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The Stable – a solo exhibition by Slovenian artist Enej Gala at A Plus A Gallery in Venice



Enej Gala – The Stable – Installation view – Courtesy A plus A Gallery

The young artist Enej Gala is presenting until 20 September 2015 at the A plus A gallery: *The Stable*, a solo show curated by Aurora Fonda and Sandro Pignotti - a site specific work conceived for the spaces of the gallery. The successful display has persuaded Nicola Lees, curator of the 31st Ljubljana graphic Biennial, to include Enej Gala in the selection of artists. The Slovenian artist, who has recently completed the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice and has emerged with an original research will be exposed in Ljubljana from 28 August 2015.

The Stable in the English language has various meanings, one of them being steady, durable and resistant. The Slovenian artist Enej Gala confronts the rural culture of his country of origin and the traditions of a nation in his solo exhibition at A plus A Gallery. However, taking into account the strong and universal interest of art regarding the relationship between the old world of traditions and contemporaneity, Gala does not stop at the point of the dialog with the rural environment that has been the basis of Slovenian culture for centuries, but develops the comparison between art and agriculture to the contemporary world of hunting; in *The Stable*, the hunt for the depiction of history is represented, the hunt for the way that we used to represent economic and cultural processes, in the manner in which – on a personal level and on a national scale – we represent ourselves.

The concept of the exhibition develops along a path that confronts poems taken from *The Book of Things* (*Knjiga reči*) by Aleš Šteger, a contemporary Slovenian writer. Enej Gala is fascinated by the poetry of this Slovenian author and by the dialectical relationship between writing and painting, between word and image, thus wanting to emphasize the importance of the process by which knowledge and wisdom, irony and cunning, but also superstitions and ingenuity of the folk-tale were transmitted through writing and oral traditions, in synchronicity with the history of the visual arts.

The first work that catches the eye in the showcase of A plus A Gallery is *Hayrack*, which is directly inspired by the homonymic poems written by Aleš Šteger and which

is also one of the most characteristic symbols belonging to Slovenian culture. A hayrack is a permanent structure normally made of wood and used to dry grass and other fodder. Although originally Slovenian, similar structures can also be found in Northern Italy, Austria and Southern Germany. Gala has turned this national symbol in an abacus – with unparallel bars and tumors instead of coins or beads used for the calculations.

The omnipresent connection with nature, along with the expressiveness of the language and art, is probably the only real stroke of Slovenian identity whose borders and political systems changed over the centuries. Trying not to disregard the reflection of the connection with nature, which is often present in Gala's works, also the pagan aspect of the cultural heritage can be retraced; therefore carnival masks appear, with their horns and tails, skins and evil, fantastic, grotesque kits linking the historical consciousness to the corporeal, material world. This evaluation may be the strategy of every human being for dealing with the present-day *impasse* demanding humans to be both – hunter and prey, producer and consumer of images, as well as for addressing the dialectic between community and individuality in a world in which new forms of capitalism and economics have emerged.

Enej Gala was born in Ljubljana in 1990 and graduated in 2013 at the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice, where he also achieved his master in painting in 2015. Since 2010 Gala has been invited to several group show all over Europe: in Milan, Lisbon, Tirana, Rotterdam, Slovenia and also at the Dakar Biennale (2013). In 2015 was invited during the opening of the Venice Biennale at the *Rob Pruitt's Flea Market* at the A plus A gallery in

Venice. He was selected for the 31st International Biennale of graphic art Ljubljana (2015). He won an artist residency of one year at Fondazione Bevilacqua la Masa, Venice (2015). He currently lives and works in Venice.