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FIRST LOOK AT 'THE LAST READER' – A NEW EXHIBITION AT MEGARON JULY 12, 2018

To celebrate Athens as the 2018 World Book Capital, acclaimed curator and Director of Annex M, Dr Anna Kafetsi, has organised a trilogy of exhibitions at Megaron, the 1991 concert hall designed by Christopher Alexander. Annex M is the visual art center of the Athens Concert Hall which opened last year to a similar program of video installation around the building and surrounding gardens.

The first exhibition in this series of three exhibition is called The Last Reader. The exhibition explores the limits of readings. and the relationship between text and reader. The title raises the question of just who is this last reader? Is it the temporal 'last' or final reader, or is it something more symbolic, the reader who interprets the text 'correctly' so that it can be read no more? The authority of the text is questioned in the exhibition, interrogating lines between fiction and non-fiction and the hierarchies of text as a form and also its status as an intellectual pursuit.

A video work by Australian artistic duo Sonia Leber and David Chesworth is the first piece to greet me as I wander up the path suddenly realising the novelty of going to see video art outside at 9 o'clock at night. It's like open air cinema but more work. Leber and Chesworth's piece titled *Zaum Tractor* (2013) blares out dramatic music while a group of boys go diving in an abandoned building on one screen and an austere public building is shown on the other. The video tracks various periods of Russian history using archival footage and comes at a time when free-speech and communication are been threatened and taken away in that country.



Still from Sonia Leber & David Chesworth's Zaum Tractor, (2013), Video installation 2-channel HD video, 5.1 audio, 26' Courtesy of the artists.

Overlaying the images, the figures articulate word-like sequences which belong to no spoken language but are instead a kind of poetic expression known as Zaum (translated from Russian as beyondsense or transreason) created by futurist poets at the start of the 20th century. Without meaning it is hard to discern the intention of the speakers but what we can say for sure is that they have escaped from some of the restraints that interpretation places on language and those who utilise that language.

[...]

It is interesting that in an exhibition celebrating Athens as the book capital of the world a number of pieces expose the fragility of literature and language. However this reveals two important points, the power of art to transgress language and the importance to protect and use language carefully during a time when it is frequently exploited.

The Last Reader is open daily at Megaron 19.00 – 24.00 / 10.7 -16 .9 2018