

Stefan Nikolaev

Rien ne va plus

September 8 - October 10, 2018

Michel Rein gallery is pleased to be holding Stefan Nikolaev's seventh solo show after *Bronze, sweat and tears* (Brussels, 2016) ; *If things are not as you wish, wish them as they are* (Paris, 2013) ; *New Works old dreams* (Paris, 2009) ; *Sickkiss* (Paris, 2006) ; *One for the money, two for the show* (Paris, 2003) ; *Under reconstruction* (Paris, 2002).

«Rien ne va plus» are the words used at the gambling table which perfectly convey the artist's dialectical idea: a lucid appraisal of the state of the (art?) world and at the same time an illustration of the moment of grace and perfect balance when nothing can be removed or added, and when each one of the people involved feels they can walk off with all the money.

A strange moment which conveys Stefan Nikolaev's interest in the relations between art and money. For the record, the title of his show at the gallery in 2013 was *One for the Money Two for the Show*.



Plus rien, 2018, copper sheet, neon, ball, boule, 60 x 162 x 25 cm

The installation of the artist's works in the gallery reminds the way gamblers playing roulette place their bets. The chips placed by the players, from the lowliest to the wealthiest, form a harmonious, coherent composition, which is being forever started all over again. Likewise, in the works on view, the forms and materials are mixed: from cast iron to bronze and gold.

In an abstract form, the circularity of the diagrams (*Testament*, 2018 and *Dreamwork*, 2017) freezes proportions about which we don't know whether they are legacy shares, economic percentages, or the shrewd dosage of a secret composition.



Testament, 2018, cast aluminium, gold leaf, 190 x 170 x 20 cm

As if only a ghost prowling about in the exhibition (fate? chance?) could whisper in the visitor's ear the irreversible sentence, phonily pessimistic in its pink hues: "No more bets". So it is on the back of a form that we must imagine that the ball is fixed, as if our future were being played out in this split second.



Business, model, sculpture, 2015, bronze with patina, 105 x 55 x 47 cm

The ghost might incidentally assume the form of the artisan caster whose modest bench which serves as his work seat becomes the sculpture itself, the unlikely and eternal bronze monument to the glory of the person we've never seen (*Business, Model, Sculpture*, 2018).

The masks inspired by the Commedia dell'arte (*Ricchi e Poveri*, 2018) are the ultimate expression of destiny, of a coin that you toss in the air and then falls back down, coming to rest like the roulette ball in the casino.



Ricchi e Poveri, 2018, cast iron, gold leaf, 50 x 40 x 15 cm

Stefan Nikolaev, born in 1970, lives and works between Paris and Sofia. He has had numerous solo exhibitions: CCA, Glasgow / Les Eglises Centre d'Art Contemporain, Chelles / CCC-OD, Tours / Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, Paris / Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin / Kunstmuseum, Thun / Gallery ATA, Sofia / ARC Projects, Sofia.

Stefan Nikolaev represented Bulgaria at the 52nd Venice Biennale (heart Vessela Nozharova). He also participated in the biennales of Lyon (heart Valérie Chatrain & Saâdane Afif); Gwangju (heart Hou Hanru & Charles Esche) and Cetinje (heart Iara Boubnova). Stefan Nikolaev is the founder of the artist-run space Glassbox which he directed until 2007.