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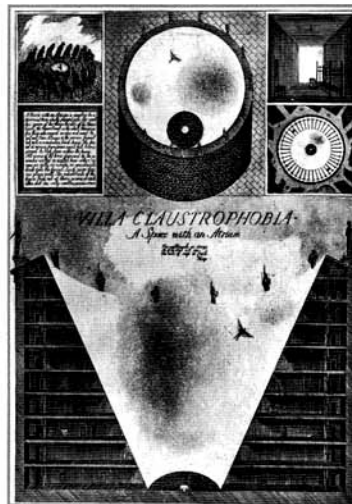
Paper Architects "Build" in New York Gallery

"Paper architects" draw a lot of fire in this country, where confining one's ideas to the theoretical realm often seems like a cop-out. But in the restrictive building climate of the Soviet Union (now hampered not by ideology but by construction bureaucracy and a dearth of material choices) works on paper have been the most inspiring output in recent years. The etchings of the best known of the Soviet "paper architects," Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin, were recently on display at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in New York.

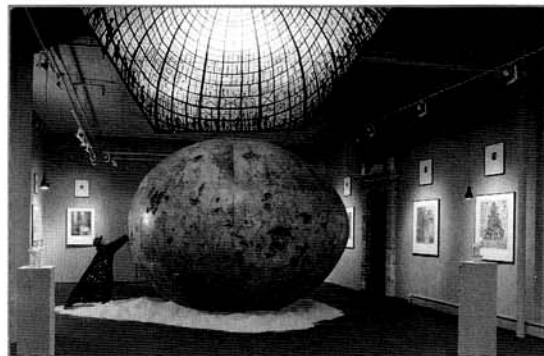
Brodsky and Utkin, like many of their colleagues, have made a name (and a living) for themselves by winning theoretical competitions in Japan and Europe, addressing programs like "a glass monument to the year 2001." Their solutions sometimes deal with specific questions of architectural form but more often seem to be commenting on social and philosophical

issues in urban life. Their "Villa Claustrophobia," for example, a cylinder of tightly packed apartments with a conoid, mirrored-glass atrium, is ostensibly an effort to provide an open view of the sky for its residents. But the prospect of people living around a common space, and yet unable to see each other, sounds all too familiar to urban dwellers. Their "theater for future generations," a stageless hall on wheels that roams the streets looking for something to watch, proposes a solution to this urban alienation.

The most striking part of the exhibition is a built version of one of their etchings: "Portrait of an Unknown Person in a Coat or Peter Carl Fabergé's nightmare" is an enormous plaster egg, scarred and etched in a manner similar to their other work. (The egg was also seen at San Diego State University last fall.) The etching on which it is based proposes three such eggs in a sculpture garden they call an "island of stability" for "those who believe in heavy things that are difficult to move." The piece is as thought-provoking as the rest of their work, and as removed from architectural reality, but, perhaps as they intended, it is far from two-dimensional. **Mark Alden Branch**



Brodsky & Utkin's "Villa Claustrophobia" (right) and New York installation (far right).



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