

Iwona as the Main Prize

Translation: Iwona Majdan

Iwona Majdan, the artist from Montreal, organized public castings in several cities in Poland in search of a husband. Men that didn't stand a chance were those with a mustache, those that were old, and those that didn't know how to cook. You were also eliminated if you didn't like cats. Iwona will announce who has met her criteria (if anyone at all) this upcoming Valentine's Day.

One man with whom she was corresponding wrote: "you appeared in this grey country like a white horse from a far away land, bringing with it fresh air. Woman, you are like an apparition, a dream."

It can certainly be said that the way Iwona goes about her search to be unusual, almost out of this world

Back in Canada, Iwona used a similarly unconventional approach to make friends. Behind the windshields of cars, she left a note that said 'talk to me' along with her telephone number. On another occasion, she sat blindfolded in a public elevator of a sky rise, listening to the comments of those that accompanied her.

She left Poland when she was eight years old. In the fall of 2002, she returned to her country of birth for an extended visit. The idea of organizing castings came about after her arrival. She called it The Love Project. "I really do want to find a husband, I want to share my life with someone - said the artist - but I also like to provoke. In this situation I wish to put into question some of the male female stereotypes and to gain personal insight, as to which boundaries I am unable to cross."

With her project, which was at first seen as an unusual form of spectacle, Iwona quickly gained interest of galleries in Lublin, Wroclaw, Poznan, Zielona Gora and Krakow. We understood at once that the idea of this beautiful woman, is at once her goal in life as well as an artistic formula for conveying her ideas. What is at stake is her personal happiness or lack of it"- noticed Magda Ujma, pr for Bunkier Sztuki where on February 14, the grand finale will be held.

This concerns real love, and at the same time it is an art project, it is difficult to distinguish where the border between life and art lies.

Castings had been announced in the local press, then the website appeared, on which Iwona Majdan at first only stated the conditions of the project, made her promise of the trip to Canada, listed her dimensions, posted pictures of her darling cats, and her childhood photos. "Are the candidates supposed to fall in love with a baby in a bib?" commented a 'Somarc in his email to Iwona.

A small number of potential candidates appeared at each of the castings. In Lublin, there was one, in Krakow there were seven, among them, an older gentleman who was looking for a wife for his son who lives in...Canada. There was also a man who claimed to be schizophrenic, therefore a perfect candidate for this crazy woman named Iwona. "I went because of sheer curiosity and astonishment that women as gutsy as her actually exist - said Krystian, a student of linguistics. Who knows, maybe I will be persuaded to get married?"

There was far greater number of those that decided to contact Iwona by mail. One man proposed online, claiming to be an admirer of blue eyed brunettes, and introduced himself as the standard Joe Blow, accountant by trade. Another man, who called himself a prince, compared the heroine of the Love Project to the Princess Dulcenea, and yet another wandered about the taste of her lips. Piotr aka Marc said: finally a woman who is able to put men in their place and tell them who's in charge. A certain Jakub wondered whether Iwona knows how to cook kosher, Tomek stated clearly that he has a mustache, a wife and doesn't cook but would like to go with her to Canada just the same.

There were also those that approached the Love Project with complete cynicism. "Hello Princess, how did it go with matching up the mental slipper?" - signed anonymous. Others didn't even believe in the existence of Iwona Majdan. "Maybe it's a group of performers, hiding behind the image of a woman with sensual lips"- wondered S. After which he added

that even if it is for real, his chances are thin, because it is the men that like to choose, and not the other way around.

Halfway through the project, completely to Iwona's surprise, one of the men broke her heart. "I fell in love - admits Iwona - and the feeling is probably not mutual. The man who wrote to me and whom I later met, all of the sudden backed away. He said that I am too intense, too emotional..."

In her website diary Iwona admits to putting herself in a compromising situation. "I really opened up, I don't know if I regret this, I shouldn't. (...) I didn't realize that I could start to feel so much so quickly. Now I'm supposed to go forward, to continue to open up, to meet other men, to respond to their letters. (...) I can't and I don't want to. All of this has become so real, my life, true feelings, real pain. I care less about continuing with this."

However, the action, or rather its finale, will in fact take place. As promised earlier, Iwona will publicly announce who she has chosen this St Valentine's Day, at Bunkier Sztuki in Krakow. Or maybe she won't pick anyone. What we do know for sure is that there will be chocolates.