

A Baronian

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Press Release

« DOGS OF THE NEWFOUNDLAND », with Helmut Stallaerts, Achraf Touloub, Emmanuel Van Der Auwera and Thomas Zipp

Exhibition from 12 January until 24 February 2018

Opening Thursday 11 January, 6 – 9pm

ECCE NON

The Preamble

Everything is going to be alright. The wind is involuntary blowing the message: no worries. Yet, one day I am angry, the next even angrier. Every once in a while the wind is able to soothe my fury and in doing so, the paroxysm becomes a mere natural phenomenon. My head is in the clouds, it is not an expression but an innovation. In no time the machine will take over all aspects of our emotional life. Eventually this will herald the beginning of both my downfall and my perpetuity. Even now, I am dependent upon server and satellite, an intravenous flow of information to connect me with myself. Where lies the border between biological and artificial intelligence, between fear and hope?

At the age of eighteen, I am submitting myself to a test. I am looking for the right shapes to terminate a series of triangles and arrows. I am reasoning abstractly and answering most questions correctly. My knowledge is formulated as a number. It is seeking to explain my difficulty to relate to other people. I am proving my proof. I am no longer responsible for my being misunderstood. The next day I am taking a similar test bringing about a completely different result.

All over the world there is the popping of explosives and fireworks, of thundering gunshots and champagne corks.

F. says: every birth is at the same time a passing away. K. says: each death is simultaneously a birth. F. says: life is a knife blade, it cuts both ways. D. says: you speak in fear. Fear is a gestalt. Each millisecond a billion things are being said. (Do the maths). In the meantime I am making memories and in past time, I am suffering from all mixed feelings, crashing into me like waves. I am weathering and being weathered, my body is carving its own history in itself, the scars and wrinkles in turn, nothing but a short-lived language. Thrice a day, I am looking at my prescribed camomile solution, but I cannot abandon the eyelid inflammation, simply because it is not affecting me and gradually I found myself identifying with the pig's eye. I prefer asking myself the question: is a schizophrenic aware of the fact that his chattering is schizophrenic? A last straw.

At midnight (Central European Time) I finally become relaxed. In the mirror I re/cognize the reflection I am having a permanent affair with. We are making faces at each other and I am pushing up my nostrils with two fingers and using two others, I am pulling down the bags under my eyes. Together we practice opening lines.

“You often come here?” “No.”

“You must be tired because you have been walking around in my head the whole evening.” Or, if by chance we would ever end up in America, “You must be from Tennessee, 'cause you 's the only ten I see.”

We laugh at each other in a feigned way, because of the situation we are in. My image is objectively speaking the only subject proficient to decipher me to some extent, because by chance we generate the same thoughts. We are our circumstances. I use a shoe to shatter the mirror into pieces, because I want us to stop asking why? Why? There is a new mirror at Ikea for 26, 99 euros.

Until the moment I wake up from this fever dream, I find enough time to masturbate. Afterwards I read tabloids and above all the headings that have stars being photographed using a telephoto lens. They are provided with a caption text, next to an arrow pointed at Mariah Carey's belly, the word Christmas log cakes has been written with a red correction pen. I am, therefore I find peace in the Original Sin because it teaches me that we all fail collectively. I am human, therefore I love the star in its fall because that is where this celestial body shows its true nature. The wolf is not a sheep but doomed to ashes, burning space debris.

The stars lighten my path. The darkness is but as dark as the allegory I embrace. Among my friends, one half thinks I am exaggerating, the other half is betting on the date of the shot in the neck, inevitably following. I encourage both and in the meantime I close my eyes when the sun is shining. I enjoy seeing the red of my eyelids and allowing the heat to spread through my bodily conductor. They say I look like my mother and she no doubt is an astonishing creature, watching over me as if I were still enclosed by the slippery walls of her womb, whereof I do not remember one thing, fortunately. That must have been truly dark, I reassure myself.

Only later in life, I learn, slightly forced by a first love, how to entirely finish my plate and more specifically her father's marinated lamb. As a child, its specific sharp taste reminded me too much of animals. Whenever I think of sheep, I think of Lisa Simpson and of picturesque children's farms and not of all the intermediate steps, which I have outsourced, in order to fully enjoy the bone I am gnawing at this moment. I refuse to hunt, to trade, or to look for tracks and I buy a vacuum-packed loin at twenty euros per kilogram which I fry for five minutes on each side on a cast-iron grill pan. I am human and cannot stand blood with the exception of the invisible variant sticking on my hands.

Simple: I am standing on top of the food cycle and therefore cannot refuse to subordinate the world to my needs. With regard to my amusement, I have tamed nature, fenced in the wildest animals. I have domesticated the cutest examples and given them a cuddly name. Fluffy. Dependency is the ratio of everything to itself. Whenever I rattle the jar of cat food granules, as if they were maracas, Fluffy comes dancing along as a fool. In exchange for granules, she is rubbing against my leg, this is love, I think, and confide my deepest secrets in her. She is my rumba-purring concubine.

I betray love, how could it be otherwise, I am human and at the end of the day, I too become bored by all that I hold dear, cannot distinguish between need and longing anymore and delude myself into being bigger than the concepts, which I cannot verbalize. It is no more tragic than your average blues song on repeat, reverberating through the loudspeakers. Verbatim, a train is leaving the station and the two lights that close the last carriage, announce her farewell. The one light (blue) is fading, it is my darling, the other one (red) is my mind and it is shrinking.

Back at the table, I stop eating meat or fish, out of penance, and immediately I experience a kind of self-gratification, due to a moral superiority. The nipples of the cow, who, whether appropriate or not, gets artificially inseminated in order to get milked continuously and mechanically, swell up and are covered with ulcers. She suffers pain lifelong for the cheese I now spread thrice a day, because at age thirty I lack the maturity of a diversified diet. Shortly afterwards, I renounce all animal products and someone asks what then for god's sake I do eat, whereupon he remembers my living off attention. Oh, my friends, I say. The mirror is chuckling along with the company.

For love, cities have been razed to the ground but then again, only she can make the city rise again from her own ashes. She provides her own destiny.

The difference between a human and an animal, is the fact that only he thinks he is able to distinguish himself from the animal. Someday Mosul will blossom again, if only because the city is situated on the water's edge. In a tree I am carving initials and a heart in order to reveal that the earth is not perforce rotating around its own axis but around love. The tide turns twice a day. A wolf howls at the moon. Love is the seed of all animal life. A bee dances. A right whale sleeps while he is swimming and somewhere a woman drives her car through the orange light, because she is offered the choice whether or not to do so.

I decide to love the feather-light touches her finger leaves on my neck, the way she bites her lower lip unconsciously, her idealism being so unconditional and therefore blind and rare, and then there is also the artificial smell of her paraben and sulphate free hair care products, free from animal testing, occurring in an ecological, yet esthetical packaging. They make/she makes me horny. Even these images dissolve in transience, with which they are infused.

These are all thoughts I have before I am even born. I come into this world, screaming and as of then my very existence is going to exist as a sequence of traumatic experiences, which I process first by means of ignorance, and then by experience. And finally I will succumb to them, inevitably. This thought is not disturbing, once we take it for granted. First I see my mother and only then, my father. My screaming remains unheard. It is considered being normal. I am screaming that history repeats itself, but no one understands me. History repeats itself. History repeats itself. History repeats itself.

Frederik Willem Daem

HELMUT STALLAERTS

Helmut Stallaerts (born in 1982 in Brussels, Belgium) is a Brussels-based painter who also uses drawing, installations, film and photography as his mediums.

His practice deals with the human figure and explores the relationships between individual freedom and societal constraints, power and established systems of order. His compositions convey a strange, ambiguous and at times dark atmosphere. In the words of Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens curator Tanguy Eeckhout: "Man is undoubtedly the central motif in Helmut Stallaerts' complex and broad oeuvre. It is not man in the here and now, but alienated man, blurred and absent."

Helmut Stallaerts studied painting at the Academie de Saint Luc, Brussels and graduated in 2004 from the Dusseldorf Academy of Fine Arts, Germany. In 2013 he was a finalist of the Young Belgian Art Prize and Won the ING People's Choice Award. His work has been exhibited internationally in venues such as the CAB Art Center in Brussels, La Maison Rouge in Paris and the Ibid Projects in London.

ACHRAF TOULOUB

Achraf Touloub (born in 1986 in Casablanca, Morocco, lives and works in Paris, France) investigates the evolutions of tradition in our globalized world.

Working in a variety of mediums, he works on creating a balance point between the traditional strategies of representation and ideas he depicts and the contemporary aesthetic of his compositions. Take, for instance, his copper ink drawings. Oscillating between abstraction and figuration, they consist of repeated Sequences (2015) painstakingly traced on paper. While from afar, the undulating lines coalesce and appear as monochromatic planes of color, up close, they become legible as a multitude of calligraphic signs

Achraf Touloub graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris in 2013. Recent exhibitions include Viva Arte Viva - the 57th Venice Biennale, and a solo show at Galeria Plan B in Berlin, Germany. In 2017, Achraf Touloub was included in Artsy's list of "20 Artists to Watch at the Armory Show" and of "14 Artists You'll Be Talking about Long after the Venice Biennale".

EMMANUEL VAN DER AUWERA

Emmanuel Van Der Auwera (born in 1982 in Brussels, Belgium, lives and works in Brussels, Belgium) makes videos and installations. His conceptual projects highlight the simulation and framing of messages and explore the mechanics inherent into the production and the dissemination of images. In making the invisible visible, his works examine how our perception of reality is informed by the surrounding political, historical and scientific context.

Emmanuel Van Der Auwera studied in France at the Ecole supérieure d'Art in Clermont-Ferrand (2005-2008); at Le Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains (2008-2010) and followed a postacademic course at the Higher Institute of Fine Arts (HISK) in Ghent (2014-2015). In 2015 he exhibited his work at the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles stand at Art Brussels and in past years he had solo shows at ESA, Tourcoing (2013); La Mediatine, Brussels (2013); Iselp, Brussels (2013); Wiels, Brussels (2013); Fondation Roche, Basel (2012); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2011).

THOMAS ZIPP

Thomas Zipp (born in Heppenheim, 1966) is one of the leading German artists of his generation. His works take the form of paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings and installations.

His process is characterized by an intense engagement with various fields of knowledge, ranging from history, science and religion, to politics, art history and philosophy. Thomas Zipp explores themes relating to good and evil, truth and falsehood, god and the devil, standards and deviations, the body and the mind. Obsession and ecstasy, borderline experience, blessedness and sexuality are among other ideas he expressestackles. In doing so, he uncovers hidden connections or contradictions and integrates them in his artworks with a playful sense of humor. His shows bring together individual works linked by an overarching concept and their display in the venue completely engulfs and alters the exhibition space.

Thomas Zipp currently live and works in Berlin. He graduated from the Staedelschule, Frankfurt and the Slade School of Art, London. His work has been exhibited widely at institutions including Tate Modern London, Haus der Kunst Munich, PS1 Center for Contemporary Art New York and Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Most recently, he had exhibitions at: at Palazzo Rossini, Kai 10, Arthena Foundation, Venice Biennale Collateral events, Comparative investigation about the Disposition of the Width of a Cercle, Venice, 2013, Kunstraum Innsbruck, Austria, 2011, The World's most complete Congress of RITATIN Treatment, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, 2010, (WHITE REFORMATION CO-OP) MENS SANA IN CORPORE SANO, Sammlung Goetz, Munich, 2009, MENS AGITAT MOLEM (Luther & The Family of Pills).