

Ioana Bătrânu

Margins

Opening: Friday, January 18, 18 – 22 h

January 18 - March 2, 2013

Tuesday - Saturday, 12 – 18 h

Potsdamer Strasse 77 - 87 . 10785 Berlin

Galeria Plan B is pleased to announce the solo exhibition of Romanian artist Ioana Bătrânu (*born 1960, lives and works in Bucharest, Romania).

We are pleased to invite you to the opening of the exhibition Margins on Friday, January 18 from 18 – 22 h.

Ever since its opening in 2005, Plan B Gallery undertook the documentation of a relevant and significant part of the Romanian art of the last decades which had been insufficiently researched. This year, Plan B will open a documentation centre in Cluj, thus rendering the research process into a necessary coherent form. The work of important artists such as Ioana Bătrânu will make the object of a thorough study which can eventually form the full image of its importance and which crosses various ages often debatable in terms of the social and artistic conditions they offer.

Ioana Bătrânu debuted in the second half of the 80s in Romania with a series of black and white figurative paintings featuring elements traced back to punk culture, the fashion of the 50s and the iconic figures of western movies. The art reviews of the time categorised these works as neo-expressionist, but this label proved insufficient for describing the subsequent development of her work. As of the 90s, Ioana Bătrânu has clarified her artistic process while the feeling of alienation in relation to reality and the autobiographical references have become essential principles in defining her artistic personality. In 1995 she participated in one of the first big exhibitions dedicated to art in Central and Eastern Europe, Beyond Belief, organized by Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and curated by Laura J. Hoptman. Ioana Bătrânu approaches themes which are marginal in relation to the "official" culture and expresses them with acute sensitivity, in a permanent vacillation between subjectivity and reality. There are a few themes which constantly come back (Melancholic Interiors, Enclosed Gardens and Latrines) and which, seen together, form a coherent image of her personal project: looking for the point in which the break with the world and the attempt to make peace with it are simultaneous in her existence. The conflict between the two leads the artist to subjects located at the "periphery" of the society in which she lives and never to the centre thereof.

Reality has always represented the decisive stimulus of her painting. Even in the 80s when most of the artists were concerned with intangible things (artistic productions inspired by esoteric quests, national myths etc.) for ensuring a professional comfort far from the official art, Ioana Bătrânu undertook in her paintings precisely what she experienced and what reality challenged her with. And reality as such, without embellishment, was not illustrated in painting, but worked on and absorbed sometimes obsessively. The Melancholic Interiors, the Enclosed Gardens and the Latrines form the core of this exhibition. In the series of Enclosed Gardens, Ioana Bătrânu painted the tomb of her mother and continuously

repeated and updated this theme, as if for gaining a clearer understanding of how to better internalise its very powerful presence. The Enclosed Garden becomes in time the x-ray of a healing process. The space of the cemetery is also invoked in other thematic cycles, without being really described. The Simple Landscapes can be ultimately seen as cemeteries without tombs while the Melancholic Interiors can be perceived as canned time, buried in oblivion. Ioana Bătrânu's paintings are subjective ways of relating to the restriction of an existential physical or spiritual territory. Each tomb is surrounded with a fence, each latrine is a narrow space, each corridor is stifling. The impersonal corridors, with identical doors can be the hallways of a school, bloc staircases, prisons, hospitals etc. Once there, the individual is submitted to a standardized behavior. The deep feeling of alienation experienced by Ioana Bătrânu along the years persists even today in a paradoxical society, which adjoins all possible contrasts in an absurd manner – the opulent luxury alongside depressing destitution, equally present and frequently encountered. The spaces in which loneliness and despair work as structuring principles are both the sordid latrine and the interior of a time frozen palace, although opposing each other in function.

Distancing herself from any affiliation to artistic trends (such as the Prolog group with the members of which she exhibited in the 90s), Ioana Bătrânu paints with the seriousness and urgency imposed by the substance of immediate reality.

For more information, please contact the gallery at contact@plan-b.ro or +49.1723210711.