

133 TECUMSETH STREET
TORONTO ONTARIO M6J 2H2 CANADA 416 554 4112



AT THE GALLERIES; Presently waxing nostalgic

Toronto Star - Toronto, Ont. Mar 25, 2006
Peter Goddard

For years **Blue Republic** - the partnership of artists **Anna Passakas** and **Radoslaw Kudlinski** - has shown its brilliantly idiosyncratic work at Peak Gallery in west Toronto. The underground cellar setting gave the impression the Polish-born activist-artists were getting away with something somewhat illicit instead of being just intelligently cheeky, as was the case.

"Nostalgia for the Present," the duo's new installation at the Koffler Gallery occupies at least five times the space Peak Gallery could afford them. But "Nostalgia" feels even more compact than any of the Peak Gallery shows, even thicker with pungent ideas, more mysterious codes, creepy suggestions and inventive possibilities.

Almost everything used in the show, from the perforated map of Paris to the tiny plastic blocks creeping over the two-metre-high stepladder in *Beautiful Infections from Alterations* (2006) - "Beautiful Infections" is the title of their core body of work going back to 2004 - could be classified as junk.

That's the magic of it. The junk - sheets of cardboard, or coloured Styrofoam - is transformed into a mysterious corner altarpiece in *Beautiful Infections (urban) from Alterations* (2006) and a miniaturized urban landscape in the huge, sprawling, mesmerizing piece, *Speeding from Beautiful Infections* (2004) with its spires looking futuristic and ancient at the same time.

The exhibition title - sad, sweet and smart at the same time - might well be reused should **Blue Republic** work find its way to some future Venice Biennale as it should.