

FORBES MAGAZINE: 'Half Gallery Holds Georgian Artist Tamuna Sirbiladze's First U.S. Solo Show, 'Take it Easy' by Adam Lehrer, August 5 2015

Half Gallery Holds Georgian Artist Tamuna Sirbiladze's First U.S. Solo Show, 'Take it Easy'



Last night, Half Gallery hosted the first United States solo show of Georgia-born and Vienna-based visual artist Tamuna Sirbiladze, 'Take it Easy.' Featuring several paintings hung around the two floors of the gallery, the work in the show is glaringly beautiful. Sirbiladze is often known as the wife of the late artist Franz West, who passed away in 2012. But as evidenced by this show, her aesthetic is entirely unique to her. Her paintings are highly expressive with splashes of glorious colors forming abstracted figures and patterns.

The imagery contained within the banners in the show oscillate between “the figurative and the gestural,” and Sirbiladze also painted the walls of Half Gallery jungle-green, mirroring the walls of French painter Balthus at the Villa Medici in Rome. The work makes references to other other artists, like Matisse and Picasso, as well as artists from other mediums like David Lynch. But even with the references, the work reads as quite personal. Sirbiladze’s work is the kind that requires the viewer’s patience to truly appreciate and understand. One needs to look quite closely, mind turned on, to take in all the imagery living within the shadows of the colors. But the paintings are incredibly emotional, and prove rewarding to those willing to give into their allure.

Sirbiladze, who was at the show’s opening, has known she would be an artist since she was a child. She studied art Tbilisi State Academy in Georgia and later the Vienna State Academy. She and I linked up at the show to talk about her first US solo exhibit.

Forbes: Have you been to New York before?

Sirbiladze: Many times, but this is the first time for my show.

Forbes: Is there anything in particular that attracted you to Half Gallery?



'Take it Easy' exhibition shot, photo via Half Gallery

Sirbiladze: I loved it because it's such a domestic feeling place. It's like home. And my works are so expressive and not at all domestic. It proved to be a nice contrast.

Forbes: So how has putting together this show compared to others that you've been involved with?

Sirbiladze: Well, Bill [Powers, owner of Half Gallery] really knew my work. For example there was this wool painting. Bill was kind of shocked at first, but then he loved it. So, I see how he is very in tune with art. Not only with thinking and knowing, but also with intuition. He has strong visual knowledge.

Forbes: Talking about the art itself, it's different than much of the art I've seen recently. It's a little abstract. How did you first get involved with art, and when did you start painting?

Sirbiladze: I was 13 when I started, and my father was a painter. And I knew at age 13 that I would be an artist. I started doing still lifes. The first time I put a brush in my hand I knew that was what I'd do. I was fascinated by art. But I had to learn about it through books. In Georgia, there were no museums. But to see original art in books was my favorite thing.

Forbes: Who were some of the painters that left an early impression on you?

Sirbiladze: I loved Rembrandt, Goya, and the Impressionists.

Forbes: Bill mentioned something to me about pomegranate, and that it's a symbol used by a film director, and in your work?

Sirbiladze: Yes, Sergei Parajanov was the name of the filmmaker. The pomegranate is a symbol of the country of Georgia, because there are some many pomegranate trees there. Many artists use it as a symbol. I had to sneak it in there.



Tamuna Sirbiladze, 'L Vase' (2015), image via Half Gallery

Forbes: So it's like your homage to your country?

Sirbiladze: Yes, it's like a subject itself. I didn't want to make it as an art statement; I wanted it to exist as itself.

Forbes: Your color palette is quite beautiful, blues and red always on white background. Do you have a special relationship with color?

Sirbiladze: Yes, color is the reason that I started painting. Searching for color and light is my main engagement.



Tamuna Sirbiladze, 'Eraserhead' (2015), image via Half Gallery



Tamuna Sirbiladze, 'Picasso's Pigeon,' (2011), image via Half Gallery



Tamuna Sirbiladze, 'G's Nose,' (2015), image via Half Gallery