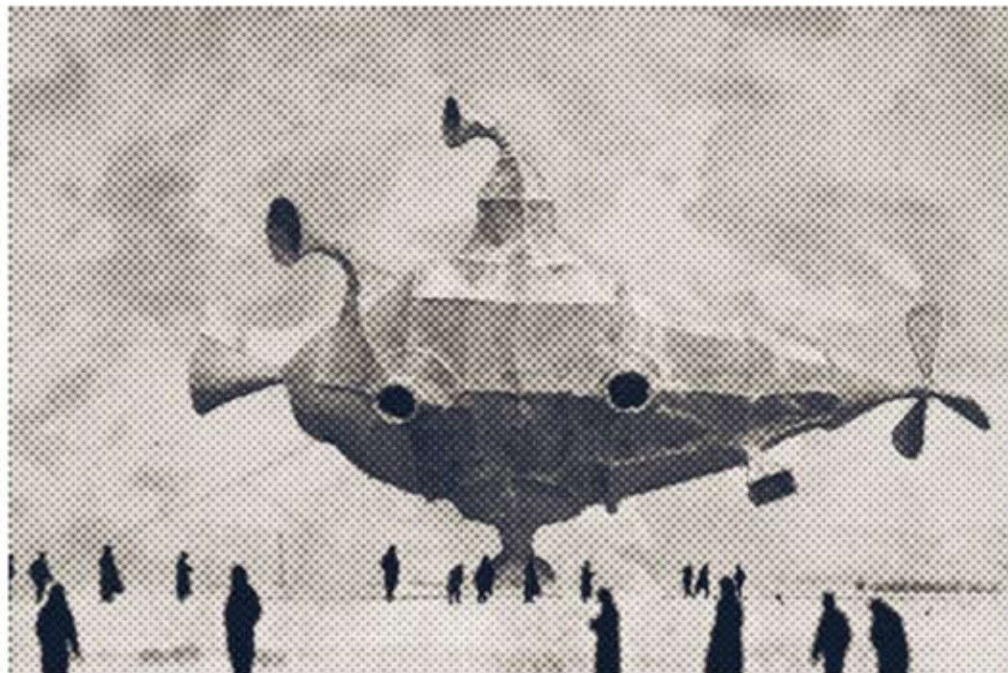


Aga Ousseinov "Selfportrait in Bathyscaphe and Other Loosely Connected Stories"

At Christopher Henry Gallery

March 19 - April 12, 2009

Media: Sculpture



There is a Quixotic, almost pathological optimism in the works – a virtuous, childlike faith in a world of possibilities, a world where contradictions and anachronisms thrive despite the anchoring of reality and history. Fragile and elegant, Ousseinov's sculptures transform the fantastical constructions of a child's dream world into a new reality, a world filled with Etruscan scuba divers, flying submarines, mechanical elephants, and square globes. Irony replaces truth for the sake of good storytelling, turning the unreal into a very real satire of the imperfect world.

Ousseinov's romantic vision of epic heroes and antiheroes traversing the perilous geographies of life was forged as a child growing up in the former Soviet Union. The exhibition is loosely based on a drawing he completed at the age of eleven for a competition heralding the "Heroism of Soviet scientists and the Arctic explorers in 1930s." Inspired by the trials and tribulations of Umberto Nobile's Arctic voyage, Ousseinov's entry displayed the entire timeline and was rejected because, as the cynical judge stated, "It has caused some doubts about the simultaneous presence in your work of the airship "Italia", the icebreaker "Krassin," the Red Tent...as well as the plane, piloted by Lundborg, which removed Nobile to the mainland from the ice flow." As in society, the childlike optimism of possibilities and alternate realities is silenced with the adult pessimism of coming to terms with "life as it is." The Soviet Union may be gone, but the manifestation of Ousseinov's reality is alive and well.