

Stanislava Kovalcikova

am I dead yet

April 29 – May 27, 2022

Opening Reception: Friday, April 29, 6–8PM

Peres Projects is pleased to present *am I dead yet*, Stanislava Kovalcikova's (b. 1988 in Czechoslovakia) first exhibition at the gallery for the occasion of Gallery Weekend Berlin. This exhibition is centered around paintings which harness powerful feminine energy, taking up space within a void of an empty notion of maleness. Glued onto the windows, an installation of mens shoes with portraits painted onto their soles, look out at the passers-by in the street. They stand watch, emptily, over Venuses, which are represented through complex depictions of women in various stages of life, emotion and aging. These women are in dialogue with each other, while the presence of men is marked by their absence: the odor of the worn leather, an installation of smoked cigarette butts allude to a past and potential future presence.

Kovalcikova's work is visceral. Once we feel it, we understand it.

The below is an excerpt from a conversation with fellow gallery artist Dylan Solomon Kraus.

Dylan Solomon Kraus (DSK): I love certain depictions of The Virgin Mary – where she's holding her child, reading him The Book, which foresees Jesus' death. That is her great pain...

Stanislava Kovalcikova (SK): To love – to love another human that way, it's agonizing and also totally warm.

DSK: Totally, and it's so vulnerable.

SK: It is innocence and female sadness.

DSK: In a museum near the Duomo in Milan, there is a painting of a woman wearing a cloak, it covers the entire church and references depictions of the Egyptian goddess Isis. ... she is one of the original Mary archetypes.

SK: She's a global goddess. During the pandemic, I saw a lot of sad Marys walking down the street, their downturned faces looked like they could be found in a church.

DSK: I have seen it too in almost everyone I know, even myself. I feel my face tries to conceal it, but everyone is feeling this deep sadness, I think it's because life doesn't make sense right now.

SK: Actually, it makes total sense, we are forced to think of everything as synthetic.

DSK: Well nature has really been taken away and been replaced by the digital.

SK: Think of how much it is damaging and impacting our brains...

DSK: It's damaging my brain, we are all getting grey matter. I feel that as soon as you get out of the cycle, you become more aware of the terror.

SK: You die, I die, everyone dies, they have never found a cure for death.

DSK: Thank god! I mean death is the cure ultimately. I'm thinking of Novalis' 'hymns to the night', 'thou art death which at last makes us whole', where the grim reaper is the symbol of God as Father because he is actually bringing you back to eternity. I didn't make it up – death is what brings us home ultimately, this is not home.

SK: This is home too.

DSK: Do your paintings somehow express that? Because your work in many ways is unexplainable, and you don't explain it either.

SK: Yeah, I think that's my way. I will never force you to see. It's much more exciting not knowing what's going to happen.

DSK: I love that. When somebody sees it, that's what's real.

SK: I know that it's a vibration that I really want to give to the viewer.

DSK: And your vibration is unsettling, it pulls you in. The eye contact is crazy – that's the Mona Lisa thing I was talking about, your paintings have a little DaVinci glare/flair to them, where they look at you, and look through you.

SK: I use a lot of sfumato – green and grayish opaque colors which I blend together. It's a special color that only reacts like that in oil. With no other medium could you achieve the same effect. I like to experiment with that technique, and then I sand it, and then repeat again.

DSK: Sanding down, building off what was left, that's a meaningful way of painting. You've got to destroy in order to build.

SK: Yeah, I think it's a good pace for me, and it feels very organic. You have to wait, like a gardener you know? I like the image of the gardener. I saw one in a Cezanne show, in New York. There were a couple of works, but that image in particular stuck with me and then later in Basel, I also saw a couple of gardeners in Pissarro's paintings. It's an interesting figure which is disappearing from our society.

DSK: Right, they were painting real working-class people which was radical at the time.

SK: Yeah, but these were also men who nurtured.

DSK: Hell yeah. I mean it's the most noble thing, the relationship with nature and humanity which is a constant push and pull.

SK: But this is what your hands are telling you, not what your brain is.

DSK: Interesting, they're making it, and your brain is seeing it. I often think that it's now easier for me to paint than do anything else. It's easier to paint than talk, easier to paint than write, email, text or anything like that. I can paint easier than that, it's like a purer part of myself.

SK: Yeah, painting is so obsolete, it doesn't serve a real purpose anymore. I like to think of paintings like magic spells. They are where all the new tricks come from.

DSK: Magic spells... I'm amazed to think of how unchanged contemporary painting is from cave painting. It remains this universal human experience of reflection...

SK: Right, and human wisdom isn't in the machine, it is still found inside the cave.

This is Kovalcikova's first solo exhibition with Peres Projects in our Berlin gallery. In addition, Kovalcikova has exhibited in a number of international exhibitions including *Do Nothing, Feel Everything*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, *Corps*, MAMOTH, London, *Everything is personal*, Tramps, New York, *On the politics of delicacy*, Capitain Petzel, Berlin and *Painting also known as blood*, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw. This fall she has an upcoming solo exhibition at Belvedere 21 museum in Vienna.

For further information and sales inquiries, please contact Javier Peres (jp@peresprojects.com), Benoît Wolfrom (ben@peresprojects.com), or call at +49 (0) 30 275 950770.

For artist information please contact Nick Koenigsknecht (nick@peresprojects.com).

For press and media inquiries, please contact media@peresprojects.com or +49 (0) 30 275 950770.

Please note that attendance will be subject to all local COVID-19 related requirements at that time. We will publish updated info prior to the event.