

Stefan Tcherepnin
Aviary Cruiser
Sept 22 - Nov 4

The last thing Van Gogh painted before his death is an unfinished depiction of tree roots in the underbrush. Although, many consider his last work to be *Wheat Field With Crows*, which I think is an over-romanticization of his suicide, and can easily be disputed by the words of Vincent's brother, Theo, who said that on the morning of his death, Vincent painted a vibrant, optimistic and beautiful portrayal of the natural world.

This summer, I spent many hours walking through the forests surrounding Stockholm and the Swedish archipelago. I encountered many areas where trees grow practically right on top of the stone-age boulders, with very little soil, causing their roots to grow in spectacular and memorizing shapes and characters. As I would follow the path laid before me, with my camera documenting rune after rune, language written by trees in the deep forest, I ventured to understand what they were telling me, or who would be the ideal translator.

Cookie monster and I no longer work together, but some of his old friends still play a part in my videos from time to time. I wondered what would happen if I present the new alphabet to these monsters, in discussion with Van Gogh (painted white-on-white - like Malevich's becoming Dubuffet), somehow the true meaning(s) of these words and characters could possibly manifest.

When I was ten years old, a bat flew into my window and was clearly not feeling well. There was foam on his mouth and he seemed rather agitated. My father wanted to put it out of his misery, but I insisted on letting it live, with hopes of nursing it back to life. I took the bat to school with me the following day, but my teacher wouldn't allow me to bring into the classroom, so I sat with him in the hallway for the rest of the day. Until someone came to check on us, and informed me that the bat had died.

Years later, as an adult in my 20's, I was living back in my childhood home with my step-mother. Once, when I went away for a few days, I returned to find out that she had let a friend crash in my room, and as soon as he closed the door, a bat flew in the window and fluttered aggressively around in the room. It made me very happy to think the bat was part of my protective network.

Van Gogh also had an affinity for bats, and in this case I have reproduced his work, *Flying Fox* (1885-2017), in white on white, over a "self-portrait" underpainting of the master.

Stefan Tcherepnin, on the occasion of the opening of 'Aviary Cruisers,' Real Fine Arts, 22 September, 2017