

Dmitry Vilensky | Chto Delat? 4 years in 90 minutes

In my lecture I will focus on the different aspects of activity of our group that was established 4 years ago in Petersburg. I will make a special focus on newspaper politics and exhibition production and also on the problems of self-organisation in the current political Russian situation.

During the lecture I will show video documentation of our action in public spaces, fragments of documentary films, installation views and graphic aspects of the composition of the newspaper.

Founded in early 2003 in Petersburg, the platform "Chto delat?/What is to be done?" opens a space between theory, art, and activism. The platform's work is coordinated by a workgroup of the same name: its members include artists, critics, philosophers, and writers from Petersburg, Moscow, and Nizhny Novgorod (see full list of participants on the web site).

It is a project that is aimed at creation and developing a dialogue of different positions about politicization of knowledge production and about the place of art and poetics in this process. The platform's activity aims at triggering collective initiatives in a form of "temporary art soviets". "Art Soviets" are involved in the making of the different cultural projects from their earliest phases onward. It is the "Artistic Soviets" that could serve as a prototypical social model, capable of formulating and realizing its goals independently and taking on the function of an alternative power—an open system for interaction with society at large.

The participants of this platform engage in a variety of art projects, including videoworks, installations, public actions, radio programs, and artistic examinations of urban space. Its most recent exhibitions and research projects are "Drift – Narvskaya Zastava" (2004-2005), a community-examination of a constructivist-proletarian neighborhood in Petersburg, and "Self-Education" (September 2006) an international exhibition and seminars program dedicated to spreading and producing alternative forms of knowledge that will continue and further develop the emancipatory traditions of a variety of practices.

As an editorial committee, this workgroup publishes an English-Russian newspaper, with a special focus on the Russian artistic-intellectual situation. In our editorial approach we not only want to engage in a confrontational re-reading of various theoretical and practical approaches from the Left, but also to focus on the actualization of the potential of a Soviet past repressed in the course of Soviet history, and to examine how it develops in the current situation of neo-capitalism in post-Soviet time.

Each issue of the newspaper is a process that draws artists, critics, activists and philosophers into a heated editorial process, which results in theoretical essays, art projects, open-source translations, questionnaires, dialogues, and comic-strips.

During the lecture the recent issue of the newspaper will be distributed.

Suggested reading materials: I would ask participants to make their own research on our web-side www.chtodelat.org and to choose texts that are of special interest to them.