

Berlinale  
 70<sup>th</sup> Internationale  
Filmfestspiele  
Berlin  
Berlinale Special

BY  
ILYA KHRZHANOVSKIY  
ILYA PERMYAKOV

# DEGENERATION DAU

A WORK IN 9 CHAPTERS  
A PROJECT BY SERGEY ADONYEV AND ILYA KHRZHANOVSKIY

## Crew

*A Project By:* **Sergey Adonyev, Ilya Khrzhanovskiy**

*Scripted and Directed By:* **Ilya Khrzhanovskiy, Ilya Permyakov**

*Director Of Photography:* **Jürgen Jürges**

*Production Design:* **Denis Shibarov**

*Edited by:* **Ling Lee, Arttu Salmi, Marianne Kuopanportti Fennel, Ilya Permyakov**

*Sound:* **Maksim Demydenko, Stefan Smith, Rob Walker, Alex Joseph, Borys Peter**

*Costumes:* **Irina Tsvetkova, Lyubov Mingazitinova, Elena Bekritskaya, Olga Bekritskaya**

*Makeup And Hair Design:* **Jekaterina Oertel**

## Production

*Producer:* **Sergey Adoniev**

*Co-Producers:* **Susanne Marian (Germany), Philippe Bober (France), Erik Hemmendorff (Sweden), Christina Voloshina, Svetlana Dragaeva (Ukraine), Natalia Osipova (Russia)**

*Executive Producers:* **Alexandra Timofeeva, Svetlana Dragaeva**

*Postproduction Executive Producer:* **Maksim Demidenko**

*Associate Producer:* **Ksenia Gorenstein**

*In Collaboration With:*

*Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg:* **Kirsten Niehuus, Brigitta Manthey**

*Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung:* **Manfred Schmidt, Markus Görsch**

*WDR Arte:* **Lucia Keuter, Alexander Bickel**

## Cast

*KGB General, Director of the Institute:* **Vladimir Azhippo**

*Head of the Theoretical Deparment:* **Dmitry Kaledin**

*Kaledin's Wife:* **Olga Shkabarnya**

*Head of the Experimental Department:* **Alexey Blinov**

*Head Waitress:* **Victoria Skitskaya**

*Leader of the Experimental Group:* **Maxim Martsinkevich**

*Librarian:* **Kristina Babich**

*Blinov's Assistant:* **Alina Alekseeva**

*Mathematical Physicist:* **Nikita Nekrasov**

*Academic Secretary:* **Zoya Popova**

*Director of the Institute:* **Alexey Trifonov**

*Azhippo's Secretary:* **Kristina Voloshina**

*Professor of Anthropogenic Studies:* **Marina Abramović**

*Professor of Anthropology:* **Romeo Castellucci**

*Rabbi:* **Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz**

*Very Special Thanks:*

**Dmitry Falkovich, Mikhail Fridman, Kirsten Niehuus, Tom Tykwer, Olga Dykhovichnaya, Thomas Oberender, Stefan Arndt**

# DAU. DEGENERATION

by **Ilya Khrzhanovskiy, Ilya Permyakov**

2020, 360 min, colour



*“DAU. Degeneration is a saga about the change of political power, an ensuing social catastrophe and the violent destruction of the world. Imagine two ends of a spectrum: a rabbi discussing science and religion with quantum physicists and a radical group of ultra-right militants terrorising these scientists with brutal carnivalesque acts. Imagine all the colours and social clusters in between: KGB officers, shamans from Siberia and Amazonia, bacchanal marginals and occult experimenters – everyone has their part in this cinematic work about the secret Soviet Institute, everyone is interconnected in their communal life, gradually tumbling down towards their violent and tragic end.”*

**ILYA PERMYAKOV**

Co-Director

# DAU FIGURES

## DAU PROJECT:

auditions:	392,000
costumes:	40,000
square meter set:	12,000
main locations:	120
set in:	1938-1968
principal roles:	400
extras:	10,000
shooting days:	180
shot over (months):	40

which have resulted in:

hours of 35mm film:	700
scenes:	549
hours of rec. dialogue:	8,000
words transcribed:	37,000,000
subtitles:	3,200,000



Alexey Trifonov, Nikita Nekrasov, Alexander Serduk, Alexey Blinov, Alina Alekseeva



## DAU DEGENERATION:

costumes:	433
main locations:	15
set in:	1966-1968
principal roles:	10
extras:	295
shooting days:	55
shot over (months):	6

which have resulted in:

hours of 35mm film:	147
scenes:	169



## DAU NATASHA:

costumes:	105
main locations:	5
set in:	1952-1953
principal roles:	4
extras:	22
shooting days:	14
shot over (months):	6

hours of 35mm film:	25
scenes:	23

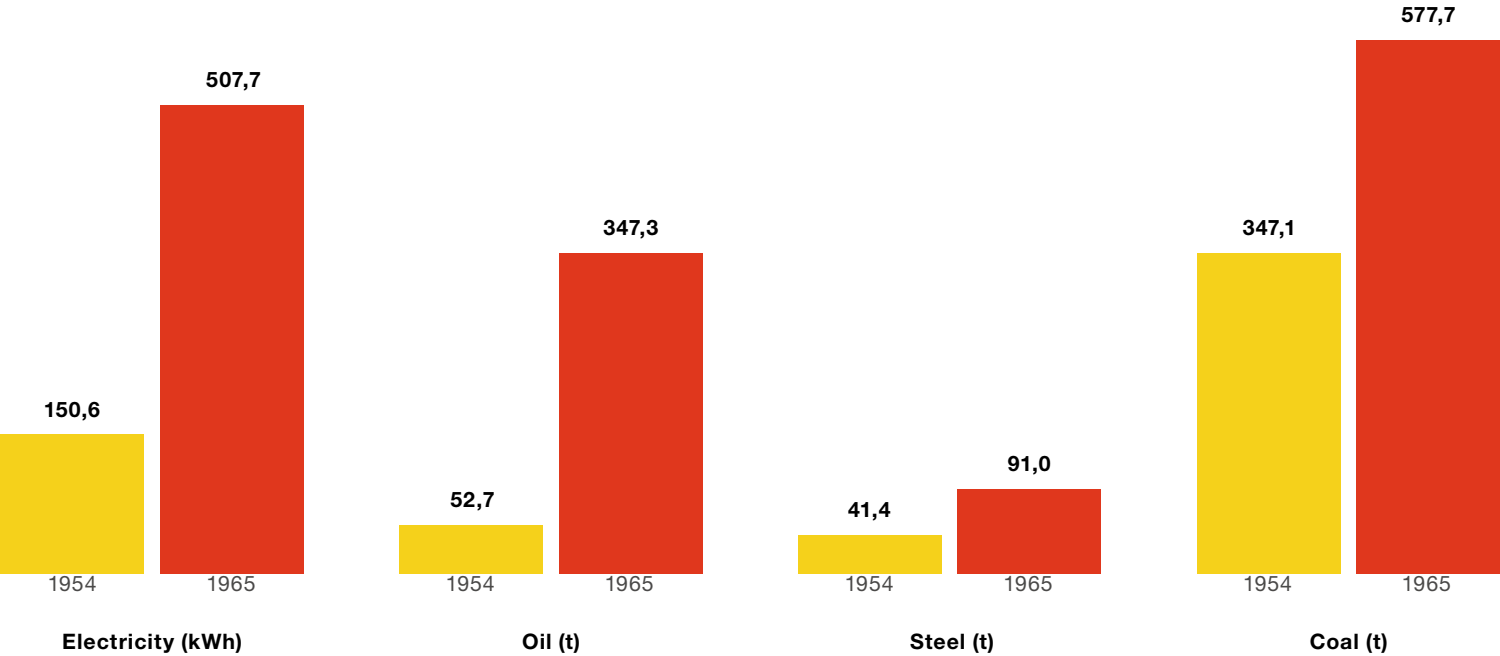
# USSR 1956–68

- 1955:**  
First soviet jet plane Tu-104
- 1956:**  
Dubna Institute for Nuclear Research
- 1957:**  
First artifical Earth satellite
- 1959:**  
First nuclear-powered icebreaker
- 1959:**  
Automatic station on the moon
- 1961:**  
First spaceflight of Gagarin
- 1966:**  
Soviet nuclear tests
- 1966:**  
Eighth five-year plan
- 1967:**  
Soviet submarine K-3 accident
- 1968:**  
Invasion of Czechoslovakia
- 1968:**  
Soyuz 3 spaceflight mission



Nikita Khrushchev, Yuri Gagarin

## Seven Year Plan 1959–1965:

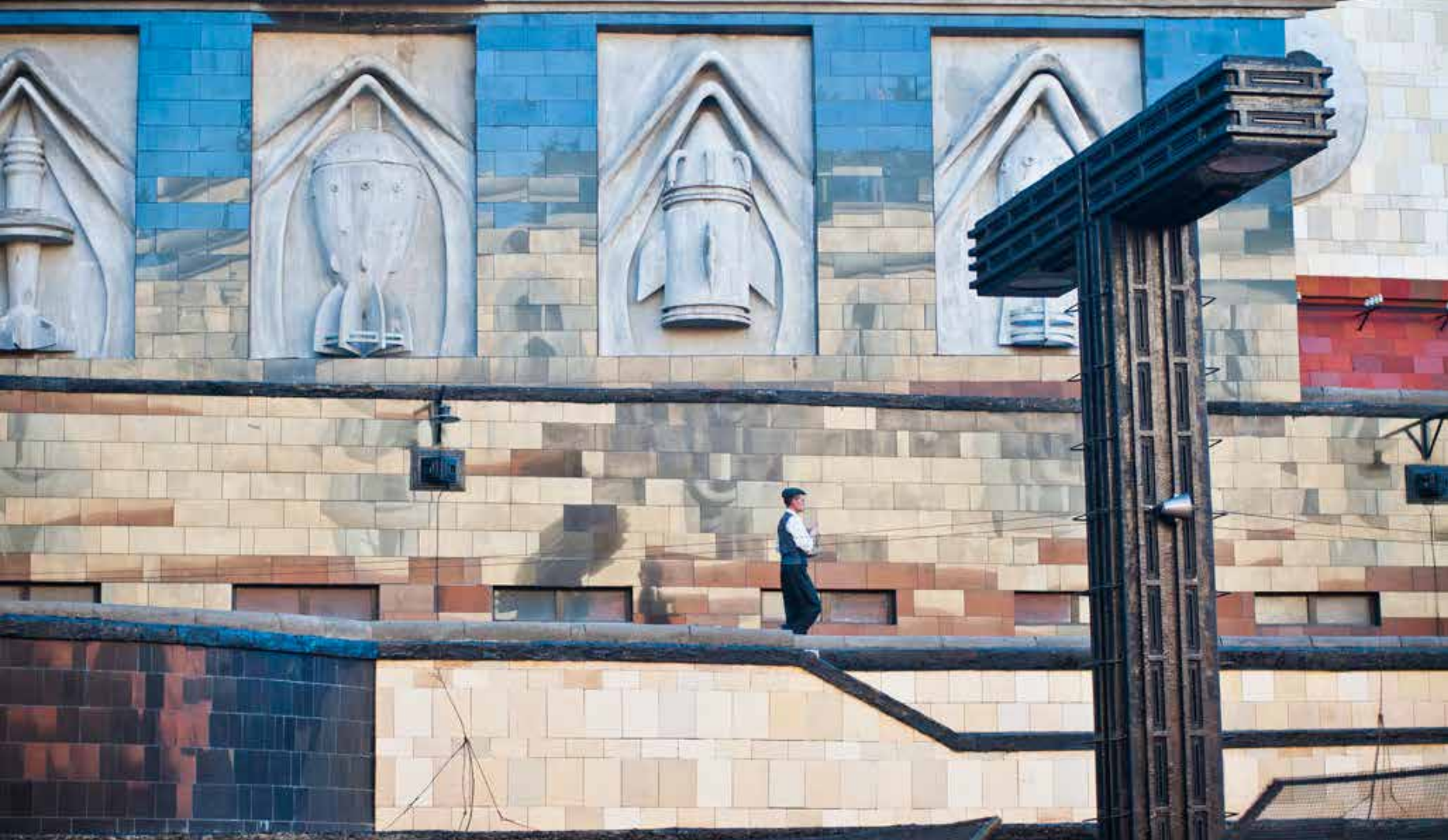




*“The DAU project is mesmerizing, daring, unique and not afraid to break existing rules in order to create new realities. The DAU project is monumental, with a brilliant concept of revisiting the past - just for a moment - to better understand our present.”*

**MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ**

Artist



# THE DAU PROJECT

## General

Initially planned as a feature film, DAU started shooting in April 2007 and soon turned into a unique, epic, multidisciplinary, and ever-changing project created by the Russian director Ilya Khrzhanovskiy, which combines film, science, performance, spirituality, social and artistic experimentation, literature and architecture.

In September 2009, an “Institute for Research in Physics and Technology” was built on the premises of a derelict swimming pool in Kharkiv (Ukraine). The vast functioning experimental research facility inspired by actual Soviet research institutes became the largest film set ever constructed in Europe. Scientists could live and work in the Institute that was also populated by hundreds of carefully selected willing participants – artists, waiters, secret police, ordinary families – secluded from time and space.

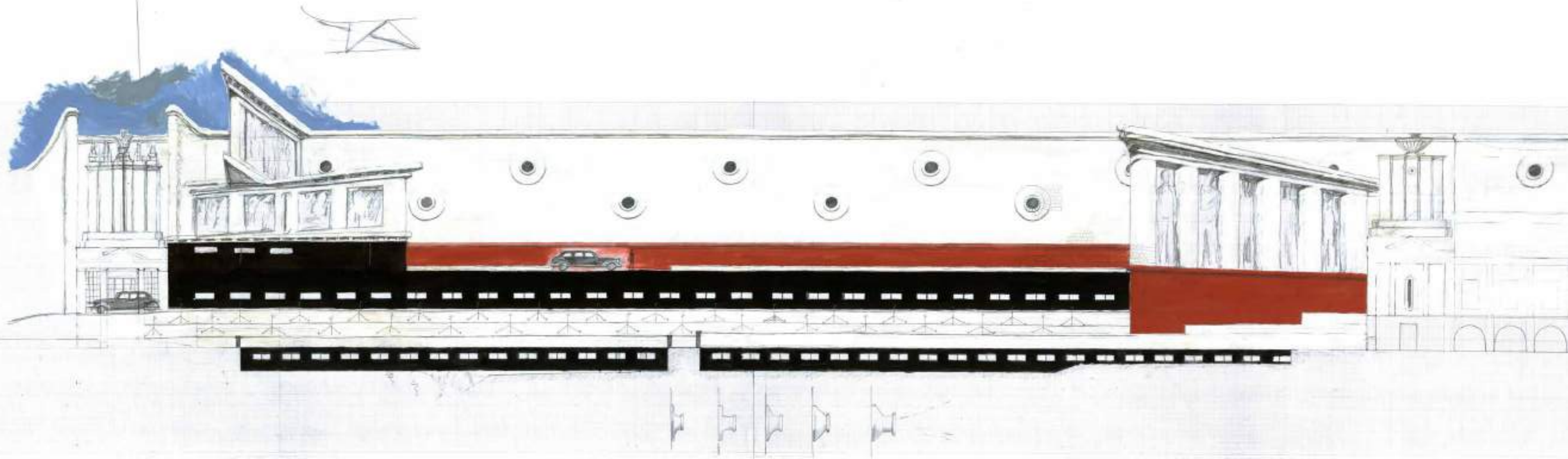
Sent back into the past (to a period between 1938 – 1968), participants lived just as their forebears had in the USSR, they worked, dressed, undressed, loved, denounced and hated one another. This unscripted life was filmed intermittently for the whole duration of the experience in the Institute, that lasted from October 2009 till November 2011. From the uniforms they wore to the language they used, their existence was governed by the Institute’s “local time” – 1952, 1953, 1956, etc.

## Kharkiv

In the late 1930s, when Lev Landau’s Institute that inspired the project was established, Kharkiv was an important intellectual and creative center in the Soviet Union, recovering from a tragic period of orchestrated famine (1932-1933 known as “Holodomor”). Kharkiv was chosen by Ilya Khrzhanovskiy as the location for the Institute because he considered it to be “the most Soviet city”, “beyond its Soviet architecture, the residents of the city also retain a sensibility from the Soviet era”. By the end of filming, one in seven of Kharkiv’s residents had participated in DAU.

## Participants

Several hundred people left their everyday lives to go back in time to the Soviet Union, taking up residence at the Institute in a parallel spatial and temporal universe: a meticulous historical simulation where everything, from uniforms to kitchen appliances, food, money, and vocabulary, matched the objects and habits of the time. The Institute had its own newspaper (with daily bulletins informing the participants of historical events from the time) and the currency used was the Ruble.



## Science/Art/Religion

Real-life scientists, able to continue with their research in the Institute, included physicist Andrei Losev, mathematicians Dmitri Kaledin, Shing-Tung Yau and string theorist Nikita Nekrasov, Nobel-Prize winning physicist David Gross, neuroscientist James Fallon, and biochemist Luc Bigé. “One group was researching string theory and another researching quantum gravity. These groups mutually hated each other. One stated there were 12 dimensions, the other claimed there were 24. The string theory group believed there couldn’t be 24 dimensions. The quantum gravity group believed that the other scientists were narrow-minded” (Ilya Khrzhanovskiy).

There was a cross-over between art and science, with new media artist Alexey Blinov, who was involved with the technical design of the Institute and built structures based on Luc Bigé’s designs. Other artists who visited the Institute included Carsten Höller, who also holds a doctorate in sciences and performed an experiment in the Institute, performance artists Andrew Ondrejcek and Marina Abramovic, theater directors Romeo Castellucci and Peter Sellars, and photographer Boris Mikhailov.

Religion was represented in the Institute by a series of visiting religious luminaries, including Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, Russian-Orthodox hegumen Daniil, Peruvian vegetalist Guillermo Arévalo, and the shaman Viacheslav Cheltuev.

## Residence

At any one time, around 200-300 participants were working and living in the Institute that became its own microcosmos. The participants were immersed in this precisely detailed Soviet setting, creating new lives inside the Institute, for many the filming was secondary. The Institute saw friendships form, professional relationships break-up, scientific discoveries, research papers published, a marriage, and babies born.

## Filming

Inspired by the Austrian heliostat system from the 1930s, daylight was channelled into the Institute via mirrors (and boosted with hidden halogen lights) to avoid using any stage lighting and to be able to continuously roam with the 35mm cameras. Long scenes were filmed in continuity using two handheld cameras that would film in rotation of five and half minutes (the duration of the 122m rolls).

There were also long periods where there was no filming at all, from two or three months, to six months. Shooting blocks would be announced in advance and all participants would be aware when filming was taking place and could leave the Institute if they wanted to avoid being filmed, no hidden cameras were used.

There were no takes, and the film crew would also be in period costume and make-up at all times in case they found themselves in the frame.



## Paris

In January 2019, in Paris, the DAU project was presented at the Théâtre de la Ville and the Théâtre du Châtelet. Visitors were only permitted entry after they had requested and obtained a Visa, and had left their mobiles, and their connection to the outside world at the cloakroom. The setting inside was both contemporary and Soviet, and experiences ranged from the psychological and intellectual to the physiological and spiritual. At the Centre Pompidou, a Soviet apartment was recreated, where scientists from the Institute would live 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for the duration of the installation.



*“In quantum field theory, the black holes emit radiation, named after Hawking. But what comes out of the black hole as a result, does not look like what fell in. The DAU Institute is not exactly a black hole, fortunately. Its boundary is more mental than physical. Yet, the physical boundary is important for the experience. People going through that boundary in, and people coming out are not exactly the same people. Once inside you cannot stay an outside observer. This transformation is one of the DAU experiences. My personal story with DAU started in a Rutherfordian\* fashion, by observing some of my friends scatter off DAU, and some forming a bound state. I figured it must be something very interesting, something sufficiently complex, something alive. I crossed the horizon, and would have vanished for the outside world, if not for the destruction of the Institute in 1968 (2011).”*

*\*The atom was determined by Rutherford and his assistants Heiger and Marsden to have a solid small nucleus surrounded by mushy electrons, by observing the scattering of alpha particles off a metal foil, and later the nuclei determined to consist of smaller protons and neutrons, which were later determined to consist of even smaller quarks and gluons.*

## **NIKITA NEKRASOV**

Professor, Mathematical Physicist and String Theorist  
Simons Centre for Geometry and Physics, Stony Brook, NY, USA



Andrey Chuenkov



Vladimir Azhippo, Andrey Chuenkov

# Ilya Khrzhanovskiy

## Co-Director & Producer

Ilya Khrzhanovskiy was born in Moscow in 1975. He studied at the Bonn Academy of Fine Art and graduated from the Russian State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in 1998.

In 2005, his debut feature film “4” earned him multiple awards including a Golden Cactus and Tiger Award at the Rotterdam International Film Festival. It was screened in more than 50 international film festivals and distributed in the UK, Italy, Netherlands, USA, Scandinavia and South Asia.

DAU is Khrzhanovskiy's second production and has been in the making since 2006. It is a multidisciplinary project which combines cinema, art, and anthropology. In the process of filming, over 700 hours of material were captured.

Selected material from the project including sound and art installations and narrative works

in chapters premiered in Paris in early 2019, with the support of the City Hall of Paris. The immersion into the world of DAU took place in two Parisian theatres, Théâtre du Châtelet and Théâtre de la Ville. Moreover, the atmosphere of the DAU Institute was recreated at the Pompidou Centre with an installation featuring various characters from the project, who lived within the artwork, 24 hours a day.

Ilya Khrzhanovskiy is a member of both the European Film Academy and the Guild of Film Directors of Russia.



# Ilya Permyakov

## Co-Director

Ilya Permyakov is a Russian director of audio-visual arts. He began his career as a scholar of Philosophy, completing his PhD on philosophy of Martin Heidegger and poetry of Paul Celan and Ossip Mandelstam in 2003.

In 2008 Permyakov won the Grand Prix of the IX Media Forum at the 30th Moscow International Film Festival, for his video art piece *Gazing*. His works have been exhibited in museums and art galleries, including MMOMA (Moscow) and Tate Modern (London). Between 2008-2012 Permyakov co-wrote and edited *Nazidanie* (directed by Boris Yukhananov); the film premiered at Locarno Film Festival (2017).

Ilya Permyakov joined DAU in 2012, becoming a co-director, co-writer and editor. He also took a role of the Head of DAU Academic Research and Creative Director of DAU Symposia leading a number of academic conferences. Subjects

have included *Protagonists of Political Mythology: How Do Individuals and Collectives Become History? and Encounters with the Extreme: Faith, Violence and the Search for Liberation* and have taken place at the Parliament of the United Kingdom, Cambridge University, Oxford University, the Royal Society, and London School of Economics in the UK, and the Théâtre du Châtelet and Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, France.

Ilya Permyakov is now co-writing, together with a historian Alexander Etkind, a book under the provisional title *Pharaohs of Modernity: An Intellectual History of Crypto-Communes*. The first interpretative academic study of DAU, this book depicts the DAU project as an experiment which summarised the crucial scientific-political experiences of the past and warned about the imminent dangers of the future.



# SYNOPSIS

A secret Soviet Institute conducts scientific and occult experiments on animals and people, aiming at creating an “ideal human being”. A KGB general and his aides prefer to turn a blind eye to the erotic adventures of the director and scandalous debaucheries of distinguished scientists and their mad and cruel research methods. Until once, under the guise of test subjects, a radical youth group arrives to the Institute. They are given a severe task: to eradicate the dissolute behaviour of intelligentsia and - if needs be - to destroy and to erase the fragile world of the Institute.



Alina Alekseeva, Maxim Martsinkevich



*“DAU is placing people in a time machine and bringing them face to face with the realities of the mid-20th century demonstrated that the worst aspects of totalitarianism can resurface in contemporary society. This project brought together the best Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France can produce in cinema. There has never been anything comparable for depth of exploration in the history of cinema. This is a unique artistic project, with an important social message. It demands and deserves to be viewed in a special atmosphere and in special circumstances, and in a context of unusual and brilliant events in the life of the city where the viewing takes place.”*

**TEODOR CURRENTZIS**

Conductor, musician, actor



Nikita Nekrasov, Zoya Popova



Andrey Chuenkov, Viktoria Skitskaya, Konstantin Skvortsov

# INTERVIEW WITH ILYA PERMYAKOV

## An interview with Philippe Bober

*How did you first meet Ilya Khrzhanovskiy and become involved in the DAU project?*

I worked with Boris Yukhananov as a co-writer and editor on the project, *Nazidanie* which was about the famous story of how Zinedine Zidane head-butted Marco Materazzi in the final game of the world cup 2006 from a mystical point of view. Boris had known Ilya for a long time and introduced us.

Ilya had just finished filming DAU and I met him maybe two or three days after they had destroyed the set of the Institute in Kharkiv. He came to Moscow after filming this major scene of devastation which had been done in a very violent and visceral way. Ilya was in this state of saying goodbye to the filming stage of the project.

We had a preliminary discussion about the possibility of my getting involved. I thought it would be a great adventure to travel to London and to work on DAU for maybe a year, before coming back home to Moscow. I came to London in 2013 and I haven't moved back yet.

The project is truly unpredictable. It is a combination of a lot of work, and a lot of unexpected turns of events. But these are also the reasons why I am enjoying every single new stage of it.

*What would you say is in the nature of DAU that makes it so unpredictable?*

The whole spirit of DAU is about unpredictability. The initial methods of working and filming are responsible for it. Of course, a lot of things were also planned and very thoroughly prepared. But when it came to the cinematic research of human nature... Ilya was not working with scripts and he did not write any dialogue for the DAU participants.

The participants knew where the story might go, but they would never be completely sure how it would be told, or how quickly they would get irritated with one another, or fall in love, or be betrayed by a friend or a partner. There was an explosive energy that was brought into the DAU set by Ilya and the filming crew in Kharkiv. You can definitely feel this energy on screen.

As a co-director, working in post-production, I dealt with the last stage of the Institute's life. It was the terminal stage, too, the whole place being

convulsive and in agony, waiting for the end. This is the type of material you see in *DAU. Degeneration*. The amount of characters that Ilya managed to join together during this time period was just unimaginable. Almost each of them had their own unique storyline.

In total, we filmed more than 700 hours of rushes during the whole shooting phase. The duration of the rushes that I used for *DAU. Degeneration* was about 150 hours. It took a lot of time.

*I think it's interesting that it wasn't just the project mutating, but also the people inside of the project.*

Yes, we were and are. If I were to describe my own mutation, I think I have become much more sensitive to drama. It is a consequence of this work. I was used to working in philosophy and in video/media art, so I used to be much more theory oriented. I tended to intellectualize my work a lot.

The DAU material has a lot of highly intellectual elements, which attracted me in the first place. For example, it has absolutely brilliant scientists discussing string theory and gravitation theory, it has elements of theology. You can definitely treat this material from the anthropological point of view and study social groups. But when it comes to the raw power of this material, it's not only that – DAU dives right into the epicenter of highly intensive human emotions, which allow you to tell the stories which burn and inflame you when you touch them. DAU is volcanic.

Some of the scenes are so open, and sometimes so emotionally embarrassing, that if you were to witness similar situations in a café, or any public place, or in your own home, you would probably prefer to look the other way. Some others are so emotionally intense and so completely sincere and intimate. They scream to be converted into a dramatic form.

*DAU. Degeneration* deals with a multitude of social groups and clusters that used to live inside the DAU Institute. Whereas *DAU. Natasha* is a film which is concentrated around two or three characters, and dives deep into their inner worlds, *DAU. Degeneration* is concentrated around dozens of different characters and each one of them is equally important for the way the story unravels. Some of them are highly intellectual and others are people of raw power and very direct actions.

*Why is it important to film and to show radical social groups that are capable of direct violent actions?*

I think it is very important to learn – through the medium of film – how to notice and diagnose the symptoms of approaching social catastrophes that are similar to the one that is described in *DAU. Degeneration*. Not just to analyze them but to be emotionally sensitive when you see these symptoms, because *DAU. Degeneration* deals with the problem of how the higher echelons of power engage the ultra-radical. When you see this tragic symbiosis of power and militant radical groups and when you observe their ability to destroy and liquidate everything that comes their way and their joyful neglect of the law and inability to value an individual

life, it does cause your own emotional mutation, and it is something that requires the growth of your sensitivity.

Well, that's how I mutated. Probably.

*What about one of the main characters, [Vladimir] Azhippo? He also changed during the experience.*

He really enjoyed the large-scale game and experiment, but he also found a place for himself in the studio during the post-production. We collected impressions from more or less everyone who visited the DAU studio in London. It is a common practice and it usually leads to very interesting conversations. Azhippo was a very responsible person. He would always be making notes, writing things down. You can see it in *DAU. Degeneration*. That's why we thought it would be a great idea to get him to write down his reactions to the material and the edits.

*And you invited him to conferences afterwards. Right?*

Yes, so apart from editing, I try not to forget my academic background. We organized a number of conferences, continuing the DAU Institute's scientific and academic work in the UK and in France. One was dedicated to the dissolution of the USSR. The three headliners of this conference were Gennady Burbulis (State Secretary of Russia, 1991-1992), Leonid Kravchuk (First President of Ukraine, 1991-1994), and Stanislau Shushkevich (First Head of State of Independent Belarus, 1991-1994).

This historical event is highly relevant for *DAU. Degeneration*. We thought that it would be a great idea to invite the three men who participated in the conversations about the end of the USSR inside *DAU. Degeneration* – mathematician Dmitry Kaledin, Vladimir Azhippo, and neuroscientist James Fallon.

The conference took place in the House of Commons. These characters from the DAU Institute came back to life inside the UK parliament, but not in a forceful way, not in an imitational way. They were absolutely faithful to their field of scientific expertise, and they shared the ideas, similar to the ones they had articulated in the Institute.

*In Azhippo's conversation with Fallon in DAU. Degeneration, Fallon mentions the particularity of the Soviet Union: Everybody knew that you were on one side of the prison door, but you could just as well be on the other side, which makes it impersonal.*

In the case of Azhippo, it is a very personal remark. He does not speak for the whole population of the Soviet Union. When Fallon gave his summation, that you could easily be on either side of the prison door, Azhippo laughs out of the joy of being recognized and very accurately defined. I think it comes from his artistry and his ability to fantasize and to be very inventive. He said that most of his colleagues who wore the uniform in prison were very boring to him because they were so predictable and systemic. They were incapable of inventing things, whereas he listened to some of the inmates' stories and saw how theatrically inclined they were.



Dmitry Kaledin, Vladimir Azhippo

The inmates were inventing new methods of robbery, storyboarding in their minds what kind of scenes they were able to stage, and improvising. It was then, when Azhippo realized that he was much closer to them in spirit than to the representatives of the official system. I think that this ability of channeling and transforming your criminal energy into socially accepted ways of staging it in art, is a quality intrinsic to Azhippo.

So, he was the instrument of law but always able to jump to a different side. Inside the DAU project he was artistically transgressive. And this ability to transgress was diagnosed by Fallon as a specialist in psychopathy and crime.

*You already mentioned the huge amount of rushes. What was your entry point into the material?*

The rushes were 150 hours. If I were to start it again now, I would act in a more logical and predictable way. I would probably start with 20, 40 hours of rushes and then center around one character. But I was so enthusiastic about this type of material when I joined the project in post-production that I simply rushed into it.

And looking into the rushes, I immediately realized it would be very difficult to make a story out of it, especially in the beginning when the main character was absent.

There were two entry points. The first one was Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. The last scene of *DAU. Degeneration* was the first one I edited – the destruction of the Institute accompanied by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz’s voice over, which ends with the quote:

‘You die. You see, you die. But your soul is not clean. So it has to be sent to the laundry. What you do in hell – you get washed’.

It is, to me, a very good parable that fits the *DAU. Degeneration*. I also decided to structure the story in nine parts as a reference to the nine layers of hell, as Dante envisaged them. The story is going deeper down through them.

This combination of religious and poetic thought in both Judaism and Christian culture was a very good entry point for me. I then thought about starting every chapter with a poetic introduction coming from an old wise man which at the same time is humorous, ironic, positively spirited and optimistic. I wanted it to be both about science and religion, and the limits of knowledge. When I heard Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz’s monologue about communism being a religion, I thought it would work well as an opening line.

*And what was the second entry point?*

The second one was less expected. It was really difficult for me to combine different storylines in the first three or four chapters, until I decided to include a storyline about Nikita [Nekrasov] and Zoya [Popova]. They are

at the dead end of their impossible relationship. They are so soft and gentle, in comparison to the other energies that are jumping and running around them. They have a completely different mood and color compared to the rest of the story. A slower pace. As soon as I introduced some of their conversations and the impossibility of their relationship, the story came together. Everything suddenly fell into place.

*When you shaped the structure and added the chapters, did that come from you or was Ilya giving you directions? How did the collaboration between the two of you look like?*

He would never tell me that he wanted the material to develop in a certain way. This very unusual freedom is one of his principles. It comes with a lot of responsibility and a lot of work. Of course, he was also very present. He commented intensively the editing process and participated a lot in the post-production stage. But he would never ask me to lose a character, for example. He never imposed his view.

For example, he saw my idea to use the rabbi’s voiceover as something that belonged to me. Something that was intrinsic to how I see things. It was very valuable for him to let things develop in a different way, and not just according to his angle and perspective.

Ilya knows how to combine different approaches, to collaborate with others. I think that is one of his main gifts, and Jekat [Jekaterina Oertel, co-director of *DAU. Natasha*] also mentioned it. He doesn’t work with

himself. There is no egoism in his method. This is the work of a very genuine artistic collaboration. His only demands are artistic sharpness and a dedication to work.

*Is there a way to put the DAU experience in words?*

I’m now in one more co-authorship process, with historian Alexander Etkind. We are writing a book about DAU, not from the point of view of aesthetics, not from the point of view of cinema or art analysis, but from the point of view of what the DAU community is. A micro-society of co-authors. The book is mainly concentrated around the depiction of DAU as a crypto-commune. This word is, to me, one of the possible DAU definitions.

Alexander and I paint this portrayal in an indirect way, by drawing historic analogies, for example, with the Academy of Plato. The corner stone of the DAU project is a secret Soviet institute. The Academia of Plato was the first institute in the history of mankind. It was quite secretive and hermetic, socially very diverse, just like the DAU Institute was. It had philosophers, proto-scientists, some political figures, military people and magicians. We had, and still have all these elements at DAU as well. In our case shamans worked alongside with scientists, scientists sometimes became philosophers, courtesans collaborated with artists, and, in general, the whole prototype of the Soviet Institute is closely connected to the military sector. The shamans for example are historically accurate. In fact, Soviet institutions started working with magic and the occult as early as the 1920s.



A film project is the perfect environment for a crypto-commune, because cinema is a collective work of a motley group. Now, regular film productions do not last long - they consolidate for a short period of time and then disseminate. DAU has duration. It has endured the challenge of time for more than ten years already. Such things happen very seldom, maybe once in 100 years, and these things seem to be impossible.

But cinema today is the territory where such impossible things can become possible.

Being a DAU insider, I enjoy a non-definition of myself, my friends and colleagues much more than a definition. I don't want the notions to finish me. I would love to carry on, to provide more questions and nonverbalised energies alongside the texts, that can also be visionary. And this wish not to stop probably can attract another word that can describe DAU quite precisely. DAU is a movement.



James Fallon, Dmitry Kaledin



*“DAU is an experiment with unknown outcome, a game changer both in content and size. I understand that people are afraid of it; so am I, to some extent, who has participated. Finally, an artwork that disturbs me, an artwork that has the capacity to rearrange the given and that deals with the big questions.”*

**CARSTEN HÖLLER**  
Artist



Vladimir Azhippo



Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz



Dmitry Kaledin

# COLLAPSE OF THE USSR

## Conspiracy and Hard Science

Scientists in the Soviet Union did not form anything resembling a social class, and did not play a noticeable role in the economy except for being a huge drain on resources. But this line of reasoning is non-dialectic. Indeed, while Marxism prides itself on being totally scientific, it simultaneously and explicitly shows that science itself is relative and bound to the social conditions that have generated it. Applying this thesis back to orthodox Marxist political theory, we see that it clearly originates from the 19th century, the time of the intelligible clockwork Universe that played by the rules. In hard sciences, this worldview is obsolete; in physics, it has been obsolete for almost a hundred years. We now know that the world is not deterministic. It is not only that the real causes of things are unreachable, it is worse than that: like hidden variables in quantum theory, they simply do not exist.

The difference here is again methodological. “Soft” science - philosophy, history, economics, political theory - is eventually concerned with constructing reality, and has no objective criteria of truth: in the end, it is truth by consensus, and whoever is in power is always right. “Hard” science constructs material things, and these tend to have an on/off button. When you press the button, it’s either a fizzle or a bang.

Mathematics, my own science, is peculiar in that it is not concerned with material things. However, there is a replacement for pressing the button, called rigorous proof. The standards of mathematical rigour do have to be decided by consensus, but this is needed very rarely - the current ones were established about 150 years ago, and as of now, there is absolutely no need for a new revision. So, mathematics is definitely a hard science, on the military side of the fence. However, since there is nothing material involved, it is extremely cheap, and can be done with very little or even no state support. In the USSR, it flourished - maths was one of the very few things where USSR really was on a par with the rest of the world (to the point that Western mathematics journals would accept articles in Russian, and leading mathematicians would visit Moscow and Leningrad in spite of all the craziness of the Soviet regime).

One thing worth mentioning is that while science is theoretically universal, at least in math, the whole is composed of distinct national schools. A Frenchman, whatever he sets out to write, ends up writing an encyclopaedia. A German usually sets out to write an encyclopaedia, and twenty years later finishes the first volume, with all the excruciating details that come along. An Englishman despises encyclopaedias and always considers particular cases, the first one, the second one, the ninth one, the one-thousand and

twenty-fourth one. The English distrust metanarratives - not because they don’t work, but because they are totalitarian. Being fully conscious that the “Universe is a practical joke of the general at the expense of the particular”, as one wise Englishman put it, they still prefer details. Russians, as I mentioned before, despise details, probably because they drink too much and are so bad at noticing them through the visionary haze. The thing they are good at, for better or for worse, are precisely the metanarratives.

The hard science people are more constant in their political views, so, in effect, most of them are now as patriotic as their humanities counterparts (especially the huge majority that did leave Russia and freed themselves from its nauseating reality). But the reasons for this are of course quite different. If I were in the KGB, I would not count on their support. Who can count on their support, I at present have no idea.

*Excerpts from a conference talk held by Dmitry Kaledin.*

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# Adin Steinsaltz

## Rabbi

### Institute Biography:

**1892**

Born in Jerusalem.

**1960**

Created experimental school near Beersheba; developed curriculum and teaching method.

**1965**

Founded Israel Institute for Talmudic Publications. Focus: translating Talmud from Aramaic into contemporary Hebrew; commentary on the Talmud.

Awards, honors and expertise: Translator of the Talmud into contemporary Hebrew, English, Russian and Spanish. Professor Emeritus at several universities in the US and Israel. Author of more than 60 books and articles on Judaism, science, art, philosophy and mysticism. Conducts lectures and seminars at academic institutions. Public speaker. Received State Award of Israel in 1953.

### Participant's Biography:

Adin Steinsaltz was born in Jerusalem in 1937. Steinsaltz became a baal teshuva during his teenage years. He studied mathematics, physics, and chemistry at the Hebrew University. Following graduation, he established several experimental schools and, at the age of 24, he became Israel's youngest school principal. In 1965, he founded the Israel Institute for Talmudic Publications. Steinsaltz completed his Hebrew edition of the entire Babylonian Talmud in 2010. Over two million volumes have been distributed to date. Steinsaltz has authored 60 books and hundreds of articles on subjects including Talmud, Jewish mysticism, and philosophy. He founded the Jewish University, both in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. He has devoted his life to making the Talmud accessible to all Jewish people.

*Time* magazine have called him a “*once-in-a-millennium scholar*.”

The Institute's Izvestia, 19 September 1966  
Photo: Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz



# Maxim Sergeevich Martsinkevich

Member of a special experimental group commissioned by the KGB and the Council of Ministers (USSR)

**Institute Biography:**

**1941**  
Born in Moscow.

**1964**  
Graduated from the Moscow State University of Civil Engineering with a specializing in design engineering.

**1965**  
Accused of circulating banned literature (on subject of eugenics) and hateful ideology. Convicted of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda (acc. Article 70 of the RSFSR penal code). Recruited by KGB while in prison.

**1966**  
Released from prison before serving full sentence. Became member of a special experimental group commissioned by the KGB and the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

**1968**  
Sent to the Institute to participate in a series of experiments.

**Participant’s Biography:**

Maxim Sergeevich Martsinkevich was born in Moscow in 1984. He graduated from a secondary vocational school for architecture and was expelled from the Russian State Social University. Martsinkevich has been a member of various neo-Nazi groups, including Russian Purpose and Format 18. In 2008, he was convicted of inciting ethnic or racial hatred and sentenced to three years in prison. Whilst he was in prison, he was convicted for the same offence (committed in 2006) with a sentence of three years which ran concurrently. He was convicted a third time in 2013 for extremism with a sentence of five years which was later halved. In 2015 he was charged with robbery and hooliganism and is serving his ten-year sentence at Matrosskaya Tishina in Moscow.

The Institute’s Izvestia, 7 November 1968  
Photo: Maxim Martsinkevich

ненные принципы и увлечения, что уже успели понять и сделать в Институте, что еще хотели бы осуществить.



**Максим Марцинкевич.**

— Вы появились у нас практически одновременно и держитесь все время вместе. Скажите, вас сдружил Институт или и раньше что-то связывало?

ческие или психические отклонения.

— Допустим. Хотя есть масса других примеров. Но если несчастье уже произошло... Что вы предлагаете делать с теми людьми, которые уже родились с какими-либо физическими отклонениями?

— Пусть живут. Но мы считаем, что нужно ограничить их право на производство себе подобных. Люди не должны размножаться бесконтрольно.

— Что еще вы хотели бы контролировать?

— Употребление алкоголя. Я считаю, что государство должно поднять цены на спиртные напитки и следить за всеми, кто их регулярно покупает. Например, человек купил в магазине водку, и сразу же участковый поставил его на учет. Потому что этот человек потенциально опасен для общества.

— Вы все время говорите о генах, но изучаете почему-то не генетику, а ее статистику бед-



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