

# Insider Information

a mixed-media  
installation  
about Wall Street

by  
**Virginia  
Maksymowicz**

- She had no known address and appeared to be homeless.

- *He was born in Transylvania.*

- She claimed some injustice had been done to her in the past.

- *His personal fortune was estimated at \$400 million.*

- She asked to speak to someone in charge.

- *He was alleged to have laundered profits of Latin-American drug dealers.*

- She began yelling.

- *It is not likely that the true nature of his business will ever be known.*

- She carried a knapsack, an aluminum baseball bat and \$150 in cash.

- *He had a high reputation for courage, boldness and reliability.*

- She was not a raving maniac.

- *He had been embroiled in bankruptcy proceedings.*

- She opened fire and shot him, a physical fitness fanatic, in the chest.

**Amos Eno  
Gallery**

**164 Mercer Street  
New York City  
(212) 226-5342**

**Exhibition Dates:  
November 12-  
December 1,  
1988**

**Gallery Hours:  
Tues.-Sat.  
noon-6 pm  
Sunday by appointment**

## GEKKO AND THE GUERRILLA GIRLS

There is something about suspenders and striped shirts with white starched collars that makes you think about money and power. Add a bank of telephones, computer screens, ticker tape and a nefarious cloud of cigar smoke and boom, you're on your way to the next Hollywood blockbuster. Of course, it's already been done with Oliver Stone's *Wall Street*, feeding off newspaper headlines of MBA greed, creating fictional characters like Gordon Gekko that mirror the Boeskys and Trumps with unflattering precision.

Appropriating another way, Virginia Maksymowicz filters the headlines and up-to-the-minute metaphors through her own vision as a woman artist dealing with a male work-a-day world. You've probably heard of reporters and G-men going undercover to expose corruption and you may even remember a *Village Voice* reporter who assumed a male disguise to see how the other half lives. However your memory serves you, there's a familiar space for the investigator in you, the Jack Newfield itch to slam the worst landlord or the Bob Woodward passion to uncover another CIA contra-coverup. So meet Virginia Maksymowicz who supports her artmaking by "temping" for Wall Street's elite. She represents a new wave version of secretaries who don't want to marry their bosses but find high hourly wages speeding along computer keyboards, the best route to affording Pearl Paint.

*Excess Assets* confronts the viewer that way, by word-playing, deconstructing and spoofing the cliches that all of us are happily (unfortunately?) addicted to. So here we are, staring at the future whiz kid with the pencil behind his ear, the neon-green glare of VDT screens rendering his pensive face a sickly gray. The image is second-generation, lifted off the video, giving it a fuzzy chiaroscuro. Isolated, it wouldn't do much except illustrate what we've probably already seen on the big screen. But Maksymowicz takes that reduced splice and sticks it on a cast paper rear-end (her own to be specific). The story line shifts as the next onion-skin layer is peeled back and exposed. The stereotypic male world is rattled by the fleshy relief it clings to, like a painting trying to deport itself properly in the Guggenheim, hanging on one of Frank Lloyd Wright's curving walls.

"She must be kidding," you figure; how else can you explain the seeming contradicton in her story board-telling realism couched against the sensuality of her body-part self-portraits? The color

screen is stuck like fly paper to the Kodak gray scale. Divisions of labor are neutrally laid out. These are not male asses. That would never do, as Vito Acconci rudely told us.

Maksymowicz is not forging a new sit-com episode of Marjorie Morningstar gone corporate or Laura Ashley invading the board room in a hundred decorator shades. Her temping on Wall Street as an alien eavesdropping on another world makes that division clearer, like Erica Rothenberg's fabricated pantyhose for the female executive, creating a phallic bulge in the crotch.

"Insider Information" is the artist's generic label for her unique foray into cultural archeology, digging up the shards of our daily lives, so thinly disguised by fashion and the label on your attaché case. With a seamless transition, Maksymowicz switches channels to *Homeless Woman Kills Wall Street Financier*, a true story that made headlines and sold papers for a few days. The facts—as reported in the newspapers—are divided into a duo of typeset vignettes presenting the two protagonists: perpetrator (the homeless woman) and victim (the executive). Despite negative references to some of the financier's activities—laundering profits of Latin American drug dealers and deep involvement with the CIA—his power and wealth are lionized, creating in print a fallen hero. But the woman is crushed like a bug. She has no assets. It's not a pretty portrait: ". . . she had long, matted, salt-and-pepper hair . . . she was often incoherent . . . it was not known how she supported herself." The account leaves no room for pity. Instead of trying to understand her position, we seek refuge in the descriptions of his tailored suits and Scarsdale mansion.

Emerging from this scroll-like monologue, a female torso hovers on the surface in cast paper relief, sensual as a 4th-century marble Aphrodite. The words retreat, trivialized by the power of the sculpted flesh, the touch of humanity. Shorn of words, the two figures are equals but there is no escaping the script.

What can we say to this homeless Aphrodite? How do we protest the dross of Wall Street, the junk bond traders who continue to rake in millions while the indictments accumulate like a scofflaw's parking tickets? Amnesty and immunity belong to the very rich, so the message imparts. Maksymowicz shows us fragments of the naked truth, excavated, dusted off, framed in a particular way. Through her obsessive filter, we view the world in a different way.

Judd Tully