



painting is a dead language VALERY CHTAK

25 June – 13 August 2010

Following the success of his *Moscopolis* exhibition at the Parisian Espace Louis Vuitton in 2007, Muscovite artist Valery Chtak hits OREL ART UK this summer with *painting is a dead language*. A provocative title certainly belies the content of an exhibition obsessed with the possibilities of painting surfaces.

Chtak seemingly paints anything and everything that falls in his wake, tables, chairs and peeling labels as much as canvases. Limited to a monochrome palette, his works may evoke the darkness of death, but their tantalisingly enigmatic spirit is full of vernal life. Life for Chtak, however, is the mundane objects we ignore and discard. The objects of anonymous owners are the empty shells of his art's genesis. Between Chtak's fingers the eroded leftovers of human society become ordered chaos; a discarded skateboard becomes iconic whilst lacking the untouchable status of an Icon. Even in their final form Chtak's paintings retain their anonymous core, lacking titles, lacking explanations. It is precisely his revelry in the familiar but unknown that makes Chtak so unique and seminal in our modern age of knowledge and accountability.

At the focus of the exhibition is an impressive installation of painted furniture and a number of large, hung canvases featuring items such as the skull, the telephone, the tractor. Emblazoned above the particularly powerful portrayal of the tractor is the slogan 'C'EST LE MEILLEUR QU'ON A' (*that's the best we have*). Following the inspiration of the Conceptualists and particularly the great American artist Lawrence Weiner, Chtak seeks not to educate or moralise with such graphics, but through their very elusiveness to invite individualised interpretation.

Having entered the gallery space, Chtak's works continue to evolve right up to the moment when the final decisions are made as to how they will hang or stand. Once settled, the recycled artworks acquire a new language through which to communicate. No longer are the selected objects defunct, useless, indeed dead.

In the legacy of the French avant-garde philosophical movements of 1970s, Chtak's work engages upon a number of levels. Propelled by political ideas of the 'Anti-Spectacular', Chtak's depiction of everyday objects is nevertheless relevant even to those unversed in philosophical dialogue. His art is ripe for speculation.

Born in Moscow in 1981, Chtak was sixteen when he first engaged his artistic interest, studying at the Contemporary Art School of Avdey Ter-Oganyan. In 2000 he joined the Moscow-based Radek Community of artists and activists, wherein he developed many of his philosophical and political beliefs. His earliest art exhibitions in 2002-2006 ranged the galleries of Moscow, including Musée Andrey Sakharov, Centre d'art contemporain Zverev, and the Guelman Gallery. Chtak has exhibited at galleries across many of the world's major cities, among them Athens' Benaki Museum in 2007 with his show *On Geekdom*, the Sidney Mishkin Gallery in New York City University in 2006 with *Russia Redux2*, Musashino Art University, Tokyo, with *The Young, Aggressive* in 2008, and Institut d'Art Contemporain, Villeurbanne, France in 2009 with *Rendez-vous 09*. Earlier this year the artist enjoyed great appraisal for his exhibition entitled *Say 'Shibboleth'* at the Paperworks Gallery in Moscow.

Succeeding his successful curation of the *Futurologia* exhibition at Dasha Zhukova's Moscow gallery, The Garage, in early 2010, *painting is a dead language* is the latest exhibition to be curated by Hervé Mikaeloff at London's OREL ART UK.

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Private View: 24 June, 6 to 9pm – DJ ALLISONE (U'luvka Vodka)

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