

## The Curated Object: Decorative Arts & Design Exhibition Guide + Educational Resource

Exhibitions NYC. BRURAL: Art/&/of/?/vs./or/Design. SET Gallery. The Curated Object



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Natalia Pastukhova. Kudymkor, 2011  
Photographed by Radya



Sherry Aliberti. Cocoon, 2012



Sasha Saltanova. Childhood, 2011-2012



Monobrow, Radya. Eternal Fire, 2011



Ruslan Khasanov. Liquid type, 2012

## **BRURAL: Art/&/of/?/vs./or/Design**

**February 26th – March 24th 2012**

Review by Natalie Fasano

*Brural* at SET gallery in Brooklyn is the first of an ongoing series designed to promote artists that its organizer, Project 59, defines as “unconventional and underrepresented... [Brural] examines two worlds, their relations and juxtaposition, providing a platform for interaction and partnership.” Focusing on talents from both Brooklyn and the Ural region of Russia, twenty-something art historian and curator Agata Iordan’s selections certainly make a case for its artists being *underrepresented*. From Ekaterinburg, she is herself evidence of rising talent from the Urals. Her vision for the exhibition was ambitious—it isn’t easy to curate a mixed media exhibition with twelve artists—and she proved herself fully capable and in command of her vision. Photography, graphic design, installation, design, illustration, collage and performance art all converged seamlessly in the small SET place and to great effect.

This particular series, *Art/&/of/?/vs./or/Design*, focuses on the correlation between--Art and Design. Selected artists were asked to contribute a work in both mediums based on similar subject matter or aesthetic concept. The result is not only a dialogue on art and design between the artist and him or herself, but also a collaborative one, providing compelling example of contemporary art as an active and ongoing dialogue between emerging creative talents.

The standout piece at the event was *Eternal Fire*, a series of photographs based on work by Russian street artists Monobrow and T-Radya. Inspired by the 70th anniversary of the beginning of World War II, *Eternal Flame* features haunting portraits of Russian soldiers from the period. Images are outlined in gasoline-soaked gauze strips attached to wooden boards and then attacked by that artist from afar via carefully lobbed Molotov cocktails. The scarred pieces are then mounted onto the exterior of an abandoned industrial building. As elements of design, they provide compelling critique to the functionality of urban space. Boarded up windows in post-industrial cities are hinted at in Monobrow’s material selection along with an aesthetic compulsion to resurrect a forgotten place.

Considering the entire BRURAL exhibition, each work seems imbued with a kinetic quality. This resonates throughout the larger contemporary movement, where artists vie for recognition in a fast paced and fickle market. Trends go in and out so rapidly that it’s hard to keep up, though the ride can be exhilarating. Design has always had a place in the social and political dialogue of the modern moment; in the best cases, it is a lasting means of expression that can give image to intangible hopes and as of yet unimagined dreams. It has the potential to be the voice of modernity inflected on the physical environment. Ruslan Khasanov’s liquid calligraphy is a good example of this multidisciplinary and active application of traditional technique. Video of letters being formed is cool to watch and, as with *Eternal Flame*, the process is once again as good as the result.

*Brural* and exhibitions like it are important in their sustained *focus* on a part of the world that is once again on our radar. The Ural region, it insists, is as important as Brooklyn in cultural potential. The narrative of a “global youth movement” is a compelling one, and the promise of emerging talents from a relatively unknown region is alluring. The 24 hour news cycle has built a new kind of spectator, however, with very little patience for anything that does not happen immediately, and to great result. Perhaps our focus on Russian politics would have been longer, if the people had toppled Putin’s regime through protest. They did not. Though it did not make the moment less relevant in the modern social context, or in consideration of Russia’s future on the world stage.

Design can bridge these gaps in our attention span, and provide insight into the possibility of dreary cityscapes and burnt out facades. For example, the Highline was not always what it is today; it took both vision and application to realize the cultural potential of what was once deemed an ocular nightmare. It is easy to become lost in musings on the harsh quality of a concrete streetscape. But, look at a photograph of the same space with superimposed orange and yellow umbrellas, and there is a suggestion of possibility that wasn’t there before.

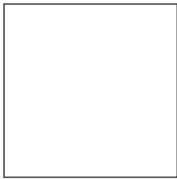
All artists featured in the exhibition convey deliberation in their submitted work. Indeed, Iodori's vision for the exhibition requires it. The artist is called to consider the occupation of designer and vice versa, to detract natural focus from his or her preferred medium to the study of another. BRURAL brings its audience two visions of the future, from two very different places. Walking through the exhibition, however, one intuits a common voice that inspires renewed faith in the potential of the modern moment to effect lasting and positive change, now and into the future.

For more information please visit:

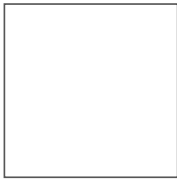
SET: <http://www.setgallery.org/>

Project 59, Inc: <http://www.project59.org/>

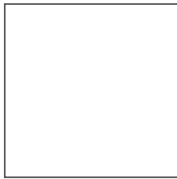
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