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A. C. M., Mansaray, Rigo 23 & Volyazlovsky

Andrew Edlin Gallery
134 10th Avenue, near 18th Street
Chelsea
Through Sept. 3

The notion that self-taught art remains a terra incognita, constantly refreshed by hidden streams of creativity around the world, is reinforced by this vibrantly inharmonious show. It presents four artists born after World War II who are largely unknown to New York galleries and museums, although one or two have been glimpsed at the annual Outsider Art Fair.

That's where you might have seen the delicate sculptures that A. C. M., who was born in France in 1951, makes from fragments of discarded typewriters and computer circuit boards. I did, but didn't really appreciate the variety and expansiveness of these obsessive structures. Some are gray, encrusted and ostensibly industrial, like long-exposed shipwrecks or space stations from a Lilliputian planet. Others are follies or gardens dotted with points of glowing color and intimations of plumed birds and even guardian figures; sets for "Turandot" or Mayan palaces come to mind. The point is that each piece casts its spell only at close range; you lean forward and enter a miniature, moldering world that one way or another seems to have accrued of its own accord.

Abu Bakarr Mansaray, born in West Africa in 1970, unspools horrifying narratives of personal or political betrayal in fine drawings made with pencils, pens and spare but vivid touches of color. In one, a wronged lover's vengeance is reaped by ferocious Assyrian lions in a manner that garners sympathy for the supposed wrongdoers. In another, the deadly warfare on the streets of Sierra Leone is reflected in the aviator glasses of a hidden witness. Mr. Mansaray's words and images have a remorseless toxicity; each work could almost be the hellish opening scene of some apocalyptic nightmare.

The drawings of Rigo 23, who was born in Portugal in 1966, are a form of blunt protest art whose sources, one can imagine, include newspaper front pages, military manuals and watchdog group reports. Their subject is usually the Reaper drones used by the United States in Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen: their costs in terms of civilian casualties and taxpayer money. Each drawing is a combination of grisaille images of U.A.V.'s (unarmed airborne vehicles) and text. Sometimes the

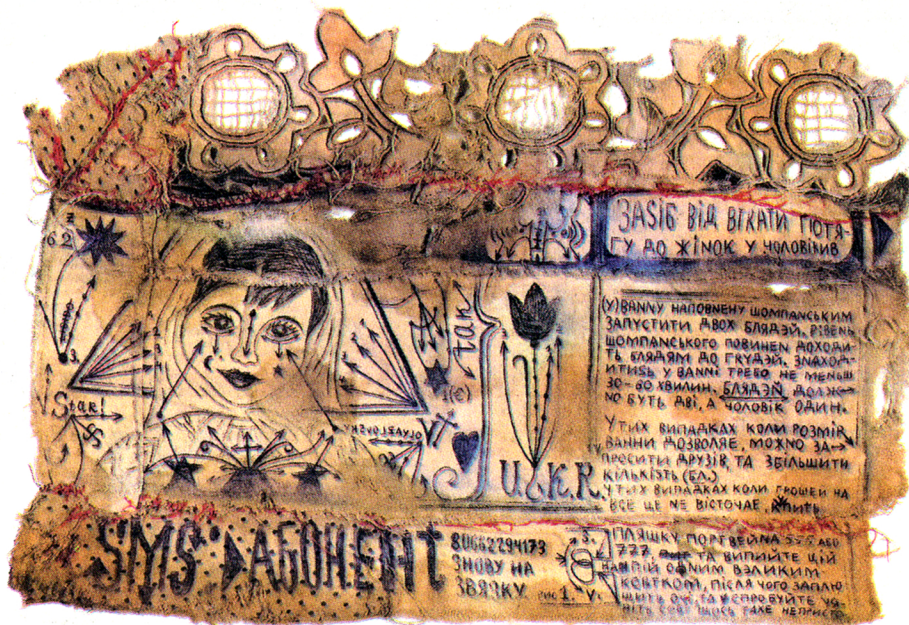
words shout like headlines: "MQ-9 REAPER, Hellfire Missiles" barks the lettering on one drawing. But smaller printing lists weapons carried by the MQ-9, or note the United States government's plans to increase production. The anger in these works begins with their non-nonsense graphic style.

Stas Volyazlovsky, born in Ukraine in 1971, comes across here as the most versatile and, perhaps, perverse of the four. He reserves a slightly archaic folk-art style for his pen-and-pencil drawings on textiles. On No. 4 of his "Folk Medicine" series, a gamine's almond-eyed face, its expression amplified by arrows, is surrounded by Cyrillic letters and texts and the word "Star!" Above her, a yellowed edge of elaborate appliqué and eyelet, highlighted by drawing, forms a kind of enlarged tiara. An old cloth runner is the occasion for hand-drawn borders, swastikas, Russian words and bits of English: "Kill My Love!" "Oskar" and "Silvester Stalone." In "Magic Mirror," an embellished tablecloth, George W. Bush regards a mirror; his reflection is the face of Hitler.

Mr. Volyazlovsky adopts a more contemporary style on paper, depicting himself in orange underwear stuffed with American money in a work titled "Visual aid manual for studying S. Volyazlovsky's finance." But his vehement tone is unrelenting. Over all, these introductions leave a nicely nasty aftertaste. Nothing goes down easy.

ROBERTA SMITH

Art in Review



ANDREW EDLIN GALLERY

No. 4 of the "Folk Medicine" series by Stas Volyazlovsky, whose drawings on textiles are at the Andrew Edlin Gallery in a show that also includes A. C. M., Rigo 23 and Abu Bakarr Mansaray.