

**Exhibition Title:** Sleeping Muse After Several Snoozes

**Artist:** Botond Keresztesi

**Curator:** Péter Bencze, Ian Donghui Lyu

**Venue:** X Museum, Beijing

**Duration:** 28 February – 11 May 2025

**Tags:** @keresztesibotond @longtermhandstand @everybodyneedsart

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**Text:** Péter Bencze

### **Sleeping Muse After Several Snoozes**

X Museum is proud to present *Sleeping Muse After Several Snoozes*, the largest survey exhibition to date by Romanian-born Hungarian artist Botond Keresztesi and his first institutional solo show in China. Featuring sixteen works spanning the last decade, this exhibition showcases Keresztesi's distinct visionary aesthetic, shaped through his unique "mental-photoshop" lens. Blending art historical references with contemporary digital culture, his ever-evolving image-making practice transports viewers into a speculative future deeply rooted in reflections on the present.

### **Gallery 5: Visual Histories and Post-Human Aesthetics**

Among the exhibition's most emblematic works is *Danse Macabre*, a dystopian reimagining of Henri Matisse's *Dance* and Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors*. Originally conceived for the RGB (Roman, Gothic, Baroque) exhibition, its Teletubby-inspired red, green, and blue figures reveal an inescapable truth: the inevitability of mortality, visible through the screens embedded in their bellies.

One of Keresztesi's most recent paintings, *Elysium*, draws from the elegant form of greyhounds and the artist's bond with his own dog. The composition merges medieval tapestry-like aesthetics with Art Nouveau floral motifs, paying homage to *Danse Macabre* while evoking the sculptural beauty of marble statues.

The artist's exploration of post-human aesthetics emerges in *Speed of Life*, which introduces the symbolic praying mantis as a recurring motif. The work envisions an ever-closer synthesis between nature, technology, and humanity, questioning whether organic life might ultimately be replaced by cyborg entities. The mantis—reminiscent of Sumerian-Aztec hybrid creatures—moves with an uncanny surrealist grace, blurring the line between the living and the artificial.

A pivotal piece in this gallery reflects Keresztesi's fusion of classical objectmaking and contemporary commercial design. A first-generation PlayStation appears deified, acting as an altar for Constantin Brancusi's *Sleeping Muse*. Floating clouds reference both Hieronymus Bosch's monstrous dreamscapes and Google's earliest AI experiments, forming a visual intertext that reinterprets the aesthetics of the post-internet era.

### **Exhibition Terrace 2: Symbols and Paradoxes**

*Stoner Elf* incorporates the visual language of Apple's early emoji sets, exploring cosmic dualities through the contrast of a full yellow moon and a dark new moon. These elements echo the balance represented in an earring piercing, with cigarette holders inserted into the lobe—an everyday act transformed into a reflection on opposition and complementarity.

The *Solarium* series is represented by *When Your Winchester Flies...*, which humorously portrays ancient sculptures attempting to tan under artificial light. Their pigment-less marble bodies will never change, highlighting the irreversibility of time. A hovering drone, carrying a Winchester rifle, symbolizes the paradox of knowledge transfer and cultural continuity amidst inevitable decay.

A second mantis-themed masterpiece, *The King of Time*, continues Keresztesi's meditation on temporal cycles and transformation.

### **Exhibition Terrace 3: Cyclical Narratives and Digital Mythologies**

*In Enter the Void*, a humanoid test dummy endlessly walks on a circular treadmill—a metaphor for the inescapable loop of technological and existential repetition. A similar cyclical motion appears in *Smoking Break*, where breath, fire, and smoke interconnect in a system echoing both Piet Mondrian's compositions and the fluidity of Brancusi's sculptural forms.

The nostalgia of 1990s rave culture emerges in *Forever Young*, a reinterpretation of *Fantazia* flyers with a metaphysical twist. Here, the planetary motifs and grid structures take on new meaning in an era of digital realities, augmented experiences, and robotic-human hybridity. The painting's central head peels back layers of flesh, revealing an underlying mechanized structure, mirroring the era's shifting understanding of embodiment.

*In Tears of Joy*, a knight encloses a princess within his armor, her tearful gaze peering through the helmet's mouthpiece. The image plays with the traditional motif of a princess locked in a tower, while its background—a metro wall in Prague's Peace Square—grounds the scene in an urban contemporary setting, layering history and modernity.

### **Gallery 6: Deities, Automobiles, and Eternal Recurrence**

*Annunciation* stages an extraordinary celestial encounter between the late rapper Tupac and a praying mantis, casting them as divine figures in a cosmic tableau. A

face formed from swirling clouds gazes outward, blurring distinctions between earthly and galactic realms.

The psychedelic, Art Nouveau-infused *Lost Highway* presents a vehicle that appears to stare directly at its driver. Its organic, fluid lines merge futuristic car design with timeless artistic traditions. A turquoise mineral—a symbol of wisdom—anchors the composition, reinforcing a theme of intelligence and foresight.

*Melancholy* takes a mechanized turn in *Melancholy*, where the traditional portrait of a dignitary with a loyal hound is subverted. Here, the cyborg dog, rather than the human, assumes central importance. Brancusi-inspired sculptures stand resilient in the post-apocalyptic setting, implying that in the wake of destruction, it is machine and material—not humanity—that endure.

Finally, *Following the Golden Snake* revisits René Magritte's *The Blank Signature*, replacing the horseback rider with a surreal hybrid—a robotic horse entwined with a snake. The viewer's perception is challenged as reality and illusion intertwine, calling into question the reliability of sight and memory. The Brancusi mask embedded within the composition alludes to art's cyclical resurgence, while the snake—a reference to the Year of the Snake—symbolizes renewal and continuity.

## **Summary**

With *Sleeping Muse After Several Snoozes*, Keresztesi crafts a dreamlike yet incisive reflection on the digital age, weaving together elements of classical art, contemporary pop culture, and speculative futurism. Through these sixteen works, he constructs a vivid universe where historical echoes, technological anxieties, and surrealist humor converge. As we navigate this exhibition, we are invited to ponder not only the future Keresztesi envisions but also the rapidly shifting realities we already inhabit.

Written by Péter Bencze