

Giulia Essyad
A Selene Blues

11.12.2020 - 21.02.2021

In a future in which men no longer exist, characters of the feminine sex have created an artificially intelligent device that they use for entertainment, for conserving memories and for creating emotional relationships. They also depend on it to reproduce. This technology takes the form of a childish blue doll, the Bluebot, suggestive both of a retrogressive toy and a cyber-feminist avatar.

Fri Art welcomes the New Heads 2020 prize, awarded each year to an artist graduating from HEAD – Genève, Haute école d'art et de design. For *A Selene Blues*, her first individual exhibition in an institution, Giulia Essyad has transformed the first floor of the Kunsthalle into an immersive environment given over to the universe of a heroic fantasy saga of which she is both the author and one of the characters.

The first room recreates the hall area of a multiplex cinema. We aren't sure if it's still open or has been abandoned. Giant advertising hoardings display images of the heroines of a fantasy film about to be released. The key moments of a still-to-be-discovered adventure play out in front of us. This intermediary space, a space pregnant with the promise of screenings, now appears to us in an out-of-time solitude, as if in a dream.

Hidden behind a curtain, the second room is given over to the Bluebot doll, presented behind glass at the various stages of its fabrication. Both archaeological staging and homage to its inventor, creation and reconstitution, the successive stages of the assembly process evoke an automaton to which life is given, the process recalling the magical naturalism of cinema and cinematic technique: disassembling and reassembling pieces, time. A disquieting strangeness emanates from the doll, which has been given this breath of artificial life: the breath of its creator, or of our imaginations? Phony wreckage of the Bluebot, redolent of a decaying romanticism, towers over the display in the most symbolic occurrence of a rediscovered, exhibited future.

In the last room, an obsolete museum device invokes codes designed for lost civilisations, retrieved from fan museums or a hard-rock café. Glass showcases and monumental frames present artefacts from film sets, in a sort of making-of: character costumes and fetichised gadgets evoking a cult of nature, menstrual cycles have been sealed up, offered to a historical assignatory gaze.

Still in the same room, two screens invite us to read a diary and letters written by the main character in the fiction: Naria. As the images pass in front of our eyes, the text and the soundtrack are reminiscent of early video games. The introspective account uses a narrative technique that brings us closer to the character and her feelings: confession. The inclusive scenography uses a deliberately didactic presentation style. The black digital screen takes on the form of an archaic cinema that the imagination of each spectator fills with their own images.

A Selene Blues installs an atmosphere. Its distant fiction is part of a variety of cultural devices which assign beliefs and emotional relationships to time. At the première of a film that will never be held, in a run-down museum that is part of a story taking place in the future, what exactly are we witnessing? The doll symbol comes to summarise the desire for consumption. Its artificiality is ambiguous: with utopia comes the shop.

Giulia Essyad, born in 1992, is an artist, poet and performer. She has published several collections of poetry, including "Birthday" (Oraibi/Beckbooks) and "Poetry Archive" (Quark). She has exhibited at Cherish in 2020 and organized the exhibition Immortality at Forde, Geneva (2014), a presentation focussing on poetry with Loren Kagny and Viktor Tibay. In 2019, she opens "Touching myself", a ceramic workshop centered on the body.

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List of works

1st room

Cardboard standees, t-shirts, custom packaging, popcorn, stanchions with retractable belt, lights, carpet, popcorn scented air freshener

2nd room

BLUEBOT STUDIES

3D printed doll parts, glass and plastic eyes, elastic thread, print in Plexiglas display

MONUMENT

Inflatable statue

3rd room

MOONSTRUAL VESSEL

Blown Pyrex glass, created in collaboration with Claude Merkli

GOURD

Ceramic vessel with fur handle, created by Loren Kagny

BLUEBOT

3D print, glass eyes, blue tack, elastic string, created by Giulia Essyad

NARIA'S NOTEBOOK

2 letters and 3 fragments from Naria's notebook, written by Giulia Essyad. First published with Project Miranda in Vagabondi Efficaci, ed. Costanza Candeloro, 2019. 2-channel video display

BLUEBOT O.S.

9 original tracks composed by Giulia Essyad

COSTUMES

Naria costume created by Loren Kagny for Giulia Essyad

Linen, red denim, polaroids, frame

Loren costume, created by Loren Kagny for herself
Silk organza, glass vials, pigment, polaroids, frame

Gaïa costume created by Loren Kagny for Gaïa Lamarre

Torn silk, elastic thread, vegan leather, plastic pearls, polaroids, frame

Ser costume created by Loren Kagny for Ser Serpas
Silver leather, fur, faux brass plaque, polaroids, frame

Naria's Notebook:



The exhibition is curated by Marie Gyger and Nicolas Brulhart.

Credit and thanks

Bluebot Team

Giulia Essyad, Gaïa Lamarre, Loren Kagny, Ser Serpas

Director of Photography: Gaïa Lamarre

Costumes: Loren Kagny

First Assistant: Louise Bonpaix

Second Assistant: Viktor Tibay

Makeup: Pauline Coquart

Photography assistant: Norida Ho

Driver: Matthieu La-Brossard

Thanks

Anouk, Khalid et Manuela, H el ene Mateev, Claude Merkli, Nelson Schaub, Wamya Tembo, Greta Gratos, Pierre Berset, Bernhard Zitz, Fabian St ucheli, St ephane Weber, Aruna Canevascini

Additional thanks

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Cjlogistique

— HEAD
Gen ve

The exhibition of Giulia Essyad, winner New Heads 2020, is organized together with HEAD, Geneva.

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