

**Simona Runcan*****Inner Shadows, Wrapped Shadows***

07.04 - 27.05.2023

We invite you on Friday April 7, 6-9 pm, to the opening event of the exhibition *Inner Shadows, Wrapped Shadows*, Simona Runcan's third solo show at Ivan Gallery. The exhibition presents paintings from the early '90s that were exhibited for the first time in the 1994 artist's solo show *Waiting Lazarus* at the Catacomba Gallery in Bucharest.

The *Inner Shadows, Wrapped Shadows* exhibition brings together works from the *Wreaths* series of paintings of funeral wreaths rendered in dark shades and colours, addressing the difficult topics of death and sacrifice. These paintings by Simona Runcan from the early '90s reflect on the tragic and traumatic consequences of the time's main historical event, the Romanian Revolution of 1989 that brought down Communism. The motif of the wreath dates before 1989 though, first encountered by the artist in the attic of a church in Dobrogea, Romania, where she saw some dried wreaths, stored out of service and out of context. The Revolution reactivated this subject for Simona Runcan, through the presence of temporary street monuments with wreaths and crosses frequently to be found in the streets of Bucharest during those years, especially in the Universitate Square area, where many people were shot during the Revolution. Similar to the artist's other series of still lifes, the *Wreaths* are painted after photographs of these urban commemorative installations. In the paintings, Simona Runcan singles out the wreaths by isolating them from their spatial coordinates, melted in the dark, neutral background, thus bringing unity to the compositions.

This genuine memorial of recent history's victims finds its counterbalance in the series of works conceived around the story of Lazarus, a religious symbol of redemption and triumph over death. Lazarus' shrouded body waiting for resurrection is painted in a manner that resembles the wrapped objects from the artist's *Lamenta* and *Silent Cohabitations* still lifes series, using photography as a source as well, in this case the photographic enactments of Simona Runcan posing as Lazarus herself.

"Inner shadows, shadows comprised by objects, wrapped shadows, shadows like inner hollows; the mystery of these covered spaces, closed-open, shadows as breaches towards the outside of some inner spaces.

[...]

To paint the metaphysical wait, the one that can birth wonders, if only the wonder of complete silence.

Can sight be acquired without eyes, sight through absence?

[...]

Trying to answer only to your own inner necessity, like Monet who continued painting the *Nymphéas* even though the war's front line was just four kilometres outside his garden. Trying to compensate this absolute artistic selfishness in one's other life, the 'worldly' one, considering art some kind of religious order..." (Simona Runcan)

**Simona Runcan** was born in 1942 in Bucharest, where she graduated in 1966 from the Graphic Arts Department of the Fine Arts Institute. Her works of graphic art, objects, paintings and installations explore in a processual, serial and cyclic manner various themes and working means, from the '60s-'80s experimental, conceptualist graphics to the more tradition-oriented painterly approach embraced by her after 1990. Although she has exhibited in national and international solo and group shows, her practice remained overall little known or acknowledged, especially abroad. After she passed away somewhat prematurely in 2007, her works haven't been exhibited until 2016, when her family together with a group of young art historians organised an extensive retrospective at the Mogoșoaia Cultural Centre near Bucharest, followed by a first solo show at Ivan Gallery in 2016, featuring her debut series of works, *The Presence of Objects*, drawings and etchings on paper from 1969-72, and a second Ivan Gallery solo show in 2018 with paintings from the last part of career, *Silent Cohabitations*. Between 2019-20 her works were included in the exhibitions curated by Salonul de proiecte in Bucharest, at Spike Berlin and at Cultuurcentrum Strombeek, Belgium (part of the Europalia Arts Festival Romania). Since 2021 Simona Runcan has been in the program of the Standard gallery from Oslo, with the solo show *Silent Cohabitations* (2021) and in the group exhibitions *Therein / Thereof / Thereto* (2021) and *Ir, Ir, Ir* (2023).

Special thanks to Silvia Trăistaru.

The exhibition can be visited in Ivan Gallery's space inside Atelierele Malmaison on Calea Plevnei 137C, B side, 1st floor, until the 27th of May 2023, Wed-Sat 1-6 pm, or by appointment outside the visiting hours.