

Flash Art

issue No. 277
REVIEWS

MONA VĂTĂMANU AND FLORIN TUDOR LOMBARD FREID PROJECTS- NEW YORK



MONA VĂTĂMANU and FLORIN TUDOR. Above: *Land Distribution*, 2011. Metal rebar, VHS tape, wood, paint, variable dimensions. Left: *Poem*, 2009. Single channel color video transferred from super 8mm film, 7 mins. Courtesy the artists and Lombard Freid Projects, New York.

Strong on ideas but weak on visuals, this Romanian duo pursues an interesting course of investigation. Experiencing the shift of their native country from communism to capitalism, Vătămanu and Tudor now investigate the socio-political evolution of countries that are in transition.

Two films shot in low-resolution Super-8 are projected on the walls at the rear of the gallery.

Vatamanu and Tudor question their past by re-thinking and reworking communist truths. *Surplus Value* (2009) shows a piece of metal being filed away until nothing remains. The film recreates a Romanian schoolchildren's exercise in manual labor and questions the purpose of work. The second film, *Poem* (2009), presents a classroom setting with a group of young people sewing white letters on a red banner. The banner, similar to one that hangs in the front gallery, is an ironic take on communist slogans, reading, "Long Live and Thrive Capitalism." The anthem calls into question propaganda and the ability of any one system to provide all solutions.

A large installation titled *Land Distribution* (2011) fills the front gallery leaving very little space to maneuver. Shoulder-high rods strung with magnetic tape create an oppressive grid. The title and material used refer to a documentary about recent land distribution in Venezuela. Structures of rods and VHS tape are used to delineate the land that is being re-distributed to the people. A text on the wall beneath the banner refers to the return of property in former communist countries

to previous owners, thus posing the evolving political realities: "Land and land distribution means currency, reform or poverty depending on geographical, historical or socio-political conditions."

Questioning recent global developments and the way ideologies affect people and places, the hypotheses of Mona Vătămanu and Florin Tudor are engaging, though a certain graininess and the dryness of the objects presented here interferes visually with the potential richness of the ideas implied.

Gregory Montreuil

