

Previous Engagements

Ioana Sisea

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Catinca Tabacaru Gallery is thrilled to open its new season with two captivating solo exhibitions which bring into focus the standing of women in what is often considered opposing social and political systems: Western and the Muslim worlds.

Ioana Sisea's return to Romania after exhibitions in London, Berlin, and numerous Italian institutions has been highly anticipated. A rising star in the contemporary art world, Sisea is celebrated for her daring and thought-provoking work that explores cultural and societal norms. Her seemingly in-motion ceramic sculptures captivate and challenge audiences, inviting us to reflect on complex themes of identity and social constructs. She occupies the Gallery's project space with an immersive installation that transports us into a realm of the over-sexualized, high-octane celebrity culture that defines today's media culture.

Ioana Sisea's practice focuses on extreme states of being as promoted by Western media, including luxury, hyper-sexuality, fame, and extreme wealth—forces that can drive individuals to the brink of madness if sustained over time. Her work delves into the intersections of capitalism-induced desire, exclusivity, materialism, and violence, questioning how these narratives shape our collective consciousness.

For her exhibition, titled "Previous Engagements," Sisea will present a new body of ceramic work that not only mimics but also satirizes the cult of celebrity, exposing the darkness and delirium that fuel these constructed icons. The 24 ceramic figures installation depicts the scene in Drake's "Falling Back" when the singer marries 23 brides. The commodification and spectacle of romance is at the center of the artist's commentary, portraying each bride as a vessel filled with societal expectations and stereotypes. The figures are meticulously sculpted, blending traditional ceramic techniques with contemporary elements to reflect the tension between authenticity and artifice in today's celebrity culture.

Sisea highlights the absurdity and emotional dissonance underlying these exaggerated personas. By using ceramics—a medium traditionally associated with domesticity—she subverts expectations, turning these supposedly fragile forms into powerful symbols of critique. Each bride is depicted in a state of existential disarray, challenging the viewer to confront the illusions perpetuated by the media and the entertainment industry. The exhibition promises to be a poignant and provocative exploration of the fantasies and follies that govern our life.

The two exhibitions paint a representative portrait of Catinca Tabacaru Gallery's identity as a cultural creator, community, and dynamic platform for artists. It begs provocative questions like what is the difference in the status of women in conservative societies that "covers" them, versus in liberal societies that undresses them? Regardless of where one might stand on this issue, such proposals certainly promise a rich and fruitful international dialogue.