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3rd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art - Against Exclusion

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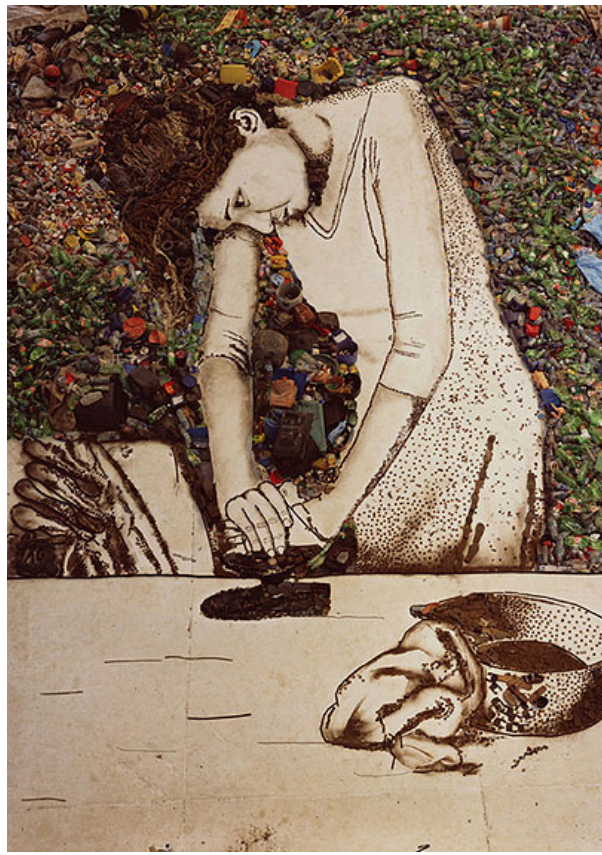
Exhibition: 25 Sep – 25 Oct 2009

Moscow Biennale

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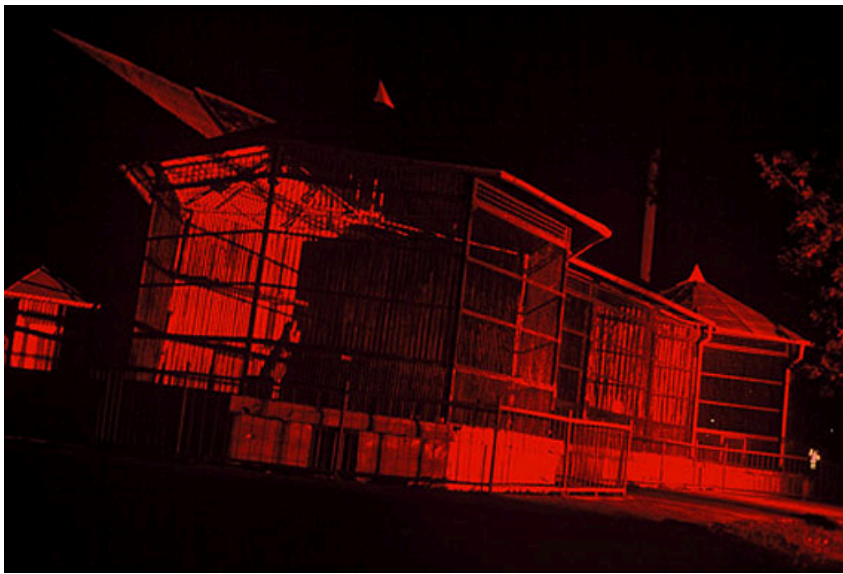
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Vik Muniz
Woman Ironing (Isis), from the series "Pictures of Garbage", 2008
digital C-Print, 143 x 101,6 cm
© Vik Muniz

The 3rd Moscow Biennial of Contemporary Art provides a mixed bag from today's international art scene. With some 80 artists, including Kapoor, Anatsui, Delvoye, Sun Yuan and Peng Yu, the audience is offered both re-worked pieces that have appeared in many of the latest international shows and established Russian artists, featuring sculptural and object-based projects that highlight the national taste for collectable art objects. Dmitry Tsvetkov's excessive installation of ironic taxidermies (bear, fox, and rabbit,) bigger than a life-size, each dressed in elaborate fur coats all led by a blind mouse, bring to mind a local version of Chapman Brothers' best-selling animalia. Placed in a gallery room along with artists like Koen Van-mechelen's live Cosmopolitan Chicken, and Celeste Boursier-Mougenot's stuffed sparrows From here to ear vue v.8, his installation adds to the zoo-like atmosphere. Whether such use of nature is a valid trend sparked by Damien Hirst's successes, or merely an attempt by the curator to initiate a new one, the hotch-potch layout of the gallery space feels confusing and incoherent. However, perhaps Jean-Hubert Martin, the curator of the Biennale, can't be faulted for the exhibition's leanings toward sculptural monumentality, as he knows Russia well, having pulled together the exhibitions "Paris-Moscow" (1979) and Ilya Kabakov's exhibition in 1985. Already having surveyed the beginning of con-ceptualism, Martin focuses on the second generation of Moscow conceptualists in the Biennial, such as Gutov, Brodsky, Chikov, present with their more sculptural/ painterly endeavors. Younger and less known artists offer yet another local trend: based in Kherson, Ukraine, Stas Volazlovsky and outsider-artist Alexander Lobanov present paintings that trade current political faces (Putin,) and urban and criminal folklore. The Biennial theme, "Against Exclusion," was devised to counter the cultural mainstream, but the exhibition achieves the opposite: it reinforces the household names with static materiality, especially with the scale of the works. Martin's selection gains its weight from an aura of its conspicuous venue — Garage, Center for Contemporary Art, backed up by the oligarch Roman Abramovic and chaperoned by his girlfriend. It isn't clear what brings the high-est number of visitors to this Biennial's prestigious venue, but it probably isn't the questions posed by the art. It seems that "Against Exclusion" left out politics, social subjects and new media. And if in his seminal 1979 exhibition "Magiciens de la terre" Martin challenged the establishment by showing art from excluded African countries, in Moscow the curator takes a comfortable stand. "We are probably ruled too much by old people," said Martin about the thirteen live-size wax figures, Old Persons Home, by Chinese artists Sun Yuan and Peng Yu. Despite the surfaces and scale of the works crowded inside the Garage, the exhibition feels ironically empty.



Carl Michael von Hausswolff

Lion cage

From the series *Red Zoo, Kaliningrad*, 2006

cibacrom print in edition of 5 + 1 ap. Dimensions 70 *100 cm.

©2006 Carl Michael von Hausswolff and Gallery Niklas Belenius, Stockholm.



Zhang Xianyong

Chinese Yoyo

2007

C print, 35 x 52 in. (88.9 x 132.08 cm)

© Zhang Xianyong



Eva Davidova
Untitled (Shumen) 2005
lambda print, 49 x 49 in. (124.46 x 124.46 cm)
© Eva Davidova