
Tsvetomira Borisova

Cool S

Solo exhibition

Part of the "Artist's Studio" residency program of Sarieva Gallery

April 29 – May 28 2022

Opening: April 29, 17:00 – 20:00, Sarieva Gallery

Afterparty with music selected by the author and Roksana Markova: 20:00 – 22:30, artnewscafe

The origin of the Cool S is obscure. During the 1970s, the photographer Howard Gribble made photos of Los Angeles, many of which contained the figure 8, much similar to the style of the Cool S. In 1973, Jon Naar's famous graffiti photos of New York frequently displayed the same figure, which in this case is already identical with its modern example. During the 1990s, the Cool S became an international symbol of teenager culture, usually appearing on exercise-books, desks or walls.

The Cool S consists of 14 linear segments, forming a stylized, pointy S-shaped form. It has no reflective symmetry, but a double rotational symmetry. The figure has been compared to the symbol of eternity.

Sarieva Gallery is pleased to present Cool S, the first solo show of young author Tsvetomira Borisova. The exhibition includes new artworks made during her stay at the "Artist's Studio" residency in Sarieva Gallery.

Tsvetomira Borisova was born in 1991 and grew up in Sofia during the Transition period when Western mass culture made its way into Bulgaria. A period during which both she and society as a whole witnessed two types of language and logic mingling and gaining common space.

In this perspective, the emergence of the Cool S as subject and title of her first solo show serves not only as a reflection of a youth mass culture's craze from the 1990s, but also of the way it was perceived non-unconditionally as it individualized itself at the time, as well as the way it is presently revived in a new context of change.

A guiding point in the exhibition is a recurring personage from Tsvetomira's earlier works – a girl with a determined look, her long hair falling in front of her sugary face. She wields swords, ever prepared to fall down and quickly regain her ground, carry her own cross and engage in situations. She inaugurates the program drawings of the exhibition, emerging as the author's alter-ego, and naturally embarks with her on a journey that marks a new beginning.

In the key artwork Mount Rushmore, the girl is a central figure with two other characters on both sides. On the right is the demon – a flaming male figure, malicious and slightly vicious – the spark you need to make a decision. On the left is the watery baby figure that morphs into a fish – the emotion and sentiment you need to hold on. In the middle, the expressionless girl has the face of a clown, clenching a broken chain with her teeth. There is something sad about her, yet also something comic. Having broken the chain, she has reached that liminal moment when you are with other people, yet alone, realizing you are a character in a common, yet personal history, in which you entertain yourself rather than the others around you.

The girl's journey is exemplified by another sculpture of her kneeling under the weight of two angelic S-shaped wings. It is at this point that Tsvetomira introduces the exhibition's principal symbol – the Cool S. It remains unclear whether this sculpture is the moment before or after the breaking of the chain – the Cool S is not monosemantic, it is simply a travelling companion.

The figure of the Cool S has been elaborated in yet another two "cult-forging" sculptures. The one is a colonnade of candles, while the other represents a visor cap, of which the author says the following: "This is a very convenient shield, a protection under the guise of anonymity, but also an indication and feature of what is commonly shared". The Cool S symbol visually squeezes into the overall atmosphere of the exhibition and its almost scenographic performance.

Within the context of the exhibition, the Cool S emerges as a mysterious currency whose value is ambivalent. It signifies the desire for an absent limit, but also refers to concepts like youth, eternity, capital – it is boundless and versatile. It is a means of exchange, representing the force and potential of being exchangeable, of being socially accepted and desired by the others. The Cool S resembles an unreal crypto-currency – it is nothing but aura, something inaccessible and intangible. The Cool S is not just the monetary value you are invested with, but also the price you are willing to pay.

Tsvetomira's exhibition is a site of dynamic events, just as any gallery or artistic studio is the site of stirs and fusses, creative vortices and doubts. A strange moment – an incessant reality-check – between being somewhere and believing. Look into Tsveti's mirror.

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"Artist's Studio" is a new initiative of Open Arts Foundation, launched in collaboration with Sarieva Gallery, Plovdiv. After an international competition, it lends practical support to selected young authors by providing them with a studio within the gallery space, accommodation in Plovdiv, fee and coverage of production costs. Furthermore, it offers consultation and mentoring, organizes meetings with collectors and experts and arranges logistic support. The program innovatively combines artistic and educational activities.

The project is realized with the financial support of National Culture Fund, Bulgaria.

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