



Polka Dots and Curls

Andro Semeiko

22nd November 2018 – 26th January 2019

Private view 22nd November, 6-8pm

narrative projects is delighted to present *Polka Dots and Curls*, a solo exhibition by Andro Semeiko.

For this exhibition Semeiko has produced a new series of paintings based on two distinct literary icons – namely, the heroic Georgian poet Vazha-Pshavela, known for his overarching themes of strong-willed nationalism, including dignity and a zeal for freedom alongside problems raised by the interaction of human love with love of country, and Dylan Thomas, one of the most important Welsh poets of the 20th century, noted for his original, rhythmic and ingenious use of words and imagery – to enact various historical loops in poetry and painting.

Semeiko has combined these two pivotal figures with the curved and elaborate, ever-so slightly camp flourishes of the Georgian language (essentially the calligraphic nature of this national script is utilised in Semeiko's work as an ironic-poetic / textual-conceptual prescription for the 'other' of 'locally-hewn' forms of interpretation) with a mannered international critical discourse in post-digital painting.

Much like the rarefied theory of contemporary painting, Semeiko's cultural cryptograms are translated into ever-more abstruse formal decorative designs, devises that start to imply the existential cosmic interstellar film-space redolent of Tarkovsky, ludic micro-realities redolent of Soviet-era sci-fi escapism.

This spiritual and metaphysical theme of Russian cosmism is a metaphor for resistance to state authority through existential tropes and personal distraction that also links to historical critical painting, for example in Semeiko's reference to Cy Twombly's calligraphic doodles, Sigmar Polke's humorous critical resistance to prevailing doctrines (against mathematical certainty in Sol Lewitt, Benjamin Buchloh's critical doctrine, et al), and Tomma Abts' experimentation with rigid grid formats.

If Thomas spent time drinking during the 1940s in Fitzrovia near the gallery in which this exhibition will take place, fittingly, in a context-based move, Semeiko's new work includes loaded ornamentation and stylistic tropes taken from Thomas' dress, gridded bubbles floating in galaxies that refer to the polka dots that the poet regularly appeared on his bow-ties and shirts, alongside more curved scripture-patterns that imply both Georgian handwriting and the hair of Thomas and his subsequent counter-cultural trans-Atlantic protégé Bob Dylan.

Importantly, by including a reflection on his own childhood spent in Georgia during a period of extreme anxiety, interspersed with small phases of respite in the 1980s and 1990s – memories of a culture infused with a psychological reprieve from totalitarianism demonstrated by countless hidden creative and personal acts – Semeiko develops and furthers art historical narrative in a small but provocative manner, his itinerant minor languages transposed onto a very public Western tradition in a synthesis that has interesting implications for painting and personal identity.

Text by Andrew Hunt

About the Artist

Andro Semeiko (b. 1975, Ozurgeti, Georgia) studied at Goldsmiths College (2001) and the Royal Academy Schools (2006). He lives and works in London. Semeiko has exhibited widely nationally and internationally including: 'The Will', 3rd Tbilisi Triennial, Georgia (2018); SAMUK Biennale, Nojeonbong Art Park & Museum, South Korea (2018); 'Nature Morte', Guildhall Art Gallery, London, UK, and Museum of Contemporary Art, Wrocław, Poland (2017-18); 'Nostalgia for the Future', Taipei Fine Art Museum, Taiwan (2016); 'Towards Understanding Huai Su' (solo), Soulangh Park, Tainan, Taiwan (2015); 'An Artist's Workshop for Unveiling Emotions' (solo), BALTIC 39/BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK (2013); 'Expanded Painting', Prague Biennial 4, Czech Republic (2009). Semeiko is the recipient of British Institution Award, London (2004) and Berwick Gymnasium Fellowship (2009).

For further information and high-resolution images, please contact:

Daria Kirsanova
daria@narrativeprojects.com