

PRESS RELEASE

Arseny Zhilyaev. *Lingua Madre*

Solo Show

Curated by **Alessandra Franetovich**

Critical Essays by

Alessandra Franetovich and **Marco Scotini**

05.03.2024 – 15.04.2024

Opening Reception

March 5th, 6 PM

C+N Gallery CANEPANERI

Foro Buonaparte, 48 – 20121 Milan

C+N Gallery CANEPANERI is pleased to present the third solo show by **Arseny Zhilyaev** at our Milan gallery. Curated by **Alessandra Franetovich**, this new project continues Zhilyaev's investigation into the politics of language (and/or the language of politics), alongside its representation in the potential exhibition history and the media. Within the framework of *Lingua Madre*, works are gathered in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. They appeal to this tragic event from an anti-war perspective, as expressed by the artist, who, despite relocating to Italy after 2014, was shaped by the milieu of the aggressor.

Nei giorni della guerra (In the Days of War) will be exhibited for the first time in Italy, together with new productions such as *Dietro la nebbia di guerra c'è sempre il dolore (Behind the Fog of War There Is Always Pain, 2022–2024)*, *Senza titolo or Wiedermal als Tragödie (Untitled or Once Again as Tragedy, 2024)*, and *Lingua Madre (Mother Tongue, 2022–2024)*. The latter, from which the show derives its title, comprises a collection of flags created with canvases bearing embroidered words taken from audio recordings of telephone calls between Russian soldiers and their families, with white paint applied over them. *Dietro la nebbia di guerra c'è sempre il dolore* presents an archive of newspapers and journal pages dating from 24.02.2022 onwards, in which the artist again uses white paint to obscure the definition of the texts, rendering them almost illegible. *Nei giorni della guerra* was first presented as a solo exhibition upon the invitation of Zdenka Badovinac at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb in 2023. In this interactive installation, the artist analysed the relationship between the current situation in Russia and its repressed past, addressing the legacy of Stalinism, the suppression of freedoms in the country, and imperialism towards other nations. The analysis was conducted through the lens of a pictorial work by the socialist realist artist Geliy Koržev (1925–2012). Finally, the neon piece *Senza titolo or Wiedermal als Tragödie* connects present-day conflicts to past events by altering Karl Marx's infamous quote on the repetition of history as tragedy and farce (a rephrasing of an earlier observation from Hegel on the legacy of Napoleon). Through this reference, Zhilyaev alludes to the current state of affairs, emphasising tragedy as an endlessly recurring catastrophe.

The critical scope of *Lingua Madre* opens possibilities for questioning the role of contemporary art in the context of the ongoing conflict in Europe. Revealing hidden narratives of Soviet (art) history and the potential of avant-garde museology, the artist reminds us of the fragility of humankind, its past, and its future.

Arseny Zhilyaev (b. 1984, Voronezh, USSR) is a Venice-based former of gatherings, exhibitions, quests, and scripts for (future) histories, using a variety of artistic practices. His projects often take shape as (para)fictional institutions, employing the museum as their medium. Zhilyaev plays roles at the Institute for Mastering of Time and the Institute of the Cosmos, while observing the activities of the Museum of Museums by way of the reflections in the lagoon. His works have been shown at Manifesta in Marseille, biennials in Shanghai, Gwangju, Liverpool, Lyon, Riga, Thessaloniki, and the Ljubljana Triennale, as well as at exhibitions at Centre Pompidou, Palais de Tokyo (Paris); de Appel (Amsterdam); HKW (Berlin); Kadist Art Foundation (Paris and San Francisco); GAM (Turin), MAMbo (Bologna). Zhilyaev has earned degrees from Voronezh State University (2006); Moscow Institute of Contemporary Art (2008); and the MA International Program at Valand School of Fine Arts, Gothenburg, Sweden (2010). He serves as a professor at NABA in Milan, and he has given lectures and master classes at MoMA, Brooklyn Museum, Bard Graduate Center, CUNY (New York); Tate Modern, Whitechapel (London); and Princeton University (New Jersey). Zhilyaev is the editor of the anthology *Avant-Garde Museology* (e-flux, University of Minnesota Press, V-a-c Press, 2015) and contributes articles to e-flux and Moscow Art Magazine. His works are included in the collections of Tate Modern (London); M HKA, Museum (Antwerp); Kadist Art Foundation (Paris and San Francisco); and MSU (Zagreb).

Alessandra Franetovich has a PhD in contemporary art history, and is a critic and curator. Currently serving as a professor at both Naba, Milan, and the Academy of Fine Arts in Verona, she is also the scientific director at the Cantieri Aperti festival and curator at Cripta747, Turin. In addition to this, she will soon begin a research fellowship at the University of Florence. Her research has been presented in universities and institutions in Italy and Europe, and she has been awarded scholarships from the Regione Toscana, Quadriennale di Roma, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, and V-a-c Foundation, Moscow. In 2019 she won the Premio Mosca for young Italian curators promoted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage. She has curated numerous exhibitions and artistic residencies, and collaborated with galleries, non-profit spaces, festivals, and museums. Her texts have been published in catalogues and magazines for e-flux journal, Middle Plane, Castello di Rivoli, Centro Pecci, and Cosmic Bulletin.