

INTERVIEW WITH SANDOR SZASZ

Unmoving Targets, Unmoving Time

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NEVAN CONTEMPO GALLERY - PRAGUE / Czech Republic

U Rajske zahrady 14

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Born in 1976, Sandor Szasz has already been remarked on the young contemporary art scene not only for the prizes and grants he won but also, because of his powerful, haunting canvases, revealing an eerie atmosphere, that were exhibited in Europe and United States.

Q. On March 5th, Nevan Contempo, a young yet very promising gallery of contemporary art, is housing the opening of your first exhibition in Prague. Although each and every visitor will have their very own inner experience with your art, I would like to invite you to tell us about the concept behind the artworks included in this first exhibition on the Czech contemporary art scene. Because you know there is always an official story opposed to a personal perspective.

The works we exhibit on this show are selected by Mikulas Nevan and were created over the last 3 years. The story that triggered this series of works is quite old, it starts somewhere in 1988 when the people of Bezidu Nou - a small village located in Mures county, Transylvania - was sentenced to extinction. For no apparent reason, a dam was suddenly built above the houses. Gradually, the water flooded the lives of the villagers, the school, and the church, forcing people to leave their homes. They joined the many others who had been forced to take part in the formation of the “New Man” in the “Golden Age”. Throughout history, Bezidu Nou tattles its own tale of the village buried under water. This aquatic manner however is tagged along with symbolic violence in the city’s political and ideological disposition. Nevertheless, the power of the social reality comes off less calculated, personal, and it rather leans to the private decisions of the obedient whom are sought to reach a utopian socialist state.

Q. Your multilayered, haunting canvases reveal a world wrapped in obscurity, desolate landscapes populated by characters without an identity, with no specific time or space connection. What are the sources of this world with post-apocalyptic overtones?

Well, yeah, if we take a look at the residents of Bezidu Nou, those who left lost their identity, bearing the stigma of deserters; they became the living dead, caught in between two worlds and unable to belong to either. The spirit of those who stayed and died there is still haunting those places. That place is cursed, although it looks serene at first sight. If you go beyond that frail surface, one can see how all traces of normality and harmony were destroyed.

Q. When and how have you started this journey as a painter?

I was studying music in elementary school, then I moved on to doing fine art. In high school we had a class with exceptional colleagues with whom I formed a group. It was a very intense period, we are all still very fond of it. Six members of this group were accepted into the Fine Arts Academy in Budapest, where we continued as if nothing had changed, and in 1997 we established the The Studio on the Border – Alesd. After graduation the Alesd group remained a solid base for me; we worked together in the years that followed, and later on, we created the Art Factory.

Q. I know nowadays artists tend to use all sort of techniques, like light projectors for instance or photos reproduced, re-coded and filtered through their own perception.

My working method includes emotional as well as a clearly conscious parts. I mostly try to collect as more information as possible about what I am interested in – photos, films, or reports from that specific time, to deepen my personal experiences and impressions. Certainly, collecting all information can take some years too. All information to a topic is recorded in ring binders and constantly added with more details. Before painting I do some drawings and collages. Usually, I draw up many different variations to a topic and work at more than one painting at a time – I live in a symbiosis with these images. I watch and observe their transformation, mutation, and improvement.

Q. I know you have your studio in Budapest Art Factory, which is quite huge and looking at your works, you seem to rather go for bigger dimensions. How important is the space where you create and what impact does it have on your work?

Budapest ArtFactory certainly has a big influence in my work, it is an ideal studio space for an artist, regardless of his/her expectations. We have six studios in there where one could work without a worry and another space for public exhibitions. But not at last this Central-East European context provides me with a feeling of the present history consciousness, which is like a tool, if you want, that allows me to better understand reality and translate it into images.

Q. Now that we mentioned, the Art Factory – can you please give us more details about this place and it is happening there? I know you have a residency program that has been opened for awhile now.

Budapest Art Factory (BAF) is an artist-run, not-for-profit studio, exhibition and project space founded in 2006. The studios of BAF have been installed in an 900m² industrial hall hosting five permanent artists –Márta Kucsora, Dóra Juhász, Levente Herman, Eszter Csurka and Sandor Szasz.– BAF provides a platform for the dialogue of contemporary art in an international context. In addition to organizing exhibitions and studio visits, BAF launched a twofold residency program. The mandate of this program is to invite internationally recognized artists, curators and art critics to Budapest and showcase their activities before the Hungarian public.

Q. Please tell me more about what is behind the name of the exhibition?

In Unmoving Targets, Unmoving Time I portray a vision of a world out of balance, a world simultaneously invaded by both past and future scenarios, full of absurd ideas, nonsensical, events that had no reason to happen and situations created under a sick ideology in which the power of the humans begins to create anomalies against his exploited environment. At the same time, I wanted to capture the social space as a place of self-exile where the isolated individual loses his personality and is transformed into a creation without identity and without humanity in relation to his fellow beings.

Q. One final question before the show begins... What plans do you have in the near future?

I am working on an upcoming solo show in Berlin with Michael Schultz Gallery.

Interview by Roxana Gamart

www.kontaktart.com