

Ilaria Sagaria | Agata Stępień

HERSTORY

1 December 2023 — 20 January 2024

Maja Arte Contemporanea (via di Monserrato 30, Rome) is delighted to celebrate its **tenth anniversary** with an exhibition opening **Friday December 1st, 2023** at 6 pm. It is a double solo exhibition entitled **Herstory**, showcasing works by artists **Ilaria Sagaria** (Italy 1989) and **Agata Stępień** (Poland 1986).

Sagaria and Stępień were awarded the residency **A Residency of One's Own**, granted in collaboration with Roman art collectors Umberto Morera and Anna Maria Balsano Morera, in 2023 and 2022 respectively.

Ilaria Sagaria is displaying her series of photographs "**Full of Grace**" in this show. Among mythology, art and photography, the author looks into a complex and stratified imaginary, dull of cultural symbols, references and artistic details and echoes of the psyche, exploring the multifaceted universe of the feminine. Her images tell of mythological tales, ancestral rhythms, and of the carnality of bodies uncovering before our eyes. They portray gestures charged with meaning. Condemned to grace, emblem of the irreconcilability between the idealized and the earthly vision, the female body shows in these images its duality between ecstasy and torment. Thanks to a wise use of light and color that seems to merge painting and photography, the author coins an original actualization of female beauty, projecting it into a present made of dark and light that still preserves in itself the legacy of classicism and obscure archetypes.

Agata Stępień's paintings also generate an exquisitely feminine narrative. The artist is at the center of this tale, comprising self-portraits, paintings of other women, and 'Reminiscences of a Mother' or 'Reminiscences of a Carnival,' alongside works entitled 'Chats with the Soul' and 'Always Ask the Fool'. These are stratified works, painted over by the artist numerous times, over several years, scraped, and dipped in resin. "The inspiration underlying my creative process emerges from suppressed areas within the psyche so as to uncover what is uncertain, hidden, or apparently marginal. Through my art, I manifest that which has yet to come to light, that which lies tucked away in my subconscious, offering the viewer a complex vision, one that extends beyond the mere sum of the parts. My instinct is to use the space on the canvas to narrate a story which holds a secret in its heart: a mystery to be resolved together with the spectator." [Agata Stępień]

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Ilaria Sagaria was born in 1989 in the province of Salerno (Italy). Having completed her studies in Fine Arts and Photography at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Naples, she worked as a photographer between Naples and Monaco. Her works have been displayed in art galleries and museums, both in Italy and abroad. She has received many accolades and has been the topic of many publications. In 2021, she held a solo exhibition at the Galleria degli Uffizi; she was invited to return in 2023, when she donated one of her works to the gallery's *Permanent Collection of Contemporary Self-Portraits*. She has also displayed works in international photography festivals among which: *Sifest*, Savignano sul Rubicone, Italy (2022); *Photolux*, Lucca, Italy (2023); *Verzasca Foto Festival*, Switzerland (2023); *Budapest Photo Festival* (2023); *Photosynthesis* and *Photopolis Festival*, Greece (2023). She has been the recipient of numerous awards, among which: The *Sette Opere di Misericordia* award (2015) given by the Museum Pio Monte della Misericordia in Naples; the Young Italian Photographers' Biennale award (2018); the Portfolio Italia award, Italy (2021); and the New Talent Prize (2023). She was also a finalist for the Passepartout Photo Prize (2023). Currently, she lives and works in Milan, where she also works as a professor of Photography. Her work stems from an accurate study of the past to develop a complex and stratified portrayal of an inner world and of specific feelings. She is particularly interested in exploring the sociological and psychological implications of images. Both intimate and visionary, her work is rich in symbolism and artistic allusions forming a bridge between past and present and forging unusual and unexpected visions for her viewers.

Agata Stępień was born in 1986 in Krakow (Poland), in a family of Polish artists. She spent the past 12 years studying Visual Arts at different art academies (Poland; Spain; Belgium; Italy; and Portugal). In this context, she was awarded a variety of scholarships. Having completed an MFA at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome, she moved to Barcelona, where she earned a joint PhD in art granted by the Universidad Castilla La Mancha in Spain and at the Universidade Belas Artes Lisboa in Portugal. Between 2017 and 2021, she taught art in the Literature and Philosophy department at the University of Science and Technology in Krakow. Her courses included: "Global Perspectives in Contemporary Representations of the Body" and "Transgressions in the Arts - Cultural Dynamic". In 2021, she displayed her works in the exhibition, "Solitude in Culture", alongside artists such as Rembrandt and Nikifor. The exhibit was hosted by the library of the University Jagellonica. In the same year, she held a solo exhibit at the prestigious Antonio Perez Museum in Spain. The works displayed on this occasion are now part of the museum's permanent collection. She is often invited to lecture in European universities, including at the Women's Leadership Symposium, Oxford University. Her research and art both focus on female artistic perception.

10 years of Maja Arte Contemporanea. On December 1st, 2013, Daina Maja Titonel opened the first exhibition at her art gallery, Maja Arte Contemporanea, following a decade of work alongside her mother (art dealer and art historian, Lela Djokic - Nuova Galleria Campo dei Fiori). Since then, she has curated 57 exhibitions, collaborating with over 40 established and emerging, Italian, and international artists. Since 2021 she hosts a yearly art residency in Umbria in May.