

Meurtrière Bleue

Nick Archer and Yifat Bezalel
18 September - 30 October 2014

Gowen Contemporary is pleased to announce the first solo exhibition in Switzerland by Nick Archer, in duo with Yifat Bezalel. The two artists have much in common and their works are inhabited by an atmosphere somewhere between dream and reality. In different ways and with great technical virtuosity, both artists escape reality and express their inner vision. The depiction of a subject's immediate appearance amongst more or less abstract backgrounds conveys emotional or spiritual meanings and evokes a sense of alienation, solitude and a feeling of latent danger.

Nick Archer (UK, b. 1963)

With a depth of vision and a scale of multi-layered meanings Nicholas Archer's paintings possess a nocturnal, Lynchian quality that suggests a dystopian vision of the world in crisis, a journey at an end.

His images link the painting style of the early north European painters such as Bruegel and Caspar David Friedrich to more contemporary cinematographic language of recent dark fairy tales such as del Toro's *Pans Labyrinth*, Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Here menace is implicit in a seemingly enchanted and beautiful landscape.

Archer's new paintings have grown out of his interest in painting the figure. But the inanimate objects found in the new works, whether an abandoned van, graffitied caravan or cottage, possess a metaphysical quality that alludes to both a world out of kilter and a more disturbed state of being .

The poured and layering process in his paintings is crucial to his practise and has led Archer towards the moving image. He animated the process of piling up layers of transparent paint on glass to reveal those layers which would traditionally be obscured when painting on opaque canvas. This resulted in a short film entitled *Snow* and had the impact of revealing this aspect of Archers' working method.

Nick Archer lives and works in East Sussex in England. He studied at the Royal Academy Schools in London (1996-1999). He has exhibited extensively in the UK and Europe including solo exhibitions with Louise Alexander gallery, Porto Cervo, Italy, Sarah Myerscough Fine Art, London, Long and Ryle, London, and Galerie Hug, Paris. His past exhibitions include the National Portrait Gallery in London, the Wandsworth museum, London, and the Maison de la Culture in Metz, France, (2013). Archer will be featured in an upcoming exhibition at the Hastings Museum, England, which puts the focus on 6 painters who live in the south east of England who have an international profile. His work is in private, corporate and public collections around the world.

Yifat Bezalel (Israel, b. 1975)

Yifat Bezalel's work is essentially composed of pencil and ink drawings on paper or wood, installation, sculpture and video. Of a remarkable quality, Bezalel's drawings reveal a deep understanding and mastering of chiaroscuro and cross-hatching as expressive tools. The work departs from classical drawing and classical motifs, but the multiple layers of superimposed images that it comprises, engenders an abstract and complex image of nature. The disconnected and repeated images create an unreal and illegible space resulting in a sense of vertigo confounding the viewer's perception. Fragility and uncertainty are further manifested in Bezalel's manner of displaying her works, pinned simply to the wall or unravelled on the floor, whereas paper chains, stickers, silver touches seem to suggest connections between different worlds. In her work Bezalel challenges the traditional divisions between interior and exterior, before and after, strong and fragile, valuable and worthless. Beyond biographical readings, Bezalel's research engages with a deep reflection touching upon political, religious and philosophical aspects.

Children's book had a great influence in the work of Bezalel. Alice In Wonderland is a recurring theme that Bezalel has developed in a series of drawings since 2002, featuring reworkings of Tenniel's Alice, disconnected from the stories and placed in alternative landscapes. Her Interest in Alice is focused on the fall down the rabbit hole, a place of limbo where 'nothing' has an almost tangible form. Maps, especially those of unknown lands, also populate the drawings of Bezalel.

"I have often asked myself what keeps attracting me to those places of death, limboes and 'other worlds' and my tentative answer would be that I grew up and still live in a place where death is always present" (Bezalel, 2011).

More recently, with works such as *The Guardians* (2013), referring to the romantic notion of war, as so well represented in classical art, Bezalel explores the influence of post political romanticism among the younger generations.

Yifat Bezalel was born in 1975 in Tel Aviv, Israel, and studied at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem. She currently lives and works in Tel-Aviv. Bezalel has extensively exhibited in Israel and, since 2011, she received great recognition in Europe and has been included in major exhibitions such as *Alice in Wonderland* at the Tate Liverpool, travelling to the the MART Rovereto and the Kunsthalle Hamburg, as well as the VIDA Museum Borgholm, Sweden (solo), MACRO Museo di Arte Contemporanea di Roma, Rome (2013), *Personal Structures*, Palazzo Bembo Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2013). Gowen Contemporary regularly exhibited the work of the artist since 2010 (2010, 2011, 2013 and 2014).