

Performing Translation

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First and foremost, what drew me to Kolomna is the Kolomna Pastila Museum's and Artkommunalka's relationship to text and documentation. I realized that the connection between text and life at these two places is so much more dynamic than I had previously thought. This connection makes me contemplate how a person remembers and documents their own history, which is ultimately a way for human beings to deal with the ephemerality of life. The Kolomna Pastila Museum and Artkommunalka present, re-present, and document histories of communities and individuals who (have) lived in the region through excursions, theatrical performances, and performances of everyday life. Narratives are mostly presented in the form of spoken words. There are artifacts and physical objects, but there is always a live person or persons to tell the stories behind these objects. When stories are delivered as spoken words, they strongly represent the mutual efforts of communication. Stories told at museums in Kolomna are often prepared from a script, but they are retold, reinvented, and even personalized for different audiences—constantly crossing over between speaking and “rewriting.”

At Artkommunalka, artifacts and objects from the 1960s in the Soviet Union are preserved *but* they continue “living” by being touched, rearranged, played, worn, and utilized by the staff and audience members. Physical contact with these objects are permitted and even encouraged, allowing the audience to explore and remember stories through bodily experiences. Often new objects are added to the collection in quite an organic way as time goes by, creating an interesting convergence of the past and the present. I also see this as another form of writing and speaking of the body.

Performing Translation is a project in three parts. These three parts can come together to create a body of work, referring to one another, or they can be presented independently, each one standing on its own. The first of the three parts, *ephemeras*, is a video presenting different fragments of images of Kolomna along with fragments of conversations in English and Russian, leaving some clues and prompting curiosity about parts that are not documented. The second part, *A Kitchen Reading*, features an oral translation of a reading from English to Russian taking place at the communal kitchen of Artkommunalka. The reading-interpretation addresses the issues of language and translation I often confront and examine and it constantly refers back to itself (i.e. reading-interpretation) in the video. The third part of the project is a handwritten copy of Erofeyev's *Moscow-Petushki*. This piece is my homage to *samizdats* and to the persistent and creative spirit of everyday people of the Soviet era. The book is not physically featured in this particular presentation, but one can hear the sound of the writing in *ephemeras*, recorded while I copied the words of *Moscow-Petushki*. When I return to Seoul, I will finish copying the book by hand and send it to Artkommunalka. I hope that Erofeyev's language translated through my handwriting will be touched and read by people and will eventually age with them and the place. *Performing Translation* is a way of documenting and remembering my experiences in Kolomna through spoken and written text, as well as through translations between the two, and it also addresses both the physicality and ephemerality of the *act* of speaking and writing.