

Armand Jalut

Palagonia POV

September 3 - October 13, 2016

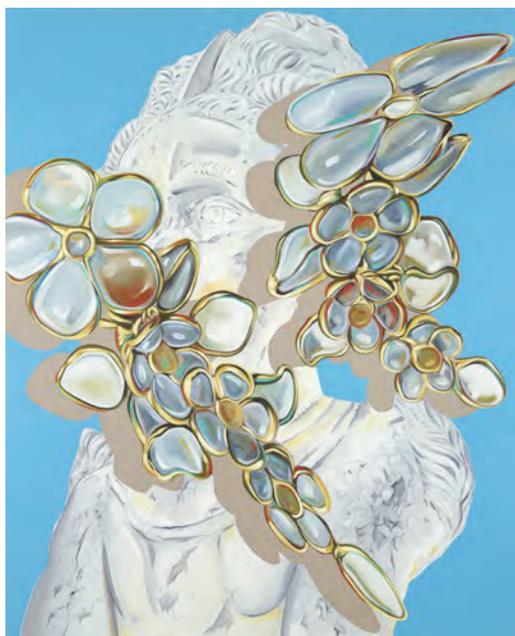
"[...] *The Prince Pallagonia gives the freest reign to his taste and passion for grotesque, monstrous forms and one does him the greatest honor by offering just a spark of imagination.*" Goethe, *Italian Journey*.

A photo taken by Henry Clarke¹ in 1967 for Vogue magazine frames the model Benedetta Barzini² in an evening dress, perched on the statues of the Villa Pallagonia (Bagheria, Sicily). Although a little uninspired, the photo is reminiscent of certain fantasy films like those of Mario Bava with the romantic charm of a decadent splendour.

This setting, which mixes a poor fantastical decor with luxurious pomp, and echoes his visit of the Villa a few months earlier, appealed to the sensitivity of Armand Jalut, who for his fourth exhibition at the gallery elaborates a new series of paintings. Around which one of those eccentric sculptures, a sort of B-series *Vénus d'Ille*³ with illusionary accents, jewellery, a Murano glass ashtray and other signs of bourgeois refinery such as a glass of liquor are convened.



Armand Jalut's studio, July 2016
ph. Michel Rein's archives ©



Armand Jalut, *Palagonia crush*, 2016
oil on canvas. 162 x 130 cm

Visiting the touristic curiosity known as the Villa Palagonia, also called Villa dei Mostri is like entering the vestiges of a Roger Corman⁴ production, a baroque version, left abandoned. It's a similar impression to the visit of film studios, where the imagination reconstitutes the possible functions of each object in the voice over, where the smallest vestige conceals an anecdote.

These props are once again raised to the status of artefacts by the artist, put to the service of almost random compositions which, beyond principals of collage and fortuitous combinations, are subjected to a range of cheap special effects (deformation, blurring, cutting out, pattern detachment), a body of gestures sending us back to a subjective point of view (POV) under the influence. By combining or isolating the patterns on the abstract backgrounds with exaggerated chromatic effects, Armand Jalut stratifies the subjects and manipulates the textures.

The elaboration of this new series is a pretext for gathering in the exhibition space the strangeness and the aesthetic values related to "antique" and "bling-bling" inspired subjects. The series finds its origin in the artist's desire to articulate sensitive connections between sophisticated, researched objects, paragons of the fashion press and the baroque exoticism of a decor which has become obsolete.

The gallery space is thus transformed into stage where the soundtrack composed by Nicolas Dubosc suggests an atmosphere, illustrates a possible scenario, fragments of a story, in which the audience and the works alternate in their roles of actor and extra.

Armand Jalut (b. 1976, lives and works in Paris) has exhibited in various museums and foundations : Les Abattoirs, Musée d'art contemporain de Toulouse (2014, solo), Rencontres d'art contemporain de Cahors (2012), Perm Contemporary Art Museum, Moscou (2012), « Dynasty », Musée d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris/Palais de Tokyo (2011), Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers (2011), Musée de L'Abbaye Sainte-Croix, Les Sables d'Olonne (2009), and Fondation Claudine et Jean-Marc Salomon (2007).

His works are in several collections : Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris / Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris / Fonds Municipal d'Art Contemporain de Paris / Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain Aquitaine / Fonds Municipal d'Art Contemporain de Gennevilliers / Musée de l'Abbaye de Sainte Croix, les Sables d'Olonne / Fondation d'entreprise Colas, Paris.

¹ Henry Clarke is an American fashion photographer, who was born in 1918 in Los Angeles and died in 1996. He was especially well known for his photographs published in different editions of Vogue magazine.

² Benedetta Barzini was a fashion icon of the 60's, Andy Warhol and Gerard Malanga's muse.

³ Short story by Prosper Mérimée

⁴ Roger Corman is an American film maker. He has directed over fifty films and produced over four hundred. The films he produces are often low budget.