a world behind curtains march 2017

FEATURING







SEVENTH CONTINENT



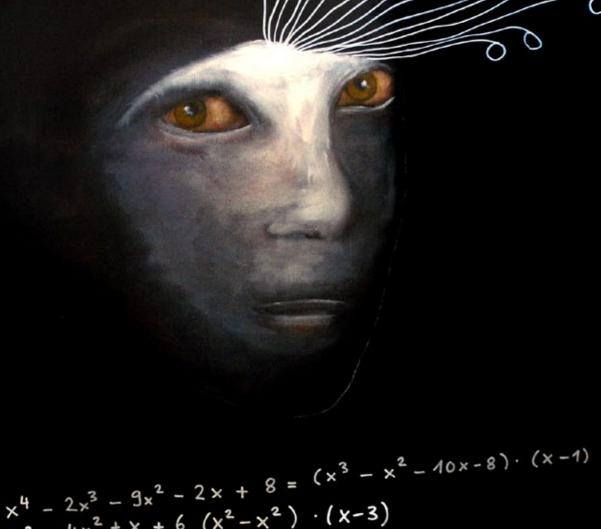
GEORGE TESELEANU



ART OF PRETENDING







N-SPHERE MARCH 2011

EDITORIAL TRANQUILIZERS

The frailty of the human spirit, and therefore of the human itself, is just a means to an end, in which everything outside the biological realm, including technology, is only meant to shatter those tiny seeds that give out warmth of thought, slumber of senses and opening of the minds. Receiving the reality, though meant to be an action lacking in the deeper understanding of the surrounding universe, is assumed to be unique in a fashion that allows the unseen network of thoughts to entangle themselves in such a way that each node is essentially heterogeneous; much like snowflakes or fingerprints or

However, outside the personal realities that each mind has created for itself, grace to a personally unique system of perception, a man with scissors cuts off faces and limbs and whole other objects, replacing them with an entirely different array of entities. The depiction of induced blindness of senses is conjured in the works of Alexander Sterzel and George Teseleanu. The universe allows itself to be structured in such a manner that some minds unknowingly generate lifeless or abstract objects

that unknowingly generate the behaviour of others.

A lucid exchange of realities transpires through the ages, when trading the self for a fictional character might not be intentional. The habit of pretending is the most ignored, acclaimed and performed string of actions, turning even into art, turning even into daily life, blinding the mind against the true nature of reality. Nevertheless, in Der siebente Kontinent, Haneke destroys the mists inside which one resides. Inhumanity becomes a derivative of advancements, be they technological or of the mind. The same faceless invisible hand turns around armies of lost-individualities in the complete eradication of quintessence. The influence of reality transpires in Spiritual Front's works, but not as a means of control, but as a path to imaginary realms.

To those who consciously live, to those who genuinely feel, to those who create, to those who destroy... a penny - a penny for your thoughts - and one simple truth. »Life itself is the most wonderful fairy tale of all.«

Quote | Hans Christian Andersen



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ALEXAND

GLASS SHOWCASE ERSTERZEL

»L'ART POUR L'ART«

Name:

Alexander Sterzel

Location:

Stuttgart, Germany

Occupation:

Artist

Definition of personal sphere:

I just can't help it

Artwork in 3 words:

L'art pour l'art

What is inspirational for you:

The life of Riley and human abysms

Currently favourite artists:

Albrecht Dürer, Matthew Barney, Max Ernst

Tools of trade:

Oil colour, Ink, Faded Photographs

Current obsessions:

The music of Richard Wagner

Personal temptation:

Female pronounced clavicula





photo | Alexander Sterzel. 2005. My Temple. Oil On Canvas. Courtesy of the artist



photo | Alexander Sterzel. 2010. Untitled. Mixed Media. Courtesy of the artist



photo | Alexander Sterzel. 2010. Untitled. Mixed Media. Courtesy of the artist



photo | Alexander Sterzel. 2007. Untitled. Mixed Media. Courtesy of the artist



photo | Alexander Sterzel. 2010. Mousetrap with Dog. Mixed Media. Courtesy of the artist



photo | Alexander Sterzel. 2010. Mousetrap. Mixed Media. Courtesy of the artist



photo | Alexander Sterzel. 2007. Das Kaiserpaar. Mixed Media. Courtesy of the artist

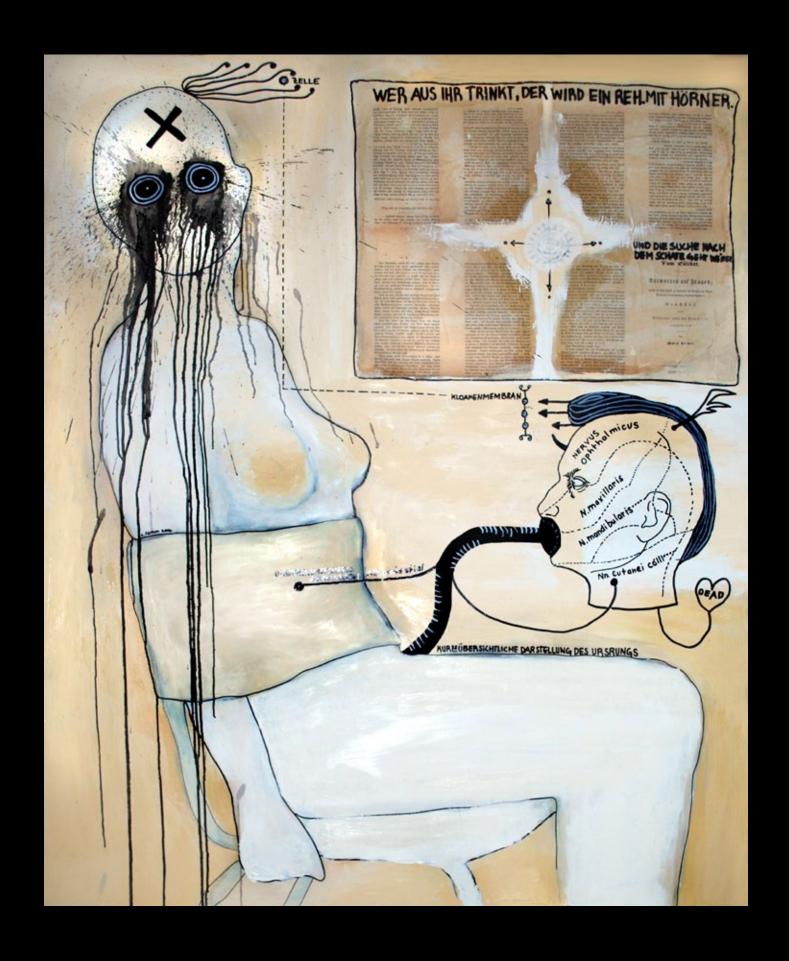


photo | Alexander Sterzel. 2006. Wer aus mir trinkt, der wird ein Reh mit Hörner. Oil on Canvas Courtesy of the artist

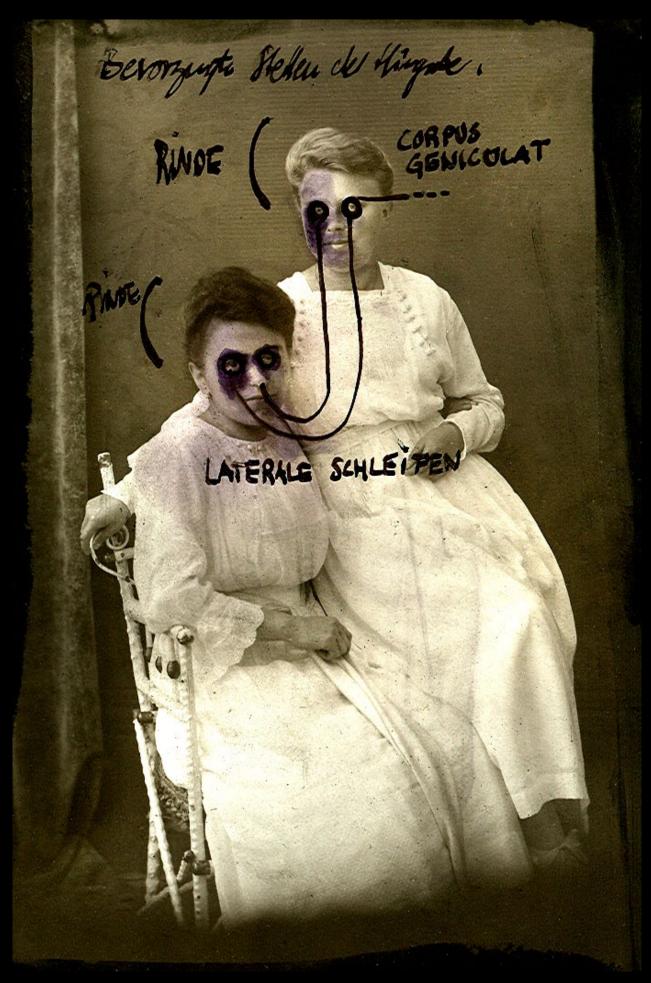


photo | Alexander Sterzel. 2008. Laterale Schleifen . Mixed Media. Courtesy of the artist



photo | Alexander Sterzel. 2005. Game Over. Oil on Canvas. Courtesy of the artist

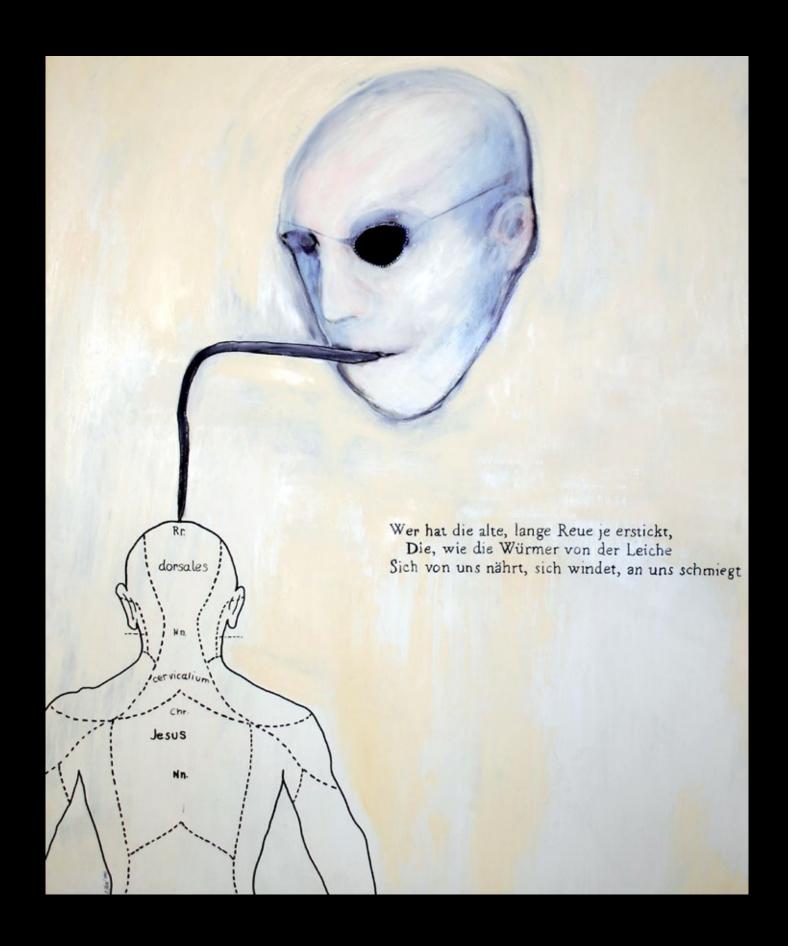


photo | Alexander Sterzel. 2005. Wer aus mir trinkt, der wird ein Reh.
Oil on Canvas. Courtesy of the artist

JOSEP

STONE SHOWCASE HNERNEST HBELLOCQ

»HOW EASY IT IS TO SHATTER THIS IMAGE OF MYSELF«

Name:

John Ernest Joseph Bellocq

Lived:

1873 - 1949

Location:

New Orleans, United States

Occupation:

Photographer

Influences:

The Jazz Epoque in New Orleans, the red light district, Titian's Venus of Urbino, Manet's Olympia

Influenced:

Natasha Trethewey, Louis Malle, Michael Ondaatje, Peter Everett, David Fulmer

Technique:

Relaxed, realistic photography with deliberately scratched faces and central subject

Associated with:

20th century photography in the United States, representation of fallen women, tableau vivants

Obsessions:

Masks, erased faces, the prostitutes of Storyville, the fallen woman, Ophelia, make-up and masking, woman as spectacle and her gaze





photo | John Ernest Joseph Bellocq. 1912. Storyville Series. Courtesy of the artist



photo | **John Ernest Joseph Bellocq. 1912. Storyville Series.**Seated woman wearing striped stockings, drinking RaleighRye. Courtesy of the artist



photo | John Ernest Joseph Bellocq. 1912. Storyville Series. Courtesy of the artist

MOVING SHOWCASE RSIEBENTE KONTINENT

$\gg \bigvee \bigvee \Box \Box \Box$ INERTIA MEANS EVERYDAY



ow can we be aware of what we desire or feel, when our world is manipulated at a more or less subconscious level by the media? In the introduction of the documentary *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, Slavoj Žižek defines cinema as the most perverted form of art, on account of its ability to tell you how to desire. Thus, the human being becomes false and artificial. In

this context we should ask ourselves if there's any reason to continue our existence in an emotional inertia.

In an attempt to give an answer to this question, the Austrian director Michael Haneke helps us. He graduated from the University of Vienna, where he studied philosophy, psychology and drama. After that he started his career as a film critic and television



director. The world described in his movies is often sad and desolate, demystifying the real world. In an interview, he stated »images should not be manipulated in any way, revealing the tricks used to increase the drama«. One of his most famous films is Funny Games, in which he is raising the issue of violence used in computer games and its effects on children. The movie becomes a clear example of gratuitous violence.

Michael Haneke was rewarded for his productions at Cannes Festival for the film version of the book *The Piano Teacher* by Elfriede Jelinek, and the Golden Globe in 2009 for the best foreign movie with *The White Ribbon*.

In 1989, Haneke opens his bleak universe with the movie Der siebente Kontinent (The Seventh Continent). This is an inquiry into what inertia means for everyday life. Inspired by a newspaper article that reported the mass suicide of a family, Haneke tries to recreate the last three year of their lives. He creates a certain framework of the story, thus provoking the viewer to gather details, the broken pieces of their world, leaving the interpretation up to the spectator. Not giving an explanation for his characters' actions, he focuses on cause rather than effect. Haneke manipulates the camera as a surgical knife, which uncovers the damages made by society at a personal level. In this aesthetic simplicity we can see the influence of the Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami.

The first frame of the film introduces the characters by using a close-up of the car number, a matter that includes them in a register. Due to this fact, they can be identified by numbers not by features. After the introduction, the image of the family is constructed like a puzzle by obser-





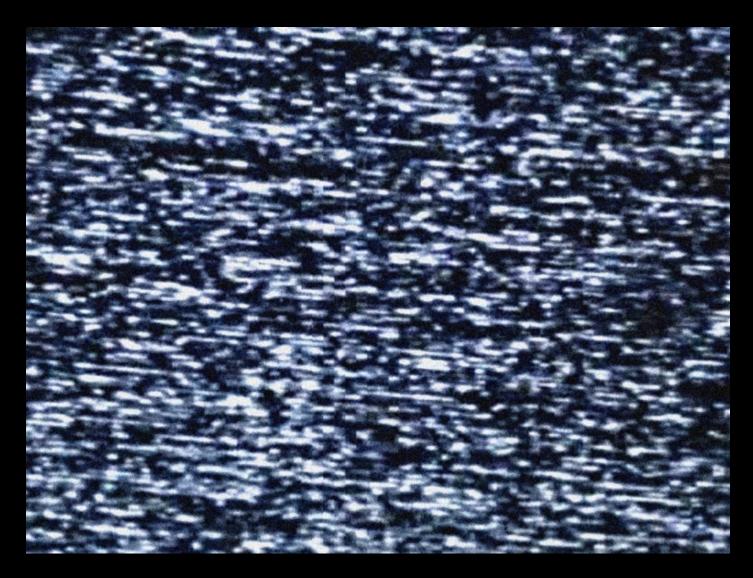


vation, analysis or dissection of their daily domestic rituals. Although we can watch their intimate actions, we are still unable to see the faces. The first character revealed to the viewer is the wife, Anna. She is observed while preparing breakfast. The other figures portrayed, Georg - the husband and Eva - the daughter are shaped in the social context in which they operate. To this extent we can see how Haneke gives a visual identity to his characters placing them in the schizophrenic society that forces them to act through a set of rhythmic gestures. The feeling conveyed to the viewer through close-ups, suggests an individuality harmed by society.

Communication is not made through direct dialogue, and, if it exists, it is laconic. Likewise, the figures of the characters are empty, using this lack »WHAT IF
DEATH IS
THE ONLY
THING THAT
MAKES US
HUMAN IN A
POSTMODERN
SOCIETY?«

of expressiveness to convert them into objects. The only emotion present is caused by death. The first character depicted in this situation is Anna's brother. His affective memory is activated by a song heard on the radio that reminds him of their mother's death. The end of this sequence shows him in front of the TV, along with his family, looking very calm. So we can see how a television show can repress even strong emotions.

The last part of the movie suggests one escape route. The last 30 minutes of the movie depict the mass destruction of their material items, before committing suicide. We can be tempted to say that this is a fortunate case of a bourgeois family, that realizes its limited views, and does something about it. Protecting themselves with gloves or goggles follow-



ing the same rhythmic gestures, each object is destroyed one at a time. In this context we are witnessing another metaphor. Eve has a nervous breakdown when she sees her father destroying the fish tank. This reaction could be triggered by two factors. First of all it could be the fact that she doesn't care about what they are doing as long as living beings are not involved. And second of all that fish tank could be the symbol of their family and its destruction would suggest that there is no escape, and life is meaningless.

As a personal note, my favorite moment and the most intense part of the movie is the final scene. After they commit suicide we can see them laying on the bed in front of the TV, showing only static. This is quite interesting because this electromagnetic

noise might be perceived as containing particles emitted during the Big Bang. We could see it as an irony: combing the media with the primordial source of energy makes the suicide in vain, making the alienation of the society through television a normal state of mind/existence.

In the end, I would like to draw attention on the philosophical aspects that Haneke uses for this movie. He is recognized as one of the contributors to the »cinema of existentialism« among Chantal Akerman, Gaspar Noé and the Krzysztof Kieslowski. The most influential thinkers that we find in the work of Michael Haneke are Martin Haidegger and Karl Jaspers. The latter one is constructing his philosophy around the idea of how man is losing himself in the technological progress, which is making him more plastic and

conducting him to self destruction. All in all, we can see that Michael Haneke allows a release of emotions only in the context of death, which makes us wonder: what if death is the only thing that makes us human in a postmodern society?

photos | Der siebente Kontinent.
1989. Screencaptures

NOX SHOWCASE GEORGE TESELEANU

NAME:

TESELEANU GEORGE

LOCATION:

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

OCCUPATION:

MASTER STUDENT OF MATHEMATICS

WEBSITE:

HRN.DEVIANTART.COM



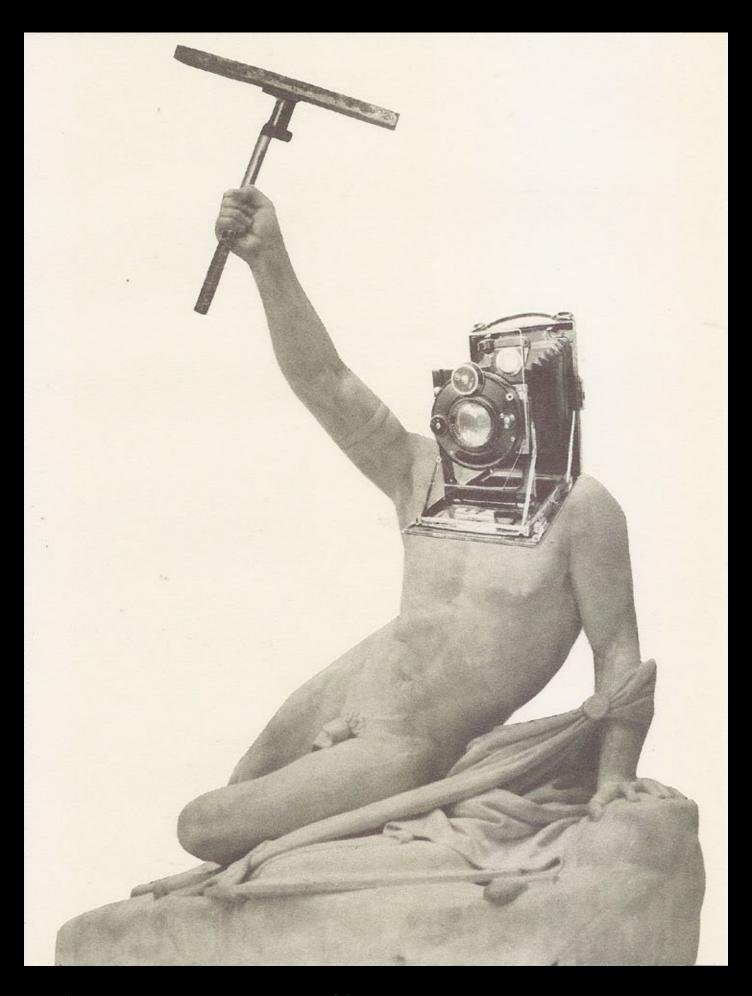


photo | George Teseleanu. Torso No.6. Courtesy of the artist

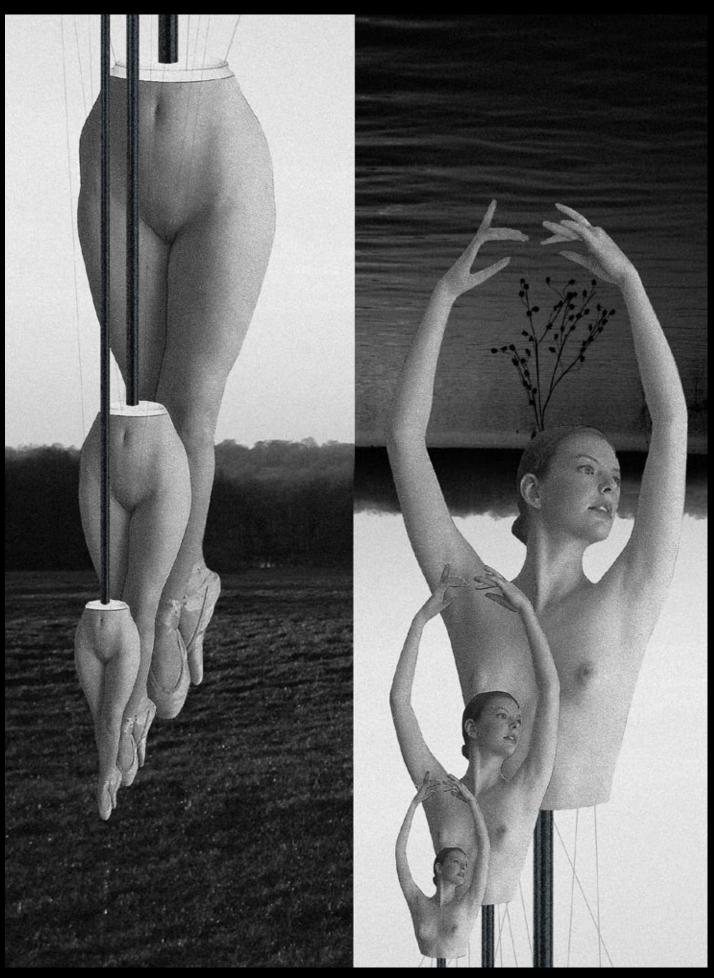


photo | George Teseleanu. Dancer Matryoshka. Collaboration with Hèctor Pineda

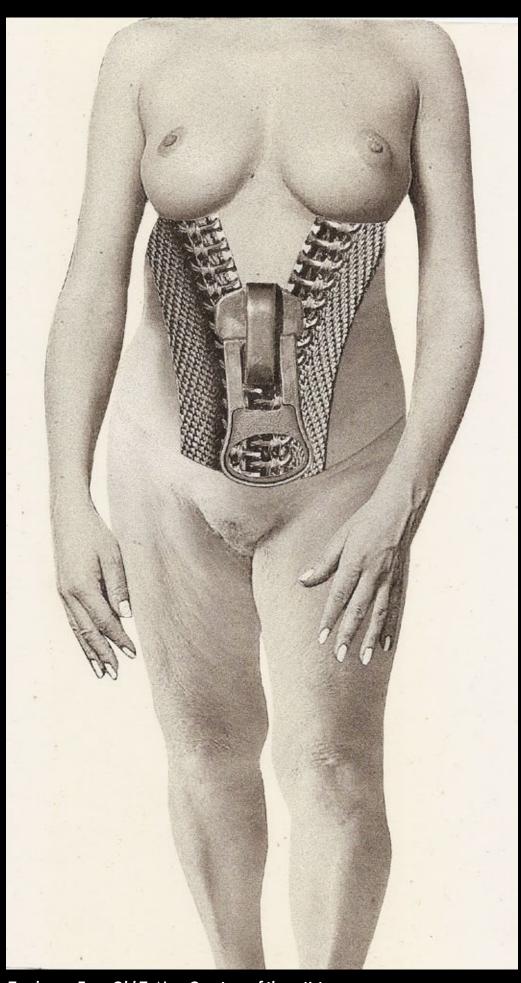


photo | George Teseleanu. From Old To New. Courtesy of the artist

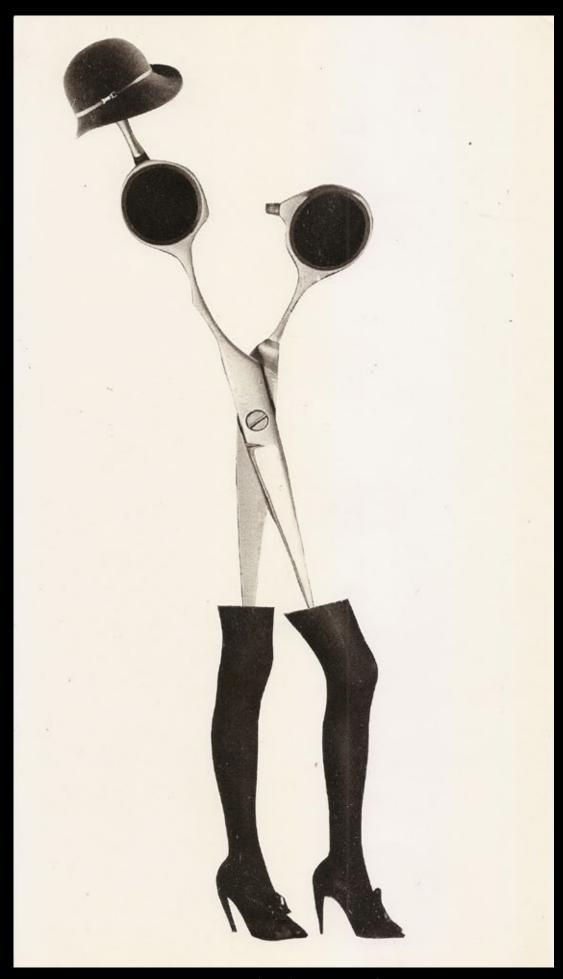


photo | George Teseleanu. Scissor Legs. Courtesy of the artist

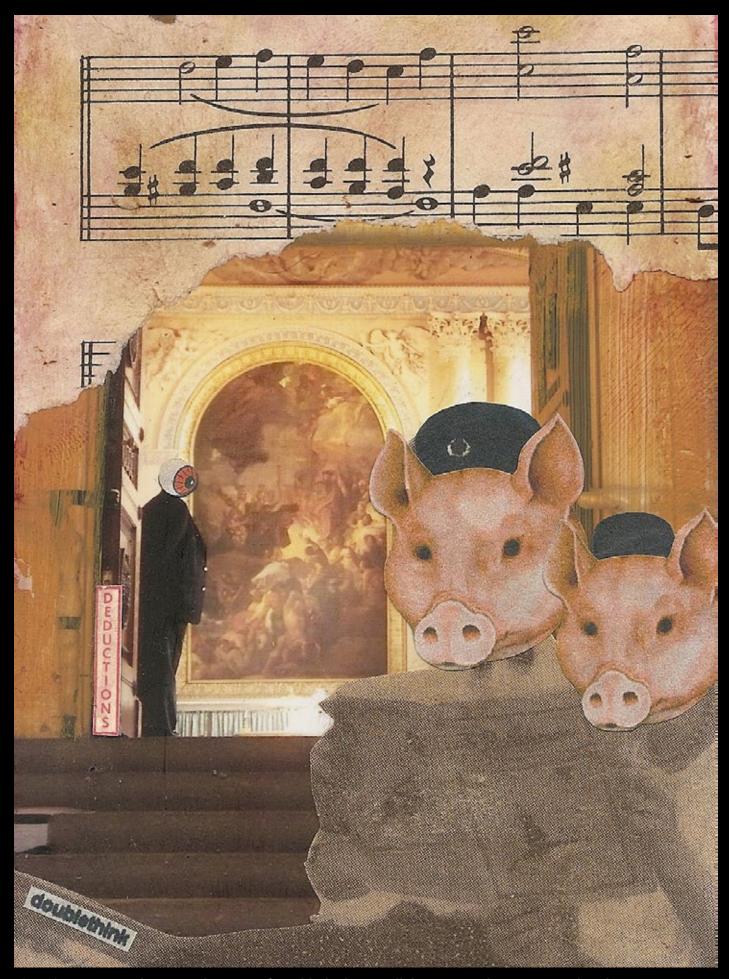


photo | George Teseleanu. Deductions Of Doublethinking. Collaboration with Laura Tringali Holmes

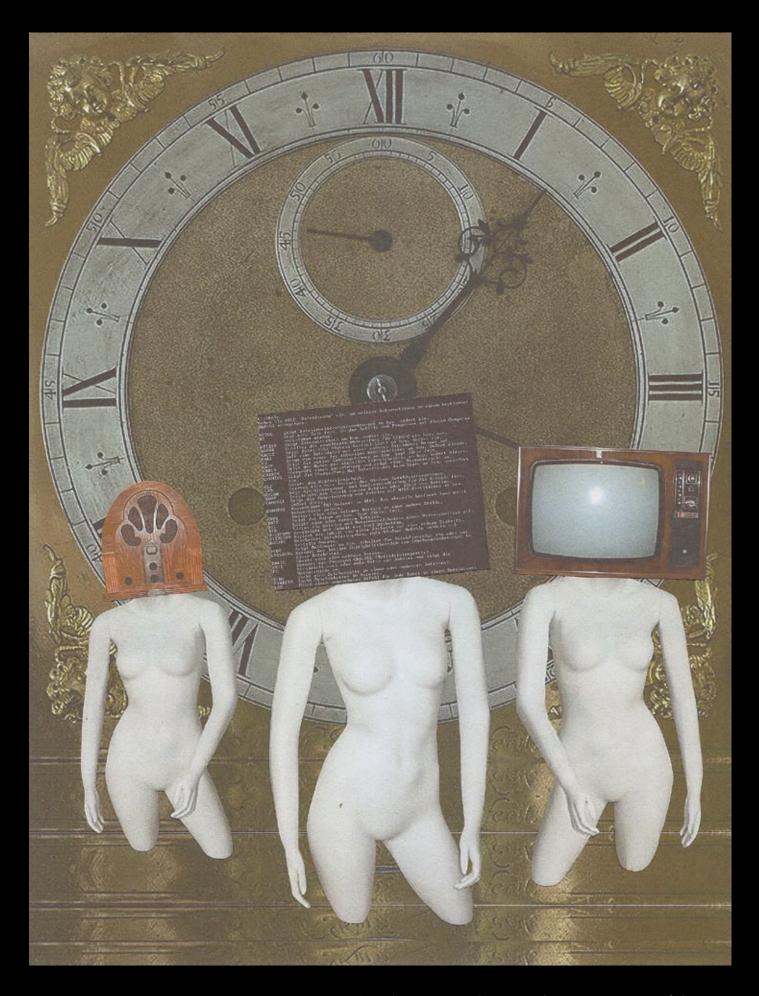


photo | George Teseleanu. Media Time. Courtesy of the artist



photo | **George Teseleanu. The Occult Priest Of The Hunting Mistress. Collaboration with Hèctor Pineda**

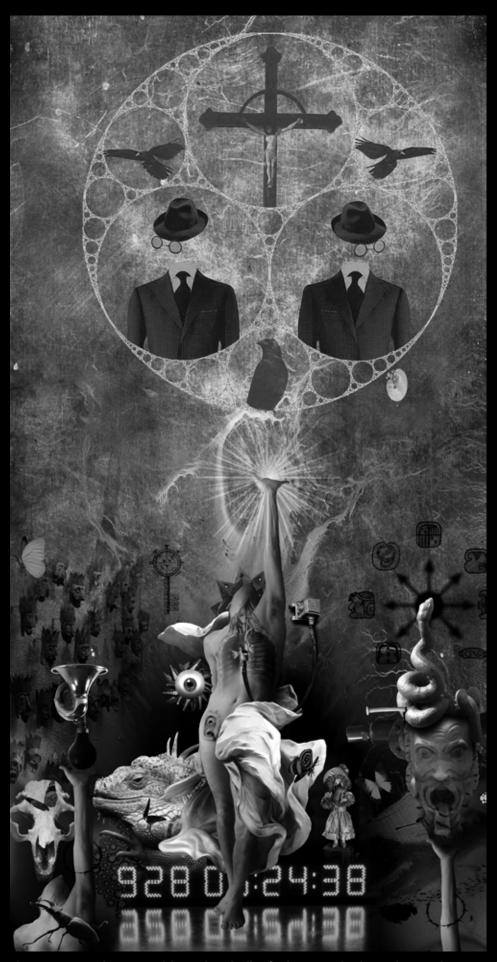


photo | George Teseleanu. Holding The Skull Of Christ With The Holy Hand From Who Has Not Name Collaboration with Hèctor Pineda



photo | George Teseleanu. The Audio Surveillance. Courtesy of the artist

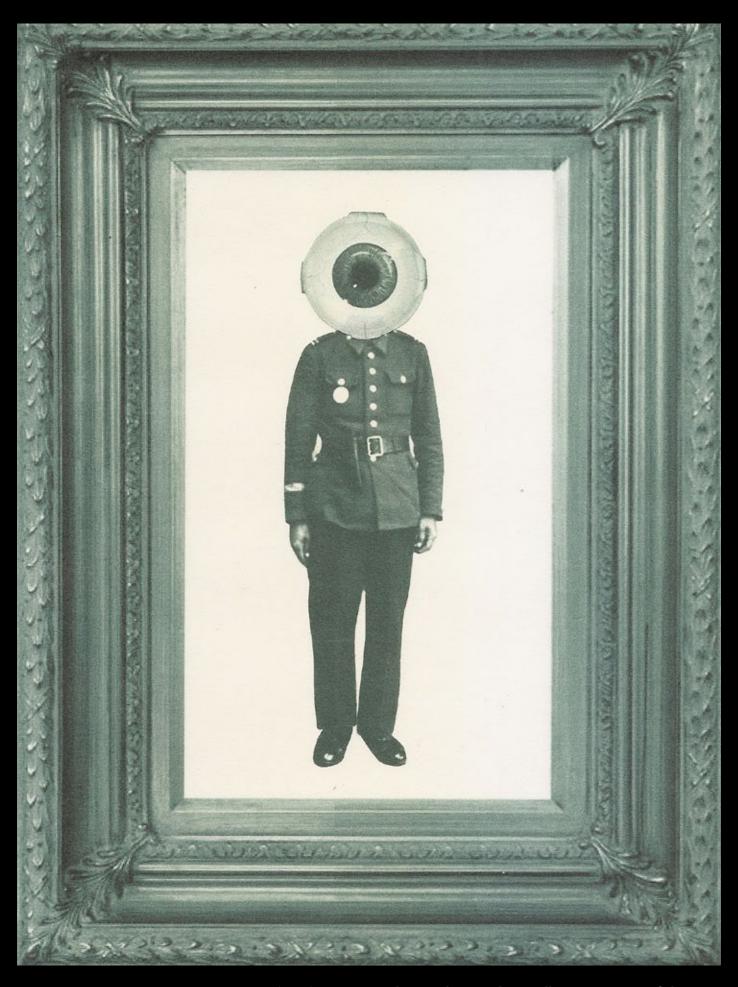


photo | George Teseleanu. The Visual Surveillance. Courtesy of the artist

SPIRIT

ABUSE SHOWCASE UAL FRONT

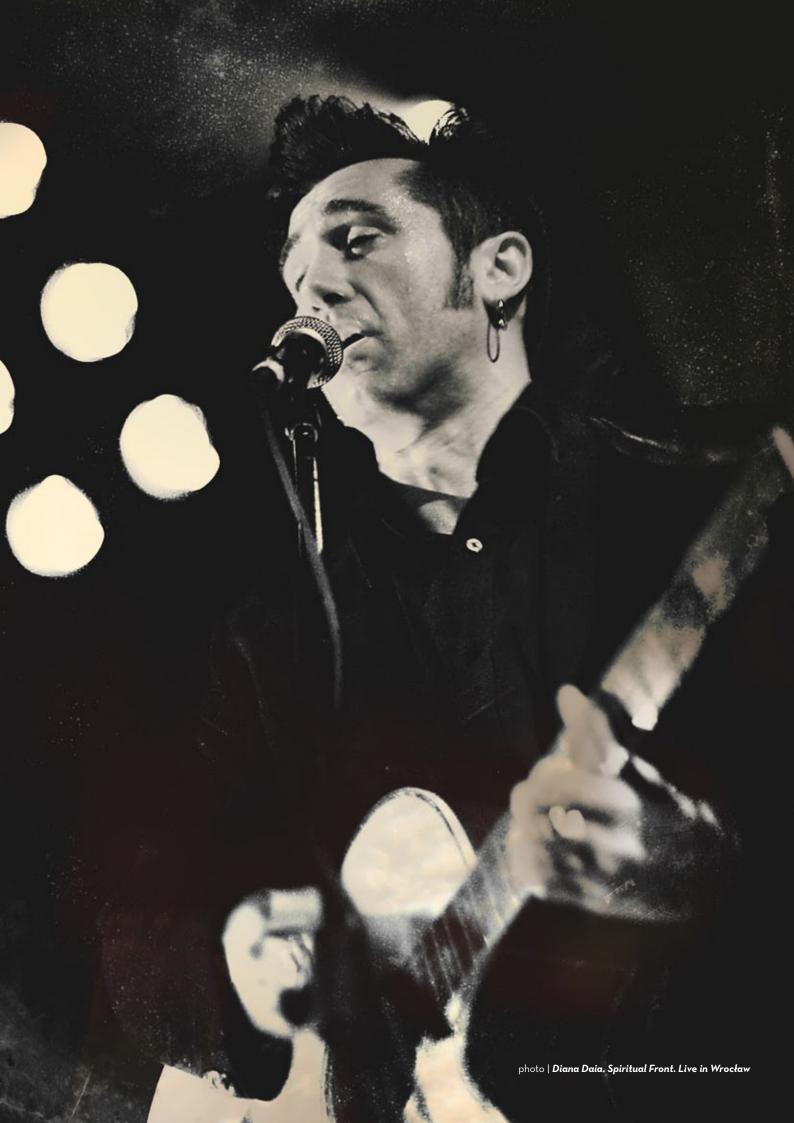
»A DEFINED BEGINNING AND AN END. CONSTANT SENSE OF CONQUEST«

Hello and welcome to The Spheres. You have recently released your second album at Trisol: Rotten Roma Casino and this might be a good starting point for our conversation. To begin with a predictable question: why Rotten Roma Casino? Keeping in mind that the hometown of Spiritual Front is Rome, how do those two elements protes and processing and pour music?

'Cause everything is destined to rot, we can't accept this fact and we constantly continue to gamble on something vulnerable, decadent, staggering. And for sure, Roma inevitably inspired it, it's a city full of contrasts.

On a romanticized level, Rome, as a setting, has often been couched in terms of decadence, carnal desires, orgies and so on, and you seem to employ those concepts in your work as well. Would you see Spiritual Front as a project strongly linked to Rome and its surround-





ings or are you more in favour of »emotions are universal, anything goes for location«?

We are influenced by the place where we live, especially if your family is born and raised there, something remains in your flesh, your culture influences your choices, your way of thinking etc. I can't say that we are a band that symbolizes Roma but at the same time we are a band that has been scarred by her, her history, her passion, her chaos and elegance is readable on our skin.

Both Armageddon Gigolo and Rotten Rome seem to conceptually follow the same pattern - focusing on quasi-mythical constructions of Italy/Italians. Why do you think that exotic part still appeals to audiences considering the cynical age we live in?

Yes, even because we never tried to fake something or we never tried to be what we aren't. Exotic? Don't know if it's exotic, we just try to express what we are, and often our identity is deeply influenced by the place which gave us a forced birth.

Talking about audiences: after having seen your performance at the Wrocław Festival in Poland, I was tempted to compare it to some previous gigs in Romania (some people who witnessed them argued that the atmosphere was overall different). Do you feel more "at home" performing in some locations and does your set list mould to that as well?

I can't understand if you mean better or worse, ahaaha. Anyway, I always try to do my best everywhere, but you have to consider many factors: location, timing, space, mood, tiredness, trips etc... but I usually have fun, I do what I like, rarely have I felt uncomfortable.

»SEX **CONTAINS A SORT OF** INNER DEATH. **AND VICE** VERSA. THAT THERE IS **A DEFINED BEGINNING** AND AN END. **A SENSUAL DESTRUCTION** OF **OURSELVES**«

There seems to be a blurry line between "performer" and "audience" when one watches your live acts. What role does interaction have in that?

It is a thin one that belongs equally to performer and audience. We have to share emotions.

You seem to be welcoming your listeners to be part of your expe-

riences, in what direction would a good concert go? Would you play more with those elements?

Absolutely, a passionate audience must be part of the show. I love that.

Do you consider your body of work as a carefully constructed narrative or as something linked to your personal experiences? Does creating characters play an important role in the creative process?

Except some movies, which I find extremely stimulating because of their theme linked to my mood, feelings etc., I am always inspired by my life, personal stories, pain, experiences, which give me the hook to go on and write.

While staring at the cover of your album, Spiritual Front could be easily placed in a quasi-urban decadent environment. Do you see your project as closer to city life in a sense?

Chris Askew painted something cool and peculiar, something made especially for us. He illustrated what we needed and what Roma is, what Roma means to us.

In the neofolk/gothic subcultures, forms of fetishism such as BDSM have been used extensively in the past 20 years or more. Do you believe one can really be transgressive while using those elements in their work?

They are usually linked, but I don't think that many of them are so interested in it, at least...I don't believe that most of them practice BDSM, I met many people in various sex clubs who never knew what industrial is.

In a sense, BDSM supposes staging scenarios, role-playing and constructing personal codes between



people. What is lost when those elements become more or less »public« through music?

Role playing is traceable everywhere, you can see it at work, with friends, in your family in every community, it's a natural thing. Sexually too, I am very fascinated by this, 'cause 80% of our relations are based on those displays of power.

Do you think some sort of selfcensorship/personal boundaries in connection with sexuality should be applied when making music?

It's a way to express our sexuality. Always. Music is phallic.

In Darkroom Friendship you play with elements such as erasing individuality through orgies, perhaps to the point where bodies without organs and only surfaces are part of the scenery. What's your take on that?

In a darkroom you can free yourself, sexually free, you can do whatever you want, without caring the social barriers. Sexuality is part of our culture and it is not easy to live free from it. Darkness could give us the possibility to be ourselves without paying attention to the 'form', to the other one's identity. I saw people transforming themselves in a darkroom.

Why have you chosen the track as your opening song for the album? Should it be regarded as an »introduction« for what there is to follow? I just wanted to bet on something different, »shocking« in a way, test my audience, but people always want the »classics«, everything which goes out from the railway is banned... The alternative scene is more conservative than it seems.

You've often described your music

as »nihilistic suicidal pop« - what »dies« in the creative process? Do you think music should be an output for self-destructive tendencies, and to what extent can it be nihil-

Nihilist 'cause we don't believe in prefabricated truths, political truths, sexual truths etc. Suicide is an affirmation of life itself. I don't blame those who choose suicide. Also, these two terms are contrasting and extreme in a way: suicide and pop!

»SUICIDE IS AN **AFFIRMATION OF LIFE** ITSELF, I

DON'T BLAME THOSE WHO CHOOSE SUICIDE«

Kiss The Girls and Make Them Die, My Erotic Sacrifice and others, a lot of songs focusing on Lustmord on this album. Why the interest in the love/death dichotomy?

Sex contains a sort of inner death, and vice versa. Sex: that there is a defined beginning and an end, a sensual destruction of 'ourselves'. a sort of constant sense of conquest, a never-ending hot war.

Is the portrayed sexual murder victim mostly masculine or feminine? What role does gender play in it? Roles suck, our middle class catholic culture forces us to choose this or that truth. We contain both: masculine and feminine sides, it could be stupid to think that we are just one thing, blame those who proclaim themselves 100% hetero or 'pure' male or female. They are dangerous!!!

Sad Almost A Winner has been considered relatively controversial so far. How was it received in Italy? Controversial if you are afraid of those themes, or if you are afraid of those kinds of emotions. Well, it's not a daily theme, that's true, but we feel displaced just when we face something that could touch ourselves deeply.

Would you argue that Italy is still to an extent homophobic, keeping in mind some conservative political views there?

I don't think Italy is homophobic, well, it depends on the place, the community you meet. Basically, it is a catholic country, you can easily imagine how false people are, but it's enough to say that here transsexuals have tons of unexpected customers, politicians are frequently victims of transsexual scandal... and cocaine too. This is Italy, the surface counts a lot.

The video for Sad Almost a Winner seems to reconstruct the narrative of Fassbinder's Faustrecht der Freiheit, and by doing so re-appropriating some concepts employed there. While the film focused on a completely different social context, love still remains to a certain degree a commodity. What were you trying to recreate in your video?

The cruelty and the blindness of



our senses do not know labels like hetero or gay or lesbians. What I wanted to show is the inner evil that belongs to the human being, and yea...that certain degree of commodity, the horrible stupid social laws that regulate everything, even the feeling and the relation between people and lovers.

Another two important elements in your music: Catholicism and German boys in uniforms. Simply display of fetishism on both, how much irony is involved in playing with those stereotypes?

Through irony we have the chance to analyze several elements even the "ultraclassic" stereotypes such as Catholicism and German boys in uniform. I can say that I am attracted to these elements, they are open to many interpretations, dramatic or funny jokes, to discuss etc., etc.

Would you consider yourselves influenced by the Catholic background from Italy?

Absolutely so. Even if you are atheist or Satanist, you have to consider the fact that you are born in a real ancient unstoppable Catholic mechanism, something that started more than 2000 years ago, and you can't ignore it. Ok, you don't want to follow any Catholic rule but you have to surrender to the fact that this is a huge Catholic world. It influenced me a lot, at least I like it, it gives me the chance to analyze the clashes inside of me in a better and refined way.

Another triptych: Jesus, Hellvis and rock'n'roll. The rock'n'roll phenomenon is more or less American. Why the appeal for it and how can it be appropriated in a European context?

They have been great superstars, the lead millions of people somewhere and they both lived in open range countries. I think that such a great personalities don't belong to any specific land.

How about the next Spiritual Front ones, what will follow Rotten Roma Casino?

Another evergreen album named I

Another evergreen album named *l* live through you which is based on the lover transfer concept.

questions | **Diana Daia**answers | **Simone Salvatori**

»YOU ARE **BORN IN A** REAL ANCIENT UNSTOPPABLE **CATHOLIC** MECHANISM. **SOMETHING** THAT STARTED **MORE THAN 2000 YEARS** AGO, AND YOU CAN'T **IGNORE IT«**

Besides a couple of Spiritual Front videos, Solo Buio Visual Factories also produced a recent Ordo Rosarius Equilibrio clip, namely A SONG 4 HATE & DEVOTION. Are any musical/visual collaborations with ORE planned for the near future?

Who knows. We are good friends, life is still long.



P

SHOWCASE THE ART OF RETENDING

»LIKE A TITAN WHO COMES FOR HIS OWN«

When I was little. I wanted to be Winnetou... or that cowboy dude; whichever one the story was focused on when I was reading it. I even had a small wooden axe and stick for a horse. Either about dolls and tea ceremonies with dirt instead of liquid, or about cowboys and knights and sword fights with crummy sticks, each and every one of you has pretended to be someone else during childhood years. While growing up, the pretend game changes, it becomes more subtle and more sinuous, until it embeds itself into life to never ever disappear again. Here, at the beginning of a third millennium, counted from when humanity found it more suitable, with the entire technological substrate of society, things have not changed, but merely shifted, in that intricate pretend game we all call life.

I. »AS A ROCK OR A CLOUD OR THE HILL«

Even before the world has been changed by the greatest pretend game of all times, there had already been an art dedicated to representations. In ancient Athens, about six centuries before year zero and stretching







photo | Vel Thora. Courtesy of the artist

for about 300 years, the theatre was spawn and nourished as one of the arts. But what is theatre in essence? On a stage, a group of people will set up actions and words to convey a story, an emotion, a point to the audience. It sounds simple at first glance, but it is far from it. Even though the subject of a play depends highly on cultural and historical backgrounds. its complexity remains unchanged. Inside the theatre world, roles shift continuously, the identity of the player remains immutable under the masks, yet the projected image recreates itself, from costumes to gestures and words.

Ancient Roman theatre would use masks, large stone amphitheatres and full male casts. Elizabethan theatre would use circular open roof playhouses, expensive costumes and full male casts. Peking opera would combine music, vocals, mime, dance,

acrobatics and full male casts. In the beginning of the most influential nonmodern theatrical currents, women were banned from participating in plays, thus all roles were performed by the male actors. It all comes to a peak of pretend, as one not only needs to change appearance in order to perform, but also to change an entire view upon life and its particularities. Why, you say? Because there will always be a rift between male and female constraints leading to different experiences, believes and behaviours; even though contemporary society is not supporting most of them any

II. »AS A WHISPER YOU MIGHT NOT BE HEARD«

»Why, except as a means of livelihood, a man should desire to act on the stage when he has the whole world to act in, is not clear to me.« (George Bernard Shaw) asked the fake golden idol. »All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players« (William Shakespeare), said the turtle. »The world is a stage, but the play is badly cast.« (Oscar Wilde), a grouchy voice was heard from behind the trees. A Buddhist monk walks in spreading knowledge. »Old age, believe me, is a good and pleasant thing. It is true you are gently shouldered off the stage, but then you are given such a comfortable front stall as spectator.« (Confucius) »This world is but a canvas to our imagination.« (Henry David Thoreau) he continues and sits down pensively. So you see, this crazy idea of playing out life as a performance is not new. However, the roles are continuously changing.

With time, the advances in technology, the rift of society from perma-



nently assigned roles (such as slavery, the vassal system, the Indian castes) to a more uniform organization, produced a large infusion of literary works in which the self was presented from two different perspectives, one of which was hidden and only visible under extraordinary circumstances. In 1886, Robert Louis Stevenson publishes The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Even though the short novel is usually associated with split personality, what could imped one to identify one of them with the actor and one with the character? The subject is not entirely lost in ages, as Jane plays the pretend game (whether she realises it or not) as Eve Black and Eve White in Nunnally Johnson's The Three Face of Eve released on the silver screen in 1957.

The idea of playing the role of a lifetime in daily life is not far from modern playwright David Henry Hwang. His 1988 work, M. Butterfly, borders on fantasy, lies, betrayal and centres on shifting a person's entire life around a single glorious performance. The role becomes life, it changes the entire set of morals for the actor and produces reverberations into the life of his audience. Song Liling plays for Rene Gallimard, he becomes a wife for the French diplomat, he brings him a child, he loves and dedicates himself to his role even when the illusion is over for his spectator. The props are even alive in the form of a baby, and the role is so masterfully played, that it engulfs the Frenchman completely, even causing his suicide.

»If all the world's a stage, I want to operate the trap door.« (Paul Beatty) says the hare and jumps away through the bushes.

III. »LIKE A TITAN WHO COMES FOR HIS OWN"«

In the book Intelligent Control Systems (2002, Meystel et al.), Albus is

stipulating that all intelligent life forms, be they alive or artificial, need an interface with the outside world. These sensory and executive elements, for instance the eyes or one's hands, build an integrated mask around such object that contains them. The individual is thus seen as enclosed in a web of networked elements that help interact with the environment. Though incredibly useful, this interface presents

»WAIT FOR THE CURTAINS TO RISE AND BE LIKE ME, AS I AM THE GREAT PRETENDER«

also the gap between the stage and the audience. The dissociation between the self and the world allows for roles to be created, illusions to be projected, stages to be set and plays to be unravelled.

The third millennium society hides behind the most invisible mask of all: cyber-identity. From the creation of innocent avatars to the hidden self behind a monitor in the depths of fantasy, the virtual world offers a better, newer, infinite stage for human performance. The multitude of stages is only limited by time, since all of them re-

quire the actual presence of a human, even though interfaced by a computer. Second Life (2003, Linden Labs) is one of the largest virtual worlds in which characters are played by human operators and interacts through avatars, a representation of the projected self, much like the ancient theatre masks. From virtual spaces in which one can play an everyday role, to fantasy spawn mass-multi-player-online-role-playing-games, the current technological state is facilitating the need for humans to perform on a large stage.

IV. »TO AN ORPHAN WHOSE KEEP-ER HAS COME«

I have recently stumbled upon a list of 101 Most Influential People Who Never Lived. The homonym 2006 book written by Allan Lazar, Dan Karlan and Jeremy Salter presents a list of fictional and mythological characters that shaped future events throughout history, with argumentation. The great surprise was to find the Malboro Man in first place and Betty Boop at the 96th position. It seems that miniskirts (sex) were not as attractive as brawns (cigarettes), heh. Returning to the topic, go see Annie. It is the most dreamed dream, the most desired role: to be saved. Either from poverty, orphanages, vices, loneliness, madness or reality, the human will always desire to be someone else, to be extracted from its own life. »I had no idea of the character. But the moment I was dressed, the clothes and the make-up made me feel the person he was. I began to know him, and by the time I walked onto the stage he was fully born.« (Charlie Chaplin)

Remove your shoes, hurry on stage, wait for the curtains to rise and be like me, as I am the great pretender.

Quotes | Phideaux. Titan. 2005



FROM

HANGING CAGES RECKONING O SLUMBER

»START PEELING OFF FACE BY FACE«

It must have been a little over a year ago when a new voice was heard through the long bleak days and nights, offering salvation in exchange even for a hint of repentance.

He swore then not to serve him anymore, slithering false master, hidden god of the fools. "The slavery you're selling is all but too transparent for my taste. The fruits of eternal life you're offering are poisoned and deceitful and this will bring your downfall. And you will watch on bedded knees the fall of your empires, and I will be there to take comfort in the massacre of your former servants, and throw a perverse grim on your eyes."

Black clouds of abandonment gathered around him, all the masks he used over the years begging to be allowed to shatter and lay to rest. At least for a while, until he watches from afar those whose life he would soon claim.

»Start peeling off face by face until the raw blackened meat sees the light of day. No more blood, no more veins, just a void filled with cruelty and wrathful deities standing immerse between you and your other self.« »Now I understand. You've drawn out the one monster you should have left alone, unspoken of and unseen. You know that this cheap impersonation of the other realm will not protect you when he comes for you. And come he will. The ultimate hideousness, You.« »Yes. I've always prayed it would be me the one who summons and keeps him on a leash. Imagine. To just close your eyes and see through his eyes as he turns day into night and disembowels the ground with his mere breath. Would it not make you feel like the sun god himself?«

But some creatures cannot be overthrown and it is better to start carving in secret another fake smile for the days to come. Sadly, not even the hordes of lesser spirits at my disposal will protect me from his evil. I risk too much, yet I still have too much to lose. »And what might that be? Can the all knowing hiding in the back of your mind say for sure? I doubt that.«

I still listen to that song, honoring the memory of you. And the mind flows back to the beginning, when freshly carved faces announced a world of possibilities ready to crumble.



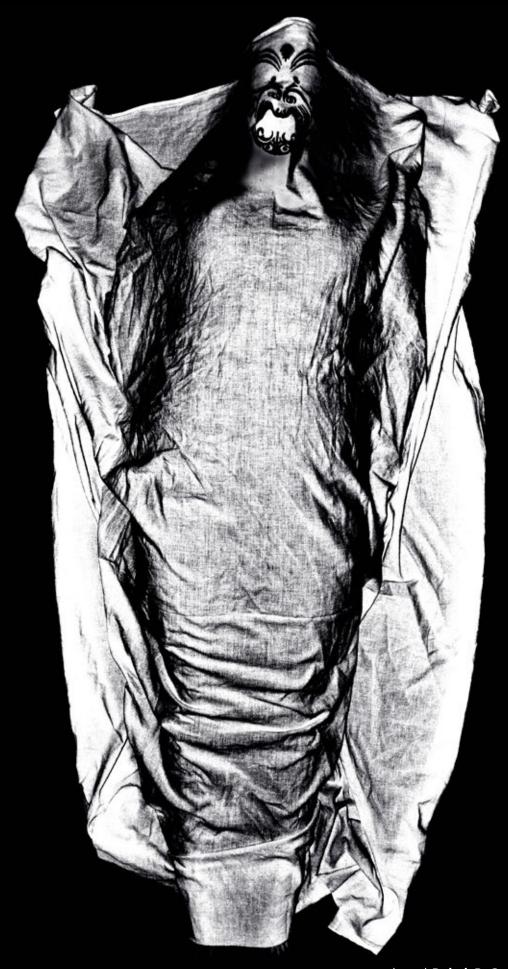


photo | Bahak B. Courtesy of the artist

CHAI

CISSORS





EYE TEASER

CHRISTOPHER ASKEW

United States



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