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MEHR LICHT

Maria Thereza Alves, Maja Bajevic, Jordi Colomer, François Curlet, Didier Faustino, ORLAN, Bruno Peinado, Dan Perjovschi, Chéri Samba, Franck Scurti

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Mehr Licht! is the title of an artwork by Didier Faustino who has simultaneously his second solo show at the gallery. «Licht! Mehr licht!» are Goethe last words. Ambiguous words. The great man was recording the darkness around him while expressing his desire of a longer life. *Mehr Licht!* gathers artists committed to humanist values more looking to a bright future than worried about the present time.

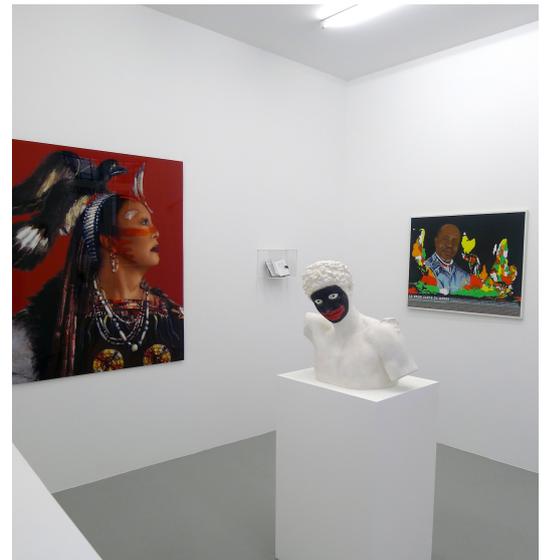
On *Mehr Licht!* (2012) **Didier Faustino** wrote these Goethe last words on a big unworking bulb Edison fixed to a human jawbone. As a bedside lamp, this artwork celebrates the discoveries of Goethe in the field of optical science and osteology, appears like a stylized skull which seems to announce the time of a strange wake. As an epiphany echoing Goethe's one, the sculpture looks like a burlesque trophy.

ORLAN's artwork, *Refiguration self-hybridation, série indienne-américaine # 17* (2005), appears as a premonition about a mutant human species issuing from an ever-growing cultural intermingling. The self-hybridizations produced since 1998 illustrate a hybridization of sexes, cultures, periods and artistic praxes, and lend her method a markedly political dimension that is feminist and open to the world. They pursue the dynamics of an approach introduced in the late 1960s involving themes focusing on the body, sacredness, femininity, beauty, and hybridization. The *self-hybridation, série indienne-américaine* were shown in 2007 in the retrospective exhibition *ORLAN: The Narrative* at the Museum of Modern Art in Saint-Etienne Métropole (curated by Lóránd Hegyi), then at the galerie Michel Rein in Paris in 2008, at the Musée du Nouveau Monde in La Rochelle in 2009, and in many international exhibitions.

Invited in international biennials and museums worldwide, **Dan Perjovschi** travels through the world with sketches books. Attentive chronicler of the history on the march, he daily creates fast and incisive drawings, full of humour they are the fruit of his observation of the place where he is mixed with the international actuality of the présent time. Globalization, global warming, religious and political extremism are his favourite targets. The drawings from these sketch books are reproduced by the artist on the walls of the museums and art centers where he is invited. The exhibited sketches book *The patch book* (2008-2009) covers the projects of the artist from October 2008 to March 2009 in Bucarest, Bristol, Constanza and Skopje, and the preparatory drawings for his exhibitions ArtFocus in Jerusalem and at the Tri Postal in Lille.

The painting of **Chéri Samba**, *La vraie carte du monde* (2013), invites us, as frequently in his work, to an irresistible self contemplation. «I do not see the evil in singing myself», the artist says. Declaration of a free artist who has always lived in this tension: to show himself and to show his art to the world. On this artwork, we can see the artist represented inside the map of the world shouting to the viewer with the title of the work *The true map of the world*. The artist explains: «Everybody wants to be in the middle of the world, but nobody is able to do it. The idea comes from the exhibition catalogue *Magiciens de la Terre* (2). When I was reading this catalogue, I noticed small maps showing that the exhibited artists country origin all were coming from the middle of the map. Europeans always believed they were on the top of the world. But it's not true. Me too, I want to be in the middle. We are definitely below but we can be in the middle.»

A play on forms and identities is at the heart of **Bruno Peinado's** work. *By all means necessary* is the title of the 2nd album of the Hip-Hop group, Boogie Down Productions (1988). This artwork is a replica of the Hermès by Praxitèle (IVth century bc). As a sanctified work the fragment is like a relic. The party holds for all. The statue is made up the way minstrels who imitated and caricatured black culture in the 19th century.



Mehr Licht
ORLAN, Dan Perovschi, Chéri Samba, Bruno Peindao.
Exhibition view

By having recourse to the artifact as much as to philosophy, **François Curlet** is developing a strategy in which free associations are transformed into allegories, and the mind is seized by surprising dialogs of forms that set the power of imagination in motion and permanently reinvent our natural and material environment. Encouraging critical thinking, his work is open to reinvention and surprise, using a vocabulary as close to joyful skepticism as it is to cynical laughter. *Eindhoven* (2013), realized for the exhibition explains the artist's relation to religion and enlightenment.

Maria Thereza Alves's work is based on an ecological line of thinking. It broaches ecosystems through the dynamism of equilibria brought about by the diversity of species. The migration of plants is connected to the history of globalization, echoing the thwarted migration of people. The plant market is one of the borderline places acting as a junction between first and third worlds. The video work *What is the Color of a German Rose?* express the paradoxes of this exploitation. In a video with mellow sounds and colours, a mixture of educational programme and commercial demonstration, a young woman shows us a succession of flowers, fruit and vegetables, while a male voice-over informs us of their place of origin. A geography of world trade is thus drawn up, based on the availability of everyday consumer goods in a European city. From the supermarket shelf to the still life buffet, we have the expression of the consumer orgy invented by capitalism, cocking a snook at the ecological side-effects of this kind of daily traffic on the world's surface.

A woman shielding her face with her hand which had a spot on it. In this day of confusion over national identity in France, **Franck Scurti**'s work, *Souad Boxes* (2011), endows this image with interesting connotations relating to burning and unveiling. The artist says: «It's a way of working that allows me to increase the symbolic layers, to develop and liberate them. In the ethnic neighborhood of Belleville in Paris I noticed boxes of henna in a shop window: Souad. Maybe it reminded me of a tragic story about the West Bank then in the press: «Souad burned alive.» So I bought three boxes, and on some of them I removed the spot from the palm of Souad's hand. Then I multiplied them, which not only creates a very Warhol-like impression. Hence an accumulation of countless boxes, with hundreds of hardly visible spots removed. By removing this ambiguous mark, I was not only unbinding the model from a cultural sign, but revealing its intriguing aspect.» (1)

The photograph of **Maja Bajevic**, *Je mange le pain des autres 2* (2006), tells about her personal story as an exiled bosnian artist in Paris. This artwork was realized during the exhibition *La Force de l'Art* at the Grand Palais in Paris (2006). «In many countries, the artist says, immigrants are referred to as those who are «eating our bread» -bread being the very symbol existence, survival even; they are taking our jobs away, marrying our boys/girls, unjustly taking our place. The main thesis is that there is not enough bread, jobs, girls/boys, places, etc.- the immigrant is taking away from us something that we are already lacking. This kind of xenophobia is widespread, especially in right-wing governments, as a justification of hatred. The performance consisted of doing literally what the expression says: eating someone else's bread. Bread made in France -French bread- but also on another level, as a reference to a work of another artist. I remade bread similar to the one Santiago Sierra used in his action *90 cm Bread Cube*. I ate it in public during the opening of the exhibition at the Grand Palais. The audience was not allowed to take my bread away from me. To my surprise, I was attacked by visitors, quite aggressively. I defended my bread with all my might, without ever looking at the audience.» (3)

L'Avenir (2011) of **Jordi Colomer** gets his inspiration from the dreams of utopical social project as the phalanstery of Charles Fourier. Fourier did not draw detailed plans for this utopian building, which was never built; in his writings, however, he planned and described it in great detail. It was intended to offer its chosen inhabitants a life and an environment painstakingly constructed on the basis of the harmony of time and space and of their characters and enthusiasms. The culmination of Fourier's thinking and his persistent dream, the Phalanstère seems, in many ways, to bring together the ideas that Colomer has been exploring since the beginning of his career. For the Catalan artist, however, this is very much about the future. These untold fictions, these ideal worlds that overcome their contradictions to kindle the conviction of the imagination, are the aesthetic sources of a political liberation yet to be achieved. They are the adventures that Colomer has always presented, whether in films, models, photographs, or installations. Grandiose fictions that reveal possibilities and that turn the most ordinary of people, whether active citizens or just spectators, into pioneers in unexplored territory. The artwork *L'Avenir* evokes the symbolic reconstruction of the phalanstery in a festive épic in the Delta of the Ebre on the south of Barcelona. This artwork underlines the confidence of the artist in the future. (4)

(1) words of the artist, extract of the catalogue *Franck Scurti: Works of chance*, Ed. Musées de Strasbourg, 2011

(2) *Magiciens de la Terre* is an exhibition showed in 1989 at the Centre Georges Pompidou and at the Grande Halle de la Villette. For the first time in French, his curator, Jean-Hubert Martin, showed some non-western artists on the international contemporary art scene.

(3) extract of the catalogue *Maja Bajevic*, Ed. Charta, 2008, p 87

(4) press release, exhibition *Jordi Colomer : L'Avenir* (2011), BOZAR EXPO, Brussels.