



Eugeniy Pavlov's "Alternative" is one of the photos in the Contemporary Arts Center's exhibit.

Putting Soviet enigma in focus

A work of art doesn't exist in a vacuum. It can take on different meanings depending on how and when it is shown, and each viewer brings a different set of experiences to the art.

The Contemporary Arts Center is featuring the work of three photographers from the Soviet Union. Most of the prints are black and white, and the few in color are muted colors. The images are enigmatic, forcing viewers to resolve the questions they raise.

In the next gallery there are bright, pin-up nudes by Tom Weselmann, simple but sophisticated symbols of a society in which advertising sets the styles.

Walking from one gallery to the other, from the sober pessimism of one to the superficial optimism of the other, is like traveling from the USSR to the USA. Unintentionally, these two unrelated exhibitions are linked by their lack of similarities.

Work appears Russian

The exhibition of "Contemporary Soviet Photographers" features almost 100 photographs by photographers from Kharkov, Cincinnati's sister city in the Ukraine. Who can say if their art reflects trends in Soviet photography? Better to say that their work appears Russian to American eyes.

The three photographers — Guennady Maslov, Eugeny Pavlov



Owen Findsen

Art

cialist government, a false structure imposed on a traditional society, but *that*, he points out, is interpretation and not explanation.

Maslov seems to be seeking out the cultures within a society. He shows photos of gypsies, circus performers and other outsiders that, Sawyer says, may be a comment on the failure of the Soviet system to homogenize diverse cultures and customs. A reporter, he shows the world without manipulating the photograph, but his pictures still are enigmatic.

Pavlov covers all the bases. As a photojournalist he documents patients undergoing treatment for alcoholism, but his photos tell a larger, more tragic story of futility and suffering. While most photographers eliminate dust specks, Pavlov often "spots" his prints with red ink, exposing the flaws.

Like Suprin, Pavlov creates photo-collages, but he arranges his bits and pieces as if he were creating a medieval tapestry. He evokes classical images in many of his works, particularly in a scene of nude swimmers, whose poses suggest a gathering of Greek gods.

Pavlov's color prints contain images printed over images, at the same time enhancing and obscuring the message of the picture. Sawyer sees this complexity as a reaction against the single image, realistic simplicity of official Soviet realist art.

There is so much to see in so many photos that it takes time to absorb it all. The flood of images becomes overwhelming unless you walk away, stroll through the Weselmann show to cleanse your palette, then, return for further exploration.

"Contemporary Soviet Photographers" is at the Contemporary Arts Center, 115 E. Fifth St., downtown, through March 9. Hours: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Saturday; 1-5 p.m. Sunday. Admission: \$2 for adults; \$1 for students and senior citizens. Free to all on Mondays. Information: 721-0390.

TV update

SUNDAY

6:30 a.m., Channel 64,
12:30 p.m., Channels
Football: AFC Champions
Los Angeles Raiders at
12:30 p.m., Channel
dom.
12:30-1:30 p.m. Chan
National Geographic.
1-3 p.m., Channel 9
(1957).
1:30-3:30 p.m., Chan
('82).
3 p.m., Channel 7, Mak
some Dove.
3:30 p.m., Channels 9
day.
4 p.m., Channels 9, 7, N
NFC Championship Game
Giants at San Francisco 4
4 p.m., Channel 48, Ho
4:30 p.m., Channel 48,
den.
7-10 p.m., Channel 6
Telethon.
10:30 p.m., Channel
Blade.
Midnight, Channel 64
check.
12:30 a.m., Channel 64,
swers.
1 a.m., Channel 64, Jan

MONDAY THROUGH

8:30 a.m., Channel 45,
saders.

TUESDAY

8-10 p.m., Channel 5, M
2:04-2:34 a.m., Channe
Dollar Biz.
2:34-5:30 a.m., Chann
twatch.

WEDNESDAY

12:35 a.m., Channel
Card.

THURSDAY

8-9 p.m., Channel 5,
Snow.

FRIDAY

3-4 p.m. Channel 5, T
National Geographic.

10 p.m., Channel 45, Fre
10:30 p.m., Channel 45
Choice/Quit.

SATURDAY

12 p.m., Channel 7, Tre
12:30 p.m., Channel 7,
NFL.

7-8 p.m., Channel 5, T
National Geographic.

7 p.m., Channel 45,
check/Hawaii.

7:30 p.m., Channel 45, M
8-9 p.m., Channel 12, Yo
10-11 p.m., Channel 12, F
Super Bowl.

12:30-1:30 a.m. Chann
Haw.

12:35 a.m., Channel 12,
1-2 a.m., Channel 5, Big E
1-2 a.m., Channel 45, M
13th.

1:30-2:30 a.m., Channel
of The Rich & Famous.

1:35 a.m., Channel 12, Ho
ping Spree.

2-4 a.m., Channel 45,
Allah (1936).

2:30-3:30 a.m., Channel
Allen Show.

3:30-6 a.m., Channel 7,
Field (1979).

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ROWS 1-20

Russian to American eyes. The three photographers Guennady Maslov, Eugeny Pavlov and Alexandr Suprin — were first seen by Cincinnati photographer Corson Hirschfeld, who visited Kharkov with a Sister City delegation. Hirschfeld is co-curator of the exhibition with CAC curator Jack Sawyer.

The three present a mix of surrealism and photojournalism. Suprin's photos are fantastic photo manipulations that create a new reality. Maslov is a photojournalist who records what he sees without comment. Pavlov covers the range between photojournalism and fantasy, providing a link between the other two.

Suprin's work is the most unreal, but also the most consistent. He shows a world usually discovered only in dreams. A bearded old man huddled in hat and cloak stands in front of a forest of branches laced with ice. Whoever he really is, he becomes an elf from a fairy tale. An evil witch hovers over an innocent girl who holds a puppy. Behind them are thatched roofs of a Russian village and a huge nest of storks, all under a brooding sky.

The photos are high-contrast, grainy collages, usually photographed with a wide-angle lens, with deep, one point perspective. But few images are a single photo. A mass of umbrellas, a cluster of giant sunflowers, a mountain of melons are reality piled upon reality until all becomes unreal, and the viewer is forced to create his own context to resolve the mysterious images.

Sawyer sees a false reality in the images that suggests the so-

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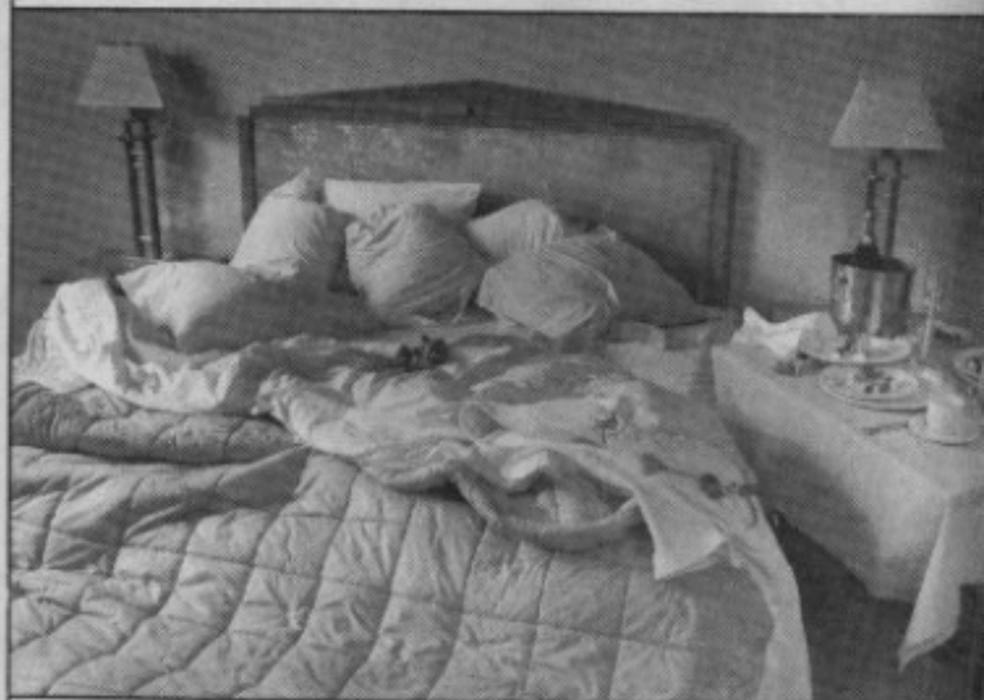
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