

ALEKSANDRA SIDOR
Unreliable Narrator

21/09 – 05/11/2022

Aleksandra Sidor resides in a small town by the Polish-Ukrainian border, painting in a shed of her family house. Her story begins in this familial space that she left for study in UK and to which she has recently returned. Yet, her loose figures elongated, stretched by realities imagined by the artist tell many other, far more sinister and ambivalent tales.

Questions about a narrator, their reliability, the power in choosing points of view when telling a story is of great importance to Sidor. Works in this exhibition are centered around two stories, they are strangely linked as both are tied to the complexity of human nature. Story of "The blind men and the elephant" – a parable from India – is as old as human species. Blind men touch a thing that could be anything from resin to human flesh, they lack a system of coordinates to place their perception. They think they know what they feel, but in fact their knowledge is limited and illusory. As Sidor's audience we are likewise perplexed as to what exactly is in front of us. The artist feels the same bewilderment and goes back to her art for her responses, rather than the other way around. Her process directs the scene, what we see is indeed her metaphoric unknowable beast that she attempts to conjure.

For some of her works Sidor uses so called skin suit as a model. It reminds of a skinned human, removed from any trace of life, an object without past or future. It is likely that Jack Unterweger, an infamous Austrian serial killer whose life trajectory fascinated Sidor for quite some time, could have been indeed excited by this removed flesh. Unterweger, a darling of Austrian intellectual elite was first a murderer, later 'reformed' becoming a popular author of children's fairy tales written during his jail time. Yet, after writing these tales and release from prison Unterweger continued to strangle women until eventually convicted in 1994. In this story Austrian society became a collection of blind men touching an elephant, deluding itself to know the whole story. An unfortunate and tragic illusion not so different from 2022 as we fail to fully understand larger historical processes taking place as we live.

For Sidor trauma of one's early experiences is intertwined with the larger context of painful Eastern European conflicts and politics of identity. Scars of the two world wars and the Soviet occupation run deep in this part of the world, almost every family has been affected by it in one way or another. Yet, Sidor embodies both her Polish identity as well as her western European experiences and training. Her aesthetics are deeply influenced by somber visions of Lars von Trier, but also are by the emotional charges of Paula Rego and Francis Bacon, absurdity of Francisco Goya, darkness of Paul Celan. As them, Sidor is unafraid to deeply look at the human nature and face multiple possibilities for interpretation. For her these potentialities are not perplexing, but rather sustaining. As an artist she is looking for her truth through her process. Not fully aligned with European poststructuralism Sidor is in search of more encompassing reality, allowing her viewers to pick up elements of her ontology, examine them and put back together. Parables become visual and conceptual devices meant to lead the way.

Nina Mdivani

eastcontemporary

Aleksandra Sidor (b. 1991, Lublin, Poland) lives and works in Poland.

Aleksandra Sidor is a Polish visual artist graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Bournemouth. She makes unsettling paintings investigating the concepts of perception, awareness, morality and trauma. Employing a highly ornamental visual language, irony and a surrealist sense of the uncanny, the artist often draws on different writings on psychoanalysis, old illustrations as well as social, cultural and political transformations. Her subject matter revolves around the transformative nature of encounters of bodies with other beings and their power relations.

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