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Journalism Students Poke Fun at Politics

By Nick Dowson

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The group once hung a banner saying "Who Beat Kashin?" outside their faculty after the journalist was attacked.

Socrates and Dracula are not often seen quoted together, but students from Moscow State University have done that by putting words into the mouths of both in an exhibit at Winzavod.

Last October, female students at Moscow State University's journalism faculty shot to fame with a raunchy calendar where they expressed their love for Prime Minister Vladimir Putin with corny lines like "Vladimir Vladimirovich, the forests are extinguished but I'm still burning."

In the ensuing uproar, a separate group posed for calendars fully dressed and asked pointed questions such as "When will the next terrorist attack be?"

Now another group of students who call themselves "The Other Journalism Faculty," or "Drugoi Zhurfak," is taking on politics with a series of mocked up images with pithy statements attached.

“Socrates” opens the small collection of pictures by saying: “For the right to speak I drank a cup of hemlock. In 2010 they attacked with batons. What will 2011 bring?”

This is a reference to the attack on journalist Oleg Kashin in November, who was beaten up severely by unknown assailants.

The “Other” students hung a banner with the words “Who beat up Kashin?” from the window of the MSU journalism faculty after the attack.

In another poster, Dracula talks about his intentions to go to the Skolkovo business school.

The posters are supposed to be both serious and humorous, said Anna Akalyeva, the exhibition’s photographer.

“The guys with whom we created this project have a wish to change the world for the better,” she said. “They are not indifferent. I think that humor can help our society, because laughter — it’s a good thing anyway round. And of course, a person should feel responsibility.”

“You have to be able to laugh at serious issues and at power. Laughter lowers stress levels and aggressiveness,” said Ksenia Ratushnaya, creative director and producer of the exhibition. “People who are able to laugh will not go and kill people from the Caucasus on Manezh Square. To the contrary, they will calmly and intently engage in the resolution of problems. That’s what we don’t get enough of.”

The group was started by students of the journalism faculty, but they say they now have more of a relation to “Other” than to “journalism faculty.”

The exhibition is on in the independent bookstore Falanster in Winzavod. The group will open another exhibition in the university’s journalism faculty on March 1.

“The Other Journalism Faculty — Superheroes’ Wishes for 2011” runs till Feb. 15, from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Falanster Bookstore, Winzavod Center for Contemporary Art. 1 4th Syromyatnichesky Pereulok, Bldg. 6. Metro Chkalovskaya, Kurskaya. Tel. 926-3042, www.falanster.su.

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