

POSTMASTERS

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YEVGENIY FIKS

My work is inspired by the collapse of the Soviet bloc, which led me to the realization of the necessity to reexamine the Soviet experience in the context of the history of the Left, including that of the international Communist movement. My work is a reaction to the collective amnesia within the post-Soviet space over the last decade, on the one hand, and the repression of the histories of the American Left in the US, on the other.

I've been interested in discovering and reflecting on repressed micro-historical narratives that highlight the complex relationships between social histories of the West and Russia in the 20th century. Having grown up and having been educated in the Soviet Union in the 1980s, my work is about coming to terms with the Soviet experience by carving out a space for critique both without and within the Soviet experience. Having lived in New York since 1994, I'm particularly interested in the history of the American Communist movement and the way it manifests itself in the present-day United States...

The reexamination of Soviet history in my work is very closely connected to my understanding of the position of the post-Soviet artist as one who is committed to and responsible for the formation of a proper understanding of Soviet history. An overwhelming sense of denial of Soviet history as a way of dealing with (post-) Soviet trauma is one of the most striking symptoms of the post-Soviet condition. While pre-Revolutionary history is being discussed at length and with much interest in the countries of the former Eastern bloc, Soviet history is almost totally repressed.

As the last ten years have shown, however, this repression and denial have not served the post-Soviet subject well. Reclaiming an active engagement with Soviet history is a more effective way of dealing with post-Soviet trauma. I am in no way suggesting that the post-Soviet artist should have a rosy or nostalgic view of Soviet times or that s/he should affirm the excesses of that period. The post-Soviet artist should also be careful to avoid the exploitation and commodification of the Soviet past.

I'm advocating quite the opposite, a critical kind of nostalgia whereby the work of memory becomes a tool for exposing and identifying the discrepancies of both the past and the present...

Taking responsibility for one's history means regaining critical agency towards and within that history. Soviet history should be viewed as much as a site of intervention as current post-Soviet physical reality. Interventionist tactics normally applied to physical social space can and should be effectively applied to history. As far as my work is concerned, approaching history through interventionist tactics means uncovering and exposing repressed histories and scrutinizing the generally accepted official historical narratives. I view activism within the discipline of history as the formation of a parallel or alternative base of knowledge whose formation begins with the collection of radical historical data...

Yevgeniy Fiks

Yevgeniy Fiks was born in Moscow in 1972 and has been living and working in New York since 1994. After studying at the Art College in Memory of 1905 Revolution and the V. I. Surikov Institute in Moscow, Fiks earned his B.F.A. at Brooklyn College (1997) and his M.F.A. at the School of Visual Arts, New York (1999).

Fiks has produced many projects on the subject of the Post-Soviet dialog in the West, among them: "Lenin for Your Library?" in which he mailed V.I. Lenin's text "Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism" to one hundred global corporations as a donation for their corporate libraries; "Communist Party USA," a series of portraits of current members of Communist Party USA, painted from life in the Party's national headquarters in New York City; and "Communist Guide to New York City," a series of photographs of buildings and public places in New York City that are connected to the history of the American Communist movement.

Fiks' work has been shown internationally, including solo exhibitions at Winkleman Gallery and Common Room 2, both in New York (USA); Contemporary City Foundation, Marat Guelman Gallery, and ARTStrelka Projects in Moscow, and the State Museum of Russian Political History, St. Petersburg (Russia); and the Lenin-Museo, Tampere (Finland). His work has been included in the Biennale of Sydney (2008); Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art (2007); and Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2009, 2007 and 2005).

Source: http://yevgeniyfiks.com/artwork/1040882_Biography.html