

GEORG KARGL FINE ARTS

PRESS INFORMATION

Agnieszka Polska and Sam Samiee *Two-Headed Horse*

On view: October 16 – December 23, 2021
Opening: Fri, October 15, 5 – 9 pm

Two-Headed Horse by Agnieszka Polska and Sam Samiee is a show about the intricacies of the perfect perspective: moments in time, but also in being, that enable us to witness magical things. Observations of light and forms of poetry that come into being only from a certain point of view. Imagine the deliberation of a carefully crafted Persian garden through a narrow arched gateway, or a Chinese flowering almond shedding petals onto a pond.

But it is not just what we witness that alters: we, the observers, are abducted on a journey that alters both *what* we see and *how* we see. And thus we walk through this medieval treasure hunt of life: beings of darkness and light, surrounded by darkness and light, perpetually bouncing off one another in an eternal dance of constant change.

The premise is simple: our artists are on a hike in the Central European mountains when they perceive and film a two-headed horse. Like knightly heroes on a treacherous quest to this very exact moment, the exhibition traces the steps one needs to take in order to be where they are, and who they are, in order to enable this observation. Together, we embark on a rite of passage: a journey along the treacherous chasm that lies between nonsense and sense, across the roaring river of chaos into the castle's hall of knights that has us facing, finally, suspended from the wall on a dancing flag, the emblem of dignity.

We begin our journey in a cave, next to Bataille, who observes: "What these admirable frescoes proclaim with a youthful visor is not only that the man who painted them ceased being an animal by painting them but that he stopped being an animal by giving the animal, and not himself, a poetic image that seduces us and seems sovereign."^{*}

As humans, equality should not allow us to settle at the bottom of our capabilities, but rather inspire us to hone, cultivate and perfect ourselves into one who deserves all the magic there is to witness in the universe.

As we continue past the painful births of modernism and digitalisation into today's world, we begin to conceive the amniotic fluid that gave birth to Samiee and Polska: contemporary poets whose process of chewing up and spewing out the world is no longer kicked into gear by the bucolic walk in the countryside. Gone are the days of Linnaeus, Freud and Jung where it was possible to classify the world: we are now in a time of chaos, and our artists draw from the infinity of data - images, sounds, letters and words - that are thrown at us as we venture through life in the 21st century.

Both artists, each in their own way, lift this mammoth and hurl it at us, be it on a canvas or on a screen. Their works carry more than just a visual experience: Samiee's works are depictions of the mind, frames within frames. We witness more than just paint: there is dance, there are words, there are after-images that spring from a dark matter that projects them, from inside, into our mind.

Polska creates verses with her immersive visuals: landscapes of subconsciousness, laced with words, spoken and sung in an otherworldly fashion that leaves us questioning the absolute value of time. Through seemingly empty scenarios, we are transported into our pandemic-era confinement through the eyes of a couple, encapsulated in a bubble of intimacy and love, observing the world through a digital peephole. And the world stares back as it melts into pixels and re-emerges into new landscapes: "Love is a token in the data market", says the demon. An offering we must make in order to participate. It seems we have finally gazed long enough into the abyss: the abyss is gazing into us.

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And here we are, our wandering minds an archive, ever multiplying this abundance of impulses, this magnitude of nothingness. We are surrounded by a crescendo of data and information, and our overwhelmed brains cannot but see God: when confronted with a boundless phenomenon beyond comprehension, we cannot but take shelter in the concept of the divine.

And yet, in this primordial soup of everything, there is also a great deal of nothing. The image of the thing is but the absence of the thing**. We witness icons reduced to ashes, once holy words losing their spell as they flicker across a propaganda screen; works of art turn into inflation and deflation in a blatant display of the absurdity of assigning excess value to empty things.

And thus, surrounded by noise, we enter the hall of knights. "Noise is defined by scale", we respond to the demon: the spell is broken. We witness the two-headed horse, a dancing image, bathed in an angelic voice. And we are left wondering whether we found the sense in all this abundance, whether we managed to surpass the scale. Like King Arthur, we have a go at extracting Excalibur. Will we?

Shanay Hubmann

* *The Cradle of Humanity*, George Bataille, page 60, translated by Michelle Kendall and Stuart Kendall, 2005, Zone Books

** quoted from *Klossowski, peintre-exorciste*, directed by Pierre Coulibeuf, final episode, 1988