

IVAN KHEMIN

Ivan Khimin is a St. Petersburg based artist and curator. In his works he uses text as a material for creating visual representations through which he explores the functioning of the text in different medias. Works by Ivan Khimin touch a range of art directions such as media archeology, net art, digital art, digital literature, text generator, ASCII art, science art, conceptualism and post-minimalism.

Experiments with media technologies such as fax, printers, video, TV networks began in the late 1970s and early 1980s and with time have extended into more “virtual” and disembodied spaces of the Internet. In Russia experiments with new media appeared in the early 1990s with works by Alexey Shulgin. Net art legacy established by Da-Da-Net Festival (1993-1999), as well as the influence of Alexander Shulgin’s lectures at Pro Arte Media Art Program (2000-2001).

Ivan Khimin attended Shulgin’s lectures and graduated Pro Arte Institute in 2001. The formation of the artist concurred with worldwide development of the Internet, when computer was becoming a mass thing and with an extensive blossoming of digital art.

Speaking about his art Khimin puts it in two directions: ASCII art and “abstract conceptualism”. Khimin’s “Asciiticiscm” forms from ASCII + asceticism. That’s where minimalism intersects with net art. Speaking about “abstract conceptualism” Khimin puts it the following way: “My works are abstract texts. Like fine art’s opposition of *figurative-abstract* text deprived of narrative and verbal functions becomes abstract. Graphical symbols removed from the habitual context acquire unexpected visual connections”.

“In classical conceptual practices interpretation of the text as an image affects to a lesser degree the basic communicational function of representation and readability and to a greater degree – extends its communicational capability and mode of existence; also define new optics of perception and add new meanings. In the project “Asciiticiscm” text stops be readable. Text is deconstructed on an atomic level, i.e. on the level of letters and signs. The possibility of literal reading is eliminated. Symbols weaving geometric patterns become a part of the work; each of datum lines is equal. Text gains abstractiveness on the meaning level and still remains re-producible, rather than a set of symbols. At the same

time a resulting image is also abstract. If it's possible to speak about abstraction as a refusal from figurative image in fine arts then it's quite fair to speak abstract conceptualism as a result of successive refusal of narrative, verbal, grammatical etc. meanings of text in conceptual art.

In the works archetype conceptual forms appear: from pictures-text to archaic printers. These forms as well as the language are used not only to express different explicit meanings but all meanings that were historically collected. Thus way may speak about "genetic" memory. Visual forms constitute a part of a generalized meta-language". Conceptualist esthetics reduces visibility to the text form. Text becomes a code or an algorithm of symbols.

Meta-language is the basis of Khimin's art – we can find it in the following works.

ASCIITICISM MMXII. STROKES AND INCISIONS (2012)

In this installation three dot matrix printers continuously reproduce basic ASCII characters thus alluding to strokes and incisions of pre-Cyrillic Slavic writing. The work explores the idea of continual text and image producing. The work sends us back to the routes of Slavonic language – to the legendary Bulgarian monk, scholar and writer Chernorizets Hrabr who created the treatise "An Account of Letters" ("O Pismenach") (9-10th c.) about the birth of Slavonic writing.

The work is comprises of three matrix printers each programmed for a specific way of typing. There is used the run of infamous type Commode 64. Here a palimpsest of printings and meanings is created. On the one hand there are historical layers of meanings and on the other there is a material layering of print. Time interval between the typed lines is set in the way to produce kind of speech as they have different sound. Thus the polyphony is created.

As a text generator, these machines produce initial pure text consisted of text symbols. The text has no narrative, which helps it to move from a linear way of perception. The work refers to initial and elemental modes of writing, to the basics of writing. Khimin's reflections on the descriptive nature of writing is connected with the necessity of its coding, placing the text symbol in the space.

Strokes and incisions are primitive and simplest sign of letter. In another words they're meta-language, a universal way of writing. And at the same time it's a pre-code, a pre-digital protocol: 0 and 1. In one way it's a universal pre-code and in another it's a coded personal message.

Khimin decodes old text symbols and recodes them. He translates those symbols into the digital language and thus he duplicates them and a time-machine palimpsest appears. But what's interesting is his working with a "zero-object". The figure of Chernorizets Hrabr and his writings are vague from our perspective and we have no exact facts about him and survived full-text recordings. Khimin create and re-create these erased proto-texts.

Also here an automatic writing is traced. And though this is a programmed program and all variants of behavior are written in advance and all chances are counted in advance there stands the question of unconscious of machines. And the artist himself tells that even if he wrote all the algorithm of behavior so why then it doesn't always works the desired way. Of course it's the specificity of the process of working machines and software programs and there is always a moment of a random choice that is a continuation of the Dadaist tradition in the web space.

POP UPYR' LIKHOI (2013)

Pop Upyr' Likhoi is the first known Old Russian scribe and priest who worked in Veliky Novgorod in the 11th century. Merely no information survived about him but a few facts. It's known that he re-wrote the Book of Isiah (?) form the Bible. This historical background provides a basement for post-minimalist painting where we can feel the motives of sculptures by Donald Judd, Frank Stella and Carl Andre. On the grey background refers to the concrete. Like minimalist predecessors the artist manipulates with words like with blocks trying to diminish the meaning. It's the attempt to destroy the essence of the being and by numerous repetitions; tautology the meaning of words (and thus the history) reduces and in the end only the form of words, the play of forms remain.

Font takes us to the field of post-digital paintings. Then, background, can be not only the concrete but also a surface of a computer. This mix of an Old Russian textual

history, post-minimalism and post-digital art creates a Khimin's unique technique and put him in a new art paradigm.

The main paradigm of media archeology – media's past in relation to the present – is realized in Khimin's works in the mode of his working with historical narratives. To be more precise in the working with old-Russian cultural figures such as Chernorizets Hrabar or Pop Upyr' Likhoi. The artist plays with old text symbols on his comfortable zone of post-minimalist and net art. Papers with codes that wind throughout printers work Ivan Khimin calls a "scroll". That is a typical way of storing early Slavonic writings. That's also underlines artist's close connection with Slavonic culture.

His interest in media archeology started with experiments in the web where he created sites where by marking out the whole page one could see different abstract pictures that were created using space button. Unfortunately those sites were lost but accidentally they were found on Archive.org and one can see them only using old operational systems. Here appears the notion of a "dematerialized object".

ASCIITICISM TV (2004)

ASCIITICIS TV is the base of all Ivan Khimin's art. It's the starting point. Other works are derivatives from this TV.

The form of the TV is a minimalistic, schematic version of a soviet TV box. On the left panel there is a button, when you press it text signs start to move. There are eleven channels and the viewer can switch them. It's a chaotic movement possess a bunch of symbolic meanings of contemporary culture and our relation and understanding of media culture and mass media culture in particular. In this interactive work a viewer becomes a co-creator thus the Beuys principle of "everyone is an artist" is present.

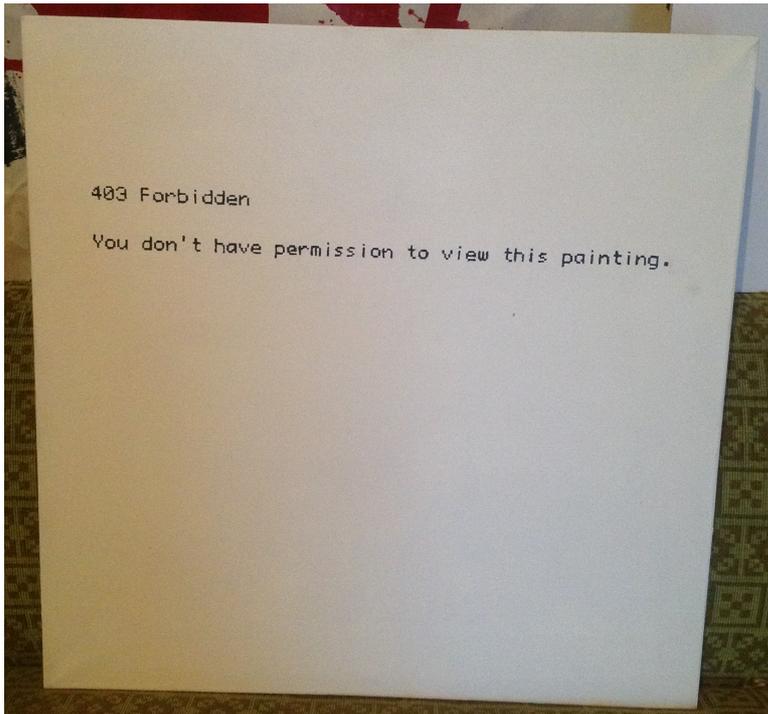
ASCII elements materialize a basic principle of the universe eternal movement. Changing programming algorithms influence the mode of behavior.

POST-DIGITAL PAINTINGS

In his paintings Khimin uses minimalist aesthetic. It's based on an interchange of basic graphic characters: 0, 1, "noughts and crosses". The rhythm of their changes creates the movement. This algorithm of symbols helps to achieve a codified message.

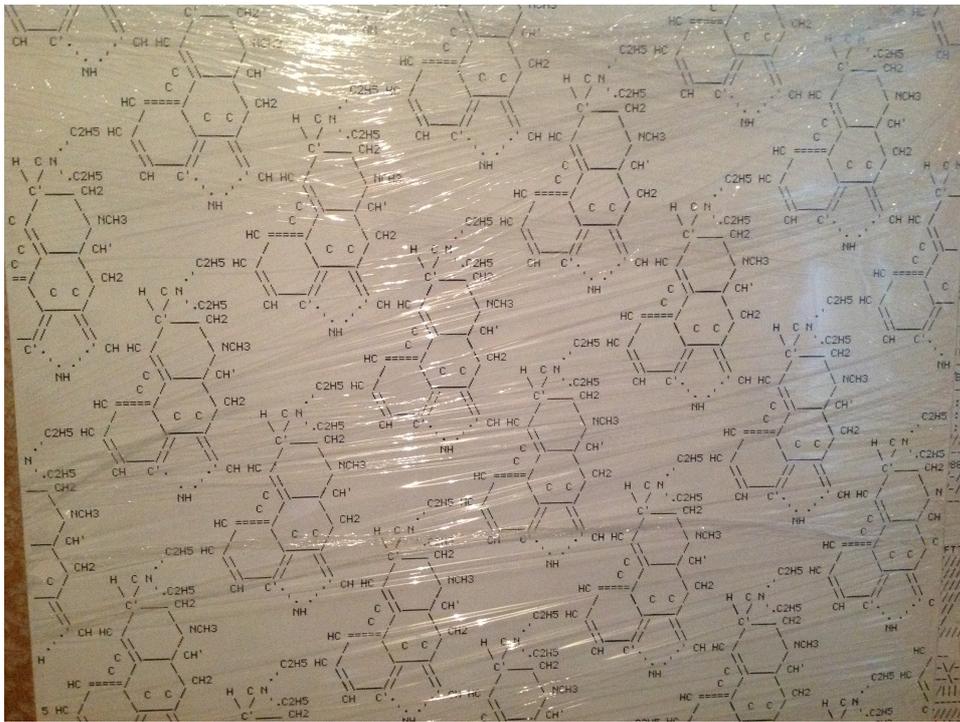
It's important to notice that all paintings are done with the use of a stencil. The image is not painted but is transferred and copied like it's a printed paper.

ABSTRACT-CONCEPTUAL PAINTING



PERFORMANCE WITH VANESSA PLACE (2013)

SCIENCE ART (2013) + CONCEPTUALISM



In his recent works a new direction appears – it's address to science art. In the “A Molecule of LSD” (2013) we see a chemical formula of LSD. The real thing is translated very mechanically as a thing in a range of other things.

VOCABULARY:

Algorithm

Code

Text

Symbol

Kinetic

Interactive

Noise

Move

Data

Process

Codex

Random choice

Combinatory techniques

Vast number of possible configurations

Machine simulate itself using interpretive trace routine

Turing's random number generator