

EMILIA KINA

The Eyelid

08/03 – 08/04/2022

With text by Rossella Farinotti

Blink of an eye

Emilia Kina puts her audiences to the test by swapping roles and perceptions. Her vivid pictorial works act on the senses in a complex yet slow way. Each and every painting created for the exhibition in Milan plays by intertwining various sensory and interpretive layers. At first unfolds the aesthetic level, dominating over the linguistic or analytical meaning; as the viewer observes the subjects they are rendered delicate, soft, linear, pleasant, even sensual by the colours and material used. Emilia's pictures seem flat, smooth, and clear. That would be greatly due to her use of the pinks - both soft and powdery ones as well as those close in shade to a carnal flesh, and the greens, and the creamy whites streaked with light blues. The viewer's sight is attracted and captivated by the large objects which in turn gaze at the space of the gallery. These pastel colours, with their calm and childlike quality, slowly morph into abstract cells, bringing into focus and capturing the gaze and the mind. They become large eyes and openings with lids agape, closed three-dimensional curtains, spectacles that observe what is happening, perhaps judiciously and certainly with the intent of attracting the audience. Kina brings about a shared and circular experience of voyeurism. In the gallery space, buttressed by the seven large works, the sensation is that of being surrounded, of a delicate and comfortable captivity that expands and develops into a slower and broader reflection. The context is overturned, changing into something unpleasant and full of anxiety.

Engaging the audience in circular thinking

Each work is three-dimensional - more than paintings they are rather sculptures. This time the Polish artist does not work with canvas or photography, a medium that nonetheless recurs in this body of work, but on wooden boards with a tangible thickness in order to create fabrics that open and close as if in a constantly moving circuit. Kina's pictorial act is not based on the figurative: the artist does not create subjects or symbols to be observed as in a narrative staging. Her story is more sophisticated, it plays on the reversal of roles between the observer and the subject being watched, the movement returned by non-flat matter, from modular cuts in wood to the assemblages between one work and another. The large curtain, which appears before the eyes of the viewer peering into the space, recalls the extroflexions of Agostino Bonalumi, which Emilia Kina does not render by shaping and filling the work from the inside, but by working on it externally, modelling the wood showing its subtle stratifications through nuances of colour and contrasts of light and shadow. Therefore, the artist not only acts on the first level of visual perception, but also indicates the meticulous technique that she uses between painting and the craftsmanship of the clippings and waves created in the material. Those same cutouts and movements that rhythm the surface of each single work, involving the audience just like in a small show made of abstract, blurred lights and colours. The eye of the viewer approaches the work like a peephole from which to peer into large sensual cracks that recall, once again, the gaze and, therefore, the organ of sight. It is a circuit that repeats itself and

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folds time. There seems to be no urgency, that we need to calmly analyse the context, because we are within a dense and stratified staging.

A slow and suspended atmosphere that avows an urgent need for action.

Where are we? The atmosphere created by Emilia Kina is intimate, ambient, and soft. It is an environment which conveys a clear reflection: a glance is not enough, a thought is needed. The public is no longer passive, we must awaken to spy, to understand, absorb, and then activate the necessary criticism. These unique scenographic works seem to show us all the themes examined here as if in a trap that has attracted gazes and senses. It is like immersing yourself in an uncomfortable love nest from which, however, you can emerge more enriched, inverting subjective views towards a global and collective overview with an opaque appearance. The big eye with the black pupil, which is bright, vivid, and judgmental, hypnotises and places us under its spotlight, through the lines of light that materialise from the streaked greens like a window grille. It resembles HAL 9000, the humanised on-board super computer from *2001: A Space Odyssey* who pretends to be a friend, only to betray later. 'Eyelids', the large three-dimensional eyelid painted and sculpted by Kina, seduces by returning that subjective gaze which recalls the voyeuristic cinema of Orson Welles, and Lars von Trier-esque environments where the human is left under the control of cosmic powers. These eyes, with or without lids, appear as timeless objects, science fiction capsules, or perhaps ancient objects. They are magnifying glasses which interact with an object of a different nature: large, finely painted binoculars in which the gaze is doubled. It seems to be out of focus and does not let itself be looked at. But it envelops and captures. It imprisons and then rejects. It is impossible to remain indifferent. Kina creates a visual language with an aesthetic made up of layers of colour meticulously spread and applied to become something else. They are all interpretations to solve a complicated riddle that problematizes the historical moment in which the scene opens and then closes again in front of so many glances.

Rossella Farinotti

Emilia Kina graduated from the Faculty of Painting at the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow. Kina's artistic practice primarily revolves around painting and photography. She is interested in the materiality of the image, a simple form arising from complex problems, where the essence lies in the relations between painting as an image and painting as an object. Emilia Kina has recently exhibited at Szara Kamienica Gallery in Cracow, Raster Gallery in Warsaw, Stefan Gierowski Foundation in Warsaw, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London, as well as during international art fair such as Artissima in Turin 2021 and NADA Miami 2021.

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