

NOVEMBER 8, 2014 - JANUARY 11, 2015

Two Solo Exhibitions:

JÉRÔME HENTSCH

“Témoignage de chambre vide” – L’art mâle à voir fissa

ERWIN HOFSTETTER

Avoir la larme facile

KMD — KUNSTHALLE MARCEL DUCHAMP

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In its 25th exhibition, the KMD shows for the first time two solo presentations that nevertheless engage in a mutual dialogue.

The walls of the upper, larger exhibition room are immersed in an enigmatically cool grayish blue. On show here is Jérôme Hentsch’s *Témoignage de chambre vide*, an object cast in hardened, transparent resin. Measuring 19 x 16 x 9.5 cm, this enlarged object as sculpture seems, when viewed through the peep holes of the KMD, decidedly heroic and monumental. In its everyday existence, however, it is much smaller and far less impressive, notwithstanding its important function as a safety element that is inserted into the empty cartridge chamber of a pistol. In other words, it is an object that prevents a pistol from firing, rendering it “impotent,” so to speak. As a sculpture, on the other hand, it is unmistakably phallic (*L’art mâle à voir fissa*). It is precisely through this ambivalence that Hentsch is able to generate a mysterious and contradictory mood that transcends the sublime and strikingly aesthetic character of the object, an effect that is heightened still further by its presentation in this exhibition room of the KMD. We for our part, as “voyeuristic” viewers gazing through the peep holes of the KMD, become witnesses of the “témoin”—of the safety catch of a lethal weapon: a “humanitarian safety seal” that has mutated into an art object, a phallic emasculating element, egocentric, hard and assertive, but for all that highly transparent, adaptable and empathetic.

Compared with Hentsch’s industrially manufactured Readymade, Erwin Hofstetter’s installation *Avoir la larme facile* generates metaphors of an entirely different sort. He has placed a large number of yellow and black bowl-shaped vessels in the lower, small exhibition room. Through the visible traces of their hand-made production in soft, pliable wax, these pieces convey an impression of extreme sensitivity and at the same time evoke in the mind’s eye of the viewer what the title already suggests: a picture of vessels that serve to catch invisible tears, tears that might just as easily be those of the viewer, for he or she must bend down in order to peer through the peep hole into the “overcrowded” exhibition room. The sight of these empty or emptied vessels could indeed elicit a tear, especially as their shape and color vaguely awaken associations with dull, misshapen contact lenses. Moreover, in their potential role as vessels for foodstuffs and beverages, they may be seen as a female counterpart to Hentsch’s phallic “witness”, who stands there in his mysterious, empty chamber—upright, rigid and yet altogether forlorn.

Emptiness is what is inherent in both works and, viewed in the context of current realities, cannot fail to disturb and disconcert us. Emptying the pistol’s cartridge chamber of its témoin certainly brings death closer, while the life-giving food and drink vessels have lost their contents—even the tears. And as the theme of emptiness is dealt with in these two exhibitions in altogether different ways, we suddenly realize the extent to which rejection and acceptance, yearning and disappointment, joy and suffering, gentleness and violence, life and death are dependent on the purpose or function of emptiness in one form or another: “Avoir la larme facile, l’art mâle à voir fissa.”

Stefan Banz

Jérôme Hentsch

Born in 1963. After studying psychology in Geneva, he spent some time in the studio of Silvie Defraoui at the École des Beaux-Arts, likewise in Geneva, and then studied Lacanian psychology at the Université Paris 8. His research and interests embrace both theatrical and visual art, to which he now devotes himself entirely. Lives and works as an artist in Geneva.

Erwin Hofstetter

Born in Entlebuch, Canton Lucerne, Switzerland in 1960. College of Art and Design in Lucerne from 1981 to 1985. Training as drawing teacher. Co-founder of the Kunsthalle Lucerne in 1989. Solo and group exhibitions at many venues, including the Urs Meile Gallery in Lucerne. Lives and work in Lucerne.