

EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN HISTORY OF EXHAUSTION

Review on Filonenko, B., German, L., Lanko, M. (eds.), 2022, Pavlo Makov. Fountain of Exhaustion. Acqua Alta. Kharkiv: IST Publishing.

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Кожен має власну історію виснаження

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Після кожної кризи починається період відродження й відновлення енергії. Після кожного піку розвитку йде занепад та поступове згасання ресурсів. У такому кругообігу знаходиться кожне індивідуальне життя, політичне утворення, глобальна екосистема й будь-які процеси, створені природою або людиною. «Фонтан виснаження» Павла Макова пропонує розглянути короткий відрізок цього кругообігу – теперішній період всебічного виснаження без видимого покращення й вирішення. Pavlo Makov. Fountain of Exhaustion. Acqua Alta – це хронологічний та обширний опис історії роботи, представленої в українському павільйоні 59-ї Венеційської бієнале 2022 року. Ця книга є доповненням до павільйону, окремою самостійною роботою, що дає більше контексту для сприйняття, резонансу та інтерпретацій «Фонтану виснаження». Історія розділена на 16 розділів, кожен з яких знайомить читача з виставками, проєктами, іншими роботами Макова, що безпосередньо пов'язані з «Фонтаном виснаження» та його розвитком. У другій частині книги представлені короткі рефлексії художників, кураторів та письменників з приводу питань, дотичних до історії або концепції цієї роботи: виснаження, води, сприйняття минулого й теперішнього, рідних ландшафтів тощо. Борис Філоненко, як автор основного тексту, окрім лінії розвитку роботи, у першу чергу намагався розкрити вихід «Фонтану виснаження» за межі первинного харківського контексту в ширший вимір глобальних переживань.

Оскільки- книга тримає в собі глибші зв'язки між розділами й текстами в кінці, аніж просто тематичні, після ознайомлення зі структурою в цій рецензії я подаю свої рефлексії щодо основних явищ та складових концептуальної сфери роботи Павла Макова, що прослідковуються крізь всю книгу: нестабільність форми й повторюваність ідеї, явище виснаження, суспільного відторгнення та локального міфу, значення води. Також описую мистецьку взаємодію Макова з іншими представленими художниками.

Актуальність описаної роботи, а відповідно й книги, обумовлена масштабною дестабілізацією в багатьох сферах суспільного й індивідуального життя, зокрема світовій політиці, екології, суспільних травматичних подіях. Ця книжка підсумовує спостереження того, що відбувається з невиснаженою ідеєю й тривалим виснаженням, яке заперечують.

Ключові слова: «Фонтан виснаження», Павло Маков, Венеційська бієнале, Харків, Борис Філоненко, локальний міф, автоархеологія.

The Ukrainian pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale (2022) was represented by numerous works of Pavlo Makov, with the central one being *Fountain of Exhaustion*. The exhibition at the Arsenale di Venezia was the first time the *Fountain* worked as it had been conceptualized at the beginning – with a stable water supply. *Pavlo Makov. Fountain of Exhaustion. Acqua Alta* is a two-parted account of the creation and development of the work that has become a symbol of global political, economic and humanitarian exhaustion. Additionally, several short texts, or rather reflections and commentaries about the exhaustion itself, familiar landscapes, global and personal concerns, and Makov's other artistic practices are included. The book's relevance has strongly increased since the world and every individual have faced consequences of environmental irresponsibility, right-wing political trends, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and other global issues. But the struggle to safely get this work out of the country under missile attacks is not when the exhaustion started.

The first part of the book gives a complete image of the life of *Fountain of Exhaustion*. It consists of 16 chapters: begins with the context and background of the arising of its idea and concludes with the last turning point of the artwork's existence for today – presence at Ukrainian pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale. Borys Filonenko described every stage of the *Fountain's* story, whether it is the first physical model, modification the form, appearance in other artworks of Makov, group or solo retrospective exhibitions. The amount of context provided is enough to get the idea not only of the development of this work but of Makov's art practices in general. Other artworks that were made at some point during the existence of *Fountain of Exhaustion*, the main exhibitions, general concerns and main problems of the artist's practices are highlighted in every chapter.

The narrative of the first eight chapters takes place in Kharkiv. Here, the emergence of the idea, its separation into an independent object, the search for its form and materials, and attempts to integrate it into the urban space are described. In the following eight chapters, the work is now a fully independent structure that exists on its own or along with other works as a part of exhibitions or book collections; for some time it maintains central place in Makov's oeuvre. The main narrative here is that from the middle of 2010s *Fountain of Exhaustion* rises above its local context and from the diagnosis of Ukrainian people shifts into a symbol of a global condition and turns out to be “a universal call to the local and international communities all over the world” (Filonenko 2022, p. 83).

Every chapter is illustrated by Makov's archive materials, photos of exhibitions, his finished works and sketches. At the very beginning and the end, there are two-page spreads with screenshots from a documentary video of the flooded Kharkiv in 1995 and images of Venetian acqua alta in 2022, both being local ecological disasters. This way we get nearly a framed book with an accentuated flow of time, where the story of *Fountain of Exhaustion* can be followed only by pictures. We move from the disaster/idea that is unexpected and unorganized to the disaster/idea that's now familiar and to some extent aestheticized.

The second part consists of short texts that are rather commenting on *Fountain of Exhaustion* or are connected with the conception, form or contexts of it. Each of them adds and widens the thinking space that surrounds the art piece. The first text is an official curatorial statement written by curators of the pavilion: Borys Filonenko, Lizaveta German and Maria Lanko. Taras Prokhasko in an excerpt from his diary *FM Halychyna*, with an example of familiar landscapes, writes about the fear and pain triggered by unwanted or unpredicted changes that transform the space around beyond recognition. Beth Joselow in *Thinking about Water* leads us through the story of her relationship with Pavlo Makov since 1993, explains the connection between concerns and main questions they reflect on in their works and writes intimate pieces about *Home* and *Hope*. In *Drops of charisma* Stanislav Turina focuses on the phenomenon of exhaustion itself, its definition, borders

and causes, its place in the world, in every single life and Makov's oeuvre. Vlada Ralko in *Time Thief* reflects on the question of exhaustion but, unlike Turina, within a single work. Ralko argues that *Fountain of Exhaustion* illustrates process rather than a fixed state; she focuses on the permanent shift of the visual form, despite what, the meaning of the work remains intact. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht in *After 1945, fragment from 'Unconcealment of latency? My story with time'* illustrates the impossibility of objective and unbiased perception of the events at the moment and of making an obviously correct decision, while reflecting on his perception of the socialist regime in the 80s. Lizaveta German seeks the answer to the question 'Why even bother to recreate the work from 1995 in 2022?'. She explains this with the so-called *archaeological impulse*, typical for the last 30 years of development of art, and auto-archaeology, inherent in Makov's art. In both cases, the place of events – Ukraine – is determinant as its contemporary art has been lacking sufficient reflections on the past and its reinterpretation. The last text belongs to Pavlo Makov: *Excerpts from our scenery. Epilogue* is an artist's story about finding and analysing more than 400 works in 1998 – Makov's third-person narrative about himself. This text makes a circle and brings us back to the beginning – the first day of the Great Flood (Filonenko 2022, p. 133).

The shaping and development of the concept and its connection with the material form of *Fountain of Exhaustion* are described widely and coherently. Rising above Ukrainian context and Kharkiv mythology is shown graphically, mainly with the examples of exhibitions where the work was present. Lizaveta German writes that, despite permanent change and development of the form, the idea is always being repeated – the absence of the fixed form and visual narrative is what enables the *Fountain* to spread into wider contexts (Filonenko 2022, p. 130). The general exhaustion is felt by citizens of Kharkiv and Venice but the contexts, forms and causes are different. So, because of the liquidity of the form and its ability to permeate into any context, *Fountain* becomes a universal symbol of exhaustion: political, ecological and humanitarian. Vlada Ralko in *Time Thief* writes that with the appearance of new models, it seems like the distance to the *Fountain* grows, its outline gets more precise and the whole structure infinitely lengthens – the inexhaustible potential gets defined (Filonenko 2022, p. 125). Perhaps, the same happens with global exhaustion, now we see it from a clearer angle; meanwhile, the exhaustion itself has become more apparent and comprehensive, branching out like the *Fountain*.

The local myth is important for understanding the idea of *Fountain of Exhaustion* in the early stages of its life. The collapse of the Soviet totalitarian system and regime in the 90s led to the inaction of the local myths that no longer had a decisive impact on the perception of the place. The symbolic connection between the past and the present was lost. Though it is strenuous to build on the ruins from scratch, Pavlo Makov and the sculptor Oleksandr Ridnyi in 1997 presented a project called *Local Monuments*, the concept of which was to create a "local myth, parallel to the official one", that would meet the times and the social context, unlike the official, hierarchized one (Filonenko 2022, p. 54). *Fountain of Exhaustion* was part of the project, which is not surprising – two years before Makov was striving to install the monument of the *Fountain* at the confluence of the Lopan and Kharkiv rivers.

At the beginning of the text, Stanislav Turina writes about a large number of images of the cornucopia (from the Kharkiv coat of arms) around the city. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and its totalitarian system, there was nothing to reinforce the "cornucopia", it did not represent the reality, which again was indicating a need for change. What that time was contributing to the most was creating a monument for the overall exhaustion (in this case even the exhaustion of the mythology), in order to, as the author writes, "carefully investigate the concept of exhaustion in itself" (Filonenko 2022, p. 122).

There are a few mentions of the resistance of the Kharkiv citizens and other artists to the idea of *Fountain of Exhaustion* and incomprehension of why it is not a *Fountain of Abundance*. Facing a new or contradictory experience always triggers a feeling of a threat and a fighting

instinct, however, this very moment allows us to get into its essence. (O'Connell 2015). Perhaps, the model of this work in the centre of Kharkiv was supposed to perform a function of an inert reminder about the potential total exhaustion, facing which scared the society. Beth Joselow writes: "Guernica may make us gasp and cause us to weep, but it does not stop wars or make us open our arms to refugees." (Filonenko 2022, p. 121). This work is not about help and salvation, it merely depicts the actual state of our existence, pointing out exhaustion that will certainly intensify over time. In Makov's opinion, the public was not ready to consciously diagnose itself, so the monument did not get a chance to tower over the city.

This book illustrates Pavlo Makov's cooperation with other artists taking place between 1995 and 2022. The 5th and 7th chapters tell about Makov working with the designer Mykola Shtok who made the first 3D models of the funnels and recorded the installation of the Fountain's Memorial with fire replacing water. Collaboration with the writer Beth Joselow on *Fountain of Exhaustion. April Wars* is described in the 6th chapter and in her text at the end. This auteur book, may be said, for the first time brought the *Fountain* closer to the global context. Taking water as the key concern and parallel, it connected the contexts of Kharkiv and Washington. The 8th chapter tells about the connection between the art of Pavlo Makov and Oleh Mitasov, which, to my mind, seems the most important out of all. Makov recorded the entire Mitasov's flat, a few photos of which later were included in his book *Utopia. Chronicles 1992—2005*. There Makov says: "Mitasov is a natural phenomenon. His 'artworks' are not art. They are documents. An absolute unconscious testimony of our life. And that is his meaning." (Makov 2005). Noticeably, this quote can be applied to *Fountain of Exhaustion* as a document and testimony of our life as well. Its first physical model was installed on the wall of the building where Mitasov lived. This work has woven into and become a part of reality created by him. 'Mitasov was both the product of his age and its verdict' (Filonenko 2022, p. 62). Probably, the same can be stated about the *Fountain*: it depicts social exhaustion and pushes us to face it while being created by the same exhaustion. What seems unclear to me is why the book does not illustrate the project of Pavlo Makov and Serhiy Zhadan *Permanent Residency* (2020). This work addresses a native to Makov phenomenon of shared living space – Kharkiv and consists of two diaries, written in two different languages: art and poetry (the same as *Fountain of Exhaustion. April Wars*) about the same context and same values (Poet Serhiy Zhadan... 2021). "Place" was always the main field of Makov's research and practices: at the beginning of the 90s he focused on the Place where one should settle down and take root; again, the place is the same as in the Zhadan's poetry – Kharkiv. Later on, the accent shifts to place's stability and strength against time and overpowering striving for progress (Filonenko 2020). Even though it could have been an effective addition to revealing the concept of Place and Home in his works, this important part of Makov's art practices was not shown; even taking into consideration that the images of *Fountain of Exhaustion* are directly present in the book.

The last thing that should be commented on is water, as it (or rather its absence) is an essential part of *Fountain of Exhaustion*. Apparently, water is the component that makes this work relevant now in Ukraine and the world, figuratively and literally. The 14th chapter tells about it the most. Different but important roles of water are shown in the examples of *Fountain of Exhaustion* in two exhibitions in PinchukArtCentre: *Borderline. Ukrainian Art 1985—2004* (2015) and *Remember Yesterday* (2021), of Vasyl Tsagolov's artwork *Fountain* and the parallel exhibition *Tailings Dam* of Daniil Revkovskiy and Andriiy Rachinskiy. Beth Joselow in her text tells about water as a main vital resource, a concern about its absence and future preservation, and a return to purity, that were the main motives of her project with Makov.

This book always forces us to come back to the beginning and change the scale of perception, to compare and superimpose past experiences with the present. During the ecological disaster in Kharkiv in 1995 water took a central place in citizens' lives. In the February of 2022 the presence of water again became the main concern of all Ukrainians and, at the same time, the exhaustion,

which had been located at the general social level, showed up clearly and comprehensively to every individual. “The exhaustion remains exhaustion. The only thing in which the work has stayed behind is time. If before the stage of the war, which has just come, this work could warn about the danger of exhaustion of our old world and what would come after it – now this warning is irrelevant. Now this work does not warn but states.” – Makov answers the questions about exhaustion after the full-scale invasion (Semenik 2022).

Pavlo Makov. Fountain of Exhaustion. Acqua Alta tells about the life of *Fountain of Exhaustion*: its transformations, searches, corporations and explorations; the path from the result of local concern to the phenomenon in the global discourse. The relevance of this work and, accordingly, this book, lies in certain predictions and warnings of the future that has already come, so now it is our time to dig into the past, explore it and use the social archaeological impulse. The book was printed on the occasion of the 59th Venice Biennale, but there is almost nothing about it in this review – the book itself allocates only four pages along with the curatorial statement. And that is justified: the book is not a catalogue but rather an addition to the pavilion. It focuses not on the temporal event, but on the lasting process that still goes on and is now presented under the roof of one of the central cultural exhibitions. As I stated above, this book makes a reader turn back and compare, this way, along with the main narrative of the story of *Fountain of Exhaustion*, it reveals many adjacent topics: the development of Makov’s art practices, thoughts about exhaustion in many forms and contexts (individual and social, local and global, past unexpected and today’s one), myth and the first decades of post-soviet Ukraine and its art.

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**Everyone has their own history of exhaustion
(Review on Filonenko, B., German, L., Lanko, M. (eds.), 2022, Pavlo Makov. Fountain of Exhaustion. Acqua Alta. Kharkiv: IST Publishing.)**

After every crisis, there is a period of revival and energy recovery. After every peak of development goes decaying and gradual fading of resources. This circulation is inherent to every individual life, political entity, global ecosystem or any other natural or man-made processes. Fountain of Exhaustion by Pavlo Makov suggests to take a look at a segment of this circulation – a present period of all-around exhaustion without any visible improvement or solution in sight. Pavlo Makov. Fountain of Exhaustion. Acqua Alta is a contextually and chronologically broad narrative about the development of the work of Pavlo Makov, presented at the Ukrainian Pavilion at Venice Biennale 2022. This book is an addition to the pavilion, an individual work that provides wider context for the perception, resonance and interpretations of the Fountain of Exhaustion. The account is divided into 16 chapters that introduce the reader to the exhibitions, projects and other Makov’s artistic practices that are directly connected to the story of the Fountain. The second part of the book consists of short reflections of artists, curators and writers on phenomena related to the story or contexts of the work: exhaustion, water, perception of the past and the present, intimate landscapes etc. Besides the narrative of the development itself, Borys Filonenko, as the author of the main textual section, in the first place tried to reveal the Fountain’s rising above primary Kharkiv context into a wider dimension of global concerns.

Since, as it seems to me, the book contains deeper connections between the chapters and texts at the end, after presenting the structure, I give my reflections about the key parts of the conceptual side of Makov’s artwork, which can be followed throughout the whole book: instability of the form and stability of the idea, the phenomenon of exhaustion, social rejection and local myth, the meaning of water. Moreover, I comment on the presented account of Makov’s joint projects with other artists.

The relevance of this artwork is conditioned by the massive destabilization in many spheres of social and individual lives: world politics, ecology, socially traumatic events. This book sums up the observation on what happens with the un-exhaustible idea and the long-denied exhaustion.

Key words: *Fountain of Exhaustion, Pavlo Makov, Venice Biennale, Kharkiv, Borys Filonenko, local myth, auto-archaeology.*

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