

Synopsis Naked Revolution

An opera. A theater piece based on Komar and Melamid's fascination with falling statues that, as of now, includes partial (because all views are partial) visions of George Washington, Lenin, Alexander Ulyanov (Lenin's brother), Marcel Duchamp and various incarnations of Goethe's eternal feminine: Molly Pitcher, Vera Pavlovna, and Isadora Duncan. Above all, it is the portrait of a moment: that moment when everything changes. Revolutionaries may consider themselves conservative (like Washington) or doctrinaire (like Lenin) but when the statues start falling, nothing is the same.

As the audience enters, a patient, an immigrant from Soviet Russia, is complaining to his doctor about his vivid dreams. (These stories are inspired by dreams related by Russian immigrants to New York.) She tells him not to worry and rises from behind his couch, transformed to Molly Pitcher. We are on Bowling Green in Lower Manhattan on July 7, 1776. The Sons of Liberty pull down the gilded equestrian statue of George III. The patient, dressed in 18th century black, runs off with the statue's head. George Washington enters and upon discovering that the royal statue is made of lead and can be converted to rare and necessary bullets, sends his militia men after the thief. But it is too late: the King's head is in the possession of Lord Townsend, so the man who stole it is hung. The General reflects on his past life and the severed head sings as the moon.

An interlude of modern dreams centered on George Washington and recent Russian events. Then a vision of workmen in 1891 erecting a statue of Czar Alexander III. The patient becomes Alexander Ulyanov and the doctor his ideal woman—Vera Pavlovna, the heroine of Chernyshevsky's *What is to be done?* They comfort each other with the hope of a better future.

But as Alexander's brother explains, this was not to be. The young revolutionary who participated in the plot to assassinate Alexander III was hanged; his brother Lenin orders the Czar's statue to be destroyed. The recovered bronze is used for future statues. The workers acclaim Lenin as their leader and the Supreme Soviet through which he will rule.

Meanwhile, back in the States, the opera concludes with an onward-going act that begins on October 31, 1917 when Marcel Duchamp proclaims the establishment of the Independent Republic of Greenwich Village atop the Washington Square Arch. A crowd is crossing the park, and the two stone Washingtons who adorn the arch remember their shared past, as the patient as Duchamp comes and goes on a bicycle and other George Washingtons arrive from all directions. Lenin in disguise as a workman appears after his death in 1923 to remember youthful summers. The doctor as Isadora Duncan, friend of Duchamp and pro-Lenin "Revolutionist," sings a climatic aria that proclaims her vision of Revolution, which is an expression of beauty, hope and freedom for the young. George III's severed head sings as a balloon and the chorus all become Washingtons. Lenin tries to dance with the Washingtons, but they pass him around from group to group. Angered, he exits shouting for a taxi. All but the immigrant patient and his doctor disappear. He starts telling her again the stories about his dreams.