



Anna Jermolaewa

Opening: 14.01.2016, 6 pm

Exhibition: 15.01.2016 - 05.03.2016

Press Release

In the center of the new solo exhibition of Anna Jermolaewa lies a broken Lenin monument. The artist found it in a town hall closet in the small Ukrainian village of Kaschperovka, located in the province of Zhitomer. It is unknown who demolished it a few months earlier, and the village mayor had been storing it among custodial tools and various items of refuse.

As part of the new "de-communization" law in Ukraine (passed in Spring 2015), monuments to Lenin, as well as other public symbols remaining from the Soviet Era, are systematically being demolished or defaced. In the summer of 2015, Anna Jermolaewa travelled through roughly 2000 km of Ukraine to document the dismantling of Lenin monuments in various towns and villages. Even though the phenomenon of iconoclasm tied to political change is certainly as old as the struggle for political supremacy itself, this kind of unemotional documentation clearly reflects current Ukrainian politics of iconoclasm without the misleading narratives of news media reportage. Concurrently, Jermolaewa's documentation shows the fragile moment within the process of transformation – the void as well as the provisional arrangement – aspects that generally remain undocumented. Images of these innumerable Lenin monuments will still exist in the form of photographs, graphics, and postcards, just as there will be images of new, yet-to-be-built monuments that will be installed where Lenin once stood. In addition, Jermolaewa's photographs deal not only with the current political situation, but also with the relationship between sculpture and base, between the individual and the masses and the role of art as an instrument of political representation in general.

During her journey through Ukraine, the artist conducted many interviews with local citizens and townsfolk about the recent demolition of Lenin monuments. The resulting video reveals current opinions and differing viewpoints within an open dialogue concerning the iconoclasm of symbols tied to the country's Soviet history.

A five-channel video installation can be seen on the wall opposite *Leninopad*. This work is the result of an ongoing project, *A Five Year Plan*, on which Jermolaewa has been working for 20 years. Every five years, Jermolaewa films the same scene: an escalator in a St. Petersburg metro station. These scenes from Russian everyday life show us that there have been little change throughout the years, variation only observed through very small details. In this exhibition, the video installation is shown for the first time with its most recent recording.

The work-complexes *Both White (after Valeria Mukhina)* and *Number Two (After Solomon Asch)* came out of Jermolaewa's intense study of experiments about conformity and peer pressure conducted by American psychologist Solomon Eliot Asch and Soviet scientist Valeria Mukhina. Though using separate series of experiments, both scientists made a similar breakthrough discovery: the majority of volunteers polled ignored apparent facts – contradicting their own perception – in order to agree with the opinion of the majority – for example, when asked the color of these two pyramids, most answered "Both white."

Anna Jermolaewa (*1970 in St. Petersburg, Russia) works primarily with photography and video. She lives and works in Vienna. Her work can be seen in numerous international solo and group exhibitions.

Solo Exhibition (selection): WRO Art Centre (2015), Zacheta National Art Gallery (2015), Function Room London (2015)

Group Exhibition (selection): Fotomuseum Winterthur (2015), Kunsthaus Zürich (2015), Moskau Biennale (2015), Kiev Biennale (2015), Victoria Gallery Samara (2014), CAC Vilnius (2013), Kunsthalle Krems (2012/13), ZKM Karlsruhe (2012), Salzburger Kunstverein (2013), Berlin Biennale (2012), Winzavod Contemporary Art Center Moskau (2012), Kunstverein Wolfsburg (2010), Calvert 22 (2010), Venedig Biennale (1999).

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