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Dolls with a bite

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By Gil Goldfine

ARTS

Dolls with a bite

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An absorbing exhibition of faceless yet oriental-looking dolls handcrafted by Zoya Cherkassky (b. 1976, Russia, here since 1991) is accompanied by a range of tastefully designed home products and small, yet stylish personal items. To dress and detail her impish mannequins, Cherkassky was assisted by Helena Blaunstein, a recent graduate of Shenkar College whose fashion designs are labeled by the brand name Frau Blau.

Below the surface of Cherkassky's sardonic *The Victims' Ball* (*Le Bal des Victimes*) is a biting social commentary on the extraordinary clout governmental agencies wield and their impact on ordinary citizens described here as a captive and bewildered population battling its way through the labyrinth of power.

Preliminary drawings provide the backdrop for her 10 dolls – Victims of Transport, Labor, Finance, Education, Health, Justice etc. – placed on high pedestals, suggesting a sort of Hyde Park Corner, where soap-box orators verbally assault every possible institution and social issue.

Cherkassky's ability to encapsulate a subject and focus on its fundamentals was also borne out in *Collectio Judaica*, an intriguing project of weavings, installations, and three-

dimensional works she mounted 18 months ago.

Cherkassky's technical skills, coupled with her social insights, border on the masterful. One would be hard pressed to discover the slightest detail, animated gesture, or symbolic element out of place.

Blaunstein has created the dolls' attire and accessories from a computerized program as indicated by the fine graphic details and artificial stitching, coloring, and textures of the cloth.

The exhibition's title was adopted from the most important of several balls conducted by curious dancing societies that developed after the French Revolution and continued as a social activity well into the 19th century. Only surviving relatives from the revolution's Reign of Terror were admitted to these fêtes, at which aristocracy deliberately paraded the latest and most bizarre fashions in dress and coiffure. Recommended. (Rosenfeld Gallery, 147 Dizengoff, Tel Aviv). Till May 29.

THE VENUE for *Seascapes*, Michael Kovner's current exhibition of oils, couldn't be more appropriate. Located on an escarpment in Netanya overlooking the Mediterranean, the elements one observes in the paintings are comparable to those that peek



Michael Kovner: Seascape, oils (On the Cliff



Zoya Cherkassky: Transport, Finance and Culture, from *The Victims' Ball* (Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv)