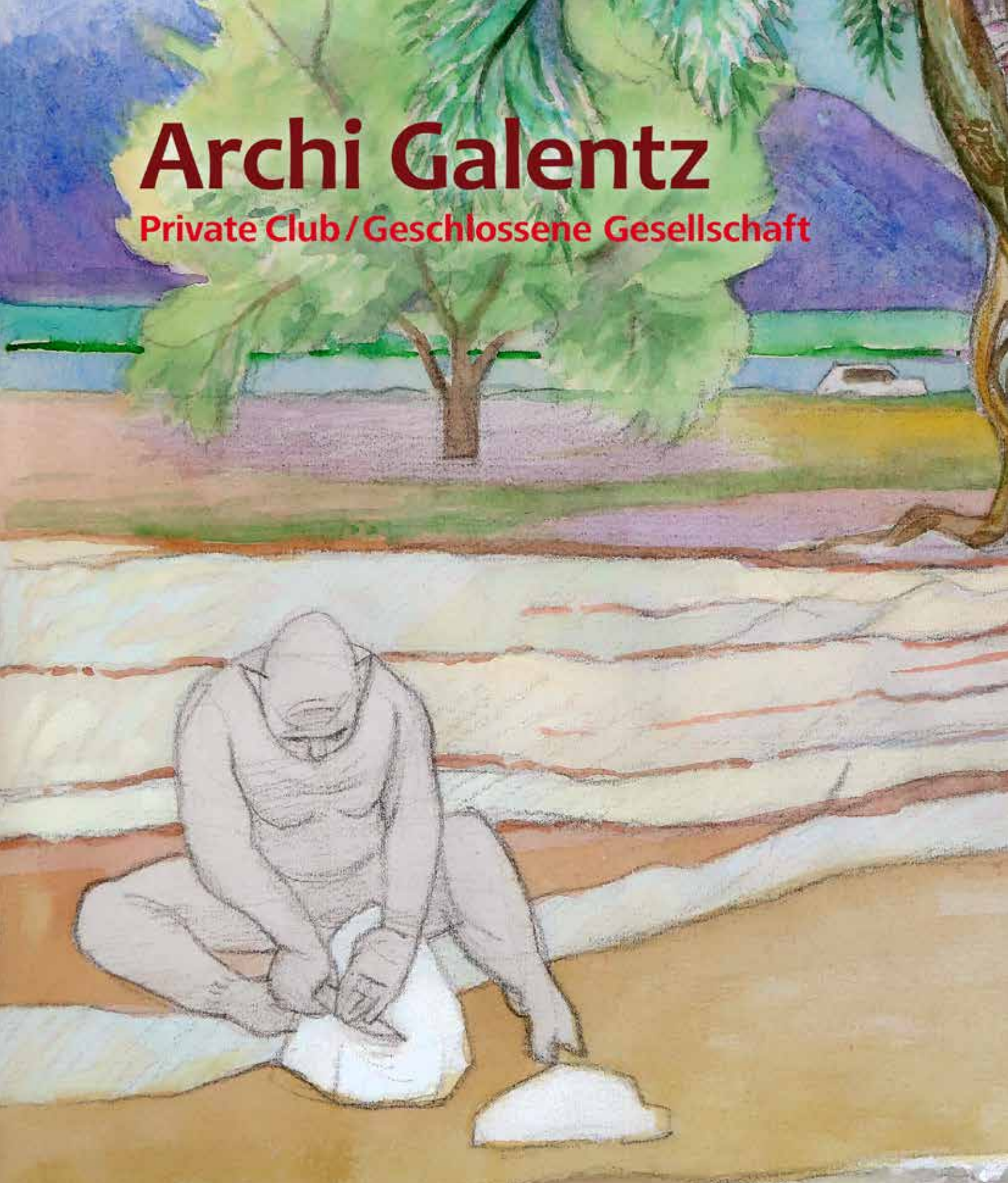


# Archi Galentz

Private Club / Geschlossene Gesellschaft



**WOLF & GALENTZ**

GALLERY • ART CONSULTING

*As a neighbour of Archi Galentz I often saw him at his studio  
in Steegerstraße 2 and I was asking myself repeatedly:  
"What the hell is he doing in his space with all that stuff?"*

Andreas Wolf



**Private Club/closed Club** 2004, Lambda-print on Kappa-board,  
plasterboard, fabric, wood, 102×100×8 cm

Abbildung Titel: **Flying of Marsyas** 2021, Gouache, 41×54 cm, Detail

**Archi Galentz**

***Private Club/Geschlossene Gesellschaft***

Wolf & Galentz Gallery, Berlin

20.08.2021 – 03.10.2021

Catalogue of the exhibition



## Actualizations Of The Everyday

### Reflections on the Artistic Practice of Archi Galentz

There is a known saying, yet a saying worth paying attention to. A saying that goes like this: What you find depends on what you are looking for.

It is a saying that at once informs us a great deal of both the direction and content of any re//search, any artistic activity moving from here to there, from then to now. But, at the same time, something important is missing. And the missing part is the never-ending push and pull of being aware, being careful for what you wish for, what you desire to get, gain.

It is the back and forth move and moment towards more nearness while also trying to achieve enough of distance that articulates how what we ache for, what we strive towards is constantly changing its shape and size, colors and connotations.

However, one thing is clear: this ache, the necessity to do, to act and to produce, that remains. It remains in light.

Looking at, and especially looking with the works of Archi Galentz through the last two decades and more, it becomes evident that here, here we find a remarkable, significant continuity. The issues that Galentz confronts with are basically the same: identity, nationalism, all kinds of isms and schisms interconnected to the sense and sensibility of longing and belonging, and why not, vice versa, belonging and longing.

What is clear, crystal clear that the search goes on, and on. It is never a dull repetition, but always a repetition that breaks and mends – it is repeating forwards.

But why this obsession, this hardheaded insistence? Because these types of themes that Galentz is dealing with, you hardly ever get to choose them yourself. They choose, they chase and they caress and captivate you. The main issue is how you deal with them – the embedded agony and the demands, but also the promises and the inherent hope.

I am sure, very sure that many are the moments during which Galentz himself has wondered why can't he just let it be, let it go and not bother about. But this artistic process is not state of being stuck, nor is it a negative spiral. On the contrary, the evidence, the works of art produced through the years, their amazing veracity and versatility, their intensity and intent, they prove a very different story, a very different case in point.

This is the story where the roots are constantly connected and re-connected with the routes that are taken, also shaken. The roots are there, but they are not self-evident, and their heaviness or lightness varies, and it alters. But the roots are there as in the whole bag of macro-level historical, economical, political and psychological traces that spell the over-all narrative of the long 20th century, both its direct visible consequences and also the not so easily heard echoes.

The roots of Galentz are something that he has through the years actively addressed and faced with. He has done this in his own works, and he has definitely done this by conducting and curating various shows with his extended family (See, for example, *Vier Lebenswege*, 2016). And not to forget, it is a family both as ancestors and artistic colleges, but is also a family in strictly thematic meaning – the issues within which that Galentz tries to push forward his versions, his interpretations.

And the routes? Well, those are never hidden, they are made visual and physical in the exhibitions, and in the numerous publications (like this, for example). But what the routes taken from a conflict laden and problematic but extremely rich roots demonstrate is its acute commitment. No matter how troubling, how demanding the issue is, Galentz has had no choice. He is not turning a necessity into a virtue, but what he does, achieves is more, much more. He keeps on keeping on – searching for the actualization of the everyday amid of confusion and the mess of the daily events that stir and surprise us.

The routes taken, started up and followed by Galentz are an example of a situated individual within a collective dilemma (in plural, always) that are not only about obligation, not only about sense of duty, not only about a struggle to figure out who am I and how am I connected to others, my immediate surrounding and my past. Because what's going on, the directions taken are more complex and compassionate than first meets the eye. What

the routes (the works of art and various curatorial projects) of Galentz allow us to focus is the progressive, stamina filled process to trying to relate and to reflect, to have an effect and being effected upon. In the words of the French philosopher, this continuity, this ability to keep on keeping on is what in another vocabulary is called "an ethics of the desire to be or the effort to exist". (Ricoeur 1974: 452)

A desire. Yes, oh yes, hell yes. Burning and aching, helping and hurting – and never ceasing, always annoying yet impossible to get rid of.

So, what is taking place, and where is Archi Galentz going towards with all these different approaches and takes on the same themes and subjects? Is he running in circles, has he lost his snorkel for sanity? Or what is going on?

When in doubt, as always, the focus must be set on the works. This time, it is set on the series of paintings called Not Red Banners. An ongoing series that takes its cue, its opposition and its anger as an energy strategy from something found in the field of contemporary art, but it decidedly turns, filters that energy into something else, something beautiful, surprising and also exciting.

We are facing paintings in almost monochrome color. Not quite, because there are hints of the ghost in the machine that disturb and distort the monotony. These are works that flirt with the instant satisfaction of connotations to flags and borders, statements and well, also manifestations – things that talk from above to the below. However, their materiality, their abstract intensity draws us into the unknown, the not-yet-there. They function like a trigger for doubt; not self-doubt but productive doubt that provides a skeptical view on all either-or claims, all black and white versions of the everyday. In one sense, they give us the motivation to avoid and to resist simplistic, instrumentalized reason.

Or, to address this yet again with the help of the analysis of Ricoeur, what we see, what we recognize is the process of give and take, ability to get close and necessity to gain a bit of a breathing space. You are part of your histories regardless of your wishes or wants. The question is how you navigate and negotiate this never-ending process. It is ongoing movement in-between particular and general, personal and public, what is recognizable and yet uncanny. It is "the sense that we belong to a historical tradition through a relation of distance which oscillates between

**Survival Kit** installation view of painted furniture and part of a private art collection. MOCA Belgrade, 2005.



remoteness and proximity. To interpret is to render near what is far (temporally, geographically, culturally, spiritually). (Ricoeur 1991: 35)

It is something that happens in and through – in and through of daily engagement, interpretations and interruptions, both realizations and incomprehension, chances of the delirious delight and the dark sadness of failures.

Thus, it is another version of trouble in paradise? Expect it is not, not even near. Instead of high above, or low below, the continuous search within the artistic process of Archi Galentz is about the actualizations and articulation with the everyday – facing, confronting its hassles, its hurdles, and its humor. This is not about reaching out to something beyond, something sublime and enchanted. This is about dealing and wheeling with the things that don't give us peace, no resurrection, no stability.

Things such as diaspora, sensibility of being lost and not often enough found, the wish to try to make sense of the expectation and experiences in a complex web of existence in-between love and hate, happiness and sadness, faith and alienation. Issues that always both private yet also public, something that must always be addressed personally but which at the same time are possible to share – and to care with.

Here, perhaps the best example from the works of Galentz is the installation called Personal Survival Kit. A reference for the need to have and maintain objects close to you that reminds us and keeps up the connection to where we are coming from, where we are now and where we might be stumbling towards in the next move – that part that we play and participate in. These are private moments, colored and covered with both grace and agony, both delight and despair that often enough do the trick. With these memories of mourning and melancholy, Galentz gives us his personal example of how to tip the delicate balance between either being able to continue or falling into the deep seas of passivity. And that, that is in itself a great case and achievement. A proof that is possible, and worthwhile.

To conclude: in a sort of a connecting the dots of a summary, even if the numbers (of works, exhibitions, projects, books etc.) are already high, and getting higher, this is not a site or a situation to pause – at least not for long. Because the promise of a process is there in the future, in the potential acts and actions of Archi Galentz. I can see it, recognize it, and if you look long enough, close enough, I am sure you can sense it too.

This is the promise articulated by the philosopher Hannah Arendt as our freedom and responsibility to be, and to become – to move and to be moved. It is both freedom and responsibility strongly inter-twined, never to be separated. The task is to try to be and to act as a compassionate human being who realizes ones limits but moves on regardless. (Arendt 1961: 27)

We face, turn towards the challenges that keep on coming day in, day out, always reconnecting to our roots and routes for that needed push and pull, pleasure and pain. As another known saying reminds us: we might fail, but well, so what, then we just get up and try again.

What's more, in this long haul of a lifetime project, it is obviously, at first, important to be able to articulate and assess what and who we might be against, but that is hardly enough. We are only able to keep on keeping on if and when we are able, not all the time, but at least sometimes, and never completely but partially, to push forward a version of a way of everyday living and working, loving and caring for the issues that we are attached and attracted to that stand for something that we yet do not recognize but we feel a sensibility and sensuality to. It opens up the artistic re//search process for an actualization of an alternative, for a productive view and vision of what we are standing with, and standing proudly for.

Mika Hannula

References:

Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, Penguin Classics 1961  
Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations, Essays in Hermeneutics*, Northwestern University Press 1974  
Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action, Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, and Northwestern University Press 1991



USTA-Forms from a series of 15, fotoprojekt in various dimensions, 2006



**Not Red Banners**, installation view of objects, during the group show *Auf Mnemosines Wohl*, Gorky Teather, Berlin, 2015

## Birthing Brainchildren in Bad Times

Mika Hannula wrote this heartfelt text quite recently as a friendly gift to me – to an old friend for his upcoming birthday. Few have known me for as long as the philosopher and curator Mika Hannula, my up-campus neighbor from the very first months of my arrival in Berlin in 1992. Mika and I have met and worked not only in Berlin, but also in Finland, Serbia and Armenia. His studies of such abstract concepts as nationality and identity, his youthful, “sans-pathos” style of argumentation, his paradoxical definitions, such as “Loving Conflict”, not only influenced me, but, indeed, shaped me as a citizen and as a man who questions what goes on around him.

He had a certain influence on me as an artist, who for a long period of time, with calm and determination, builds up his position. An artist who understands that with all the contempt for manifestation as posturing and clowning, the need for a more or less clear statement remains an important condition not only “To Belong”, but also for the very existence of “The Club of Witnesses of the Truth”. For yes, art is not only fun, it is also an instrument of knowledge.

In addition, from my student years in Berlin, I was taught not to get sucked into either insoluble dualistic confrontations about primogeniture, or Zeno’s paradoxes, relying only on the power of logic, but led me to the culture of pragmatism, to which I developed that very “Loving Conflict”, to the concepts of identity as an intricately multipart system and as a performative act.

But let’s leave the paradoxes of postmodern relativism aside and turn to the exhibition, for the opening of which, both the text by Mika Hannula and the publication of this modest edition are timed. This exhibition had many working titles such as: *The First 50* and *Stages and Formation of the Midlife Crisis of an Arrieguardist* and even *Mein Krumpf*, ie. *My Spasm*, which would indicate the process of the giving birth to this brainchild of mine in the form of a personal exhibition of my most important projects. Most important, and continuing ones, variously weaving and developing to be reborn again at an appropriate moment.

Eight or nine of my projects to which my thoughts keep returning, and working on which still takes away my breath, like they did years ago when they were born as sketches, from image-visions and from experimenting with material.

This gallery exhibition is not a retrospective or an outside look at ulterior motives or “driving forces”. It does not include the whole series of works with maps, with Armenia as a territory, with the idea of a small, neat national republic, with my promised land, lost even before I had time to enjoy its gardens. There is no *Paradise* series, *Byzantium*, *30 Years War* or *Black Garden* in the exhibition. The complete bankruptcy of governance and, even worse, civil society and intellectual thought, fetters me today. As during the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Armenians did not have any dissident literature, so after the capitulation in the last war there was not a single alternative model for building a society.

Now is not the time to talk about what the artist’s intuition saw and warned. I printed imaginary maps with earth and stone in 1995-1997, painted borders of my historical homeland with watercolors using the “Tears” technique back in 2003.

But I will not turn this beautiful gallery space, warmed by the exquisite art of predecessors and colleagues, into a wailing wall. It is inappropriate to celebrate loudly and brightly at the moment when your homeland self-destructs and dissolves in dreams of hidden potentials and obvious



**Not Red Banner/Strahlen** 2009, 16x22x5 cm, object from shine-through fabrics, wood in a plexiglas box



**White flattering Banner** 2013, 12x18,5x3 cm object from OSB-board, colored primers in layers

**Suggestiveness in Orange** 2009, 7x8 cm fabric in 19x20 cm object-frame coated with silver leaves





**Arriere-guardist** 2004, pencil drawing on paper and inkjet-print, passepartouts and palladium-leaves coated frame, 50×26 cm

Translation of the text under the drawing (from Russian)

The rearguard is a former avant-garde warrior, the frontman who is now in a defense position. Having survived many attacks, he became an experienced fighter, skillfully holding back the advancing enemy. And he has remained loyal – his activity should not be directed, his "Passionarity" allows him to carve out, in spite of all the complexity of the situation, the time necessary for an organized retreat. A.G., 2004

allies that can be revived by the magic spells of prehistoric ancestors.

The project *Private Club / Geschlossene Gesellschaft* is done for my friends and associated colleagues, I very delicately asked my partner Andreas Wolf for permission to play with the space of our gallery for the personal, not necessarily highly specialized purposes of our joint venture, namely, the study of the phenomena of visual art of the space around us. It would seem, I have earned the confidence for absolutely free expression in the third year of our gallery's activity. In the month of August, when a break can be taken from work, at the moment when my dear partner is himself immersed in the creative process and is doing an exhibit in another city. It is a pity that I will not be able to attend his opening day and many thanks to him for supporting me, including the publication of this brochure.

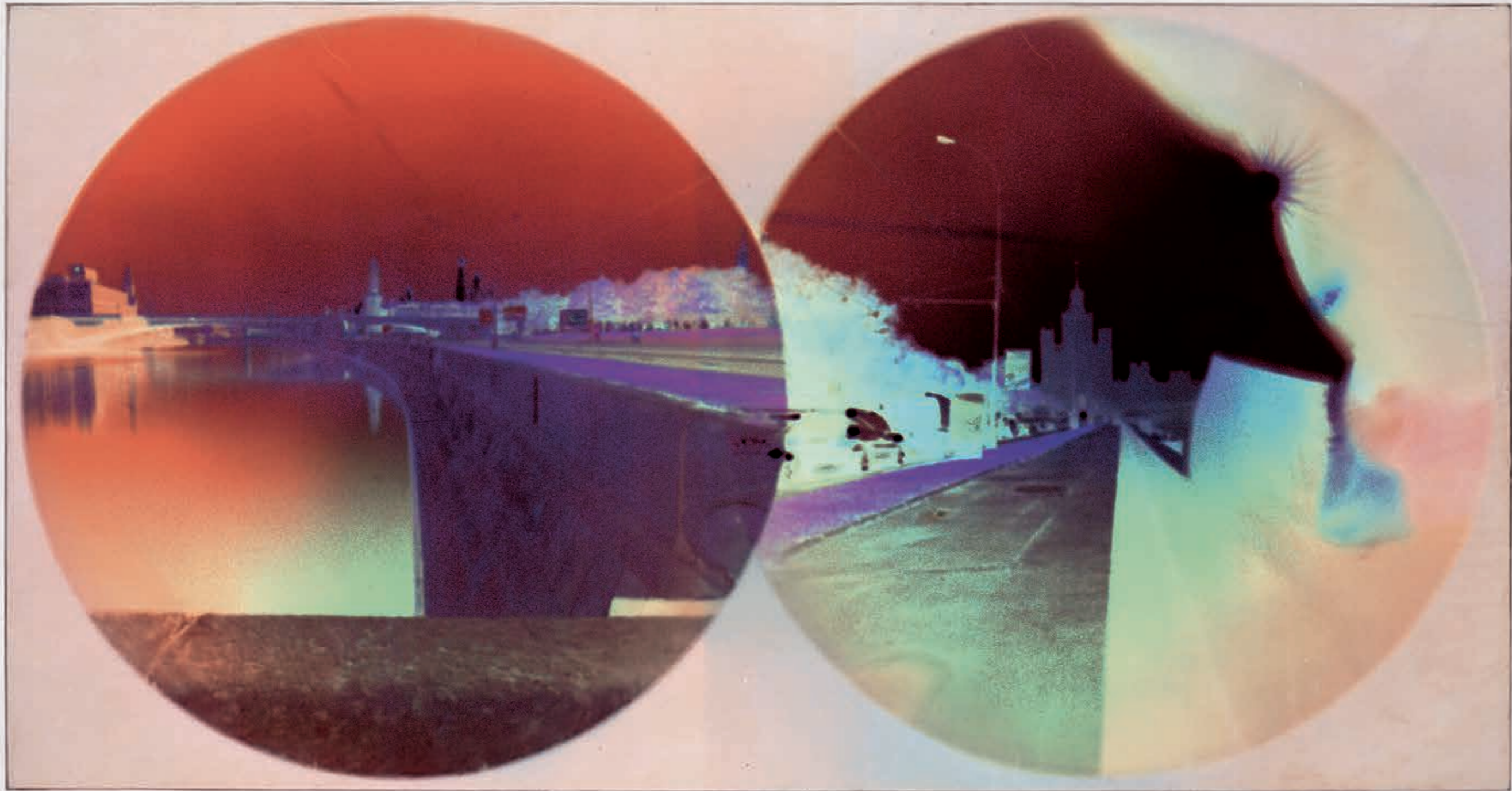
From my experience as a curator and gallerist, I know that only by putting works on display, only by allowing them to influence each other both as ideas and as formal finds, does one understand a work of art and its potential in all its depth. This catalog does not contain a list of exhibited works, because installations are much more than the sum of their components, especially when the works of colleagues are involved as in the installation *Sirvival Kit*. In this exhibition, are shown those projects that, as I have already mentioned, continue to live, and which I really want to see again woven into a general exposition.

In the show-window of the gallery, visitors are greeted by an object from the series *Wall Cut-Outs* that started 2001. The title of this work gave the title to the entire exhibition.

In the main hall of the gallery on the left is the installation *Sirvival Kit*, which I first realized in 2005 at the exhibition *Situated Self. Confused, compassionate and Conflictual* in Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art and only once again had the opportunity to put it together in the Tennispalatsi City Museum in Helsinki. On the wall opposite the front of the windows on the left is the 11.5minute 2006 video *USTA, has you got some Astar?* (purposely in Pidgin English) and in the display window under the video there is a printout of 14 images of the so-called Usta-Forms, that is, the uniforms of the "Rearguard artist" – the result of cooperation with local tailors. To the right of the door is a series of *Not Red Banners*, which began in 2003, as a study of the phenomenon of colorchanging silk fabric from purple to orange turning into pure red at a certain angle, literally depending on the chosen position, or on the "context", if you like.



**Cabinet for framed pieces**, 2011, plywood and paint, 180×75×58 cm



Distant view on Kremlin, 2002, Inkjet-print on paper on canvas, 100x200 cm



**Missing Link**

One of the painted stones from a series. Tempera and spray-varnish on sandstone, app. 12 x 7cm, 2014



**INRI** Pair of working shoes as an object in an acryl-glass box and a C-print. 20x20x50cm, 2020



Detail of the installation on a table, mirror and painted stones by *Narcisshow*, at Fonticus gallery, Grojenjan, Croatia, 2017

The wall to the right of the entrance is given to one large work, a printout on paper of a 2002 photograph, *Distant view on Kremlin*. This relatively large work was exhibited only once – at the exhibition *Flowers from No Man's Land* in the Berlin Parliament building in 2003 and is one of a large series of images of Moscow made with a camera-obscura, which exposes a photosensitive film to the surrounding reality directly without filters and lenses. All my other main photo projects: *They were called Nadezhda, Vera, Lyubov ...*, 2002, *Red November*, 2005, and *Still-Alife*, 2009, are shown in a special designed case, which is like a monument on the pedestal and occupies the right quarter of the hall space and can be viewed from all sides. This sculptural object is an homage to my colleague Pierre Pajard and his choice of a creative position as a European artist.

Apart from two more photographic works: *Ghost Hunting*, 2014, and *Traces*, 2008, all the other works in the gallery corridor are objects and under the general title *Footprints* represent my very recent explorations with form and thematic work, effort, and sacrifice as aesthetic categories.

I give the gallery's smaller space entirely to figurative compositions. Painting is the queen of visual art. Subtle mystical compositions on paper and canvas with references to antiquity and with homages to the forerunners. *Requiem*, 1994, *Allegory of Love*, 1998, and *Flaying of Marsyas*, which I have been working on for the last five or six years.

Archi Galentz, July 2021





**Traces/Moscow subway hatch**, 2008, 50x50cm, C-print in a passepartout and silver-leaf coated wooden frame



**STOP/POTS**, found object in a plywood frame, 2019, 82x80 cm



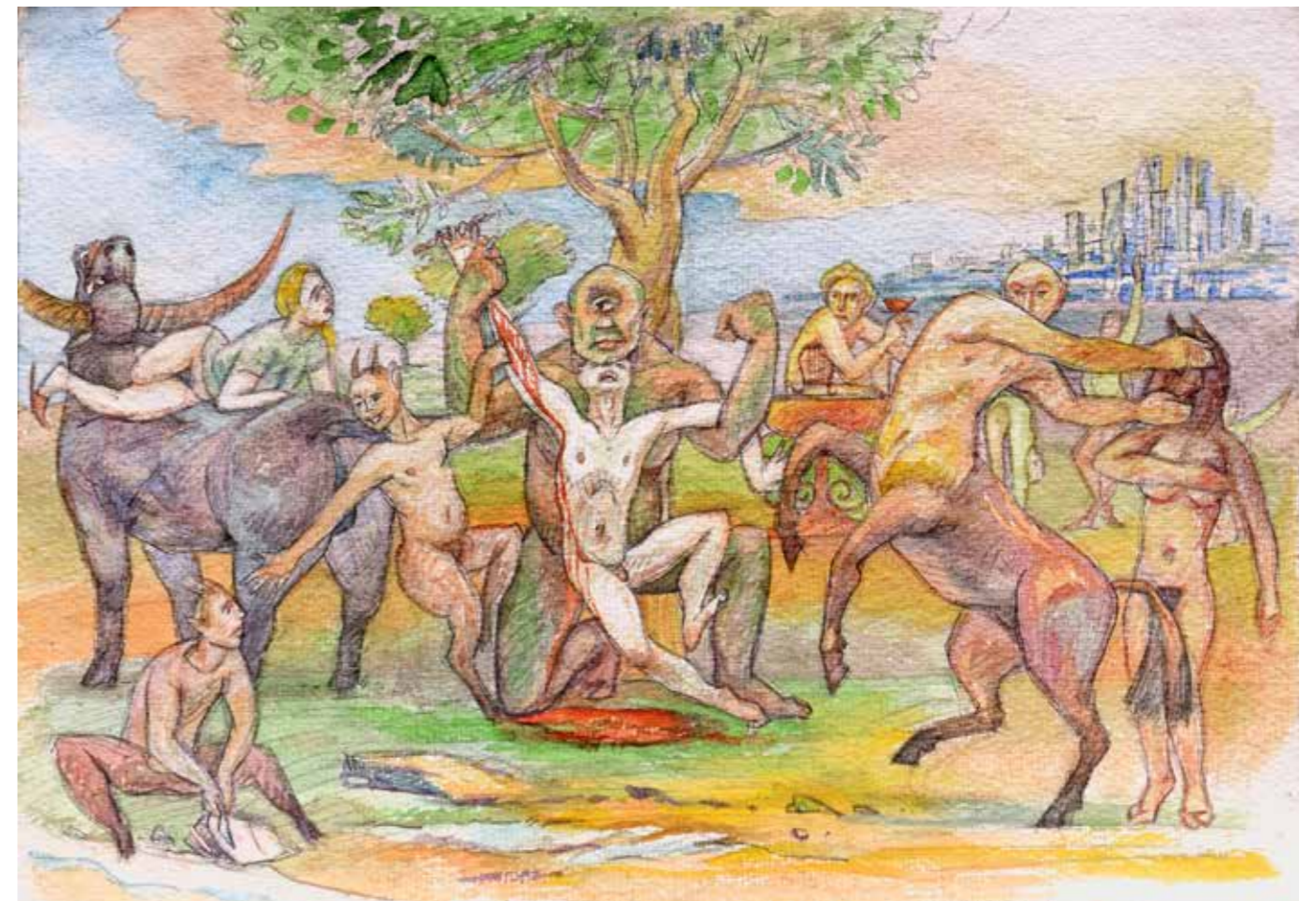
Archi Galentz in front of the window with **Allegory of Love** from 1998 during the *Second-Hand Museum* show, 2004, Berlin.



**Hurry Up, Themis**  
2018, gouache on paper, 18x24 cm



**Themis takes off her blindfold**  
2018, acrylics on canvas, 30x30 cm



**Flaying of Marsyas**  
2016, watercolour on paper, 24x34 cm



Ghost hunting/Stasi Ministry, 2014, inkjet-print on paper, 60x80 cm

### Archi (Harutiun) Galentz

Born 1971 in Moscow into a family of Armenian artists. Grew up and went to school in Moscow. Entered 1989 State University of Arts and Theater in Yerevan, Armenia, faculty of design. Invited as a guest student 1992 to University of Arts (HDK Berlin) to classes of Prof. Hirsig. Joined soon after classes of Prof. Fußmann and studied there till gaining Master degree 1997. First solo show 2000 at gallery Taube in Berlin, since then works as freelance artist and curator in Berlin, Moscow and Yerevan. Lectured 2006 at State Academy of Arts and Open University in Yerevan, founded 2008 an artist-run-space InteriorDasein in Berlin with focus on representing collaborative art projects with Russia and Armenia. Honored 2012 with an Arshile Gorky medal by Armenian Ministry of Diaspora affairs. 2019 founded, with Andreas Wolf, Wolf & Galentz gallery in Berlin.

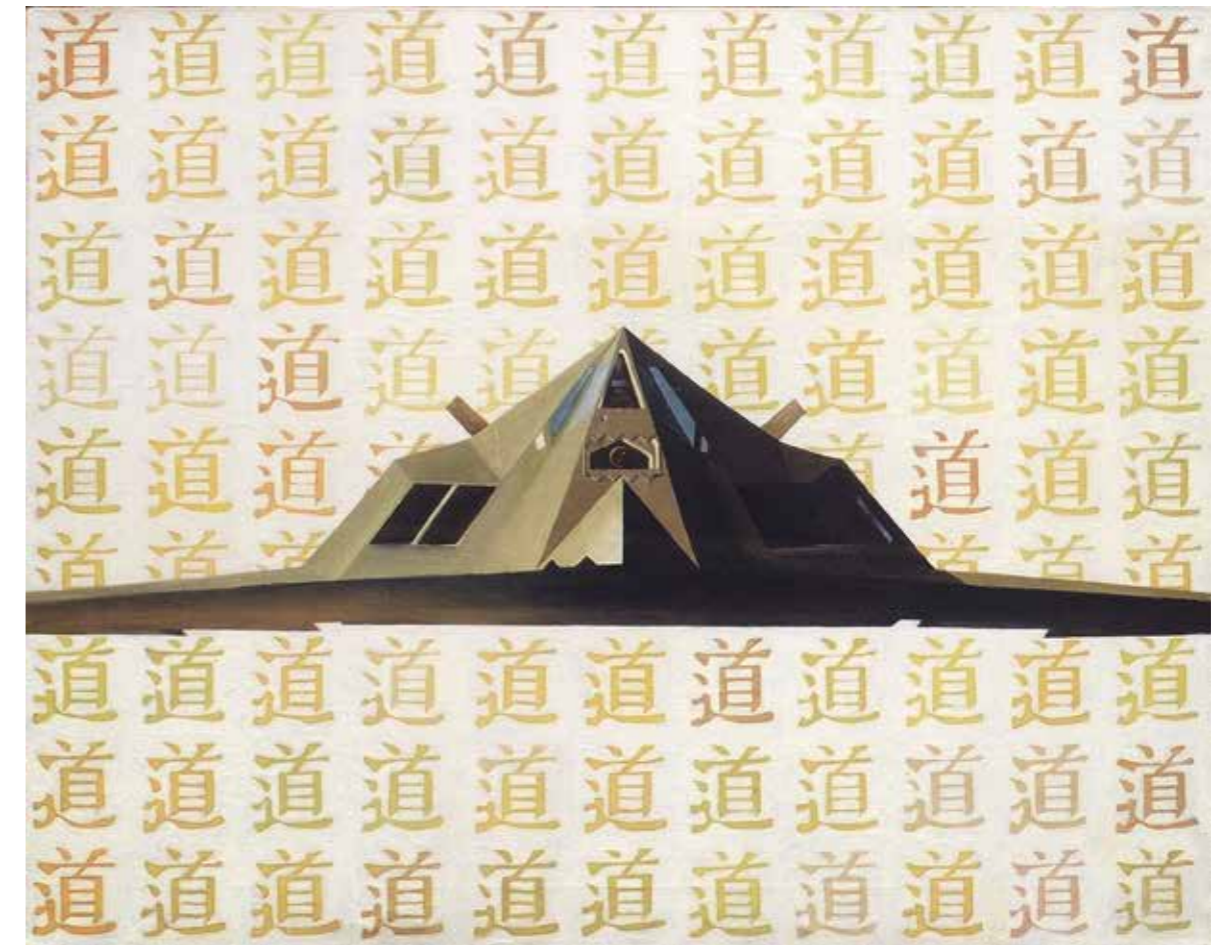
Except for the 2017 exhibition **TIMELINE. Side Steps To Avoid A Disaster** at the Modern Art Museum (MAMY) in Yerevan, Armenia, all main solo shows of Archi Galentz took part in Berlin: **This Days in 16 Years**, 2005 and **USTA, has you got some ASTAR?**, 2006 at Prima Center or **Manana Lesko – Moskauer Briefwechsel**, 2011 at the Museum Direktorenhaus

Archi Galentz participated in over 80 group shows, among them: **Getting Closer. Four Armenians looking for a way out**, 2003 at ifa-Gallery in Berlin and Bonn/ **Flowers from no man's land**, 2003, Gallery in Parlament, Abgeordnetenhaus, Berlin/ **Not In The Sky and Not On The Earth**, 2004, MOCA, Skopje, Northern Macedonia/ **Na Kyrort, Russian Art Today**, 2004, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden, Germany/ **Focus Istanbul: Urban Realities**, 2005, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin/ **Situated Self**, 2005, MOCA Belgrade, Serbia and

Tennis Palace Art Museum, Helsinki, Finland/ **under\_ construction: visual dialogue**, 2007, Isola di San Lazzaro, Venice, Italy/ **ThisPLACEd: virtual, real, in between**, 2009, City Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia/ **Voulu/ Oblige: outskirts of a small contradiction**, 2009, Forte Marghera (53th Venice Biennial), Venice, Italy/ **Atlantis 2011**, 2011, Palazzo Zenobio (54th Venice Biennial), Venice, Italy / **Grandchildren. New Geographies of Belonging**, 2015, Tütün Deposu, Istanbul, Turkey/ **N. Nikogosyan. Moskauer Klassiker im Doppelspiegel**, 2016, Museum Direktorenhaus, Berlin/ **Do not lean out. Contemporary Art from Berlin**, 2019, MOCA Novi Sad, Serbia/ **Kolonie Wedding, Contemporary Art from Berlin**, 2021, Centrul de Interes, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Archi Galentz curated over 20 exhibitions since 200, his artworks can be found in the following public collections: Museum of National Art, Sardarabad, Armenia / National Library, Yerevan, Armenia / Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje, Macedonia / Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, Serbia / Museum of Contemporary Art, Medellin, Columbia / State Library, Berlin and Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, Leipzig / Direktorenhaus, Museum for Art Crafts Design, Berlin

99 times Tao and single Stealth Bomber, 1991, oil on canvas, 70x90 cm





**Galaxy**, 2020,  
working underlay framed,  
85 x 118 cm



detail



**To Malevitch** 2015, 11 x 15 double-sided fabric in  
34 x 34 cm object-frame coated with leaf silver

## WOLF & GALENTZ

GALLERY • ART CONSULTING

### Programme

The gallery focuses on the presentation of 20th century artists from East and West Berlin, as well as 21st century visual art. In contrasting and juxtaposing them, current and historic aesthetic positions become discernible. The gallery also facilitates international art exchange programmes. The gallerists both maintain contacts with artists in Berlin and internationally, such as from Finland, Croatia, Macedonia, USA, Russia and the Caucasus.

### Team

The gallery team consists of the artist Archi Galentz, the designer and artist Andreas Wolf and Dr. Anna E. Wilkens, specialist in German studies, as well as a team of freelancers.

### Services

- Advice for collectors and art lovers
- Art trade
- Artist placement
- Research
- Estate care, Gisa Hausmann, Gunther Baumgart
- Production of edition objects
- Catalogue production
- Bespoke frames

[www.wolf-galentz.de](http://www.wolf-galentz.de)



**Hourly fee**, 2021, 3,5×4,5 cm found disclosure  
in a silver leaf coated object frame, 12×13×4 cm

## WOLF & GALENTZ

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