

DMITRY GUTOV SCARAMOUCHE - NEW YORK

At the opening of Dmitry Gutov's "In Our Days, Everything Seems Pregnant with its Contrary" at Scaramouche, a gallery on the Lower East Side, people drank wine and murmured appreciation for words painted on canvas that for decades had called people to revolution.

The work came from Russia: this leading Moscow conceptual artist's New York solo debut was comprised of various phrases once thundered by Karl Marx, now rendered into attractive designs. Gutov presents the words with little or no satire intended, as he has been involved in close readings of Marx from the mid '90s. The ten canvases in the show, thinly painted in light ochre and shades of brown-green, feature "Marx" in large capital letters, with phrases from the *Grundrisse*, a crucially preparatory work for his most well-known work, *Das Kapital*. Gutov highlights the words in the middle of a phrase with a large, bold, black font, streamlined à la Rodchenko. The rest of the quote in a lighter hue causes it to recede into the background. Several words are barely readable, which makes the meaning even more obscure to the modern viewer. In one work, *To be Radical is to Grasp the Root of*

the Matter (2010), Marx's words pile on top of each other, with "root" pressing in on "matter." The visual play of light and dark, push and pull and different font sizes creates a dynamic pattern.

So what are we in America — the Soviet Union's capitalist nemesis and victor of the Cold War — to make of Gutov's intentions? Although Communism failed, Gutov has acted like a true believer, becoming an active member of the Karl Marx School of the English Language in St. Petersburg. The group, which reads and discusses Marx's dense texts, hopes to purify his thinking, distilling revolutionary concepts from decades of Soviet misinterpretation. Since he began with the group in 2006, Gutov started painting Marx's statements on canvases, or casting them into metal sculptures. The very title of the show comes from Marx and indicates that Gutov continues to hold the radical teacher in high esteem.

Today, exhibiting in major international venues, Gutov belongs to the greater art world, which endorses his branding in 'Karl Marx' paintings.

Yulia Tikhonova



DMITRY GUTOV, *Ignorance is a Demon*, 2010. Oil on canvas, 41 x 30 cm. Courtesy Scaramouche, New York.