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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

THE FANTASTIC TAVERN: THE TBILISI AVANT-GARDE

Curated by Daniel Baumann and AIRL

EXHIBITION DATES: JUNE 25 – JULY 31, 2009
OPENING: THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 6 – 8PM
CONCERT: THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 8PM

GALLERY HOURS JUNE: TUESDAY – SATURDAY, 10AM – 6PM
GALLERY HOURS JULY: MONDAY – THURSDAY 10AM – 6PM, FRIDAY 10AM – 5PM

Fantastic Tavern: The Tbilisi Avant-garde is an exhibition as a book. It presents an introduction into Georgian Modernism, a highly significant yet overlooked period in art history. Since 2004, Swiss curator and art historian, Daniel Baumann, has collaborated with the Arts Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory (AIRL), a group of Georgian art historians and artists, on an annual celebration of international contemporary art and culture in Tbilisi. Here, Casey Kaplan is pleased to introduce their newest collaboration to New York.

From 1918-1921, Georgia declared its short independence as the Democratic Republic of Georgia, and Tbilisi became the “Paris” of the East, where an inspired community of artists not only developed unprecedented creative practices but also collaborated to produce astonishing works of art. During this time, members of the avant-garde in Russia fled Moscow and several key figures from this group made their way to Tbilisi. Their union with the Tbilisi avant-garde along with others from the International community marks a short but crucial period in Georgia’s rich history that eventually led to the development of films, stage designs, theatrical performances, musical compositions, literature, sound poetry, magazines, books, paintings and sculptures, all of which form what is referred to today as “Georgian Modernism”.

At the entrance to the gallery, the title of the exhibition is hand-painted by Georgian artist, Levan Chogoshvili, in old Georgian script with its English translation below. Inside, nine fully-illustrated publications highlight the work of Futurists, Dadaists, and other avant-garde artists, including the Georgian Dada manifestos of Grigol Tsetskhladze and Titian Tabidze. Documents on stage design, sound poetry, and musical compositions provide a glimpse into to the undiscovered cultural events that occurred in Tbilisi in the 1920’s. The exhibition also features four films with genres ranging from documentary fiction to parody and drama, only very rarely screened in the West. Mikheil Kalatozishvili’s 1932 film, *Nail in the Boot*, was banned and believed to be lost until it was discovered again in 2008. It will be shown here to the public for the first time. The Georgian art historians, (AIRL), illuminate the historical relevance of the period explored in this exhibition through their texts.

On the night of the opening at 8pm, the young New York musician and composer Sergei Tcherepnin will perform at Casey Kaplan.

Sergei Tcherepnin is the great grandson of esteemed conductor and composer, Nikolai Tcherepnin, who was the Director of the National Conservatory in Tbilisi during the short period of Georgia’s independence. Tcherepnin’s absorption of the local culture of Tbilisi at the height of Georgian Modernism is reflected by the Georgian folk melodies present in his compositions of the period.

Daniel Baumann lives in Basel, Switzerland and is an art historian, freelance curator, and writer for, among others, Camera Austria, Mousse, Parkett, Piktogram, and Spike. He is the director of the Adolf Wölfli-Foundation, Museum of Fine Arts in Bern, Switzerland; the curator of Nordtangente-Kunsttangent, a project for art in public space in Basel, Switzerland; and the co-founder of New Jersey and Shift Festival for Electronic Arts in Basel (see also www.denver.cx). This is the second exhibition that Baumann has curated at Casey Kaplan, preceded by *Pose and Sculpture* during the summer of 2006.

AIRL (Arts Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory) was established in Tbilisi in 2001 by art historians, historians, sociologists, and conservators together with artists in order to research Georgian art and to promote intellectual and cultural cooperation and exchanges internationally.

Information on the annual celebration in Tbilisi, organized by Daniel Baumann and AIRL, is accessible through the following website’s www.tbilisi2.com, www.tbilisi3.com, www.tbilisi4.com, www.tbilisi5.com. For more information on the Tcherepnin family, please visit www.tcherepnin.com. For further information on the exhibition please contact Loring Randolph, loring@caseykaplangallery.com at the gallery.

Next exhibition: Jason Dodge, *When I woke up, there was a note in my pocket explaining what had happened*, September 10 – October 24, 2009

HENNING BOHL, JEFF BURTON, NATHAN CARTER, MILES COOLIDGE, JASON DODGE, TRISHA DONNELLY, PAMELA FRASER, LIAM GILLICK, ANNIKA VON HAUSWOLFF, CARSTEN HÖLLER, BRIAN JUNGLEN, JONATHAN MONK, DIEGO PERRONE, JULIA SCHMIDT, SIMON STARLING, GABRIEL VORMSTEIN, GARTH WEISER, JOHANNES WOHNSEIFER