

Scar.f in the Wind New Works by Agnieszka Zak-Bielowa

Welcome to “Scar.f in the wind”, a solo exhibit of new works by Warsaw-based artist Zak-Bielowa. Drawing from distinct international identities in her comprehensive Chusta (Shawl) series, Zak-Bielowa employs a masterful use of color and pattern, alluding to the international meaning of scarves as treasured objects across a variety of cultures, from India to Saudi Arabia, Slovenia to Poland. Critical scholar Russell Jacoby noted on the subject of multiculturalism that “ideas of diversity...are true and attractive. Multiculturalism is better than monoculture.” In her works, Zak-Bielowa aptly expresses the beauty of cultural diversity through this iconic symbol of the scarf. By manifesting the ideas surrounding national pride and native costume in the form of scarves, Zak-Bielowa plays with composition to evoke content and manipulates color and pattern to heighten the work’s aesthetic appeal. These populist references continue in the artist’s Carousel and Merry Go Round series depicting scenes of revelry and entertainment. Loose brushstrokes elicit a sense of motion and celebration shared across the common social experience of public fairs. Imbued with bright colors and a festive atmosphere, these works combine the vibrant colors found in works by Marc Chagall with an earnest figurative painting style evoking Alex Katz. Zak-Bielowa’s work evinces her masterful training at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw under the tutelage of Professor Jaroslaw Modzelewski, celebrated for his inclusion in the New Expressionism of the 1980s. She applies this careful training to these themes of multiculturalism, an issue close to her heart. The artist explains: “I came from a patchwork family: my husband comes from Ukraine, his father from Russia, [his] mother from Basarabia (Moldova/Ukraine), his grandmother was Polish and I’m also Polish. When the holidays come, all differences come to light.” This entrenched sense of cultural diversity and the impetus to celebrate our unique cultural accoutrements is evident in the Chusta (Shawl) and the Carousel and Merry Go Round series by evoking celebrations and garments that span international communities but consistently remain close to home. “Scar.f in the wind” blends a careful eye toward detailed realism, infused with ethereal qualities reminiscent of a myth or fable. Hinting at narrative, each work creates an opportunity for the viewer to engage by forming their own attachment to the works by drawing from their personal history and experience. By heightening the everyday to assume a fantastical element, Zak-Bielowa creates a subtle yet remarkable window into the ubiquitous, yet inimitable, human spirit.