

HOŠEK CONTEMPORARY

— EST. 2016 —

ALEXIS FIDETZIS - DESERTION ARCH

Opening reception: 7th September 2019, 4 - 10 pm

Exhibition period: 8th - 30th September 2019

Curated by Petr Hošek

Formally speaking, *Desertion Arch* is a collage of a triumph arch made from multiple architectural monuments initially found in Italy (and adopted later in the rest of the so-called Western world). A geographical aspect of putting together forms from different European countries creates a subtle eclectic mode which also puts us into a strange feeling that we are actually seeing something derived completely from the artist's imagination, not far from Piranesi's fantastical architecture drawings, called caprice. The iconography of a classical triumph arch - the glorious past, the war hero, the brave warrior or the strong muscular figures are exchanged with rabbits, antelopes and turtles - animals whose mechanics of survival have them escape or hide from danger in order to save themselves. Among others, we could find allusions to the 'White feather society' or shield throwers - ancient warriors that would throw away their shields to be able to run away from battle more easily. The archetypes of pride and duty, which are constructed by past political systems are switched to ones which make us think about the absurdity of heroism. Fidetzis is with his work questioning the ways in which societies and individuals create value systems and modes of morality. What is the meaning of duty, pride or courage - and why are they by definition socially interlinked?

In the past, all these heroic symbols provided political systems and the individuals sustaining them with the affirmation that what they are doing is right, while on a deeper level they also worked as tools of propaganda since they occupied (and in many cases still occupy) public spaces of high importance. On the contrary, Fidetzis is in his research also aware of the fact that Germany (and Austria) are probably the only countries which erected monuments to deserters. These monuments don't represent the act of desertion itself, but rather the individuals who refused to fight with the Axis powers. In this context we could mention Peter Sloterdijk, who is answering a question of whether humanity is capable of taming itself. He is operating with the term of pacifism and is emphasising the rational individuals and their wise '*justification for the belief that it is better to be killed than to remain in solidarity with a murderous cultural group.*'¹

Fidetzis new work is a monument to the people who fled not because of some ideologically induced sense of duty, but rather from a fear for their own life, seeing their survival as paramount and life as the only constant, therefore *Desertion Arch* becomes an 'anti-monument' to rationalism and humanity. We are facing a triumph of cowardice, but in the reverse sense to its common understanding. Its comic iconography mixes all questions mentioned above and allow us to meditate on what we believe in today and what is the role of an individual in a human society.

¹ Peter Sloterdijk, *What happened in the 20th Century?*, London 2018, 31.

About the artist

Alexis Fidetzis was born in Athens, where he currently resides and works. He studied painting in the Athens School of Fine Arts (BFA) and the Munich Kunstakademie while during his graduate studies in New York City (Pratt Institute, graduate class of 2014, MFA with distinction) he explored research-based artistic practices focusing on matters of art and geopolitics. He is currently pursuing another graduate degree at the University of Athens where he studies history of cultural politics. In his work, Fidetzis employs a multitude of media including installation, drawing, performance, video and live animals, alongside academic, pseudo-historical and conspiratorial writings, in a persistent effort to underscore the mechanics of identity construction in a modernist context. His works have been shown in museums, galleries and festivals in Greece (Athens Biennale 5-6, Yeni Jami/New Mosque, Thessaloniki, Mykonos Archeological Museum, etal), Germany (Lage egal, Berlin and AdBK, Munich), France (Galerie Vanessa Quang, Paris), Switzerland (Kunstraum Riehen, Deuxpiece, Basel) and the United States (the Pierogi boiler room, DeKalb Gallery, Pratt Institute Brooklyn, the Nolitan, NYC).

About Hošek Contemporary

Established in 2016 by Petr Hošek, Hošek Contemporary is a gallery and art residency located on a historical cargo ship next to Fischerinsel in Mitte, Berlin. The gallery focuses primarily on site-specific pieces, performing arts and experimental sound works. During the spring and summer months, the gallery is hosting weekly improvised and experimental music installations, with local and international artists.

About MS Heimatland

Built in 1910 in Fürstenberg an der Oder, MS Heimatland was initially operating under the name Ida and used for transporting coal to Charlottenburg. After the Second World War, the 58-meter long cargo ship was renamed Heimatland, meaning 'homeland'. Until the 90s, the ship was sailing on Elbe and Havel, moving sand and chippings. It served for artistic and cultural purposes for the first time in 2002, when German sculptor Christiane Möbus chose it for her Nackte Tatsache Tatsache project. Finally in March 2018, Heimatland became the main exhibition space and artist residency of Hošek Contemporary. The boat is permanently anchored in the historic port of Berlin.

PETR HOŠEK
MOTOR SHIP HEIMATLAND
CLOSE TO FISHERINSEL 3
IO 179 BERLIN
+49 1525 7486496
INFO@HOSEKCONTEMPORARY.COM
WWW.HOSEKCONTEMPORARY.COM