Merry Crisis and a Happy New Fear (AGAIN)

Luka Rayski – Augustin Rebetez

curated by Elisa Rusca

la rada, Locarno 15.12.2018 – 20.01.2019

opening : Dec 14th, 6pm

« Optimism » said Cacambo, « What is that? »

« Alas ! » replied Candide, « It is the obstinacy of maintaining that everything is best when it is worst ».

Voltaire, *Candide*

Conceived to conclude the annual programme of la rada art space, Merry Crisis and a Happy New Fear (AGAIN) presents recent works by Luka Rayski and Augustin Rebetez, who are dealing both with the reversal of the aesthetic codes of beauty through states of mind oscillating between the reverie and the hallucination.

Rebetez’s photographs depict nightmarish characters, grotesques and surreal. Each portrait is an extremely structured mise en scene whose nature intrigues the viewer for its impossibility to be grasped. For this exhibition, the Jura-born image-maker presents a combination of works realised between 2012 and 2018: a series of framed photographs of various dimensions and one large-format wallpaper show us strange creatures, human-like figurines, clusters of disconnected, yet sculptural, bizarre objects. As a misbehaved storyteller, the artist gives us fragments of a universe larger than the photographic frame: Rebetez’s taste for a gothic extravaganza composes here a catalogue from his personal teratology.

Rayski’s drawings and paintings are recognisible for their irreverent style and a quick, “bad” pictorial gesture. In his most recent series, “Arabische Pferde”, the Polish artist plays with the diversion of acquired images from mid-20th century books on Bedouin people and Arabian horses. The black and white photographs that illustrated a Western-centred look fetichising the Middle-East, are used here as a background and as a formal playground for the artist. The pages are torn apart, the images decontextualised, manipulated and distorted. Bigger works on canvas and plastic foam complete the selection for this show: silhouettes frozen in motion, almost floating, and abstract nets that seem to move.

Insolent and sarcastic, both Rebetez and Rayski let us enter into their alternative worlds by seducing us with their sweet brutality and caustic beauty. The weirdness out of this dialogue might be an escape from the present condition of instability and anxiety, or a jump right into it.

Reflecting on the situation of general tension that we unsuccessfully try to forget in a temporary way, Merry Crisis and a Happy New Fear (AGAIN) reminds us that behind every light in the dark could hide a monster: will it eat us? Or is it only a reflection in the mirror?

Luka Rayski (1982), granted with the Fulbright Scholarship graduated with a MFA in Fine Arts at Parsons The New School for Design, New York, in 2014, after graduating cum laude in Graphic Desing and Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, Poland. In 2007, he was awarded with the Prize of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in the Geppert Competition at the National Exhibition of Young Painters. He also won many prizes for posters, as the first prize at the competition of Poster Gallery AMS in 2006. Since 2009, he publishes drawings in numerous magazines such as Tygodnik Polityka, Wysokie Obcasy, and Tygodnik Powszechny, among others. He is based in Warsaw.

Augustin Rebetez (1986) had a solo show at the Rencontres photographiques d’Arles in 2011, and participated in the Sydney Biennale in 2014. That same year, he received the Vevey International Photography Prize. In 2016, he created an installation for the Tinguely Museum in Basel and an other one for the MBAL. In 2018, he took part to the Shenzhen Independent Animation Biennale. He collaborates with many performers, acrobats, musicians and friends, as well institutions such as Théâtre de Vidy in Lausanne, where he created three different pieces, or Art for the World. In 2018, he released a serie of twelve stop-motion shorts with director and clown Martin Zimmermann, entitled The Adventures of Mr. Skeleton (www.mrskeleton.ch). He has published several books and realised many clips and album covers. He is based in Mervelier, Jura.

Elisa Rusca (1986) is a curator and writer based between Berlin, London and Warsaw.