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Marius Tanasescu

Daily Carnival

Curators: Horea Avram, Patricia Teodorescu



Marius Tanasescu's "Daily Carnival" is a provocative visual celebration—in a sarcastic key—of the organic, the repetition, the color and the body.

A "Carnival" is about masquerade, as one might expect, but here we have no masks. What suggests the masquerade, however, is (in the work "Every Day is a new Day") the artist's face photographed daily at the first moment of the day, over almost a year. The result is a large composition of more than 300 shots: "difference and repetition" at its best. The work is a resolute—if somehow absurd—exercise of self examination, a way of revis(it)ing the self-portrait genre in the age of "mechanical reproduction" (yes, the images are film-shot photography).

"Carnival" addresses also the body, in the most physical way. In the video "Me and My Arrows" the artist performs almost naked, at minus 8° C, an "iconographically correct" Saint Sebastian. The posture is known: the undressed body fastened to a tree, angelic, impassive face, towers and buildings in the back suggesting an Italian Renaissance urban vista. However, there is an ironical twist here: the body is "punished" not by arrows, but by harmless, soft paint-balls. A gesture which undermines with a single move both established Renaissance's representational clichés and Modernism's canonical "action painting". And there is also a comment on the medium itself: instead of painting, the absurd story is told via a clip-like edited digital video, with a captivating electro-acoustic sound-track (by Gilles Dumont). The work is therefore a critical reflection not on martyrdom and hagiography, but rather on the status of the image and art history in general.

Yet another (photographical) dimension of the carnivalesque enters the scene—carnival as the spectacle of the body: an almost nude female body submerged, or rather suspended in a dream-like liquid scene. This is "Mermaid", the very image of seduction and enchantment, an image of another type of reality which is otherwise suppressed during non-carnival existence.

But "carnival" is also the celebration of "*carne*", of the meat and flesh before fasting, and so is the series entitled "Interior Design": photographs of animal viscera seen in their disturbing details. While paying homage to the whole tradition of carnival, the series challenges and reinvents symbols, proposing a visual critique of the idea of consumption.

Repetition, as we see, plays a key role in Marius Tanasescu's work. But apart from the multiple self-portraits, there are other series whose visual effect is based on repetitional strategies. Many of these compositions are accumulations of things as diverse as eggs, lights, beetles, grains or fish scales, all of them decorative if not spectacular fragments of the daily world. The title of the exhibition itself comes to add further dimensions to the idea of repetition and seriality. A carnival on a daily basis...

Unlike the traditional carnival, however, Marius Tanasescu's "Daily Carnival" is not so much a farewell to the flesh but rather its celebration.

Horea Avram



- **Marius Tanasescu** (b. 1972) is a Montreal and Paris-based artist and art historian who works mainly in photography, collage and video. His work has been shown in galleries in Bucharest, Montreal, and Tucson.
- **Horea Avram** (b. 1969) is an independent art critic and curator, based in Montreal, Canada. PhD candidate (ABD) in Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. He was the curator for the Romanian participation at the 1999 edition of the Venice Biennale.
- **Patricia Teodorescu** is a Bucharest-based artist and curator. She works in various media such as photography, video, painting, sculpture and installation. She participated in group and solo exhibitions in New York, London, Berlin, Chicago, Bucharest, Vienna, Luxembourg.
- **“Arte” Gallery** is an artist-run center, coordinated by the artist Patricia Teodorescu. The gallery is equally an exhibition space, a dialogic site and a creative hub, a sort of work in progress for—and with the participation of—artists, curators, theoreticians and art-consumers in general.