

STEREO

ul. Bracka 20B

00-028 Warszawa

www.galeriastereo.com

E: galeriastereo@gmail.com

T: +48 503 178 965 | +48 509 099 786

BARBARA WESOŁOWSKA

*A Feeling in Oneself
and Voice of Someone Else*

15.04 - 27.05.2023

We are interested in the omnipresence of the human face in your paintings. You mentioned that it's probably always the same face - is it a familiar or unfamiliar face?

BW: The faces in the paintings come as results of a process of layering, covering and erasing what I perceive to be errors. The whole process of painting is set up in this way to allow me to search for an image that would have a certain emotional charge. There are these images that insist, and for a long time the presence of the face was central to my work. I like to think about the way memories are constructed as an analogy for making a painting and, specifically, finding the face in it. It's always a hybrid of pieces that are familiar but remembered wrongly, stolen, replaced or borrowed.

I was raised in a strict Roman Catholic family and I spent a big part of my childhood and youth exposed to paintings and figures of medieval saints and Madonnas. We lived on an island owned by the Church, and our lives were organised by the order of catholic calendar with its litanies, rosaries, advent and lent. Guilt was at heart of it all.

The title of this exhibition is borrowed from Theodor Reik's paper „Psycho-Analysis of the Unconscious Sense of Guilt”. It describes how the Freudian superego is constructed and experienced by Reik's young son, who articulates it as “a feeling in yourself but the voice of someone else”. That double nature of it is fascinating to me—it's being from the outside but experienced inside, like a hallucination. I think the faces in my painting operate in a similar way. They are at once the most familiar and the most foreign, internalised yet actively intruding.

Do you find the influence of your experiences with the „Gardzienice” Theater in your work?

I was most impressed by certain works of Gardzienice that I neither saw in person nor performed in. *Gusta*, *Awwakum*, *Carmina Burana* were the spectacles that operated with images strongly related to paintings and iconography. Some scenes would actually freeze into a still image. I find the recordings of these performances incredibly powerful, haunting, metaphysical. Their violence, beauty and spirit continues to affect me. Music was an essential element in creating the affect. I think the way I use colour is strongly influenced by the rigorous way that music was studied, constructed and performed at Gardzienice. It also had an important function of taking the attention away from the viewer. If the actors were consumed by singing and playing towards each other, they would avoid the temptation to please the viewer. Such oblivion is important in the process of painting too. The viewer must be out of the picture. In fact everything needs to disappear in order to make painting possible.

Which visual artists are particularly important to you? Do you find a kinship with someone?

Different artists were important to me throughout the years. There was only one art book at home - “The Last Judgement by Hans Memling”. I remember every detail of that altar, every hand and face. A few years ago I saw a big retrospective of Merlin James at KW Institute in Berlin, there was a huge room filled with incredible, erotic paintings which you can't see anywhere online. Seeing them in real life marked a shift in my mind and in my work. I also love Alina Szapocznikow for how she used the personal as material.

- April, 2023

1
Desideratum
2022
oil on linen
95 x 75 cm

2
Nocturnal mass
2023
oil on linen
80 x 60 cm

3
Dream of the false start
2023
oil on linen
150 x 100 cm

4
Episodes
2023
oil on linen
100 x 80 cm

5
Six or seven years
2022
oil on linen
150 x 90 cm

6
Vision
2023
oil on linen
85 x 70 cm

7
Untitled
2022
oil on linen
50 x 40 cm

8
Untitled
2023
oil on linen
120 x 80 cm

9
The father of myself
2022
oil on linen
122 x 122 cm

