

Maria Pishvanova

# Sovok

## Artist Statement

What is “sovok”? In Russian, it literally means “scoop” and is a play on the word “soviet.” In practice, it is a scornfully-comic designation of the soviet lifestyle and everything that had to do with it. It is a stigma, one placed by Soviet people themselves on their life in the USSR. Through it, some kind of a passive protest was expressed. People made fun of themselves in a way. But it was a rather sad, dark sort of humor.

Working on the project “Sovok” I aimed to depict in a grotesque, joking, and, at the same time, exposing manner the hopelessly depressive mood of this period. To this end, I moved beyond painting and graphic design and turned to art installation. Using various pieces of industrial waste, I drew closer to how it felt during that 70-year period.

I am a witness of this time and know it inside and out, not by hearsay. I lived within this society and remember it. I think that my project will tell people things they never knew, things that should not be forgotten.

# Sovok

## Characteristics

Brainwashing

Censorship

Leveling

Equalizing

Impositioning of various dogmas

Shadowing

Abscense of human rights

Faking life values

Personality cult

Pseudo Patriotism

Inculcation of communist ideology in every stratum of society

*All this with a background of total poverty and shortages.*