

## Andrei Molodkin: Crude



26th January – 17th March, 2013

Katzen Art Center, American University Museum  
Washington D.C.

Artist reception: 6 – 9pm, 26th January with introductory talk at 6pm

***The work featured in CRUDE is an extraordinary research in oil, its behaviour and its meaning. It's exciting to see an artist who really belongs to this time, who brings you right into the present.***

Jim Harithas, Director, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston

Opening in the week of President Obama's second-term inauguration, *CRUDE* presents a recent body of work by internationally recognised artist Andrei Molodkin which centres on the doctrine of Liberty in contemporary global politics. On display will be a series of factory-made acrylic sculptures and large scale canvases executed in ball-point pen. Crude oil is positioned as fuelling the War on Terror and, crucially, becomes the paradigm under which socio-political ironies are explored.

As an artist-engineer, Molodkin constructs work which manifests as a complex mechanical system. By re-appropriating the materials and technology utilized by the oil industry at large, Molodkin uses the idiosyncratic language of the industry he is critiquing to expose the corruption and contradictions that lie within.

The oil-sculpture *DEMOCRACY*, 2008 is sited at the core of the exhibition. Placed in a disrupted formation directly onto the floor, it comprises nine separate acrylic blocks, each hollowed to spell the individual letters of 'Democracy'. A complex series of pipes protrude from the letters and spiral around the polluted word. These are joined to a number of cast-iron pumps that sporadically push air into the tubes, transferring oil throughout the autonomous sculpture. As a result, the work is presented in both a literal and metaphorical state of flux. Observing *DEMOCRACY* in motion, the staccato noise from the pressurised pumps transforms into aggressive gunshots; the gentle dripping of the oil within, reminiscent of the blood spilt in conflict.

Katzen Art Center, American University Museum - 4400 Massachusetts Avenue Northwest, Washington, DC 20016

The exhibition was conceived and produced at Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston Texas (2011/2012); the nucleus of the country's oil production, refinement and commerce. It now travels to the Katzen Art Centre at the American University Museum in Washington D.C., the centre of US federal Government and the symbolic heart of Western politics.

Andrei Molodkin's *Liquid Modernity*, 2009 installation has entered Tate's permanent collection, London UK. The vast structure is made from acrylic and fluorescent tubes, crude oil, industrial pumps and compressors, and is accompanied by four preliminary sketches which detail the conception of the project. Crude oil powers the fluorescent tubes creating a mutually dependent dual installation, which references the questionable imprisonment of Mikhael Khodorkovsky.

In 2009 Andrei Molodkin was invited to take part in the 53rd Venice Biennale, where he exhibited the installation *Le Rouge et le Noir* in the Russian pavilion. Chechen oil and the blood from wounded soldiers pumped through two replicas of the Louvre's Nike of Samothrace. Recently, Molodkin has had the following solo shows - *Absolute Return*, Museum of Modern Art, Saint Etienne (2011); *CRUDE*, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston Texas (2011/12) and *Liquid Black*, Museum Villa Stuck, Munich (2012).

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#### About the artist:

Andrei Molodkin was born 1966 in Boui, North Russia and graduated from the Department of Architecture and Industrial Design at Stroganov Institute, Moscow in 1992. Whilst studying he also served in the Soviet Army, convoying missiles through Siberia. In the freezing temperatures, Molodkin would rub oil over his body to provide the warmth to keep himself alive. Oil became his source of survival, yet he was always acutely aware of the corruption and exploitation embedded in its very substance. Throughout Molodkin's career, he continues to explore the connotations of oil in a myriad of high-profile socio-political contexts.

#### Museum information, hours, location:

The American University Museum is a three-story public museum and sculpture garden located within the university's Katzen Arts Center. The region's largest university facility for exhibiting art, the museum has a permanent collection that highlights the donors' holdings and the AU's Watkins Collection. Rotating exhibitions emphasize regional, national, and international contemporary art.

The American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday - Sunday. Admission is free. For more information, call 202-885-1300 or look on the Web at [www.american.edu/cas/museum](http://www.american.edu/cas/museum)