

Exhibition



Peter Blum/Oliver Estavillo: Double Deutsch Hay Hill Gallery



Hay Hill Gallery will be presenting a double exhibition this February, featuring the established German artists Peter Henryk Blum and Oliver Estavillo. Differing wildly in style, these two shows contrast each other perfectly whilst connecting in theories of what it is to be human.

Blum is one of the most exciting German figurative artists of his generation. Using the Old Masters techniques of layer and glaze painting, his scenes are muted, selective with colour, like silent film reels and tinted sepia prints. Players are staged in ironically self-conscious poses where the melancholia of sad harlequins and heavily made up women is reminiscent of physical theatre. Light hearted or darkly surreal, the works are unsettling, stirring up feelings of being at odds with things- even as everything else is odd.

Gentle diffusions of light are met by the devilishly sharp details of technical brilliance. The unreality of the real world with its desires, alienation, loneliness and illusion is presented in a deeply lyrical style as Blum steers us away from the rational subjective self into the strength of the collective. The characters are heartbreakingly earnest in their wordless attempts to communicate and these pantomimes verge on the Theatre of the Absurd, much like the Orator's indecipherable speaker in Ionesco's play *The Chairs*.

The meta-theatricality of Blum's work confronts us with the contradictions of humanity. Wearing dark glasses, we long to hide away but to also be adored, to 'know fully, even as we are fully known'. To reach wholeness, we must look through the masks and costumes, remaining open-hearted with each other. Blum's staging of each character remains strange because it is clear they are not alone in their secret rituals. Struck dumb, there is someone watching in the wings- and that person turns out to be you.

Oliver Estavillo has been referred to as "Pop-Brueghel" and "The Tarantino of Painting". His inspiration is taken from everyday life; the bizarre neighbours, serial killers, boring aunts and shrill parties. Like Ripley's *Believe it or Not*, Estavillo's oils are circuses of weird and wonderful creatures. Ladies with budgerigar heads and droopy hats wear their pearls high to disguise crepey necks and sagging jowls. They gaze out of colourless eyes under dusty chandeliers and bare bulbs. These operatic gatherings are peopled with muscle men with squared hair and tanned torsos, sinewy women in tight cocktail dresses, tentacle-headed lurkers and emperors in need of new clothes.

The intricately sketched lines are etchings, inked with vivid pools of enamel. Every possible crease and fold is highlighted as though these people were deflating behind the settee like old balloons forgotten after a party. These are places where the meat-mottled women drink wine and fanged stags brawl under neatly mounted taxidermy testicles. The raw sexuality and animalistic debauchery makes these much more of an Angela Carter take on your average fairytale.

Estavillo's work reminds us of the transient nature of life, and that the material world is meaningless. Unlike many moralistic paintings where the sensuality of the painting undermines the main message of aesthetic futility, these works are disturbing and explicitly morbid. From Holbein to Bernt Notke, the certainty of death has been explored throughout history, particularly through the 'Danse Macabre'. Estavillo's Puce-faced devils, confetti and baboon-clowns demonstrate life's madness, vulgarity and unlimited greed. This ultra-violent fantasism scratches beneath the glittering surface to expose decay, confronting us with our own selfish bloodlust.

Start 03 Feb 2014

End 01 Mar 2014

Times Mon-Fri 10.30-6, Saturdays 11-5

Venue Hay Hill Gallery

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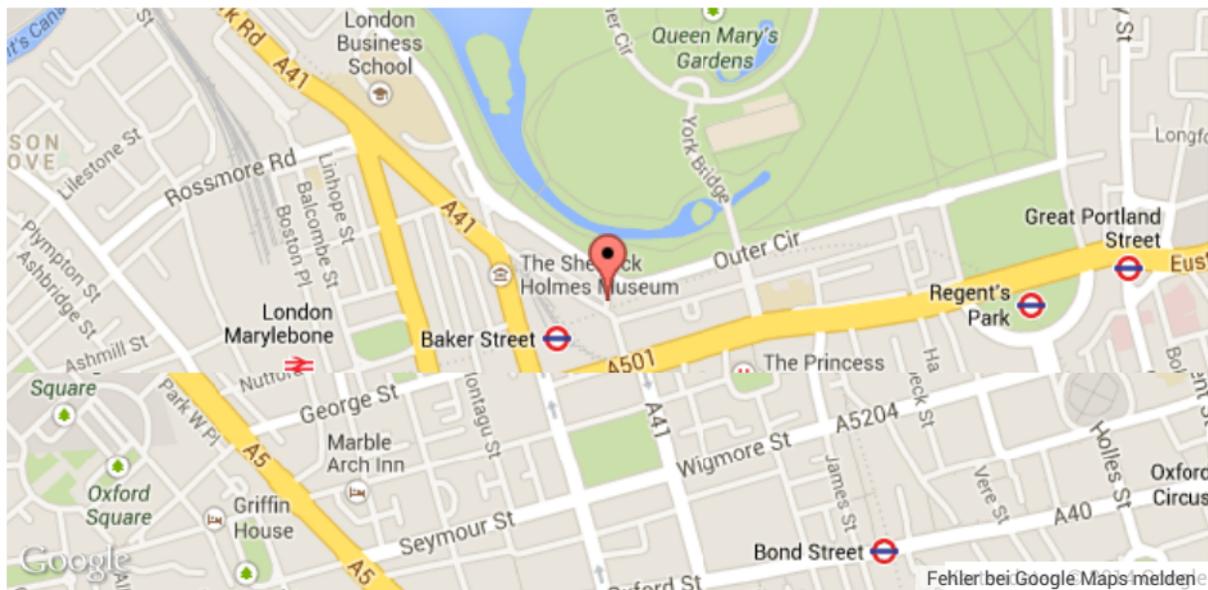
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Posted 15 Jan 2014



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