

## MARTINA VACHEVA

Born 1988

### About the Artist:

Martina Vacheva was born 1988 in Plovdiv. She lives and works in Plovdiv and Brittany, West France. Martina graduated from the National Academy of Arts in Sofia, majoring in Illustration and Book and Print Graphics, in 2012 she specialized in the illustrator's class of Georg Barber (ATAK) at the Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design Halle, Germany.

Martina Vacheva works mostly in the medium of painting, as well as ceramics – a material she uses to create sculptures and installations. She forges links to themes and representations of Bulgarian folk culture in a diverse and humorous manner. Her main interest has been Bulgaria's myths and fairy tales. Yet her work carries also a postmodern vibe, borrowing from the techniques of parody and pastiche with a sense of a cool detachment from the subject. Vacheva studies the relations between the archaic and the present within the cultural codes, asking the question of their longevity and future transformations.

In 2016, SARIEV Contemporary with the curator Vera Mlechevska presented her first solo show "Sereality" as part of the gallery's BACKGROUND: Young Artists 2016 exhibition. After the success of the show her works have been exhibited in many curatorial exhibitions and projects such as: "Lifestyles and Still Life" curated by Vera Mlechevska, Lubomirov/Angus-Hughes, London, (2016); Exhibition of nominees for the BAZA Award for contemporary art, Sofia City Art Gallery (2017); "The Image is no Longer Available" curated by Vesela Nozharova, Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia (2017); "My Dear Provincialist" curated by Victoria Draganova, Swimming Pool, Sofia (2017); "Let Them Draw II (Drawing and Withdrawing)" group show - drawings, curated by Pravdoliub Ivanov at SARIEV Contemporary (2017); "Art start: Young artists to Follow in 2017" curated by Vessela Nozharova, Stefka Tsaneva, Daniela Radeva, Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia (2017); "Baywatch" curated by Nathalie Hoyos and Rainald Schumacher, KVOST, Berlin (2018); "Dias de Romance" curated by Carmen Ferreyra, Centro Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2018); "Schock und Schrecken" curated by Stefka Tsaneva, Goethe-Institut Bulgarien, Sofia (2018) and others, "Immersion – Background: Young Artists from Plovdiv", Bulgarian Embassy in Helsinki, Finland (2018), curated by Vera Mlechevska. Martina Vacheva is the 2017 BAZA / Young Visual Artists Awards winner - a prize attributed by the Sofia City Art Gallery and Institute of Contemporary Art – Sofia. She was awarded with two-month participation in Residency Unlimited, NY. Martina Vacheva has works at Art Collection Telekom, Metropolitan museum library collection, New York and Gaudenz B. Ruf collection, Zurich, Vienna.

## MARTINA VACHEVA

### **1. *Plague*, 2018**

Glazed ceramic, clay, carpet, stones, dry grass, dry branches, mud  
160 x 170 x 50 cm

**Edition:** Unique

**Ownership history:** The Artist





MARTINA VACHEVA, *Plague*, 2018 (detail)





**MARTINA VACHEVA**

***2.Samodivi***, 2019

glazed ceramic, branches on wall, 130 x 120 cm

**Edition:** Unique

**Ownership history:** The Artist





**MARTINA VACHEVA, *Samodivi*, 2019 (detail)**



**MARTINA VACHEVA, *Plague*, 2018; *Samodivi*, 2019**

### **About the Works:**

Both *Samodivi* and *Plague* are part of the series *Mud*, which Vacheva produced in 2018-2019. With the works of this series Vacheva goes much deeper into the study of some fundamental myths, prototypes and accumulated stereotypes and their connections to the subconscious, the emotions and the impulses. By introducing a less known element of her work – the interest in nature, she finds in its purest form the idea of transformation, the transition from one state to another, from one image to another, into an eternal circle. *Mud* takes a look at the human body's fleshliness, its absorption from the earth and its transformation into something new, a process of both evolution and degradation, invariably connected to each other.

In works, such as *Plague* and *Samodivi*, demonic figures and magical phenomena come into play. Not without irony, the sculptural work *Plague* (2018) combines a ceramic mask with textiles and natural materials to create an archaic image of death and terror. The personification of the plague is reminiscent of the costumes used during the Bulgarian Kukeri festival, where dancers with apotropaic masks celebrate the beginning of spring and the renewal of all life every year before Easter. *Samodivi* on the other hand interprets the myth of “samodivi” - female nature spirits. In Slavic mythology they are described as magical girls who died before baptism or brides who died before marriage. Like sirens, their beauty, song, and dance lure men to their doom. The popular belief is thought to have originated in the story of Orpheus, the singer and poet of Greek mythology who came from Thrace and whose cult included singing and dancing.

Vacheva's artworks bring together the real and the dreamed, historical events and mythological traditions, exploring the intersections between tradition and modernity in Bulgaria, a country that, since the fall of socialism, has been in the throes of an ongoing controversial discussion about its own cultural identity.