

LUHRING AUGUSTINE

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Sanya Kantarovsky

On Them

April 27 – June 15, 2019

Opening reception: Friday, April 26, 6-8pm

Luhring Augustine is pleased to announce the opening of *On Them*, an exhibition of new paintings by Sanya Kantarovsky, marking his first solo presentation with the gallery.

On Them presents vignettes from the lives of a strange group of real and imagined subjects. An anguished killer, a hospice patient, a headless infant accordionist, and a disenfranchised snowman assemble into a painted tragicomedy, simultaneously unnerving and seducing the audience. The otherwise discrete paintings seem to suggest contingency, akin to a set of chance encounters one might have with passersby throughout the course of a particularly disconcerting day. At times, the subjects directly return the viewer's gaze, as if begging for connection; at other times, they plead with an omniscient celestial entity, or stare vacantly off the edges of the canvas.

While Kantarovsky's practice ranges across a diverse array of media, including drawing, printmaking, sculpture, and animation, his project revolves around his paintings, which emphasize affect in the portrayal of archetypal subjects, from the doe-eyed and self-conscious to the unsavory and criminal. His latest body of work mines the historical modes through which figurative painting elicits empathy from a viewer. Kantarovsky considers the gamut of human sensibilities through eloquent gesture and lush coloration, yet his weathered surfaces are openly marked by doubt, embarrassment, and over-identification. In his scrutiny of painterly melodramas, slippages occur as he offsets dark and abject subject matter with incongruous double-takes. Through frantically conjuring a wide array of ways in which lived experiences have been transmuted through the stuff of paint, Kantarovsky simultaneously indulges and questions the atavistic project of humanist painting. Evoking many art historical motifs, from the glistening sanpaku eyes of El Greco to the perverse Yokai woodcuts of Utagawa Kunioshi and drawings of Bruno Schulz, the paintings simultaneously titillate and repel, staging the gravity of bearing witness against the pleasure of looking. Here, seeing takes on a burden of responsibility, which Kantarovsky distributes between his subjects and the audience.

Unwilling and unable to be held accountable, we ravenously consume with our eyes. We shift the blame *on them*. On our neighbors, on our statesmen, on our enemies, on our parents, on our children, on our victims, on the painted and abused.

Kantarovsky was born in Moscow, Russia in 1982 and currently lives and works in New York. He studied painting at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, RI and received his MFA at the University of California, Los Angeles. Kantarovsky recently presented solo exhibitions at Kunsthalle Basel in Switzerland (2018) and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, Italy (2017-2018). A comprehensive monograph entitled *No Joke* was co-published by Studio Voltaire and Koenig Books in 2016. Kantarovsky's works belong to several prestigious museum collections, including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Tate Modern, London; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

For further information about the artist, please contact Lisa Kohli at 212.206.9100 or via email at lisa@luhringaugustine.com. For press requests, please contact Caroline Burghardt at 718.386.2745 or via email at caroline@luhringaugustine.com.