



## MILO RAU / IIPM – INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF POLITICAL MURDER THE MOSCOW TRIALS

- > 1-3 March 2013, Sakharov Center, Moscow, Three-day court show
- > 14-16 March 2013, Gessnerallee Zurich, Preview of film version and video installation
- > 11 May - 10 June 2013, Wiener Festwochen, permanent video installation
- > 14-16 June 2013, Konzert Theater Bern, Final exhibition and film premiere

**When punk activists “Pussy Riot” were sentenced to two years in a penal camp this summer for their unannounced appearance in Moscow’s Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, it sparked protest rallies across the globe. But this was just the end of what have been 10 years of show trials against artists and dissidents, trials which Putin’s system used to hinder any kind of democratic change whatsoever. The project “The Moscow Trials” attempts to inject impetus into rigid Russian circumstances through the form of political theatre. In Moscow’s Sakharov Center a court is being set up in which a three-day trial show will provide the stage for the exponents of Russia’s cultural war. There are no actors on stage; instead there are real-life protagonists: Artists, politicians, church leaders, proper lawyers and a proper judge. A lay court made up of six Moscow residents will reach a verdict: For or against democracy, for or against artistic freedom.**

**Concept and artistic & stage direction:** Milo Rau **Curating and production:** Jens Dietrich  
**Co-curating – Weimar/Bern:** Sophie-Thérèse Krempf **Film co-production:** Arne Birkenstock  
**Stage:** Anton Lukas **Sound:** Jens Baudisch **Camera:** Markus Tomsche **PR:** Yven Augustin  
**External consulting:** Sandra Frimmel **Dramatisation and production management:** Milena Kipfmüller **Assistant director:** Yanina Kochtova (Moscow), Swaantje Kleff (Weimar) **Casting - Moscow:** Anastasia Patlay **Corporate design:** Nina Wolters **Online programming:** Jonas Weissbrodt

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The images of the kangaroo court set up to try “Pussy Riot” could be seen in all Media outlets this summer. All over the world, support movements were founded. The singer, Madonna, called for the release of the activists and Nobel prize-winner, Elfriede Jelinek, condemned the trial in a pamphlet posted on the Internet as the “end of all democracy in Russia”. A five-minute appearance at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow was enough to sentence three of the activists of “Pussy Riot” to two years' imprisonment. On what grounds? Offending the feelings of believers, blasphemy, and agitation against the Russian nation. An absurd judgment which was met with horror in the West.

But what appears to be a sudden epiphany of an authoritarian theocracy has a long prior history. It begins with the election of Putin as Prime Minister in 1999. The former KGB agent secured his control by closing ranks with nationalist and extremely orthodox circles. The chaotic, but liberal conditions which were present under Gorbachev and Yeltsin quietly began to disappear. Those artists in particular who didn't want to fall into line with the new politics of regime loyalty and Russian orthodoxy quickly came to the attention of a system in which the law, the secret service and the Media all work together closely.

With the destruction of the exhibition critical of religion “Caution! Religion” in 2003 and the trial of the curators that followed, the point of no return was reached. With the authorisation of the state, the Moscow patriarch called for the “expulsion of demons” and the “salvation of Russia”. After a show trial, the exhibition's curators barely managed to escape being sentenced to hard labour, with one of the main defendants taking his own life. As a result, dissident artists and activists were repeatedly forced to go either abroad or underground, much like the recent activists of “Pussy Riot”. “This trial was the death of critical art, it has destroyed the milieu in which we were able to live” said cultural philosopher Michail Ryklin in an interview later on.

In the form of political theatre, THE MOSCOW TRIALS retraces the steps of this story of a state and church-driven campaign against inconvenient artists. A court is being constructed in the Sakharov Center in Moscow, which previously played host to the destroyed exhibition “Caution! Religion” in 2003. In a re-enacted show trial with the most important exponents of the Russian cultural war, “art” faces up against “religion”; “dissident” Russia against “true” Russia.

There are no actors on stage; instead there are the protagonists of real, political life: Professional lawyers, a constitutional judge, witnesses and experts of all political shades. In the style of a courtroom drama with an open end, cross-examinations, summations and disputes on the side-lines of the trial will bring about a disturbing and conflicting image of today's Russia: Are Putin's cultural policies violating freedom of opinion and human rights? Or is it indeed art which is violating the feelings of believers? Who is the offender, who is the defender?

A randomly selected lay court, made up of six Moscow residents, will reach a verdict after three days. For or against the artists; for or against Putin.

A documentary film, a programme, a video installation and a closing exhibition will document the project and illuminate the socio-political background and effects of performance art.

**Milo Rau** was born in 1977 in Berne. He studied Sociology, German and Romance Studies in Paris, Zurich and Berlin under Tzvetan Todorov and Pierre Bourdieu, among others. From 1997 onwards, he started his first reporting trips (Chiapas, Cuba), from 2000 he worked as an author for NZZ, from 2003 as a director and author at home and abroad with, among others, the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin, Staatsschauspiel Dresden, HAU Berlin, Theaterhaus Gessnerallee Zurich, Teatrul Odeon Bucharest and Beursschouwburg in Brussels. In 2007, Rau founded the theatre and film production company IIPM, which he has been running since. His theatrical re-enactments and films have been invited to some of the most important national and international festivals – In 2012/13 to the “Berliner Theatertreffen”, “Noorderzon Festival Groningen”, the “Wiener Festwochen” and the “Radikal Jung” Festival where he was awarded the critics' prize for direction. Alongside his work for stage and film, Milo Rau lectures Direction, Cultural Theory and Social Sculpture at universities and colleges. His productions, campaigns and films (among others, “Montana”, “The Last Hours of Elena and Nicolae Ceausescu”, “Hate Radio”, “City of Change”, “Breivik's Statement”, “The Moscow Trials” and “The Zurich Trials”) were invited to the Festival d'Avignon, among others, and nominated for

the Prix de Soleure, while also touring the world. The Swiss newspaper “Tagesanzeiger” recently named him as one of the “most sought-after directors of today”, with the German weekly “Der Freitag” calling him “the most controversial theatre director of his generation”.

In May 2013, Milo Rau will again use the stage to try out the format of theatrical show trials at the Theater Neumarkt Zurich. In the “Zurich Trials” (3-5 May, Theater Neumarkt Zurich), the topic of “Die Weltwoche” will be the focus - a magazine which repeatedly stirs up controversy and discussion in Switzerland and its neighbouring countries.

[www.the-moscow-trials.com](http://www.the-moscow-trials.com)  
[www.international-institute.de](http://www.international-institute.de)  
[www.theaterneumarkt.ch](http://www.theaterneumarkt.ch)

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