Pavel Martysiuk
‘Under the Roof’

This series of nude portraits developed through an intuitive process in the attic of the artist’s home in Gdańsk. The space came first, becoming a place for experimentation. Paradoxically, limiting the work to a single location gave both the photographer and the people he photographs greater freedom of expression. The attic became a point of reference, a symbol of the encounter with empty space.

Exhibition “Under the Roof” comprises sixteen visual concepts. Each reflects an emotional state experienced by the model or the artist at a particular point in their life. To express these states, the photographer uses materials at hand - stone, fabric, rope, wood and earth - alongside other objects that help shape the scene.

During a session, the person in front of the camera gradually sets aside the layers of everyday life and becomes absorbed in their own emotional experience. Their body becomes a metaphor for the sensitivity and tenderness needed to look inward. Pavel directs the session, creating a setting in which they feel safe to experience and express their emotions. The process may change over the course of a session. The photographer then steps back to observe, documenting the transformation as the protagonist expresses their feelings freely.

The attic also became a place where the artist could work through and reflect on successive stages of his life and his experience of migration. Through staged photographs, he expresses his own tensions and his need for closeness.

The people Pavel photographs are not professional models, and many are posing for the first time. Building trust with each person is an important part of his process, allowing them to relax and be open. Before developing the concept for a session, he asks himself: “What matters to me emotionally right now?”

The moments of heightened vulnerability shown here are not signs of weakness, but glimpses of a self taking shape. How can we respond to our emotions with tenderness, without being ashamed to reveal them? How can we show the beauty of vulnerability without hiding from it?

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