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Untitled Art Miami Beach, 2024

Izhar Patkin | Booth SP8

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Ocean Drive & 12th Street, Miami Beach, FL 33139



Patkin's 1990 epic sculpture *Palagonia* is in many ways his 'Grand Tour.' It fluxes Bernini's 1652 altarpiece marble depiction of St Theresa's orgasmic transverberation at the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome, with the 1749 frolicking grotesques by Francesco Ferdinando II Gravina at the Villa Palagonia in Sicily—a sight Goethe described as filled with "elements of madness," and as a monstrous expression of the unconscious. Adding to the mix, Patkin invokes the 'veil-like,' groundbreaking impressionist wax sculptures of Medardo Rosso of the 1890's.

Expanding on Bernini's saintly masturbation scene, Patkin's Theresa is either having an orgasm, or a night-mare (portrayed by the leaping horse). Bernini's angel, about to penetrate the saint's heart with his dart, is swapped with a putto aiming a violin's bow (the violin itself is carried by his pouch). In Patkin's *Palagonia*, rather than seeing visions, St Theresa is hearing voices (a saint's halo becomes a golden tambourine). Surrounding playful figures are depicted as extensions of musical instruments they contain (a coiled snake metamorphoses into a trumpet; a giant's larynx mimics his accordion next to an imp blowing a flute).

The three human figures in *Palagonia* are actual live-casts of Patkin's friends.

Palagonia is a tour de force of Patkin's idiosyncratic oeuvre. Patkin's often describes his practice as 'thematic technique.' With his use of jarring materials, story and form become one. Simultaneously, his inventive process enhances the narrative with disruption and challenge, veiling and unveiling what Patkin calls 'the ghosts of our indoctrinated registers.'

In an essay titled *The Credo of My Ghosting Process* (p. M Galleria d'arte, Florence, 1989), the legendary critic, Edit deAk, quoted a conversation about his process:

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The wax phase of sculpting is where the creative process nestles...It is the stage of the not yet presentable. It is the private, the intimate and the vulnerable phase (also that which gets thrown away). It is the soul of sculpting, not the commodity of it...You are literally formulating the shape, developing the [wax] albino im-age from the dark into the light, regurgitating these figments of your image-ination.

Palagonia seems malleable, alive, and ever on the cusp of transformation. The process of its making remains raw, and embodies “the intimate and the vulnerable phase.” The effect is of figures encased in a paradoxical space where they are simultaneously fully formed, yet suspended in their moment of becoming.

Saint Teresa of Ávila

Book of Life, Chapter 29:

So I saw the angel holding in his hand a long golden dart, the iron end of which bore, I believe, a little fire. It seemed to me that he sometimes plunged it through my heart and buried it to the insides. Pulling it back, it seemed as if this iron took them with it and left me all aflame with an immense love of God. The pain was so sharp it made me moan like I’ve been talking about. But the sweetness caused by this incomparable torment is so excessive that the soul cannot desire its end, nor be satisfied with anything apart from God.

Caption: Izhar Patkin, *Palagonia*, 1990 wax, plaster, wood, gold/silver leaf, polyresin, musical instruments, glass-chips.

Inquiries: info@jupitercontemporary.com