

Melli Ink / Christine Rebet

7 November 2014 – 24 January 2015

Opening hours:

Wed – Fri: 11:00 – 18:00; Sat: 11:00 – 17:00

and by prior arrangement

Grieder Contemporary is delighted to present an exceptional double exhibition featuring new works by Melli Ink and Christine Rebet in dialogue, the origins of which stretch back many years. The two artists first met in the 1990s while studying stage design at the Central St. Martins School of Art in London, and soon realised that they shared interests which went beyond the confines of stage design. Uniting them since then has been a pictorial idiom replete with symbols, metaphors and surreal elements. Never shy of breaking with convention or pushing genre boundaries, they experiment with a wide range of techniques and materials. Their forms of expression range from video via performance to sculpture, although drawing remains the preferred nucleus of their output.

Melli Ink's new works incorporate distinct references to artists who have inspired her, including Henri Matisse, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Alexander Calder and Kasimir Malevitsch. What surprises is the richness and complexity of the re-contextualisations that Ink conjures with the help of ceramics, bronze and glass. Matisse's late-career paper cut-outs provided the impulse for a mural consisting of hand-painted ceramic tiles that appear to float off the surface.

The geometric symbolic language of Russian Suprematist Malevitsch has recently held Ink in thrall, as has that of the great Swiss artist, Sophie Taeuber-Arp. This should come as no surprise, since both works reflect a notion that comes very close to that of Ink, namely that our world is determined by energetic forces that are not logical and that can be grasped and depicted only at an intuitive level. The influence of Taeuber-Arp is in evidence not only in the abstract shapes present in Ink's new drawings, but also in the material character of the works, which Ink achieves through the wholesale use of coloured crayons, and which calls to mind Taeuber-Arp's embroidered works.

Two ceramic tables by Ink represent a highly successful three-dimensional translation of drawings. Their extensive surfaces are imbued with complex codings: some – like Malevitsch's black cross – are immediately recognisable, while others – as so often happens with Melli Ink – reveal their secrets only on closer examination. The fact that Malevitsch took the symbolic idiom he created one hundred years ago for stage sets and costumes and developed it for the opera "Sieg über die Sonne" (Victory over the Sun) is recalled only peripherally.

Ink's most surprising re-contextualisations in this exhibition are surely the large forged iron boughs dotted about the space: they lean against the wall or hang from the ceiling as mobiles featuring delicate glass tear drops. These metal objects find Melli Ink fulfilling a dream harboured since her student days: that of creating sculptures from a metal that is bulky and strong and appears to have been made to outlast eternity. It is interesting that Ink has opted for an organic, fragile approach in this, her first foray into iron sculpting, which is inspired by walks in the woods with her four-year-old son, during which he reported seeing a variety of fauna – including a mammoth. What astonishes is the ability of the new context to capture the original beauty and energy as well as the natural abstractness of the form.

Christine Rebet's intensely coloured ink drawings from her new series "Melting Sun" and "Compresseur de poitrine" (Chest compressor) also have this mesmerising effect. They give the impression of having emerged from a fantastic tool catalogue from a bygone age. Yet closer examination of the titles shatters this initial cosy illusion to reveal a further level.

The drawings are the result of an artist-in-residence programme, during which Rebet has worked in close collaboration with the curatorial duo Francesco Urbano Ragazzi. Together with Maria Rosa Sossai, Artistic Director of AlbumArte in Rome, they gave birth to Rebet's current solo show at AlbumArte called "Meltingsun" in which drawings of this series and sculptures are combined.

The referential origins of the drawings are the jewellery designs of the French-Italian jewellery dynasty Mellerio dits Meller. This venerable company, founded under the patronage of Maria de Medici in the early 17th century, supplies royal houses and the elite of Europe. Rebet has taken the precious objects, which have always been associated with wealth, beauty and exclusivity, and transformed them into forms offering a raft of associations and sociocritical interpretations.

The subtle drawings in the "Melting Sun" series appear to be a blend of capricious treasures and particularly delicate apparatus or tools. They bear sonorous titles such as "Chrystal Tale", "Prophets", "Moon Penumbra" and "Graces and Grapevines", inviting associations with important gems or items of jewellery, as well as with colonial and post-colonial exploitation, earlier promises of exoticism and the desire for status symbols.

The framed drawings in the "Compresseur de poitrine" series find Christine Rebet going one step further and adopting a wonderfully ironic stance as she transforms the objects into delightful fetish-like instruments of torture. The martial character of these designs becomes tangible only once subjected to an intelligent artistic artifice: Rebet has realised some designs in copper and iron but also in paraffin to visualise their potential for power and violence.

The perfect presentation of the delicate wall and room sculptures in interaction with the drawings will, on the opening evening, be complemented by a performance by the artist. Like a fashion or jewellery show, glove-wearing assistants will carry drawings of the series "Melting Sun" by Christine Rebet through the exhibition space to a sound performance created by the artist in collaboration with Fabrice G rardi.

Melli Ink (*1972, lives and works in Zurich and Berlin) began by studying at the Parsons School of Art, Paris (1992-93) and then stage design at the Central St. Martins School of Art in London (1993-96). Following her graduation, she worked as a stage designer and artist for theatre, film and opera, including at the Royal Festival Hall, London; the British Film Institute, London; the Bloomsbury Theatre, London; the Salomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Miller Theatre at Columbia University, New York. Her work has been seen in solo and group exhibitions, including: Museum Kunstpalast, D sseldorf; Kunsthau Baselland, Basel; Alte Feuerwache, Mannheim; Patrick Painter, Los Angeles; Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich; Gastr ume, Z rich. Her most recent exhibition ran until mid-October 2014 at Castel Coira (IT).

Christine Rebet (*1971, lives and works in Paris and New York) attended the Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice and the Central St. Martins School of Art in London before gaining a master's degree in Fine Arts at Columbia University, New York. Exhibitions featuring her work have been held at the Sculpture Center, New York; Institute of Contemporary Art, Singapore; Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris; Le Magasin, Grenoble; Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo; Parasol Unit, London; Fondation Cartier, Paris. Her first solo exhibition in Italy runs until 13 December 2014 at AlbumArte in Rome.