

Chert is pleased to present the second solo show of Kosovar artist Petrit Halilaj at the gallery. The title of the exhibition, “of course blue affects my way of shitting,” is taken from a text written by the artist, which is itself part of a bigger series of prose and poetry that Halilaj started writing in 2007. Many of the artist’s titles for previous exhibitions and artworks have come from these texts, which have never been presented in their entirety until now. The exhibition is accompanied by a new publication which collects the artist’s writing alongside his most recent series of drawings “Several birds fly away when they understand it.” Both the texts and drawings link together history and fantasy, reality and absurdity; a dichotomy at the core of the artist’s practice.

The texts reveal an intimate and personal history. As a collection they provide a unique insight into the artist’s brain, recounting memories of childhood, war, exodus, family, work, and contemplating his own identity, his sexuality, love, affections and emotions. Halilaj’s resolutely personal works simultaneously reflect on social and political events, understanding the struggle and impact they have on a singular life. But it is this intimacy within Halilaj’s practice that this exhibition at Chert focuses on; celebrating the more delicate and less evident side of the artist’s production.

The drawings from the series “Several birds fly away when they understand it” comprise images of the bird archive from the former Natural History Museum of Kosovo (whose story was the subject of his latest solo exhibition “Poisoned by men in need of some love” at WIELS Contemporary Art Center in Brussels); these birds have been modified by the artist, and painted with beautiful and exotic masks. Birds were also the subject of Halilaj’s installation presented at the 2013 Venice Biennale for the Kosovo Pavillion. “I’m hungry to keep you close. I want to find the words to resist but in the end there is a locked sphere. The funny thing is that you’re not here, nothing is,” filled the space with a huge nest, inside of which, a semi-hidden white room was home to two canaries, alter egos of the artist and his lover.

Together with the drawings in the downstairs of the gallery is “Cleopatra,” a rotating bulb which imitates the movement of insects at night, attracted to the light. This piece is also connected to the story of the defunct Museum of Pristhina, and especially to its collection of butterflies and insects. The lamp throws light on the drawings in the lower space of the gallery, which are lit only from the effect random movements.

On the upper floor you find a large rug, made by the artist’s mother in Kosovo. The rug would be plain, were it not for some chicken feet — as if a hen has just passed by. In the past, hens have been a predominant subject in Halilaj’s work: from the series of drawings “Bourgeois Hens,” to the sculptures “They are Lucky to be Bourgeois Hens,” and living hens have been present in his shows

at Stacion, Prishtina; at the 2010 Berlin Biennale; and then again at the Rome Auditorium in 2011, as part of “Temporaneo,” organised by Nomas Foundation; and before that, in a group exhibition in Istanbul.

Finally, a collection of videos and documentation provide further background into the artist’s different projects, giving a more total and intimate view of his artistic language.

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