

12 August 2010

Press Release



## **ALEXANDER PONOMAREV: SEA STORIES**

6 October – 21 November 2010

Curated by Nadim Samman

**Press View: 5 October 2010, 10am - 1pm**

*Sea Stories*, is the first UK solo exhibition by highly regarded Russian artist **Alexander Ponomarev** (b. 1957). *Sea Stories* will unveil a series of new and recent works by the artist, most of which have never been exhibited before in the UK.

Drawing upon a background in nautical engineering and an early career as a submariner, Ponomarev uses his Sea voyages as a starting point to explore relationships between illusion and reality, technology and art, mythology and documentary as a way of understanding the shifting tides of personal and cultural history which are particularly relevant to a contemporary Russian experience.

His work often takes the form of epic aquatic installations which display a performative engagement with remote seas and Arctic terrain but he also produces smaller more intimate pieces, often placing himself within the frame so that the scale and context of the ocean is magnified. What comes across in all of Ponomarev's work is a sense of playfulness underlined by his deep respect for the sea and the strange underwater world he has chosen to spend so much of his life engaging with.

The works in ***Sea Stories*** arise from some of the many oceanic journeys undertaken by the artist including expeditions to the North Pole, deep sea submarining and the tracking of the 60th latitude of the Atlantic whilst onboard a scientific research ship.

A centrepiece of this exhibition is the UK debut of the impressive installation piece **Base (2003)**. Originally created during a residency at the studio of sculptor Alexander Calder, a nine-metres-long horizontal tube filled with water forms a tunnel for the movement of a black submarine. Rising above the water on propellers, the submarine performs a chameleon – like transformation, revealing brightly coloured markings that are a far cry from the camouflage usually associated with such naval vessels.

In this work the artist reprises the recurring metaphor of the submarine that populates his practice. For Ponomarev, the submarine is employed as a symbol that links art to war, while also signalling the issue of surface and hidden depths, and the fraught relationship between appearance and disappearance.

*Sea Stories* also features moving image works, drawings and photographs documenting further artistic adventures from far flung corners of the ocean. Films presented include *Heliotropism* (2009), created onboard a lifeboat in the middle of the Atlantic and ***Maya: A Lost Island* (2000)**, which documents a strange but wonderful collaboration with the 5th fleet of the Russian Navy, who were persuaded to lay a smokescreen in front of the island of Sedioyatyl, thus causing its entire landmass gradually to disappear and become momentarily invisible. The exhibition also unveils a new series of self-portraits by the artist. ***Deep Water Graphics* (2010)** was created in the arctic and the images were gradually distorted by subjection to water-pressure at depths of up to 4km below sea-level.

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**Alexander Ponomarev**, whose father was a hero of the battle of Stalingrad, graduated from the USSR Nautical Engineering College in 1979 following a period at Oriel Art School. He then spent several decades working for the Russian navy, taking his mariners oath and sailing the seven seas before illness forced a return to land. Art was his salvation allowing him to combine his passion for the sea and technological expertise with artistic exploration that would encompass a homage to Leonardo Da Vinci – the great figurehead of scientific and artistic marriage. When not crossing oceans he's most at home in France. In 2007, he was named an Officier des Arts et des Lettres by France's Minister of Culture.

**Recent solo exhibitions include:**

'Subtiziario', collateral event at the 53rd International Art Exhibition Venice Biennale/ Biennale di Venezia (2009); 'Faire Surface', MNMN (Monaco National Musee Nouveau); Culture Project, New York; Punto di vista Nina Lumer, Milan (all 2008); 'Verticale parallele' Chapelle Saint-Louis de la Salpetriere; National Center of Contemporary Art, Festival d'Automne, Paris; 52nd International Art Exhibition Venice Biennale / Biennale di Venezia; 'Secret Fairway' special project of the 2nd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art; 'In the Garden of Wolf Packs', installation in the Tuilleries Fountain, Louvre, Paris (all 2007); Multimedia Complex of Actual Arts, in conjunction with the 1st Moscow Biennale (2005); 'Alexander Ponomarev,' TNT Center, Bordeaux, France (2004).

**Recent group exhibitions include:**

Krasnoyarsk Biennale of Contemporary Art; 'New Angilarium', Museum of Modern Art, Moscow; 'I Believe', Winzavod Center for Contemporary Art, in conjunction with the 2nd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (all 2007); 'ARS 06. Sense of the Real', Kiasma Nykytaiteen Musee, Helsinki (2006); 'Under the Bridges-2', Casino Luxembourg, Luxembourg; 'Alexander Ponomarev, Video,' firstRun, art media festival, Ivri, France (all 2005).

**Accompanying Events:**

**Exhibition viewing and talk by curator Nadim Samman**

**Date:** Tuesday 26 October 2010

**Time:** Viewing 6:30pm; Talk 7:00pm

As part of part of the Inside Out Festival



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**Notes to Editors:**

**About Calvert22**

Calvert22 Foundation opened in London in May 2009 and is the UK's first not-for-profit foundation specialising in contemporary art from Russia and Eastern Europe. Calvert22 presents a programme of four to five curated exhibitions a year, under the artistic direction of David Thorp, each accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue and a programme of related talks and events as well as an expanding education programme. Calvert22 is a registered charity.

**Visitor Information**

Address: 22 Calvert Avenue, London E2 7JP

Opening Hours: Wednesday – Saturday: 10am – 6pm; Sunday: 11am – 5pm

Admission: Free

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Nearest Tube: Old St / Liverpool St

Website: [www.calvert22.org](http://www.calvert22.org)

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