

Watch Your Step!

Art Review: "A New Vision Exists" at Bourouina Gallery

by Jovanny Varela-Ferreya

In search for visionary artists exhibiting in Berlin, as per usual, BAPS takes a look at the works of Zenita Komad, now on view at Bourouina Gallery.



Austrian artist Zenita Komad contemplating her next move at her studio in Vienna. Photo: Peter Rigaud

In my recent search for [some contemporary heart](#) I was fortunate to stumble upon the Austrian artist [Zenita Komad](#), currently displaying her work on the walls of [Bourouina Gallery](#) in Berlin. The title of her exhibition "[A New Vision Exists](#)" made me wonder what tone this statement was delivered in. Perhaps she forgot to add an exclamation point, I thought, as it sounds like the words of an explorer at the brink of any discovery worth sharing. Or perhaps it was intended as a whisper: the quiet sharing of a little secret. But maybe it was simply a personal sticky-note reminder, the type we keep glued to the wall so that we're constantly reminded of the importance of its content. Either way, being a discovery enthusiast and keeper of secrets myself, I had to go take a closer look.

Three Roads Diverged In An Art Gallery And I ...

As soon as I set foot inside Bourouina gallery, the diverse format of the displayed works turned the space into a bifurcated path: a grid of framed collages to the right, an installation hanging from the ceiling straight ahead, and a painting (or was it a sculpture?) on the left. Aesthetic overload on all fronts – just the type of feeling I look forward to every time I open the door of an art gallery. After not knowing where exactly to begin, I looked at the program and saw that the painting (or was it a sculpture?) on the left was titled "Schlüsselbild Aleph." Taking this as a sign, along with the fact that it was a gigantic metal key penetrating the center of a painting, I decided to start there. The path that would take me through "[Zenita universe](#)" had begun.



Zenita Komad's "Schlüsselbild Aleph" at Bourouina Gallery in Berlin. Photo: Chris Phillips

The Schlüsselbild Aleph, her “key work,” is exemplary of the stamp that has defined Komad’s work. Is it a painting? Not quite. Is it a sculpture? Not really. These “object paintings” find themselves at the nexus between the second dimension (a flat surface) and the third (a 3D object). What I find exciting about these pieces is their undeniable presence. A painting usually carries the curse of creating its own reality within the frame, leaving the viewer on the outside looking in. These object-paintings, however, transcend their flat limitations and their materiality invades our own physical space.



Komad’s collage (R) and installation hanging from the ceiling straight ahead. Photo: Chris Phillips

Take, for example, her piece “[Mein Ego Stinkt Zum Himmel II](#),” a giant bakelite telephone attached, like any preying host, to the surface on the canvas. As if this invasion into our space was not enough, it rings every time one stands in front of it, declaring its presence and urgency via its annoying ring (too bad there is no way to pick up the message from this anonymous caller). One is only left to wonder who is making the call and what message he/she/it has to make to us at that particular moment.

Of Zen & Art

Komad's work, I was to discover, orbits the realm of spirituality. Her past exhibitions carry titles such as "Spirituality is not shopping" and "I love God." I found this information surprising, since the works that I encountered at Bourouina did not seem to scream religiosity/spirituality to me. Instead, what the works were screaming was the immense enjoyment of their creation; one can easily see how much pleasure the artist must have experienced throughout the creative process during the construction the works. Her object-paintings are fun, lighthearted, and do not carry the heavy, devotional, or condemning attitude that "religious" art works (or anti-religious: see the "[Believers](#)" at KOW) often possess. It is perhaps in her deep involvement with her work that she acquires the level awareness and connectedness to the world that, for lack of better words, we tend to call "spiritual."

What I came to stumble upon at Bourouina Gallery was a whispered discovery that someone had pinned to the walls. It wasn't an imposing annunciation as much as it was the humble trace of an artist's path towards meaning. As such, I take Zenita's work as a gift that she is sharing with us (how appropriate for the holiday season!), so I encourage you to accept this offering of her vision and deep level of personal involvement with her art.