

PLUS-ONE Gallery

Ritsart Gobyn

'Prologue'

18.05 - 18.06.2023

Characters (in order of appearance)

The actor; *Untitled* (paintings) – oil, acrylic, spray paint on canvas, wooden frame
The author; *Characters (in order of appearance)* (text) - inkjet print on paper
The musicians; *Untitled* (14 struts, pillars/flutes) – acrylic on steel
Melpomene; *Untitled* (trestle, tragedy) – painted casted aluminum
Thalia; *Stabilart* (level and tape, comedy) – painted bronze, wooden pedestal
The blind messenger; *Untitled* (moving blankets) - merino wool
The *deus ex machina*; *Untitled* (Gyproc plates, grey and pink sky) - mural
The chorus of Bacchae; *Untitled* (paintings, 5 masks) - oil, acrylic, spray paint on canvas
The prompter; (you) - human

The scene

In front of Vlaamse Kaai, at PLUS-ONE Gallery. Two large windows run the length of the façade and flank a central gate that opens onto the orchestra, filled with pillars – dark-red poles with holes – as flutes. Melpomene and Thalia, respectively symbolizing tragedy and comedy, dispute here until they get interrupted by the blind messenger. (Prologue) He guides the prompter to the stage that is crowded with five singers from the chorus. They are neither joy- nor mournful. (Parode) Their songs lead the prompter to the white space, room of the actor. The small windows overlook various landscapes. The prompter whispers the lines. (Epilogue) The following text imitates the Greek tragedy *Bacchae* by Euripides (406 BC).

Prologue

The actor:

Dear all, here, and now, we gathered plenary, for the first, last, everlasting, Endless Rehearsal¹. Paintings have been framed, acts performed, texts written, textiles woven, sculptures cast, for you, the prompter, to witness an infinite play, unified in space, time, action in three episodes.

The author:

May you hear the laughter and weeping that strain two galleries of cherry-red columns. Please, don't feel unwelcome, enter the stage, and let your whispers be heard by the chorus. Absorb the sonic waves of air that try to escape these steel flutes, as dictated by chiming scores. The sky is radiating white beams of light, through the cirrocumuli of a grey-hued celestial ceiling. The clustered clouds herald an ominous dispute between two muses, Melpomene and Thalia. Their staged attributes - trestle, level and tape – are props for a prologue of reconciled potential.

Melpomene:

Who am I? Well, I embody tragedy and the act of trembling truth and rigid rationality, Melpomene.

My wreath of vines is associated with Dionysos, But don't be fooled by the things that you see², I'm still, I'm still Apollo's servant, Melpomene. My trestle supports me during this sibling feud with Thalia, my sister here, muse of comedy.

The *paragone*, the comparative debate that originated in the renaissance, places painting versus sculpture to define one of them superior.

Thalia:

(Laughs uncontrollably)

Alas we all know that sculpted matter mirrors our reality by formulating form out of formlessness. I am an amused muse versus this sobbing sister. Sculpture can offer multiple views on one figure, a quality that is not granted to painting at large.

Melpomene:

(Weeps even more uncontrollably)

Woe! What about the reflecting mirrors, water and glass surfaces that present both front and back side of the key figure at one gaze at a time. It is all about imitation, *mimesis* and illusion. Objects can only appear as a two-faced Janus. Stop cackling, you! This quarrel isn't comic at all.

¹ *The Endless Rehearsal*, Ritsart Gobyn's first solo exhibition at PLUS-ONE Gallery (13.05 - 13.06.2021)

² Trompe L'oeil

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Thalia:

ILLUSION, you say it yourself, dear sister of mine, paintings are merely flat images without depth! The brushstrokes stage and reveal the process as the unfinished poetics of a semi-simulacrum.

Melpomene:

Please, stop using these expensive words when you don't understand them yourself anyways!

The blind messenger:

Dear daughters of Zeus, muses of the same blood, don't bicker about this corny topic. We must address other senses, like touch, if sight cannot provide the answer to this discord. I was born without optic abilities, and as a skilled traveler, I acquired an exceptional tactile sense. Hearing, smelling, and touching replaced seeing whilst traveling with messages on my blind mind.

Thalia:

You must be able to gather the structure of a sculpture by touch, whereas painting lacks form.

Melpomene:

Let the messenger's finger judge for itself, *OK?*³

The author:

The blind messenger approaches a painting that hangs on a column of the orchestra. When touching the surface of the assumed framed canvas, he experiences cold contact. The temperature of the aluminum painted object lowers the temperament of the sisterhood.

The blind messenger:

The dilemma of the *paragone* has been lifted. Sunbeams break through the grey firmament, altering the silver murk for a pinkish horizon. The day is making place for the night with a scattered scale of chromatics cruising the sky. Hear the faraway chants and laments of the Bacchae, they resonate as murmurs in the ether.

Parode

The chorus of Bacchae:

Sinister sisters, your emotive motives are moving us to joy and mourning, as we linger in between, just like the ephemeral transition of sun to moon. We used to tear human flesh in ecstasy, but this carnal era with spilled blood has come to an end. Therefore, we nowadays shred landscapes and skylines into almost abstract samples of reality.

³ *Untitled (OK?)*, 2023; Oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 125 x 95 cm

O, we mangled cities such as Corbet, Clausen, Pissorra, Hödler, Reusdael and Friedreich⁴. The shreds are dispersed on the white walls. We, the Bacchae, fold the canvases to collect and protect some of the fragmented horizons. Don't fear us, but accompany this chorus away from this pink-hued realm to the next episode. All of us are waiting for your voice and your gaze. Bring us light to fight the obscurity of the night.

Epilogue

The actor:

Dear prompter, I forgot my line, what now?

The prompter:

Let's return to the prologue, where it all started.

Koi Persyn, May 2023

Ritsart Gobyn (b. 1985) lives and works in Ghent and is represented by PLUS-ONE Gallery. His work was recently exhibited at Art Brussels with PLUS-ONE Gallery, 2023 (art fair), Piermarq* Gallery in Sydney, Australia, 2023 (group), Venetiaanse Gaanderijen, Ostend, 2023 (group), Art Antwerp with PLUS-ONE Gallery, 2022 (art fair), Enter Art Fair Copenhagen with PLUS-ONE Gallery, 2023 (art fair), Altered States, PLUS-ONE Gallery, Antwerp, 2021 (group). In 2022 he made the book 'Acts of Painting' in collaboration with Tom Van Imschoot. This book explores various forms of painting in which the act of painting itself is foregrounded. Ritsart and PLUS-ONE Gallery will launch a new book, named 'Reclining Fragments' for the finissage of this exhibition on June 18 at the gallery. Ritsart's work is part of the Baloise collection (CH) and was exhibited at S.M.A.K. (Ghent) in 2021.

⁴ Courbet, Claus, Pissarro, Hodler, Van Ruisdael and C.D. Friedrich