

Goshka Macuga and Alex Mirutziu at Rüdiger Schöttle, München

PAIN BALLET AND HISTORICAL PASSION

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Goshka Macuga, Alex Mirutziu – Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, München. From February 5 till March 20, 2010

The gallery owner is beside himself with joy. He claims to have made “a discovery in No Man's Land”. Even Rüdiger Schöttle's eyes glow with euphoria from behind his horn-rimmed glasses, as he recalls setting out for the Transylvanian Cluj-Napoca last autumn, without having put his hopes up too high. He was in fact heading for the mothballed brush manufacturing plant Perom that today hosts art galleries, among which the Sabot Gallery. The name refers to a program that is meant to “sabotage the fundamental segregation between E- and U-culture” - as the founders put it. Thus, discoveries may be made even in a highly capitalized art business. As the world agonizes over crises and cries about prices, treasures are dug out. Schöttle on his way to the terra incognita.

Now as you stand in front of the *Discovered*, it is presumably difficult to ignore him, even though the appearance of Alex Mirutziu – born in 1981 in Sibiu – is not what we would call monumental. His slimness is outweighed by the zooming focus on the aestheticized ego, on self-experienced agony of love, on his sexual orientation that is no longer homosexual but deliberately queer, on his urge for the fashionable and the caricaturesquely inflated glamour. This draws an almost omnipresent attention to the *Discovered*. In 2010, Mirutziu shall be represented on the satellite art fair *Independent* at the same time as the *Armory Show* in New York; he may be seen at the art biennial in Bucharest and has penetrated the shooting star lists of popular magazines.

At the February opening – his first in Germany – Mirutziu is told to have worn a head contraption that enabled him to mince through the audience with a high-heeled pump in his mouth, a fur coat casually slung over his shoulders, posing, nudging people.

“The audience went completely silent”, says the gallery assistant with an unwaning enthusiasm. The fur coat is still lying on the gallery floor – as if it had just dropped off the shoulders – reminding of Sacher-Masochs famous novel “*Venus in Furs*” (1870) which inspired the medical doctor Richard von Krafft-Ebing to find the concept of masochism. Anyway: the cross-references. At a first sight (at least at this small exhibition on the gallery's ground floor) you're tempted to tag Mirutziu's art as too deliberately flamboyant, too close to the excesses and stencils of Andy Warhol and his *Factory*. A second intake though reveals the desperately manic, the subtle line between self-iconization and self-destruction,

the critical reflexiveness behind the shrill gestures. You may grasp the inscrutable behind the apparent shine more easily if you are prepared for the encounter with Mirutziu's art – perhaps through his text “Hot Mess. Contemplating the body at war with itself”, prefaced by a quote from Rilke's “Duino Elegies”: “For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror”.

And Rilke is not the last in line. Mirutziu's fundamental belief is infused just as much by Vilém Flusser's contemplations on the “self” and the “mask” as it is by the sociological theories of Niklas Luhman or by Descartes' questioning the possibility of a positive balance of pain incurred: “For what can be more intimate or internal than pain?” Such is the theory that Mirutziu bases the fact on: “Pain makes us not only human, but real creatures of the world, it gives us a meaning”. Pain is allotted a special role in his art: be it in his acrylic painting “Painting # 2 for bank vault” (2009) resembling a Pietà and portraying his boyfriend, or in the light box Sock Face (2010), rendering the artist himself – a shirted, severely combed snoot – but for the crumpled sock in his mouth.

A knob reminding us that before 1989, neither the artist nor his art would have been safe in Romania. Homosexuality was just as undesirable as western consumerism. However, status symbols don't seem to arrest Mirutziu's interest anymore – an iPod belonging to an ex-boyfriend has been retooled to art:

Unforgotten if

unpunished (2009). The gadget now displays a video with Mirutziu trampling down a small plastic car. But the destructive snorting of the painful memory does not swallow this action which is rather the evidence of the balletesque, body-controlled ability of the artist. Suffered pain may translate as bitterness.

Or catharsis.

<http://www.artnet.de/magazine/reviews/pschak/pschak03-03-10.asp>