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Yaşam Şaşmazer



“Young sculptor Yaşam Şaşmazer embodies the theme of one’s inner darkness through the shadow concept and life-sized adult figures in her latest exhibition Metanoia.”

by Heval Okçuoğlu

Yaşam Şaşmazer was one of the most favourite names in the previous Contemporary Istanbul art fair. Born in 1980 and graduated from Sculpture Department in the Faculty of Fine Arts at Mimar Sinan University, she has been displaying her works at solo and group exhibitions at home and abroad since 2010. Life-sized figures of children she created were the most striking works at the fair.

It wouldn't be wrong to say that the first feeling Yaşam's sculptures put into the viewer's heart is 'restlessness'. The life-sized figures of children of solid wood reminded of pain, fear, childhood traumas, nightmares, and the ache of growth. Those children who were wandering in their darkness with fear and curiosity have awoken from their anxious dreams and grown up. Metanoia exhibition, which will be on display from Jan 11th at Tophane-i Amire, hosts 7 life-sized adult figures this time, accompanied by works representing their shadows. Metanoia means a spiritual transformation, reconstructing and recovery. The journey that one sets off in order to change his own mind and heart points to an unworldly enlightenment. Carrying her artistic occupations in Turkey and Berlin, Şaşmazer invites you to one of the most interesting exhibitions of this month.

Metanoia can be visited between January 11th and 30th at Tek Kubbe Hall of Tophane-i Amire.

What is the core idea behind Metanoia?

Metanoia is about the process of meeting with our own shadow and accepting it. It is a difficult process because it is about the sides we criticize others for and sides we do not want to see about ourselves. Even though it is painful to front the shadow and realise it, it may trigger a big personal change within. As it goes with every awareness process, confronting the dark and primitive self and internalising it causes a transformation. This transformation reminded me of the term Metanoia, a psychoanalytic term meaning a radical mental change, reconstructing and recovery.

Shadows provide a basis to your art, what does it mean to you personally?

Shadows are very strong archetypes of subconscious and as Carl Gustav Jung says, it is everything we own that we do not want to. The primitive, dark and eerie side of our psyche consist of the parts we do not want to see and sweep under the mat.

What is the most transformative journey you have experienced so far?

In general, all journeys have an effect of transformation but i think solo journeys are more important. Being alone somewhere makes the journey more internal and thought inducing. I think this is the reason why I love the journeys I've made alone to far lands. I travelled to London when I was 16, 17 years old and that was an important one for me as I have figured out the transformative power of that journey back then.

The stories of your sculptures are based on conflicts; 'good and bad', 'right and wrong' and 'darkness and light'. What can you say about being fed by contradictions?

It is a natural condition because we need a dialect to understand and question things. At the same time, human nature is what I am really curious about. I think we are all driven away by the grey area between the black and white of these dualities. What really goes on there is the main subject of my art, that's why contradictions play a big role in my works.

What did sculpture teach you?

It's not possible to give a general answer to this question, everybody takes something different. It gives me perspective to understand the human and the world.

What's next for you in 2014?

More sculptures and a lot of journeys.

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