

## The Stop-Gap between here and Ragnarök.

The work of Michael Nitsche.

I immediately come to a "stop" when I'm about to enter a show with a title unabashedly appropriated from an iconic emblem of the music industry in the states. It tells me, "Stay away 'cause it ain't your favourite boys doing the beastie with some hotties the way you like it in your dreams". Most likely it's some schmuck grunt artist from some crack east of here that had to strap-on content because it wasn't there to begin with.

Animals meticulously rendered in porcelain stacked vertically in descending size and a large shark were pivotal in naming the age that jumpstarted trends in contemporary art in the 90s and epitomized an obsession with manufacturing and sensationalising aptitude which is the profile of any "stick"-size competition. Yet these works remain water marks for many that will never achieve such illusions of grandeur and remain coughing on the exhaust from the thrust of these works due to a lack of perversion and defect.

...Entering "NO SLEEP 'TIL RAGNARÖK" here in Wien at the Michaela Stock Galerie, the German artist Michael Nitsche presented a goat balancing a skull on its head with a monkey on its back blowing a "bazooka" size toxic bubble harnessing a big stick just in case its ride needed motivation. Another smaller primate with a rather maniacal grin swings from the underside of a mammoth shark that portrays the qualities in its form that illustrate what would happen if you were to take that "other shark" of equal dimensions out of its illustrious tank of phemadihyde.

What might have easily passed for a menagerie of stuff animals smothered in a thick, heavy coat of syrupy goo, like enlarged over confectionary figurines prancing through the unassuming consumers' holiday shopping spree, suddenly became players in someone's dream-scape after a nights' binge of Kaiseiwurst und Punsch with all the trappings to snare your apprehensions of cannibalism, natures' unrepentant food chain scenarios and sex between unlikely species that would normally be at war with each other. With all the ordinary tools and materials one sets out to produce craft, Michael Nitsche wedges in a stop-gap that expels the cognition of charm and replaces it with a fetish for the tactile attributes of an unnatural order of demonic fiends at serious play.

Michael's work contains all the blessings of fault and error. His passion for the materials he uses (paraffin being the stabilizing agent), camouflage his inabilities for representation though within the failure to make a butterfly-*a dangerous underbelly of nerve and energy applied with unapologetic abandonment*-enters a dragon fly with a disposition that bolsters a hideous stinger no less intriguing and befitting the occasion. In fact nearly all these vagrants of reverie are packing heat in one form or another with an insatiable agenda for deviance and carnage.

This can all be part and parcel to the artists' own personal search in his hunt for solace from the isolation one can feel in dreams that can be as polarising as they can be a unification of the psyche. It may account for the whimsical placement of certain attributes of anatomy and composition springing up in the work that alerts the viewer of the potential for confrontation and consequence should one penetrate the membrane that separates the pray from the predator, or the dreamer from the dream becoming a hybrid incarnation of the residual violence of loneliness endured. The threat of being quarantined with ones' anxieties not being challenged by a formidable measure of lucidity would regulate this ensemble as a cache of subjective collectables were it not for the deftness in the way Michael handles his materials and the derisive hook-back that underwrite the work.

I never found out where RAGNARÖK is. I Googled it of course, this I can do on my 92 year old Insperon 1100. Instead I discovered an online database/game that offers dungeon entrance walk-throughs, explains how to make Valkyine Heim ungodly and offers instructions how to escape from a bear. And after just a few minutes I realized this was a conundrum that wasn't going to lead to additional material that would bring further light to the creative processes of Micheal Nitsche. Because I wasn't convinced that this would be his primary external source of imagery I was confident that the drive behind the work was intrinsically personal/internal with all the idiosyncrasies parlayed by sound studio fundamentals in

eliciting emotional engagement from the viewer and decided that I wasn't going to lose any sleep over it, though I still can't stand seeing my A-list of music hits pimped-out into a title for an art show.

Alexander Viscio.

All photos courtesy of Michaela Stock Galerie, and Michael Nitsche