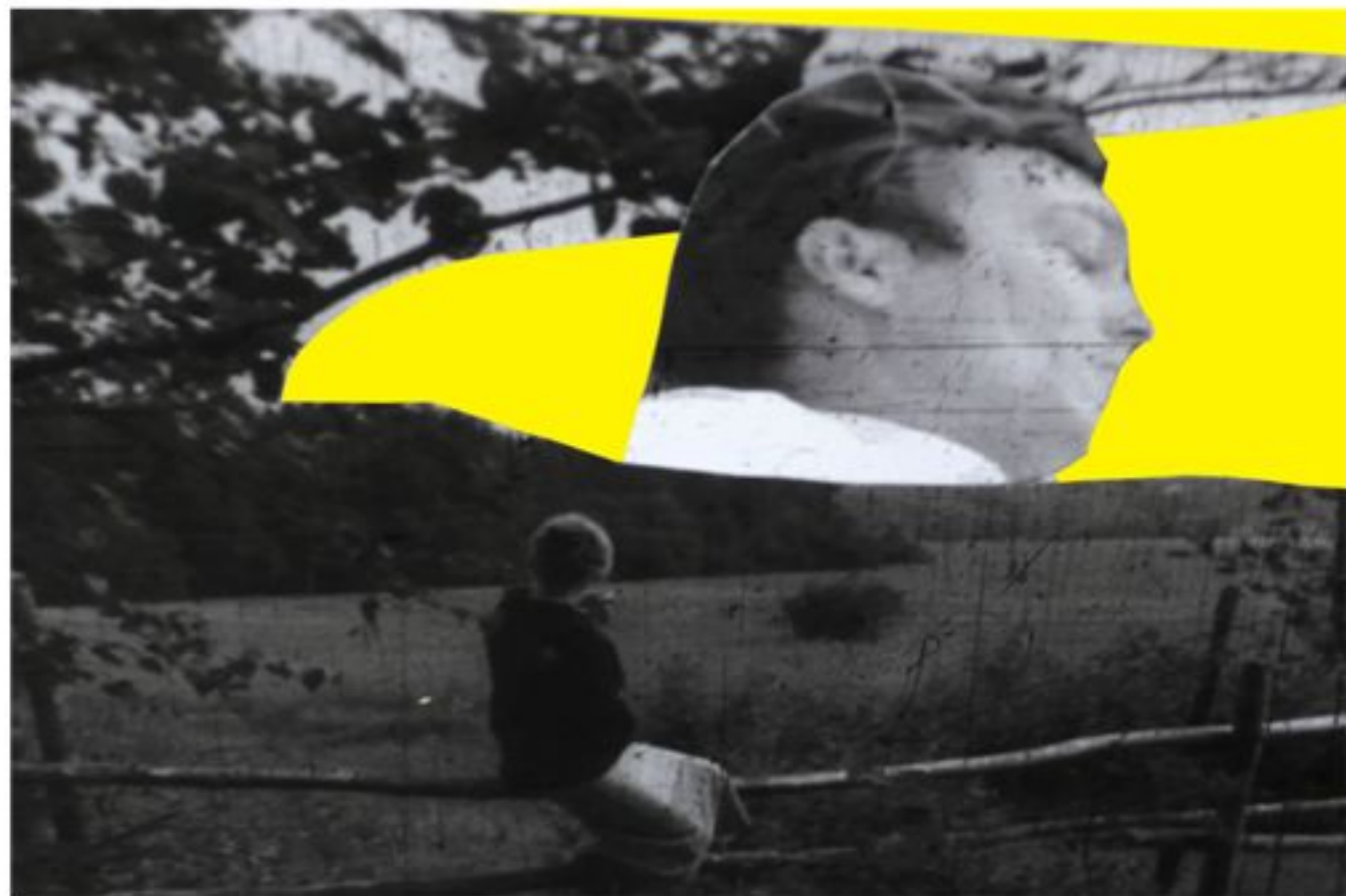














**Господину Гюнтеру Дитриху
директору галереи Фото-Эдишен, Берлин**

Уважаемый господин Дитрих,

Обращаюсь к Вам по поводу предстоящей выставки "От зеркала к зеркалу", которая уже состоялась в городе Орхусе (Дания). Интерес к творчеству моего брата, кинорежиссера Андрея Тарковского не ослабевает. Ретроспектива его фильмов прошла недавно в Лондоне с огромным успехом. И выставка в Орхусе, и ретроспектива фильмов в Лондоне состоялись при содействии Российских посольств в Дании и Великобритании. Фильм Тарковского "Зеркало" для российского и для зарубежного зрителя является, как бы визитной карточкой нашего кино. В 2009 году исполняется 35 лет со дня выхода фильма. Работы художника Сергея Святченко - это первый значительный художественный отклик на этот фильм. Думаю, что выставка фотоколлажных работ Святченко будет иметь успех у немецких любителей кино и фотоискусства. Этот успех мог бы быть поддержан, если бы нашлась возможность пригласить таких звезд российского кино, как актеры Маргарита Терехова и Олег Янковский, снявшиеся в фильме "Зеркало".

Желаю Вам всего доброго, с уважением- Член Союза российских кинематографистов

Марина Тарковская.

Москва, 24 ноября 2008 года.

Translation from russian

Dear Mr Gunther Dietrich,

I am writing to you regarding the forthcoming exhibition *Mirror by Mirror* which is to be launched in your gallery. The works by my brother continue to spark interest worldwide. His films have been displayed in London recently with great success. The exhibition *Mirror by Mirror* launched in Aarhus, as well as the films shown in London, were sponsored by the Russian Embassies in Denmark and Great Britain, respectively.

Over the years, Tarkovsky's film 'The Mirror' has become the quintessence of Russian film in both Russia and abroad. Its 35th anniversary will be celebrated next year, in 2009. The collages made by Sergei Sviatchenko for the exhibition *Mirror by Mirror* represent the first artistic attempts to grasp the essence of 'The Mirror'.

I am convinced that the exhibition displaying these photo collages is bound to create considerable German interest as well, especially if Margarita Terekhova and Oleg Yankovsky, who play the leading parts in the film, could be persuaded to come to the opening exhibition in Berlin.

I wish you all the best. Good luck with the project.

Yours sincerely,

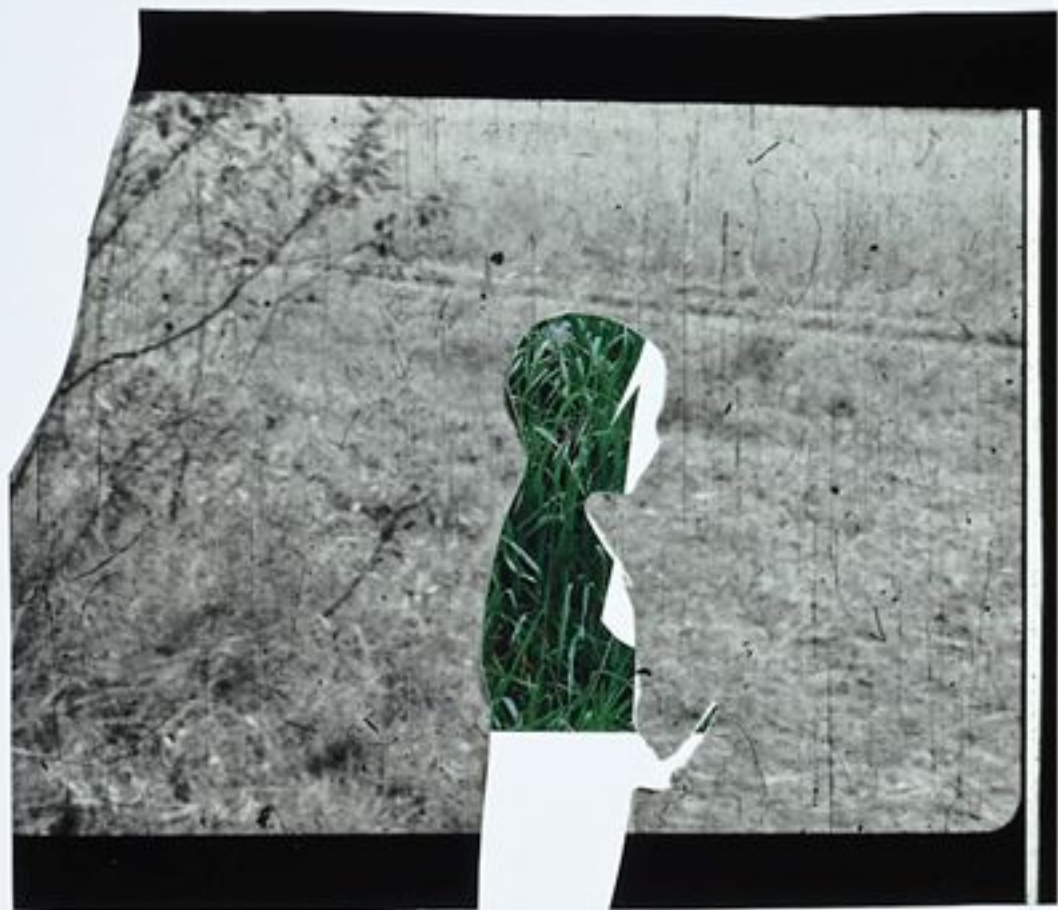
Marina Tarkovsky, author and member of Cinematographers Union of Russia

email 12.01.2009



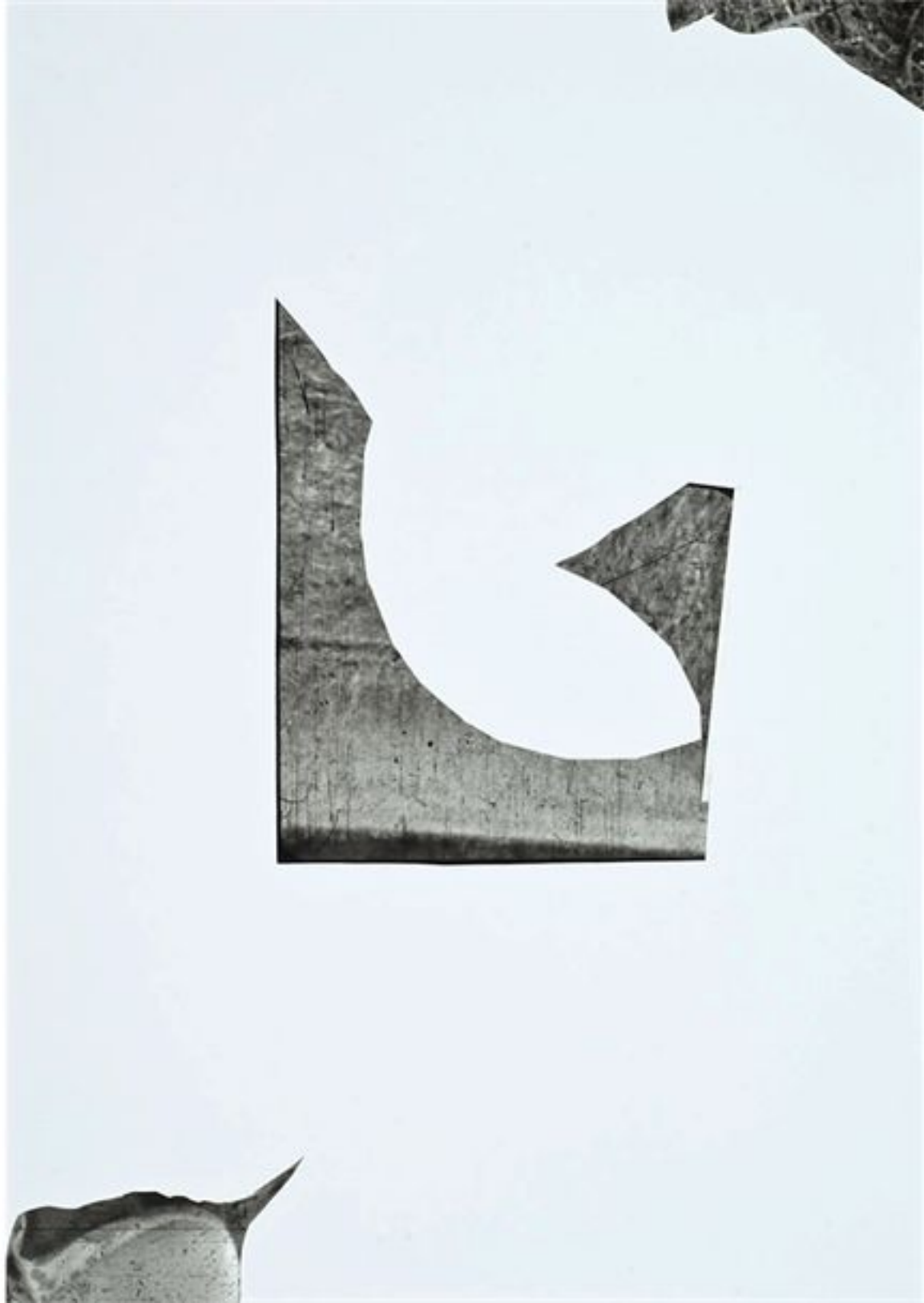
collages - cut out on paper - various sizes 2008













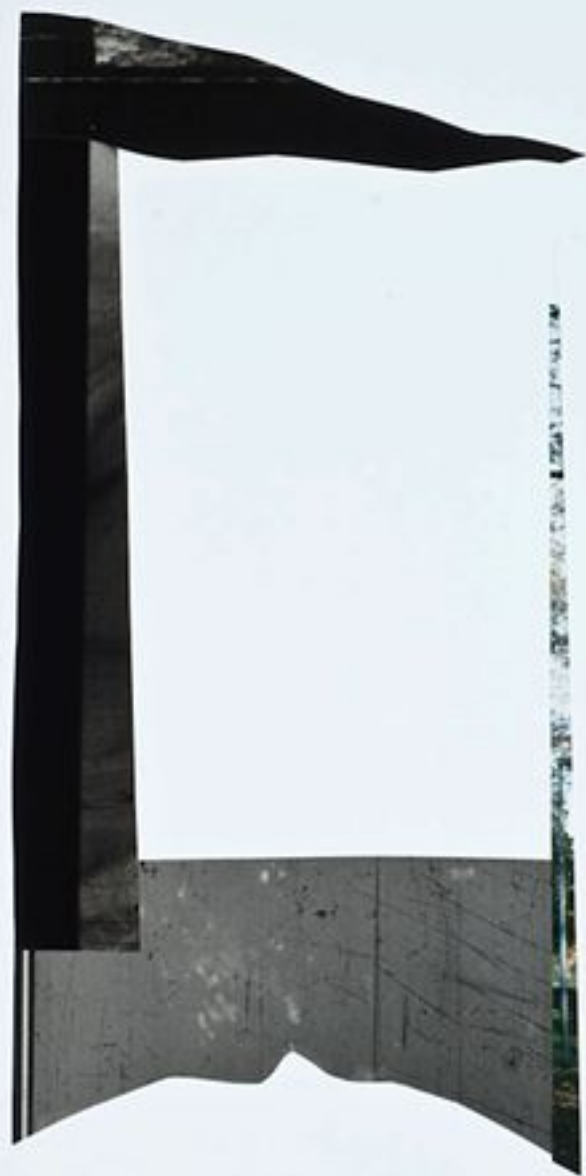


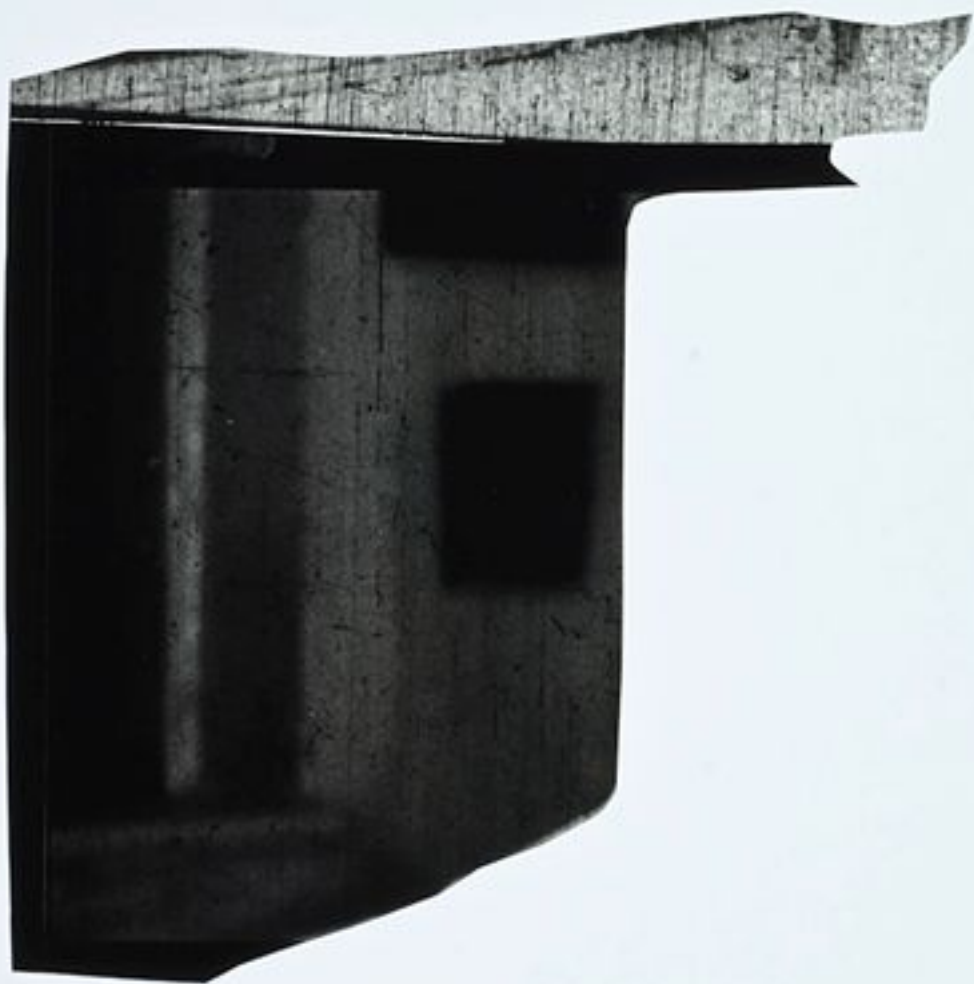








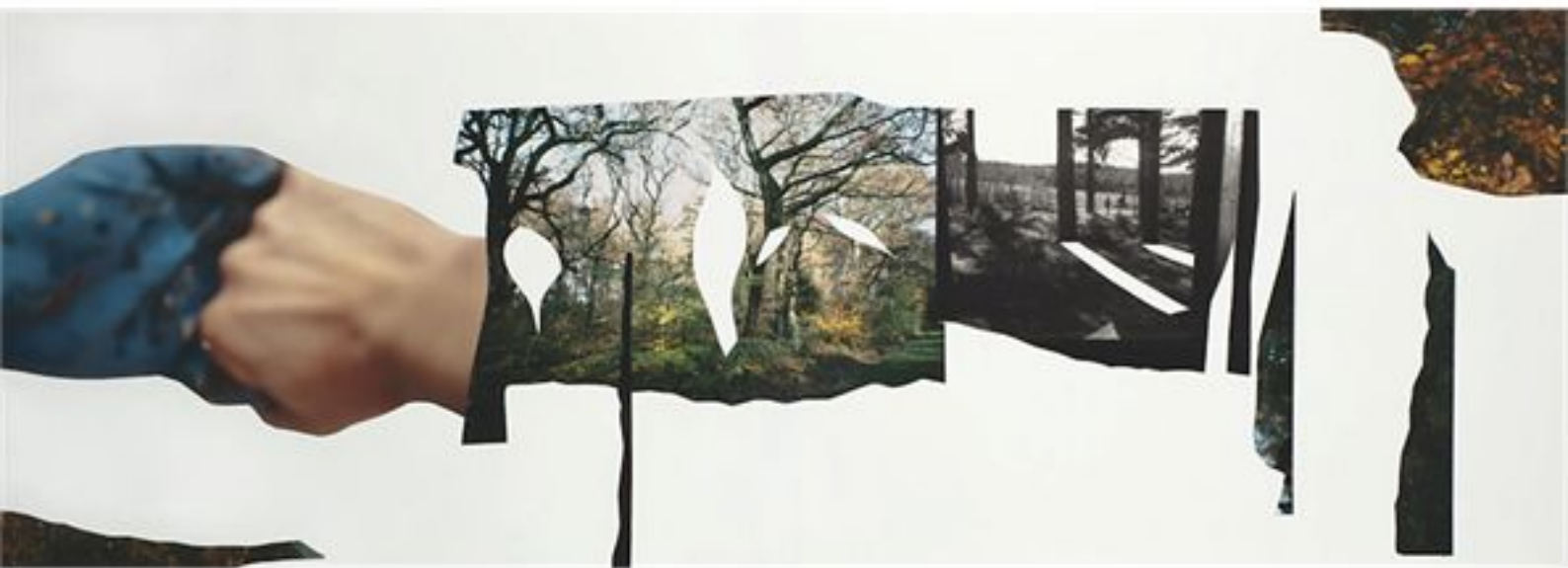














selfportrait of the artist

Gedankenblitze zur Ausstellung „Spiegel an Spiegel“ von Sergei Sviatchenko

Als der Filmmacher Sergei Paradschanow* in den 70er Jahren verhaftet wurde, nahmen zahllose Intellektuelle den Kampf um seine Befreiung auf. In diese Zeit fällt auch der Beginn des Briefwechsels zwischen Andrei Tarkowski und dem inhaftierten Paradschanow.

Einmal besuchte ich Tarkowski in seinem neuen Haus, ich traf ihn, meinen guten Freund, in einem Augenblick größter Konzentration an, als er gerade dabei war, aus Zeitungsausschnitten etwas zu zaubern. Schweigend schob er mir Paradschanows Brief aus dem Lager zu, während er selbst weitere Ausschnitte herstellte und Stück für Stück zu einer Gruppenfotografie zusammenfügte, auf der er, Paradschanow und seine Freunde zu sehen waren.

Immer wieder fügte und klebte er Bild an Bild. Mit einem Mal schwebten Turbane über den Köpfen, eine Krone und andere unerwartete Details. Das Fest war in vollem Gang! Selbst Tarkowskis Sprache war ungewollt daran beteiligt – Paradschanow harrete seiner Antwort. Damals musste ich mir, wenn auch nicht ohne Eifersucht, eingestehen, dass Tarkowski auch auf dem Gebiet der Collage ein Meister war.

Und jetzt stellen wir uns – nur für eine Minute – das Unvorstellbare vor: Tarkowski betritt die Ausstellung des Künstlers Sergei Sviatchenko. Mit welchen Augen würde er wohl die in Dänemark, Berlin, London, Paris und Italien (seine geliebte Wahlheimat) stattfindende Ausstellung betrachten? Sviatchenkos zehn Collagen, die dem Film „Der Spiegel“ gewidmet sind, sah ich das erste Mal in Dänemark, in Aarhus, in der Galerie „Image“. Sie beeindruckten mich durch ihre künstlerische Nähe zu Tarkowskis Schaffen. Vornehmlich sind mir die wagemutigen Montagen des Films „Der Spiegel“ mit seinen musikalischen Explosionen und Akzenten im Gedächtnis geblieben. Der Flug des inneren Ichs, die Aufrichtigkeit der Offenbarung, das Thema der Schuld und das Gefühl der Liebe – das alles spielt sich in Sviatchenkos Collagen auf der Ebene des Unbewussten, der Ängste ab und wird von ihm mit großer Behutsamkeit umgesetzt.

Eine Reihe von Details hätte sicher Tarkowskis Interesse geweckt: die unerwartete Montage einzelner Filmausschnitte, aber auch die Schroffheit, mit der diese zusammengesetzt sind. Der blaue Hintergrund, die Brüche und Durchbrüche in die Unendlichkeit des Raumes – Sviatchenkos Stil zieht die Aufmerksamkeit des Betrachters auf sich.

Die ungewöhnlichen Lösungen, die der Künstler fand, zerreißen die gewohnte Logik Descartes', demonstrieren offen eine scheinbare „Unverständlichkeit“, eine Unverständlichkeit des ersten Blicks. Auch Tarkowski scheint im ersten Augenblick unverständlich zu sein. Doch das war für ihn kein Hindernis. Er arbeitete mit dem Code der Auserwähltheit, setzte das Gewöhnliche außer Kraft, entschied sich für die Gestalt des Widerstandes gegen das Regime und gegen den Alltag...

Das ist mir auch in der Kunst Sergei Sviatchenkos begegnet.



Aleksandr Gordon ist ein bekannter russischer Filmregisseur und Drehbuchautor, war mit Andrei Tarkowski freundschaftlich und verwandtschaftlich verbunden, beide studierten bei Michail Romm an der VGIK, der Staatlichen Filmhochschule in Moskau.

Übersetzung: Martina Jakobson

*Sergei Paradschanow (1924-1990), sowjetisch-georgischer Filmregisseur armenischer Herkunft; ging für seine einzigartige Filmsprache in die Weltfilmkunst ein. Das Universum seiner Filme verbindet gleichnishaft Farbsymbolik, Bilder, Musik und Worte. Seine Filmszenen beruhen auf einem enzyklopädischen Wissen der fernöstlichen Kulturen und ihrer Kunst, auf einer außergewöhnlich-mythischen Fantasie...

Space and Photography

By Irina Tchmyreva

In my works, I have deliberately chosen to depict persons resembling myself and my closest family: myself (at the age of 8 and 16), my mother, my mother's brother, my father, my grandmother, a clear light, as glimpses of my childhood, radio news (the conflict with China), and the unusual plastic and structure of these elements remind me of my childhood in Khar'kov and our enormous garden. It is as if I am now in the right side of the mirror.

Sergei Sviatchenko, excerpt of a correspondance
March 2008

Sergei Sviatchenko creates collages. He does not connect fragments of memory to form a plane; on the contrary, he uses them to create a space – a space in which these memories are not scattered puzzle pieces, but sets within a small stage box that the audience can enter. Dedicating them to Tarkovsky's film „The Mirror“, Sviatchenko has made a number of collages. Surely, most of the members of the intelligentsia and the well-educated establishment have seen this film at least twice since it appeared the first time, and a lot of people belonging to different generations have declared explicitly that this film has changed their lives. True enough, there are people unable to come to terms with the film, even though they all agree that it made them feel bad. Among the people declaring „The Mirror“ their love are those considering it an admission ticket to a circle of people belonging to „the cultural jet set“. However, a very large number of people are genuine disciples of this film – people who appreciate visual poetry. There are artists whose memory of this film is precious; for them, turning towards it is like returning to their own beginning, assessing the overall result of their own work. It is some test! Like parading in front of a royal balcony.

For this solo exhibition of collages, Sergei Sviatchenko has chosen as his theme a tribute to the film „The Mirror“.

If the artist had not been sincere regarding his declaration of love for the old film, the exhibition might have turned into an artist's rough self-experimentation, displaying himself before the audience in light of „The Mirror“. There is a whole story relating to Sviatchenko's acquaintance with this film: his lecturer, professor of architecture in Khar'kov, Viktor Antonov, saw in Andrei Tarkovsky an example of an architectural structuring of the poetic way of thinking: the architect and the film maker met. Tarkovsky gave Antonov some working clips from the film. Antonov took the initiative in showing the film „The Mirror“ in Khar'kov; the same film that the Soviet bureaucrats did not want to be shown in traditional cinemas. Tarkovsky turned up at the screening, in reality the premiere of the film in Ukraine in the beginning of the 1980s. It was back then that the young Sviatchenko saw the film. „I was stupefied, retelling the opening scenes to my friends time and again. It was brilliant,“ says the now famous artist Sviatchenko. When leaving the Soviet Union in 1990, he took with him a present from Antonov: fragments of a 16 mm colour film - „The Mirror“.

They lay between his books for 18 years to become the pillar of Sviatchenko's collage tributes. Tributes to what? To Tarkovsky, to the film, time, the generation, the home, the parents, himself, his children, the audiences around the world whose personal memories, thanks to Tarkovsky, have become a legitimate part of their existence: they have exited the dreams and the emotions and entered the light of History.

On the surface of the table, Sviatchenko has created sets of memory by using the motion pictures transferred from the filmstrip to the paper – his own memories. Their mechanism was set to work and tuned by Tarkovsky's masterpiece. Accustomed to modern technology, we forget that it constitutes a magic power, enabling one substance to be transformed into another: the light in the filmstrip converting into the substance of the pictures, black-and-white like old films on the screen, like photographs, like engravings. Then, the technology of transformation must yield to play; play with space in three-dimensional reality. A room. A chair. Pasteboard figures. Like small soldiers from Andrei's simple childhood play, in Sergei's childhood in the next generation, and in the childhood of many boys in the following generations. The space of play, captured by the camera, is once more reduced to a plane surface, now photographs.

The computer technology adds colour, which has no immediate significance, but which possesses the eternal importance of emotions – emotions rousing the memory. We see pictures, the nature of which is that cinematic art must give way to the collage; the collage must give way to the photograph, which must give way to digital art in the exhibition space. The viewer walks through a door, so to speak, into these elements where memories of an unfamiliar childhood become a reflection of our own childhood.

When contemplating Sergei Sviatchenko's works, we find ourselves in a permanent dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious; a dialogue not so much taking place in the external world, but in one's own memory, in one's own mind here and now.

Sviatchenko transfers a small-scale experiment – a paper experiment from Surrealism's modernist „culture of being“ - to the present, which calls for other dimensions and rates of speed in order to catch the attention of the viewer, and to establish a connection between the artist and the viewer. Becoming actively influencing elements in the architectural medium, Sviatchenko's in-depth collage have an immediate effect. Whirling them into the collage space, the collages do not give the viewers any chance to regain composure. Here, the collage represents an expression of a modern way of thinking, not so much in the form of distortion or entropy, as in the form of freedom of thought surpassing the usual rate of associative communication. Sviatchenko offers the viewer a journey akin to one taken in a time machine; a journey connecting the social impact of the archaic pictures and the newest technologies.

Let me add that Sviatchenko's works represent one of the future art forms; a future where not so much the verbalization as the momentary intrusion into the sphere of concrete knowledge – located outside of the pictorial framework – becomes the basis of global communication.

Irina Tchmyreva

MA in Art Theory and History of Fine Arts

The Russian Academy of Arts

Motivation

The exhibition *Mirror by Mirror* is created by Danish-Ukrainian artist Sergei Sviatchenko who lives and works in the old Danish town of Viborg. Here, Sviatchenko has founded Senko Studio, a gallery for contemporary art.

Mirror by Mirror is an artistic as well as a personal and heartfelt homage to the remarkable Russian film maker Andrei Tarkovsky. The exhibition uses as its point of departure Tarkovsky's film *The Mirror*; a work that has been decisive for Sviatchenko's artistic expression and for his perception of the world in which he lives. The basis of Tarkovsky's cinematic poetry lives on in Sviatchenko's equally poetic and surrealist pictures. Shown in Denmark and Russia, the exhibition includes installation, video art and collages. Moreover, fourteen collages, created by Sviatchenko while on a study trip to Moscow in June 2008, are included.

Sviatchenko's works represent a new interpretation of art in the former Soviet Union. In this respect, they are examples of continuity and change alike: an aesthetic reflection of the present in contemporary Russia, combined with visual and poetic traces of one of the most visionary poets in the history of Russian film.

Both as a private person and as the Danish Ambassador to Russia, I am delighted to witness the effort made by a thoughtful artist to reflect his own recent history in the artistic past of his native country. This is an example of how relations are able to retain their significance across time and space. This is what happens when lives are lived, experiencing the world from East to West and back again.

His works are presented in a particular political context in which the idea is to create new fruitful relations between what we traditionally term 'East' and 'West'.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Sviatchenko for his art, as well as for contributing to promote knowledge of the Soviet Union and Russia in Denmark.

Per Carlsen
Ambassador
The Royal Danish Embassy in Moscow

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