

Catalin Pislaru  
David & Billy  
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*David & Billy* brings together Catalin Pislaru's minimalistic approach to visual aesthetics and a tongue-in-cheek defiance towards western myths. The exhibition's title refers to two narratives that are definitive of our culture - the biblical tale of David and Goliath, and an imaginary all-American archetypal character named Billy.

Pislaru's artworks turn to ubiquitous symbolic accounts that define societal Western values. On one hand, David is admired for his courage and ability to defy the giant Goliath against all odds. His character stands for ingenuity and resolve, and especially for the beloved image of the weak overcoming the strong. On the other hand, Billy is a common name that stands as a placeholder representative of contemporary mass consumerism. Mass consumption fed by late capitalism is a criticized notion that is as emblematic of current society as the historic tale of David and Goliath. Here, Pislaru places the two characters out of context by bringing together the sacred and the corrupt. Their individual integrity begins to split at the seams as their narratives fuse into the absurd, and funny new tale of *David & Billy*.

Pislaru has taken two table tennis tables and altered their original identities by manipulating their borders with minimal, clean lines. The readymade objects are, in themselves, rare items. When Pislaru acquired the tables, he noticed a hand-drawn inscription on one of them. It reads *David*. This coincidence cements the artist's concept of identity erasure in favor of negating order and creating new symbolism overlaying an archaic one. The artist's use of graphic, free-hand lines cancels the utilitarian value of the table tennis tables, turning them into compositions reminiscent of abstract painting. The narrative of the tennis table is interrupted by the detours of Pislaru's new borders, making obsolete the original item and *David*, whilst breathing a new, aesthetic life to the objects.

His sculptures and drawings also defy order, as the artist creates phantasmagorical takes on sense and instruction. For his sculptures, the Pislaru has taken IKEA ready-to-be-made library shelves and ignored their construction manuals. Resulting in unique abstract sculptures, he rids the objects of their intended purpose. The anonymous organic forms that resemble mythological creations are anti-conformist in spirit. Here, Pislaru has altered their context, and pointed a finger at the narrative of mass-consumption - ironically, the IKEA library shelves are meant to store knowledge, which is something sacred. However, the shelves are so common that they can render the knowledge they store meaningless. The artist's act of defiance and unmaking turn the lifeless objects, and the essence of consumerism, upside down.

In the same vein of breaking down and rebuilding narratives, Pislaru has taken the library shelves' instruction manuals and created a series of five unique drawings. The drawings show a disassembled and abstracted version of the instructions, on which he superimposes commonplace symbols such as stylized hands and arrows. His choice to dismantle sense and turn to aesthetics and humor holds up his intent to break the status-quo by re-contextualizing canonical rites.

Catalin Pislaru opposes with a sense of humor, and a keen eye for aesthetics. In this exhibition, the grand narratives of Western culture, and the mythologies of David and Billy, turn into an amalgam of absurdity. The artist's intent to break apart, and reconstruct sense, gives way to novel narratives calling for a re-evaluation of the rules we have set that have defined us as a society.

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