

ARRIVALS>HUNGARY

<9> Beáta Veszely: From Life

Beáta Veszely combines video and digital technology with the more traditional techniques of painting and drawing in carefully conceived installations. For her exhibition *From Life* Veszely presents her latest video, *On the Way to Heaven*, together with drawings from her ongoing series of *HÁ drawings*, and a new painting, *History Wanted*.

The relationship between physical and spiritual or transcendental phenomena is a central theme in Veszely's work. The figure of the horse is a particular focus. In recent years, horse archery has become a primary motif: originally practised by equestrian nomads, horse archery has been revived in recent years as a popular competition sport in Hungary. The interest is both personal and artistic for Veszely, who has been riding since the age of eight and practising horse archery since 2005.

In the short video, *On the Way to Heaven*, a man rides a beautiful grey mare around a series of jumps in a small enclosure in the country. The rider's torso is bare and the horse is not saddled. Into the sequence of more descriptive frames, Veszely introduces a change in texture and pace with a series of close-up views in which the horse's head, hooves and hair linger momentarily in a hazy focus. The defining moments of the footage occur as horse and rider arrive at a jump and a star-shaped light emanates from the horse's body. The effect, akin to but clearly more than the play of light on the camera lens, is heightened by Veszely's use of sound as the ambient noise of birds and the countryside are momentarily replaced by a deep, resonant hum. With each jump made by the rider, the light shines a little longer until it subsumes the entire field of view.

The large painting *History Wanted* is a companion to the video and relates to a series of large format paintings Veszely has been making in recent years, drawing on advertisements from popular Hungarian and English horse magazines. *History Wanted* is a portrait of two mares, Arabell and Zsani, about whom information is sought. While the place names and telephone number in the lower part of the painting indicate the horses are from Hungary, Veszely's double portrait evokes something far more disturbing than a prosaic search for pedigree. The horses are painted standing in knee high grass against a loosely brushed background that evokes gently undulating fields blown by a soft breeze. Their seemingly gentle attitude, emphasised by the way their heads converge in a trusting nestle, belies the bloody cuts and welts covering their bodies. The juxtaposition of the horses' calm presence and an unknown and brutal history brings to mind notions of resilience and redemption.

The idea of violence, redemption and momentous events coincides with emotions of love and personal passions in Veszely's delicately rendered pen drawings of contemporary horse archers. Executed on found magazine and newspaper pages, and displayed in rows of varying heights, these drawings suggest an animated landscape through which Veszely's equestrian figure makes its way. Once again, Veszely has drawn her iconography from existing sources; in this case, photographs and video footage taken by Veszely herself. Most of the people represented are friends of the artist; some are self-portraits. All are rendered in a flurry of densely-packed lines and cross-hatching over the torn out magazine pages collected by the artist over the years. English art magazines and newspapers tend to be the most common. Although Veszely insists that the selection of pages is a relatively random one, the process of matching a particular image to a page is deliberate and considered.

She has talked about playing with different moments in time, which is reflected, for example, in her use of pages from the magazine *Interview*, founded by Andy Warhol in 1969. In one drawing, a rider in contemporary dress sits astride his horse against a background of an early Mondrian painting from the 1910s reproduced on the 1983 cover of the Hungarian art magazine *Muveszet*.

As with her paintings, Veszely uses the text-image relationship to open up a third dimension in which varied interpretations are possible. If we look closely, many of the text-based backgrounds to the drawn figures are narratives of tragedy and destruction, and of art and religion. In one drawing, an archer poised in mid-action looms menacingly across the voluptuous flesh tones of an 18th century Fragonard painting with the cropped title of "*the Apocalypse*" blaring across the lower margin of the page.

Veszely's multi-layered narratives might be interpreted as an expression of living in a contemporary moment fraught with contradiction and conflict. János Sugár, with whom Veszely studied in the Intermedia Department at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Art in the early 90s, has described a clash of contexts implied by the processes of globalisation; a situation in which previously distinct identities – be it national, social or political – take on new and multiple forms. In Veszely's visual lexicon, with their implied notions of transcendence and mystical unity, the horse might also serve as a symbol for the work of art – an encounter with otherness that offers experiences that go beyond explicable physical phenomena. Within this logic, Veszely's rider could represent the artist, a figure who moves across a landscape of changing dimensions, at once of the moment and within a larger space of time, place and history.

Beáta Veszely was born in Budapest in 1970. She graduated from the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts in 1994 and obtained an MA in Fine Art from Goldsmiths College, University of London in 2000. Veszely is currently a research student and director of TIPP, a collaborative research initiative between the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts and Goldsmiths College. She lives and works in Budapest.

Notes

A horse archer is a cavalryman armed with a bow. Because using a bow requires a horseman to let go of the reins with both hands, horse archers need superb equestrian skills. Peoples known to have employed horse archers include the Scythians, Sarmatians, Parthians, Huns, Hungarians, Mongols, Turks, Armenians, Bulgars and some Native North American tribes. In Japan mounted archery is called Yabusame.

Further Reading

Herrigel, Eugen, *Zen in the Art of Archery*, Random House, London, 1981
Irwin (eds.), *East Art Map. Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, published by Afterall, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London, 2006
Kassai, Lajos, *Horsearchery*, Dee-Sign, Budapest, 2001
Vanderlinden, Barbara and Filipovic, Elena (eds.), *The Manifesta Decade. Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions in Post-Wall Europe*, The MIT press, 2006
Tisdall, Caroline, *Joseph Beuys. Coyote*, Schirmer/Mosel, Munich, 1980

ARRIVALS>TALKS AND EVENTS

Artist in Conversation

Tuesday 9 January, 5.30pm

Beáta Veszely in conversation with Suzanne Cotter, Senior Curator, Modern Art Oxford.

Gallery Talk

Saturday 13 January, 3.00pm

Allia Ali, deciBel Curatorial Trainee, Modern Art Oxford.

In Conversation

Tuesday 23 January, 6.30pm

János Sugár, artist and co-founder of the Intermedia Department at the Hungarian Academy for Fine Art and Eszter Lázár, Curator, kArton Foundation, Budapest.

Screening

Wednesday 7 February, 6.30pm

Video works by contemporary Hungarian artists; Miklós Erhardt, Szabolcs KissPál, Szacsva Y Pál, János Sugár, Beáta Veszely and Little Warsaw.

For further details, visit www.modernartoxford.org.uk

All events are free. Booking recommended.

T +44 (0)1865 813800.

For Saturday Gallery tours, no booking is necessary.

ARRIVALS>HUNGARY

TURNER CONTEMPORARY, MARGATE

Presented in parallel to Beáta Veszely's exhibition at Modern Art Oxford is ARRIVALS>HUNGARY at Turner Contemporary, Margate.

Szabolcs KissPál

The Dance

Turner Contemporary, Margate

19 January – 24 February 2007

www.turnercontemporary.org

A LARGE PRINT VERSION OF THIS LEAFLET IS AVAILABLE. PLEASE ASK A GALLERY ATTENDANT.

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Beáta Veszely, *On the Way to Heaven*, 2006, film still, Courtesy Marton Szmrecsanyi

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ARRIVALS > HUNGARY

10 JANUARY – 25 FEBRUARY 2007

ARRIVALS>HUNGARY is part of ARRIVALS>NEW ART FROM THE EU, a series of exhibitions over two years at Modern Art Oxford and Turner Contemporary, Margate, introducing the work of artists from the expanded European Union.

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