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UGO SCALIA ART ADVISORY

## Aks Misyuta: an atypical artist evolving at a fast pace

Ugo Scalia

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Born in 1984 in Bryansk, Aks Misyuta is a contemporary Russian painter and sculptor known for her biomorphic shapes and her stark, almost sculptural, depictions of fleshy characters. Since 2018, the artist has been living and working in Istanbul, in Turkey. Flirting with both primitivism and naïve art, the young artist has developed a very expressive body of work in the last few years. But even more impressive is the fast rate of improvement she has displayed in the process...

In her paintings, Misyuta primarily represents females of disproportionate shapes and sizes. But the “inflated” and monumental aspect of her figures is paradoxically a way for the artist to convey their fragility: they could burst from the simple spike of a needle: “The inflatable appearance is a way to depict our vulnerable nature - just a momentary pinprick is enough sometimes to destroy. So, for me, it’s all about self-cognition and interactions: all the figures, like balloons, are floating in their own pensive universe.” These characters often inhabit gloomy and worrying environments, painted in a dark palette, and displaying stark shadows. However, in her most recent works—since 2021—, Misyuta manages to contrast turquoise, greenish colors with softer and warmer ochres. Thus, whilst maintaining her worrying ambience, the painter more and more often creates a somewhat welcoming and comfortable environment for her feminine protagonists. Additionally, as a self-taught artist, Misyuta produces images which she claims to be spontaneous, intuitive, and cathartic. Influenced by

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images from folk, ancient and modern art she was exposed to as a child, but working mainly off the top of her head, the young painter uses her imaginary characters to depict a troubling form of intimacy: one that doesn't show on their impersonal faces, but rather in the attitudes their various poses convey. Hence, if her figures are not meant to look like herself, they constitute archetypal characters who express all sorts of intimate feelings of the artist. The shapes are deliberately amplified and exaggerated, so as to embody individuals, situations and moments which affect the artist.



Misyuta's quest to express such a form of intimacy is also strengthened by the presence of a few recurring objects full of symbolic meaning, such as watches, "owers, or mirrors. The watches without hour markers, for instance, represent a kind of feminist manifesto against the patriarchal expectations centered around the rationalizing of time—namely: productivity... and motherhood. "The clock is ticking", Misyuta reminds us, is the most common phrase thrown towards women in her native country and elsewhere, when they reach an age at which they are expected to start a family. In her paintings, the female characters wearing watches are hence quiet rebels celebrating the so-called act of "wasting" time. The title of her first show in Paris (until 6 May 2023)—*Lazy Self Embrace*—once more illustrates this recurring thought in the artist's work: both robust and fragile, the figures seem to be asserting their unconditional right to loathing.

The creation process is another distinctive feature of her work: Aks Misyuta paints a lot, and rapidly. The artist works spontaneously, from her own intuition, and never does any preliminary work for her paintings. The first layer of her paintings is constituted of a single color—black in most cases—upon which she gradually builds, until she can see these "invisible lines" which will then enable her to finish a composition. Thematically, she works both from her own memories and by funneling the echoes of present days: "As is the case for many self-taught artists, I work directly from memory, my imagination, which has very much to do with the naïve approach."

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One must add that the aesthetic quality of Aks Misyuta's paintings has dramatically increased these last few years: from good, her art is starting to become great. Since her solo exhibition entitled *In The Eye of Beauty* at Sébastien Bertrand gallery in 2021, the artist's most recent works have been a constant display of powerful compositions and of a particularly refined use of light, shadows, and colors. Testifying to her ever progressing pictorial fluency, not only is Misyuta expressing herself more freely in terms of technique, but also in terms of subject matter. The scenes represented as well as the choices of settings and points of view are more and more diverse, just like the attitudes and activities undertaken by her figures are constantly evolving. In her latest exhibition *Lazy Self Embrace* at the Art:Concept Gallery in Paris, one can notably see a close-up of an upside-down skirt revealing only a female abdomen in an almost erotic fashion, a gigantic male figure laying pensively in bulks of sheets with the emblematic watch in hand, or a gigantic head on top of which lays a typical feminine character of the artist.



At the same time, Aks Misyuta's technique seems to be maturing by taking on board new means of expression and integrating them coherently into her own style. This was exemplified in particular in the Paris exhibition by an almost Bacon-like portrait of a woman comprising several angles of her face at the same time. But the overall feeling conveyed by the artist's latest work is not one of departing from her previous ways—rather one of her artistic process entering a phase of maturity. In short, Aks Misyuta seems to be coming into her own as one of the most promising young figurative painters out there... The art world better watch out.

