

Djanogly Gallery, Nottingham Lakeside Arts, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD

## Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva: Making Beauty



Title : Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva, Making Beauty Sculpture, 2016, installed at Djanogly Gallery

Website : [www.lakesidearts.org.uk](http://www.lakesidearts.org.uk)

Credit : Photo Nick Dunmur, courtesy Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva and Djanogly Gallery



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Djanogly Gallery, Nottingham

20 August - 30 October 2016

Review by Cassie Davies

In 2015, Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva was commissioned by the Vatican Pavilion at the 56<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (2015) to produce a piece that responded to the scriptural text, 'In the Beginning...the Word became flesh.' Using waste products from the meat industry, Hadzi-Vasileva interpreted this biblical theme to create 'Haruspex' (2015), a chalice-like installation constructed from a cow's stomach and lamb's intestines. The artist has reconfigured the piece for her first UK solo exhibition at the Djanogly Gallery in Nottingham. 'Making Beauty', the title of the show, creates beauty out of materials that have otherwise been discarded or under appreciated.

Shown in connection with 'Haruspex' is a site-specific installation, 'Fragility' (2015), which was first installed at Fabrica, a converted Regency church in Brighton. The piece is made of an incredibly fragile material; the artist has worked with pig caul fat (stomach lining), transforming the membrane through a chemical process to create translucent veils. Hadzi-Vasileva uses both traditional and exploratory techniques to create her works; for 'Fragility', the artist soaked the pig caul fat in cold water, salts and alcoholic spirits over a 6-week period (the traditional preservation method for organs). At the Djanogly Gallery, the veils hang elegantly from the ceiling in rows of suspended columns. Light pierces the work, highlighting an intricate lattice of veins and blood vessels. The piece is a reflection on the phenomena of near-death experiences, which is often described in terms of light leading to some distant place. In the gallery, the viewer walks through 'Fragility', following the direction of the bowel-like tunnel, towards the golden centre that is 'Haruspex'.

Elsewhere in the exhibition can be found a mix of the artist's earlier and more recent pieces. During her time working as an Artist-in-Restaurant in 2011 at Pied à Terre, a Michelin-starred restaurant in London, Hadzi-Vasileva transformed eighty sheep's testicles (sourced from the restaurant's kitchen) into light bulbs. She also preserved them in other forms: displayed at the Djanogly Gallery are four sheep's testicles, silk-lined and made into purses. For some of her newer pieces, individual sheep's and cow's stomachs have been blown up and cased behind glass, and pig's stomachs hang from the ceiling like lampshades. While 'Haruspex' and 'Fragility' majestically transform their architectural environment, the artist's smaller pieces take on more sculptural qualities, enhanced through the incorporation of other materials such as timber, metal, plastic, clips and wire.

Hadzi-Vasileva works across a range of mediums, from sculpture, installation and architectural intervention, to video, photography and sound. Her recent sculptural and sound works, some of which are still works-in-progress, elaborate on her exploration of the artistic possibilities of scientific research. Shown alongside 'Fragility' and 'Haruspex' is a new body of work produced during the artist's year-long collaboration with medical research departments, labs and hospital units in London, Norwich and most recently the NIHR Nottingham Digestive Diseases Biomedical Research Unit. Hadzi-Vasileva worked with medical scientists in the area of digestion, the stomach and the bowel, to learn more about materials and innovative methods of technology developed for use in reconstructive surgery. 'Making Beauty' prepares its audience for the future of waste meat products, as Hadzi-Vasileva continues to manipulate challenging materials, discovering new and astonishing ways to transform the perishable into a beautiful object.

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**Published on 15 September 2016**