

HISTORIAE

February 2nd- February 18th

Roman Ermolaev, Tommy de Moor

OPENING: Friday, February 2nd, 19:00

Ermolaev and De Moor approach the subject of history on various levels, with very layered artworks and a high demand for aesthetics as the outcome. In their works history is juxtaposed with the contemporary society, art history with contemporary visual arts, and finally, they transform different kinds of historical or literary narratives into interdisciplinary art installations by combining different kinds of techniques such as 16mm film and digital media and also Pepper's ghost (Ermolaev) or enflourage and mummification (De Moor).

In the installation *Beatus* (2017.) De Moore approaches the visual art genre of still life by mummifying the piglet and also by using the technique of enflourage, the ancient practice of capturing the scents of flowers in purified animal fat for which he was inspired by the film *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (based on Patrick Süskind's novel written in 1985.). The artist is simultaneously „mummifying“ historical and contemporary, both by using ancient techniques today and making them an equivalent part of an artistic concept, but also by using art history visual genres such as still life, which can be traced both to the Dutch Golden Age paintings or even to contemporary artworks such as Damien Hirst's. In De Moor's case the still life motifs are left out from the narrative, the motifs balancing on the border of life and death, blossom and decay: the piglet, the flowers...

Ermolaev, on the other hand, enters the times of the Dutch Golden Age by creating different realities and dimensions in his video-installation *Holy Land* (2017.): the two dimensional film for which he used the combination of 16mm film and digital media in order to mimic the light present in the paintings of the old Dutch masters, a three dimensional hologram and finally the palpable, material Delft ceramics. The exhibition space becomes a sort of the recreated setting for the story told with strong images and costume design, without words, about the Dutch history and its cultural codes. For instance, a windmill being deleted from porcelain by an African girl, can be seen as a reference to colonialism and slavery but also to the reconstructed Dutch landscape and a long, stable tradition. Ermolaev is creating a kind of a personal, foreigner's visual narrative of Dutch history.

From the one hand the literary historical fantasy novel *Perfume* triggered the creation of the artwork, the novel in which the character Jean- Baptiste Grenouille has an extraordinary sense of smell which even brings him to kill young virgins with magical smells in order to create the smell which causes awe and adoration in others..., the unseen feeling of beauty and love. On the other hand, the real (hi)story with all its enlightened, artistic and cultural achievements, but also with its dark side, come together in Ermolaev's installation...

The mankind, constantly balancing on the border between the enlightened human and an animal...

A treadmill, the contemporary (but also historical) motif in Ermolaev's film perfectly shows our history (at first it was used as a human-powered treadmill for grinding grain, then as a punishment for prisoners and finally as an exercise treadmill) and futility of our sisyphian task. As in George Orwell's animal farm or in De Moor's contemporary *memento mori* story, „the pig“ finally becomes Beatus. And, in the end, *Windmil or no windmil, life would go on as it had always gone on- that is, badly* (*Animal farm*, George Orwell, 1945.).

Text: Neva Lukić, art historian