

KAROLINA BIELAWSKA  
POWROTY / COMEBACKS

ECHO Cologne  
February 16 - March 23, 2024

The exhibition is organized by Galeria Wschód.

One night in the Polish region Mazury, the artist's homeland, a storm broke two willows that had been growing close to her family home since her childhood days. After that, whenever she visited the spot, she felt pain, similar to the kind caused by harm or loss. However, as time passed, the willows started to grow back and the pollarded stumps slowly blanketed with longitudinal shags of branches and leaves. Observing this gradual rebirth elicited an unexpected mixture of feelings: yearning, euphoria, regret, relief.

It turns out that due to its unique ability to regenerate, the willow was perceived, in Slavic mythology, as a symbol of vital forces, fertility, and life reborn. Then according to folk tradition, a belief prevailed that a hollow willow is dwelled by the devil himself.

A willow can grow in tough terrain, especially wetlands, which makes it a natural barrier against excess water. Her thick, hanging shoots resemble loose hair.

Karolina Bielawska (b.1986 in Poland) lives and works in Warsaw. Her visual language communicates a desire for harmony that constantly collides with violence, oppression, and brutality, turning the canvases into sites of tension and conflict. The artist takes this chaos and totalizes it into patterns. The controlled figures have a soothing effect on our senses. There is a calmness in anticipating what might come next. Bielawska sees her works as products of her contemplation about feelings and the possibilities of portraying them. The internal and personal sphere is what preoccupies the artist. She also finds that the energy, the emotional charge, and the memory of a particular place influence her work, herein shaping a site-specific sensibility.