

POSTMASTERS

postmasters 459 w 19 street nyc 10011 212 727 3323

fax 212 229 2829

postmasters@thing.net

Katarzyna Kozyra

Summertale

Postmasters

459 West 19th Street, Chelsea
Through Nov. 15

The Polish multimedia artist Katarzyna Kozyra earned a reputation as a provocateur in the 1990s. For her film "Men's Bathhouse," she disguised herself as a naked man, infiltrated an all-male sanctuary and surreptitiously filmed its nude denizens.

In recent years Ms. Kozyra has been producing elaborate, fairytalelike films that call to mind Matthew Barney. With supernatural clarity and hallucinogenically rich color, "Summertale" relates an engrossingly zany and weird story about a quintet of midget women who live in a rustic cottage surrounded by lush gardens. After a rainy night three full-grown people emerge from giant mushrooms: a tall, red-haired drag queen, a male opera singer and an innocent girl played by Ms. Kozyra.

The midgets, wearing colorful matching peasant dresses, initially welcome the newcomers into their home but turn on them when they discover that the drag queen is not a woman. The midgets disable the men and pull them, unconscious, into a basement room. There they chop their captives up with axes while the girl, bound and gagged, watches in horror. Toward the end the girl appears on an upper-story balcony from which she angrily casts a spell on the midgets in the garden below. In the final scene the midgets have turned into fly agaric toadstools.

What it all means is hard to say. Maybe it is an allegory about the soul's progress as it transcends the duality of male and female. In any case, it is a hoot.

KEN JOHNSON

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