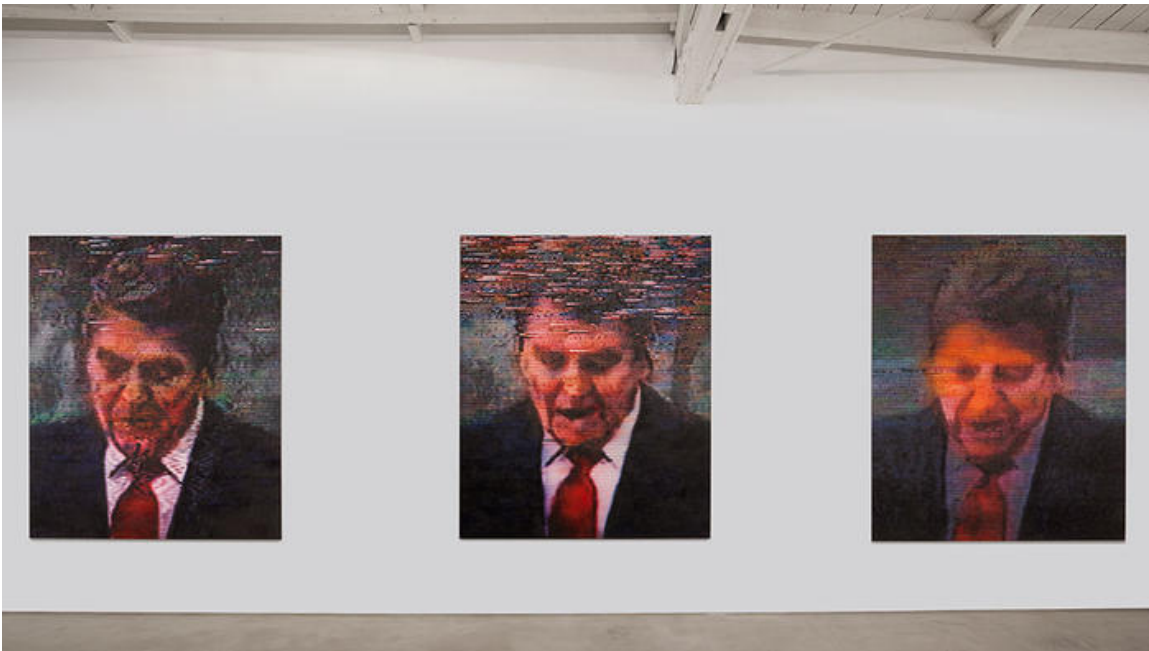


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Mixed media, mixed messages at Oh Wow



Kon Trubkovich, "House of the Rising Sun," installation view at Oh Wow Gallery, Los Angeles. (Oh Wow, Los Angeles)

By **SHARON MIZOTA**

New York artist Kon Trubkovich's exhibition at Oh Wow features a suite of large paintings of Ronald Reagan, based on a video of his 1987 Brandenburg Gate speech in Berlin.

Having emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1990, Trubkovich sees this speech—in which Reagan demanded Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev “tear down” the Berlin Wall—as a public and personal

history. The exhibition circles this productive intersection, although it feels more like a promising beginning than a fully realized project.

The paintings preserve the video's striated texture and distortion, re-enacting the video and giving it a new physicality, but I'm not sure they do enough to capture the layers of meaning that Trubkovich intends.

If the paintings are too reticent, a five-channel video installation is too fussy. It features found footage of Russians of various ages and genders performing the American folk song "House of the Rising Sun." Singing in accented English or making up new lyrics in Russian, the videos are fascinating on their own, but Trubkovich has interjected squiggles and splotches, as well as other related but distracting footage.

Oddly, the highlight of the show is in the back room, a row of small, graphite drawings that depict alternately brick walls and open skies. Rendered with the same video static as the Reagan paintings, they suggest how barriers and freedom are ideological constructions.

Oh Wow, 937 N. La Cienega Blvd., (310) 652-1711, through Feb. 14. Closed Sunday and Monday. www.oh-wow.com