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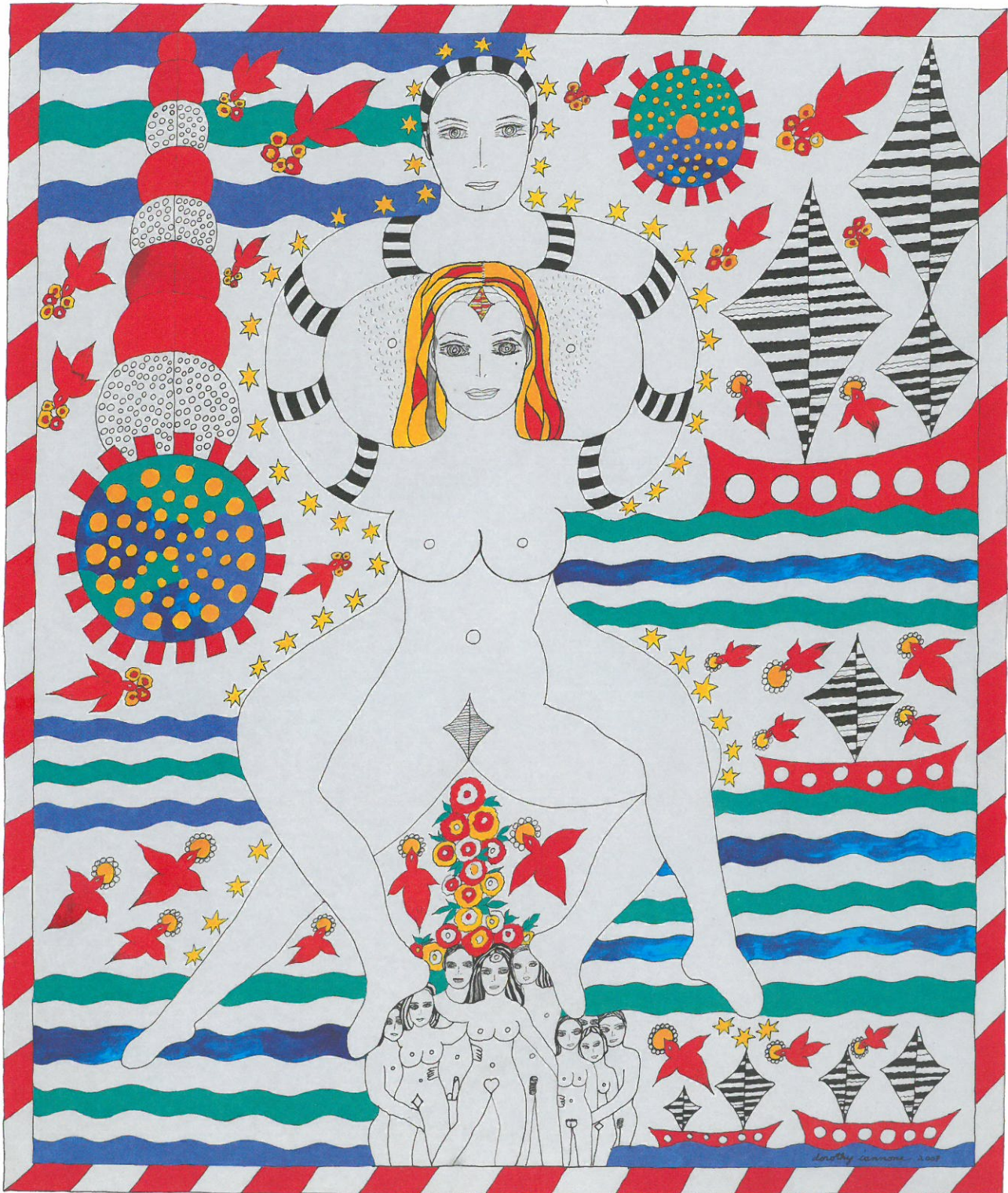
Flash Art

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DOROTHY IANNONE

RUAIRIADH O'CONNELL / *Examining the current state of art education* / FANG LU
GARY INDIANA / FRANCESCO VEZZOLI
plus Ettore Spalletti / Paula Cooper / Basim Magdy

Pierre Ardouvin and Przemek Matecki

Progress Gallery / Paris

"Isn't it good to be lost in the wood" is the result of a dialogue in which the artists allow their works to do the talking: Pierre Ardouvin and Przemek Matecki take up the challenge of a conversation *in absentia*, which tasks their images with meeting each other in a preparatory space punctuated by a series of fake columns introduced on the initiative of curator Estera Tajber. The white cube of the gallery is transformed into a Baudelairean forest of symbols where the artworks reveal themselves as we walk around.

Polish artist Przemek Matecki is interested in the imaginary world depicted in glossy magazines: he uses pages he has collected throughout his life as a medium for an atlas of hybrid figures arising from an act of appropriation and painterly anamorphosis that is both playful and brutal. Sometimes vulgar, sometimes kitsch, his works do not hesitate to exaggerate the codes of contemporary beauty, whose grotesque reverse side and productive metamorphosis they represent.

Pierre Ardouvin is a French artist who has made repurposing what already exists into the focus of an unsettling art form that hovers on the boundary between humor and criticism. His works are often prosaic, ordinary objects. The works are hackneyed images of idyllic places that, via a retouching process that reveals more than it conceals, turn into a backdrop for a series of catastrophes that are both hallucinatory and ridiculously improbable.

In the installation, the works of these two artists from different creative and geographical horizons create a dialogue of analogies and discrepancies, of assonance and broken rhythm: both involve dual images, mirages of society, monsters that lurk in our visual subconscious; they involve appropriating the "remains" of reality and sabotaging our knee-jerk interpretations of the world. But they also readily short-circuit points of view: as Syd Barrett sang in the song that gives the show its name, "Isn't it good to be lost in the wood? Isn't it bad so quiet there in the wood?"

by Viviana Birolli

Chen Zhen

Galerie Perrotin / Paris

Chen Zhen's works function in the spaces between polar extremes: health and sickness, East and West, painting and sculpture, tradition and technological development, communism and capitalism, political debate and cultural dialogue, homeland and exile.

The artist was born in 1955 in Shanghai, and moved to Paris in 1986. This retrospective, titled "Fragments d'éternité" and organized by Galeria Continua and Galerie Perrotin, includes thirty works from 1980.

These are mostly iconic, large-scale installations such as *Round Table – Side by Side* (1997), *Le Chemin / Le Redau de l'écriture* (1991), *Le Bureau de Change* (1996–2004) and *Purification Room* (2000, on display at CENTQUATRE-PARIS as part of the retrospective). Also included are several previously unseen paintings.

Zhen's illness became a source of inspiration and the engine of his artistic work. In retrospect, many of his works function as elements of a mausoleum dedicated to himself but also society. *Purification Room* is a good example: the final version of this work includes furniture, clothes, various electric machines and other objects covered with earth.

In the white-cube spaces of the gallery, the more rough works stand out. Here the artist's tendency to write, to document and process his experiences, thoughts and feelings is fully expressed.

Social Investigations – Shanghai (1997), an installation made of 46 photographs and annotated documents, reveals the artist's concern for the future of his hometown. In one of the images, a photo of a deserted street taken in a working-class neighborhood, a young boy is seen standing in the middle of the road. In the juxtaposed caption the artist asks bluntly: "When the inner cities become theme parks or gentrified, where do poor people go?"

Despite Zhen's indefatigable efforts to search for islands of sanity and his attempts to create utopian enclaves, the exhibition's aftertaste is marked mostly by the dystopian prophecy embedded in his works.

by Ellie Armon Azoulay

Robert Overby

GAMEC / Bergamo

The installation of "Works 1969–1987" at GAMEC in Bergamo (the traveling exhibition's first venue was the Centre d'Art Contemporain in Geneva, and it will later be presented at Bergen Kunsthall in September 2014 and Le Consortium, Dijon, in January 2015) occupies four rooms according to a rather severe, chronological display of the artist's oeuvre. Despite a diversity of output, the path through the exhibition acknowledges a practice that only tangentially flirted with gratuitous eclecticism and rarely echoed the part-time ventures of the creative class (indeed, Overby worked as a graphic designer for most of his life). What the show does reveal is a preoccupation with the human body and its surroundings, which guided the work as a sequence of rigorous investigations into the techniques and languages of artistic production.

In the first room, curator Alessandro Rabottini has gathered a number of Overby's early paintings – delicate landscapes and sensual anatomical studies – along with concrete and latex casts of architectural elements (*Concrete Screen Door with Hole*, 1971). These objects lead to the artist's most ambitious project, the so-called "Barclay House Series," a group of twenty-eight latex and rubber casts made of a decaying building. Two of these are on view in the second room. The "Barclay House Series" is a testament to Overby's significant contribution to the art of his generation: here he explored new materials and production techniques, used architectural details as counterpoint to the human body, played with scale and a camp sensibility, and contemplated memory, loss and the precariousness of human existence.

The venerated post-minimalist notion of *skin* recurs throughout Overby's art. Works like *Magnetic Stretch* (1970), imprints of everyday objects that test the pliancy of plastic sheets (on view in the third room), or paintings that include BDSM accessories (*Clap*, 1975, in the fourth room), are further instances of a speculative practice that was free from the constrictions of style and theoretical agendas.

by Michele D'Aurizio



From top, clockwise:

Chen Zhen
 Le Chemin / Le Radeau de l'écriture (1991)
 Installation view at Galerie Perrotin, Paris (2014); courtesy of ADAC – Association des Amis de Chen Zhen; photography by Claire Dorn

Przemek Matecki
 From the series "Sketch in the oil" (2013-14)
 Courtesy of the Artist; Progress Gallery, Paris; Praz-Delavallade, Paris and Raster Gallery, Warsaw

Robert Overby
 "Works 1969-1987," installation view at GAMEC, Bergamo (2014); courtesy of GAMEC, Bergamo; photography by Antonio Maniscalco

