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Allergies

Sanya Kantarovsky

May 9 – June 21, 2014

Opening: Friday, May 9, 6-8pm

Lean into the bathroom mirror. You meet a swollen, splotchy stranger. A droplet dangles from the tip of his nose. He tugs at the cheeks, pulling his face down into a horrible caricature and baring from under heavy lids—as if an act of submission—those eyes, distant, lost in a tangle of bloody threads. *Who... are... you?* The stranger just smirks.

Sanya Kantarovsky's paintings flush with agitated colors. Like moments glimpsed blearily out of bloodshot eyes, these are half-veiled scenes, the surfaces layered and fragmented. Saturated hues seem to echo the swollen emotions and confusion of these quotidian melodramas. Bodies tangle and meld, they peek through and overlap. Masks unmasked pile up, like a summary catalogue of human feeling. Smugness, befuddlement, melancholy, satisfaction, Kantarovsky's subjects go through it all in the course of their erotic encounters and embarrassments. These are the inflammations and repulsions between people. Intimacy, indifference, resentment, boredom, longing.

1906 saw a neologism introduced by a couple of Viennese immunologists. In other words, the year of the death of Paul Cezanne is the year of the birth of allergies. No mere lexical innovation, Clemens von Pirquet and Bela Schick's novel coinage explained disparate afflictions—hay fever, eczema, asthma—by common cause and pathology, in what now appears like an epidemiological prophecy. The intervening decades have seen an explosive growth in the range of allergens, the numbers of afflicted, and the spread of allergic diseases. If the 19th century was tubercular, the 20th, it's no exaggeration to say, was the Century of Allergies.

Through runny eyes, you might even read them as allegories. The exemplary mode of Russian literature, art and film of the first half of the 20th century, the allegorical informs much of Kantarovsky's work. His invocations of the allegory, however, reflect—and reflect on—its contestations and fraught history, modernism's allergy to allegory. Indeed passages suggestive of seemingly disparate and discordant historical moments appear like rashes across Kantarovsky's canvases. Temporalities mingle. They bleed into each other. Evocations of disparate predecessors such as Natalia Goncharova, Henri Matisse, James Ensor, Pierre Klossowski and Philip Guston dissolve into references to Soviet *Agit-Plakat* posters from the period of de-Stalinization. They fall away and resurface, these inflamed faces, like so many masks from the Century of Allergies. Effecting precise confusion, the work nearly allegorizes—through the pleasures and anxieties of intimacy—the pleasures and anxieties of painting after painting, the experience of historical simultaneity in the present.

-Eli Diner

With thanks to Leon Benn and Vicki Khuzami

Recent exhibitions include: *Bard Girls Can Fly*, White Flags, St. Louis, MO, 2014, *What Were you Expecting, Mr. Milquetoast, a Plot?*, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2014, *You Are Not An Evening*, GAK, Bremen, Germany (solo), 2013, *Notes on Neo Camp*, Studio Voltaire, London, UK, 2013.

For further information, please contact:

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GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY – SATURDAY, 10:00AM – 6:00PM

KEVIN BEASLEY, HENNING BOHL, MATTHEW BRANNON, JEFF BURTON, NATHAN CARTER, JASON DODGE, TRISHA DONNELLY, GEOFFREY FARMER, LIAM GILLICK, GIORGIO GRIFFA, ANNIKA VON HAUSWOLFF, BRIAN JUNGEN, SANYA KANTAROVSKY, MATEO LÓPEZ, JONATHAN MONK, MARLO PASCUAL, DIEGO PERRONE, JULIA SCHMIDT, SIMON STARLING, DAVID THORPE, GABRIEL VORMSTEIN, GARTH WEISER, JOHANNES WOHNSEIFER