Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys
MACRO
April 19 – June 24, 2023
Opening Reception: April 19, 6–9pm
Grotehertstraat 12 Rue du Grand Cerf
Brussels, Belgium 1000

At the end of the 1970s, we watched Micro Macro on Belgian television every day. In this game show, a number of candidates were shown an extreme close-up of an object. While the image zoomed out very slowly, they had to guess which item it was. Whoever recognized it first won the corresponding object. Usually, it was a trivial thing like an ashtray, a padlock, a bucket or a mixer.

The program was mostly watched in black and white because color televisions were few and far between. This made the close-ups even more abstract and mysterious. The prolonged viewing of an object by the candidates and the TV viewers, with the tension increased by the excruciatingly slow zooming out of the image, made the game very popular, but at the same time gave it an enormous sadness. Winning a worthless bucket, lighter or candlestick gave a feeling of joy and euphoria for a very short moment. This was soon followed by an indefinable feeling of sadness and depression because the prize had no value whatsoever. However, its presence on prime-time television gave the won object a soul. It became an animistic fetish and took on a life of its own.

This “animating” of dead matter is a recurring theme in the works of Jos De Gruyter & Harald Thys. Photographing an endless series of useless objects (Objects as Friends, in 2011), a video in which immobile puppets act out a tragic story (Das Loch, 2010) or a collection of mechanical figures of dubious character (Mondo Cane, 2019), are always attempts to give inanimate matter a soul and to bring it to life.

For their simultaneous exhibition at KIN & Gladstone, the artists create both a Microworld that refers to a kind of earthly garden of Eden and a Macroworld that refers to a kind of purgatory or hell on Earth.

In the Microworld, the viewer is invited to closely observe haunting creatures imprisoned in a terrarium. Self-contained ecosystems inhabited by altered beings. Mutated snakes and rats with human heads live in enclosed spaces reminiscent of an illegal laboratory experimenting with new life forms. New life forms that have the potential to replace humanity.

In the Macroworld, it is the viewer who is observed by the sculptures.

We are beings populating a weary society, in which people attempt, with the courage of desperation, to create a cozy contentment from a, maybe, failed existence. But, once they escape from their biosphere, we cannot withstand the emergence of the new organisms from the Microworld.

For further information, please contact: press@gladstonegallery.com