

VINCENT LAROCHE: DOG TAG

DECEMBER 21—FEBRUARY 22, 2019

BUNKER 2 CONTEMPORARY ART CONTAINER

GUEST CURATED BY VERONIKA IVANOVA

What happens on the peripheries of history is sometimes more incredible and important than what happens in the centre. For example,

Ivan Turgenev was a Russian novelist, poet, and translator, he is canonized as having popularizing Russian literature in the West.

Ivan Turgenev's mother was a wealthy, vindictive, and spiteful widow, who had an estate in Moscow.

One of her estate serfs, Andrey Polyakov, was born deaf and mute. He communicated with the other servants of the estate via hand signs. He was a man rumored to have superhuman strength and was renowned for his stamina in the fields.

Andrey became infatuated with another serf, Agafya Semyonovna, the widow's laundress. He offered her gifts, including a gingerbread chicken, and followed her around, smiling and making noises unintelligible to her. His affection was fiercely protective. Agafya was chosen by Turgenev's mother to be married off to Kapiton, a drunkard. Kapiton's drinking worsened and after a year, he and Agafya were sent away to a small village. As they were departing, Andrey ran after Agafya to hand her a red handkerchief, causing her to burst into tears.

As Andrey walked home he came across a dog drowning in a river. He saved her and he nursed her back to health. A year went by and Andrey grew to love this dog immensely, and she too followed him around throughout his daily activities. One day Turgenev's mother saw the dog in the yard, and ordered the footman to get rid of her behind Andrey's back.

Andrey, distraught, searched for her the entire day. The dog was able to escape captivity and return to Andrey. Andrey learned that her disappearance was an order from Turgenev's mother, and began to hide his dog in his room. However, her whining was still audible to the others, and the servants came again for the dog. Andrey barricaded himself with her in his room. The servants signed to him, explaining the futility of the situation, and Andrey conceded, agreeing to come out on the condition that he be allowed to get rid of his dog himself.

Andrey brought her to a butcher shop and gave her a final treat before traveling to the river where he found her. Andrey sat silently in the rowboat and held her close to his chest for a long time. Andrey cried as he drowned her. He was followed by another serf, who reported back to Turgenev's mother. Andrey, however, did not return.¹

DOG TAG, VERONIKA IVANOVA

¹ Варвара Житова, "Воспоминания о семье И. С. Тургенева" (1884) *Вѣстникъ Европы*, No 11-12, 1884.

Vincent Larouche (b. 1995) lives and works in Montréal, QC. Recent exhibitions include “Sandcastle Staircase” at McGill (2018), “Limestone Foot” at Pushmi Pullyu (2018), and “Back-Talk” at Calaboose (2017).