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ANDRA URSUTA: 'Vandal Lust'
By ROBERTA SMITH

Andra Ursuta, who was born in Romania in 1979 and has lived and worked in New York since 2000, operates in several modes, all cheerfully dark. There are the fine little nature studies of decomposing human forms and crawling insects framed in cast dirt that she has exhibited at White Columns, and the cutely sinister dollhouse-like rendition of the modest one-room house she grew up in that can be seen, along with more drawings, in "*Ostalgia*," an exhibition of art inspired by life in Eastern Europe at the New Museum. This little chamber is overseen by a white phantom made of the soap that her parents produced for a living.



Andra Ursuta's life-size tableau "*Vandal Lust*" at Ramiken Crucible. It was partly inspired by a 1984 work by Ilya Kabakov .

For her second solo at Ramiken Crucible, Ms. Ursuta has created a life-size tableau titled "*Vandal Lust*" that was partly inspired by "*The Man Who Flew Into Space From His Apartment*," Ilya Kabakov's 1984 installation piece about escape from Soviet Russia. "*Vandal Lust*" centers on a crudely made catapult that has apparently been used in an attempt to launch the artist into space from the gallery. That she didn't get very far is suggested by a large dent in the back wall and a babushka-wearing female mannequin (with a face resembling Ms. Ursuta's) that lies, slightly flattened by the impact, crumpled on the floor.

In Ms. Ursuta's best efforts, her narratives are convincingly bodied forth by a distinctively fractured, somewhat deprived sense of craft. The catapult in particular is cobbled together from scraps of lumber, cardboard, resin and plaster, with straplike lengths of fabric woven with a floral motif left over from a line of peasant-inspired sportswear that the artist once designed. Despite its size and brutishness, this structure also has aspects of delicacy and even miniaturization. It almost seems to be made from a network of tiny corridors and passageways, all clogged with stuff. In other words, it is implicitly and structurally insane, which is consistent with the overall scheme.