



Taka Ishii

Gallery

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**Sanya Kantarovsky “Paradise”**

**Dates: Jan 24 – Feb 22, 2020**

**Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Tokyo,**

**Opening reception: Friday, Jan 24, 18:00-20:00**

Taka Ishii Gallery is pleased to present “Paradise”, an exhibition featuring four paintings and four woodblock prints created by Sanya Kantarovsky in collaboration with The Adachi Institute of Woodcut prints in Tokyo. In the lower gallery, a series of diminutive paintings expands on the tone of the exhibition above, presenting a group of unsavory faces.

During a month-long stay at the Troedsson villa in Nikko, Kantarovsky developed a series of ink and watercolor studies, which were translated into an edition of woodblock prints through the expert craftsmanship of the Adachi Hanga printmakers. In the tradition of Edo-period *Ukiyo-e* prints that draw on Kabuki and Noh theater, Kantarovsky’s set of images indulges in pictorial drama. Closely considering the work of such masters as Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Kantarovsky refers to a tradition of dark and satirical image-making through specific visual notes — a bare foot emerges from beneath a gown, a seabird gazes indifferently at a grisly assault, a child receives the restraining touch of his elders. These haptic themes are transmuted through the subtlest occasions of line and color, scrubbed, veiled, piled and blurred with a persistent restlessness.

As the works in “Paradise” were developed consecutively as woodblock prints and paintings, they evidence the gaps and values of these approaches, each laden with its own distinct history. The variations between the two serve as clues to how a picture is conjured and built up, suspended in different registers of seeing and making. Whereas the prints are graphically fixed, “sealed” in their commitments to the image, the paintings expand on these positions with a sense of unstable possibility. Narrative cohesion remains out of reach, and a looker is prompted to enter these oneiric scenes through a heap of simultaneities – past and present, attractive and repellant, thin and thick.

Sanya Kantarovsky’s artistic practice revolves around painting, oftentimes incorporating film, animation, sculpture, design, and curatorial projects. His paintings take aim at imagined human subjects, which are often entangled in a variety of discomforts, both psychological and physical. On these painted stages, dissonant frequencies of seduction and repulsion vie for the viewer’s attention. The artist interrogates how desire itself can be rendered, as it contorts the faces of pleading children, leering old men, rootless cosmopolitans, and the hungry masses. Drawing on the history of humanist painting and caricature, Kantarovsky’s subjects seem proud to have been rendered and simultaneously embarrassed to exist at this elevation, embodying a doubt that echoes the artist’s own fraught relationship with the project of painting. This indulgence in affect is marked with a wry self-reflexivity, acknowledging the futility of faithfully transmuted lived experience.

Kantarovsky was born in Moscow, Russia in 1982 and currently lives and works in New York. He studied painting at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, RI and received his MFA at the University of California, Los Angeles. Kantarovsky recently presented solo exhibitions at Lühring Augustine New York (2019), Kunsthalle Basel in Switzerland (2018) and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, Italy (2017-2018). Recent group exhibitions include Baltic Triennial 13 "GIVE UP THE GHOST", Vilnius (2018); "The Arcades: Contemporary Art and Walter Benjamin" at the Jewish Museum, New York (2017); "The Eccentrics", at the Sculpture Center, New York (2016); and his curatorial project "Sputterances" at Metro Pictures, New York (2017). Other important presentations include "Happy Soul" at LAXART in Los Angeles (2014); "You are Not an Evening" at Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst in Bremen (2013); "What Were You Expecting, Mr. Milquetoast, a Plot?" at Badischer Kunstverein in Karlsruhe (2014); and "Apricot Juice", with Ieva Misčevičūtė, at Studio Voltaire in London (2015). A comprehensive monograph entitled "No Joke" was co-published by Studio Voltaire and Koenig Books in 2016. Kantarovsky's works belong to several prestigious museum collections, including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Tate Modern, London; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York among others.

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Sanya Kantarovsky

"Woe to Wit", 2019

Woodblock print on washi paper

47 x 33 cm

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Sanya Kantarovsky

"Cataract" (detail), 2019

Oil and watercolor on canvas

200 x 282.6 cm

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