

MIKLOS ONUCSAN
MARKINGS OF THE WORKING AREA

Curated by Madalina Brasoveanu
Opening Reception: Saturday, April 24, 6 - 9 pm
Exhibition Dates: April 24 – May 29, 2010

Mihai Nicodim Gallery is pleased to present „Markings of the Working Area”, the first solo show in the US of Miklos Onucsan.

The work presented in this show by Romanian conceptual artist Miklos Onucsan spans three decades, starting from the communist 80's, through the transition to a market economy and democracy in the 90's and till the present day, when Romania joined the European Union. The mantle of history surrounds Onucsan's work, colliding with his own, and this is the starting point where his work can be discussed and understood.

The Los Angeles exhibition is built around his self-portraits and the context in which they were made. Any one of these portraits was made at a particular moment in time, closely related to cultural and political events, not random, but reflecting the artist's own mechanisms of interpreting and processing these events.

The first self-portrait, in chronological order, is „*Self-Portrait Along the Way*” (1982 - 1992). The work consists of four photographs-documents, the first three dated back in 1982, illustrating an action protest - *C'est ici qui j'arrive tous les matins* (It's here where I arrive each morning). The setting of the photograph is the artist's place of employment – a state owned cooperative. His forced employment there, within a suffocating totalitarian communist regime, started his rebellion as an individual and as an artist.

In this stage in his career he produced works like „*Fragile*” (1987), „*The Expression of the Human Body*” (1986), „*Impermeable*” (1985), „*I Watered a Horseshoe as if it Were a Flower*” (1985), „*The History of Rust from Its Origins Until Today*”(1986), all works that share a certain *arte povera* feeling and communicating feelings without nominating them, in the context of general short-comings and cultural censorship in Romania at that time.

The forth photograph of „*Self-Portrait Along the Way*” is dated 1992. Here, the protest transforms itself in self-alignment, the rebel becomes one of many in a row. We're now in the 90's, a confusing period after the fall of the totalitarian communist regime, period in which revolts –individual or general- collapsed due to the new found freedom and democracy.

This freedom was hard to cope with because of lack of „practice”, so freedom became another form of alignment. From this period belong works like „*Object to march with*” (1995) – with its cynical nostalgia, „*Stiff Ballet for the End of the Century*” (1996), the „*Camouflages*” series (1995), „*Ephemeral*” (1994), „*Grateful Posterity*” (1998) and many other works holding a dark rhetoric as well as a wonderful sense of humor.

„*Self-portrait by the Yard*” (2010) is the third and last self-portrait so far. The artist pictures himself as an industrial, ready-made product. The custom laser-carved wood beam could be cut in thicker or thinner slices, by client request.

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The objectification of his own appearance and the aggressiveness of its slicing are a very ironic way of self-flagellation, however the slices of self-portraits act as personal heralds.

„*Self-portrait by the Yard*” belongs to a new stage in Miklos Onucsan’s career: his emergence from cultural isolation in Romania to a new, market-driven, cultural environment. In this moment, more like in any other, his origins count.

Other works belonging to this period are: „*Here Rests the Grass*” (2002-2008), „*Shortcut*” (2006), „*The Game Lasts 2 Minutes*” (2010), „*Stellar Eclipse*” (2010), „*Christian Card Remix*” (2010), works in a conceptual vein which placed in an organic dialog with the previous ones, seem to have an independent world of their own. Placing the self-portraits series as its main structure, the show gathers works made at very different times and contexts, and displays them as marks of the artist’s working area, as signs which are meant to define a space, a time, and a practice bound to their own set of rules.

Madalina Brasoveanu. 2010

Special thanks to Davide Mariani si Cornel Abrudan.

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