



**Sanya Kantarovsky**

***TO PRISON***

with selections from *Tatsumi Hijikata The Last Butoh*,  
Photographs by Yasuo Kuroda

September 30 - November 4, 2023

*“I, who caught a cold by looking at a stone and became anxious on seeing a landscape with no one in it, grew up thinking myself maimed. One day a man stood next to my father; a tree cracked and my father fell. Clutching a stone, I resisted; my father was being beaten up. That was the start of my perception of an unhappy world. There must, however, by more fruitful mistakes in bleeding nature.*

*I grew up always sniffing out criminals, that is to say, such company as theirs. Everyone bears the burden of being a human child, yearning for companions to run away home with. My anger over that alone was ample.*

*A gang of pals contains the dimension of smell. The word “world” was nothing but raving to me, who had spent my youth like a cur. Bleeding nature always overflows the allotments of history and sociology, and my gaze never wavered from it. The friends I made in Tokyo were, so to speak, inhabitants of the transparent, mechanical “world,” without any ties to bleeding nature and even without smell. I could not help seeing them as corpses.*

*Isn’t there some work that strews absolute putrefaction and graphic terror throughout the world? I have always thought I would like to put my hands to the axle of anger that sustains that kind of work.*

*Today I am no longer a dog. Albeit clumsily, extremely clumsily, I am definitely recovering. What, however, does my recovery signify? What on Earth does recovery mean to me? Haven’t I already recovered? Don’t I continue to recover in order to be sick?”*

– Tatsumi Hijikata <sup>1</sup>

*To Prison* is comprised of a new body of work by the New York-based artist Sanya Kantarovsky alongside a series of archival prints by the photographer Yasuo Kuroda, “Tatsumi Hijikata: The Last Butoh,” which document scenes from Hijikata’s legendary Butoh performances held in postwar metropolitan Tokyo.

Butoh is a dance form held largely in darkness, characterized by abrupt, convulsive movements. The performances, seen as akin to an anti-dance, are broadly understood as an expression of social trauma. Hijikata, who settled in Tokyo from the rural Akita prefecture in 1952, began developing the practice of Butoh at the end of that decade while bearing witness to the rapid re-invention of Japan—a society being crafted in the economic image of the Western capitalist superpowers who vanquished and occupied the nation following the second World War.

The grouping of paintings made by Kantarovsky emerges from a sustained engagement with both Hijikata’s oeuvre and the photographic records captured by Kuroda. Human limbs and dense locks of hair gesticulate across several paintings in a state of suspended animation—with the latter often rendered in broad, gestural, calligraphic brushstrokes. The surfaces of the paintings alternate between sensuous, clay-like textures and unsightly, glistening residues of evaporated solvent—rupturing the boundaries between humility and vanity.

The figures in Kantarovsky’s paintings rhyme with those on Hijikata’s stages—both embodying forms animated by exacerbated emotional states. This visual dialogue culminates in a form of communion between two dissonant yet deeply connected approaches to the body as both material and subject. Here, the limits of human form, charged with a perverse erotic desire, are distinctly grounded in both the spiritual and abject capacities of the body.

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<sup>1</sup> Tatsumi Hijikata, “To Prison.” TDR (1988–), Spring 2000, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 43-48. Originally published as “Keimusho e,” in *Mita Bunjaku*, January 1961.

## Sanya Kantarovsky

### Biography

1982 Born in Moscow, Russia

2003 European Honours Program, Rhode Island School of Design, Rome, Italy

2004 BFA, Painting, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI, USA

2008 Residency, Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME, USA

2011 MFA, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Lives and works in New York, NY, USA

### Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2023 *TO PRISON with selections from Tatsumi Hijikata The Last Butoh, Photographs by Yasuo Kuroda*, Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles, USA  
*After birth*, Taka Ishii Gallery Kyoto, Kyoto, Japan
- 2022 *A Solid House*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO, USA  
*Center*, Capitain Petzel, Berlin, Germany
- 2021 *The House of the Spider*, Modern Art, London, UK  
*Recent Faces*, Luhring Augustine, New York, NY, USA
- 2020 *Frozen Dress (Part Three)*, Capitain Petzel, Berlin, Germany  
*Frozen Dress (Part Two)*, Luhring Augustine, New York, NY, USA  
*Frozen Dress (Part One)*, Modern Art, London, UK  
*Paradise*, Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 2019 *On Them*, Luhring Augustine, New York, NY, USA
- 2018 *Disease of the Eyes*, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland
- 2017 *Letdown*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy
- 2016 *Feral Neighbours*, Modern Art, London, UK  
*In the Gutter*, Tanya Leighton, Berlin, Germany
- 2015 *Happy Soul*, Art Basel Unlimited, Basel, Switzerland [Cat.]  
*Gushers*, Marc Foxx, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
*Apricot Juice*, with Ieva Misčeviūtė, Studio Voltaire, London, UK [Cat.]
- 2014 *Happy Soul*, LAXART, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
*Little Vera*, with Ella Kruglyanskaya, Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, Latvia  
*Allergies*, Casey Kaplan, New York, NY, USA
- 2013 *Monday's Dirty Light*, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, CA, USA  
*The Flat Made Thing*, with Frances Stark, Art Basel Features, Marc Foxx, Basel, Switzerland  
*You Are Not an Evening*, Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen, Germany
- 2012 *The Fourth Empty Desk*, public billboard installation and LAXART facade, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
*Dear Dilettante*, Tanya Leighton, Berlin, Germany  
*Blue Notebook No. 10*, Marc Foxx, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2009 *Mutualisms*, AMT | Alberto Matteo Torri, Milan, Italy
- 2008 *Simple Past*, BW Space, Berlin, Germany

- Selected Group Exhibitions
- 2023 *MONOTYPES*, Kunsthalle Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland  
*Soul Mapping*, Zeno X Gallery Antwerp South, Antwerp, Belgium  
*Watercolours, Chapter III – Curated by Weiss Falk –*, XYZ collective, Tokyo, Japan  
*The Moth and the Thunderclap*, Modern Art, London, UK  
*Brave New World: 16 Painters for the 21st Century*, Museum de Fundatie, Zwolle, Netherlands
- 2022 *Extensions Out: An Exhibition to Benefit Blank Forms*, Luhring Augustine Tribeca, New York, NY, USA  
*Dark Light: Realism in the Age of Post-Truths*, Aishti Foundation, Antelias, Lebanon [Cat.]  
*A Maze Zanine, Amaze Zaning, A-Mezzaning, Meza-9*, David Zwirner, New York, NY, USA  
*The History of Forgetting*, Château Shatto, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
*“HANGA” Tomoo Gokita + Sanya Kantarovsky*, SHOP Taka Ishii Gallery, Hong Kong, China  
*My Reflection of You*, The Perimeter, London, UK  
*omelette papier*, Capitain Petzel, Berlin, Germany
- 2021 *MOTHER AND CHILD*, Friends Indeed Gallery, Bayview, CA, USA  
*Someone said that the world’s a stage*, GRIMM, New York, NY, USA  
*Plus One*, Luhring Augustine, New York, NY, USA  
*Before the Cockerel Crows*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy  
*and I will wear you in my heart of heart*, FLAG Art Foundation, New York, NY  
*Will o’-the-wisp - Sanya Kantarovsky and Camille Blatrix*, Modern Art, London, UK  
*House of Perception*, Antenna Space, Shanghai, China
- 2020 *100 Drawings from Now*, Drawing Center, New York, NY, USA  
*2nd Garage Triennial of Russian Contemporary Art: A Beautiful Night for All the People*, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia  
*(Nothing But) Flowers*, Karma, New York, NY, USA  
*BED AND CLOCK, MOON AND BEACH: Edvard Munch*, Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin, Germany  
*This Corrosion*, Modern Art, London, UK  
*Infinite Games*, Capitain Petzel, Berlin, Germany  
*Radical Figures: Painting in the New Millennium*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK [Cat.]
- 2019 *Wars*, David Nolan Gallery, New York, NY, USA  
*Taka Ishii Gallery 25th Anniversary Group Exhibition: Survived!*, Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo, Japan  
*A Seed’s A Star*, Loyal Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden  
*I’m Made of Water*, Rental Gallery, East Hampton, NY, USA  
*10-Year Anniversary Exhibition*, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, CA, USA  
*Drawing Biennial 2019*, Drawing Room, London, UK  
*Prints and Editions*, Luhring Augustine, New York, NY, USA  
*Let Me Tell You a Story*, The Arts Club, London, UK
- 2018 *Nightfall*, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, Belgium  
*Résistance: Sanya Kantarovsky and Vincent Gicquel*, 14e edition of “Chambres à part”, Galerie Félix Vercel, Paris, France [Cat.]  
*Baltic Triennial 13: GVE UP THE GHOST*, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania [Cat.]

- Selected Group Exhibitions
- 2018 *Helen at the Mountain*, Tetsuo's Garage, Nikko, Japan  
*Nothing Will Be As Before: Ten Years of Tanya Leighton*, Tanya Leighton, Berlin, Germany  
*ICA Collection: Entangled in the Everyday*, Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, Boston, MA, USA
- 2017 *Social Surfaces*, Artists Space, New York, NY, USA  
*The Trick Brain*, Aishti Foundation, Antelias, Lebanon [Cat.]  
*La Vie simple – Simplement la vie / Songs of Alienation*, Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles, Arles, France [Cat.]  
*EuroVisions: Contemporary Art from the Goldberg Collection*, The National Art School Gallery, Sydney, Australia, Jun. 3 – Aug. 5; Traveled to: Lismore Regional Gallery, Lismore, Australia, Dec. 16, 2017 – Feb. 26, 2018; Heide Museum of Modern Art, Bulleen, Australia, Mar. 23 – Aug. 19, 2018; Canberra Museum and Gallery, Canberra, Australia, Nov. 23, 2018 – Feb. 24, 2019; Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst, Australia, Apr. 12 – Jun. 2, 2019. [Cat.]  
*The Arcades: Contemporary Art and Walter Benjamin*, Jewish Museum, New York, NY, USA [Cat.]  
*Menagerie: Animals on View*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, New York, NY, USA  
*Thinking Out Loud: Notes for an Evolving Collection*, The Warehouse, Dallas, TX, USA [Cat.]  
*An Uncanny Likeness*, Simon Lee Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 2016 *La Perle*, Galerie Art: Concept, Paris, France [Cat.]  
*Giles*, Gagosian, Athens, Greece  
*Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, Kaufmann Repetto, Milan, Italy  
*A Modest Proposal*, Hauser & Wirth, New York, NY, USA  
*Theories of Modern Art*, Modern Art, London, UK  
*Répétition*, Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium  
*Inaugural Exhibition*, Romeo, New York, NY, USA  
*SURREAL*, König Galerie, Berlin, Germany  
*The Eccentrics*, Sculpture Center, New York, NY, USA [Cat.]  
*Untitled Body Parts*, Simone Subal, New York, NY, USA
- 2015 *Tightrope Walk: Painted Images After Abstraction*, White Cube, London, UK [Cat.]  
*The Funnies*, MOT International, Brussels, Belgium  
*Over you/you*, The 31st Biennial of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia  
*Works on Paper*, William Arnold, New York, NY, USA  
*Call and Response*, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, NY, USA
- 2014 *Live and Let Die*, Modern Art, London, UK  
*Another Cats Show*, 356 Mission, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
*Heather Guertin, Sanya Kantarovsky, Viola Yesiltac*, Malraux's Place, New York, NY, USA  
*What Were You Expecting*, Mr. Milquetoast, a Plot?, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany  
*Bard Girls Can Fly*, White Flag Projects, St. Louis, MO, USA

- Selected Group Exhibitions
- 2013 *Ten Years*, Wallspace, New York, NY, USA  
*D, ZweiDrei*, Berlin, Germany  
*Notes on Neo Camp*, Office Baroque, Antwerp, Belgium; Studio Voltaire, London, UK  
*New Year's Day Swimmers*, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 2012 *A Fear of Paranoia* (screening), Various Small Fires, LAX ART, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
*CKTV*, Cleopatra's Inter-City Pavilions Project, 9th Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai, China  
*Last Laugh*, The Company, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
*Out of The Blue*, Bortolami, New York, NY, USA  
*Phases*, Wallspace, New York, NY, USA  
*Things, Words and Consequences*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow, Russia
- 2011 *Emerging Artists Exhibition*, Los Angeles Initiative at Honor Fraser, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
*Next Season*, Marc Foxx, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
*3,328 Hours of Sunshine*, Clifton Benevento, New York, NY, USA  
*MFA Exhibition*, New Wight Gallery, Broad Art Center, University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA [Cat.]  
*All that is Unseen*, Allan Nederpelt Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, USA
- 2009 *Lost and Found*, New Museum, New York, NY, USA
- 2008 *Disegni*, AMT| Alberto Matteo Torri, Milan, Italy  
*Supernature*, Howard House Contemporary Art, Seattle, WA, USA
- 2007 *Reality/Alternation*, Brenda Taylor Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 2006 *Three Painters*, Howard House Contemporary Art, Seattle, WA, USA  
*Tiny Vices*, Spencer Brownstone Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 2005 *Los Muertos*, Kings County Space, Brooklyn, NY, USA  
*Sunday Afternoon*, Match-Art, New York, NY, USA  
*Terra Non Firma*, Howard House Contemporary Art, Seattle, WA, USA
- 2004 *Blacklight City Neon Nation*, Red Door Gallery, Providence, RI, USA
- 2003 *Quattro Giorni, Quaranta Disegni*, Palazzetto Cenci, Rome, Italy
- Curated Exhibitions
- 2022 *Extensions Out: An Exhibition to Benefit Blank Forms*, Luhring Augustine, New York, NY, USA
- 2021 *Karlo Kacharava: People and Places* (co-curated with Scott Portnoy), Modern Art, London, UK
- 2017 *Sputterances*, Metro Pictures, New York, NY, USA
- 2015 *No Joke*, Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin, Germany
- 2012 *Things, Words and Consequences* (co-curated with Stas Shuripa), Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow, Russia [Cat.]

- Selected Bibliography:  
Monographs and  
Artist's Books
- 2017 *Let Down*. Geneva: Innen, 2017.  
2016 *No Joke*, exh. cat. London: Studio Voltaire; Koenig Books, 2016.  
2009 Kantarovsky, Alexander. *Mutualisms*. Bratislava, Slovakia: Sputnik Books, 2009.
- Selected Bibliography:  
Books and  
Exhibition Catalogues
- 2020 *Radical Figures: Painting in the New Millennium*, exh. cat., 42-49, 112-114. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2020.  
2019 *A Seed's A Star*, exh. cat. Stockholm: Loyal Gallery, 2019.  
Diner, Eli. "Sanya Kantarovsky." In *Unrealism: New Figurative Painting*, 210-217. New York: Rizzoli, 2019.  
2018 *Baltic Triennial 13: Give Up the Ghost*, exh. cat. Vilnius: Contemporary Art Centre, 2018.  
*Résistance*, exh. cat. Paris: Galerie Félix Vercel, 2018.  
2017 *The Arcades: Contemporary Art and Walter Benjamin*, exh. cat. New York: Jewish Museum, 2017.  
*La Vie simple – Simplement la vie / Songs of Alienation*, exh. cat. Arles: Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles, 2017.  
*Thinking Out Loud: Notes for an Evolving Collection*, exh. cat. Dallas: The Warehouse, 2017.  
2016 *The Eccentrics*, exh. cat. Long Island City: Sculpture Center, 2016.  
*Vitamin P3: New Perspectives in Painting*. London: Phaidon, 2016.  
2015 *Tightrope Walk: Painted Images After Abstraction*, exh. cat. London: White Cube, 2015.  
2013 "Eli Diner and Sanya Kantarovsky: Robes and Geometers." In *Bulletins of the Serving Library* #6, 128-140. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013.  
2011 *Bulletins of the Serving Library* #2, back cover. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011.
- Awards and Honors
- 2014 Artist in Residence, Monteverdi Tuscany, Tuscany, Italy  
2012 Acquisitions Award, Art Here and Now (AHAN), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
2007 Program Artist in Residency, Berlin, Germany  
2003 Gelman Travel Grant, New York, NY, USA

## Public Collections

Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, USA  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia  
Blenheim Art Foundation, Woodstock, UK  
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX, USA  
David Roberts Art Foundation, London, UK  
EMDASH Foundation, Berlin, Germany  
Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy  
Hammer Museum, University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, USA  
Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, Boston, MA, USA  
Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, France  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA  
The Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, TX, USA  
RISD Museum, Providence, RI, USA  
Tate, London, UK  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, USA