

## Zlye

### ARTIST

**Alexander:** My name is Alexander. I position myself mainly as a painter, but I am also a designer. I work with installations, paint on canvas, work in the street as well. I've been looking for the new forms of interaction recently, in order to organize a new form of presentation.

**Stanislav:** My name is Stas, Stanislav Rikshkovovets. I do not position myself as a painter, I am a painter, because I live like this, only like this. I am a representative of the art-group "Zlye" (Evil, Mean). We are four people, who are based in this city. Unfortunately all four cannot be here, but there are two of us. From old Slavic, I am not very good in it, but I have information, that the people here used to have a different alphabet – "bukvitsa", where the letters were called "az", "buki", "vedi", "glagol".. They were not only letters, but also images, that's really important. Each letter had a letter. "Az" for example, if I am not mistaken, meant 'the god on the earth', "the living water – the dead water", everything that we know from the fairytales. There was a letter "zelo". Then, when Russia got baptized, when different people started to rule in the country, they changed "zelo" into "zemlya" (earth), because "zelo" meant "evil". But evil at that times was understood like "something by no one understood, by no one studied". Our people didn't have the notions "good-bad", "kind-evil". Nothing like that existed. The evil was something that was not understood yet. That is how it started. "Zlye" is the initial letter that was written like that.

**Alexander:** The group has an impartial judgment. You present an idea and get clear response. It's like a critical society. If we do a collective work, we reach a collective result, and everyone participates in it. Everyone does his part, according to his abilities. At the same time, the canvas are done individually. We have people in the group who do photography, video, therefore they have different forms of presentation. They find a suitable place for them, not only the galleries. This part of life requires you to have everything well, in order to be able to do your favorite thing. Firstly, it seems to that the group helps to realize your place in the world.

### ARTWORK

**Alexander:** As for me, more than anything, an artwork is a term, used by the institutions to characterize the works of the artists. In reality, it is an authoritative opinion that determines if something can be considered an artwork or not. In reality it is hard to feel the borderline between what can be called art, and what not. I think an artwork can be done out of anything, the most important thing is how you do it and who will appreciate it.

**Stanislav:** The most recent work done by the art group is one about flies. It is called "The Revolution Square". On one side there are flies with one kind of shit, on the other - with other. The image is very clear, the place is very clear (the work is made in Samara, on the Revolution Square). The locals told me an interesting fact. There is a monument on the Revolution Square, a statue of Lenin on an interesting, very beautiful pedestal. Before him on this pedestal there was a monument to, if I am not mistaken, Alexander I or Nicolas II. I cannot say for sure. So this work is so close even to those events of those times. But in reality, you can project it on any times and any events, because when one crowd gathers against another, it smells shitty.

The initial impulse to create this work was that we are all part of one thing. The boundaries are only inside of our heads. Everybody has a different aesthetic perception, I guess.

## PRODUCTION

**Stanislav:** We are the factory. Sometimes we work together, sometimes separately. One comes up with an idea, then we discuss it, we look at it and everyone contributes corrections according to the abilities, and then we do it. That is what concerns the collective works. We also work individually, but the style, the presentation- everything is different. The group has its own so-to-say religion, ideology or a concept, yes, a concept.

**Alexander:** This work with the flies started with the idea of other members of the art group, I visualized it and Stas moved it on the object. We had this interaction and everyone participated in it so it was a team work.

**Stanislav:** We do not have a studio, a workshop, because we are constantly moving. We paint more in the street, because, as I already said, we move from one place to another. We cannot afford a space now, because you need to work there, to live there. It is a certain spirit.

There is a Russian word "zaeba" (pain-in-the-ass), I don't know how you are going to translate it. Perfectionism is different. I think I am rather the first one. I do not consider myself a perfectionist, because I do not have this desire, this itch. In general, I think that if a work is finished completely it is dead. In my opinion, it's quite sad. Considering the feedback, if people like it or not, doesn't really matter to me. What matters is if the impulse that I sent works or not. I have never missed. Everybody hates us. Everything is great.

## MATERIAL

**Alexander:** The material is always very different, depending upon the necessity. I prefer to work with spray paint. I like how it permits to create graduation, clear and blurry lines at the same time. In addition to it I use a piece of paper, that acts like a template and permits to achieve very thin and straight lines, or the other way around: curved lines. With these instruments – a spray and a piece of paper– very detailed, photo-realistic works can be created. This technique helps to speed up several times the process. We do not have any sponsors, that is why all the materials that we use are bought with our pocket money. We choose the things that are cheaper, that cover better and are more difficult to remove. Along with the traditional materials, the oil and acrylic paint, I started to use projection. On the painted canvas light acts as an additional material, giving more dynamic to the work, making it more lively and adding a new meaning. Therefore it can be called an interactive material, like video projection. I tried to unite this process with the process of painting. A lot of people do that: trace the image casted by the projector. It is not a secret, the XXI century is the century of technologies. But I thought that projection can be used as a way to present the work.

Mapping is also quite spread, in the sense that it has been used for a long time. But after the mapping an empty space was left, that ... Mapping is something airy, and when it is over nothing is left, if it is not documented. In this case I decided to connect mapping with the process of painting, like a performance. So there is a series of videos, that I managed to follow, and after this mapping there were three canvas, three artifacts left.

**Stanislav:** Different materials can be used. I had this one work that I did with the help of others, but not people, they were other creatures. They are considered injudicious by everyone. This work was the "Peace" sign made by the pigeons with their shit. I don't know. You can use whatever you want, and do whatever you want – it's a process. There are people who paint with blood. It's is not important, what do you use.

## MEDIUM

**Alexander:** We use different media: first you use one thing, then another, and you end up with the third. Lately we used canvas and installations. It is stupid to limit yourself to one type of activity. You can combine painting with video cutting, with digital art, computer illustration. All of it are parts of one thing, of one work. It is stupid to choose just one favorite piece, when you have that much media. I think if you combine different media, the product that you get becomes more interesting.

## PROCESS

**Alexander:** Basing on an example, I can tell the life process of one work, we did it 2011. It was a big sticker, one of our first big stickers. We stuck it by the Court. There was a girl on this sticker, and it said: "Execute, not to forgive". It was a campaign aimed at making people think about the child rape. This poster lived for two days in its initial form. Then half of it got torn away. It was a tall poster, and they couldn't reach the top. The girl had only the head and the hands left. Apart from that there was a swastika sign next to the poster. The poster was torn down and the swastika was there as if nothing happened. After we found out, that the poster was torn down, we went there and painted with red paint like the half of the girl's body was torn away and the blood was flowing from her head. Our message was painted over with green paint, which was completely out of place, because the facade of the building was white, not green. So we left our signature on it. The street itself provoked us to finish the work. It is such a kind of process when the object lives its life. When you leave your work in the street, you don't know what will happen to it, because it is now commonwealth, not your own property. No one can say for sure, if the work will stay for two hours, or for years. It depends upon how people receive it.

## PRESENTATION

**Alexander:** Basing on an example, I can tell the life process of one work, we did it 2011. It was a big sticker, one of our first big stickers. We stuck it by the Court. There was a girl on this sticker, and it said: "Execute, not to forgive". It was a campaign aimed at making people think about the child rape. This poster lived for two days in its initial form. Then half of it got torn away. It was a tall poster, and they couldn't reach the top. The girl had only the head and the hands left. Apart from that there was a swastika sign next to the poster. The poster was torn down and the swastika was there as if nothing happened. After we found out, that the poster was torn down, we went there and painted with red paint like the half of the girl's body was torn away and the blood was flowing from her head. Our message was painted over with green paint, which was completely out of place, because the facade of the building was white, not green. So we left our signature on it. The street itself provoked us to finish the work. It is such a kind of process when the object lives its life. When you leave your work in the street, you don't know what will happen to it, because it is now commonwealth, not your own property. No one can say for sure, if the work will stay for two hours, or for years. It depends upon how people receive it.

## INTENTION

**Stanislav:** We want what everyone else wants, to become buddhas, enlightened and clean. In order for this to happen, we need to wake everyone up. Everyone wants it, but just a small group of people understands, that only through pain and aggression people can wake up, at least for a second. If a

person has this second, there is an opportunity that they will wake up completely, it will be like a chain reaction. It is all strict like this and that is what unites us.

I need to find the way to get through. There is an image and a method, that I have in my veins, my talent, that I make use of in order to address people. It has a very aggressive form, because I have already said, that only through pain, through incredible suffering, a strong emotional impulse, not love or all this blah-blah-blah, only aggression can 'turn the person on' for a moment, a second, two or five. Of course, when they will turn off, they will feel a lot of hatred towards me, and some of the teeth might be lacking as a result, but it's ok, it's worth it.

Maybe later, he will remember this feeling of awakening and will start to realize the world by himself. He will form another ring in the chain, and then there will be another one, and another, and the chain will continue. And it will be great. And then everyone will become enlightened.

**Alexander:** I think, for me the reason why all of that is done... In the beginning it was "monkey style": I saw someone doing it and wanted to repeat. But when you reach a certain level of skill, you start thinking of what are you transmitting. The main thought in art for me now is to show people the unity of the whole world, of the consciousness. The ideas that I have now are something that I tell and transmit to the others, acting as a re-transmitter. I do not create them. Nothing can come to this world from the outer space, without being already present here.

**Stanislav:** To do something that is harder than a word, or two words, or three words.

**Alexander:** There are some things that cannot be expressed by words, that is why I want to express them on the canvas, because it is possible. Now the goal is to show how to achieve the initial source through the works.

## METHOD

**Stanislav:** The method is simple: an idea, a sketch and its realization. Speaking about peculiarities, it all depends on where you do it. If you work in a studio, you can do whatever you want, the way you want. Working in the studio, experiment will be one of the most important methods for a painter, for me, for us. The street can be seen that way. You can't experiment. We go there having in mind an exact form of presentation, an exact message. You cannot leave a certain frame. It can cause you problems. The same as if you don't keep in mind certain time periods, when you can do this work, it can turn out being physically unpleasant, and spiritually as well (when you get caught).

**Alexander:** Speaking about the method, when I started to paint, I looked at the similar works of the Germans, Dutch, Americans. I saw a certain technique of using paper. The straight side was used for cutting. I started to use it a little bit different. I worked on this technique more, with it I can get very detailed images. When I arrive to the point where I could get very detailed images, I realized that there are easier techniques to do that. In the beginning I was enjoying the very process of creating a detailed work, and then I switched to the conscious statement. I moved from the technique to the idea, and realized that what I serve and how I present it is more important.

## ART

**Stanislav:** In my opinion, art is something monumental that brings aesthetic pleasure. In our times, the informational era, a very developed era, anything that gives you an esthetic pleasure can be considered an artwork. There is also the notion of mass and individual character of art. Individually, anyone can create an artwork. I do not understand what happens now. The art for me is utter bullshit, sorry, I cannot call it the other way: paying really, really, really big money for some

completely strange things that usually stay without being used. It is in my understanding. I cannot say that something is like this, or something is like that. I do not have the right.

Speaking about my own works, I cannot say that I am doing art in its classical sense, I need to think about it. There are other people who were taught to do that. They are specialists in art and they have a lot of different other names. I prefer to leave the debates about what art is for them. I live with art, for real, I live with it. If I don't paint, I don't live. If I don't model something, I don't live. If I do not doodle something the way I aesthetically like it, I don't live. I see it this way.

Art is a human concept. That's it.

Alexander: I think that art is an environment made by the people, who want to change something in this world, because a painter always changes, always does something. In reality, the term "art" does not have limits. A person who is connected with art, a curator, whatever he calls art will be art, because he has a certain level of competence in this area. I think art is a field with no boundaries for experiments.

**Stanislav:** Art is an ability to be here and now, to realize it. That's art. All the rest are fantasies, fantasies, fantasies. A fantasy that have to be sold, a fantasy that brings aesthetic pleasure, a fantasy that has to last a thousand years – all these are fantasies. All of them are just human concepts. There is only one real art: to try and feel yourself now. To become a buddha – that's art.

**Bio**

The Street art group "Zlye" is a creative association consisting of an unspecified number of artists. It exists since the mid-2000s. Previously works by this art-group appeared only in the streets and were very provocative. Recently works can be seen in exhibition halls and galleries of contemporary art centers. The main motive for creativity of "Zlye" is a reflection of reality, by artistic allegories.

WEB: <http://zeart.ru/en/ze>

**Credits**

The interview was conducted on August 19 2015 with Alexander and Stanislav from ZLYE at the NCCA building in Ekaterinburg.

Interviewed by: Johannes M. Hedinger

Filmed and recorded by: Alexander Kiryutin, Alexander Petkov

Edited by: Alexander Kiryutin, Alexander Petkov

Transkript by: Daria Koltushkina

Set producer: Anna Litovskikh

Produced by: 3rd Ural Industrial Biennial Of Contemporary Art Ekaterinburg, Russia

Special thanks to: NCCA, Pro Helvetia, Com&Com