

LUZ

Matei Dumitriu

Opening Thursday, June 20th

20.06 - 27.07.2024

For his second solo exhibition with Suprainfinit Gallery, Matei Dumitriu further expands the medium of painting through a new series of lightboxes, alternating them amongst canvases which jump in and out of reality. Feeding each other from internet-based visual information, the constellation of artworks transforms the gallery space into fragments of meta images whereby non-human elements possess agency and activity. By harnessing the online meme culture towards a heterotopia realm, Matei widens the boundaries between the virtual and the real, the uncanny and the familiar, the accident and the poetic, that have come to define the contemporary mindset.

In Spanish, '*Luz*' means light, and Matei's type of light is screen light. RGB colours overflow inside his paintings and lightboxes while simultaneously glowing on the visitors' phones. *My dear lamp* conjures a futurist aesthetic that shines out its RGB colours as a tentacular body, seeking to beam through unimaginable cracks.

Nowadays, online images and visual (mis)representations of things are supernaturally present, revealing reality as meaningless, as production of non-sense and abstract ideas, a phenomena that deeply interests the artist. Matei possesses a large archive of abstract images found on the internet, a growing archive with dissonant, often poor-quality imagery that he recomposes in different contexts and artworks. The spoken slang is now transformed into visual slang, as language and images complement each other in an everydayness that hovers over a form of abstract humour. Whereas Matei calls it zombie scrolling, the moving image artist and essayist Hito Steyerl says "cell phones are zombie cameras, cameras that failed dying" [1]. As such, the ongoing, 24/7 circulation of images, anonymous images, borderless images have long permeated the artist's practice.

Do not dare a logical understanding of Matei's works in *Luz*. Perceive the show as a non-narrative storyboard. Cropped out fragments that trigger you. Plunge inside the images you see even if you do not fully get them. Allow them to affect you—they will find you, anyway.

Music, always stems from a mix of two found captions: *WHY* and *I always music*, the latter a typo from *I always love music*. Reflecting on ideas of validation and value systems in the art world, and questioning the "why" which is always asked to artists as a justification question, Matei turned this eternal question into a riddling music score that visually resembles a scattered embroidery. Severing the gallery space, this sense of ambiguity is also continued in *4up*, an image of a guy showing four fingers as a signifier of a gang sign, a secret online signal within gay communities, or simply a gesture of outspoken questioning. Hung up as a watching eye, *Foton virus* dissects the image of a virus close-up while the shimmering capsule transforms it into a hypnotic aura.

The three paintings *The bluest light*, *Lain* and *Edy punctuation* are conceived as a digital carousel that emulates the aspect of Instagram images and generates a tension between the materiality of oil paint and the artificiality of digital images. *Lain* is inspired by an early 2000s anime series and depicts one of the main characters with the caption *I understand*. The work juxtaposes the idea of the internet as a disturbingly vast medium over the cyberpunk-infused image of this sentient character, Lain. *Edy punctuation*'s three emojis scream away their digital anxiety whilst the background is being erased during their evasion.

By exiting the exhibition, a narrow perspective of an empty, distant road selected from an old Czech animation radiates a feeling of voyeurism. Just as there are no borders for the circulation of online images, neither are there for our gazes. Examining contemporary definitions of image production and circulation, Matei's presentation invites us to navigate an environment that interrogates accessibility and inclusion, while musing on ideas of value and spectatorship.

[1] Hito Steyerl, *Duty Free Art*, 2017, Verso: London, p. 63.