REVIEWS

Laetitia Bénat and Pierre Bismuth, Paris

Exhibition of Laetitia Bénat, "Condensation" and Pierre Bismuth, "Almost identical, very slightly different" runs at Cosmic Galerie from September 9th to October 2nd, (opening on Saturday September 6th, 6pm to 9pm).

Pierre BISMUTH uses his artistic practice as a tool for examining our perception of reality, specially regarding our relation to cultural productions. With limited means and a lot of humour he aims at destabilising pre-established codes of perception and pushing the viewer to become critical when presented with cultural objects whose meaning seems obvious. He has it that it is by creating unexpected shifts in the everyday meaning of things that changes in perceptual habits can occur. Cosmic Galerie presents for the first time in Paris series of works based on the ideas of substitution and equivalence. For instance, In prevention of technical malfunction (unplugged Bruce NAUMAN video work) comes down to the presentation of an unplugged video of the American artist. With this piece, Pierre BISMUTH profits from these more or less short periods of time where video works are installed but not necessarily working, due to technical problems or simply when the show is closed at the end of the day. Some things less, some things more consists of three thin partitions pierced with circles until as little material as possible remains, while the circles removed from the partitions accumulate on the floor. This installation generates leftovers from production that have to be managed, whereas In prevention of technical malfunction tries to exploit them. Identical and modified and vice versa is a new piece of the Synonym series about the progressive alteration of meaning from one synonym to another. Each word from a vertical list is synonymous with the word before and the word after, but the last word of the series is eventually the contrary of the first. The same list is also displayed inverted, and so the two lists can be read both vertically and horizontally. The room is completed by two new versions of the series From red to nothing and From green to something else which are the formal development of the Synonym series. However, here the progression is visible through the different exhibitions of the artist. Each new presentation of these two works reproduces with a hardly noticeable difference the colour of the latest show, with a slight addition of white for From red to nothing and colour for From green to something else. It is only after a certain number of venues that the evolution becomes visible for those who follow the series, doomed for ending in white for From red to nothing and never ending for From green to something else.
The new series Replace by the same plays on the idea of substituting one thing by its double: on each of the pictures, produced by the artist and without thematic link between them, elements taken from duplicates are glued at the exact same place as they were on the originals.
Lastly, Foldings are also presented for the first time. They consist of origami made out of different materials (magazines, newspapers, posters, maps, etc). The origami is then showed unfolded, bearing only the trace of its folding. However, each piece keeps the name of what it was as an origami.
Five video works of Pierre BISMUTH, selected by bdv (Stéphanie MOISDON-TREMBLEY et Nicolas TREMBLEY), will be screened alternatively, one per day: La Partie I, 1999 ; Respect the Dead, 2002-2003 ; Link, 1998-2003 ; Jungle Book, 2002 ; One Man Show, 2003.

Pierre BISMUTH is born in Paris in 1963. He lives and works in London and Brussel. He has had solo shows in institutions such as at the Centre d'art contemporain in Brétigny, at the Kunsthalle in Basel, at the Witte de With Museum in Rotterdam, at the Sprengel Museum in Hanover and at the Kunsthalle in Vienna, as well as group shows at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, at the Casino Luxembourg, at Manifesta 4 in Frankfurt, at the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, at the MAMCO in Geneva, at the 49th Venice Biennale, at the Musée d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and at the Fondation Cartier in Paris, to name a few.

More particularly known for her video works and photo series, Laetitia BENAT gives away in her works fragments of her inner world, which are as many windows opened on intimate landscapes. Her series of images are like pictures from a movie pinned at the front door of a movie theatre: stories barely started from which the viewer can imagine his own movie.
For her first one person show in France and her first venue in a French gallery, Laetitia BENAT presents for the first time her works on paper, transferred on walls for the occasion. Often drawn in diaries, her drawings are her most expressive unit. Drawing somehow replaces writing, like filming and photographing replace looking. Her wall drawings are the transposition in space of these notebooks, the strolling of the visitor replacing the turning of the pages. Realized freehand, they preserve the spirit and the spontaneity of small size drawings. Sketches of flowers, animals, faces and bodies are echoing with one another; the drawings are refined, cleared and focused on a few details that make them legible. These evanescent traces of mental images act like a condensation of Laetitia BENAT's imaginative world on walls.
Mixed with a feeling of suspended time, the artist's thoughts, often close to fantasy, create in her apparently fragile universe a threatening calm. This oscillation between anxiety and serenity is particularly striking in Laetitia BENAT's video works. Five of them, selected by bdv, are screened here. In Nearby, 2000, apparently ordinary landscapes filmed in a static way, produce an uncomfortable sensation of confinement ; in Halvimar, 2002, two characters that seem to be shadows wander in a castle, subtly recalling the souvenir of the tragic end of a love story. Blood, 2002, MC/CW, 2000, and Black Sanna, 1998, will also be shown.

Laetitia BENAT is born in 1971 in Vichy, France. She lives and works in Paris. She has had shows at the Villa Arson in Nice, at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, at the Rectangle in Lyon, at the Centre national de la photographie in Paris, at the Centre régional d'art contemporain in Sète, at the Hayward Gallery in London and at Fri Art Kunsthalle in Fribourg. She is a permanent contributor to Purple, and collaborates with Claudia CARGNEL since 1995.

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