

EX PURGAMENTO

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Tate Modern is getting bigger. A corporate-style video on the ground floor informs me that the 'Project' will include 'an urban plaza' and 'a fabulous restaurant'. The first thousand visitors will get an inflatable day-glo rabbit signed by Jeff Koons. I made that last bit up, or maybe I didn't, but not the first. To which I can only respond: the intimacy and congeniality of Natalia's studio, whose human scale (6 by 2.3 metres; the Tate's turbine hall is 152 metres long and 35 high) encourages playfulness without any loss of discrimination, have never been more necessary or welcome.

Charles Boyle

Opening times:

30 Nov – 30 Dec
Sat, Sun, Mon, Tue 10AM – 6PM

Other times:

Yes, absolutely.

Please call for appointment:
tel.07799495549

Closed: 24 & 25 Dec



With special thanks to Helen Wilks and Jens Schaumann.

SECRETS

AND

Monika Beisner
Felicia Głowacka
Monica Lucia Madas
Ana Maria Pacheco
Paula Rego
Elżbieta Smoleńska
Danuta Sołowiej
Róisín Tierney
Helen Wilks
Natalia Zagórska-Thomas



Fingered

May the first digit of your right hand
slash out your future for you, leading you astray.

May the second, your middle finger
blacken and go bad, like the luck you dealt me.

May the third, your ring finger
shriveled and drop from that golden hole, like a lambs tail, ringed at lambing time.

May the small one, insouciantly crooked,
snag on the corners of your life, always sending you sprawling.

And may your thumb, unwilling by yourself
pin this poem to your arse, and march you down River Street, lamenting your sins!

© Róisín Tierney

2014

LIES

SECRETS AND LIES

© Helen Wilks 'Childhood Fragment: Fork'



© Paula Rego 'Secrets and Stories' (Courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art)

Soft whispers and animated chatter. Two ghostly dresses waltzing with the wind. Listless little girls, clutching dolls. A vixen embarks on a miraculous journey. A lovers' tryst and shattered glass – or is it shattered dreams? On the edge of the Forest, a clawed creature peeps out of her nest. Half-glimpsed through a window, a silhouette – Her. Could it be the start of a story?

Sometimes curating need not be more than an expression of taste, where the objects brought together seem to have little connection between them but the eye and sensitivity of the artist, collector, curator, beholder. What matters, however, is how they are thus compelled to communicate. At times unexpected, always meaningful. Natalia Zagórska-Thomas does this naturally with her own work. She assembles found objects to weave narratives between them. Some are macabre, others sweet and sour. In this spellbinding show, artist-turned-curator, Zagórska-Thomas, has intertwined the personalities of ten foreign and British artists working and living in London. She is drawn to the secrets and the lies that we sense but cannot entirely grasp. We are drawn to their ambiguity.

Helen Wilk's characters seem drawn from the Commedia dell'Arte and evoke the candour and seriousness of childhood drama. A large cat and a little girl peer ominously at each other: will he pounce at her, will she stab him with her fork? Her pristine white dress invites the spilling of blood. Monika Beisner reveals and conceals in her sequence of postcards where beings from a long gone era are now masquerading for us, putting on a show.

The lens of Elżbieta Smoleńska's camera captures conspiring looks and spying glances, gazes hidden behind black glasses. Bodies are draped in cloth, flesh is exposed.

Danuta Sołowiej's ceramic creatures are at once placid and feisty, deliciously tactile yet prickly. Touch if you will, but at your own risk. Beware, says the tale brought to life in this Camden studio. As Róisín Tierney's poem achingly reminds us, "Truth sometimes hurts, and Beauty, Beauty sometimes lies". We are their silent accomplices.

Curating is the result of encounters, encounters that touch, move and transform. This ambitious gathering of playful and disobedient stories, lightly fingered objects that fight, love, strive, suffer and play, invites you to create your own memories, cherished and unresolved. Wondrous and intimate, part-cabinet of curiosities, part-boudoir, Studio Ex-Purgamento has the aura of a memory theatre and a treasure box. The objects displayed here are the keepers of secrets and lies. They take on a life of their own. I wonder what they get up to, at night, when the door shuts, and the last visitor quietly leaves.

Melanie Vandenbrouck

© Felicia Głowacka, Untitled



Binding these artworks together are Felicia Głowacka's quickly drawn sketches. In elusive charcoal and red chalk, they are equally bold and delicate. Her stooped figures seem to morph into fantastic creatures. They are as mysterious as the artist herself.

A.M.B: This time you chose to invite women only. Is there anything behind that? Or was it just an accident?

N.Z-T: Initially it was a complete accident. Choosing work of artists who interest me – the subject being Secrets and Lies – subconsciously, I think, I had chosen women whose work includes some kind of a secret or a story you can't quite get at. And, of course, as I'm the filter and I am a woman, I chose women. But once I realised it [...] I did have a think about it. As you know I considered asking you to do it...

A.M.B: "Embodied as Maria Borkowska..."

N.Z-T: Yes, but then I thought that actually this isn't important. I didn't do it on purpose, it's not a political statement in any way, but I just don't see anything wrong with it. And if there is something interesting about that then that is great too because I'm interested in such accidents; The things you choose when you don't know you are making a choice.

Conversation between Natalia Zagórska-Thomas and Andrzej Maria Borkowski.
To hear more go to: www.zagorska-thomas.com/index.php/exhibitions/secrets-and-lies



© Monika Beisner "Faldetta"

Everything becomes diffused, things put on shapes only momentarily and just in order to take them off at the first opportunity. The customs, the modes of being of this reality reveal a rule: it's the rule of pan-masquerade. The reality assumes certain shapes just to show off, for laughs, for fun.

[...], it's just a temporarily assumed role, it is the epidermis, which will be cast off in just a moment.

Bruno Schulz
"Treatise on Mannequins"



© Danuta Solowiej "On the Edge of the Forest"



© Ana Maria Pacheco: "The Miraculous Journey of a Little Vixen 7"
(Courtesy of Pratt Contemporary Art)

Glass breaks above the clear, suggestive lines of Monica Lucia Madas' couple. We hold our breath for Ana Maria Pacheco's Vixen, and want to join Paula Rego's murmuring figures: will we be let into their secret?

Cisza na Stole

Otworzył parasol liście szeroko,
Jakby padało,
Sprzęty na stole patrzą mi w oko,
Jakby się coś stawało.

Stefan Szuman, *Silence On The Table (fragment)*



© Natalia Zagórska-Thomas: "Bird on the Wire"



© Monica Lucia Madas, *Untitled*

Devoid of it's own initiative, voluptuously pliant, yielding in the feminine manner, acquiescent in the face of all impulses, it constitutes outlaw terrain, open to every kind of charlatanism and dilettantism, the domain of all abuses and dubious demiurgical manipulations. Of all essences in the cosmos, matter is the most passive and defenseless.
Bruno Schulz "Treatise on Mannequins"

Perhaps we are not just using these objects to tell our secrets, perhaps they are betraying us. Telling secrets we don't mean to tell...
I'm thrilled to think that objects have a life of their own.
N. Z-T.



© Elzbieta Smoleńska "Her"