

VNH Gallery is delighted to announce the solo exhibition by the Franco-Romanian artist Mircea Cantor (born in 1977) entitled “*HISTORY IS JUST A BULLET ON YOUR TIMELINE*“. This is his first solo exhibition in Paris since the one organized at Centre Pompidou in 2012 following the artist receiving the Marcel Duchamp prize in 2011.

An acute visitor will notice that the coloured arc on the exterior façade of the gallery – entitled “Double rainbow” –, which marks the beginning of the exhibition doesn’t assume the Parnassian dimension that it would seem to incarnate. Indeed, we are first challenged by the barbed wire pattern that forms these chromatic arcs. Then, an addition of interrogations linked to the notion of identity burst in while the visitor realizes that these iron brambles are painted from the tip of the artist’s fingers as he meticulously affixed his fingerprints next to each other. If the mathematical sense of identity is defined by two confounded elements that nothing can dissociate, contemporary societies more often prefer the antonymic definition referring to what differentiates and separates us from each other. These are the same societies in which each fingerprint ends up opening this or that access, this or that door but can also be used to identify a Human being and define his freedom and even sometimes his destiny. If the rainbow metaphorically expresses for some the symbol of the alliance between God and men, the artist’s interpretation seems to underline the profound antagonisms in which Humanity often dives into and of which the barbed wire are the sad material evidence.

Mircea Cantor’s new film entitled “*Aquila non capit muscas*” (2018) after the famous Latin saying that translates “The Eagle doesn’t hunt flies”, was produced for this exhibition and fits into his assiduous practice of this medium. In “*Deeparture*” (2005), the absence of action was the cornerstone of this video where each breath, move and dare little by little defined the cohabitation of two animals – the lamb and the wolf – that once confronted to the unexpected see their instinct overall encouraged to the elaboration of new reference points rather than to a confrontation which yet seemed obvious. At VNH Gallery, the flight of an eagle is carefully registered and deconstructed in a video where the smallest detail is captured. The inner power and the determination of the hawk lead to imagine a target that isn’t revealed after a few seconds. From then is played a confrontation between the King of the Skies, who has nourished so many ancestral legends, and a drone, icon of a triumphant technology. It is esthetical, philosophical and opposes two of the worlds conveyed in the artist’s previous works as well as convening the concepts of territory, surveillance and intrusion.

In this same room are deployed hundreds of drawings from the series “*Tableaux*” initiated by the artist many years ago now. If the ideal objectivity would justify the systematic anonymity of the journalists of the magazine The Economist, the artist introduces a sensitive (and therefore

subjective) touch by drawing with Indian ink over the magazine's sheets. This weekly practice he developed since 2014 reaffirms the artist's fondness for haikus: the translation of a sensation, a fleeting sentiment, swift and concise, that doesn't describe things. Before this juxtaposition of stories from individuals, nations, countries and worlds, we are confronted with full force to a cold and implacable reality; a sort of state of the world where the appearance of this all very personal sensibility contrasts with the violence of analysis and observations.

Under the glass skylight, the rope pattern is omnipresent and emphasizes the notion of link that the artist has been developing for a great number of years throughout his work. A several meters long rope snakes around the space and guides us to the seven throning chairs. Each one of them entitled "Add verticality to your seat (to Socrates)", they have been made from the section of centuries-old trunks collected in Romania and engraved within the mass by local craftsmen which have worked on this purified form with the artist whilst following traditional techniques. In parallel to this patrimonial dimension, the making of these abstract portraits of the philosopher under the features of a chair reminds his position of accused, he who was sentenced to death for his ideas. Accused of everything for recognizing he knows nothing (cf. the Socratic doctrine for which the artist has proven great interest), the philosopher, far from renouncing, took advantage of this funeral ending forum – told by Plato in his "Socrates' Apology" – as a sounding board of which the echo inspired his contemporaries as much as it inspires contemporary philosophy. One chair only seems to have just been taken out of a blaze, as if the recurrent evidence of a previous violence, of a power that has been overturned or on the verge of it. On the wall, the works on paper "*Words are ropes*" (2018) – made with wine – underline once more this importance given to words, which, with their wise and profound assembly, can separate, confront or sublimate the daily in order to attain the universal.

Mircea Cantor has won the Aspen Leadership Prize (2017), the Marcel Duchamp Prize (2011), the Zece Pentru Romania Award (2010) and the Fondation d'Entreprise Ricard Prize (2004).

He has realized many solo exhibitions in institutions such as Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes, France (2019), Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris, France (2019), Fondation d'Entreprise Hermès, Tokyo, Japan (2018), Fondazione Giuliani, Roma, Italy (2017), Fondation Francès, Senlis, France (2016), Rennie Collection, Vancouver, Canada (2014), National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest, Romania (2013), Centre Pompidou-Prix Marcel Duchamp, Paris, France (2012), Museum of Moving Image, New York, USA (2012) Le Credac, Ivry sur Seine, France (2011) amongst others.

A great number of his works are part of the collections of prestigious museums or foundations : MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, New York (USA); CENTRE POMPIDOU, Paris (France);

MUSEUM ABTEIBERG, Monchengladbach (Germany); MUSEO NACIONAL CENTRO DE ARTE REINA SOFIA, Madrid (Spain); MAGAZINE 3, Stockholm (Sweden); KUNSTHAUS ZURICH, Zürich (Switzerland); PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART, Philadelphia (USA); HIRSHHORN MUSEUM, Washington D.C. (USA); FONDATION FRANÇOIS PINAULT, Paris (France); WALKER ART CENTER, Minneapolis (USA); FONDATION LOUIS VUITTON, Paris (France), RENNIE COLLECTION, Vancouver (Canada).

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