

Adrian Ghenie and Navid Nuur

'On the Road to ... Tarascon'

Opening: 20 September, 17 - 22 h

20 September - 14 December, 2013

Tuesday - Saturday, 12 - 18 h

Potsdamer Strasse 77 - 87, 10785 Berlin

Galeria Plan B is happy to announce the exhibition 'On the Road to ... Tarascon', the materialization of the conversation between the Romanian painter Adrian Ghenie and the post-conceptual Iranian-born Dutch artist Navid Nuur, unfolding over the last few years.

The two artists met in the context of the gallery's program and new episodes in their dialogue were occasioned over time by group exhibitions and art fair presentations. This is in tandem with the mission of the gallery, to be a locus of conversation and collaborative research.

A first iteration of this project was exhibited at the first edition of Art Basel in Hong Kong in May 2013 and was awarded the Discoveries Prize. Guggenheim Museum's curator Alexandra Munroe describes the project: "The installation by Navid Nuur and Adrian Ghenie encompasses performance, sound, painting, and assemblage in a complete environment that has keen art historical and critical relevance. It wrestles with the history of modern painting while showing an exciting and fresh perspective. Working collaboratively, the artists go beyond the constraints of conceptualism and engage with more current languages of art."

While Navid Nuur is concerned with articulating modules of thought, where the abstract component of collective memory and intimations of a possible future acquire a sensuous presence, Adrian Ghenie's paintings engage the invisible part of our past, where collective memory is constantly challenged by mysterious, strangely prophetic actions and places, occulted folds in the temporal linearity upheld by conventional histories.

Always poised between figuration and abstraction, the two practices converge in looking at how both thoughts and oblivion materialize. The works in the exhibition question the dematerialization of painting through a dialogue between the figurative and the abstract, between representation and prototype, between embodiment and its traces. It is an occasion for both artists to challenge their positions: Adrian Ghenie steps forward in researching the abstract side of the figurative, and Navid Nuur adapts his conceptual toolbox to an investigation of traditional painting and representation.

The two artistic discourses achieve new potentialities in this encounter, through the direct access they offer one another to work, to the physical and affective correlates of art-making. This ranges from the performative dimension of their collaboration (a video work shows Navid Nuur holding a microphone connected to a Marshall amplifier, voicing out Ghenie's act of painting as it unfolds in front of him) to the exchange of material (Nuur takes color samples from Ghenie's painting in order to create another work which refines specific details of Ghenie's work through enlargement and repetition; in exchange Ghenie provides Nuur with a set of blue colours that he himself prepared). As a next step, Navid Nuur adds an abstract layer of paint (starting from the texture of a Van Gogh painting) on top of Ghenie's picture, searching for a point of fusion between the two practices. At the end of the collaborative work, Nuur assembles all the detritus of this shared process into monocle-like instruments, viewing devices for their own material opacity.

Excerpt from a conversation between Adrian Ghenie and Navid Nuur, Berlin, July 2013

(to be published in full as online reader on September 16 at <http://plan-b.ro/reader/>)

N.N.: About two years ago we had this discussion, when you told me: 'I wish I had in my practice more room to do abstract works because I'm intrigued by how color resonates and how, for example, an apple looks better when it gets worse over time, how this color has an energy.' At the same time, I was telling you how I wished I had more of this visual historical practice, which is fixed on one thing, because I do everything – that's mostly my practice. [...] It's because you have to open your mindset to feed yourself from opposites and different components and that's how we met most of the times: having these conversations and hanging out in a way...

A.G.: .. from the outside people might think we are the most unlikely artists to collaborate...
It's about research. People tend to simplify my case saying that I'm a figurative painter. Of course, this is an excuse; I'm interested in figurative painting, not in the image, but rather in how to experiment with the figurative, to build it with different components. Because the figurative traditionally became conflated with this sort of imitation of reality, but it was the bricks you built this figurative representation with, that I wanted to change, so as to incorporate most of the research or experiments made in painting in the last century – from avant-garde to abstract expressionism – and with that, to create a new figurative.

A.G.: What intrigued me about Van Gogh is this difference between the reality of his actual existence which was a complete nightmare from top to bottom and Van Gogh the cliché, which is a beautiful fantasy. [...] I have kept an eye on this subject for a long time, since I discovered what Francis Bacon did with that painting of Van Gogh, 'On the Way to Tarascon'... Bacon actually understood the right temperature of his existence and depicted it. [...] The Van Gogh I'm trying to depict is one who is extremely angry; it's almost like the ghost of Van Gogh who saw what happened with his works after his death and somehow he's frustrated even after that!

N.N.: I think that applies especially to this series that we're doing: the painting that you've made, next to the painting that I've made, inspired from his drawings. It was about pushing even further this energy that was already there, by using your skills and a computer in addition, and at the end, about analyzing from all these different angles that elemental Van Gogh - which is really not enough out there in the world I think. [...] I also looked at your strokes and how I can fuse them in the paintings we're doing. We looked at it from different perspectives: the subject, its historical reference and then we mix them up in our own way... It was also interesting how our works evolved; it all went quite naturally: you did one part, I did another part, or I started with something and you came with another thing and that was because we both had the same understanding of Vincent and his practice – so it was not too weird or too difficult to find a meeting point for our practices.

Adrian Ghenie (1977, Baia Mare, Romania) lives and works in Cluj and Berlin. His previous solo exhibitions include: the Museum for Contemporary Art, Denver; S.M.A.K Museum, Gent; the National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC), Bucharest. His work has been included in group exhibitions at the Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Francois Pinault Collection at Palazzo Grassi, Venice and the Liverpool Biennial.

Navid Nuur (1976, Teheran, Iran) lives and works in The Hague, The Netherlands. His previous solo exhibitions include: Centre Pompidou, Paris; Parasol Unit Foundation for Contemporary Art, London; Matadero Contemporary Art Center, Madrid; Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen and Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel. His work has been included in group exhibitions at the 54th Venice Biennale, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Museion Bolzano, Kunsthaus Glarus, Stroom The Hague.

For more information, please contact the gallery at contact@plan-b.ro and +49.1723210711.