

Métal
Anna Rettl, Davide Hort Di Fabio

25.10.2024 - 07.12.2024

Matteo Cantarella is pleased to present *Métal*, a two person show featuring works by Austrian artist Anna Rettl and Italian artist Davide Hjord Di Fabio. Stemming from conversations around the idea infrastructure, in its literal, semiotical and existential connotations, the exhibition debuts new paintings by Rettl and a new body of sculptural works by Hjord.

Rettl is largely interested in the cyclical nature of representation and how, through the evolution and consumption of imagery, it continues to reveal human self-perception. Like a screen for meaning-making, for Rettl images stem from a strenuous sense of anxiety and alienation that trail the human experience. Engaging in an anatomical dissection of codes and techniques, she bases her compositions on a repertoire of images borrowed from varying periods and practices. The paintings in the exhibition, in fact, carry references of Hans Bellmer's surrealist puppets, Camille Claudel's emotive forms and André Kertész's distorted nudes - manipulated bodies, unnatural silhouettes with exaggerated or missing limbs.

Rettl paints with watercolours, a technique which contributes to the way her figures appear: curved, stylised shapes, and transcending bodies alighting on an swell of abstract and figurative backdrops. Stripping the figures from all peculiarities and distinguishing traits, Rettl points out at how myths, personal experience, fiction, and cultural symbols reference narratives that have been told from time immemorial. Challenging the historicity of the medium, and the presumption of time's linearity, the works become screen of an enclose which is simultaneously isolated from and yet inseparably connected to its exterior world. Although the figures seem to be caught in a moment of blind action without awareness of the world around them or history that animates them, their gestures, language and bodies are perceptively familiar to us. In this constant exchange between the individual and our collective history, the works ask us to rethink this distance - where in history are we - the viewers?

Speaking to subjective perceptual experience, Hjord's works deal with queerness and how bodies negotiate, resist, and transform the structures that confine them. The choice of aluminium and plexiglas speaks to a specific relationship between the human body and the hidden infrastructures that sustain modern life. These materials, used in the inner frameworks of buildings, mirror the body's role as an infrastructure that supports, circulates, and eventually breaks down. Like buildings, bodies are subordinated by innovation, require renewal and repair, and are prone to decay. The sculptures, hung at various heights, suggest that these forms are not static. They protrude from the walls as if liquified, emerging from within the structures of the space itself - symbolic of how bodies underpin and shape the environments we inhabit.

This exploration of the body's infrastructural role resonates with broader socio-political themes. For Hjord, bodies are not merely physical systems but also integral to a network of social reproduction, sustaining communal life. While the sculptures reflect the labor that bodies perform in both tangible and relational ways, the works also resist reducing them to a mere apparatus, emphasising their singularity and defiance, the grit and the imprecisions and elusive nature that make the self conceivable outside an englobing machinistic entity.

Anna Rettl (b. 1992, Austria) is an Austrian artist living and working in Copenhagen, Denmark. Rettl graduated with an MFA from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (2021), studied at the Maumas Independent Study Programme (Lisbon, PT) as well as at Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien, under professors Daniel Richter and Francis Ruyter (2014). Her work has been exhibited at Overgaden (Copenhagen, DK), Kunsthall Charlottenborg (Copenhagen, DK), Tørreløft (Copenhagen, DK) and Arcway (Copenhagen, DK) with Clara Busch, among others.

Davide Hjord Di Fabio (b. 1990, Italy) is an Italian artist working with sculpture, video and installation. He lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark. Hjord holds an MFA from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (2024) and he is the 2023 recipient of the Anne Marie Carl Nielsen talent award for sculptors. His work has been exhibited at Kunsthall Charlottenborg (Copenhagen, DK) The Italian Cultural Institute (Copenhagen, DK), MASSIMO (Milan, Italy), Vejen Kunstmuseum (Vejen, DK), Kunsthall Rønnebæksholm (Næstved, DK) and at Den Frie Udstillingsbygning (Copenhagen, DK), among others.