

Sveta Mordovskaya  
*Rest in Pieces*  
10.09–15.10.2022

Sveta Mordovskaya: *Rest in Pieces*

In 1913, the poet Rainer-Maria Rilke stood almost shattered as he contemplated the dolls of artist Lotte Pritzel – emaciated, delicate wax and fabric creations of refined elegance, dressed in weird gauzy costumes, with a childish, depraved touch, both erotic and melancholic.

Sveta's dolls are less graceful, but more complex, and instead of being mounted on baroque stands, find themselves in rather strange places and uncomfortable positions: an Anna Geddes doll dressed in an insect costume is stuck in a cross, others are wrapped in plastic, pressed into cotton, kept in a cage, lie beheaded on a mirror, or disappear in the clutter of carefully arranged objects. These corporeal assemblages transpose and disorganise familiar forms and views into estranged and uncanny sculptural states, thereby questioning the codes, conventions, and categories of sculptural forms as well as the artistic and psychological qualities of devalued but unruly materials, such as straw, mirrors, fabric, and cellophane.

As an allegory and a symbolic body oscillating between illusion and disillusion, the doll raises genuinely artistic questions about the relation between nature and art, appearance and being, reality and simulation, original and copy, wholeness and division. By displacing, beheading, disguising, and unmasking the doll, Sveta adds extra layers of alienation and artificially to the doll's natural mirage, doubling the strangeness of this human doppelgänger.

Sveta's work often confronts and transmits the desires and anxieties of the self and the Other, and so does the doll. As double, image or reflection, she allows for identifications and projections of unconscious wishes and defenses and often functions as a container for conflicting or split off parts of the childish self as it grows into adulthood. According to Rilke, unlike other everyday objects onto which we attach a strange and ineffable aura, dolls are gruesome alien bodies, dense repositories of forgetfulness, on which our affection is completely wasted. While other objects capture a spirit or poetic trace through the attention and care given to them, the doll only responds to the child's warmth with silence and a smile as her constant excuse. "Facing her, as she stared at us, we first experienced that hollow in feeling, that pause in the heart."

The doll sparks the first bitterness of wasted tenderness. Behind her mask, the doll is a soulless fake friend, or rather, the self can't be sure whether the soul of the doll resides in the self or in the doll; dolls have the quality of not being present. But we can never quite detach ourselves from this rejection by the Other, from our desire to create them, from our anger that they will never return what we have given them, from our belief in their anima. And so, through a monumental mental effort that combines fear and magnanimity, we keep the doll's soul alive. "That we did not then make you into an idol, you brat, and perish from fear of you, was because—I must tell you—it was not you we had in mind. [...] We were thinking of a soul, the soul of the doll."

Neither a thing nor a human being, the doll becomes the unknown, and everything familiar with which it had been filled becomes unknown to us in it. As such, the doll is a fetish object. If the enigma of fetishism is the enigma of a logic of the object that makes the object alien to itself, then the doll is the eternal stranger. The part and the whole, the human and the inhuman, the sensual and the supersensual, possession and dispossession: fetishism perverts all these relations and renders them unrecognizable.

As an inanimate representative of an animate, the doll is both a fantasy body and a human model, an illusion of and an allusion to reality. Like the doormat covered in artificial snow that refers to a place or state beyond, but which remains within a threshold (the VIP lounge), the doll lives in the interval, in the in-between. The doll is the trace of death in life, in it, we anticipate the finite and irreversible transition of the human being to the thing. Here, the deadly thingness of the doll is already proclaimed and mourned in the title: *Rest in Pieces*. "I do not want these half-completed masks, rather the Doll. That is complete. I will / suffer its shell, its wire, its face / of mere appearance. / Here. I am before it." And here we are, almost shattered, contemplating before the doll's pieces.

– Sophia Roxane Rohwetter



1. *I never liked you anyway*, 2022  
T-shirt and mirror  
100 × 70 cm
2. *Guts*, 2022  
Plastic bag, doll and found objects  
55 × 40 × 17 cm
3. *Bag Lady*, 2022  
Mirror and trash bag  
55 × 40 × 17 cm
4. *Have Mercy On My Soul*, 2022  
Mirror, dolls, flies, gift foil, papier-mâché and wire  
25 × 80 × 65 cm
5. *Johannes de Silentio*, 2022  
Wood, doll, papier-mâché and ropes  
85 × 50 × 13 cm
6. *Marija*, 2022  
Mirror, doll, papier-mâché, fly and found objects  
37 × 143 × 43 cm
7. *Red Sofa*, 2022  
Textiles, foils and gift papers  
50 × 200 × 130 cm
8. *Untitled (you know)*, 2022  
Wood and doll  
102 × 65 × 21 cm
9. *Grandmother*, 2022  
Clay, full watt, wool, papier-mâché and found objects  
100 × 90 × 23 cm
10. *V.I.P.*, 2022  
Entrance matt and artificial snow  
2 × 75 × 100 cm
11. *Melancholia*, 2022  
Paper, full watt, papier-mâché, doll  
and found objects  
93 × 90 × 23 cm
12. *Waste :(*, 2022  
Papier-mâché, wire and wax  
75 × 45 × 20 cm
13. *Self-Portrait*, 2022  
Straw  
20 × 570 × 500 cm
14. *Safety sign*, 2022  
Hair, feather, mirror and found objects  
30 × 36 × 9 cm

