

**PRESS RELEASE****GLASNOST:
Soviet Non-Conformist Art
from the 1980s**

9 April – 22 May 2010

Image:
Dmitrij Vruble
Brezhnev and Honecker
1991–2004
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 80 cm

In April 2010 Haunch of Venison presents the first comprehensive survey of Soviet non-conformist art from the 1980s and early 1990s ever to be mounted in London, in collaboration with Galerie Volker Diehl (Berlin) and Diehl + Gallery One (Moscow)

With around one hundred works, the paintings, sculpture and photographs featured in this historically important exhibition respond to the transformative moment in the mid-1980s when Mikhail Gorbachev introduced the economic and political reforms known as *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, liberalising Soviet society and bringing an end to the Cold War. These two terms rapidly gained international currency, enriching the lexicon of pop-culture and informing the underground art of the period in the Soviet Union.

Encouraged by Glasnost's insistence on transparency and freedom of speech, Soviet artists in the primary centres of Moscow and Leningrad retaliated against the official, state-sanctioned art that had dominated the Soviet Union for decades and began to produce work which was experimental, provocative and satirical in intent. Crucially, they developed artistic strategies which were often openly critical of the official institutions of Soviet culture.

Glasnost: Soviet Non-Conformist Art from the 1980s examines the various strands of this vital underground movement. It bears witness to a radical change in aesthetics, an eclectic fusion of media and approach, and a political resistance to totalitarian power. Characterised by a new-found individualism, the work in this exhibition represents the sum of a number of different personal styles.

Artists such as Alexander Kosolapov and Komar & Melamid practised Sots Art, reworking the myths and tropes of Socialist Realism with biting irony and a pop aesthetic inherited from the West; others such as Ilya Kabakov and Erik Bulatov continued in the tradition of Moscow conceptualism, subtly exploring the intellectual manipulation of mass consciousness; a third group of artists spoke out without a Soviet accent, looking instead to European contemporary art for genuine relevance and meaning; yet another enriched the borrowed languages of the German *Junge Wilde* ('Young Wild artists') and the French *Figuration Libre*

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('free figuration') movements with images appropriated from the Russian avant-garde.

Assembled over the past decade, the paintings, sculpture and photographs in this ground-breaking exhibition represent an attempt to deconstruct the historical context of the Glasnost/Perestroika era and to convey the artistic revolution enabled by the unprecedented social and political change that the Soviet Union underwent in the 1980s.

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EDITORS' NOTES

Haunch of Venison

Founded in 2002 by Harry Blain and Graham Southern, contemporary art gallery Haunch of Venison works with some of the most important and exciting artists working today, presenting a broad and critically acclaimed programme of exhibitions at international gallery spaces in London, Berlin and New York. In March 2009, Haunch of Venison moved their London programme to the 21,500ft gallery spaces at 6 Burlington Gardens.

www.haunchofvenison.com

Volker Diehl

Galerie Volker Diehl, Berlin, was created in 1990 and is focused on contemporary art with international relevance. Volker Diehl was the first Western gallerist to open a gallery space in Moscow, opening Diehl + Gallery One in March 2008 on the Smolenskaya embankment with the inaugural show, *Like Truth*, by Jenny Holzer. It was then followed by a group show of Russian political art from the 1980s (Sots Art), *Glasnost/ Perestroika*, and solo shows of Wim Delvoye, Zhang Huan, Jaume Plensa and Olga Chernysheva.

www.galerievolkerdiehl.com