
Aaron Roth

Beige
Solo exhibition

10 February 2023 – 31 March 2023

Opening: 10 February, Friday, 18:00 – 20:00, Sarieva / Gallery, Plovdiv

Afterparty: 20:00 – 22:30, artnewscafe

Sarieva / Gallery is pleased to present in its own particular space in the city of Plovdiv the first solo show of the young artist Aaron Roth – Бейж (Beige). The exhibition will take place between February 10 and March 31, 2023.

Aaron Roth was born in Los Angeles in 1998. He has been living in Bulgaria ever since he was 12 years old. In 2021 he obtained a bachelor's degree in painting from the London Slade School of Fine Arts with a thesis project on a topic related to the visual culture of Bulgarian pop-folk music. Since then, he has realized three independent solo shows in the country. He has collaborated with Vesselina Sarieva ever since his second solo show *At Liberty with the Time Frame* (2021), realized at the invitation of Open Arts Foundation to Fluca – Austrian Cultural Pavilion, and curated by Valko Chobanov.

The exhibition Бейж continues the author's research into modern daily and political reality of Bulgaria and the Balkans. His work is focused on the folk psychology of the "rich-poor" and the "poor-rich", the adjustment of clashing spaces, the "making ends meet" masked by cheap symbols of social status, the "goon" and nouveau riche style of the 1990s Transition period mixed with the integration policies of the European Union, and the overall corruption of the populace as everyday social order.

In his current large-scale paintings, photographs and objects, Aaron has mainly portrayed the materiality of the "initial accumulation of capital" stage in its dark, criminal aspect. His works bristle with images of link chains, tiger pelts, mobile phones, gold, whisky, Mercedes cars, EU flag stars, luxury brand clothing, cigarette brands, bill counters etc.

With Бейж Aaron enters the painful boundary space where the exception and the crime become an existential norm. The financial capital is already regulated and managed according to modern European principles. The "grey of the economy" has been masked not only beneath the nondescript beige, but has also acquired the trendy "aristocratic" color Beige. It literally becomes the preferred "custom color" by the fully-developed goon elite. Beige is the color of neutrality and stifled tension. Symbolically transitioning into the political, it becomes the color of the ethics and aesthetics of the European Union before which we are all equal.

Aaron's first work from the Beige series is the painting *Bobí's Couch* (2023, 170 x 170 cm., oil on canvas). The couch which Bulgaria's former prime minister Boyko Borisov had in his office is here portrayed in close-up, too close to be seen in its entirety. The artist says that for him this couch symbolizes the mafia practice in politics and the recently disclosed corruption schemes related to investments in infrastructure of the former government. At the same time, this couch type can often be found in the offices of small company CEOs and functions as a marker of trust and stability.

Other artworks of the same series are the paintings *Two Guns in a Designer Handbag* (2023); *Philipp Plein* (2023); the photographs *Balconies (beige)* (2023); *Yoga (beige)* (2023) and the large-scale mixed media wall work *Leather Floor Mat for Mercedes-Benz Actros (after 2013) – Flat Cabin* (2023). With the latter (which actually portrays a TIR truck floor mat) Roth again engages in meditational spaces – borders, checkpoints etc. and the mediators who pass through or manage them. The gigantic floor mat becomes an abstract form of the wall, a symbol collage pad, through which is acted out an almost renaissance plot with hidden personages. The hole in the driver's seat is replaced by a painting of a sore mouth – drawn after the visual warnings against smoking on cigarette

packs – while the hole in the neighboring seat is replaced by a metal plate with an engraved inscription which says: “I work to earn, I earn to spend” – a quote by Bencho Benchev, the suspicious businessman and politician from the city of Burgas. The TIR truck cabin becomes a meeting site between the legal and the illegal, the warning and the punishment, the plot and the agreement.

In a deeper psychological plane and mode, the exhibition Бейж refers to other topics of seemingness and its rhetoric – those related to Orthodoxy. The mass-produced religious souvenirs become interior points of tension, Orthodoxy becomes a weapon, while religious symbolism becomes a media language of manipulation. The painting Untitled (2023) literally corresponds with the following recent media headlines: “MIRACLE! Dolphins pulled an icon of the Virgin from the sea. An icon of the Virgin was found on the shores of Sochi and the person who discovered it claims 12 dolphins pulled it out of the sea.” (Pik.Bg); „Russia deploys trained dolphins at Black Sea naval base, satellite images show” (Guardian). The first article posted in a Bulgarian online tabloid was re-printed from the internet domain “Dobroljubie” and states that the person who found the icon was a former soldier and took the icon to Moscow. Whereas the second article from the British online journal states that the US Naval Institute concluded that two dolphin pens were moved to the Sevastopol naval base in February at the start of Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine. No need to comment. Instead, the artist comes up with a pretty, romantic picture of two dolphins and an icon.

Бейж by Aaron Roth is an exhibition about the imperceptible fake giving rise to complicity.

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Aaron Roth is born in Los Angeles (1998). He currently works between Sofia and Plovdiv. In 2021 he received his Bachelors in Fine Arts (painting) at “Slade school of Fine Art”, London with a thesis on the visual culture of pop-folk. His first solo show was exhibited in 2021 in an abandoned supermarket near to Stochna Gara in Sofia “biznes (end) management”. His second solo show, “At liberty with the time frame”, was part of FLUCA, Austrian cultural pavilion in Plovdiv, organized by Open Arts Foundation. In 2022 he had his third solo show “The golden wire” in Sofia, “Punta” gallery.

Group shows that he has participated in include: “Memories of a social club that doesn’t exist”, London (2022), ZÉRUÛ gallery, curated by Jerry Goa; “Freedom”, Plovdiv (2022), Kapana City gallery; “The hanging show”, Sofia (2021) “Institute of Contemporary Art”, Sofia; “Sofia queer forum” (2021) Museum of contemporary art Sofia and Doza gallery, curated by Martina Stefanova; “Sofia Art Week” Sofia 2021 curated by Voin de Voin; “And The weird dreams/we have 3.0_back_to_postwhut” Venice (2020); “In the Calle” curated by Ludovica Elpidia.; “BAZA 2022”, Sofia City Art Gallery.

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