

Moscow Museum of Modern Art extensive solo project of Estonian artist Jaan Toomik



Installation view.

MOSCOW.- [Moscow Museum of Modern Art](#) presents the extensive solo project of Estonian artist Jaan Toomik 'My End Is My Beginning. And My Beginning Is My End' curated by Viktor Misiano. The title of the present exhibition alludes to the lines of a rondeau by a 14th century French poet and composer Guillaume de Machaux constructed on the reproduction of a tune – note by note – in reverse order. Toomik himself is a protagonist of many of his artworks, which for the most part are persistently structured on the motif of repetition. The idea of a cyclical nature of life, the interrelation of life and death are the key motifs of Toomik's art.

The exhibition at 10, Gogolevsky boulevard features paintings, sculpture, short films and video art created over the last 20 years. Toomik is the most acclaimed Estonian artist on the international art scene. He is a painter, video artist, conceptual installationist, director of short films and action artist. According to the curator, that is the reason the works are structured not in the chronological order but based on a unique scenography, in contrast and dialogue with each other, thus revealing the way the artist's key themes and motifs are translated in different art forms: video, performance, painting and sculpture.

The *Seagulls* (2004) video installation made in collaboration with Rainer Jansis, an experimental musician, is an artwork opening the display. It explores the emotions of a person in the grasp of a nightmare: helplessness, physical constraint, as well as the 'struggle to communicate'. That is why this artwork, which already took part in the Impossible Community project in 2011 (MMOMA), is the introduction to the rest of the project. Indeed, it is one more desperate try in Toomik's 'struggle to communicate'. Many of his videos are nothing else but documentation of his action art and performances, which in their turn have been intended not to be seen as self-sufficient theatrical performances but precisely to be documented on video. They are often based on personal experience. It is, for instance, the case of one of his best known videos *Dancing with Dad* (2003), where the artist is dancing on the grave of his prematurely deceased father accompanied by Jimi Hendrix' song. In the artist's own words, he seeks here, 'to find contact with him through dance and to overcome some inside taboos.' The struggle to communicate is one of the major motifs in Jaan Toomik's art. Thus, his iconic video *Father and Son* (1998) shows the artist himself, naked, skating meditatively over the boundless ice field accompanied by a religious chant sung by his proper son. The images of human naked body and of a naked universe portray the existence in its purest, universal forms. Thus, again involving a personally context, Toomik gives it an ontological quality.

The motif of traumas, not so much collective as personal ones, has a special place in his art, going together with peculiar 'rituals' of emancipation and sometimes also radical experiments with his own body. These problems of trauma and memory are explored in a short feature film *Oleg* (2010) based on a true story from the artist's life. It is the story of an unabating feeling of guilt: in 1982 a protagonist, being a private in the Soviet army, learnt about a fellow soldier's decision to shoot himself but did nothing to prevent him. 25 years later he would come to his place of service to find the grave of this man and camp near it. We shall never know what he was going to do there.

The exhibition 'My End is My Beginning. And My Beginning Is My End' provides the spectator with a rare opportunity to trace every stage of Jaan Toomik's artistic career – from his fascination with Neo-Expressionism and Post-Conceptualist installation to performance and video art – and to penetrate the issues of life and death, reality and dream, crucial for the artist.

Jaan Toomik is a world-famous video artist, painter and film director, often described as Estonia's most brilliant figure on the world art scene. Toomik's personal as well as group exhibitions took place on such institutionally important venues as Georges Pompidou National Centre (Paris, 2012), MUMOK (Vienna, 2009), National Gallery of Jeu de Paume (Paris, 2000), Hamburger Bahnhof Museum (Berlin, 1999 – 2000), 22nd International Biennial in San-Paolo (1994), Manifesta 1 (1995), 47th and 50th Venice Biennial (1997, 2003), 4th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art (2006) et al. Since 2000 Jaan Toomik teaches at the Estonian Academy of Fine Arts, the Department of Interdisciplinary Arts, and is chair for the Department of Painting.