

Tony's

OLEK

"I do not expect to be a mother but I do expect to die alone"

27 January – 23 March 2012

Private View: Thursday 26 January, 6-9pm



Crocheted London Taxi, Tony's Gallery, London, 2011

Tony's Gallery is proud to present *"I do not expect to be a mother but I do expect to die alone"*, the first UK solo exhibition by Polish-born, New York-based artist **Olek**. Renowned for her use of crocheted yarn as a medium both indoors and on the street, the artist has created a major installation and sculptural environment: a distinctive Olek-esque living quarters filled with domestic objects of all kinds. These, along with the gallery walls and floor, have been entirely covered in crochet.

Both playful and rich in metaphor, the brightly coloured work on display features multiple designs including Olek's trademark camouflage motif. The omnipresence of explicit messages crocheted into the objects, are statements revealing her position as a female artist in an art world that is inclined to have sexist opinions. These text-based pieces replicate actual missives sent to the artist by SMS text messaging, immortalising intimate details of her past relationships. The viewer thus becomes witness to Olek's personal history as she continues her exploration of modern day concerns, touching upon the themes of privacy, technology and communication.

For this exhibition, Olek has drawn inspiration from her experiences of living in the UK over the past few months and assimilating into British culture, as reflected in recent works such as her crocheted London black cab, a piece produced outside of Tony's in November. The show's title is a direct quote from *I do not expect*,

an appliquéd blanket produced by Tracey Emin in 2002.

Her practice has the striking quality of presenting a double-edged approach whereby the initial impact is colorful, enchanting and almost cartoon-like and yet under this camouflaged skin lies a complex and subversive metaphor for the world as she sees it. She instigates a dialogue between fiction and reality by carefully playing with our ambivalent perception of her work.

The performative nature of her work is an essential element within her practice, from the time-consuming and laborious act of crocheting on immense scales to her active and impromptu positioning of objects in the street as well as her use of participating performers who, dressed in crocheted suits, are part of her environments. This notion of performance instigates an interaction between the artist and viewer who inadvertently takes part in her work either by discovering her objects or by ultimately being positioned within her artistic context.

Later this year, Olek will participate in the Smithsonian American Art Museum exhibition, *40 under 40*, which will showcase her entire crocheted studio apartment. She is quickly becoming recognised as an influential artist in the contemporary art world as well as the street art scene, and was recently listed in the Artinfo article *See the Women Who Shook Up the Art World* in 2011 alongside Anita Zabludowicz, Marina Abramovic and Mera Rubell and has also been listed in “*The 25 most important artists of 2011*”.

<http://www.artinfo.com/photo-galleries/slideshow-see-the-women-who-shook-up-the-art-world-in-2011?image=35>

Olek was born *Agata Oleksiak* in 1978 in Poland. In 2000, she received a Bachelor degree in Cultural Studies from *Adam Mickiewicz University* in Poznan, Poland, and relocated to New York City, where she is currently based. Olek’s work has been exhibited in galleries, museums and public spaces worldwide, and featured in numerous publications such as *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, *Time Out NY*, *Village Voice*, *CNN*, *ABC News*, *CBS News* and *NBC News*. Olek is the recipient of awards including the *Ruth Mellon Award* for sculpture in 2004, *In Situ Artaq* award (France) in 2011, and a grant in 2011 from the *Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC)* for performance in public space. Olek’s residencies have included *Sculpture Space* in 2005, *Instituto Sacatar* (Brazil) in 2009 and *AAI-LES* in 2010. In 2008, Olek was the winner of the *Apex Art* competition, which aired on PBS. In 2010, the artist was commissioned by the *Brooklyn Museum of Art* for a one-day interactive performance installation.



Gallery Installation, “Knitting is for Pus****”, Christopher Henry Gallery 2010-2011



Project B (Wall Street Bull), guerrilla action on Dec 25th 2010, crocheted acrylic yarn over sculpture by Arturo di Modica



Project C (Astor Place Cube), guerrilla action on October 3rd 2011, crocheted acrylic yarn on sculpture by Tony Rosenthal



Crocheted bike nr 2 (Poland), crocheted acrylic yarn over a bike, Poland 2011

Links to videos online:



Project B (Wall Street Bull), guerrilla action on Dec 25th 2010, crocheted acrylic yarn over sculpture by Arturo di Modica
VIMEO: <http://vimeo.com/18306137>

Notes: about Tony's Gallery



Tony's is a new art platform/gallery space located on Sclater Street in the heart of the east-end gallery scene and prominent urban art quarters of Brick Lane and Hoxton. The gallery's aim is to encourage the crossovers between street and contemporary art through a programme focused on instigating a dialogue between the two genres and exploring their boundaries. By offering a platform for experimentation and creative freedom, the actual gallery space becomes part of the process of contextualisation of the artists' practice and projects. Through an emphasis on artistic collaboration and installation-based projects, *Tony's* challenges the idea of the traditional exhibition space to adapt itself to the concerns and tendencies of the current street art discourse.

Tony's presents seven exhibitions per year with an international programme of recognised artists who have already become identifiable for their on-going and relentless interventions onto the skin of urban and rural landscapes around the world.

Tony's Gallery

68 Sclater Street, London, E1 6HR

020 3556 5201

info@tonysgallery.com

www.tonysgallery.com

Twitter

Facebook

Flickr

Opening hours: Wednesday – Sunday, 11am – 7pm

Nearest tube: Shoreditch High Street

Previous artists exhibited at Tonys:

[Bortusk Leer](#) solo exhibition

[Burning Candy](#) group show

[Debbie Lawson](#) solo show

[Malarky](#) group show