

Intimate Extractions: Eva Beresin Interviewed

Painting as an act of intimate witnessing at the nexus of the abject and comedic.

By Rachel Falconer
Sep 28, 2022

Eva Beresin's paintings pose a stealthily radical exposure of intimate domestic life. Her solo exhibition at La Nave Salinas Foundation in Ibiza, [A Daily Exercise of Deadly Sins and Other Nonsense](#), assembles a body of work that deploys a satirically comic treatment of the tragedy and transgression that pulse through the human condition. Beresin's practice is informed by her urge to render stories deeply rooted in the most harrowing moments of human history and infuse them with a levity that raids the borders of saccharine cuteness and the grotesque. In these comic-tragic friezes, banally domestic and uncomfortably intimate scenes confront us with female carnal exposure, beguile us with abject humor, and seduce us with the uncanny familiarity of the hypnotically misshapen. Denying any clear orientation by dismantling encoded moral binaries, Beresin reveals the willfully contradictory register of human behavior.

— Rachel Falconer

Rachel Falconer - Congratulations on the show, particularly for being the first female artist to exhibit at La Nave Salinas Foundation. Your family history has deeply influenced your work. Could you talk a little more to this and how it has informed the characters in your paintings?

Eva Beresin - Thank you. I use darkness and humor to describe and express my post-Soviet experience. This is where I come from, my history, and this is the main part of my work as my family is key to all the characters and personalities in my paintings. Both my parents were Holocaust survivors. This history was not consciously part of my earlier work, but it is something special because I discovered it much later, which has proven to me that it is something I carry in my genes. This has made it clear why all these figures that I dream about and paint are here. My parents were very protective, and they didn't want to explain to us what happened—they wanted us to be happy. When my mother died, I restored and transcribed the diary she had written after her liberation from Auschwitz, and it changed my life and the way I work. I was somehow more free because it was something special to me to meet her through the writing and follow her journey. I felt a closeness to her that I had not felt before and also a sense of freedom of expression around my body and sexuality that I had not expected.

RF - Your friendship with the art dealer, artist, and curator Kenny Schachter has been pivotal in the discovering and championing of your work. Could you elaborate on this relationship?

EB - It really has been something quite special and magical. When you paint all your life and you don't get so much attention and then you get a lot from one moment to another, it really is overwhelming. Kenny



found me on Instagram; I mean, we found each other there. He contacted me and sent me questions, wanting to know who I was, was I old or young, gay or straight, what my background was. This showed me that he really wanted to understand me as an artist, and it made me feel incredibly close to him.

RF - One of your recurring points of focus is the domestic, smaller scales of life that take on a kind of universal messaging. Could you tell me more about your process?

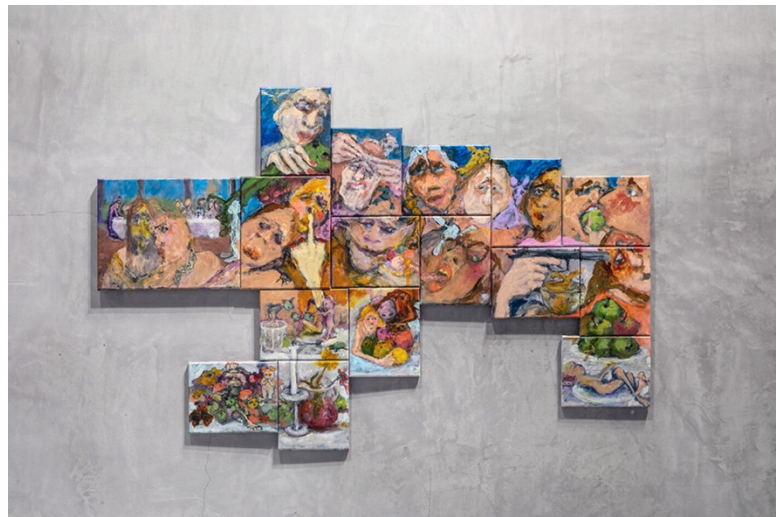
EB - When I make work, it is a very quick process. I need to get my thoughts and feelings and characters onto the canvas as soon as possible. It is a mixture of bringing out my ideas through my imagination and the images I collect. I want to bring to the canvas these everyday happenings: reading the news, eating together, traveling. I am always searching for images, and I collect images that have different facial expressions that I am looking to show.

I see something, and I combine it together with other things. My work is always showing how history repeats itself. There's a little bit of history in every scene of my family's story. I am always representing some human characters and nonhuman behaviors where animals are learning from humans or humans learning from animals. I also have my own creatures that combine animals and humans. I have all these figures in my mind from when I was very young, so there are ghostlike elements in the faces.

For this exhibition I was working on the theme of sins. For instance, *The seven spiritual laws of success* (2022) is about Treason—one of the bigger sins somehow—and its figures reference Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. The three-figure structure is important to me for this composition. I use the symbol of the table a lot in my work because it shows the humble domestic object as a metaphor for bringing people together. The horizontal plane of the table in *The seven spiritual laws of success* acts as interlocutor or symbol of domestic nothingness; the under-the-table situation is where I push the abject. Like sexuality, it's the seen unseen. I composed *The seven spiritual laws of success* in one hour. I love the feeling of emptying myself onto the surface. This intimacy has a universal appeal like magic little moments of nothing. Of course, the composition should be strong. My work is always a game of composition, colors, and content.

RF - Your work shows the female gaze and raw sexuality through representations of the female body. Do you want to provoke a specific reaction, and what do you think of being positioned as a feminist artist?

EB - No, I do not care about the reaction. It's life. If someone doesn't like it, then it's okay. I don't need to be likeable. It is funny, actually, because I am a shy person. My parents thought it was very improper to be naked or talk about sex, and now this is my moment of freedom; this is my kind of sexual revolution.



This question of being a feminist artist is interesting because I grew up in Hungary, and under Communism feminism did not exist. It was a completely alien concept. But I always made work like this, so from this point of view I was always a feminist. Without knowing it existed, I was.

Tracey Emin was one of my heroes in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Her work had the same kind of confrontation, same message, like: This is me; this is my sexuality. Deal with it. Look at it or not. My work now is much more about the female gaze and using the male gaze but to empower. Same gaze but different context. My focus is also on the loss of sexuality as we age and become invisible, which is just horrible. This is why I use the grotesque and the abject and push them to the edge, never totally getting there but

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forcing a certain borderline to make us visible again. This is what I appreciate about how you describe my work as slowing everything down to the scale of hyper-intimacy so that you as the viewer are forced to reflect on your own exposure, your own intimacy, and your own frustrations, etc.

RF - Could you talk about the process of building narrative in your work?

EB - At the moment I am working on another mosaic piece that acts as fragmented stories. The first one, *Between Stupidity and Serenity*, which is in the show, is made up of sixteen smaller canvases put together; the new one is much bigger and will be around thirty pieces. I am really inspired by the movies of Peter Greenaway, particularly *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, as they have these color spaces. I saw this film in my youth many times, but seeing it again now is very different. I can see much more the details: the toilet has this pinkish tone; the dining room is very Diego Velázquez and opulent; the space where they have red meat hanging and where they have sex. It is a freeze-framed narrative in flux and a very exciting way to build stories. The film *Brazil* is always a huge reference for me as well. Taking these as inspiration, you make it your own. You channel it through your language, and it becomes something else.