

AQUARIUM

AN INSTALLATION BY VLADISLAV SHABALIN WITH THE VOICE OF DIAMANDA GALÁS

Basel, 12-19 June 2011

Concern about the future of the world is a constantly growing preoccupation of contemporary art. This is particularly true for Russian artist, **Vladislav Shabalin**, a dissident in the Soviet era, now an Italian citizen. Shabalin's work stands out for the originality of his chosen medium, suspended between art and science. For several years he has worked on the restoration of fossils, and during that time has become more and more conscious of their artistic potential. As a development of his recently completed huge fossil triptych, ***Aquarium*** (9,35 x 13,78 ft, weight 794 lb) which will be exhibited in **St. Leonard's Church in Basel from 12 to 19 June 2011**, Shabalin has conceived a sound installation created in collaboration with Greek-American composer, vocalist and pianist **Diamanda Galás**, whose powerful voice and disturbing expressiveness matches the artist's visionary purpose. The exhibition, curated by Marina Mottin, is presented by the associations Forum für Zeitfragen and Art et Léonard in collaboration with Italian paleontologist Stefano Piccini, founder of Geoworld, and with the support of Bibione Thermae.

The unifying element between Shabalin's art-of-the-fifty-million-years and the raw and visceral sounds of one of the most extreme exponents of avant-garde and experimental music, is a sense of tragedy, of impending apocalypse. The triptych was inspired by one of the great ecological disasters of recent times, the release of five million barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. After almost a year of work to restore and reposition the fossil elements, Shabalin has transfigured a portion of a prehistoric lake bottom (from the Green River Formation, located not far from the area invaded by the oil spill) into an aquarium which is at the same time ancient and "post-natural", an aquarium of the future that no longer contemplates life. The composition evokes the harmonious motion of swimming fish, though the water is stone, the fish are colourless shadows, and the aquarium is still and unchanging.

Thanks to Diamanda Galás' participation in the project, visitors are not allowed to remain simply spectators. The sound installation aims to plunge them into a compelling, even shocking emotional experience. Every night at 10, Diamanda Galás' howling and screams (from *Vena Cava*) will give voice to the pain of the Earth threatened with death.

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Info: www.shabalin.it/aquarium/en

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