



### COLLECTOR DAILY RATING



### ON VIEW

[Bori Mikhailov: Four Decades](#)  
November 23, 2013 - February 8, 2014

[Dominique Lévy Gallery](#)  
909 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10021

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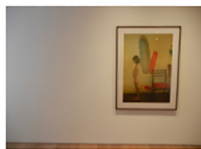
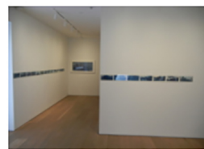
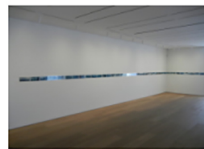
## Boris Mikhailov: Four Decades @Dominique Lévy

By Loring Knoblauch / In [Galleries](#) / December 16, 2013

**JTF (just the facts):** A total of 146 photographic works, variously framed and matted, and hung against white walls in two separate rooms. The works have been executed in a variety of photographic processes, and were made between 1968 and 2000. (Installation shots below.)

The show includes works from several projects/series, with details as follows:

- *Superimpositions*: 1 chromogenic print, framed in brown and unmatted, 1968-1975, 59x39, in an edition of 5
- *Crimean Snobbism*: 1 set of 55 sepia toned gelatin silver prints, framed in blond wood and matted, 1981, each 7x5 (or reverse), in an edition of 3
- *Green*: 1 triptych made of gelatin silver prints hand colored with aniline, framed in brown and unmatted, 1991-1993, overall 104x118, unique
- *Green*: 1 gelatin silver print hand colored with aniline, framed in brown and unmatted, 1991-1993, 40x94, unique
- *At Dusk*: 1 set of 110 hand toned blue gelatin silver prints (not all on view), unframed and pinned directly to the wall behind Plexi, 1993, each 5x12, in editions/variations of 5+2AP
- *At Dusk*: 1 set of 20 chromogenic prints, framed in white and matted, 2000, each 24x51, in editions of 3



**Comments/Context:** Given the embarrassment of photographic riches available here in New York, we are continually seduced into thinking that the view from this city is somehow comprehensive or all encompassing. But the fact is, we routinely miss the arrival of important international photography because it hasn't shown up here for one reason or another, and as a result, our sense of the larger trends is often twisted and blindered by our myopic view of what is in front of us. While this problem has been kicking around in my head for a while now, it was given physical

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presence by this superlative Boris Mikhailov show. While this exhibit isn't a retrospective exactly, it brings together a handful of projects that show the spread of Mikhailov's art over the past four decades, and for those that haven't been following his work closely enough (aside from his bruising *Case History* show at MoMA a few years ago), it will leave you wondering how we have failed to pay better attention to so much innovative photography.

In every one of Mikhailov's series, there is a sense of palpable political context, of the artist wrestling with larger economic and social realities that have an almost physical presence. The earliest works on view were made during the Soviet era and push up against the constraints of the totalitarian regime. His sandwich prints combine multiple negatives into one collage-like image, collapsing a morose nude child in a drearily empty room with the impossibly jaunty colors of large balloons, putting private and public into contradiction. In the early 1980s, Mikhailov used a vacation snapshot aesthetic to highlight just how unlikely (no ridiculous) it might be for a group of artists to be vacationing at the fancy spas of the Crimean coast. Friends pose in bikinis, spitting water each other, dancing with palm leaves, and horsing around in lovely gardens and on rocky beaches, the images executed to look like family fun, but with a tongue in cheek wink at just how implausible such a trip was for everyone except the chosen few.

With the fall of the Soviet regime in the early 1990s and the subsequent decline into economic malaise, Mikhailov's work takes on an even darker, more documentary tone. The *Green* series is like a bleak parody of triumphant Soviet mural art, with large panels of rusting equipment (classic Modernist silhouettes of ladders and girders), abandoned industry, and the futile struggle of workers overwashed with an acidic, almost toxic mix of green, yellow, and ochre; the wall filling triptych is wholly depressing and anti-heroic, but has a compelling sense of competing ugliness and beauty. The *At Dusk* series evolves these ideas further toward capturing the decaying social order found in the streets. Using a panoramic camera which seems to make the sky push down with even more unbearable weight, he inventories the poverty and misery which prevails: fallen ice, dirty clothes, long lines, people scavenging cardboard and sleeping in the gutter, hollowed out by hunger and emptiness, all drowning in a murky blue tint. They are pictures of instability, hardship, and unrelenting grimness, almost timeless in their muted, uneven palette.

This show isn't comprehensive enough to tell all of Mikhailov's many stories or to help us connect the dots across four decades of artistic output, but there is enough here to reinforce his reputation as a major talent. There is a bravura facility with the breadth of photography on view that we don't often encounter – he jumps from process to process, from camera to camera, and from genre to genre with effortless ease, using what he needs to create the mood any one series might require. From our perch in the West, it is hard to truly grasp the darkness of his vision, but what I like best is Mikhailov's tenacious unwillingness to look away. Even as the world around him has become more complex, challenging, and despairing, he has consistently delivered nuanced jolts of provocative intelligence, forcing us to see what he sees.

**Collector's POV:** The works in this show are priced as follows, based on the project:

- *Superimpositions*: \$40000
- *Crimean Snobbism*: \$240000 for the complete set
- *Green*: \$180000 for the single image, €480000 for the triptych
- *At Dusk*: while complete sets are available, the small prints are also being sold in groups of 10+, at \$7000 each, and the large prints in pairs, at \$12000 each

Mikhailov's work has only been sporadically available at auction in recent years; prices have ranged between roughly \$3000 and \$30000. But given that the secondary markets haven't included a representative sample of his work, gallery retail is likely still the best option for those collectors interested in following up.