

GALERIE CATHERINE BASTIDE

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Nick Bastis **Making Friends**

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On this particular morning, Sam's internet was down, so he went out for a stroll along the river. He looked over to the other side and thought he saw his friend Mose. He couldn't be sure from that distance – it could have been someone else with a similar stride and the same hair-do as Mose. Sam decided to take the bridge across the river and see whether it was Mose.

Mose was walking on the other side of the river. As he looked across the river, he thought he saw his good friend Sam. He was almost sure it was Sam, but at the same time, he knew it could have been someone who looked just like Sam with a comparable puffy jacket. He decided to take the bridge across the river to see if it was Sam.

On the bridge, it turned out that it was neither one of them.

- As told by Gijs Milius

In Heinrich von Kleist story "On The Marionette Theater", as recalled by Nick Bastis, someone tries to convince a friend that puppets have more grace than human dancers, as the puppets lack self-awareness, ergo is devoid of ego, and of vanity. And so Bastis makes drawings by using "the dumbest part of the body", his elbow, evacuating all sort of visible, individual reference to the self, while the drawings are put in relation to various images and texts that function as investigative props but not as explanatory tools. He instigates collaborations between himself, some snails, and designer gallery chairs. The custom chair covers are marked with the slime excreted by the snails that don't know they're making art while scrolling, shitting, and sleeping, contingent to pure randomness yet all the same incorporated in the mechanism of art production. A looping film depicts three Lithuanian graphic designers shooting guns on their lunch break, Bastis having only interjected by asking two of them to wear paper masks in the image of the third.

Rather than expressing something in particular, the work is more concerned with the mechanisms of expression itself and its contingencies, produced through minor interjections in already occurring processes, flirting with an evacuation of the ego. Well, except for the sculpture of the guy with his penis looped into his own anus. That is an autonomous piece.

Bastis reminds us that if the puppet can be gracious in itself owing to its apparent absence of self-awareness, there is still a puppeteer who activates and actions their creature. The puppeteer is a sort of God who is perpetually, autonomously fucking itself, its penis looped into its anus, barring any other sort of element or outside information to penetrate it.

Nick Bastis (MFA, 2013, University of Chicago), was born in New York in 1985. Currently based between Brussels, BE and Vilnius, LT. Works recently shown at the Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago, US), Fluxia (Milan, IT) and Objectif (Antwerp, BE), upcoming shows at Regards (Chicago, US), Podium (Oslo, NO), Kunsthalle Athena (Athens, GR), Chapter NY (New York City, US).