

PRESSBOOK

Klara KRISTALOVA

Whitewall

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KLARA KRISTALOVA'S BAND OF CIRCUS CREATURES

Klara Kristalova's new show "**Underworld**" presents an eccentric yet familiar cast of sculptural characters. Inspired by "sad and shabby" family circuses, Kristalova creates a world that is quiet, mysterious, and ever so subtly melancholic. The spirit of these tiny creatures draws from classical myths and fairy tales, yet is imbued with struggles of modernity. We asked the artist about her new work on view at [Galerie Perrotin](#) and [Lehmann Maupin](#) in New York.

WHITEWALL: Myths, fairy tales, and the writings of Hans Christian Andersen and Oscar Wilde inspire your work. How do you see these stories translating into your sculptures, specifically in your shows in New York?

KLARA KRISTALOVA: I like a lot of old folk tales, from Hans Christian Andersen, Selma Lagerlöf, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*. I don't read them as often now, but they still inspire me. I have many influences in addition to transformation stories and folktales, including overheard conversations, daily life, movies, music, and other artist's works. I start with an image in my head, a feeling, or of course, a story idea that affects me. Then I do drawings, notes, and key words; then I do more drawings, watercolors, and collages. I collect the ideas, put them on my wall, and go through them. I try to put them into groups, varied by size and expression. I want dynamic groups, where the perspective is shifting, from inside to more distanced. Then I start to build.

WW: You say that the hybridity of your sculptures reflects a state of transformation. Can you tell me more about this?

KK: I want my work to be in a state of change, almost like a film sequence but internal, inside the head of the spectator. Change is important because that's how I look upon situations in life. Nothing stands still for more than a moment before it slowly or rapidly changes again. You grow up, winds blow, people move. But the hybridity also shows the complexity of human nature.



Klara Kristalova
The Magician's Daughter (detail)
2013
Photo by Carl Henrik Tillberg
Courtesy of Galerie Perrotin

WW: For your “Underworld” series, you present a new cast of characters “who form an ambiguous circus.” Where did you get ideas for these characters?

KK: For this new work, I was interested the circus as a theme. Not the big fantastic productions kind but the small family type troupes that travel around the countryside. I remember specifically once when we took the family to a village nearby and there was a very “worn out” kind of circus where the same people did all the performances just dressed in different clothes. It was very pretty with lights and a classical charm but at the same time, very sad and shabby. They weren’t perfect but you get a sense that they really tried, in a simple way.

I was inspired by this kind of atmosphere where strange things can happen but still be close to ordinary life. The title refers to an imaginary kind of circus where the characters are part of another dimension, each are like psychological characters. “Underworld” also refers to the fact that the show will take place in the lower part of the gallery in New York, which I liked.

WW: Why do you choose to work in miniature?

KK: I don’t look upon my work as miniature, but I like small-scale works because they are easy to work with and can fit easily into the hand. I can get an idea and make it fast, like a drawing, but I also like larger size works like *The Magician’s Daughter*, *The Strange Child* and *Marriage*, because they create a different atmosphere in a room. Ceramic works are usually small because they need to fit into the oven. Big pieces have to be heated in several parts and then assembled.

WW: You have two shows at Galerie Perrotin and Lehmann Maupin. How do the works at each location relate?

KK: I tried to keep the work in the different locations separate by using two different themes that are in some ways related. The group of works at Lehmann Maupin are mainly psychological portraits of women of different ages, slightly older than the adolescent age I have worked with before. However, in the “Underworld” exhibition at Galerie Perrotin, some of the women are kind of performers too who could definitely fit in the “Big Girl Now” exhibition.

“Underworld” will be on view at Galerie Perrotin through April 12, and “Big Girl Now” will be up at Lehmann Maupin through April 26.