

IOANA MARIA SISEA

THE ADVENTURES OF BEAR LACHE AND HIS FRIENDS



Ioana Maria Sisea, Anna Nicole Smith: Patron Saint of Strippers, 2023, stoneware, glaze, luster

Ioana Maria Sisea - The adventures of bear Lache and his friends
14 April – 19 May 2023

PV 13 April 6:30 - 8:30

Gallery rosenfeld is delighted to present the first UK solo exhibition of the Romanian artist Ioana Maria Sisea. Sisea is a multi-disciplinary artist who works in sculpture, painting, performance and installation. The artist first exhibited in the gallery as one of the 4 artists in the group show, 'Introducing: Nuno Gil, Dene Leigh, Lydia Makin and Ioana Maria Sisea'. On that occasion, she presented a series of painted terracotta sculptures all of which continued to develop her fascination with the western obsession with 'desire' as seen by someone living in Eastern Europe. In her work, she achieves the very difficult feat of combining humour with an acute political and social commentary.

The new exhibition, which is entitled 'The Adventures of Bear Lache and his Friends', will contain 36 ceramic sculptures which will recount a very significant episode in Romania's recent history when the dictator Ceausescu was ruling the country.

Lache can still be seen on the wall of the Carpathian Hunting Museum in Romania, near Brasov. To this day he is the largest bear to have been hunted. His trophy allowed Ceausescu to surpass his peer General Tito as the record holder and was, for a period, the essential preoccupation of a large portion of the Presidential Staff. Ironically, there was nothing wild about Lache. He was bred for size from an unusually large male bear from the Romanian Circus and a captured female bear from the Carpathians. He was born in a zoo in Oradea, Romania and never left captivity until his selection for the tragicomic hunt. Meanwhile, his sister became a female animal star in Romanian cinema. By the time he became an adult, Lache was the biggest bear in Romania, and was moved from the zoo to a restaurant in the Romanian alps where he became a domesticated plaything of local tourists. As a docile giant, he developed a predilection for beer and pralines, which people would bring him on a daily basis in exchange for photos taken alongside him or even the chance to hug him.



Ioana Maria Sisa, Trophy, 2023, stoneware, glaze, luster

One day, Lache vanished from the restaurant without trace or explanation. Ceausescu's staff could finally relax, having solved his diktat to surpass Tito's record. Lache was executed in a fabricated hunt in the Carpathians. A huge but vain effort was made to make him explore the forest, but he refused to move from the spot he was left in. Ceausescu shot him unceremoniously from a close distance. Perhaps, the only thing that was 'real' about the event was Lache's death.

The artist had this comment on what took place; 'what struck me most about this episode was the possibility of someone feeling a sense of victory from such an unequal, unfair interaction. Ceausescu with a huge rifle from a big distance killing an animal that could crush him in one second if they were meeting face to face. Most of the time 3 or 4 other hunters would shoot the hunted animal before the dictator would get there to ensure that Ceausescu would have a risk-free opportunity to kill something.'

After Ceausescu's death the symbol of the revolution became the 'drapelul cu gaură' the 'Flag with a Hole'. This was, in reality, the previous flag of Romania with the Communist coat of arms cut from its centre. The coat of arms depicted the wealth of Romania: Wheat, mountains, forest, the Danube, the sun and oil. This mutilated symbol is a perfect example of how Sisea's work manages to communicate on various levels creating extraordinarily evocative and humorous sculptures which also contain a strong political or social idea.

For images, interviews and further information contact Yeojun Lee: press@galleryrosenfeld.com