

Artist: Leonardo Pellicanò

Exhibition title: WHIMS

Curated by: *Hôtel des Glaces*: residency program run by FRAC Bourgogne and Café des Glaces

Venue: Café des Glaces, Tonnerre, France

Date: November 5th 2022 – February 4th 2023

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Exhibition text: Bea Orlandi

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Leonardo Pellicanò, *WHIMS*, exhibition view, Café des Glaces, Tonnerre

HD_WHIMS_L.PELLICANO_HôteldesGlaces02:

Fuochini, 2022, oil on linen, 60 x 80 cm

HD_WHIMS_L.PELLICANO_HôteldesGlaces03:

Untitled, 2022, textile support, artist book, 135 x 60 cm

HD_WHIMS_L.PELLICANO_HôteldesGlaces04:

Untitled, (detail), 2022, textile support, artist book, 135 x 60 cm

HD_WHIMS_L.PELLICANO_HôteldesGlaces05:

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HD_WHIMS_L.PELLICANO_HôteldesGlaces06:

Flimsy Swirls, 2022, oil on linen, 20 x 25 cm

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Leonardo Pellicanò, *WHIMS*, exhibition view, Café des Glaces, Tonnerre

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Untitled, 2022, oil on linen, 70 x 70 cm

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Feather Jacket, 2022, oil on wood, 15 x 20 cm

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Feather Jacket, 2022, oil on wood, 15 x 20 cm

Not only did I miss my life, but I felt that, once over, it was due to me, round and elongated, just like an egg, to suggest infinity: something to hold inside my hands, all for me.

This is why I decided to dive.

I was stubborn in life, and I didn't become better once dead. I thought I might be able to catch it, or to find it grasping on the bottom, waiting for me. The fact that I failed to capture my existence when living didn't discourage me only because I was dead. I had purpose, a plan: I thought that was what differentiated me from all those whose faces I saw mirrored inside the well. Settled on the surface of things, they kept whispering old stories, as if words still mattered. Their image captured inside the viscosity of water sated them, and drinking, they forgot.

Others tried: I saw their bones, supple like ribbons, float upwards, towards the light. But I thought I was better, that I, alone, could make it. I wonder if that's why you were laughing when I dived past you, my flesh coming off in shreds, my toothless smile, because I already thought, 10 meters in, that I had won.

-They say there's a basilisk down there- you told me, holding me still for a second with your voice, within the breakneck flow of time.

I must have sounded arrogant when I told you I didn't care. I thought myths were for the living. Something that shepherded them blindly through habits, procedures, and I had already freed myself from stories, from images, from the directionality of time. I was after reality, I told you, abstracted from everything else. But no matter how stupid I sounded, you held my hand and told me, come with me.

Death was a party, and a hollow. There were dark corridors and rooms, then cavities filled with water, where rhythm slowed down. Space was closing in around us, in an embrace made of strange faces, memories, monsters, shadows. Dancing, or diving, I became lighter and lighter.

I don't know what you looked like then: you kept changing, meter after meter, like it was time and not space that we were travelling through, and as if time itself was something fickle, something that was turning and tangling up without a plan, just after its yearnings, on a whim.

Sometimes you reminded me of an animal, a bird, sometimes of a flower, an obsolete device, a sentence I once heard. At times you reminded me of a coin tossed into a well to challenge fate. Sometimes you reminded me of myself. Sometimes I got scared of you. I blinked, and where your locks had been I could see horns, then I blinked again and there where wings, chimneys, antennas, rays of light, then nothing. My fingers went through your face like it was made of water. Only your eyes remained still, and they were holes through which I could see out, removing myself from the landscape.

I must have forgotten what I was looking for. What was I looking for, indeed? Everything was all around me, all at once. If I wanted something, I only had to grasp for it. But, fearing of getting lost, I held onto you. Your hand felt smooth and lukewarm, like an egg, inside of mine.

At some point you told me: we are here. This is the end, the bottom. Where I am from. And I believed you, what else could I have done? I could almost imagine the ground under my feet, and the images that were spinning around us in our descent had solidified: decrepit buildings looked sternly at us, with their gaze long centuries.

I am going to kill him! I said, mimicking rage, even if what I felt was peace, wonder. You looked at me as if you were still falling, even if I could see you standing steady close to me. I am going to kill him! I repeated, yelling, and this time I sensed it: the rage, the fear. Because it all felt new, and still familiar, and I thought you tricked me. It wasn't the end and there was no monster: of this, I was sure.

It was me then time who dragged you around, through the city made of tombstones you called home. Where is it? Where is it? I yelled, unsure if I meant the monster, or my own existence. I was forgetting

my life the way I lived it, my family, my interests, my job, but at times I was taken by the feeling of being still alive. In those moments, I squeezed your hand harder. I could almost feel my nail going through your skin.

And then, all of a sudden, I was empty handed. The city we were buried in had crumbled, castles, fountains, churches reduced to a dust so fine I couldn't stop myself from inhaling it, even if I long since spent my last breath.

What I believed was the bottom had given out under our feet and death kept going, released from time and space, like the kind of parties you end up joining, hoping they will go by quickly, and then they never end.

Where you used to be in your mercurial, changeling forms, there was now only a purplish darkness. There was no sound, no music, only the pulsing of your blood, enveloping us as if we swam in it, but dramatically slowing down.

If there had been a basilisk, it was already gone, and there was only me, confused and lonely, continuously falling right where the monster was supposed to be.

Isn't it grotesque, I heard your voice saying all around, how one thing reminds us right away of another thing, and reality, while we are after it, we reduce it to a nothing, a thin, flimsy film we feel compelled to scratch away!

You abandon it, and still, you ask where...

Where? I said, impatient to know.

Where...

Somewhere, the sound of something breaking, or maybe a laugh, then silence.

Where are you? I say.

I stretch my hands and I have the impression of touching things that must be known, not by me, maybe known by others.

A beak, a spoon, a handle, a silver keepsake or maybe an insect that, as the air moves, flies away.

As any lover, in trying to make sense of emptiness I get lost.

But the more I search, the more you are not there.

Bea Orlandi