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berna reale
agora: right now

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opening may 28

exhibition may 28 – jul 23, 2022



Berna Reale. *Cabeça raspada*, 2022. Print on cotton paper, plexiglass face mounted. 100 x 150 cm | 39.4 x 59.1 in. Courtesy of the artist and Nara Roesler.

Nara Roesler São Paulo is pleased to present *Agora: Right Now*, a solo show by Berna Reale and curated by Claudia Calirman. The show opens to the public on May 28 and remains on view until July 23, 2022. Reale, known for her performance practice of forceful political discourse, presents a new body of work, including photographs, installations and, for the first time, paintings.

Agora (Now) is a word that communicates urgency, calling our attention to current events, thus, the choice of the title of Reale's third solo exhibition at Nara Roesler aims to emphasize the idea of the present.

Berna Reale seeks in the world of fashion, through its colors and advertising, ways to communicate how contemporary media deals with violence. Just as the catwalks and magazines dictate trends that will be over shortly afterwards, our media moves from one atrocity to another, churning out impactful images which are endlessly consumed by the public. On the other hand, the show aims to remind us that the time of violence is always the present, given that, at every moment, somewhere in the world, someone is a victim of some form of aggression.

Observing this, Reale created a series of photographs that could easily have been in fashion publications and billboards, if it weren't for the peculiar accessories they seem to advertise, such as handcuffs, in *Cabeças raspadas* (2022) and electronic anklets in *Ligadas* (2022) and *Acorda Alice* (2022). Despite being images constructed by the artist, Reale does not aim to celebrate or aestheticize these abominable actions, precisely because she understands the risks of trivializing violence.

In fact, to unveil its effects, to point out the executioners and to highlight the ways in which violence is fetishized and speculated on culturally, the artist often uses allegory, building images whose strength lies precisely in the opening of possible meanings and in the scope with which they can deal with the topic of violence.

In one of the gallery's rooms, there are six oil paintings on metal plates, bearing representations of violated bodies. These paintings by Reale are, in the artist's words, "about reality without being realistic". Reale also works as a criminal expert at the Centro de Perícias Científicas Renato Chaves, in Belém and therefore, she sees violence often. However, in her practice she recreates it in a way that highlights the ambiguity of our relationship to these images. As the titles of the works point out—*Olhe para mim* (Look at Me), *Ela disse não* (She Said No), and *Desistir* (Give Up), to name a few—these paintings instill fascination and horror, desire and abjection.

Reale also presents an installation that, like *O tema da festa* (2015), plays with the ambiguity between celebration and violence. The artist constructs a table, on which aluminum cakes, of different sizes and shapes are arranged. The stainless surface of the metal, however, is marked by perforations that create representations of knives, creating aggressive scratches and indentations that unavoidably modify the material.

In particular, Reale focuses on topics that deeply matter to her: particularly violence against society's marginalized identities such as femicide, transphobia and homophobia; however, her work is not restricted to these issues. What she wants most is to remove us from our state of indifference, brought about by the trivialization of the media. Her provocative images have the power to disturb and accompany us, showing the urgency of dealing with the politics of present day violence. As curator Claudia Calirman summarizes, "By drawing our focus towards various forms of social injustice, Berna Reale's work has a clear aim. By creating portrayals of extreme situations, her work is playful at the same time that it borders on the absurd, causing astonishment and bewilderment. The time portrayed by Reale in her exhibition *Agora: Right Now* is the violence-infused present that is everywhere, desecrating and ravaging the here and now."

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Since then, the artist has been exploring and developing the idea of using her own body as the central aesthetic element of her images and performances, through which she aims to denounce social problems and injustices. Her work critically engages with the theme of violence, exploring its symbolic and physical representations, and the inevitable shadow of censorship, as a means of revealing the importance of image-making when it comes to maintaining freedom of thought. The strength of Berna Reale's imagery lies in eliciting a desire to get closer, countered by a sense of repulsion—an ambivalence reminiscent of the irony in Brazilian society's fascination for and disgust of violence. Importantly, Berna Reale's work has come to heavily depend on photography as a tool for not only registering, but also perpetuating and disseminating her actions once the performance is over.

Berna Reale was born in 1965 in Belém do Pará, Brazil, where she lives and works. Recent solo shows include: *While You Laugh*, at Galeria Nara Roesler (2019), in New York, USA; *Festa*, at Viaduto das Artes (2019), in Belo Horizonte, Brazil; *Deformation*, at Bergkirche (2017), and *Berna Reale – Über uns / About Us*, at Kunsthaus (2017), both in Wiesbaden, Germany; *Berna Reale: Singing in the Rain*, at Utah Museum of Contemporary Art (UMoCA) (2016), in Salt Lake City, USA; *Vazio de nós*, at Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR) (2013), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Recent group shows include: 3rd Beijing Photo Biennial, China (2018); 56th Venice Biennale, Italy (2015); *Brasile. Il coltello nella carne*, at Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea Milano (PAC-Milano) (2018), in Milan, Italy; *Video Art in Latin America, Il Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA (Il PST: LA/LA)*, at LAXART (2017), in Hollywood, USA; *Artistas comprometidos? Talvez*, at Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (FCG) (2014), in Lisbon, Portugal. Her works are included in important institutional collections, such as: Instituto Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil; Kunsthaus Wiesbaden, Wiesbaden, Germany; Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM-SP), São Paulo, Brazil; Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and JW Collection, Atlanta, USA.

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Nara Roesler is a leading Brazilian contemporary art gallery, representing seminal Brazilian and international artists who emerged in the 1950s as well as preeminent mid-career and emerging artists who dialogue with the currents put forth by these historical figures. Founded by Nara Roesler in 1989, the gallery has consistently fomented curatorial practice while upholding the utmost quality in art production. This has actively been put into practice through a select and rigorous exhibitions program created in close collaboration with its artists; the implementation and fostering of the Roesler Curatorial Project, a platform for curatorial projects; and continued support to artists beyond the gallery space, working with institutions and curators in offsite shows. In 2012, the gallery doubled its São Paulo exhibition space, in 2014 it expanded to Rio, and in 2015 it opened in New York City, continuing its mission to provide the best platform for its artists to show their work.

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