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Enemy Image

Momenta

72 Berry Street

Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Through Oct. 17

Young curators are the lifeblood of contemporary art. So it's worth paying attention when they arrive. Elena Sorokina — Russian-born, New York-based and a recent participant in the Whitney curatorial program — has organized two concurrent group shows, both of interest, and on obliquely related themes.

“Russia Redux No. 1” is a supplement and rejoinder to “Russia!” at the Guggenheim. It is made up of work by a dozen contemporary artists and artists’ collectives from the Soviet Union. All but one of them (Dmitry Gutov) are absent from the Guggenheim. But all critically inflect the celebratory national portrait that the show delivers, questioning what “Russia” as a blanket term might mean.

Pieces include Taras Polataiko’s photographs of Chernobyl; a newsprint broadside by Dmitry Vilensky and the group Chto Delat (What Is To Be Done?) on questions of political resistance; and a stirring performance piece, documented on video, by Elena Kovylyna, in which grace and violence mesh.

The show is the last for Schroeder Romero at its present space. Long a Williamsburg staple, and never afraid of difficult art, it is to move to Chelsea this winter.

“Enemy Image” shares the critical character and conceptual bent (and one artist, Yevgeniy Fiks) with Ms. Sorokina’s other show. But its theme is internationalist, a consideration of ways in which the basic notion of a political enemy has changed since the cold war. No longer, Ms. Sorokina suggests, is threat envisioned in terms of opposing superpowers, but rather in terms of religion and ethnicity.

The subject, big and complex, can be only glancingly addressed in a small show, though she has made some shrewd choices. Siemon Allen’s room-filling installation of enemy-specific propaganda trading cards, printed in the United States between 1939 and 2001, is outstanding. A wry fictional agitprop film by the Speculative Archive (Julia Meltzer and David Thorne), which imagines Syria replacing the United States as a global presence, is also effective, as are contributions by Mr. Fiks, Cristobal Lehyt, Les LeVeque and Basim Magdy.

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