

# KÜNSTLERHAUS BETHANIEN

Markus Draper

*House near a Deep Forest*

08.04. – 30.04.2023

In Markus Draper's exhibition *House near a Big Forest*, a fly tells the story of the KGB's links to reform movements in the Soviet Union. The focus of the narrative lies on the building on Angelikastrasse 4 in Dresden that formerly housed the KGB headquarters. The address has become famous as the workplace of the former KGB agent Vladimir Putin.

Draper's narrative starts in the mid-1950s with the career of Yuri Andropov (1914–1984), head of the KGB for many years and a central figure in the events of the Cold War. Andropov's close ally since 1955, Vladimir Kryuchkov (1924–2007), visited the house in Angelikastrasse twice in 1986, when he served as deputy director of the KGB. He travelled to Dresden on behalf of Mikhail Gorbachev in order to win over decision-makers and intellectuals in the GDR for a reform movement in the country. Vladimir Putin worked in Dresden from 1985 to 1990.

Draper's historical investigation, which unfolds on the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, aims to demonstrate that the changes and reforms in the late Soviet Union were closely connected to the KGB from the 1970s onwards. By doing so, it sheds light on the role its outpost in Dresden played in these activities from the mid-1980s onwards. At the same time, it is a reflection of the artist's vision of Russia, which was shaped by his childhood and youth in the GDR, set against the background of the current situation.

Draper's work adopts the narrative form of a fairy tale. Based on the assumption that truth is always a construct, the results of his historically accurate research are artistically reframed into a fairy tale. By juggling with historical facts, Draper attempts to construct an artistic truth on images that leaves room for ambivalence.

In Russia, a fairy tale does not begin with the plot, but with the storyteller. *House near a Deep Forest* is a reference to Draper's former Russian teacher, who taught her class by reciting the novels of Tolstoy, Pushkin and Dostoyevsky from memory over countless hours. Taking its cue from Putin's rhetoric, who once compared political opponents to 'midges', the role of the narrator in Draper's work is assigned to a fly. Revisiting significant historical events in order to reveal and allow for ambivalences is a central concern in Draper's work.

**Markus Draper**, born in 1969 and raised in Görlitz, studied from 1991 to 2000 at Academy of Fine Arts Dresden, Central Saint Martins College, London, and Columbia University, New York. In 2000, he obtained his degree as a master student with Professor Ralf Kerbach. He has received the Marion Ermer Prize (2001) and the Vattenfall 'Energy' Art Prize (2006) as well as numerous grants. His work has been shown in solo exhibitions at Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (2007), Berlinische Galerie (2014) and Kulturhistorisches Museum Görlitz (2015), as well as in group exhibitions in museums and art centres worldwide. His works can be found in the contemporary art collections of the Federal Republic of Germany, Museum Folkwang, Essen, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden and Berlinische Galerie, among others. He lives and works in Berlin.

**Anastasia Gubareva** was born in Moscow in 1982 and moved to Hamburg in 1993. After graduating from Folkwang University of the Arts, Essen, she worked at Theater Bonn from 2009 to 2013. In 2011, she was awarded the Advancement Prize for Young Artists of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. She was a permanent member of the Gorki Ensemble from the 2013/14 to the 2021/22 season, where she worked with directors Yael Ronen, Hakan Savaş Mican, Sebastian Nübling and Oliver Frlić, among others, and appeared in productions such as Und sicher ist mir die Welt verschwunden (Text: Sybille Berg / Director: Sebastian Nübling), which was selected by Theater Heute as Play of the Year 2021. In 2022, she was invited to the Berliner Theatertreffen with the play Slippery Slope (Director: Yael Ronen / Music: Shlomi Shaban). She can be heard as a radio play speaker in several productions of Deutschlandradio Kultur and WDR.

**Holger Kuhla** studied theatre, dramaturgy and cultural communication at Humboldt University in Berlin. He has served as dramaturg at Staatstheater Cottbus and as scientific and artistic adviser at Humboldt University. He has worked as a freelance dramaturg, director and author for theatre and radio (DLF, rbb), and lecturer for theory and practice at Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy University of Music and Theatre in Leipzig. He was head dramaturg in Dessau and currently collaborates on various docufictional performances, among others with composer Marc Sinan and Volkan T. Error. He has also been a permanent and freelance dramaturg at Maxim Gorki Theater since 2013.

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