



Erik Moskowitz | Amanda Trager  
*Two Russians in the Free World*  
April 27 - June 1, 2014  
Opening, Sunday, April 27, 7-9pm

Sunday, May 11  
FRIEZE Lower East Side and SoHo Morning, 10am-12:30pm  
Sunday Stroll LES, noon-6pm

From April 27 - June 1, 2014, PARTICIPANT INC is proud to present Erik Moskowitz | Amanda Trager, *Two Russians in the Free World*, a multi-channel video installation that maps the interconnections between artistic inspiration, love, and the marketplace. As in their previous collaborative works, music and song are key elements, conveying a narrative derived from actual interviews; in this case, five hours of interview footage with Sasha Jampolsky, who plays the character Sasha, detailing his stories about being an artist in 1970s Soviet Union.

The environment created for *Two Russians in the Free World* is centered around a 75-minute video projection, synched with two flatscreens representing the main characters, Manni, a Russian billionaire, and Sasha, a moneyless artist. The inclusion of sculpture made of shopping carts, blocks of text from the script, beanbag chairs, and a theatrical scrim of an 18<sup>th</sup> Century British Period Room furthers the artists' orchestration of a multiplicitous chorus that simultaneously plays out on screen and in the gallery space.

Purposed to emphasize the film's dialectical nature, the exhibition elements impart a sociality and interaction that stems from immaterial rhetorical practices, such as those of the Moscow Conceptualists, a legacy to which Sasha belongs. The artistic experimentation that arose in 1960s and '70s Eastern Europe and Russia was marked by a participatory aesthetic rooted in collective actions. There, unlike the wide production and proliferation of subjectivities in the West at that time, the happenings and body-related performances of conceptual artists were a consequence of an imposed collectivity, made radical by a privatization of shared experience. The resulting actions were in many ways unremarkable, and often inspired by a utopian quest for self-individuation.

In the manner of non-action/non-productivity, Moskowitz and Trager implicate Manni, the billionaire who doesn't collect art, and Sasha, an artist who no longer makes art. In a stretch of anticipation and temporality, the characters occupy a space in which social and physical relations are re-imagined with new possibilities for intimacy and being-in-the-world. Simultaneously utopian and dystopian, the dubbed voice-track harmony assigned to the characters suggests a group subjectivity, but also a subjugated puppet-body – or the same bodies being dragged through a precarious field.

The narrative telescopes out to include the story of its own making as the actual artists/filmmakers depict themselves debating plotline and meaning as well as the virtues (or lack thereof) of their collaboration. Within this scripted environment, Moskowitz and Trager usher the audience into a space where the line between the subject and the subjected becomes increasingly blurred, and where the recurring question is posed: *Why and for whom do artists create?*

Erik Moskowitz | Amanda Trager are Brooklyn based artists, born and raised in New York City. Their collaborative partnership began in 2008. Recent exhibitions and screenings include Centre Pompidou and the Jeu de Paume (Paris), the Reina Sofia (Madrid), Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin), The Beirut Art Center (Beirut), Momenta Art and 303 Gallery (NYC). They are recipients of numerous grants and awards, including the NYFA Fellowship in Video (2008) and the NYSCA Distribution Grant (2009). In 2013, a 30-minute Prologue version of *Two Russians in the Free World* was screened at Centre Pompidou (Paris), the Rotterdam Film Festival (Rotterdam), The Showroom (London), the Emily Harvey Foundation (NYC), The Museum of Contemporary Art (Vilnius, Lithuania), The Pera Museum (Istanbul), The Uplink Factory Shibuya (Tokyo), and IndieLisboa (Lisbon).

*Two Russians in the Free World* was made with support from the Artists in Residence Program at Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, California.



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Common Practice New York is an advocacy group that fosters research and discussions on the role of small-scale arts institutions in New York City. Common Practice New York aims to collectively embody the question, What is our common practice and why do we value it? Learn more about Common Practice New York and join our mailing list at <http://commonpracticenyc.org/>

PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street, between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets on the LES, ground floor, wheelchair accessible. Subway: F to Second Avenue, Allen Street exit or JMZ to Essex/Delancey. [participantinc.org](http://participantinc.org)

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