

Vasil Berela

*Crash me, but gently*

Opening: September 12, 2025, 18:00 – 21:00

Exhibition: September 13 – October 04, 2025

Mariannenstrasse 33, 10999 Berlin

Curated by Dr. Luisa Seipp

Between crumbling reality and inner escape, Vasil Berela creates an aesthetics of the transcendental moment. A threshold where movement and stillness collapse into one another and human existence emerges in its fragile permeability. *Crash me, but gently*, Berela's immersive exhibition at Galerie Met, sharpens this experience into form. The works are carried as much by autobiographical fragments as by the tensions of a heritage oscillating, in the aftermath of civil war, between destruction and survival.

The first room becomes the stage for a disturbing scene of paralysis and the echo of invisible violence. Frozen in place lies an unconscious, corpse-like body on the street, next to it a lifeless dog. The installation bears the title *Monsieur Grat's Dream* and refers to Descartes' dog. The seemingly dreaming yet lifeless animal opens up a reflection on the relationship between mind and body, between consciousness and mechanism – an allusion to Descartes' famous dictum that regarded animals as soulless machines. The work's title hints at a paradoxical "dreaming in death", a liminal realm where life's suspension extends to the animal as well. On the wall, an axe sealed within a red glass case is marked with the paradoxical injunction *In case of e(me)rgency*. The installation recalls an accident that Berela himself experienced as a transcendental moment, in which his life appeared to pass before him as if in cinematic fast motion. The experience of the accident appears here as a threshold image. In Giorgio Agamben's sense of the *Stato di eccezione*, as a state of exception in which the boundaries of subjective experience open up and the relationship between life, body and order is renegotiated.

In the second room, the gaze turns to the inevitability of external inscriptions. The white letterbox with dove and monitor points to the body as an archive. As a grievance box that absorbs and stores information, without ever being able to escape it entirely. Berela sharpens this allegory through Franz Kafka's *In the Penal Colony [In der Strafkolonie]*: "The apparatus does not simply write the sentence, it inscribes it onto the body of the condemned. [...] It writes it with needles into the human flesh." Berela's apparatus here becomes a symbol of human existence, permeated, marked and controlled by external powers. Body and machine, vulnerability and violence are inextricably entwined.

As an aesthetic reference, the sombre films of Lars von Trier come into play. In works such as *Breaking the Waves*, *Antichrist* or *Melancholia*, existential abysses are interwoven with moments of the sublime. A space where attraction and repulsion, beauty and horror, remain inextricably bound. Berela's visual language oscillates precisely in this zone, in which the corporeal and the metaphysical collide. The exhibition title *Crash me, but gently* is in this context more than a poetic gesture. It articulates a paradoxical dialectic of violence and care, of destruction and tenderness. It names the condition that insight is only possible by passing through the experience of being shaken.

Berela's work remains profoundly biographical. Born in Gori, Georgia, in a landscape of post-Soviet disintegration, he was shaped by political anarchy, shattered infrastructures and the latent violence of civil war. After the war in his hometown in 2008, he fled to Germany; since 2011 he has lived and worked in Berlin. His works can be understood as an aesthetic form of escapism, as spaces in which the subject seeks refuge, yet at the same time recognises that no withdrawal can ever be absolute. The deeper the soul slips into forgetting, the more exposed the body remains to the harshness of the outside. In this

dialectic of retreat and permeability, trauma and transcendence, Berela's art inscribes itself as a radical inquiry into what it means to be human.

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Text by Dr Luisa Seipp

Artist: Vasil Berela

Vasil Berela was born in Gori, Georgia. He grew up in a typically Georgian environment shaped by the aftermath of the Soviet era: a collapsed infrastructure, political anarchy, and the lingering shadow of civil war. For a child, this atmosphere was deeply formative. These early experiences continue to echo throughout Berela's artistic work. Many of his pieces carry elements of escapism—opening doors to inner worlds where existence strives to survive amidst a bleak reality, or seeks to flee, perhaps even to forget. And yet, the body remains sensitive—vulnerable to external disturbances. It often appears helpless, almost exposed. No matter how far the mind retreats, the flesh remains. The further the soul withdraws into forgetfulness, the more permeable and reachable the body becomes to the harshness of the outside world. After the war in his hometown in 2008, Berela fled to Germany. Since 2011, he has been living and working in Berlin.

Curator: Dr Luisa Seipp

Dr. Luisa Seipp is a Berlin-based art historian, curator and author. After studying Art History at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and completing her M.A. in History of Art with Photography at the University of London, she received her doctorate in 2021 with a thesis on Munich Pop Art. As an assistant curator and curator, she has realized exhibitions and performances at Haus der Kunst in Munich as well as at Schinkel Pavillon in Berlin. She is co-director of Ventana Projects in Berlin.