



Wilhelm Sasnal

Dates: Sep 2 – Oct 14, 2023

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Kyoto

Opening reception: Saturday, Sep 2, 17:00 – 19:00

Taka Ishii Gallery Kyoto is pleased to present a solo exhibition of Polish artist Wilhelm Sasnal from September 2 to October 14, 2023. This marks the artist's first presentation with the gallery and will feature a series of recent paintings inspired by traveling and staying in Los Angeles last year.

Sasnal's works are distinguished by their diverse visual sources, ranging from the artist's everyday snapshots to his personal archive of appropriated images found in magazines, newspapers, and online. By selecting photographic materials and crossing the media, he investigates the physical experience of painting in a present-day environment saturated with digital images. The resulting output whose *mise-en-scène* is minimalistic but thought-provoking, evokes an ambivalent sense of both familiarity and detachment.

Born in 1972 in Tarnów, Sasnal spent his early life in communist Poland. As a teenager, he often listened to gothic and metal rock music from the Western bloc that was airing on the local radio. It was there that he came across visual arts and artistic movements such as the Bauhaus and found covers of albums and band logos as motifs of his oeuvre. While in art school he formed an anarchic Grupa Ładnie (Pretty Group) with his schoolmates and as his practice began drawing paintings from photographs — both of which were a rebellion against the conservative education of the academy.

In his recent practice, Sasnal has been exploring the relationship between figuration and abstraction. "Asphalt 1", 2022 is a compositional play of lines and shapes in bold black strokes, inspired by the artist's enthusiasm for cycling. Two layers of figure-ground relationship coexist in a single canvas; circular marks left on asphalt by a bicycle float over a floral vase in an open space. The two-dimensional flatness of the former intervenes with the three-dimensional illusion of the latter. In another painting "Untitled", 2022, the landscape behind the wire fence is a surreal mixture of pink and gray with a touch of blue, gradually getting darker as it approaches the horizon. Not only do these two paintings visualize Sasnal's gaze at the abstract through the figurative, but they also offer the viewers a contemplation on the dualism that has shaped the history of the medium.

The surface of Sasnal's paintings retains the physical movements of the brushstrokes in which the artist's cognitive process is imbued. Contrary to digital photography that captures every detail of reality with myriad pixels, his reductive procedure rejects fixed interpretation: the source images are often cropped; the background is mostly left blank or filled with a single hue; and the color palette is carefully restrained.

Consisting of these elements, the works resonate with the essence of memory. They are fragmental and subjective extractions of everyday experiences that connect with the past, influence the way to perceive the present, and have the potential to create new meanings by their juxtaposition.

Wilhelm Sasnal was born in Tarnów, Poland in 1972 and currently lives and works in Kraków. Sasnal studied architecture at the Kraków University of Technology between 1992 and 1994, followed by painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków from 1994 to 1999. His solo exhibitions include POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw (2021); Beyeler Foundation, Basel (2017); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2012); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2011); Swiss Institute, New York (2007); and Kunsthalle Zurich (2003). He has participated in numerous group exhibitions and film festivals, notably “Capturing the Moment”, Tate Modern, London (2023); “I am you, you are too”, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2017); Warsaw Film Festival (2016); Berlin International Film Festival; 31st Bienal de São Paulo (both 2014); and “The Reach of Realism”, Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami (2009).

For further information, please contact:

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Thu – Sat 10:00 – 17:30 Closed Sun – Wed and National Holidays



Wilhelm Sasnal
“No thanks, I don't drink”, 2022
Oil on canvas
140 x 100 cm

© Wilhelm Sasnal
Courtesy of the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London
Photo: Kenji Takahashi



Wilhelm Sasnal
“Untitled”, 2022
Oil on canvas
137.2 x 117.2 cm

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Courtesy of the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London
Photo: Kenji Takahashi