

Petrit Halilaj
“of course blue affects my way of shitting”
Opening Reception: April 26, 2014
April 26 - June 14, 2014

Chert is pleased to present the second solo show of Kosovar artist Petrit Halilaj at the gallery. The title of the exhibition, “of course blue affects my way of shitting,” is taken from a text written by the artist, which is itself part of a bigger series of prose and poetry that Halilaj started writing in 2007. Many of the artist’s titles for previous exhibitions and artworks have come from these texts, which have never been presented in their entirety until now. The exhibition is accompanied by a new publication which collects the artist’s writing alongside his most recent series of drawings “Several birds fly away when they understand it.” Both the texts and drawings link together history and fantasy, reality and absurdity; a dichotomy at the core of the artist’s practice.

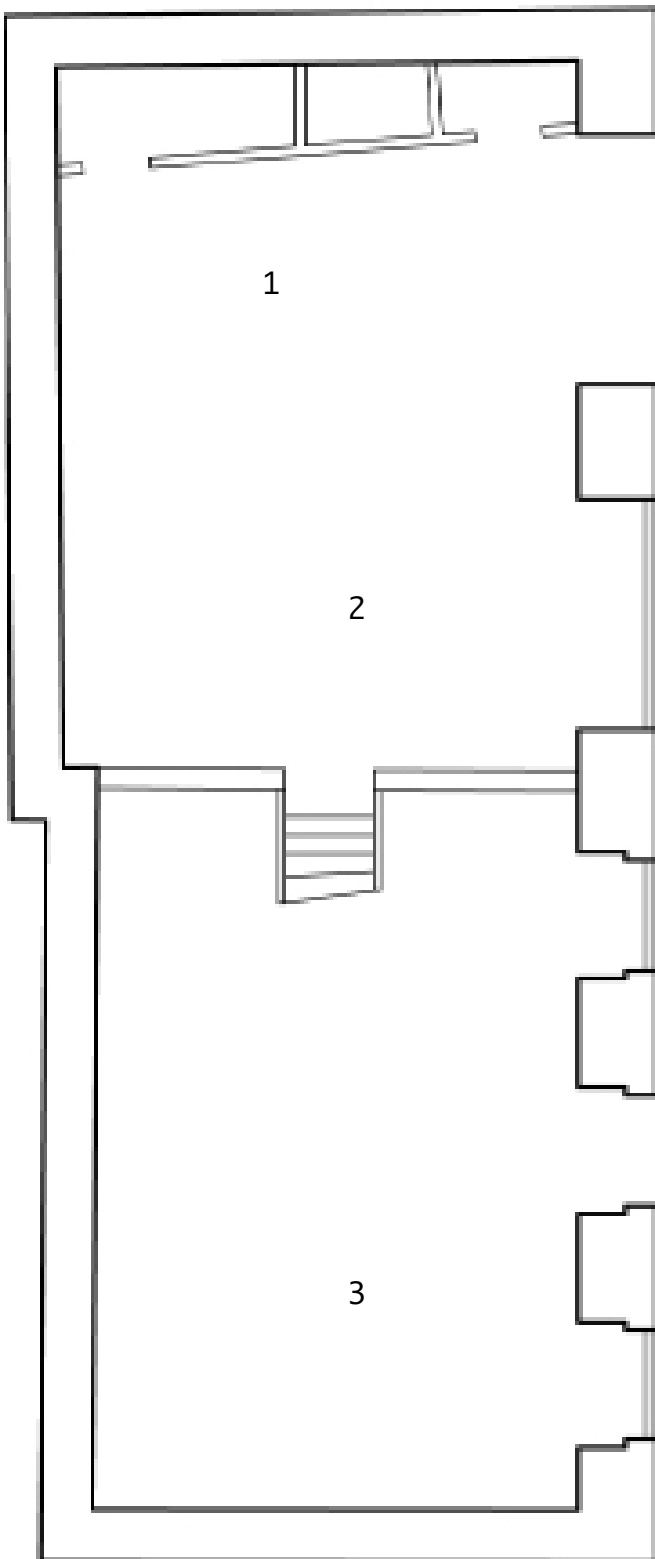
The texts reveal an intimate and personal history. As a collection they provide a unique insight into the artist’s brain, recounting memories of childhood, war, exodus, family, work, and contemplating his own identity, his sexuality, love, affections and emotions. Halilaj’s resolutely personal works simultaneously reflect on social and political events, understanding the struggle and impact they have on a singular life. But it is this intimacy within Halilaj’s practice that this exhibition at Chert focuses on; celebrating the more delicate and less evident side of the artist’s production.

The drawings from the series “Several birds fly away when they understand it” comprise images of the bird archive from the former Natural History Museum of Kosovo (whose story was the subject of his latest solo exhibition “Poisoned by men in need of some love” at WIELS Contemporary Art Center in Brussels); these birds have been modified by the artist, and painted with beautiful and exotic masks. Birds were also the subject of Halilaj’s installation presented at the 2013 Venice Biennale for the Kosovo Pavillion. “I’m hungry to keep you close. I want to find the words to resist but in the end there is a locked sphere. The funny thing is that you’re not here, nothing is,” filled the space with a huge nest, inside of which, a semi-hidden white room was home to two canaries, alter egos of the artist and his lover.

Together with the drawings in the downstairs of the gallery is “Cleopatra,” a rotating bulb which imitates the movement of insects at night, attracted to the light. This piece is also connected to the story of the defunct Museum of Pristina, and especially to its collection of butterflies and insects. The lamp throws light on the drawings in the lower space of the gallery, which are lit only from the effect random movements.

On the upper floor you find a large rug, made by the artist’s mother in Kosovo. The rug would be plain, were it not for some chicken feet – as if a hen has just passed by. In the past, hens have been a predominant subject in Halilaj’s work: from the series of drawings “Bourgeois Hens,” to the sculptures “They are Lucky to be Bourgeois Hens,” and living hens have been present in his shows at Stacion, Pristina; at the 2010 Berlin Biennale; and then again at the Rome Auditorium in 2011, as part of “Temporaneo,” organised by Nomad Foundation; and before that, in a group exhibition in Istanbul.

Finally, a collection of videos and documentation provide further background into the artist’s different projects, giving a more total and intimate view of his artistic language.



1.
I don't have a Room, I don't have a Mind. Nevermind!
 2014
 various cushions, different colors and sizes, canary costume, documentation of videos:
 -*They are Lucky to be Bourgeois Hens* (acquatium sculpture detail, 2008)
 -Space shuttle in the garden (2009)
 -*Cleopatra* (2011)
 -*Because it is for you my Dear, and the Sky doesn't see you and we can fall. Yes I am doing it for you, to see if you are free too* (detail, 2011)
 -*I'm hungry to keep you close. I want to find the words to resist but in the end there is a locked sphere. The funny thing is that you're not here, nothing is* (Birds documentation, 2013)
 -*I'm hungry to keep you close. I want to find the words to resist but in the end there is a locked sphere. The funny thing is that you're not here, nothing is* (cut out from conversation with Skhurte Halilaj, 2013)

2.
 No title yet
 2014
 Traditional 'jan' rug made by Skhurte Halilaj. 260 x 400 cm

3.
Cleopatra (Lamp), 2011-2013
 Electric motor, iron arm, light bulb, electric wire.
 ed. 5 + 2 AP

Drawings for them series:
Several birds fly away when they understand it
 2013
 Riso-graph printing, collages and drawings on archival paper, coming from ex-Natural History Museum of Kosovo.
 22.8 x 23.4 cm each / panels 69 x 70 cm each.
 Riso-graph printing, collages and drawings on old found paper.
 20 x 30 cm each

Petrit Halilaj was born in Kosovo in 1986, he currently lives and works between Kosovo, Italy and Germany. In 2013 he represented Kosovo for the first official Pavilion in the Venice Biennale, curated by Kathrin Rhomberg, commissioned by Erzen Shkololli, Arsenale, Venice. In the past he has presented solo exhibitions at WIELS, "Poisoned by men in need of some love," curated by Elena Filipovic, Brussels; Foundation d'Enterprise Galeries Lafayette, "July 14th?" Paris (2013); Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen, "Who does the earth belong to while painting the wind?!" curated by Giovanni Carmine, St. Gallen (2012); Kunstraum Innsbruck, curated by Veit Loers (2011); Stacion, "Back to the Future," curated by Albert Heta, Center for Contemporary Art Prishtina (2009).

Group exhibitions include: "SUPER Visions - Zeichnen und Sein," curated by Stefanie Heckmann, Museum Schloss Moyland (2013); "New Public," curated by Rein Wolfs, Museion, Bolzano; "30 Künstler/30 Räume", curated by Kathleen Rahn, Kunstverein Nürnberg, Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft (2012); "Temporaneo," organized by IMF Foundation and Nomas Foundation, Auditorium, Rome; "Ernste Tiere: Petrit Halilaj, Judith Hopf, Bedwyr Williams," curated by Christina Végh Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn; "Ostalgia," curated by Massimiliano Gioni, New Museum, New York; "Based in Berlin," curated by Angelique Campens, Fredi Fischli, Magdalena Magiera, Jakob Schillinger and Scott Cameron Weaver, Atelierhaus Monbijoupark, Berlin; "You don't love me anymore," curated by Katja Schroeder, Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster (2011); 6th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, curated by Kathrin Rhomberg, Berlin (2010).

Upcoming projects include solo exhibitions at National Gallery of Kosovo in Prishtina (May 2014) and Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon (July 2014).