

Piotr Uklański

11.10.2022

15.10.2022

MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique is pleased to present new paintings by Piotr Uklański. This exhibition expands upon Uklański's *Suicide Stunners* portrait series—depictions of historical and fictional heroines based on the women who were the unsung protagonists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood—whose visual narratives were laden with suggestions of the occult and layered sexuality.

His slyly reconsidered portraits of Lizzie Siddall, Jane Morris, Emma Jones, Annie Miller, Fanny Eaton, and others who served as the muses and models for the all-male Pre-Raphaelites, Uklański shifts how the female figures appear as manifestations of male desire and fantasy in the original paintings.

Uklański's works disrupt the view of the Pre-Raphaelite sisterhood as a group of objectified muses. His striking paintings bare their authorial positions as cultural contributors and formidable figures of art history in their own right.

With his *Suicide Stunners* series, Uklański again harnesses the tactic of appropriation for which his conceptual practice has achieved critical acclaim. His quotation of fin-de-siècle paintings builds upon over twenty years of projects—from *The Nazis to Pornalikes*—that grapple with the charged signifiers of visual culture. In the publication *Suicide Stunners*, writer Alissa Bennett nuances our understanding of “appropriation,” connecting the haunted nature of doubling to Uklański's recent series of ghostly portraits,

“It is fitting that Piotr Uklański has chosen the portraits of Rossetti and his Pre-Raphaelite brethren to continue a career-long investigation into the strange lapses inherent to all acts of doubling. Though Uklański's oeuvre is often identified as appropriative, the designation seems to me an inadequate placeholder employed in the absence of a better term. The conceptual slickness denoted by the word somehow fails to accommodate the fecundity of Uklański's practice, for while the appropriative gesture always acknowledges the power of the sign, it often neglects to excavate it. Uklański's work is perhaps more appropriately compared to the homophone, a slippery word that tricks both the eye and the ear, a linguistic doppelgänger who understands from practice that

familiarity is always the best disguise...the women in Uklański's portraits no longer bear the marks of the men who painted them in life. Prefigured by their ghosts, they are now charged with the power of the doppelgänger, their defiance reminding us that the oppressed always reserve the right to stage a return.”

For his Paris presentation, Uklański will feature an exceptional depiction of Fanny Eaton—the only Jamaican muse of the Pre-Raphaelites alongside other *Stunners*. The final painting depicting the derrière of Alison M. Gingeras painted using a classical *grisaille* technique is a sly wink to the artist's own muse and a painterly reprisal infamous photograph published in *Artforum* in 2003.

Uklański's exhibition at Pièce Unique coincides with his solo exhibition *Il Tormento di Chopin* at the Bibliothèque Polonaise on the Ile Saint Louis. Recognized as a unique cultural institution by UNESCO, housing relics of Frederic Chopin and the Musée Bolesław Biegas, the Bibliothèque Polonaise was founded by Polish nobles and intellectuals in exile during the partition of Poland in the 19th century.

As repository of Polish culture and its national mythologies, Uklański has made site-specific works that riff off the romantic, tortured histories of expatriated Poles in Paris. *Il Tormento di Chopin* opened in June and runs through May 31st 2023.

Piotr Uklański was born in 1968 in Warsaw, Poland; he lives and works between Warsaw and New York.

Piotr Uklański has created a body of work that uses many types of media, including sculpture, photography, collage, film, and performance, and promiscuously assimilates various cultural references in attempts to challenge societal views on politics, death, sex and media. He came into view on the art scene in New York in the mid-1990s with a significant sculpture that fuses Minimalism with popular entertainment called *Untitled (Dance Floor)*. Uklański's readiness to take on likely contentious subjects draws polemical reactions. His photographic series *Untitled (The Nazis)* generated oppositions and protests when exhibited in London in 1998, and was later demolished in a publicity action staged by a Polish actor while the work was displayed in Warsaw in 2000. In 2006, Uklański debuted his first feature-length film, *Summer Love: The First Polish Western*.

The artist's works are represented in private and public collections, including: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim in New York; Tate Modern in London; the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw; the Migros Museum of Contemporary Art in Zurich; the Rubell Family Collection in Miami; the Francois Pinault Foundation in Paris; and Muzeum Susch, among others.

His solo shows were held at: Belmont Chapel, Island Cemetery, Newport; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Dallas Contemporary, Dallas; Bass Museum, Miami; Secession, Wien; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Kunsthalle Basel, Basel; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, among others.

His work was featured in several recent group exhibitions at: Barbican Art Gallery, London; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan; Tate Modern, London; Guggenheim Museum, New York; MART Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento

e Rovereto; among others. Uklański represented Poland at the 26th S.o Paulo Biennial in 2004, and he has participated in the 16th Istanbul Biennial in 2019, the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003, the 63rd Venice International Film Festival in 2006, the 5th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art in 2008, the 75th Whitney Biennial in 2010 at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and documenta 14 in 2017 in Kassel and Athens.

Artworks Details:

Piotr Uklański
Untitled (Eugene van der Bruggen), 2021
Oil, pastel, and resin on mohair velvet over cotton canvas
H36 3/8 x 24 1/4

Piotr Uklański
Untitled (Fanny Eaton), 2021
Oil on canvas
H30 1/8 x 36 1/4

Piotr Uklański
Untitled (Stunner VIII), 2021
Oil, pastel, and resin on mohair velvet over cotton canvas
H38 1/8 x W26 1/8 x D 1 1/2in

Piotr Uklański
Untitled (Alison M. Gingeras), 2020
Oil on canvas
H20 x W25 x D1 1/4in

Piotr Uklański
Untitled (Stunner X), 2021
Oil, pastel, and resin on mohair velvet over cotton canvas
H38 1/8 x W26 1/8 x D1 1/2in