

Melanie Smith

FAKE AND FARCE

BACKDROPS FOR SEVEN SCENES

Opening: Tuesday, February 6

PROYECTO
PARALELO



In her most recent project Melanie Smith takes on Flemish painting, specifically the work of Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Brueghel the Old. Through video, performance and painting Smith re-reads the work of these canonical artists through a contemporary lens setting up a stage where the theatrical, the pictorial and the moving image overlap. The result is a humorous and enticing series of works that hint to Baroque aesthetics, the History of Art and the relevance in today's context of the subject matter at hand.

*A strange picture:
A plethora of signifiers multiplies the number of lacunae,
which leads to the endless account of missing elements*

Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*

The exhibition **FAKE AND FARSE: BACKDROPS FOR SEVEN SCENES** has its origins in the performative piece developed for La Tallera during the Summer of 2017. This multi-faceted piece created spatially complex theatrical perspectives that brought the back stage to the front whilst turning the workplace into a continuous exhibit. Siqueiros' ex-studio became a workshop where carpenters, students, local seamstresses, stage designers and a restoration specialist, came together to recreate a mixture of *tableaux vivants* from Bosch and Brueghel the Elder's paintings. Over three months, seven live activations from fragments of the original paintings were made with students from the local theatre school. These were simultaneously recorded on nine different security cameras. During the activations, there were live musicians playing different tunes, mashing up unfinished fragments and developing multiple musical itineraries.

The show at PROYECTO PARALELO unfolds upon the results of those scenes thus adding an extra level of interpretation that sets forth the tension between the construction of time in what is properly pictorial and in the moving image. This problem has driven Melanie Smith's work to various solutions that address the aesthetic, the social, the political and the affective arenas.

The *mises en scène* in the show are multiple: the gallery itself has become a stage, but also each painting works as the backdrop or as a fragment of a possible scene. The whole exhibition is a kind of background while the recorded images of the action that took place in La Tallera have become themselves a video-installation.

The works in the show are also traversed by a delicate sense of humor that subverts the canonical interpretation of Flemish painting but that can also be found in it. In the specific case of Bosch's paintings there is a paradox between his clear refusal of the popular, the disorderly and everything that is out of the norm, and the way in which his means of representation rely on an aesthetic of the chaotic, the capricious, the extravagant and on a surprising formal freedom. These paradoxes are revealing in the way Smith reads the older works. Her paintings seem to build and destroy the pictorial plane in a single move. Michel de Certeau's description of Bosch's paintings are useful defining Smith's work too:

“The painting becomes progressively more opaque as the prolific epiphany of its forms and colors becomes more detailed. The former hides itself in displaying the latter. The painting organizes, aesthetically, a loss of meaning”. It is from these spaces of indetermination that Smith’s questions arise and connect the medieval imaginary with the contemporary world: Where are the loopholes of theatricalized politics today? Who are the crazy ones? Who is defined as the Hermit? When did greed stop being a sin? How have we interiorized pride? How is political correctness detaching us from desire, joy, irrationality and disorder? How can the stasis of painting be understood as a kind of movement where lack of action, time and form take on another meaning?

Melanie Smith (Poole, England, 1965). Melanie Smith was born in Poole, England in 1965. She received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Reading. Her work has been characterized by a certain re-reading of the formal and aesthetic categories of avant-gardes and post-avant-garde movements, problematized at the sites and within the horizons of heterotopias. She is a member of the Sistema Nacional de Creadores, FONCA, Mexico. In the forthcoming months, she will take part in numerous exhibitions at the Hamburger Bahnhof, Hamburg; Perez Art Museum, Miami; Liverpool Biennial and the Hamburg Kunsthalle. She is currently preparing an important anthological show at MACBA Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona that will open in the summer of 2018 and will travel to Museo Amparo, Puebla, and MUAC, Mexico City.

For more information and images please contact the gallery.