

ISSN 1120-3982

4180549 05>
6 42633 35907 1

POSTE ITALIANE SPA
Sped. in A. P. - D.L. 353/2003
(conv. in L. 27/02/2004 n° 46)
art. 1, comma 1, LO/MI

Flash Art

THE WORLD'S LEADING ART MAGAZINE • INTERNATIONAL EDITION

no. 314

Volume 50 - 2017

May

IT € 8,50 - FR € 14,50 - DE € 15,00
ES € 13,50 - PT € 10,90 - NL € 13,00
AT € 12,50 - BE € 11,90 - UK £ 8,80
CH CHF 12,00 - US \$ 15,00



MARIA LAI

JILL MULLEADY / BRUCE LABRUCE / PATRICK JACKSON / XAVIER VEILHAN /
YAN XING / VIJA CELMINS

Hercule Florence

NMNM / Monaco

Meticulously researched and documented, this captivating show, cocurated by artist Linda Fregni Nagler and NMNM's Cristiano Raimondi, brings together a vast array of drawings, watercolors, prints, letters and manuscripts that shed light on the remarkable achievements of nineteenth-century draftsman, printer and inventor Hercule Florence (1804–79). Born in Nice but raised in Monaco, this self-styled "new Robinson" is little known outside of Brazil, where he settled and worked for much of his adult life, after taking part in the ill-fated Langsdorff Expedition (1825–29) into the Amazon that cost the German leader Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff his sanity and the French painter Aimé-Adrien Taunay his life.

Florence's studies of the Amazonian landscape, its flora and fauna as well as the indigenous tribes and their customs, hold pride of place in the show alongside the finely illustrated diaries he kept during the expedition. Yet this forgotten figure from Brazil's colonial past deserves our attention today for his subsequent discoveries: innovative proposals for a system of musical notation of bird song and animal cries; a sixth architectural order, the Palmian; and more or less successful experiments with different printing methods, including *photographie*, a term he coined in 1833 for a technique of printing with light, a few years before Daguerre was credited with the invention of the photographic medium.

Commissioned works by five international artists, three living in Brazil, provide a welcome contemporary twist to an exhibition that might otherwise flag owing to the sheer volume of archival material. Formally varied in approach, they touch on different aspects of Florence's oeuvre, whose ongoing preoccupation with copying and recording informs Fregni Nagler's own artistic contribution. Lucia Koch's translucent silk curtains, printed with subtle color gradients drawn from Florence's enchanting watercolors of cloud-strewn skies, are among the exhibition's highlights.

by Agnieszka Gratzka

Art et Liberté

Museo Reina Sofia / Madrid

The Museo Reina Sofia's current exhibition "Art et Liberté: Rupture, War and Surrealism (1938–1948)" is perfumed with the politics of desire, yielding to an excavation of spirit through the sibylline energies of youth. Founded by Georges Henein, Ramses Younan, Kamel El-Telmissany and Fouad Kamel, the movement's immersion into the psyche was a libertine effort that blurred the present with thoughts of an untapped future. Delightful incongruities, fraught with the tipsiness of young adulthood, were used to dissolve the bourgeoisie's conservative aesthetics and mindless autocracy in solutions similar to Walter Benjamin's most "excoriated and ridiculed ideas" during his period in the German Youth Movement.

While contemporary conservatives have co-opted the surreal, "Art et Liberté's" debauched unveiling of its unconscious still has a political charm. To give in to an illogical and unnerving human psyche, with all its pulsions and desires, is to stretch the empty literalism of an oppressive and systematic reality to the breaking point. This is particularly true of Inji Efflatoun's painting *Untitled* (1942), wherein female bodies are composed of malleable substances somewhere between muscle and hair. They cohere with Mahmoud Said's *La Femme aux Boucles d'or* (1933) in which cleavage takes center stage, the subtle tan line emphasizing a plump command. Reality's osteoporotic nature fractures, revealing cracked passageways into body, mind and matter. As Robert Rauschenberg noted of his "Early Egyptian" sculptures — his cardboard sarcophagi stacked at zero degrees of surrealism — bodies allow for "a silent discussion of their history exposed by their new shapes." Such was the caustic psychoanalysis of the Surrealists: an idealistic reform of spirit, and a desire to work through the rubble of war, its waste, through a soft and pliant psyche.

by Sabrina Tarasoff

Will Benedict

Fondazione Giuliani / Rome

Contradictions animate and define Will Benedict's work; suspended between political engagement and surrealism, narrative and abstraction, experimentation and commodification, and alarm and humor. With a technique based on layering and assembly, he questions the conventions of filmic and painted representation, focusing on the mass media landscape.

"Fiction is a Terrible Enemy", the artist's first solo show in Rome, presents a selection of recent works reflecting his warped visual sensibility. Focused specifically on video production, it includes two works produced for the band Wolf Eyes, an emblem of today's hard rock noise underground. Benedict accompanies their hammerings with images both hilarious and disturbing, linked to the concept of "Law and Order" — always a focus of right-wing politics, not least of Donald Trump. Two videos address food policy. *The Bed That Eats* (2015) is a grotesque commentary on junk food, while the mockumentary *Toilets not Temples* (2014), on excesses in food production and consumption, was shot with the help of journalist David Leonard. The imagery alternates between documentary-style sequences and transcendent visions, witnessed in the scene of men falling from the sky, which lies halfway between Magritte's *Golconda* (1953) and *Magnolia's* (1999) frog storm.

Alongside the videos is a sample of paintings evidencing Benedict's refined and peculiarly expressive pictorial language, one which erases the distinctions between manual creation and reproduction, and between picture and frame. Two works, *Production Hospital* and *Leopard Frog* (both 2016), characterise his approach to two dimensions: Roughly painted foam panels occasionally bearing collaged images encase canvases, framed by aluminum and glass. These works' reflections of their surrounding space and of the visitors reinforces their existence in a border territory between reality and representation.

(Translated from Italian by Alexander Estorick.)

by Cristiana Perrella