Where Dogs Run

Natalia: My name Is Natalia, I'm a participant of the Where Dogs Run group.

Olga: I'm Olga.

Alexey: I'm Alexey.

Olga: If we're talking about who is artist in general, then I think it's a person, who's trying to live how they like and to do what they want, so artist doesn't owe anything to anyone. And it doesn't matter what your method is, we, for example, do technological art, and there's no difference between us and other artists in general.

Natalia: We've always worked as a group. None of us ever worked separately. About who comes up with what – it happens differently, and yes, we always discuss everything, so, we work all together and we don't have our own projects.

Olga: If one of us doesn't like the idea, then we don't do it. It should be important for every one of us.

Natalia: We met in the entrance hall of the house. Olga and I studied together in college We had an assignment, we were making a film about some mentally ill person. We sneaked into his apartment with a hidden camera and filmed how he lives. Then we needed to quickly look at what we had and our camera died. We left his apartment and met Vlad, who's not here now, and Alexey is his friend, that's how we met, we just asked if we can charge our camera at his place, he let us. Something like that.

Olga: That's how we began to make exhibitions together

Natalia: So, coincidence

Olga: the group has been existing for 15 years and for 13 or 14 of that we've always had to search for and change studios, and what you do is always very limited by the space and it's possibilities, and the fact that NCCA now can afford to provide some artists with studios is great, and we created several projects already in here.

Alexey: We try to be as independent as we can, but that's very difficult.

Olga: We always depend on somebody. If the project is serious and needs sponsorship, you look for it. And wherever we get that sponsorship or grant from the foundation, there's no pressure on you in the process, but still you're not independent, cause that foundation, for example, chose your project over the other, that's selection, that's influence, and non artist that search for grants can really be independent.

We're obviously not gallery artists, not street artists, obviously, what we do demands a lot of time, and a lot more, we're much more dependable on some outer circumstances than street artists who can quickly actualize their idea

Natalia: People expect something technological from us

Olga: We can talk about the artwork that we created in this studio, "1,4,19". We created it here together with NCCA. It is a live mouse put in robotized labyrinth, and its physical reality in which it exists, starts to depend on the virtual reality, which is formed with unrealized potential of the mouse. It's a closed cycle in which past and future actions of the mouse affect its present in this labyrinth equally. That project was difficult for us. It's an experiment that each time starts from the beginning, each time the labyrinth is set from the start and each time new mouse is put inside, which creates an

endless quantity of mathematical situations, and we can watch live organism produce new algorithms of fighting the system, and not only mathematical ways of doing so, but also physical (bodily), and we can see how a very primitive creature can win over a complicated mathematical system.

PRODUCTION

Alexey: When we have a concept set, then we separate all we have to do into small steps, and start doing it. The most interesting part is thinking on concept, and the rest is quite a formal procedures: to draw, to count, etc. Once we all agree on something, we split everything into primitive operations and do them.

Olga: For example, if we talk about 1,4,19. after we decided what we're doing, Alexey designed the labyrinth and it turned out that in order to create a completely rational structure consisting of absolutely equal corridors, it should contain very different details, and in order for camera to capture the mouse in all parts of labyrinth, every wall will have to have its own angle to it(to camera), and then we had to create lots of little details and put them together into one rational structure. And then we separated the operations and created the object, there was a lot of difficult programming: we realized, that it's a great responsibility, cause we had a live mouse, and there was a whole programmers team that worked with us, so we wouldn't hurt the mouse. The team was called Nexus and cost 144 million rubles. We need to get back to that cause now they might be called differently.

MATERIAL

Alexey: We don't stick to some specific materials, we always have exactly ones that we need. So they are different every time and if you think about it, it doesn't matter, it only matters, when you use them.

Olga: Every time we need to learn to work with new material. For example, the last piece that we are working on right now is a transportable micro chromatograph, gas analyzer, it's the second project, in which we work with gas and smells, but now we're interested in different aspects of it and our intentions are different as well.

First project, when we worked with gas analyzing, was very, very interactive, it was built on interaction with public. That new project is quite autistic and doesn't interact with people much.

Alexey: It's a backpack and a musical instrument, like a street organ that contains different ways of creating sound, and the person (who carries it) can smell any place and recreate the scent in the form of sound. Because the smells everywhere are very different, we get a unique melody that plays what the air contains. All the processes are invisible for people, they can hear the music directly and understand, what the smells around them contain, even if they can't sense them. The idea is about this traveling character who collects the scents of different cities and sound maps of various city smells,

Olga: and the street organ is needed to resolve the person in the crowd, the man just walks and creates music, that way he can collect data about what is hidden in the air. And that data of gas situation in the city controls the sound directly, so the person is just carrying both devices and also turning the handle to generate the power so it doesn't depend on electricity.

Natalia: On the one hand, it's a very middle age approach, the contemporary artist behaves in a very middle aged way, walking and playing music, he has a direction of walking, and that direction varies, so there's a lot of live situations in it, connections to government, to locals, so there is a little interactive part in it, because there's people, but that could also be happening in a field, where

there's no one round. The difficulty is that devices work on static electricity that you can charge, or generate power with handle, there's a so called motor soldier inside that gives power to the whole portable installation.

MEDIUM

Olga: Everything you use to express your opinion is medium. You can't separate the message from its carrier.

Natalia: It's the question of applicability. So there's a statement. Say, Velimir Khlebnikov's piece "Pipe Martians". We take his poetry – beautiful – and read it in any environment (->context) we want, and the poem sounds the way surroundings dictate it, and it has its own energy, rush, but you still can interpret it any way you want, so whatever artist initially says, there's always a context, that can either turn the statement upside down, destroy it, or raise it higher.

PROCESS

Natalia: Some pieces are endless. We don't understand where they begin and where they end. For example, the Mandelbrot set, easiest example.

Olga: The whole name is "Knitting And Crocheting The Mandelbrot Set", we transferred the Mandelbrot set into scheme for knitting and asked women, old ladies, to knit it. And because the set is infinite, they will knit it forever.

Alexey: They are knitting the additional set that is more infinite.

Natalia: There's nothing more infinite!

Alexey: It's so unreal to complete it, it's hard to imagine, not only from the human point of view.

Olga: On the other hand, if we talk about artworks where we don't expect it to end... When do we know it's dead? Not when it's physically destroyed, because that happens all the time. When the project looses it's meaning for us, or when its context is changed so much because of something we couldn't predict, then the project doesn't exist anymore.

There's a grandmother at the exhibition, that sits there and knits. Then she's changed by another grandmother.

It a performance, and the audience can't join, because the person should be instructed previously, because in the hands and the head of the performer, there's a huge amount of information, they can't be replaced by anyone.

For example, "Beklinichevo", when it hasn't stop existing for us, but the context has changed so much in the most awful way.

We have a very old project called "Belkinichevo", that transfers kilometers of birches into kilometers on speed-o-meter, so kilometers of birches from small Ural village Beklinichevo, every time someone watches the video, are transferred into kilometers on speed-o-meter, that way the virtual and mathematical takeover of the territory by the birches takes place. Belkinichevo is endlessly expanding. This meant something completely different to us, but now, when in this new time we were asked to exhibit it, it had different meaning

PRESENTATION

Natalia: We don't think our artworks need some special preparation from the audience. We exhibit them in different places.

Olga: Where and how we exhibit them depends on the exact project. We don't think that we need some special audience. We create our artworks for ourselves. We make them to see what they will turn out to be. And we exhibit them so we could understand them.
We started documenting artworks not that long ago. Mainly we document those where the process is present. It's important to document them, and then we try to film and take pictures of it.
Natalia: We haven't made any published documentation, but we're starting to think about that. We're almost ready to start working on some book, some projects need documentation in a book format.

INTENTION

Natalia: Any artwork contains a certain message.
Olga: If we try to describe it in words right now, then why do we even do what we do, why don't we write books. So I think there's no need to describe, "what we wanted to say with that" in words. And what about function of art, I think main function is to create meanings, and unfortunately, lately in contemporary art creating meanings became the main functional thing.
For a long time we could talk about aspiring to create an absolutely meaningless thing, it was our highest goal to achieve an absolutely meaningless situation, but now this aspiring has acquired too much importance because meanings that you create are easily applicable, they become functional, art is functional in that sense, but when you can find more functions in it than that, then it's design.
Natalia: Not everything should happen for reason.
Alexey: That is why we do it, because we try to understand why we do it.
Olga: There's either no answer to that question – why and what for, or there are millions of them.

METHOD

Olga: Obviously there is a method, but we don't realize what it is. Because we certainly have one. Can you not realize a method?
Natalia: Obviously we act alike each time. We need several years to think about this question. We feel the sameness in our actions, but we can't express it with words.
Olga: We will send you an answer to that in several years. When we start noticing that about ourselves and when we will analyze our method.
Natalia: It's beginning to look like a method.

ART

Natalia: Art is something artificial, and definitely unnatural.
Olga: I can only answer this question applicably to certain situation: this is art, that is not.
But in the end, some concrete artwork won't fit in your definition of art, so I think I can't talk about in those kind of categories, to define what art is and isn't in such abstract word and terms. Only concrete things. 4 of us can fight for hours about it, we don't always agree,
Natalia: maybe we will kill each other some day.
Olga: We can really fight about what each of us thinks is art or isn't. It's very funny, funny fights, but we understand that it's funny.
Natalia: And when we're in this condition, we treat it with irony, but that could last for a long lime.
Olga: We can't give you a certain answer to this important question.
Alexey: I agree, that intuitively I can define this for myself, but I can't formalize it.

Olga: You can construct any definition you want, but then some artwork that really impresses you, won't fit it.

Alexey: Then there's no point in this formalizing.

Bio

The creative association "Where Dogs Run" was formed in Yekaterinburg in 2000. Participants: Alexey Korzukhin (b. 1973), Vladislav Bulatov (b. 1975), Natalia Grekhova (b. 1976), Olga Inozemtseva (b. 1977).

The artists create kinetic sculptures, objects, installations, video and events which appeal to spontaneous somatic experiences and mythological narratives as well as images of optical and linguistic illusions yearning for the technical achievements of utopias. The group is an active participant of biennials and exhibitions of contemporary art in Russia and abroad.

WEB: http://where-dogs-run.livejournal.com/

Credits

The interview was conducted on August 20 2015 with Natalia Grekhova, Olga Inozemtseva and Alexey Korzukhin from 'Where Dogs Run' at the artist-group's studio in the NCCA building in Ekaterinburg.