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Press Release

BENJAMIN VOLCKAERTS, ANDREY BERGER: METAMORPHOSIS
14.03 – 27.04.2024

Duo exhibition entitled “*Metamorphosis*” includes the works by *Andrey Berger* (b. 1986 in Barnaul, RU) and *Benjamin Volckaerts* (b. 1999 in Antwerp, BE) created by the artists in different mediums - sculpture, painting, drawing and installation. Two artists enter in a dialogue around the theme of the flow of permanent changes which we experience every moment. The sequence of states, the permanent transformation of every part of the reality around us, fluidity of the present is visualized by the artists through different techniques and materials – paper, plywood, painting, ceramics, plaster, metal, and wooden constructions.

The theme is disclosed through interplay of the artists’ vision and approach. Berger’s scientific research, studies of natural micro-structures are turned into sophisticated half-abstract compositions remind the reality which is hidden by the external visible shell of objects and creatures and can be discovered only with optical devices. The artist speaks about interconnection and coexistence of two parallel universes - macro and microcosm, visualized with different approximation in his works. Benjamin Volckaerts, on the contrary, is constructing his own reality, following the way of transformation from imagination and fantasy to the shapes, characters, and objects.

The distinctive feature and at the same time the way of creating the works of both authors is the change, combination and transformation of forms and materials.

Andrey Berger

Andrey Berger is an interdisciplinary multimedia artist working at the intersection of art, science and new technologies.

Through all his career Andrey Berger works in several fields of art: painting, drawing, sculpture, installation, and digital art. The artist experiments with different mediums, expressive forms, and formulas of the material he uses in his practice. His works are characterized by a dynamic graphic structure with very detailed elaboration and a multilayered technique. Graphics are the starting point of Berger's creative process and the basic for the composition of his works. Hundreds of finely traced lines form objects, shapes, landscapes, and figures existing on the border of figurative and abstraction, illusion and reality, movement and static. Sophisticated graphic compositions are characteristic of Berger, and an important part of the artist’s recognizable style. The works by Andrey Berger are characterized by their 3-dimensionality, which brings them into the space between painting, sculpture, and installation.

The artist experiences the reality by studying two different spaces: modern urban landscape and wild nature environment. In his practice he found a balance between both and creates large scale works for public spaces using his knowledge of nature's elements and principles of its' existence. His works disclose nature's elements in a different scale, he moves freely from the interpretation of biological and geological structures to the themes related to astronomy and astrophysics. In artist's compositions macro and microcosm are shown in their interconnection and coexistence.

Works from "**New Olympics**" series included in the exhibition are linked to the theory called "Punctuated Equilibria", a landmark work by paleontologists Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould published in 1972. The theory explains evolutionary changes of species. In contrast to the idea that life forms change slowly over time in response to the environment, the PE theory states that significant changes take place abruptly in rapid bursts of time.

"New Olympics" is a metaphor of cellular life in the endless process of degeneracy. Fluid rings resemble the rearticulated Olympic symbol, stating that nothing can be solid on the edge of the Metaverse.

The exhibition featured a "**Simulacrum**" series of works based on the observation of various urban surfaces. "I associate this series with my recent street practices. For the last couple of years, I have been putting up paper posters on the walls of buildings in different cities, observing how they transform and mimic the environment: natural decay, painting over, spontaneous advertisements, graffiti. Another level of transformation occurs when these images are documented and transferred into digital space. Another level of transformation occurs when these images are documented and transferred into digital space. The digital transition imposes a new layer of deformation, which is associated both with the specifics of photo equipment and with the specifics of the matrix screens of gadgets through which we view the image. I was interested in working through these phenomena visually and finding my own plastic language", - explains the artist.

In the works "**Vibrant matter #1, #2**" and "**Traffic surface**", shown at the exhibition, Andrey Berger interprets the vibration and dynamic of the space around us through a visual form characteristic of the artist and records the changes and vibrations occurring in it. In Berge's works three-dimensional illusory forms fill almost the entire space. Bright, nearly acidic colors of the background, visible through the black plastic graphic mass, create a flaming coloristic effect, shimmering from one shade to another and following the movement of the eye. In this mysterious haze, barely noticeably pulsating on the surface of the canvases, we see not the source of the fire, but its consequences, with which we relate ourselves in one way or another.

The works by Andrey Berger are in the collections:

Ruarts Foundation (RU), ArtMosSphere Foundation, Moscow (RU), A.V. Shchusev Museum of Architecture, Moscow (RU).

Andrey Berger is a founder of the FGA street art platform. As a street artist he was exhibited extensively in the USA, Germany, Denmark. The artist worked in collaboration with Puma, BMW, Absolut, Adidas, Superdry, Xiaomi, Swatch, Hugo Boss and others.

Recent solo exhibitions include among others:

Urban Art Fair, solo show, Paris (FR), 2023; *Dubai Art week*- video project at the @artinspace, Dubai (AE), 2023; “La sécurité”, *Microcredit*, Paris (FR), 2023; *Cosmoscow Art Fair*, Moscow (RU), 2023; *Cube Moscow*, Moscow (RU), 2022; *1618 space*, Saint Petersburg (RU), 2022; “*Paradise Air*”, art residency (solo show), Tokyo (JPN), 2022; *Yandex museum*, solo show, Moscow (RU), 2022.

Recent group exhibitions include among others:

“Atomic number”, group show, *Murals Inc.*, Rotterdam (NL), 2023; *Wall Works gallery*, group show, Paris (FR), 2022; “Monsters under the bed”, Saint Petersburg (RU), 2022; *Cosmoscow Art Fair*, Moscow (RU), 2022; *Ruarts Foundation*, group show, Moscow (RU), 2022; *Blazar Art Fair*, with *Triumph gallery*, Moscow (RU), 2022; *MaxArt Foundation*, Moscow (RU), 2021; *Uppa Winery*, art residency, Cremea (RU), 2021; “New Ruins”, group show, *Manege Central Exhibition Hall*, Saint-Petersburg (RU), 2021; “Osmos”, *Electromuseum*, Moscow (RU), 2021; *MaxArt Foundation*, Artist residency, Moscow (RU), 2021; “The Bridge” - public art murals for *Strelka Institute*, Dmitrov (RU), 2021; *Sort Winery* - public art mural, Krasnodar (RU), 2021.

Benjamin Volckaerts

In his creative research Benjamin Volckaerts applies different mediums and its combination developing his practice in the fields of sculpture, drawing, installation, and collage.

Having both Belgium and Korean origins, the artist brings into his creations a captivating mix of cultural heritage of European and Asian arts, moving from contemporary minimalistic shapes and materials such as plaster and polymer to the ancient technique of ceramic to create sculptures that are similar in visualization and have common roots with the objects of ancient art.

Discovering works by Benjamin Volckaerts can turn into exciting quest of decoding and following parallels in the artist’s creations with Aztec sculptures, ritual objects of Maya, Japanese ceramic from Jōmon period, ritual African Katsina terracotta sculptures and so on.

Roots and traditions of ancient art of different epochs and countries are imprinted and evoked in Volckaerts’s objects in their modern interpretation.

The artist works with different materials and its’ combinations – plaster, cement, acrylic, metal, ceramics. Working with ceramics represents an important part in his artistic practice.

“*Extending my exploration to various ceramic techniques, I got inspiration from historical practices across Europe, South America, and Asia, infusing them with my Korean heritage. By integrating the lively colors of South Korean culture with natural clay tones, I achieve captivating and harmonious contrasts*”, explains the artist.

Benjamin Volckaerts’s works form a vibrant universe of personages and objects - warriors, dragons, mythical creatures, sculptures reminiscent of ritual objects, bas-relief, and collages. They appear as the embodiment of his thoughts, the fruit of his imagination, and characters of the short stories written by the artist.

Some figures represent the human body’s proportions and realize in a minimalist shape, some are realized in ceramics remarkable by its sophisticated relief finishing and textured surface with a lot of details.

In his sculptures Benjamin Volckaerts explores the interplay between abstract and figurative visulisation, starting with collected collages and drawings to shape specific forms. Within this

creative process, he seeks fascinating harmonic contrasts, delving into aspects like form, color, material, content, and the viewer's perception.

The essential feature of Benjamin Volckaerts's works is a multiple possibility of combination of their parts which gives the artist the endless source of transformation and presentation of his works.

Heads, arms, parts of armors and ammunition can be replaced or swapped with other pieces which gives the to the work a new character, a new expression, and new meanings each time.

"The ceramic elements, though not permanently affixed, are designed for interchangeability, transforming the artwork into a dynamic 3D collage. Careful consideration of technical specifications in material selection guides the assembly and disassembly of my warrior figures, creating a unique blend of tradition and innovation", the artist says.

Benjamin Volckaerts (b. 1999) lives and works in Belgium. He graduated from Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp in 2021, in 2022 the artist obtained his Master degree and had a honorable mention in the selection for Mark Macken price.

Recent shows include among others:

Shoobi Gallery Antwerp, duo show, 2024, "Unmatched", Ballroom Gallery Brussels, 2022.