

this is tomorrow

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Review by Taylor Le Melle

Christine Rebet's hand-drawn animation film unfolds like an ominous lucid dream. With underlying suggestions of trauma, 'In the Soldier's Head' (2015) depicts proto-plants, hybrid mechanical structures, and incomplete architectures dancing across an empty landscape. A façade made of tiered colonnades springs erect out of the ground plane, and collapses just as easily. A miniature palm tree twirls like a pinwheel toy as it dangles from an unidentifiable machine-plant. An irregular heartbeat thumps along, providing a soundtrack to the spinning, sputtering, and twitching imagery.

Rebet's practice regularly combines the use of drawing, film, sculpture, and performance to present 'intensely personal perspective[s] on historical traumas, reinterpreted through the land, bodies, and minds that are subject to them'.^[1]

'Paysage Fautif' is the New York-based French artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery. The show's name is taken from Marcel Duchamp's 'Faulty Landscape' (1946), and presents biophysical analogues for delusions and anxieties caused by these aforementioned traumas. Based on her experiences while she temporarily lived in Haiti, alongside the film are also sixteen ink-on-paper drawings.

The film and its accompanying drawings, such as 'Llorando II' (2013), appear as conflated examples of bodily dysfunction and natural disaster. Built by the mind's delusions, these anthropomorphic figures and their surrounding architectures are both weirded through their entanglement with each other. While watching the film, I couldn't help but recall a time when my own subconscious spawned a string of hallucinatory dreams, a side effect of an anti-malaria medication I was taking during a long trip in a tropical country many years ago. Despite preventative modern interventions, however, Rebet seems to suggest that death and disaster are inevitable. The animation concludes as the organic architectures bleed to death, multicolour water spots (or bodily fluids, as in Duchamp's 'Landscape') seep outwards from within as each figure melts into a final muddy pit of ochre-coloured sickness.

Although the exhibition is inspired by Rebet's time spent in post-earthquake Haiti and also her father's recollection of his episodes of delirium while he was stationed in the Algerian desert as a young soldier, one should not use this biographical information to slide into a reading of those places, rather, the emphasis should be on the connection between historical and bodily trauma. The previously noted preventative modern interventions could easily be medicine, machine, or mercantilism, all signs of 'progress' but all inextricably linked to violent colonial histories (Haiti and Algeria share, for example, successful rebellions against oppressive French colonial rule). Ultimately, all imperialist ventures harbour the possibility of catastrophic ends, whether political or natural.

Sputtering out of control, the scenes in the film are apocalyptic, but nonetheless imagine an uncertain, if not optimistic, future. If anyone ever was to animate W.B. Yeats' 'The Second Coming', it might look like this.^[2]

The final frames of the quick-paced film depict an amorphous set of shapes and colour, and perhaps this is a clean slate, one that '[injects] the scene with vigor and potential'.^[3]

[1] Press Release, Christine Rebet 'Paysage Fautif'

[2] Yeat's poem begins, 'Turning and turning in the widening gyre...' and ends with an impending birth, 'slouching towards Bethlehem to be born?' In my interpretation, Yeats is ambivalent as to whether this 'rough beast' is Savior or Legion, so to speak.

[3] Press Release, Christine Rebet 'Paysage Fautif'



Title : Christine Rebet, *Paysage Fautif*, Installation View at Bureau, 2015

Website : <http://www.bureau-inc.com/>

Credit : Courtesy the artist and Bureau Inc, New York



Christine Rebet, 2013, *Llorando II*, (*In the Soldier's Head*), Ink on paper, 11.6 x 15.5 inches