

## *Pretty People*

Virginia Ariu is presenting a series of collages that serve as the corner stone of her work. Ariu's practice is an ongoing exploration of reconstruction through collecting, rewriting, stretching and rearranging objects and concepts. Snippets of adds, both image and text, come together in juxtaposition while retaining their magazine-like character. In an alternate reality, the collages are pages in magazines for the rich and beautiful which, casually placed on coffee tables, might serve as idantarian attributes. Once opened, they unleash desires, the fulfillment of which remains ever more uncertain. Light penetrates the opaque walls of sleek architecture, shiny surfaces, metallic and cold, glass ceilings to reaffirm allusions to transparency. If only it wouldn't be for those same faces creeping into our field of vision, as reflections, as ghostly reminders of their immanent powers. The bodies depicted in Ariu's collages seem to be emptied, mere platitudes. Much like the catchy magazine headers, they embody absent presence. Or present absence.

Sveta Mordovskaya's works "Untitled" and "Lottiiee V", too, tie in with said tension, even though Mordovskaya alludes to the body in ways entirely different. Bodies seem to ooze from the corporeal assemblages. Even if bodies are present only in absence, one might feel their weight pressing down on us. They manifest in accumulated layers of debris – uncanny sculptural forms emerge from assembled materials picked up in the street, online purchases (wrapping papers, foils, cleaning tools, fabrics) and artists' materials such as ceramics and papier-mâché. The fragmented forms resist order, their contours buckle under excess echoing the fetishistic pull of the body in pieces – detached, desired, yet drained of its vitality. Within the remnants of commodity production Mordovskaya excavates a set of material realities, asking how far parts of ourselves might latch on to them, making the vague objects of desire alien to themselves just as much as making the self alien to itself. Commodity fetishism seems to linger in Mordovskaya's works where consumption doesn't just obscure the origins of objects but fractures their coherence entirely. What is consumed turns to debris, and what is discarded returns to haunt us.

With Peter Wächtler's 12-minute-long video work "Untitled (Vampire)" we are introduced to a creature – haunting just as much as being haunted – existing in a state of suspended alienation. A solipsistic vampire lives secluded within the dusty confines of a castle high in the mountains, outside the bounds of human society. A distant gaze on the subject vampire portrays him as he keeps on living within the mental loops of his mundane routines. All communication muted, an inescapable distance persists behind the Styrofoam walls further isolating the protagonist within an inward negation about questions of self-identification and how to fit a warming blanket with a tacky leopard-guardian into your self-representation – questions that feel existential down to their bones. All the while, the story of anyone who tries to find shelter within the small comforts of short-lasting consumptive desires seems all too familiar. If capitalism haunts us, creating inescapable conditions similar to being prey to vampires, the lonely creature in Wächtler's work digests itself just as much as it perpetuates its existence.

Curated by Antonia Rebekka Truninger

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