

PRESS RELEASE

ANDREÏ MOLODKIN: LOVE[©]

June 12 - July 19, 2003

NEW YORK — Kashya Hildebrand Gallery is pleased to present Andrei Molodkin's first New York solo show opening June 12th, 2003.

Andrei Molodkin's project LOVE[©] is an enterprise of disassembly, a contravention of valid rules and social agreements. On gigantic canvases, drawn precisely with blue ballpoint pens, we find in place of the traditional heart - symbol for caring and love - a skull and two cross bones, which symbolize death and warnings of real danger like radioactive contamination, high voltage or poison. In this procedure of writing rebus, where an image corresponds to a word, a substitution has been made and a clear symbol has been replaced by another.

Although both important from early Christian symbolism, the heart and skull icons have divergent destinies relating to mass culture. While "love" has become a big business, its symbol enormously widespread and easily aped, the skull is relegated to precise corners of use.

The artist's still-lives are reminiscences of the type 'MEMENTO MORI' which we know in its big diffusion from occidental art history. They are 'MEMENTO MORI' of the age of industrial reproduction, having changed its distant smile of the Romantic Movement into an enormous outburst of trash laughter at contemporary mass culture. Extract the sign from its traditional cultural context, and the mythology spreads by mass media transforming a particular object into a fetish, and simultaneously bestowing on it a sacred dimension and devaluing it because through universal dissemination its impact is diluted. Furthermore, while copyright laws protect the logos of commercial brands such as MacDonald's golden arches and Nike's boomerang, a class of symbols like the heart and the skull remain freely accessible.

The artist is working with a simple pen, which he uses with great precision on canvas. He first used this method in 1999 while realizing the project NOVO-NOVOSIBIRSK, which represented the architectural drafts for the oversized monuments shown in 2001 at the Musee National Russe of Saint-Petersburgh and then in Moscow's Museum of Architecture Shchoussev.

The pen could be considered one of the emblems of the 20th century, and by drawing with it in a maniacal manner, Molodkin exposes the almost sick but also therapeutic character of his work.

LOVE[©] is not only a simple deviation from or demonstration of the commercial psychosis of an artist that relies on the copyrights of authors on love. LOVE[©] is the smile of an enormous skull enlightening our time, the smile of our media saturated culture.

Olesya Turkina
(excerpts translated from French)

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