

Monster Chetwynd The Owl with the Laser Eyes

Curated by Irene Calderoni

Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo
2nd November 2018 – 30th March 2019

The work of Monster Chetwynd (UK, 1973) incorporates elements of folklore, pop culture (both ancient and contemporary), art history, cinema, and literature, in order to produce works that mock hierarchical structures, subvert rules and invent new rites. Whether they be paintings, sculptures, videos, installations, or actions, her works are invariably imbued with a carnevalesque mockery which Michail Bachtin referred to as "a ritual, syncretistic entertainment form", that is able to remove differences and boundaries between categories of objects, places, and people. In this perspective, the performance element is central to the artist's practice, as the conceptual and emotional propeller which generates all other expressive means, supports, tools, fetishes, or remains of a living, participatory action that centers on the body, interaction, and group dynamic. The objects that populate the works of Chetwynd are farcical characters: marionettes, stage props and machinery, costumes, backdrops and storyboards. Consistent with this explosion of energy, which turns the world into a living theater, the visual world of the artist is exuberant, picturesque, and captivating.

For her exhibition at the Foundation, the artist presents a new series of large-format paintings, which incorporate sculptural objects from previous performances in dialogue with visual backgrounds of different origin—ancient painting, cinema, illustration. Each work reconfigures fragments of images that belong to other works, stories, places, and times, according to a logic that recalls bricolage, or do-it-yourself, in the anthropological sense of the term.

In one of the works, the protagonist is the artist's fetish-animal, the bat. On the large panel a grotesque figure emerges from the painting's surface, not unlike a nightmare that becomes real. Elsewhere in the exhibition, small painted bats are hidden in the recesses of a hellmouth, into which the public is invited to delve.

The central device of the exhibition is a theatrical space designed to host two different marionette shows on the night of the opening. One show is inspired by Italo Calvino's

The Castle of Crossed Destinies and his use of tarot cards as linguistic device. The second show is the one after which the exhibition is named: The Owl with the Laser Eyes. Drawing from sci-fi films that focus on perverse TV shows, such as "Running Man" or "The Hunger Games", the marionettes crafted by Monster Chetwynd are the protagonists of the epic combat between the cruel Laser-eyed Owl and the team of contestants gathering around Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo.

In support of the activities of the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo

