

GAZELLI ART HOUSE



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PRESS RELEASE

Pauline Boty, Niyaz Najafov, Markus Martinovitch *Silver Lining*

Press View: 28th February 2019, 4 – 6 pm

Private View: 28th February 2019, 6 – 8 pm

Exhibition: 1st March – 6th April 2019

Gazelli Art House is pleased to present *Silver Lining*, a group show of works by Pauline Boty, Niyaz Najafov and Markus Martinovitch exploring the artists' diverse cultural backgrounds and the worlds they occupy. The exhibition examines their different generations, social and economic environments, personal stories and unique influences behind their works.

Covering three different epochs and ages, these artists highlight the role of art in their lives from socio-political tools to forms of therapy and shared struggles towards meaning.

Pauline Boty, one of the few British women involved with Pop Art, used her position as an artist to denounce male domination in the art world, politics and beyond. As a free and rebellious spirit, she struggled to be recognized in London in the swinging Sixties and railed against the prevailing sexism of those years. Boty developed her own deeply personal, feminist-inspired Pop style. Her early paintings were both sensual and erotic, celebrating female sexuality from a woman's point of view. Later she incorporated celebrities into her works declaring "people need them, and the myths that surround them, because their own lives are enriched by them. Pop Art colours those myths."

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Niyaz Najafov, a former soldier in the Azerbaijan army, channels his existential anguish into art. Najafov believes he was born an artist and his life has been about making sense of the world around him through the eyes of an artist. As a self-taught painter, Najafov creates magnetic and often tortured figures presenting imaginary characters that disturb and tickle in equal measure. He records everyday scenes with a profound intensity, capturing his struggle with reconciling the distressing and humorous parts to the human condition. Compared to Francis Bacon by the Huffington Post, his art has been described as ‘raw, crude and sophisticated at the same time’ and Najafov leads the new generation of Azeri artists who have sprung up following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Markus Martinovitch is a twelve-year-old Russian-German boy with autism who produces extraordinary works. His condition requires heavy medication causing severe side effects such as tremors. He is often unable to paint and suffers prolonged episodes of hallucination. These harmful experiences are transformed through his art to bright and bold exclamations about life itself. During one of his hallucinations, he emerged with a series of works presenting the notion that the world itself might just be an illusion. In his own words, ‘colour does not exist – it is just a reflexion of the light.’ Despite his young age, Martinovitch brings a remarkably mature and considered approach to his works and is unafraid to tackle complex themes regarding inner and outer spaces and the often-strange relationship between existence and meaning.

“Silver Lining is about the enduring way art transforms both the lives of the artists and the viewers themselves and portrays the alchemy of creativity, creative energy and art itself,” said Mila Askarova, founder of Gazelli Art House.

About the artists

Pauline Boty (1938 – 1966) was a leading figure in the pop art movement of the 1960s. But she died aged just 28, and her art was largely overlooked after her death.

She studied at the Royal College of Art where she became friends with other emerging Pop artists, such as Derek Boshier, David Hockney, Peter Phillips and Peter Blake, who inspired and supported her. She studied stained glass but preferred the paintings and collages she worked on at home, cutting images from adverts, magazines and art catalogues.

The embodiment of the swinging ‘60s, Boty was a dancer on *Ready Steady Go!*, played one of Michael Caine’s girlfriends in the film *Alfie* and acted on TV and on stage at the Royal Court. Boty was one of four pop artists, with Derek Boshier, Peter Blake and Peter Phillips featured in Ken Russell’s landmark 1962 film *Pop Goes the Easel*, but her looks and image meant she struggled to be taken seriously.

In 1965 Boty became pregnant and was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer during a pre-natal examination. She declined chemotherapy because she feared it may harm her baby. Boty died in 1966, just five months

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after giving birth. Her family stored her art in a barn after her death, but works like *Count Down to Violence* (1964) have been rediscovered by the art world in recent years. David Mellor exhibited Boty's work in his important show on the 60s at the Barbican in 1993 and again in a joined Anglo-French exhibition, held in Brighton in 1997. Major retrospective exhibitions were held at Whitford Fine Art and Mayor Gallery, London, in 1998 and at Wolverhampton Art Gallery in 2013.

Niyaz Najafov was born in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 1968. He lives and works in Paris.

Najafov originally trained as a soldier, as well as a professional sportsman – coaching hand-to-hand combat. Inspired by other self-taught artists such as Paul Gauguin and Francis Bacon, it was only in 2003 that he began to experiment with oil paint. In a short span of time, Najafov has been touted to be the next “Francis Bacon” and has since been chosen to represent his country, Azerbaijan, at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009.

Najafov is at the forefront of Azerbaijan's Contemporary art scene and his expressive oil paintings and sculptures have been exhibited in prestigious international fairs and exhibitions. With his impressive body of work and growing international recognition, Najafov is an integral part of the burgeoning Azeri art scene. Najafov's artworks have exhibited throughout Europe – London, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, and Geneva.

Markus Martinovitch was born in Moscow in 2006. He is based in Moscow and Dusseldorf. Martinovitch keeps exploring creative techniques such as painting, digital art and conceptual audio. He had his first solo exhibition at the age of 7, at the Komod gallery in Moscow. To date, his work has been featured in 8 group shows and 6 solo exhibitions in Germany and in Russia.

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Notes to Editors:

Gazelli Art House supports a wide range of international artists, presenting a broad and critically acclaimed programme of exhibitions to a diverse audience through global public projects and exhibition spaces in London and Baku. The gallery was founded in 2003 in Baku, Azerbaijan, where it originally held exhibitions with local artists. Mila Askarova, Founding Director, opened a permanent space on Dover Street in 2012 following a series of conceptually interlinked off-site exhibitions across London. The same year, Gazelli Art House launched its Window Project, a unique opportunity for MA and post-graduate students to expose a body of their work. Three times a year, the gallery offers an allocated space with street frontage as well as the windows of the first floor to display the works. In 2015, the gallery launched Gazell.io, a monthly online residency for digital artworks, and Enter Through The Headset, an annual VR show. The Window Project, Gazell.io and Enter Through The Headset highlight the gallery's on-going commitment to supporting artists across different mediums.

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