**GARAGE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRESENTS:**

**SPIRIT LABOR: DURATION, DIFFICULTY, AND AFFECT**

*September 10, 2021–January 30, 2022*In memory of Nikita Alexeev (1953–2021).

The exhibition explores the relatively small segment of contemporary art that is dedicated to investigating and challenging the durational dimension of its agents, from the body of the artist to the act of making and viewing art. It brings together works by 30 artists from different generations across Southeast and Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Eastern and Western Europe.

The title in English, *Spirit Labor*, has been borrowed from the eponymous film essay by British curator and performance historian Adrian Heathfield, in which he traces a special kind of labor that transpires in artistic practices “inclined toward elemental exposure and non-human forces.” *Spirit Labor*, as artist Melati Suryodarmo has pointed out, is not about spirit itself but about the underlying principle behind the making and performing of some works that betrays a sustained *practice* of spirit. The Russian title of the exhibition, *In Service to Time*, offers a slightly different perspective, drawing our attention to the durational aspect of such practices; to the turbulent human dependence on the only truly non-renewable resource: time.

The focus on duration—on viscous, problematic, unhistorical time—often produces works that are hard to make and live through, such as those made gradually throughout the artist’s entire life. Tehching Hsieh produced only seven works in his lifetime, with each taking no less than a year to make and the longest and final piece completed over fourteen years. Vyacheslav (Yura) Useinov spent eleven years making his small painting *The Shadow of a Non-Existent House*, explaining that the image on the canvas was the result of his spiritual and emotional effort, which allowed him to stoically keep that fading visual memory before his eyes at all times.

In exploring the many different aspects of what duration(al) can mean, from endurance and body art to conceptual practices, *Spirit Labor* touches on the inner psycho-emotional work of the artist, something that can lead to great effort and colossal difficulty, the overcoming of which often produces affect. In her performance *Save My Soul*,Elena Kovylina steered a rickety boat toward a storm and survived by a miracle. He Yunchang made a meter-long cut on his body as a gesture of resistance to non-democratic forces. Similarly, Yoshiko Shimada “became” a statue in front of the Japanese embassy in Korea as a reminder of the continuing taboo in Japanese society on discussing the fate of so-called “comfort women” (women who were sexually exploited by Japanese soldiers during World War II) and violence against women in Japan and worldwide even today. Fiete Stolte runs from time on an airplane, moving across time zones to get ahead of the light-day and gain an extra day of life.

The exhibition design, developed in collaboration with architects from Grace, encourages an almost “confessional” confinement with each artwork by placing them within separate cubicles made of concrete, the visual and technical properties of which were originally conceived to be very much “in service to time.”

Artists: Chingiz Aidarov, Vyacheslav Akhunov, Yuri Albert, Nikita Alexeev, Luchezar Boyadjiev, André Cadere, Eugenijus Antanas Cukermanas, Gino de Dominicis, Duan Yingmei, He Yunchang, Hamlet Hovsepian, On Kawara, Koh Nguang How, Vitaly Komar, Elena Kovylina, Andrey Kuzkin, Tetsuya Noda, Roman Opałka, Nam June Paik, Ghenadie Popescu, RASSIM®, Yoshiko Shimada, Mihai Stanescu, Fiete Stolte, Sun Furong, Melati Suryadarmo, Tehching Hsieh, Vyacheslav (Yura) Useinov, Alexander Yulikov, Zhou Bin

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*Curators: Snejana Krasteva, Andrey Misiano*

**GARAGE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART**

Garage Museum of Contemporary Art is a place for people, art, and ideas to create history. Through an extensive program of exhibitions, events, education, research, and publishing, the institution reflects on current developments in Russian and international culture, creating opportunities for public dialogue, as well as the production of new work and ideas in Moscow. At the center of all these activities is the Museum’s collection, which is the first archive in the country related to the development of Russian contemporary art from the 1950s through the present. Founded in 2008 by Dasha Zhukova and Roman Abramovich, Garage is the first philanthropic organization in Russia to create a comprehensive public mandate for contemporary art and culture. Open seven days a week, it was initially housed in the renowned Bakhmetevsky Bus Garage in Moscow, designed by the Constructivist architect Konstantin Melnikov. In 2012 Garage relocated to a temporary pavilion in Gorky Park, specifically commissioned from award-winning architect Shigeru Ban. A year later, a purpose-built Education Center was opened next to the Pavilion. On June 12, 2015, Garage welcomed visitors to its first permanent home. Designed by Rem Koolhaas and his OMA studio, this groundbreaking preservation project transformed the famous Vremena Goda (Seasons of the Year) Soviet Modernist restaurant, built in 1968 in Gorky Park, into a contemporary museum.

Garage is a non-profit project of The IRIS Foundation.

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