

San Karol Palczak

30 June – 12 August 2023

Emalin is pleased to present *San*, a solo exhibition by Karol Palczak (b. 1987 in Przemyśl, Poland). This is the artist's first exhibition with the gallery, and his first outside of Poland.

San is the name of the river flowing through Krzywca – Palczak's home village in Subcarpathia, a rural region in the southeast of Poland. The river and its landscape are silent subjects of observation in Palczak's camera lens as he films scenes staged or encountered in his local context. Surrounded by the void left by the Jewish-Orthodox-Catholic population that used to coinhabit the region, Palczak's works feature a cast of characters from the economically strained, increasingly depopulated and militarised area. As both a witness and a part of its story, Palczak speaks to a connection between modernity and the landscape, and he speaks to it through tenderness.

Drawing technical and stylistic references from historic traditions of painting, Palczak mixes pigments with sun-exposed oils and primes metal sheets with garlic. His precise, focused studies treat their subjects with devoted attention. The artist's videos relay the true dynamic of his engagement – improvised, chaotic, sometimes skirting danger. The camera shakes in his hands and the frame rotates as he gives instructions to his friends, passes canisters of gasoline, calls for water.

Large effigies made of hay and set alight reference the Slavic practice of burning marzannas, a pre-Christian folk custom still practiced in Poland today. Traditionally, the burning of these figures represented the passing of seasons. However, in Palczak's practice it also stands in for the listlessness and loneliness of men in a rural region that many have left in pursuit of economic opportunities in urban centres. At the same time, the effigies act as an intermediary for a connection to the land, something spiritually familiar captured in the cold stillness of oil and metal.

The series of self-portraits of legs focuses on the burn scars left on Palczak's skin from an explosive accident he survived as a boy. The same fires are still set by men in the same places: the muddy yard, the stables in wintertime. Following the fire's trace, Palczak connects self-portraiture to the effigies and trees set alight in other works.

Palczak's project is a technically focused observation of the environment as a vessel for spiritual survival. As in the tradition of 19th century realist painting, the social context imbues the landscape with a sense of transience and anxiety: the impact of economy and technical detritus on nature and its people rendered emotive.

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Karol Palczak (b. 1987 in Przemyśl, Poland) lives and works in Krzywocza, Poland. He graduated with a BA from the Academy of Fine Arts, Kraków, PL, in 2015.

Recent and upcoming solo exhibitions include *San*, Emalin, London, UK (2023); *Śreżoga / Haze*, Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw, PL (2022); *Tym co teraz widzę / With what I see now*, Galeria Bielska BWA, Bielsko-Biała, PL; BWA Tarnów, Tarnów, PL (both 2021); *Zadymy / Pothers*, Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts, Kraków, PL (2021); *Dym / Smoke*, Galeria Promocyjna, Warsaw, PL (2019); and *Baghvan*, Galeria Potencja, Kraków, PL (2017). Palczak's work has been included in group exhibitions at Bolesław Biegas Museum, Warsaw, PL (2022); Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts, Kraków, PL (2022); BWA Tarnów, Tarnów, PL (2021); National Gallery of Art, Sopot, PL (2021); 44th Biennale of Galeria Bielska BWA, Bielsko Biała, PL (2019); ZAMEK Center for Culture, Wrocław, PL (2019); 11th Triennial of Wozownia Gallery of Art, Toruń, PL (2019); BWA Przemyśl, PL (2019); Stefan Gierowski Foundation, Warsaw, PL (2018); Grand Prix of Franciszka Eibisch Foundation, Katarzyna Napiórkowska Gallery, Warsaw, PL (2015); and Palace of Fine Arts, Kraków, PL (2015).

Palczak's works are included in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw; Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw; The mBank Art Collection, Warsaw; PKO Bank Polski Art Collection, Warsaw.

LIST OF WORKS

1. *Czarno-białe drzewo*, 2023
oil on aluminium panel
58 x 39 cm
22 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 15 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches
2. *Autoportret oparzonej nogi II*, 2023
oil on aluminium fixed on plywood
24 x 14 cm
9 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
3. *Autoportret oparzonej nogi*, 2023
oil on aluminium fixed on plywood
20 x 11.5 cm
7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
4. *Płona kukła II (autoportret)*, 2023
oil on aluminium panel
56 x 35 cm
22 x 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches
5. *Płona kukła (autoportret)*, 2023
oil on aluminium fixed on plywood
81 x 47 cm
31 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
6. *Stodka Pani*, 2023
oil on aluminium panel
77 x 52 cm
30 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
7. *Chmury*, 2023
oil on aluminium fixed on plywood
19.5 x 19 cm
7 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
8. *Stopy w stajni (autoportret)*, 2023
oil on aluminium fixed on plywood
26.5 x 19.5 cm
10 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches
9. *Kompozycja z trzema postaciami*, 2023
oil on aluminium panel
82 x 36.5 cm
32 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches
10. *Waldek I*, 2023
oil on aluminium fixed on plywood
21 x 12.5 cm
8 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches
11. *Chmury III*, 2023
oil on aluminium fixed on plywood
38.5 x 42 cm
15 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
12. *Lód na Sanie*, 2023
oil on aluminium fixed on plywood
24 x 40 cm
9 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches
13. *San*, 2023
single-channel video, colour, sound
duration: 24:32 min
unique
14. *River*, 2023
single-channel video, colour, sound
duration: 31:26 min
unique

