

**PRESS RELEASE****Slavs and Tatars  
E-Z Chasm****Kalfayan Galleries, 11 Haritos Street, Kolonaki, Athens****Opening: Thursday, 28 September 2017, 20.00 – 22.00****Duration: 28 September – 27 October 2017****Opening Hours: Monday, 11.00-15.00 | Tuesday - Friday 11.00 - 19.00 | Saturday 11.00 - 15.00**

Kalfayan Galleries are pleased to present in the Athens gallery the first gallery solo exhibition in Greece of the art collective **Slavs and Tatars**. Titled "E-Z Chasm", the show opens on **Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2017, 20.00 – 22.00**.

For Slavs and Tatars' first show at Kalfayan Galleries, the artists explore the intellect of the heart and that of the breath that make up hesychasm, a controversial Orthodox prayer practice. Often considered to be a syncretic ritual with influences of Buddhist mantras or Sufi *dhikr*, hesychasm allows the artists to excavate the hidden corners of ideologies, the edges of empires that make up their rich practice. At the center of the exhibit is a new work, 'RiverBed', a vernacular seating structure found across Central Asia, Iran and the Caucasus. As opposed to a chair, where individual space is delineated, *RiverBed* redeems the notion of collective seating and the fluidity of activity that accompanies these structures. While reading is at the heart of the artists' practice, notions of hospitality also allow for reclining, sipping tea or the like. Their new 'Kitab Kebabs' series highlights the non-rational, non-cerebral approach to knowledge: via the unlikely skewering of books.

The instrumentalisation of faith, be it Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, has a long and checkered story, one that continues to impact our world today. For the *Reverse Dschihad* series, a body of works first exhibited for the artists' nomination to the prestigious Preis der Nationalgalerie at Hamburger Bahnhof, the artists explore one such episode via the particular story of German orientalism and philology.

On the 8th of November 1898, Kaiser Wilhelm II raised a toast to the Ottoman Sultan during a visit to Damascus and pledged the friendship of Germany to 300 million Muslims. This was the opening salvo to a multi-pronged strategy to "set the East aflame," in the years preceding the first World War. When Sultan Mehmed Reshad V declared jihad on 11 November 1914, it was entirely partial: against enemy infidels (France, England, Russia) but on the side of other infidels (Germany, Austro-Hungarian Empire). The publication of a propaganda newspaper called *El Dschihad* in Urdu, Russian, Arabic, Tatar, and Georgian was perhaps the most curious piece of this puzzle. Born of Germany's late arrival to colonialism, *El Dschihad* intended to stoke anti-imperial sentiment in territories belonging to the Entente Powers. The paper was aimed at Muslim POWs held at a camp in Wünsdorf, outside Berlin, called Half-Crescent (Halbmondlager) who would, ostensibly, return to the front on the side of the Central Powers or to their homelands in an effort to spread their new liberationist message. At the show camp, prisoners were treated with particular luxuries—including recreational games, halal meat, and a custom-built mosque, the first of its kind on German land.

### About Slavs and Tatars

Founded in 2006, Slavs and Tatars is an art collective devoted to an area East of the former Berlin Wall and West of the Great Wall of China known as Eurasia. Their practice consists of three activities: publications, exhibitions and lecture-performances. Their work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at major international museums including MoMA, New York, Vienna Secession, Dallas Museum of Art, and Kunsthalle Zurich, among others. A mid-career traveling survey of their work, *Mouth to Mouth*, is currently on exhibit at the Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius (CAC), including a monograph published by Walter König.

Slavs and Tatars' work can be found in major public collections in the United States, the Middle East, and Europe including the Tate Modern, MoMA, and Sharjah Art Foundation; they have published more than half a dozen books, including *Friendship of Nations: Polish Shi'ite Showbiz* (Book Works, 2013), *Not Moscow Not Mecca* (Revolver, 2012) and their translation of the legendary Azeri satire *Molla Nasreddin*, now in its second edition with IB Tauris.