



Rafał Zar 'Old Hill Uprising'
20 September – 6 December 2014

Public Preview
Friday 19 September, 6–9pm

Eastside Projects
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www.eastsideprojects.org

Free entry
Open Wednesday to Saturday, 12–5pm

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"Well, I heard that any act of artistic creativity is the act of defiance ... Let it be Old Hill Uprising ..." Rafał Zar

Rafał Zar's 'Old Hill Uprising' is the Polish artist's first major solo show in the UK and Eastside Projects' 2014 ESP Members Show. Produced in his grotto-like flat in Old Hill, Sandwell, Zar's new paintings return, obsessively, to themes that loop through his work: religion, sexuality, oppression, ageing and unrequited love. Two new series of dark paintings mark a departure for Zar from the cartoonish light of his previous characters.

'Crucifixion / Black Christ' and 'The Hunger' draw on a complex cultural and artistic history encompassing what he sees as a 'cult of suffering' deeply rooted in the human condition. They carry echoes of the trauma of twentieth century European histories and the misery resulting from conflicts that riddle contemporary international politics.

Writing of his title Zar explains; "In August this year Poles celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. What happened in Warsaw in 1944 has for me incredible meaning. I can't express in words what I really feel. Resilience perhaps. I won't live in Old Hill forever. It's just a port of call in my journey. A place where things started getting at least a little bit better for me. The place where I started rising upwards ... uprising."

The formal and thematic darkness of Zar's painting is offset by his absurdist sense of humour, creating contradictory and unsettling works. Zar confronts us with an ambiguous deviancy of sexuality and violence, a world of ice-skating characters formed of bones and hair and faceless creatures dressed to impress for a bizarre date.

Zar sees what he paints as, "a pretext to produce another line of horizon." He turns bones into a repeated motif that operate both as a vehicle and subject matter for his relentless painterly task. As ever, in these new works, Zar's avatars inhabit landscapes devoid of feature, but are doggedly pursued by darkness and whimsy.

Zar was born in Piszczyna, Poland, during Martial Law in 1981. He has been based in the West Midlands since 2006. In June 2014 Eastside Projects presented Zar's work at the Start Art Fair, Saatchi Gallery, London. After being selected for the 2013 edition of New Art West Midlands, for which he showed at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and The Barber Institute, Birmingham, Zar was awarded the First Prize. In 2012 he graduated from an MA in Fine Art from Birmingham City University, UK. From 2000-2006 he studied Fine Arts Education: Visual Arts, specialisation: Easel Painting and Art Teacher Training at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland.