



Afrika, *Donaldestruction*, installation view, Southern Exposure at Project Artpool, San Francisco, 1991. Courtesy Paul Judelson Arts, New York and Power Plant, Toronto.

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Soviet artist Afrika's *Donaldestruction* at the Clocktower (May 2–June 16), curated by Rebecca Quaytman, is quite a trip. Afrika is a witty and sharp young Leningrad artist who has engaged in a worldwide tour (Leningrad, San Francisco, Toronto, Nantes; Paul Judelson Arts, September 1990–November 1991) as symbolic in its intent as Miralda's. But, of course, we're not talking 500th anniversaries here, but a Most Pressing world problem: the collapse of the U.S.S.R. Afrika's art has the aura of a traveling circus; it has spectacle, charm, home truths, and wisdom. The energy level is a toxin compared to dourly academic American art. A dazzling catalogue essay written along with Sergei Anufriev of Medical Hermeneutics explains the project. Afrika and Anufriev conducted a Trojan Horse action against a symbol of Soviet order: Vera Mukhina's *The Worker and the Farmer*, a vast steel tonnage of figurative sculpture that faced down the Nazis from the deck of the Soviet Pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Exposition, and was subsequently institutionalized in Moscow in front of the Exhibition of Agricultural and Industrial Achievements. Afrika and Anufriev, in order to demonstrate how the ideology

behind the statue had lost power, snuck up under its skirt, opened a door, and crawled into the belly of the gargantuan motherbeast. After knocking about in the darkness, imbibing womb-like aura, they left, refreshed, and took the door with them. This purloined panel swings on a pendulum in Afrika's installation. The door was said to hermetize the sacred value of the ideology, supporting its effectiveness. Taken—a Caesarian section has been enacted against the ideology, and, as Afrika remarks, they took the farmer's daughter's "pussy" as well: "We stole the door between two worlds." This graft is then used to fertilize a similar door taken down between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.; the co-penetration of two worlds is instrumented by means of a cluster of Dadaist methods Afrika calls *Donaldestruction* strategies. Father (McDonald's), Son (Donald Duck), and Holy Ghost (Donald Trump) rule this tabloid theology. By pushing on these pulse points of interaction, Afrika opens doors. This clever jeu d'esprit is materialized in wall pieces that are surfaced in oxidized metal clones of the purloined pussy; pop prints of Donald Duck, wrappers from Moscow's magical McDonald's (golden arches as the pearly gates of dawning capitalism?!), and, the best, a picture of the real Taj Mahal, nonetheless Trumped, are stickered like tattoos onto the cloned grafts. A wall with a Lissitsky-like spread of agricultural and industrial mutant sons and daughters of Mukhina, modernists with heads and backbones of machine metal, is brought low, as a group of stuffy Russian scientists are enlisted under a decal of Donald Duck. There are so many ideas here, such breathtaking succinctness, such urgency, such fun, one can't help but root for it.

Andrei Khlobystein's *At Home* (Clocktower, May 2–June 16) is introduced by a statement with illustrations that is every bit as sharp and symbolic as Afrika's. Khlobystein's theories are not art history theories for correct books, but artists' ideas, grand brisk summaries that fall like words of wisdom, aural reverberations of artwork. Khlobystein shuns another round of iconoclasm (the Lissitsky tradition) to discuss the deeper peril of nature and home in Russia. He describes a post-perestroika world where, after imposed social order is gone, one is left in a freefall where there are wild fluctuations of scale and sentiment. His symbol for this is the rabbits in the grass of *The Vision of Saint Eustace* by Pisanello, inquisitive universes in detail, each a big-eared world that may reorder the deaf larger world. He in fact had a rabbit in the gallery, sniffing out likes and dislikes; playing nature's docent, docilely. A chalk figure in grass, children's drawings, a re-creation of a tomb from Siberia—all sorts of methods and sites—embed his notions of a return to the earth in tableaux of Russian boyhood memories. Khlobystein is more typical of the Leningraders, who in their popular cultural decorativeness are poles apart from the dry intellectuals of Moscow.

Robert Mahoney