

setp stanikas

## spring | le printemps

2017 05 02 - 06 10

### *Danse de singe*

*Aux sons d'une petite musique narquoise, sautillante,  
Essouffée, — tandis qu'il pleut, tandis qu'il pleut de la pluie pourrie,  
Saute, saute, mon âme, vieux singe d'orgue de Barbarie,  
Petit vieillard pelé, sournois, animal romantique et tendre.*

*(...)*

*Encore un air, hélas ! le dernier ! — Et que ce soit cette sourde  
Valse de jamais, requiem des voleurs morts, musique en échos  
Qui dit : adieu les souvenirs, l'amour et la noix de coco...  
— Tandis que la pluie pauvre fait glouglou dans la boue vieille et lourde.*

Oscar Venceslas de Lubicz-Milosz

Everyone would probably agree that Svajonė and Paulius Stanikas have their own particular list of roles they play, a certain artistic repertoire they use masterfully, balancing between the invasion of the contemporary and paradoxical inclusions, inclusions as in pieces of amber, of the quasi-classical, the tragic and the grotesque, idealism and decadence. The artists have a distinct style, which is deliberately damped down by the dusk of romanticism (in the literal sense of the word and as an allusion to the historical style of art), as if it was a combination of the most secret diary and a promotional booklet, a prayer-book and a lifestyle magazine. Of course, as is always the case in these artists' work – in everyday life, in the present and in the banal - the subject is important. All the same, both the subject and everyday life are absorbed into time that is crumbling and running out. Time is like sand. Banal. But also true.

This time setp stanikas have decided to somewhat transform their drastic or perverse roles into a lyrical elegy, an installation mood, suffused with interlaced golden strands of sadness and grief, but at the same time the refreshing and intimate breath of gentleness. setp stanikas have 'cleansed' their project of (non)political topics. They have focused on the phenomenon of time as an echo of word, sound and music, a recollection, fading and therefore emotionally vivid, and as a fragment of an impression that stings.

In this setp stanikas installation, we will see combinations of the artists' favoured techniques such drawing, photography, video and objects, but this time the difference lies in the content, in its abstractionism going towards plain emotionality. There are no specific historical figures here - that has been typical of more than one setp stanikas installation over the last several years, as indeed there are no straightforward biographical or everyday details - it is as if everything is melting, receding and dying, but at the same time a fresh, but melancholic feeling of renewal and revival is emerging, coming closer – and gathering strength.

Appealing to a lyric impression, the artists having given it the name Spring.

It is no coincidence that in this installation the main motif is the most abstract means of expression – sound, i.e. the leitmotif of music and dance. However, one should not forget that setp stanikas are masters of montage, choreographers of melancholy. A German chanson found on the internet not only plays subtly with feelings but also appeals to a broader, melancholic (desirous at the same time of hope and renewal) post-war cultural tradition of Marlene Dietrich and Édith Piaf's musical elegy – 'non, rien de rien, non, je ne regrette rien'. It is not only the feeling itself that is important to setp stanikas, but the fact of an almost random quotation and the choreography is not disguised.

Nonetheless, the semantic and emotional axis of the setp stanikas installation is a videodance. The viewer sees an ochre-coloured carpet - a metonymy of seaside sand - and it is as if (s)he is participating in the dance and seeing it through the eyes of the dancer. The pleats of an azure-blue skirt billow out, shoes of the same colour come in and out of view. And the spinning around in a circle is an imitation of the metro-rhythmic structure of a waltz, which is also a whirlpool of time when one tries to grasp interpersonal ties as well as the ones from the past.

This is a retro allusion, an undisguised part of the romance market. The texture and colour of the carpet, the metaphors of dance triggers further series of associations – we also hear the surf breaking, the wind is blowing on our faces, we are sinking in a thick sunset, we hear the shrieking of seagulls - we are enveloped by the aura of a specific spacetime. This is a stereotypical metacultural symbol but also a splinter of the artists' subjective reality that was filmed on an impulse in their home in Paris (some sort of fragment appears in a shot), before leaving for the airport to fly to Vilnius).

Creative / casual choreographical decisions of this sort enable one to stay naturally emotional, experience creative spontaneity, (still) undergo an 'adventure' of discovery, and yet not slip into sentimental pathos. The artists employ both natural emotionality and its substitute – an 'aesthetic thickening', 'sensual glamour', but only in so far as it helps the choreography of the whole, maintaining an ambivalent relationship between drama and kitsch.

There has been no effort to hide the fact that all of this elegy has been choreographed. However, choreography, tricks or banality cannot win against and stop time. Its wax – as it melts - drips on the objects, covers them with a specific surface, flows slowly and fills the mouth, eyes, voice, gaze, memory, thoughts, shaping the contours of death and (re)birth.

Kęstutis Šapoka

#### **Exhibition partners**

Živilė and Jonas Garbaravičius

#### **Patron**

Rolandas Valiūnas

#### **Supporters of the exhibition**

The Lithuanian Council for Culture, Ararat, Idea Artis

#### **Supporters of the gallery**

Vilma Dagilienė, Romas Kinka, Vilnius City Municipality, Lietuvos rytas, Ekskomisarų biuras, Namai ir objektai, Farrow&Ball, Libravitalis