

## IRINA KORINA: *DEMONSTRATIVE BEHAVIOR*

SCARAMOUCHE GALLERY | MARCH 25–MAY 13, 2012

**GAIL VICTORIA BRADDOCK QUAGLIATA**

Moscow-based installation artist Irina Korina's first exhibition in the United States, *Demonstrative Behavior*, caters to the contemporary aesthetic demand for the dissection of society's foibles through unconventional yet wholly relevant materials.

The window display at Scaramouche is dynamic in itself. An imposing figurative piece with two heads (both wearing babushkas), "Scarecrow" (2012), dominates the front window of the gallery. Upon further inspection, it seems to be made of sticks, all jutting out at confused angles, some festooned with tattered fabric. This presents an odd contrast with the cleanly manufactured lines of its brightly colored workman's jumpsuit and safety vest. An even closer examination reveals that this being seems to have several tentacles, fabricated from a glossy, gaudy plastic material, which the artist has neatly sewn and pressed into a crisp metaphor for skin. This creature is the focal point of the main space, save for a large, rusting column crowned with woven plastic plaid shopping bags (the kind so easily found in Chinatown) arranged carefully to mimic an onion dome. At the back of the gallery, "Vertigo 1" (2012), a colorful rug, dangles as though it had begun to scale the wall but never quite finished. Its surface is interrupted

by Communist figures and Soviet symbols in plasticine, topped by some sort of one-eyed, anthropomorphic cross with a red tongue displayed between its many, many fangs. Several other rugs in the space depict similar situations. Perhaps it is difficult to parse the commentary of a society so removed from one's own, but the recognizable signifiers of Russian culture are clear.

Surrounding the sculptures, which are clearly intended to be the central focus of the exhibition, are a series of delicate pencil drawings that are somehow far more compelling than their symbolism-heavy neighbors. The gently absurd subject matter of these works on paper includes a dog driving a car packed with an eerily smiling human family, a man constructing an improbable Christmas tree out of cocktail glasses, and two jeans-clad legs disappearing into a black, ceiling panel-shaped hole in an otherwise perfect, cloudy sky. These images are rendered with such an immaculate hand that the moment or concept depicted seems even more peculiar and jarring in contrast with its execution. The purposefully kitschy and rudimentary elements of the installation pieces shown here express a consternation with the hollow national dream of capitalist splendor. Korina's drawings, however, manage to evoke the dull, heady feeling of



Irina Korina, "Happiness Does Exist," 2004–12. Carbon, ballpoint pen on paper, 11.7 x 8.3". Photo: M. Gertz. Courtesy Scaramouche NY.

a hangover—post-conspicuous consumption binge. So what does it mean when a celebrated installation artist, creator of parodic spectacles, is most persuasive as a restrained draftsman?