

ART PROBE

ISSUE #9

- Shristi Sainani

Exhibition : LUSUS NATURAE
(21 January — 26 February 2021)

Artists : Katharina Arndt, Jim Avignon, Fritz Bornstücker, Stefano Bosis, Dimitra Bouritsa, Maxim Brandt, Beth Braun, Joanna Buchowska, Ulrike Buhl, Troels Carlsen, Mimmo Catania, Claudia Chaseling, Jeroen Cremers, Amrita Dhillon, GodsDogs, Grigori Dor, Christina Foitou, Elena Alonso Fernandez, Zohar Fraiman, Abie Franklin, Andrew Gilbert, Giuseppe Gonella, Lennart Grau, Philip Grözing, Eric Haacht, Tanja Hehmann, René Holm, Stella Kapezanou, Sarah Kretchmer, Miriam Lenk, Katsuhiko Matsubara, Christopher Colm Morrin, Amalia Mourad, Mascha Naumova, Anna Nezhnaya, Justine Otto, Eglè Otto, Allan Paul, Christian Perdix, Paul Pretzer, Cornelia Renz, Noah Ryu, Susanne Schirdewahn, Moritz Schleime, Kerstin Serz, Semra Sevin, Alexander Skorobogatov, Rebecca Stevenson, Mairén Hernández, Miriam Vlaming

Venue : BCMA, BERLIN (Germany)



Christopher Colm Morrin, *Growing* (2021)

Source : BCMA Gallery

Curated by Vanessa Souli, *Lusus Naturae* is a group show exhibiting 50 artists, at BCMA Gallery, Berlin. The title of the show, '*Lusus Naturae*' comes from a Latin term which can be translated to '*Freak of Nature*' or '*Wonder of Nature*'. The narrative of the show revolves around concepts of deformation, mutation and monstrosity. The exhibit brings forth a diverse range of media, implementing

this idea of transformation using emotions of fear, surprise compassion, disgust, humour and desire. Every artist with their pieces takes a different stance on what these terms can transcend to. While some artists follow the topic with respect to folklore and mythology, there are others which forge interest in the contemporary advent of social media and beauty filters. The resultant, hence, lies on a slim line between pleasing and horrendous; sometimes gloomy, other times absurd. The press release for the show states —

This exhibition aims to highlight the beauty of hybrid creatures and challenge their 'ugliness' by building a dialogue between old and new tradition.¹

¹ *Lusus Naturae - arts project space, 2021*

Some of my favourite pieces from the exhibition, '*LUSUS NATURAE*' were:

1) Up n' Away, 2019

Artist : Paul Pretzer



Source : BCMA Gallery

Humour struck, the picking of my favourites start from this piece called '*Up n' Away*' painted by Paul Pretzer in 2019. Pretzer is known for his dark, suggestively humorous pieces. He is an Estonian artist, born in 1981.

This oil on canvas, measures 40 x 33 x 5 cm. What the viewer beholds in front of them is an image showcasing landscape, constructed with broad brush strokes. Above the olive-emerald hilltops, lie an ombre sky with lavender moving up to an indigo and finally merging into a black. Floating in the darkness of the canvas above, is the subject. The subject has an orange tonal quality and is levitating on the top, naked. It is his anatomical rear that viewer sees. Everything beneath the torso is visible. The subject is urinating on the hilltops. On the bottom-right and on the left of the canvas, one can see cherries dangling, mid-air. This piece is particularly interesting because it (much like other artworks by Pretzer) seems like a marriage between oeuvre of renaissance and surrealist imagery. As a composition too, this piece is visually balanced. It carries a minimal quality, without lacking narrative.

2) Escaping Others, 2020

Artist : Christopher Colm Morrin



Source : BCMA Gallery

Christopher Colm Morrin was born in Dublin, Ireland (1980). He is a visual artist, poet and has completed his Bachelors in Psychology. He currently works in Berlin; his work rooted in the concepts related to 'being'— internal and external. He addresses stereotypes regarding masculinity, challenging stringent notions of men and depression, fragility and expression.

This piece called, '*Escaping Others*' seems like an extension of the series he had displayed mentioned in his Artist Statement (on his website). The series was called '*Male Fear And The Avoidance Of Feelings*' where he uses on canvas, torn up notes he writes to himself along with repeated lines created with a pencil while in a state of distress or anxiety. The vulnerability of these marks, make this piece intriguing. Not to mention the accidental quality by which the marks and ink gestures, come together are a harmonious composition. This acrylic and collage work measures 30 x 20 cm and was painted in the year 2020.

3) The Beauty, The Beast 2, 2021

Artist : Mascha Naumova



Source : BCMA Gallery

The greatest compliment an artist can receive is when the viewer says — I have seen nothing like this before. This piece did exactly the same when it was being scrutinised for ArtProbe's Issue 9. *The Beauty, the Beast 2 (2021)*, repelled and provoked enough to be one of the top contenders from *Lusus Naturae*. Mascha Naumova is a Russian performance and video artist, exploring moral, social and gender specific work in her oeuvre.

In this pigment on ink jet paper piece, what one sees in front of them is the artist soaked in milky white water, with slight suggestions of her blonde hair making the liquid muddy, in a sense. The artist showcases her right profile, which is covered in raw skin, sliced from the back of poultry. Below the photograph, there is a hint of her exposed chest. The overlay of bird skin over her, speaks of a need to cover up or hide her blemishes, which may be more emotive than literal. There is a certain need to seek refuge within the piece. As if the subject doesn't mind looking offensive, if that meant guaranteed safety.

4) Imbued incoming Sun, 2018/2020

Artist : Giuseppe Gonella



Source : BCMA Gallery

Finally, my last pick of the lot would be Giuseppe Gonella's '*Imbued Incoming Sun*', fabricated during the years 2018-2020. Gonella is a contemporary artist, based in Berlin. He was born in Italy and completed his masters in fine arts, specialising in the field of mosaic and stained glass.

This oil on canvas is from his series called, Blood and Milk. It measures 40 x 50 cm. What the viewer sees in front of them is a primary subject and a secondary subject; both of which are of African descent. Both wear green strappy garments which are covered by a robe. While one sits under a parrot green robe, the other is covered in a sky blue one. The question arises, as you spot the differences (and similarities) within the image, whether if the primary and the secondary are intact, different women? Perhaps, not.

In the art-world green may have a bad name but in this Gonella, the green is what captures the eye of the viewer and invites them to read further into the work.

REFERENCES

- **Lusus Naturae - arts project space, 2021**
arts project space. 2021. Lusus Naturae - arts project space.
Available at: <<https://bcma.gallery/lusus-naturae/>> [Accessed 1 February 2021].