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METAL

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Eva Beresin stars in the next annual exhibition at the Fundación La Nave Salinas in Ibiza. She's an artist who is committed to the risky and radical. The solo show opens 16th July and features works that focus on the comic nature of the tragedy inherent in human behaviour. They represent the banality of the grotesque in scenes full of witnesses: sometimes manifested as animals and creatures interacting with humanity or looking directly at the viewer with surprise or despair. With site-specific works, attendees will be able to see pieces of monumental dimensions with others of a more domestic format.

"We were struck by her way of painting, her strokes. But also, how she approaches delicate situations with risky images", explains Lio Malca, promoter of the Fundación La Nave Salinas, a 700-square-metre stone building located on the edge of the sea where Beresin will be exhibiting her work this summer. On occasions, Beresin inserts self-portraits that seem amusing, mainly through hands, feet and facial features distorted like a caricature - a constant in her work. "I use my face and my body, I put them at the centre in situations that are relevant to me, combining them with my creatures, those that have accompanied me since childhood," she says.

Of Beresin's work, art critic Kenny Schachter has said that "her paintings are equally seductive, hilarious and disturbing. While lulled into a false sense of comforting entertainment, Eva hits us over the head after luring us in with her unparalleled, unbridled, symbolically violent and disturbing images." She confesses, "I've never looked for beauty, so I can't define what it means to me". Whilst Kenny adds that "I have always found a fascination for interesting, extraordinary and exciting people and things".

Eva Beresin trained as a painter at the Budapest School of Visual Arts. The daughter of an art collector, she was always exposed to the art world from an early age, and since the age of 9 she has known that painting is her great passion. Based in Vienna, Beresin is the first woman artist to exhibit at the foundation. In 2015, Beresin realised a deeply personal exhibition project for the Charim gallery in Vienna that brought her into the international art spotlight, titled *My Mother's Diary: Ninety-Eight Pages*, that was also materialised as a [book](#).

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This acclaimed exhibition was based on a diary written by her mother after her liberation from Auschwitz. With a bold handling of symbolism, her work captures stories inspired by tragic situations, but wrapped in a positive atmosphere, being able to extract beauty from pain. "You have to have a sense of humour to cope with horror," explains Beresin. "My courage to show all this somehow makes me laugh and encourages me because, despite all the hardships, we are still here".

In addition to being present in important international collections, Beresin's work has entered the permanent collection of the Albertina Museum in Vienna. We made time to talk about the seven deadly sins, the Shoah's pivotal impact on her need for humour to cope with tragedy, seeing little animal faces everywhere and her impressive 10 hour a day screen time.



Congratulations on your new show at Fundación La Nave Salinas! This is your first time exhibiting your work in Spain. Are you excited about it?

Of course, I am excited to have received this unique invitation from a very special person -Lio Malca- to this extraordinary place.

What are you going to be showing for this new exhibition? What can people expect from your most recent work to date?

The work that I do consists of stories, stories that emerge with a constant engagement with matters that I am consciously or subconsciously concerned by. A lot of things would be unbearable if I wouldn't intertwine them and combine them in satirical mostly bizarre ways. For this particular show I have been thinking about the seven deadly sins and how surprisingly contemporary they are.

We are slowly getting out of the biggest pandemic the contemporary world has experienced for decades. How are you feeling? Did this event become a source of inspiration for the work you're showing this summer in Ibiza?

The pandemic has changed us all in different ways, me and my work too. Simply the fact that I could live with so many limitations, without so many things that I was used to before. As a consequence, my values shifted, everything was put in new perspectives, and I developed a new found clarity for seeing the essential. So indirectly it's still a source for the show but there is no specific inspiration relevant to the show at La Nave.

After seven years since its opening, you are the first woman to show artworks at the Fundación, how do you feel about it? Have you ever faced difficulties when developing your work due to being a woman?

It's actually so sad that we still have to think or talk about it. I would call it a pure coincidence that I am the first woman. Personally, I never had any bad experiences [due to] being a woman. From a very young age I was always able to enjoy using my feminine merits very consciously and knowing my own limits. Back then, when I hadn't even heard about feminism, I'd say I was still a feminist in my own way.

Humour is a key to understand the narrative of your work. It so happens that in other artistic disciplines humour is not only a healthy coping mechanism but it's also quite political when it's used to highlight other issues. When did you discover that it was part of your painting style or structure?

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Intuitively, I was always simply interested in exaggerated representation. Exaggeration has always something tragical and that's where we arrive at humour. Enduring tragedy is for me only possible with humour on one's side. I am convinced that is tied to my family's history. But I really first became fully aware of it, when I visited Auschwitz Birkenau, where my mother had to spend a few months. She survived but her entire family was killed. Nothing I experienced was as absurd as standing there and trying to imagine ... From that moment on nothing was sacred or taboo to me anymore. And only able to go on with a lot of humour.

You also started painting at a young age, while observing the old ladies with their wild makeup and styling. Do you remember any special painting or piece that made you dedicate your work to art?

Yes, I remember so many paintings and pieces, my dad was an art addict, a collector of art books among other things. So, I had more than enough material around, and often sat on his lap and absorbed the art books, while he explained them to me. He also took me to art auctions when he acquired new things. He was my first and until very recently my only fan, he kept hanging my works between the real works of art.

“The story of where I come from and who I am today seems an inexhaustible source. 2020 was the year of a worldwide lockdown, my work since then inevitably explores how it affects each one of us”. This is a comment you made in one of your recent interviews. It made me think of your show at Charim Schleifmuhlgasse in 2015, when you went through the story of your mother through a diary of hers relating how she was liberated from Auschwitz. How did you approach this project both personally and professionally? Was it healing in some way?

Yes, it was definitely a kind of healing from things that were withheld from me but have always been present. I was able to develop a very special intimacy to my mother after her death. At first, I didn't think about what I could be developing. I just wanted to read this diary which I was never capable to read until then. Overwriting her handwriting to make it readable again was a very long procedure. Time to think. I was asking myself how to show this story in paintings without slipping into clichés. What could I show? [Whether] to show what you want to see, we all knew and saw seemingly everything about the Holocaust ... Then I realised, I only wanted to show her how she was before. I wanted to make her beautiful happy world visible again, what she was torn away from.

Some places in the world, including many European countries, have political narratives that are getting quite dangerous. It feels like we are going back to dark places we were supposed to have overcome. The evidence of fascist behaviour is quite worrying. How does this affect you and your work?

I believe that hate never disappeared. We only stopped reflecting, we in Europe kept this particular problem away from us, we thought something like that would never happen again, but we knew hate was always omnipresent, and now it is coming to the surface again.

What feeling would you like the spectator to experience when looking at your work?

Joy.

According to the show's statement your work represents yourself within all your facets; a work in which you throw fun to dark situations. Do you consider yourself optimistic?

Optimistic with a lot of doubts and recurring depressive episodes.

What are your main influences? Not only other visual artists and painters, but also in film, music and literature. Are there other sources of inspiration that are key to your work's development?

It's a huge mix of everything. It's very hard for me to pick names. It's me, my person, my mentality, experience, and everything I have ever seen, heard and read in my life.

Do you have any special work ritual at the studio?

I constantly have my iPhone in my left hand. Average screen time: 10 hours.

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You mentioned that some of these creatures that have accompanied you since you were a child. Can you develop on this and how it has affected your work?

I just see faces and creatures everywhere and all the time. They can be in a tree, a shadow, a dirty glass or leftover food. It's always been like that, I read the expressions without an idea where they come from, it's been like that since my childhood.

Distortion is a very interesting subject for painting. It has been used by some of the greatest artists like Francis Bacon, it sometimes feels like it's technically easy, but I found it such a difficult technique; details in brushstrokes can form very different expressions and sentiments, especially when painting portraits. How have you given shape to your unique style? And how has it evolved through the years?

I hate to sound so very old, but I actually was taught way back in the days that you have to know the basics. First, you must learn anatomy, descriptive geometry, only if you master it you are allowed to distort it. But after you learn the rules, and just study the rules for years, it takes away a certain freedom. Your own very special way of seeing things. I remember in art school; at some point you could hardly tell the works apart from each other. So, after learning the rules, you must do a lot of work to create your own way of distorting. I do not believe this would work through a special technique, it's more about your own personality.



We are going through this surreal moment in which metaverses are becoming a real thing and NFTs have played a huge part in it. For some people, it's a very exciting new thing and they even consider them as a part of this new artistic discipline. But digital and Net art were already here, the main difference is how NFTs have affected the art market and have kind of democratized the system in which someone become a so-called artist. How do you feel about all of this?

I love them. I don't understand the aggression towards it, it's just a great possibility for digital art. An NFTs are just like a new way of conserving and exchanging digital art. Humans hate new things, most people are afraid of anything changing. I created some NFTs from my previous digital work, it was really fun. Kenny Schachter was a huge inspiration for this, his way of working I find very powerful, and he is a brilliant mind. He has understood what NFTs can be.

Absurdity has become the norm in a real life. Politics and social issues are in such a state that the way technology, media, and institutions deal with them is sometimes ridiculous. We've got to the point that it feels like we reality and fiction are fighting. Do you think your paintings are more relevant or representative than ever?

The match between reality and fiction is my topic. But reality can be much worse than any fantasy.

Do you have any special plans for your stay in Spain while you're setting up the exhibition?

There is going to be an art fair at the same time which I really want to see. I am looking forward to finally meeting some people on the Island that I have as yet only known through Instagram. I am definitely not going to the beach, I want only shade and good food.