

ERIKA BORNOVÁ

MADNESS IS THE GUARDIAN OF THE NIGHT

13 August 2021 – 31 October 2021

Prague City Gallery

Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Karlova 2, Prague 1

Open daily except Monday from 10 am to 6 pm

Curator: Martina Pachmanová

Five years after her last solo exhibition in the Václav Špála Gallery, Erika Bornová (1964) presents her new works. The title of the exhibition in the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace (GHMP), *Madness is the Guardian of the Night*, refers to a line from the poetic cycle *The Book of Hours* by Rainer Maria Rilke, an aesthete, unbalanced loner, neurotic, seducer and exalted poet.

Although Bornová is primarily associated with the medium of space – that is, sculpture – in the last ten years, she has increasingly returned to painting, a discipline she had studied but then abandoned for a long period. On the one hand, Bornová's exhibition builds on her previous works on the border between sculpture and painting, dedicated to important but often contradictory and ambivalent historical figures. Through their destinies, Bornová shows how subtle the line is between "normality" and madness, between genius and infatuation, as well as between devoted love, addiction and destructive obsession, and that insanity is closer to human existence than a rationalized modern society would be willing to admit.

However, works on paper form the centrepiece of the *Madness is the Guardian of the Night* exhibition: more than 60 acrylic self-portraits painted with obsessive compulsion during the artist's temporary and partial loss of sight, and fanciful, large-scale "portraits" of submarine plants and animals that show the bizarre beauty of a world invisible to the human eye. In her highly imaginative, large-scale drawings, the longest of which measures seven metres, Bornová was freely inspired by the plants and the bizarre bodies of aquatic invertebrates hidden from the human eye in the depths of the seas and oceans, or visible only under a microscope.

Her exhibition in the Prague City Gallery presents Erika Bornová as a storyteller of powerful, ambiguous stories who reflects on the banality of life with grotesque exaggeration, tries to unriddle the complex entanglement of the human imagination and dreams with her typical passion, and gravely examines the complicated relationship of a human to the world, to others, to themselves and to nature. As the artist herself puts it, her current interest in nature

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is a response – in part environmental – to the climate changes affecting every one of us and the entire planet, it is "an escape from concrete and viruses into nature and a world that is elusive to humans".

Martina Pachmanová, the curator of the exhibition

Erika Bornová (b. 1964) studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (1983–1988). Her early works were influenced by the neo-expressionism of “the New Wild” and postmodernism; during the late normalisation period, she presented them at unofficial *Konfrontace/ Confrontations* exhibitions. Since the 1990s, she has devoted herself exclusively to sculpture (from small objects to monumental figurative sculptures), using a material that was essentially unused in art – polystyrene. At the same time, she began to use other, generally non-sculptural and often kitsch materials (fur, fish scales, feathers, cellophane, costume jewellery rhinestones), which imprint a subversive pop(art) ironic undertone on her work. Bornová has long thematised interpersonal relationships, female identity, and the fetishisation of the female body in her work, as well as the loneliness of the individual in the midst of modern society. She is represented in the collections of the National Gallery in Prague, the Aleš South Bohemian Gallery, the Klatovy – Klenová Gallery, the Museum of Arts and Design in Benešov, and in a number of private collections in the Czech Republic and abroad, including Collett Prague – Munich a.s. and the Wanniek Gallery. A retrospective Czech-English monograph, *Fragile Monuments*, which summarises the development of Erika Bornová’s work and her exhibition activities, was published by the KANT publishing house in 2016. The same publisher is bringing out a bilingual publication, *Madness is the Guardian of the Night*, for the exhibition of the same name at the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, with texts by Martina Pachmanová and Otto M. Urban.

Exhibition Curator: Martina Pachmanová

Graphic Design: Karel Kerlický

Architectural design: Nedvěď Architekti

Media Partners: Art&Antiques, ArtMap, ArtTalk, Flash Art, A2, Artiki, Revolver Revue, Artyčok.tv, protisedi.cz, Radio 1, Český rozhlas Wave

Admission: CZK 150 full price / CZK 60 reduced / CZK 20 seniors

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Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, which in its exhibition activity focuses in particular on modern and contemporary art. It collects, protects and professionally processes art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the Prague City Gallery exhibits at seven venues: The Stone Bell House, Municipal Library – 2nd floor, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, The House of Photography, Villa Bilek, Troja Château and František Bilek’s House in Chýnov.

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ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM

Wed 15. 9. 2021, 6 pm

Release of the book *Madness is the Guardian of the Night* published by Kant. Musical accompaniment by Tomáš Jamník on cello and Josef Špaček on violin. The event will be followed by a guided tour of the exhibition.

Tue 12. 10. 2021, 6 pm

Tomas Dimter's lecture on the topic of Alma Mahler

Fri 5. 10. 2021, 6 pm

Meeting in the exhibition with artist Erika Bornová and guitarist Pavel Steidl

Tue 19. 10. 2021, 6 pm

Guided tour of the exhibition with Erika Bornová and curator Martina Pachmanová

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Saturday art workshops

The self-portrait theme will be part of the artistic responses to the exhibition. One of the ways of portraying one's identity will be expressive painting in a large format when blindfolded, or creating the work in a darkened room. Both approaches will be a reminder of the artist's temporary loss of sight. During the workshops, we will also explore the theme of underwater plants and animals, taking inspiration from the artist's fantastical concept of them. We will depict bizarre life forms using classical dry and oil pastel techniques, as well as digital painting.

Sat 2 October 2021, 1–6 p.m., **Self-portrait and Identity**, GHMP Education Centre in the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sat 30 October 2021, 1–6 p.m., **Deep Sea World**, GHMP Education Centre in the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Art studio for adults and seniors

From among the artist's fundamental topics, we will focus on self-portraiture. Interactive workshops will focus on the medium of painting as a tool for self-exploration. We will focus more on the perception of colours, subjective action and an unforced approach than on the external form of the portrait. The artistic medium will be a transparent painting technique, using watercolour or acrylic paint.



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Fri 8 October 2021, 3–6 p.m., **Self-Portrait Painting I**, GHMP Education Centre in the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sun 10 October 2021, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., **Self-Portrait Painting II**, GHMP Education Centre in the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sun 10 October 2021, 3–6 p.m., **Self-Portrait Painting III**, GHMP Education Centre in the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Interactive tours of the exhibition for all types of schools and other age and interest groups, with the possibility of a follow-up artistic response in the form of your own artistic creation. We adapt the events in terms of time, theme and level of difficulty to the specific requirements of each school. Reservation required: edukace@ghmp.cz



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