

Karen Rosenberg, "Art in Review: David Maljkovic," *The New York Times*, February 20, 2009, pp. C29

## David Maljkovic 'Retired Compositions'

*Metro Pictures*  
519 West 24th Street, Chelsea  
Through Saturday

David Maljkovic, a Croatian

artist born in 1973, has made a series of multimedia projects about art in the former Yugoslavia. Abstraction made brief inroads there during the 1950s, courtesy of an experimental group called EXAT-51 (short for Experimental Atelier). It's a fascinating subject, though Mr. Maljkovic doesn't quite seem to know what to do with it in his first American solo show.

In two short 16-millimeter films projected on a Constructivist sculptural backdrop, Mr. Maljkovic takes a lingering look at monuments to experimental art in current-day Zagreb, Croatia. The documentary-style "Images With Their Own Shadows" was shot at the estate-turned-mu-

seum of the EXAT founder Vjenceslav Richter, whose voice (from a recorded interview) accompanies the film.

In "Retired Form," the camera circles a monument to World War II victims designed by the artist Vojin Bakic and installed in Zagreb's Memorial Park in 1968. A special publication from a Zagreb-based gallery provides some helpful background on Mr. Bakic, who was seen as something of a socialist "state artist" despite his espousal of abstraction.

A sculpture and related collages reconstruct the American pavilion at the 1956 Zagreb Fair, a trade fair that provided a vital conduit among the United States, the Soviet Union and the developing world during the cold war. The sculpture, "Lost Pavilion," is a model-size reconstruction of the squat, Space Age building. Low, staticky sounds, composed by Jan St. Werner of the electron-

ic music duo Mouse on Mars, emanate from a speaker in the base.

There's a lot going on here: conflicting modernisms, re-claimed legacies and even a touch of nostalgia for an era in which abstraction was harnessed to ideology. At the very least, Mr. Maljkovic reminds us that art in postwar Eastern Europe wasn't totally circumscribed by Socialist Realism. **KAREN ROSENBERG**