

half a century ago, he seems to suggest that his viewers reflect upon the present day from an objective distance. But the attempt at subtlety is a crashing failure. The empty rooms filmed in the Royal Villa of Durrës, the repainted news stills, the reenacted historical events, even the opened envelopes—all of it invokes a contemporary language of Serious Installation Art that seems as predictable, as sanctimonious, and as insufficient in the face of recent events as the latest political directive from Brussels. History, catching up with Paci's melancholy visions, has also utterly overtaken them.

—Adam Jasper

## VIENNA

### Anna Jermolaewa

KERSTIN ENGHOLM GALLERY

Is it possible to preserve the collective memories of Communism in Russia after its transition to turbocapitalism? And what about in a conflict-ridden Ukraine caught between allegiances to East and West? While Anna Jermolaewa is not alone in posing such questions about the former Soviet Union and its satellite states, her most compelling work brings to the fore the role that monuments—both heroic and commonplace—play in constructing and safeguarding a sociohistorical and cultural public sphere that has been rapidly disappearing since the 1990s.

Jermolaewa's recent installation *Leninopad* (Russian for "Leninfall"), 2015–16, centered around a gilded statue of Lenin, deposed with its decapitated head nearby. The artist found this vandalized epoxy resin effigy in storage in the Ukrainian village of Kashperivka while crisscrossing the country in the summer of 2015 to record the demolition of monuments built in honor of the Soviet leader. Accompanying this



View of "Anna Jermolaewa," 2016. Foreground: *Leninopad*, 2015–16. Background: *Five Year Plan*, 1996–. Photo: Stefan Lux.

ruin of History were photographs, watercolors, and a video that jointly addressed the ad hoc destruction of Soviet symbols during the Euro-maidan movement (2014) and the more organized demolition endorsed via a government decree of 2015. The photographs illustrate how such statues were typically installed: situated in front of government buildings and in public squares, with an obligatory base, a plinth, and an occasional allée of evergreen trees as a vegetal frame. But in light of the systematic iconoclasm of the last two years, they also disclose a sudden void of power—evinced by the spectacle of Lenin's body cut violently in half, or by conspicuously vacant plinths—and the assertion of authority by

Ukraine, represented by the national colors painted on the pedestal where Lenin once stood, or by flags posted in his stead. These monuments' condition attests not to their neglect, nor to a wasting-away into obsolescence but to an active process of reshaping collective memory.

Jermolaewa's improvised conversations with local residents, which unfolded as she searched for demolished Lenins and tried to ascertain the circumstances of their disappearance, revealed a fundamental paradox about monuments: While they represent a dominant history and communicate an official agenda, they are also assimilated into the everyday lives of ordinary people, where they may carry a very different message. Similar plotlines of monuments vanishing overnight are accompanied by reflections on their "past presence" and "future absence." If one expects Lenin to be demonized in a Ukraine still combating Russian incursion, one will be surprised. Various people recall beautiful squares with fresh flowers, the impressive use of marble and other materials; insist that "he" never bothered anyone and that "it doesn't matter if he was good or bad"; lament the erasure of their History and grieve for values that have been taken away. Not a single person voices support for the amputation of the monuments.

To make sense of these remarks, it helps to contextualize them in relation to another work of Jermolaewa's, *Five Year Plan*, a five-channel video installation begun in 1996 and updated every five years in the same Saint Petersburg metro station. It is not unimportant to know, of course, that Saint Petersburg—formerly Leningrad—is the city where the October Revolution began in 1917. Named after the famous centralized plans of the Soviet Union, the mundane videos capture commuters riding an escalator; the only difference between 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016 is an almost imperceptible change of clothing styles. Unlike the Lenin statues, which prodigiously "embodied" Soviet ideology, here we have its tangible outcome: a mass-transport system that steadily streams people regardless of regime changes. In this juxtaposition, Jermolaewa suggests that collective memories crystallize around Histories big and small; more important, she implies that monuments and spaces of common culture do not speak for themselves—no matter how grandiose the state ideology may be—but must be interpreted by individuals who are generally more interested in living their everyday lives.

—Nuit Banai

## MILAN

### Judith Hopf

KAUFMANN REPETTO

A strange sight greeted visitors to Judith Hopf's third exhibition at Kaufmann Repetto: two large feet, each made from bricks held together by mortar. Ambiguous objects, the works (both titled *Brick-Foot*, 2016) have a humorous charge, but situated as they were just outside the gallery doors, they constituted an obstruction.

The show was distributed throughout three spaces and a courtyard. In the first room on the left there were three small concrete serpents, from of the series "Untitled (Serpent)," 2015–. A fourth, smaller snake, *Untitled (Serpent)*, 2016, traversed the wall and peered into the second room, its mouth open in a threatening display of sharp teeth. But a closer look revealed that perhaps they were not quite as menacing as they first seemed, being made of fragments of printed e-mails meticulously folded into triangles. It was possible to make out the names of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto's staff amid the intervening blue, aquamarine, and green lines used to delineate e-mail communications among several parties. These colors were featured in another work in the second room, titled *Untitled (Email Lines)*, 2016. Comprising three parallel strings of LED lights, one in each hue, suspended from the