

<https://www.schinkelpavillon.de/exhibition/claude-mirrors>

CLAUDE MIRRORS

Victor Man, Jill Mulleady and Issy Wood

11. September 2019 – 15. December 2019 Opening: 11. September 18:00

Fullscreen

Curated by Agnes Gryczkowska

Suspended in a haze or isolated in darkness, headless bodies, faceless heads, gestures, objects, fetishes and stories are treasured and discarded – slowly fading into obscurity. As our lives and social interactions are mediated by digital images detached from their source, we can turn anything into mesmerising reinterpretations – slippery and ambiguous. As we become masters of, and slaves to the splintering images which constitute our lived experience, we surrender to the daily practice of myth-making. And as the world around us becomes a demonic carnival of socio-political and environmental catastrophes, of distrust and disbelief, a lot of us turn to the nightmarish and the fantastical. As if we were looking into a Claude glass – the world and us within it can be condensed into one small and dark image. We find ourselves in a murky reality that is perceived through levels of abstraction.

Claude Mirrors is a story of decapitated truths of identity, of dark and cryptic worlds and hallucinatory tableaux that Man, Mulleady and Wood pull us into. None of the three painters allow for a clear reading of their work – the powerful nature of their paintings lays within these coats of abstraction which hold up the uncertainty instead of resolving it. What is so captivating about their works is that they all privilege mood over narrative, focusing on the powerful ambience, comparable to that seen in the slow horror genre.

Severed heads and androgynous figures in Man's nocturnal paintings are full of morphing identities. His characters are caught in the zones between death and resurrection, male and female, animal and human. Does a head really offer a physical location for where our true self resides? Or is it the decapitation of our head that reveals our true selves? Or perhaps our true selves are in the projections of our heads and faces which we choose to share with the world and the latex coats and boots we stroke.

Mulleady's paintings, also bathed in a nightmarish aesthetic, are a balancing act between surreal and brutal. The world seems dilated – even the ghoulish, electric greens and reds in Mulleady's paintings somehow seem as murky as the gestures contorted. Antonin Artaud's doppelgänger which appears in one of her paintings perhaps signifies some form of a theatre of cruelty that we all deal with. Morality and prudery have oozed out, anything goes. There is ecstasy, fear, sadness and the toxic mist of absinthe.

Wood's gigantic faces of Mother, sphinxes, aliens and idols are apathetic, their eyes void. Faces, fashions and trends pop up and are shot silently, as silently as we move from one Instagram story to another. Luxuries and objects of desire she paints are surreal and seductive, but their lives short and tragic; nails are long but they can hardly hold; identities and feelings are passed on from one hand to another. The only timeless thing about them is the striking timelessness of Wood's painterly techniques in which she depicts them.

Do we take pleasure in a male, female, part object, part animal, or the signs that we send out that satisfy our selves? Our identities seem to form in the silent, shadowy corners where the representations of things and physical reality meet. Our capacity to reshape the world is decreasing, so we create our own versions of it – as if we observed it through a glass ... darkly.

Text by Agnes Gryczkowska