

## Article

# On Feminist Aesthetics and Anti-Propaganda in Russia

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**Abstract:** The feminist agenda in Russia experienced a phase of intense aesthetic search in the field of contemporary art and contemporary theater. The split in society, war, increased censorship and state propaganda, and mass emigration stopped this process. Feminist ethics and aesthetics are oriented toward democratic values and the absolute value of human life; it is difficult for them to survive in totalitarian states. Using material from the history of feminism and aesthetic practices in the post-perestroika decades of Russia, this article examines two historical forms of such survival: the Stockholm syndrome and, in more detail, “anti-propaganda”, the popularization of the feminist agenda through aesthetic practices with mandatory feedback and the utmost attention to individual fate and personal trauma.

**Keywords:** feminist aesthetics; contemporary art; contemporary theater; state propaganda; anti-propaganda

## 1. On the “Deep People” and “Foreign Agents”

“The war of the mad Slavs”, unprecedented for the twenty-first century, makes everyone who does not support President Putin’s aggressive policies but has not left Russia yet ask themselves how this could have happened to us.<sup>1</sup> Eight months into the so-called CBO,<sup>2</sup> the issue of “LGBT propaganda”, which is commonly associated with the feminist agenda, has suddenly become a relevant part of Putin’s and the State Duma’s political agenda. The Duma is rapidly passing laws to increase censorship, deport citizens with foreign passports, as well as discussing how to impose legal penalties of unprecedented size and increase the list of citizens and NGOs declared as “foreign agents”. This hasty legislative practice is justified by the urgency of the struggle for “our civilizational foundations”.

The logic of protecting the “Russian world” from the colonizing ideologies of the West was demonstrated by President Putin in his latest public speeches, where Eurocentrism as a colonial threat to Russia is combined with both feminism and same-sex marriage to look like the enemy of religious Orthodoxy and the idea of the traditional family. The announced CBO/SMO to exterminate the “Ukrainian Nazis” before our eyes becomes analogous to a crusade against people who were until recently declared our brothers. It seems extremely neurotic for the bearers of an imperial consciousness to present themselves as both conquistadors and, at the same time, as a colony of the West.

Russia experienced a revolutionary renewal in the 1990s, but our practical experience with democratic values was too short and painful to be successful and sustainable. The split between the so-called “deep people” of the pro-Putin empire and the opposition, sharing common European values, now looks like a chasm. Its depth was unexpected for most of us, and we were not prepared for those who were declared or named as potential “foreign agents” to become either forced emigrants or citizens who are ready to be beaten by police batons or go to prison. The significance of President Putin and his long rule seems decisive in this split, but the origins of the split are deeper. State Socialism in the USSR has neither lived up to its imperial ambitions nor its colonial or colonizing past. Leftist in rhetoric and colonial-imperial in content, the ideology of the USSR was a long experiment in State duplicity and the distortion of basic moral and political concepts. Soviet people came face to face with the false presentation of a “caring state”, uncontrolled power, and the illusion



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of a missing alternative to anything other than Communism. This condition is familiar to my generation as well as to readers of Alexei Yurchak's bestseller *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*. It would seem that the lack of "involvement" of citizens in the fake "hyper-normalization" of the Soviet State, described in detail by the author, should have prepared the former Soviet people for familiar tactics of resistance to its unlimited and uncontrolled power. But the mechanisms offered by old vaccines no longer work. State propaganda has become too straightforward and aggressive, even when compared to its Soviet counterparts.

Today, the militant patriotism of Russians reminds me of an updated version of the Stockholm syndrome.<sup>3</sup> People again believe that the Totalitarian State will take care of them, and today, the majority seems utterly "involved" and ready to believe in the necessity of State terror, both inside/outside the country. This "*Goyda*–patriotism",<sup>4</sup> as presented by actor Ivan Okhlobystin in a rally on Red Square in September 2022, brought the ecstatic gesture of Ivan the Terrible's time to the scene of modern history. We have to consider that political propaganda has its own aesthetics, and this has a powerful effect on the modern viewer's emotions, which range from confusion and disgust to euphoria and delirium. The choice and accumulation of historical errors determine the choice and accumulation of these aesthetics and their effects.

## 2. On Propaganda, Counter-Propaganda, and Anti-Propaganda

The official Soviet argument that "Art belongs to the People", after a brief and glorious period of Russian historical avant-garde, provoked the production of "understandable" art that was more or less propagandistic in form and conservative in content. Propaganda as a desire to insist on a socially significant idea—Official State Socialism—became an odious instrument of power and an integral part of what was meant by "Art for the People". When I hear about the State's "propaganda [for] healthy lifestyle among young people" (a literal translation from Russian) I get scared by the first word in this phrase and cease to expect good things. Today, for example, even the Artist and Feminist Manifestos could be turned into propaganda for the State if this term had not already been rendered so "toxic" by its use.

State propaganda, and even any attempt at counter-propaganda, has become synonymous with brainwashing. Both arguments and counter-arguments have given way to the notorious method of "monstrous lies" on a scale belonging to Hitler or Goebbels, a comparison mentioned more than once in the speeches of our president. It is always One Way talk. As a rule, the opponent is accused of a monstrous lie, and his arguments are not seriously considered because it is only the repetition of both the monstrosity and the lie which counts.

Lies have become an integral part of politics and propaganda. Today, its numbers are unprecedented, and what is especially horrible is that they seem inevitable. As an antidote, we just calculate how many of them exist, such as 10 instances of Putin's lies visible in videos on the now-banned YouTube, or 30,000 of Trump's lies on Wikipedia. However, this counting is not satisfying. But what else is there to do with this knowledge when they continue to circulate so widely on the internet, especially in Russia and where there is no legitimate public discussion of what is false and no public feedback mechanism? All we see is just the next false statement presented even when it is directly contrary to the previous one, which somehow automatically overrides it. It is just the next normal. No questions. Any questions about the significance of Trump's exceptionalism as a "stable genius", or conversely about the possibilities of his "deprovincialization",<sup>5</sup> in Russian public discussion are impossible. To understand the effect of this, you need to remember for a moment that Trump only ruled for one four-year term, and not for twenty or, better still, thirty years.

Here, I want to remember the Kharkiv University feminist conference 'On the Disagreements between Marxism and Feminism' held in the Former Soviet Union in May 2017, organized by the philosophers Irina Zherebkina and Sergey Zherebkin, professors of

Kharkiv University, where we touched on the problem of solidarity and violence, including state violence. Five years ago, these discussions between Ukrainian and Russian participants about the problems of the alliance of feminism and Leftist theories in the context of an undeclared war between our countries were an important experience for all of us. I will mention three memorable speeches from the conference.

First, Irina Zherebkina posed the question of whether feminist solidarity is possible beyond the category of the universal and whether “liberal” particularism (the logic of difference) explains the separatist aspirations of all the feminism that has emerged after the collapse of the USSR.

Being displaced from the dominant subject position allows feminism not only to critique the ontological dualism of the object–subject opposition but also to reinvent reality by taking a position between the dominant subject and its object. Roughly, this was the idea behind the second memorable speech by philosopher Alla Mitrofanova, which was called ‘A New Rationality, or Can We Talk about an Ontology of Feminism?’

Third, Roman Osminkin, a poet and performer, art critic, and queer theorist showed how the feminist actions of the Pussy Riot and FEMEN “overcome the level of unique artistic expression into serial reproduction” by producing works that are accessible to many people. In these works, “before our eyes, aesthetics and politics mutually impregnate each other, making visible those who were invisible, making the media machines discern the speech of those who were noise before”. In other words, these feminists’ actions are recognizable as a means of social struggle for any subject caught in between the zones of deprivation and oppression.

This exchange of views ranging from philosophy and politics to poetics and pragmatics did not avoid conflicts, but for me, the core issue raised at this meeting remained the question of whether it is possible to convince a vulnerable opponent of your arguments when you only see yourself in a vulnerable position. Indeed, what can you do if you see your arguments manipulated by the State, and then how do you choose to comprehend or find a means to argue with the mind produced by this Other if that is your aim?

My suggestion at this event was to work patiently with a randomly chosen, albeit friendly, companion (“*poputchik*” in Russian) and consider how to use together all the aesthetic options and ethical arguments available that would convince them. If we want to make feminism a more popular and effective ideology than it is today, we need feedback from more than like-minded people. The suggestion was met with bewilderment. I can understand why. Was I proposing again another version of “Art for the People”? Why should anyone give up the practice of living, thinking, and speaking within their own like-minded community? But if we don’t try to find a common language with people who are vulnerable to State propaganda, we are forever in the status of “foreign agents” in the eyes of the “deep people”. Is this really our aim or where we want to be positioned?

Then, in Kharkiv, Marina Usmanova, an activist in Kherson’s LGBT community, asked me confusedly, “But why would we need this type of feminism?” I often think about that reaction alongside the confusion my suggestion initiated. Certainly, we do not need methods of aggressive propaganda and monstrous lies, despite their well-known effectiveness. The chasm mentioned above between “deep people” and “foreign agents” has created a situation where, when no argument succeeds, we only have the possibility of having a confessional closeness with those one agrees with. This is why it is still unclear what we, the “bad Russians” who remain in Russia and want to change the situation and survive, and “have not overthrown Putin” yet, should do today.

I believe our choice and the accumulation of knowledge of Western feminist theorizing in the 1980s and 1990s was never a colonization. Perhaps tomorrow the Russian feminist diaspora will face the problem of “an inescapable individualism as a side product of our modern/colonial education balancing between “the Scylla of exoticization and the Charybdis of presumable national authenticity”, as Madina Tlostanova writes [Tlostanova \(2022\)](#). Yet, so far, we have tried to speak the same language, and I think we still have a lot to talk about.

I had the pleasure of working with Katy Deepwell on the anthology *«Гендерная теория и искусство: 1970–2000»* (Moscow: Rosspen 2005)<sup>6</sup> involving the translation of 26 articles from Western feminist thought into Russian. For me, 16 years ago, it was an exchange of experience with theoretically more sophisticated partners or sisters. It could be considered that Western feminist theorizing did not know such long historical interruptions, as happened in Russia during the twentieth century. Certainly, there is and has been a history of Russian feminism, and much has been told and written about, but little of this has been translated into English. I believe Irina Yukina's book *«Русский феминизм как вызов современности»* (Russian Feminism as a Challenge to Modernity) (St. Petersburg: Aleteia 2008), if it is ever translated into English, would be extremely popular in the international feminist community, but I do not think Russian feminism can “colonize” anyone. Today, our interest in international feminism in all its variety has outgrown these stages of scholarship and has become more mature and critical, even though many Russian feminists are still not ready to make clear choices about what to do in a highly destructive local and global situation. This is mainly because, behind the vague and manipulated notion of the Russian “deep people”, we cannot hear the muffled and distorted voices of the uncertain “majority”.<sup>7</sup> We can neither ignore the silencing of their voices nor the noise that hides them.

Before the CBO/SMO of 2022, there was a belief that the situation could change for the better over time (e.g., Spirenkova (2022) or Sviytska (2015)). It was precisely during these years that we experienced an aesthetic boom of performance in contemporary art and para-theatrical forms in contemporary theater, where the borders between these two art forms collapsed. A visibly feminist agenda was manifest in many exhibition spaces in Moscow. Many people remember the lively exhibitions organized by *«феминистский карандаш»/Feminist Pencil* (2012–2015, curator: Nadia Plungian)<sup>8</sup> and the major exhibition *«Международный женский день. Феминизм: от авангарда до наших дней»/Celebrating International Women's Day (8 March): Feminism: from avant-garde to present day*<sup>9</sup> (2013: curators: Nataliya Kamenetskaya, Olesya Turkina, and Marina Loshak). The Meyerhold Center became a center for creative initiatives, where feminist aesthetics were strongly promoted and practiced. There were international festivals of inclusive theater held there, and groups from the Russian provinces and neighboring countries were involved in the programs. The Meyerhold Center set up the practice of holding public discussions for each event where the participants talked to the audience, usually just after the event. The Meyerhold Center has closed now. The Director, Elena Kovalskaya, left the institution right after the beginning of the CBO/SMO, and the artistic director, Dmitry Volkostrelov, was fired a little later.

I would describe these activities as anti-propaganda and they were important attempts to popularize feminism through aesthetics in which feedback from and interaction with an audience at the same time were key. The emancipation of the spectator in contemporary art and contemporary theater and the concept of a spectator as a partner and a co-author were all central to the aesthetics of these anti-propagandist feminists. Unfortunately, the public and educational resonance of important feminist exhibitions were sometimes disappointingly diffused by conflicts between event participants. In my opinion, the scandal at the international exhibition *«Международный женский день. Феминизм: от авангарда до наших дней»* in 2013 was due to intergenerational conflicts between women and needlessly militant. The fact that one series by Victoria Lomasko selected for the exhibition was replaced by another was seen as a fact of censorship.<sup>10</sup> The pioneering exhibition series *«феминистский карандаш»* (2012–2015) was accompanied by problematic reactions of participants due in part to the interpretations of critics and the behavior of visitors. The psychologically complex performance *Abuse* at the Meyerhold Center (playwright Natalia Zaitseva, director Ivan Komarov) generated heated and controversial discussions at the Center and in the media.

For me, the important aim of expanding the territory of feminist and Leftist ideas was not really a priority in those years, although feminism became visible in numerous self-organized activities by many women in Moscow and St. Petersburg and other cities.

There was a Reading Group established, which started by analyzing feminist theoretical texts from the anthology «Гендерная теория и искусство: 1970–2000», which I and Katy Deepwell co-edited, at the Garage Museum as part of its educational program. It is remarkable that the most popular text in the Moscow Reading Group, as well as in Irina Zhrebkina's course at Kharkiv University, was Rita Felski's article 'Why Feminism Doesn't Need Aesthetics and Why It Can't Ignore Aesthetics' [Felski \(1994\)](#). I guess this choice was made because of Felski's anti-doctrinal pathos and belief in the boundless possibilities of what the author called "para-aesthetics". In this text, she proposes to consider feminist aesthetics in very individual "languages of contradiction and indecision". This proposition broadened the horizons of contemporary art and inspired many female artists and readers. I think the relevance of this article in our context is due to a desire to abandon many existing aesthetic doctrines as well as a movement toward a sphere of private individual positions and unpredictable poetics, where "diary, autobiography or letter become no less important genres than sonnet or novel", as Felski suggested. The results of para-aesthetic approach seem to be truly unpredictable. One of the organizers of the Reading Group in Moscow, Mika Plutitsky, a psychologist and visual artist, said that many of her girlfriends and classmates had become feminists through their experiences of motherhood, and particularly queer motherhood. She added, "They were all privileged women with very good education, trained to reflect and understand complex texts such as Felski's article". I should add that, according to Mika, all these women thought feminism was unnecessary and outdated in the 2010s before becoming mothers and reading Felski.

Again, anti-propaganda presupposes feedback, mutual arguments in the dialogue, and maximum respect for the individual positions and emotions of each participant in the conversation. I see this becoming more common in feminist political and aesthetic practices. Here are two examples: The first, the Meyerhold Center production of the poet and playwright Sergei Tretyakov's play *I Want a Child* (1926) staged in 2017 by Sasha Denisova. Tretyakov's return to the stage seems like proof of an interest in propaganda theater, especially since it was interpreted as an agitation piece, Meyerhold-style, with intensive discussions that arranged the course of play on stage. The discussion after the performance turned into the final episode of the play: Ella Rossman, Dasha Serenko, Sasha Alekseeva, and Natalia Polyak, as feminist activists of different versions of feminism, in the role of "real feminists", came on stage and sat down to talk. They passed with honor the test of this identity arguing between diverse positions and had a difficult conversation with an "alien" audience unfamiliar with feminist agenda and yet were still able to negotiate their mutual disagreements.

The second example, the performance *Silent Picket* (2016–2018) by Daria Serenko, an artist and activist in the Feminist Anti-War Resistance (FAR), seems to me a perfect example of anti-propaganda. For several years you might come across a girl in the Moscow subway or on the street with a small poster like "No matter what the victim wears, the rapist is always to blame for the violence" or "The dishes don't care who washes them." Serenko was this girl and although she did not approach anyone herself, she always responded to anyone who approached her. These handwritten posters would provoke a discussion of the entire carriage, a solitary reaction from a neighbor, or no reaction at all. Afterwards, she would leave a record of each conversation online. In two years, more than six hundred people in eleven countries took part in Daria's silent picket. She created more than two thousand posters related to feminist themes. Today, Daria Serenko is in forced exile. In contrast with *Silent Picket*, her activist work in 2022 was too loud.

Anti-propaganda in the pre-COVID-19 years was like an antidote that seemed to allow us to survive a time of shameless manipulation of public opinion by means of propaganda. It transformed the repressed social and political temperament into a search for actual aesthetic languages, into the special drive of cabarets, shows, apartment shows, comics, and tragic musicals, and into searching new possibilities for contemporary art and para-theatrical forms, impressive even with very modest budgets. It seems that, in this case, the therapeutic effect of "the pleasure of the text", according to Roland Barthes, comes



into conflict with the need for effective political strategies. Although that is exactly what it was, a chance to preserve us until better times, even without the belief that we could wait. The reality that we have waited for has become something different—the mobilization and CBO/SMO on the territory where our friends, colleagues, and close relatives live.

### 3. On Self-Writing and “The Voice through the Landscape”

Russian feminists of different generations often did not try to understand each other but they still valued the attempt to speak publicly on these issues. Paradoxically, in new circumstances, it is more necessary than ever to hear and understand each other. The difficulty of this might seem like an extreme price to pay for a better mutual understanding, but we need to appreciate this point as well.

Roman Osminkin, the poet mentioned above, offered an unexpected interpretation of female self-writing. In a post on the now-banned Russian-language version of Facebook about the significance of the award of the Nobel Prize to Annie Erno, Roman writes:

“Women’s self-writing allows us to get away from an essentialist definition of gender; it is not always and not so much a stigma of fate, a representation of a new—previously excluded—identity, as a modality of the act of writing, a conscious choice of first-person discourse... It is to the feminine self-writing the bearer of male gender socialization should be grateful that men today can write about their bodies, experiences, feelings and affects, including the many nuances between hetero- and homo-, the many shades of masculinity and femininity”.  
[author’s translation]

Let me mention in this context the avant-garde staging of a play by Arina Boiko, *One Hundred Percent Love Fire of Passion of Full-fledged Desires of the Relationship to You from Me* (an untranslatable play of words). The play was staged in 2018 by playwright Natalia Zaitseva who was also its director. An intimate correspondence between two girls is read by two men (who act as if they are two bored policemen). The action in the play is reduced to stylistic collisions between these two realities, the impassioned reading either complicates the meaning or emphasizes the virtuosity of the female self-writing.

While today we find ourselves in the middle of a terrible story, nevertheless, in this frightening landscape, some things have suddenly become easier. For example, when I read an April 2022 Facebook post by Nadia Plungian, a member of the Moscow Feminist Group, an art critic, curator, and artist, her words seem to be addressed directly and confidentially to me. I apologize for the length of this quote, but I find it important:

“In conditions where there is no “majority”, the strategies that enable us to survive (live and work) are again those of the author, a solitary figure, detached from any larger movements. The constant observation of one’s choices. Not a search for “perspectives”, but a plunge into the depths. In the West, on the other hand, nothing has shifted, and everything remains the same: there is “activism”, “public life”, “profession”, “position”—clear-cut cells from which you are invited to define yourself again in the face of the academy and the press of the 2010s. But the continuous and living disintegration of everything is impossible to put into any pre-prepared container of meaning. New forms of resistance and self-consciousness, which are accepted with interest “here”, are simply not recognized as meaningful by “there”. It is true that the crisis of social thought in the world also consisted in this demand for ready-made, pre-known answers in past decades, but now this pressure is drying up and will never return in any circles. It will not, because there is no longer any motivation to explain one’s experience to an outside observer. But to find a voice through the landscape [“голос пейзажа”] is vividly audible, as it is in the age of change’. [author’s translation]

“To find a voice through the landscape” is more than a statement of Nadia’s reflection on her «*феминистский карандаш*»/*Feminist Pencil* series of exhibitions and her many articles on actual feminist subjects or her other academic activity, including her new book on landscape painting in the 1930s. This melancholic “voice through the landscape” sounds to me like a voice of shared existential anxiety, dissociation, and a premonition of other ethical and aesthetic solutions. Somehow, it reminds me of the sad and disturbing partisan landscapes of Cambodia, where I felt extremely uncomfortable traveling in 2009.

#### 4. But Still about a Revolutionary Feminist Future

The general conservative turn in Russia has not canceled the history of Russian feminism, but it has put us in a deep depression. The teaching of gendered theories as university disciplines has been cut. These days, punishment for “propaganda of LGBT and pedophilia” (a link that sounds utterly fantastic) is being discussed in the State Duma and the press. Many comrades have emigrated.

Analyzing a radically changed reality and finding the right course “in the next normal” usually takes time. It is important to know that the Feminist Anti-war Resistance to war in Ukraine (FAR) emerged as early as March and is one of the fastest growing anti-war campaigns in Russia. The organization quickly gained more than 26,000 subscribers on Telegram. Feminism has proven to be one of the most effective schools of the struggle for rights in the country. These political skills will be in demand in Russia not today, but tomorrow. Feminism has become an integral part of the ideology of many young and well-educated women. The new ethic, with its high sensitivity to personal trauma and violence of all kinds, has naturally gained many female followers and activists in Russia.

Ecofeminism is represented in rare but brilliant examples of new media art. Here, I would like to name the artist group Sadovsky & Limiyan. I was a curator of their show *Myths of the Anthropocene* in Nizhny Novgorod (2021). It was a real pleasure to work and communicate with these two women. They are not only highly professional, responsible, and caring, but they also keep their critical distance. Sadovsky & Limiyan’s installation with live plants and hydrogel *Zeynalova* in the FUTURO gallery impressed many competent viewers. A second project from their recent exhibition, titled *A000000000001000AA011*, is now being shown at video art festivals in Indonesia, Greece, and South Korea. It is a fantasy about possible human mutations in the conditions of irreversible ecological changes of our planet. These artists insist on artistic reflection as the result of direct interaction with real ecologists and scientists. Their project *Where’s My Plastic Bag?* was a collaboration with a young chemist, Sakina Zeynalova. Her unique biopolymers are based not in plastic but starch and, as such, could help solve the problems of plastic waste which restricts irrigation in arid lands. Unfortunately, Sakina could not get a patent for her invention in Russia. Today, she lives in Turin and writes popular books about chemistry.

My experience with the new generation of young feminists has convinced me that what they need is not hype, which is often and unfairly blamed on them. They need an atmosphere of security, comfort, mutual respect, and the ability to work in a profession. Unfortunately, this is what is hard to obtain in Russia today. I feel for them very much when I am thinking about whether Russia will survive as a European country and turn over what is not the best page of its history.

I once wanted to compare the confrontation between feminist ethics/aesthetics and State propaganda as a David and Goliath battle, but this analogy is too macho and reminds me of the “mad Slavs” in the *Battle of the Nations* again. Yesterday, my granddaughter, a biologist, told me about a story she found online in which a young woman cares for a python. At one point, this woman discovered that her silent pet had lost its appetite and stopped moving. She took the python to a doctor, and the doctor told her that the python was methodically preparing to hunt her. The doctor assured her that the snake’s hunt would not be fatal for her, but it was a risk for her to stay close to the snake. The story hit me with a symbolic representation of how any brutal and non-reflexive power can operate

and, for a while, paralyzed me with a deep horror of animals. After some time, I found a positive grain in the story, that the girl's relationship with the snake was prompted by her caring for it, and her friendship and concern proved ultimately to be a timely strategy to rescue her from the situation of living with the python. A revitalized feminist future will not become our reality soon, but I believe it will. We just must do what we can.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The first time I heard the words “war of the mad Slavs”, I was upset by the superficiality and dismissiveness of the phrase. Soon, however, I happened to come across the history of the *Battle of Nations*, an international tournament popular on the web since 2010, with medieval battles initiated by Ukraine, which Russia regularly won, and I realized that the words about madness had some validity. The male role-playing of these wars, driven by a major passion for combat and combined with the transformation of such re-enactments into big business, has made a popular, scary, and symbolic venture out of an exotic genre of contemporary culture. The ninth edition, which had been scheduled for July 2022, has been officially canceled, if the official *Battle of Nations* website is to be believed.
- <sup>2</sup> I am obliged to use CBO as an official abbreviation in the text for legal reasons. СВО (Специальная Военная Операция) means SMO (Special Military Operation).
- <sup>3</sup> I have written about another version of Stockholm syndrome as a part of the myth of the free Soviet women, which kept her in the deep trench of “truly equal rights” in the article ‘Creatures of the Feminine. On the Specifics of Feminine Identity in Russia’ (2002) in [Pejic \(2010\)](#).
- <sup>4</sup> This term draws on the slogan shouted by the Oprichniki, “Goyda!”, from the 16th Century, whose rallying cry is familiar to modern audiences from Eisenstein’s Soviet film *Ivan the Terrible* (1944) and Vladimir Sorokin’s novel *Day of the Oprichnik* (2006).
- <sup>5</sup> “After Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 US presidential election, there was widespread public and scholarly outcry that particularized this historical moment. But the tendency to exceptionalize Trump obscures how his rise reflects long-standing political and economic currents, both domestically and globally. By contrast, the effort to deprovincialize Trump effectively locates his electoral win within broader historical, political, and economic assemblages of which it is but one part. This entails examining how colonial and racial legacies shaped perceptions of the 2016 election, as well as the role of anthropology in the contemporary political landscape”. [Rosa and Bonilla \(2017\)](#).
- <sup>6</sup> Russian text. Translated English title: *Gender Theory and Art: 1970–2000* (Moscow: Rosspen 2004).
- <sup>7</sup> It is difficult to judge the “majority” statistically now. Statistics, represented by the once influential Levada Center, has been declared a foreign agent. The president’s frozen rating numbers (86% vs. 14%) have seemed unrealistic for a long time but are still frightening because the tradition of considering Russia as a European country is alive and well and resisting.
- <sup>8</sup> Exhibitions of «Феминистский карандаш» include: Fabrika Gallery, Moscow, 2012; Дом равенства, Murmansk, 2013; «Artplay», Moscow, 2013; Галерея «Борей», St. Petersburg, 2014; «Героиня нашего времени». Gallery 69, Oslo, 2014; «Постсоветские Кассандры». Galerie im Körnerpark, Berlin, 2015. «Феминистский карандаш—II» print catalog available online at: [https://issuu.com/feminifoteka/docs/fk2\\_katalog\\_ru](https://issuu.com/feminifoteka/docs/fk2_katalog_ru).
- <sup>9</sup> Moscow: Manezh Museum and The Worker and Kolkhoz Woman Museum in Moscow, March–May 2013. This exhibition was held at the pavilion at VDNKH in Moscow topped by Vera Mukhina’s famous Soviet sculpture of Worker and Peasant Woman.
- <sup>10</sup> ArtLeaks story on this incident: 3 August 2013 <https://art-leaks.org/2013/03/08/victoria-lomaskos-pussy-riot-drawings-censored-from-feminist-exhibition-international-womens-day-moscow-russia/> (accessed on 21 December 2022) and interview with Victoria Lomasko: <https://art-leaks.org/2013/03/10/what-happened-at-the-exhibition-international-womens-day-feminism-from-avant-garde-to-the-present-moscow-russia/> (accessed on 21 December 2022).

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