About the Gallery

So, we are in the Glassyard Gallery. The gallery was founded in 2017. It's located in a turn of the century building on the first floor, Piano Nobile. It was a former high bourgeois flat and it's a very significant feature in the Hungarian, especially in the Budapest architecture, these types of flats… The flat has huge rooms, high ceiling, very airy atmosphere. The rooms open after each other. So it's like an enfilade structure, as it called in the terminology. So, there are four kind of cube proportion rooms for one after each other, and it creates a clear narrative for all exhibitions. We were looking for more than a year to find a space in the town which has a real atmosphere, which has a special couleur locale, and this flat really provides all this essence of Budapest, a Fin de Siècle kind of atmosphere. And the old flat which was used during the decades of socialism turned into a white cube. Right now the gallery space has a professional lighting system and it's purely clean and concentrate on the artworks. So, this is the venue of Glassyard Gallery and as a commercial gallery we are dealing with Hungarian and Central-Eastern European artists, mostly. We used to arrange solo shows for our artists and curated group shows based on different topics. We are working established artists, generation around 40, 50, and also younger generation, up-and-coming artists from Hungary and also from the region like Slovakia, Czech, Albania, Poland, and Romania, and many other countries around Central Europe. We used to participate prestigious art fairs, like we’ve been several times at Artissima, Torino and Vienna Contemporary, in Vien and we try to be present with our artists in the international institutional scene as well. So that's about the gallery. And this is the show.

About the artist and the exhibition

This is the show of Sara Dobai, entitled Donkey field and In Plain Sight. It comprises works from different period of the artist. There are photography series and videos, actually two video pieces, one as a TV screening the other projected on the wall. So, one of the photography series is called Overcoat and it's connected to Gogol’s famous novel from the 19th century, the Overcoat.It was a series of illustration for the new edition of the novel at a London based art publisher. They asked photographers, contemporary photographers to illustrate the novel. And Sarah made a series of photographs in London and Paris in the shopping streets, in the shopping area, in the downtown during the period of the economic depression after the crisis around 2011/12/13. And she made mise-en-scène type of photography. But the mise-en-scène was kind of ready-made mise-en-scène because she took photographs on the shop windows and that years during the crisis, even these very posh and fancy shopping districts, shop windows were a little bit ruined, melancholic and abandoned. And she tried to catch this atmosphere of this decline, of the crisis, the melancholy of the late capitalism during these years. The photographs on the shop windows are multilayered because of the structure of the shop window, because of the objects in the shop, they are on display. But the framing and the composition as the photographer made the composition, it's really artificially constructed and full of little details. Surprising elements like the mirroring of the different surface, the mirroring of the camera lenses, the mirroring of the windows, the mirroring of the glasses, glass plates inside the shop windows and the mirroring on the objects. So, it's a very complex visual experience to see a simple shop window. There are different objects, different kind of shops, shoe shop, jewelry shop, window for a costume designer, a shop window for leather goods, purses, for expensive clothes. But somehow you can feel the atmosphere of the decline and it’s somehow really sad. And you can feel the despair in these images.

About artworks

Artwork 1

This is a 70 by 60 cm size photograph framed in white frame with a smaller white mount around it. The title is Brompton Rd. which is one of the Shopping, St. in in in London, in the city and this is the shop window of a shoe shop and you can see a pair of shoe on the shop window mannequin, but only a fragments of the body and the shining shoes are a little bit dusty.

Pedestal is in the middle of the image of the composition and there are different tones of gray and green, kind of melancholic atmosphere and the mirroring windows, and at the bottom of the image you can even see the streets mirroring on the surface of the shop window glass plate.

Artwork 2

The next image called Mile End, and this is the only photo which was made in the studio of the artist, not in the streets. But she created a situation on it. It's a constructed situation with an image of a professional camera as reflecting her own activity. And imitating kind of advertisement for her job or for her profession. But the whole set is about draperies and different kind of accessories for advertisement photography. So, it's kind of advertisement about the advertisement.

Artwork 3

This is a 25 minutes video piece. It's kind of reinterpretation of the famous movie of Robert Bresson, the renowned film director from the Novel Vague the French new wave from the 60s film makers, the movie called the Pickpocket and the artists re-interprets the story from her special perspective reenacting the main scenes from the movie with amateur actors. But the narrative is very fragmented, the visual language is very strong and it's a kind of hommage to Robert Bresson, to his very particular and very special film narration. So, it's kind of hommage for the famous film director. She's completely fond of his movies.

Artwork 3

In the next room there are also images from this series, the Overcoat series. This entitled the Bond Street, the famous Bond Street full of jewelry shop and other luxury goods shop. This is the shop windows of a jewelry store. But this is the most enigmatic kind of composition. Because you can't really identify which is the object, and which is the reflection of an object, which one is the object inside and which is outside? Which one is inside the shop window and which is the mirroring. It's one of the most complex and the most impressive image for me. For the first gaze, you can't even identify what's going on on the image.

There are a huge tree and two animals, two deers. But there are also jewelries and all the object has a flat white surface so it's like under snow or something but the reflecting images the trees are also in this grayish tone which completely absorb the reality of that object. So, the whole composition somehow on the edge of a dreamlike universe. But what you can really identify are the shining jewelries, the earrings and the necklaces. And you can feel that those are really expensive kind of stuff.

Artwork 4

The other image is another photograph called New Bond St. also in in London, in the downtown, it's an image on an almost empty shop window of a leather store.

Normally they are full of wallets, purses and leather products, but this one is so empty that it's really kind of surprising. There are different colorful elements, but those are just pedestals. There are flowers, but it's also just an image of a flower. There are boxes but empty boxes. There is nothing on it or in it. So, the whole image just about the emptiness, emptiness and the decline. There is only one red purse which is so small and so insignificant that you even can't identify it. But that's all about the lack of money. That's the place of the money which is somehow missing from the whole context. So this is why for me, even against the strong yellow and the red colors, this is for me the most depressive kind of image.

Artwork 5

This called Ivry Interior. This is theetitle of the photograph. It's also a framed photograph, and Ivry Interior probably does the name of the interior design store and this is a shop window full of hanging carpets, different type of and different colors of carpets. Hanging carpets with different patterns and motives. But one of the motives is an architectural element. So, it's like trompe-l'œil, a kind of trick for the eye. trompe-l'œil is an expression in the in the history of painting which means that the artist creates a small element on the oil painting like a small fly and it seems real, and the fly is just sitting on the painting. So, this this kind of trick used in this shop window too. But it's very accidental. It's a kind of architectural fragment about a huge hall, from a Baroque or Renaissance palace, but it's also kind of twisting the sense of the space, the sense of the shop window. So, it's also about that you can't identify the situation and even the mirroring of the shop window glass plates are present and visible, so this is a new layer on this representation of this rich textures of clothes and different fabrics here.

Artwork 6

There's the title Shaftesbury Avenue. It's also from the Overcoat series. It's a shop window of costume rental store and this is a historical Hungarian soldier’s uniform

of Hungarian Hussar. The famous Hungarian Hussar uniform with flitters and glitters for the carnival season. So, it's a grotesque gesture, it really looks artificial and empty without the body inside. It's just an empty uniform. It's like a sculpture, but it's completely empty without a human body. It's important that the human component is completely missing from this context even in the form of a plastic mannequin.

Artwork 7

Yeah, the last piece from this series, it's called Hatton Garden.

It's another shopping area of the downtown London, and this is the emptiest shop windows from all. All the objects, all the products, all the items are removed. Only three transparent pedestals are there, shining in the light.

Reflecting the light into many directions like a kaleidoscope. It's a beautiful geometric composition, but it's so empty and it's so obviously something missing from it. And this is just the monument for the missing goods.

Artwork 8 and 9

In the next room there are photographs from another series of Sarah which was done in 2018 and 2021. Two views are about a forest, beautiful forest scape or landscape.

Kind of double images on the same object. It's like a stereoscopic image, but not completely. It's a kind of sequence. And this beautiful innocent nature is close to Stockholm in the suburb of Stockholm, it's the garden of the family estate of Raoul Wallenberg. Raoul Wallenberg was the Swedish ambassador during the Holocaust in Budapest, and he saved the life of thousands of Jewish people and later he was taken by the Soviet troops and possibly he was he died somewhere in a detention or in the jail. So, he was a real hero, and the forest is the ambience of this hero’s childhood actually. But it looks so innocent! As an image on a the beautiful and innocent nature. But the story which has started here among this trees in this forest, that's continued in a tragic kind of history.

Artwork 10, 11

Opposite of these two images, there is another reference to this Holocaust era. The title of this large-scale photograph entitled “Towpath scenes through ground glass”. It's another kind of landscape. It's a landscape on the Thames in London and the shore of the of the river. A view of the paths where the father of the artist used to walk every day in London and her father is a Holocaust survivor. And one day on the side of this riverbank an inscription appeared, stated that the Holocaust never happened. Her father went home, took a bucket of water and started to clean this text. And this is the documentation of this site and an invisible event after the actual action has happened.

So that's how these two geographical locations, Stockholm, the forest of Raul Wallenberg’s family, who saved actually her father's life, connected in this room.

Artwork 12

And in the last room there is a video screening. It's almost a 30 minutes short movie based on the notebooks of her father and her father's brother, which he wrote during the last months of ‘44 and the first months of ‘45, those were the tragic period in Budapest during the siege of the town. And they survived those months in a protected house, under the authorized protection of the Swedish Ambassy, namely Raul Wallenberg.

The movie is also a kind of hommage and related to another movie of Robert Bresson called [Au Hasard Balthazar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Au_Hasard_Balthazar). Which is another famous movie of Robert Bresson about a donkey and how the donkey had a tragic story in that community where he was born. The artist created a metaphor and connected the tragic story to the people who suffered during the Holocaust and the siege in Budapest at the end of Worls War II. So, it's also a kind of reenactment of the movie and full of reference to the visual language of Robert Bresson. The movie was shot partly in Budapest and in London.

So mostly the original streets and the venues in Budapest where the places where her father survived in the days of ‘44-‘45.