

GLADSTONE GALLERY

"Pink Wave Hunter," *Modi*, April-May 2011

GALLERY

Pink Wave Hunter

The art of Andro Wekua at Kunsthalle Fridericianum

In his art, Andro Wekua combines collective and personal memories into poignant, in part disturbing representations. The gloomy and uncanny as phenomena and fear as a symptom of the human psyche play a big role in Wekua's works. He purposefully uses formal devices – often well known patterns from the horror film genre – to create a narrative structure that evokes corresponding feelings.

Wekua grew up in Georgia and was driven out of the country in the course of the Civil War. In his installations, collages and films, pictures repeatedly flash up that are related to this aspect of his life. Personal aspects in his work, however, only serve as an illustration enabling him to raise more general questions about universal truths. What happens when our subjective memories mix with foreign images? When we try to fill gaps in our memory with historical or contemporary documents? Or when fantasy provides the cruellest of answers? The last question revolves around the psychology of "getting the creeps" and corresponds to a popular stylistic means of Wekuan scenographies.

In his pictorial works, Wekua combines motifs he finds in magazines, on the Internet or in photo albums in painterly fashion and with pastings into multi-layered, kaleidoscope-like collages. Experiences and lore overlap on a visual and narrative level. He also applies this technique in his sculptures, installations and particularly in his films and videos. His often dramatically presented installations attest to a tendency towards the narrative: naturalistically reproduced albeit alienated figures seem to be frozen in situations – similar to a video still – revealing only a moment of a more complex whole. Characters from his installations appear as protagonists of his filmic works. Wekua collages by using figures of his earlier works, taking pictures out of their context and putting them in a new structure.

Pink Wave Hunter conjures up the heavily destroyed and abandoned buildings of Sukhumi, the city in which he was born. In 15 individual architectural models, he combines his memories dating back 17 years with information gained from research on the internet and photo exchanges with other exiles. The fact that these are not faithful reconstructions, but highly subjective constructs, is revealed not only by the visible "memory gaps" – for example, when a sculpture shows only the façade of a building because the memory was not sufficient for the rest. The choice of materials, which differs with each building, also seems to be subjective and above all emotional. His selection of buildings is based on their personal relevance to him, on the one hand, and on their general popularity on the other. Wekua points to a fundamental problem here: we can view the past only through the distorting mirror of subjective memory, inextricably entwined with collective memory and the ideal images that superimpose themselves on repressed memories. The exhibition also includes paintings, collages and sculptures which, in typical Wekua fashion, appear as mysterious figures whose context unfolds in the imagination depending on the viewer's past experience and is only hinted at in its outlines.

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