



Sanya Kantarovsky and Anna Sew Hoy

Hunter Drohojowska-Philp responds to serio-comic work at Marc Foxx and poignant sculptures at VSF.

FROM THIS EPISODE

A few months ago at LAXART, Sanya Kantarovsky exhibited a video that revealed a hopeful outlook rarely found these days: Happy Soul's rubbery-limbed, wide-eyed fellow was naked but hid his nether regions with his hand, eventually was covered by falling leaves that transformed into colorful butterflies and dispersed, all set to pop music. It bordered on being too sweet but it was also memorable. Now the same artist, born in Riga, living in New York, shows his latest paintings at [Marc Foxx Gallery](#) through February 7, a show called "Gushers," referring to a sort of candy.



*Sanya Kantarovsky, "Apples and Oranges," 2015
Oil, pastel, watercolor, and oil stick on linen
33-1/2 x 25 x 1-7/8 inches (85.1 x 63.5 x 4.8 cm)
Courtesy the artist and MARC FOXX, Los Angeles
Photo: Robert Wedemeyer, 2015*

The paintings, at times, veer too close to the simple humor of an animated short but more often, they incorporate references to modern art history, to everyday life and are made with a notable skill that brings them up to another level altogether.



Sanya Kantarovsky, "Wet Hands," 2015
Oil, pastel, watercolor, and oil stick on canvas
75 x 55 x 1-1/8 inches (190.5 x 139.7 x .9525 cm)
Courtesy the artist and MARC FOXX, Los Angeles
Photo: Robert Wedemeyer, 2015

Using a rich Fauvist palette, combining oil, pastel, watercolor and oil stick on canvas, Kantarovsky's compositions are complex and confounding. Against a layered background of stylized trees and plants, "Wet Hands" (2015) features a Modigliani-esque female nude resting against the crouched figure of a man reaching down into a Matissean pool of pale blue water where goldfish are swimming. A dark hand reaches up out of the water, perhaps a symbol of the unconscious, of the painter's wet hands. The point is to retain such mystery, hint at narration without resolution. In "Apples and Oranges" (2015) a naked man reclines while looking at a dark-skinned woman on the floor while a man in a suit sits on the edge of the chaise and stares away from the scene. A ghostly enlarged profile of a mournful man looks over the scene. The warm blue background, bright orange and ochre shapes, figures in olive and brown with elongated limbs, recall Gauguin and other early modern artists. Perhaps the profile is the artist himself looking longingly at the past.



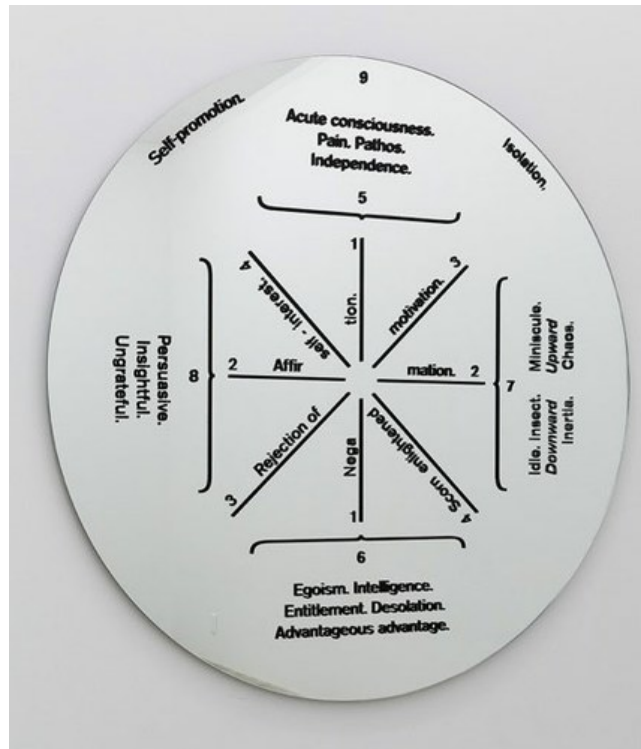
*Sanya Kantarovsky, "Sleazeballs," 2015
Oil, pastel, watercolor, and oil stick on canvas
75 x 60 x 1-1/8 inches (190.5 x 152.4 x 3.4925 cm)
Courtesy the artist and MARC FOXX, Los Angeles
Photo: Robert Wedemeyer, 2015*

Quoting from visual history is a defining aspect of post-modernity, and exceedingly common, but it is refreshing to see an artist pull it off with such an ambitious set of references, major and minor, figurative and abstract. In the center of the gallery, a washed-out canvas is piled in a heap, with the replica of a purple bird standing on top and the model of a yellow hand emerging from the folds. Titled "Mondays," (2015) it summarizes the struggle of a working artist to find meaning in new ways. The show only falters when Kantarovsky loses confidence and indulges too fully in his inclination to comedy.



*Anna Sew Hoy, "Gravitational Pull," 2015
Stoneware and enamel, each 22.5 x 16 x 19"
Various Small Fires (VSF)*

Meanwhile, over at Various Small Fires, now moved to Highland Avenue and renamed VSF, [Anna Sew Hoy](#) has arranged her satisfyingly simple ceramic sculptures in the entrance courtyard. Roughly based on her recent public sculpture "Look-See" at Kings Road Park in WeHo, "Face No Face," as it is called, refers to works made with the vertical oval shape of a face and a void at the center. "Gravitational Pull" (2015) is a two-part work of stoneware, shaped like dark and light colored hoods, mounted on cinderblocks and facing one another. It could refer to a socio-political stand-off but, as is always the case with Hoy, the simplest of gestures and means convey more than such superficial significance. The empty centers, the repeated forms, don't tell a specific story but they bring us into her always enticing world.



*Liz Magic Laser, "Inflective Medallion," 2015
Enamel silkscreened on mirror
47 x 47 x 0.25"
Various Small Fires (VSF)*

In the main gallery, [Liz Magic Laser](#) — her real name apparently — shows a couple of mirrored objects inscribed with diagrams demonstrating techniques of effective speech delivery along with her video on a similar topic, a young boy reading from Dostoevsky's Notes from the Underground as though delivering a Ted talk. On view through February 21.