

SOMEDAY

Aline Bouvy: Servant, clown or enemy
April 5 - May 11, 2024

In January, a New York-based writer¹ follow on Instagram posted a photo of a book page with this sentence: "Whatever his quality, his stature, his finesse, his creative capacity, his success, the poet can only be to the bourgeoisie: SERVANT, CLOWN or ENEMY."²

When I visited Lisette's studio in Dordrecht, the Netherlands a few days later for a 3D body scanning session, I thought very hard about these three words. They echoed through my mind as her portable Artec Eva scanner snaked around each crevice of my naked body - under my armpits, across my chest, and between my thighs. During the session, I felt sorry to have to confront her with this spectacle. I was overcome with embarrassment when I had to check the result of each scan on her computer screen, and my feelings of vulnerability and ridicule increased as we went through the various poses. What the fuck had I been thinking?

I was going to have these scans milled in PU foam, at 63% of my actual height. I wanted the scale to be that of a child, but with the characteristics of a pre-menopausal woman's body. Strangely enough, when I discovered the first milled copy of this little figure, much of my embarrassment disappeared. The pause seemed to me as a borrowed superego, not at all merciful, inhabited by an irreverence close to that of my dogs. If these figures look like they came out of a circus ring, I can assure you I am not the gentle clown. I just refrain from biting because if I do, I'll lose my job, that's all.

Someday is happy to announce "Servant, clown or enemy," an exhibition of new work by Aline Bouvy. Bouvy's multidisciplinary practice explores the relationship between personal desire and social norms. Her work often embraces the ugly, unseemly, embarrassing, and deviant to challenge Western moral and aesthetic conventions. For the show, Bouvy expands upon these themes and her ongoing fascination with puppets and dolls, object theater, and "Kleinkunst."

The exhibition opens with a small passage - a deliberate distortion of the gallery's entrance, now reduced to childlike proportions. This architectural intervention introduces a play with the scale that defines the rest of the exhibit, transforming the gallery into a sculptural space that viewers can physically inhabit. Concurrently, the entrance segues into broader themes of public space and design to underscore how built environments influence our emotional experience of safety or danger, inclusion or exclusion, comfort or claustrophobia.

Inside the gallery sits a frozen foam-milled figure. Interested in the use of her own body as both a tool and a medium, Bouvy produced the sculpture from 3D scans of herself, naked in grotesque poses. The figure is smaller than life-size, resulting in a visual dissonance. The postures were inspired by Roque Dalton's writing on creative exploitation and class struggle. Embracing Dalton's classification of the poet, i.e. the artist, as "servant, clown or enemy," in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, Bouvy reclaims a sense of agency - transforming intended degradation into empowerment. The figure is surrounded by scattered pills, tokens, wafers, and bric-and-brac, rendered at an equally uncanny scale. Cast in Jesmonite and devoid of

¹ Stephanie LaCava

² Roque Dalton in "Stories and Poems from a Class Struggle"

SOMEDAY

pigment, these trinkets litter the gallery floor like the ghostly rinds of discarded memories - alabaster relics stripped of their former functionality. The deliberate use of the color white serves to expose its pseudo-“neutrality.” Expanding on this theme, a magnified burger mounted on the wall angles the history of the first American fast-food joints such as White Castle and White Towers. Both chains exploited the multifaceted connotations of the word white and fantasized on the idea of the medieval European fortress - architecturally and ideologically. In the center of the burger, a miniature carved diorama contrasts the detailing of a gothic-style chapel with that of an abandoned theater or convention center - the Colosseums of the 21st century, where agents, salesmen, jesters, politicians, and influences alike can peddle their respective narratives.

Together, the works reflect on the commodified spectacle of modern life. Bouvy fuses research into the exuberant architecture of world exhibitions, the development of fun fairs and theme parks, and the invention of the “white cube.” By subverting social expectations and embracing the role of the artist as servant, clown, and enemy, Bouvy illustrates the liberating potential of irreverence, naïveté, transgression, insubordination, and mischief.

Aline Bouvy (b. 1974, Brussels) lives and works between Brussels and Luxembourg. She studied visual arts at the ERG (Graphic Research School) in Brussels from 1995 to 1999 before joining the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht (Netherlands). Between 2000 and 2013, the artist worked in collaboration with John Gillis and also cofounded the feminist collective The After Lucy Experiment with Claudia Radulescu, Delphine Deguislage, Charlotte Beaudry, Céline Gillain, and Aurélie Gravas (from 2010 to 2015). Since 2013, her work has been shown in numerous galleries and institutions such as Triangle-Astérides, Marseille, FR; Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, D; Albert Baronian, Brussels, BE; Public, London, UK; Exo Exo gallery, Paris, FR, and Motel, New York, among others. In 2022, her work was the subject of a survey exhibition “Cruising Bye,” at the MAC’s – Museum of Contemporary Arts in Hornu, Belgium. An exhibition catalogue was published on the occasion.