

Sweaty Grips

Daniel Oksenberg

Curator: Sagie Azoulay

The exhibition *Sweaty Grips* is a sculptural painting installation that comprises a theatrical space by introducing four scenes: The Juggler, The Diver, The Gambler, and The Fireworks Operator. The playful scenery is composed of game-like structures of painted wooden forms that are tied together by ropes. Each one of the works in the exhibition depicts a character at a crucial moment; it is the moment of danger, excitement, and glory, which holds the risk of potential failure and demise.

Daniel Oksenberg's painting practice has evolved into a course of installations that combine three-dimensional elements. The transition from painting to sculpture alters the characters in his works to become objects reminiscent of set props. The current installation is one that samples both material and aesthetic features from two primary sources: Cat's Cradle string figures and Shibari - a Japanese bondage method often identified with BDSM.

Sweaty Grips brings together the mythical and the cinematic and takes its viewer on an internal journey through various locations: the pier, the circus, the casino, and the Far East. The storytelling mechanism and the sculptural mechanics of the objects are intertwined, leading the protagonists of the exhibition to an entangled fate. At first glance, the woven tales seem optimistic and full of life, but as the eye lingers, the exhibition unveils tragic sights such as skewered hands, a decapitated dragon, a crushed hand beneath a rock, and tied hands. The ropes connect, gather, support, strangle, govern, and vanquish.

All of the climactic moments that the works portray are at the same time moments of despair in which pleasure, jeopardy, and crisis convert into one symbolic occurrence. The scenes present power relations of control and discipline in themes of childhood and sexuality. As tension between plastic arts and theater provides the objects on display with a performative element, the two mediums of practice produce a dynamic of defiance and devotion, both in materials and in mentality, thus thickening the intricate system of figure-object-narrative.