

# The New York Times

ON THE WEB

## Art in Review

Published: December 30, 2005

### 'Russia 2'

#### *'Bad News From Russia'*

White Box, 525 West 26th Street; the Annex, 601 West 26th Street; Magnan Projects Annex, 505 West 28th Street, all Chelsea  
Through Jan. 11

Ethan Cohen  
18 Jay Street, TriBeCa  
Through Jan. 14

An entertaining, abrasive mess, "Russia 2" presents dissident works by 12 individuals and three teams who live in Russia. The show, which occupies four galleries, was jointly organized by White Box and M. Guelman Gallery in Moscow.

Most of the works involve strident combinations of Pop Art, Conceptualism and political satire; some, like Alexander Kosolapov's bronze statue of Lenin with a Mickey Mouse head, border on the sophomoric.

The most impressive painting is a heroic, classically composed, mural-scale picture of handsome, shirtless soldiers shooting back at unseen attackers in the midst of a loosely painted field of wildflowers by Vladimir Dubosarsky and Alexander Vinograd. Whether it represents a real insurgency or is a mocking allegory of outmoded wars over style - i.e., between Impressionism and Socialist Realism - is hard to say.

A certain reckless lack of taste runs throughout. In funny short videos by the Blue Noses (featured in a solo show at Ethan Cohen), the use of naked women calls to mind "The Benny Hill Show." And the large photographic transparency attached to a full-size bus stop by Oleg Kulik (at the Annex), depicting a fashion model in a suicide bomber's vest dozing in a [Madonna's](#) pose at the foot of a partly broken monumental statue, treats the subject of terrorism with a too clever cynicism. There is something off-puttingly obvious, too, about the group AES+F's digital, faux-fashion photographs of children in white shorts and shirts posing in rocky landscapes while holding sleek rocket launchers. Subtle this show is not, but it

gives a tantalizing glimpse of another, rather woolly artistic universe. KEN  
JOHNSON