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RITA MAIKOVA'S "BONES AND RIBBONS" @ KRISTIN HJELLEGJERDE GALLERY

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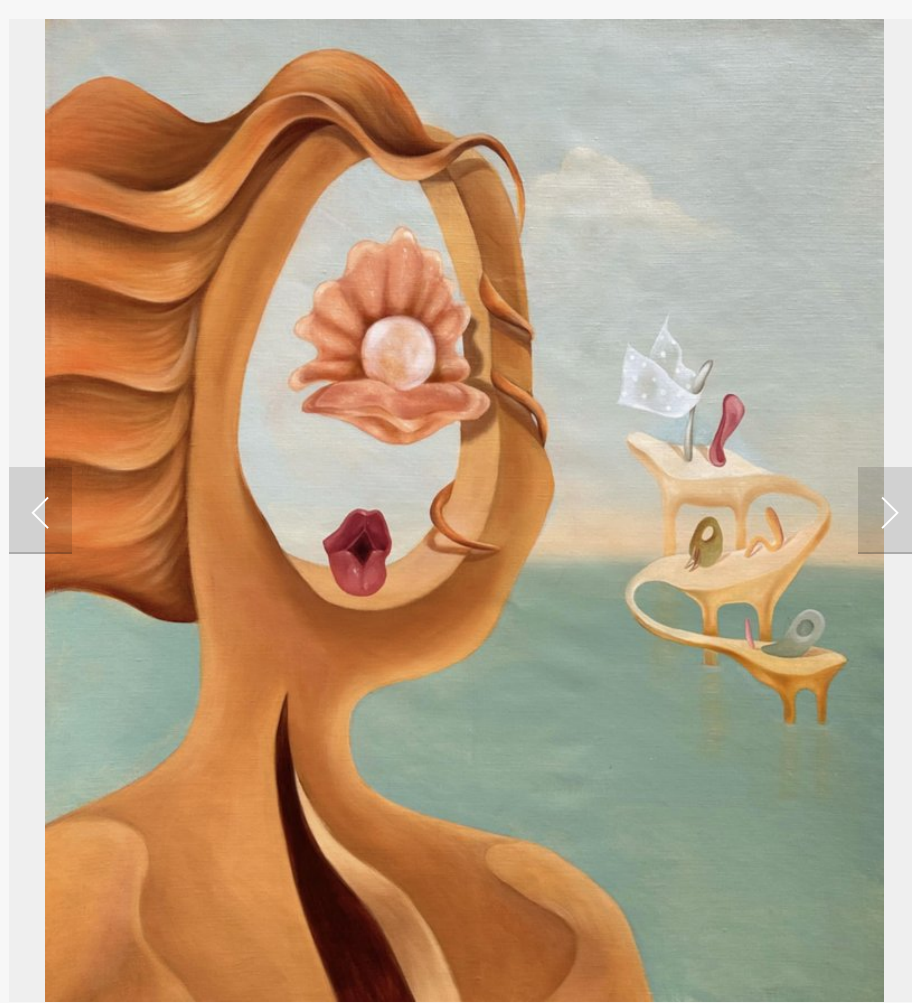


RITA MAIKOVA, THE DOVES ARE HERE, COPYRIGHT © 2023 KRISTIN HJELLEGJERDE

Tiny pairs of eyes stare out from drooping, coral-like, fuzzy and ghoulish creatures that appear gathered together in theatrical formation against hazy skies. This is the surreal and magical world of the Ukrainian artist Rita Maikova, *Bones and Ribbons*, the artist's first solo exhibition with Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, explores what Maikova describes as 'the duality of existence' that not only Ukrainians and other nations living with conflict must negotiate on a day-to-day basis, but millions of other people whose worlds have been torn apart by personal, social or political circumstances. In these works, the divide is drawn between the body (bones) and ribbons (the soul). In each painting we can locate both modes of existence – light and dark, despair and hope – but rather than setting up opposites, the compositions gesture towards a kind of resolution or as Maikova puts it 'the party after the battle', a time of healing and celebration.

Maikova was abroad when Russia invaded Ukraine and has not been able to return to her home country since. Finding herself caught in a limbo state, she has had to find new ways of existing in the world that involves the compartmentalisation of her emotions, in other words 'choosing to leave behind the pain in order to leave the house.' In some ways, this is the experience that these paintings capture, though for Maikova the act of making art is also a form of healing and freedom – it allows her to access her unconscious mind, to dream again. We see this in the fluidity of forms that populate her compositions – hybrid characters appear, often simultaneously, as rock-like formations, rivers, undulating bodies and huge, anthropomorphic beasts against an otherwise bare, desert-like landscape that is inspired by Maikova's upbringing in the vast, open steppe of southern Ukraine. In this show, the landscape is also sometimes the sea or the beach, defined by the line of the horizon and the changing of light that imply the passage of the day but also, and more importantly for the artist, creates shadows which, she says, 'express our dark side that is necessary to our existence.'

Bones and Ribbons is on view 5 May-3 June at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London (Wandsworth)



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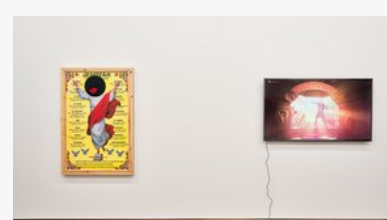
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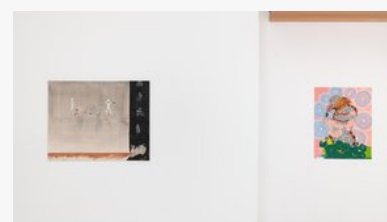
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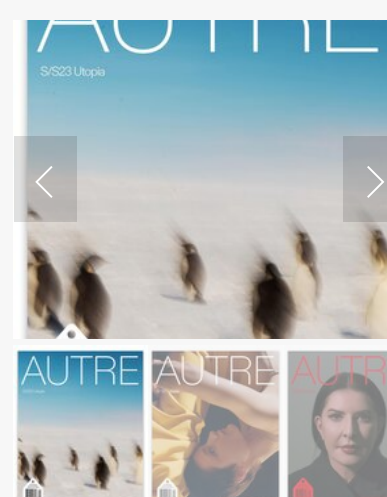
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