

The New York Times

FEB. 6, 2014



Dread Scott's "Constitution of the USSR" (2014), in "The Wayland Rudd Collection," a show at Winkleman Gallery. Courtesy the artist and Winkleman Gallery, New York

Art in Review

By [HOLLAND COTTER](#)

'The Wayland Rudd Collection'

Winkleman Gallery
621 West 27th Street
Through Feb. 15

Born in Moscow in 1972 and now living in New York City, the conceptualist Yevgeniy Fiks is a virtuoso in the art of recovering cultural memory. In a 2013 [solo](#) at Winkleman, "Homosexuality Is Stalin's Atom Bomb to Destroy America," he connected dots between Cold War anti-communism and homophobia. The [current group show](#) he has organized, "The Wayland Rudd Collection," is based on the little-documented history of the African-American presence in Russia. The black American actor Wayland Rudd emigrated to the Soviet Union in the 1930s hoping to find a tolerant social climate; there he had a stage and film career until his death in 1952. While assembling an archive on Rudd and other black expatriates to Russia, Mr. Fiks asked a dozen or so contemporary artists to submit work in some way related to the subject, and that's what we see here.

Some hew fairly closely to the historical subject. Suzanne Broughel contributes a collage based on a photograph of Rudd, and Dread Scott inserts images of black figures into Soviet revolutionary posters. Natalia Pershina-Yakimanskaya (also known as Gluklya) creates a line of Russian dresses incorporating African fabrics. Ivan Brazhkin, in short video, tells the story of the Russian-Brazilian actor Tito Romalio (1951-2010), who was [killed](#) in St. Petersburg in what could be interpreted as a racially motivated crime

Other artists simply go with what it means to be a stranger in a strange land. Joy Garnett documents the short, elusive, embattled life of Ismail Ahmed Edham (1911-1940), an Egyptian writer (and distant relative of the artist) who claimed to have been educated in Russia. Kara Lynch, in a video and a series of handwritten books, records her time in Moscow during an artist's residency in 1994.

Drawings by Zachary Fabri center on images of Angela Davis, a black power figure politically harassed in the 1960s for her links to the Communist Party. And music by the young artist-activist [Nikolay Oleynikov](#), performing with the Moscow riot-punk-folk band Arkadiy Kots, gives a sense of rebel resistance in an ethnically and sexually intolerant Russia today.

Mr. Fiks's show is full of information and gives interesting artists (Alexey Katalkin, Jenny Polak, Michael Paul Britto) a chance to display offbeat, issue-charged work. It's scheduled to travel to First Floor Gallery, Harare, Zimbabwe, this summer.