

Psy·che (sk)

n. Greek Mythology

A young woman who loved and was loved by Eros and was united with him after Aphrodite's jealousy was overcome. She subsequently became the personification of the soul.

Psy·che 1 (sk)

n.

1. The spirit or soul.

2. Psychiatry The mind functioning as the center of thought, emotion, and behavior and consciously or unconsciously adjusting or mediating the body's responses to the social and physical environment.

Psycho Painting is an exhibition exploring the mental processes that determine painting and artwork. It aims to be an interrogation of the subtle border between emotional and rational concepts in the manufacture of artwork.

In ancient Greece the word psyche meant or alluded to the spirit, the soul and not to the mind. It is only in the course of the past two centuries that the word psyche has become a common signifier for the rational. Whilst the mind has come to be associated with logical processes, the previous signifiers of psyche inferred emotion and spirituality; in Greek mythology Psyche was a woman and lover of Eros in their epic relationship.

Starting from these two literal definitions Psycho Painting tackles the conflict between the cerebral and emotional in the work of a group of artists. Each of the selected artists has been invited to prepare a piece that engages this tension; inevitably letting the emotional or rational part of their work become preponderant.

A portrait of Sigmund Freud by Gerhard Richter introduces the works, serving both as an homage as well as a ghostly reminder of the difficulty of defining or fully grasping our psychological nuances. Beside the portrait, which has an almost paternal presence in the gallery, John Armleder provides a playful installation of LED lights, which on the one hand defies or challenges the gravitas of its surroundings through an exploration of the notion of decor and on the other adds psychotic undertones to the portrait of Richter. In the same room David Adamo is equally charismatic in spirit. His devastated Axe sculptures present the idea of strength frustrated by neurosis. Adamo successfully guides us towards considering the more menacing aspects of the subconscious whilst being in strong dialogue with the sincere but vivacious installation by Armleder.

The artists invited fulfill the concept of Psycho Painting wholeheartedly, by accepting and celebrating the harmony within our dual understanding of 'psyche'. We understand the specific gestures of constructed and studied processes as representative of the artists' rationale, meanwhile the outcome deals with something more emotive, far from logical. Each artist relies fundamentally on studied procedure, and what is interesting is the point of departure from these rehearsed processes to the resulting potent emotional expression. From the sombre moodiness of Lesley Vance to the hysteria of Kaari Upson, the violent collisions that make Brendan Fowler's work, the emotional relationship between Xylor Jane and numbers, the irrational investigations into magic of Kerstin Bratsch and the elegant paintings of Jacob Kassay that create a sensation of detachment; the exploration undertaken by each creates a powerful dynamic within the gallery.

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