

Eva Beresin, NINETY EIGHT PAGES

Opening: 09/10/2015, 07:00pm.

September 10th – October 10th 2015
Charim Events, Schleifmühlgasse 1a, 1040 Vienna

A publication by Eva Beresin comprises the foundation of the exhibition. She shows us nameless paintings without titles. The unnamed pieces speak of the ineffable which thematically determines this work. The paintings, however, follow a color scheme. They are identifiable by a color code based on the order of colors in the book which determines a principle of arrangement. The paintings themselves depict mainly portraits and scenes of the artist's mother's yet unburdened youth as a student in Budapest. After the invasion of the Wehrmacht in March 1944 her mother travels to Guyla, her hometown near the Romanian border, to be with her family. There she is captured and deported to Auschwitz and then to the concentration camp Ravensbrück. For Eva Beresin, her mother's diary from the time following the liberation of the camp by the Red Army, becomes the centre of an artistically framed struggle.

The artist began tracing the fading texts of her mother's diary, letter for letter, page after page.

The compelling wish to make these pages legible came over me after her death in 2007. Sometime in the winter of 2012 I delved into it and it wouldn't let go of me. Touching her writing, the movements of re-tracing her lettering, faded and at times almost disappearing into the page, became more important than the reconstruction of the content. It became apparent to me that immersing myself into this process created the most intensive closeness I had ever felt with my mother.

Writing everything again opened up a space for feeling and reflection in which questions began to take form. The possible answers often lay out of reach in an unnameable silence circumscribed by the experience of the holocaust. Still questions arose: Can a person, may a person, spare a child from one's own past and blows of fate? Or is a person compelled to share these? Are they also the fate of the child? Although both parents wanted to spare us from their past, the imagination becomes stronger than real images. Where did these images that tortured me as a child come from?

The residual impact of this human tragedy are written upon generation after generation and influence the thinking and views of those born later. As if to capture the namelessness, to break the spell, Beresin takes possession of her family's history.

The result is an exhibition, arranged as an installation piece. Woven fabric based on pieces of a pattern designed by the artist's mother during her time as a student are incorporated into the exhibition in a tactile way. Beresin designed a Shiva stool, and upholstered it with the same kind of cloth. When sitting Shiva, the Jewish ritual of mourning and bidding farewell, mourners do not sit on regular chairs, but on low stools. These stools, as well as another mourning tradition, a covered mirror designed for the exhibition, portray central elements of the act of remembrance in symbolic form. They become art objects. These formal elements of the installation lend the exhibition an air of deeper reflection.

Eva Beresin allowed herself to be moved, quite literally, when tracing her mother's gestures, the distinctive style of her writing, absorbing it in her body, only to transform it into a painted language. In this regard, the gesture of touch by the painter is continued in the act of painting itself. They reflect her impressions, and a search for being close not only to her mother, but to herself.

Text: Kurt Klädler