

KETELEER GALLERY is very pleased to present CLASH, the first solo exhibition by Nasan Tur (°1974. Offenbach, Germany) with the gallery. The exhibition consists of new and recent sculptures, paintings, photographs, drawings, woodcuts and video.

Nasan Tur: *Clash*, a text by Pieter Vermeulen.

What is an image? Today, the answer to this age-old question appears as straightforward as it is complicated, especially now that we are completely surrounded by them. Ever-changing, constantly shifting in meaning and location, from screen to screen, server to server: a total mobilization of images circulating in varying sizes and intensities, visible, yes, palpable even, but never tangible. The amount of visual information that stirs our retinas on a daily basis is hallucinating. The incessant excessive stream of things we eagerly indulge in: junk food for our steadily weakening attention span, a *grande bouffe* for our oversaturated eyes. And yet, our hunger is never satiated. What's going on here?

There's an economy of images and attention is the scarce commodity competed for. Selfies are the telling symptoms of a pathological narcissism, but even more so of the commercial marketing of ourselves as being beautiful, attractive, trendy, performant. Contemporary images are at once big data, big brother and big business. Icons of art are being traded as idols of the market, effortlessly pulverizing financial records; art works swallowed whole by the black hole of capital. Images mimic images rather than reality, their production of meaning is an accelerated semiosis, a rampant *memesis*. In terms of visual practice, does art still hold any privileges? How do artists present themselves within this omnipresent visual culture? How to look at art since the pictorial turn?

In the early 1990s, French philosopher Baudrillard uttered the provocative statement that the Gulf War never happened. Western citizens experienced the military conflict through meticulously manipulated and broadcasted images, without the possibility to compare them with the gruesome reality. In times of ubiquitous simulacra – disinformation, digital manipulation, fake news and deep fakes – his words seem but a distant holler or an early warning. Propaganda and warfare have perhaps always gone hand in hand, but never before were images so deliberately employed in political and military battles.

All images have a performative aspect to them: they do something to the viewer. There is such a thing as the violence of the image. Hito Steyerl describes how in Eastern Ukraine, pro-Russian separatists take a Soviet tank – a memorial of World War II – down from its pedestal and go to battle with it. It's telling of how history is never sound asleep but always merely slumbering – to be startled awake in an instant. Images are weapons, at least insofar as they're picked up, used, wielded.

Nasan Tur shows camouflage suits he calls *The Invisibles* (2021-), a series of sniper outfits in varying sizes meant to make the person wearing it invisible in military conflicts. The wearers themselves are absent, the costumes no more than empty shells, melancholic figures, lifeless bodies awaiting reanimation. But these ghostlike figures are also staring back at the viewers, confronting them with the ethical question from Plato's Myth of The Ring of Gyges: would we behave as righteously if we were able to hide under the cloak of anonymity and invisibility? Would that power be able to corrupt us morally?

One way of summarizing the underlying theme in Nasan Tur's vast oeuvre would be 'how the image of power correlates with the power of the image'. Take, for instance, his *Agony* series (2018) in which the law of the jungle is turned upside down: the prey becomes the predator and vice versa. The stuffed animals are images of themselves, cadavers in a hitherto impossible distance from their instinctive, biological being. This series of sculptures deals not so much with the justice of revenge and the retributive punishment as it does with the revaluation of all values. Power relations are all too often normalized and conventionalized, as if they were natural laws carved in stone. The *mundus inversus* (upside-down world) in Nasan Tur's work shows us things could always be different.

In a neighbouring building, Hotel Pilar, the installation *Locked Up* (2021) is on display, initially created in the context of the COVID-19 quarantine. Where social isolation during the pandemic became a symbol for societal solidarity, Nasan Tur show a series of prominent figures who were robbed from their freedom solely based on their ideas, sexual orientation or strive for justice; activists, journalists and politicians who are currently locked up and whom the artist wants to make visible again. They're staring out of the window – that thin line between the private and the public – as a reminder or a warning to every passer-by, as a monument or a *Denkmal*.

The series of drawings *Traces* (2021), where also made during the lockdown. With his right hand Tur follows the contours of his left hand in meticulous, overlapping movements resulting in visual patterns which evoke not only the origins of art but also the interaction between the two cerebral hemispheres.

Tur also puts himself on the spot. In the video work *In My Pants* (2015) the artist stares the spectator straight in the face while he wets himself. Here too, the work is about the ambiguity of the image: with this shameful gesture he reveals a childlike vulnerability which is simultaneously carefully staged for the viewer. The failure of the artist becomes the success of the work.

His photographic series *Sea View* (2016) consists of panoramic views of the Mediterranean Sea with refugee boats and drowning victims filtered out of them. These images show not only the persistent mechanisms of collective denial and dissociation, but also tragical idylls, projections of what the world could look like. Alas, the best possible world exists only in our imagination.

Time and time again, Nasan Tur reveals himself as a contemporary iconoclast: he dethrones images to reinvigorate them. With a wink and a witticism, he questions the cult of the image, of beauty, the media and the genius. And that is what the *iconoclash* in his work consists of: critical in times of crisis, intelligent but not pedantic, as playful as it is serious.

Nasan Tur is currently preparing for a solo exhibition in 2023 at the Berlinische Galerie, Museum of Modern Art Berlin and towards participation at the forthcoming Riga Biennial.

Nasan Tur has also participated in major exhibitions including documenta 14 (2017); 10. Istanbul Biennial (2007); 6. Taipei Biennale (2008); The artist's work has also been featured in significant group exhibitions such as DO DISTURB! Palais de Tokyo (2015); Stand Up! Centre Pompidou Paris (2015); Power to the people Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (2018); Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin, Städel Museum Frankfurt, Maxxi Museum Rome. In 2012 he was awarded the Will Grohmann Prize of the Academy of Arts, Berlin and 2014 the Villa Massimo Prize of the Deutsche Akademie Rom.

Public/Private Collections (selection) Berlinische Galerie - Museum of Modern Art, Berlin, DE, MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome, Italy, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, DE, Lentos Museum, Linz, AT, Kunsthalle Mannheim, DE, Joanneum Museum, Graz, AT, Albertinum - Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, DE, Pori Art Museum, Pori, FI, Sammlung zeitgenössischer Kunst der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, DE, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, DE, Botkyrka Konsthall, Tumba, SE, Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe, DE, Borusan Museum, Istanbul, TR, ARTER Museum, Vehbi Koç Foundation, Istanbul, TR, ifa Collection Stuttgart, DE, Kunst Haus Wien, AT.