

Bare chest as creative escape

Bert and Mo look fantastic. Photographer Ivo Hofsté stole them from their hyperly hip party for a moment and set them in the storage-room for a picture. Bert's wrapped up head appears above a Kim Basinger-like eighties dress (broad shoulders, narrow bottom) and Mo poses with his chest bare in a wide flaring turquoise shiny skirt which reaches to his calves.

Tonight is Ponyclub-night, and as always as club-promoters they show that a creative search in the closet and a box of paint can be half the job. Every now and then their dada-esque club, full of performances, music and art, will land somewhere. 'A temporary free-zone for nocturnals who can't find what they're looking for in the regular night life', according to MAMA showroom for media and moving art in Rotterdam, who included these photographs of Hofsté in the small group exhibition 'Fantasy Island – expedition Robinson.'

'Here', the curator Boris van Berkum says, 'you can see that artists express their social displeasure'. Not by complaining or convicting. Also not by longing for something that has become lost. But, just like the men of the Ponyclub, by finding a creative escape, 'That escape', says Berkum, 'is the social criticism'. The theme aspires toward museum quality, the way MAMA often does it – so who's going to take on the challenge?

There are a couple of beautiful pieces, like the meticulously executed, completely hairy girls by Silvia B. One small creature, which comes up to your thigh, stands slightly turned away towards the wall. You have to bend and twist to be able to look at her little blond-haired face, which is contrary to every concept of beauty but is still attractive.

Besides the ideology of the perfect beauty, compulsive consumerism is also something to want to escape. Two artists found a metaphor in the animal kingdom. Shuwichi Kaneda made a polyester hammerhead-shark, an animal that due to its physical build and energy consumption, can never stop swimming. Shuwichi covered the animal with logo's, like a race-car.

Han Hoogerbrugge uses a humming-bird in his animations, also an animal that must keep flying to collect nectar to be able to keep flying and collecting nectar; a vicious circle that illustrates modern mans unstoppable urge to collect. Hoogerbrugge lets the hummingbird appear briefly in a film with a ball that swings out in space, which turns out to be filled with gadgets we fill our pockets, bags and lives with; mobile phones, laptops, mp3 players and so on. Outdated while you watch and then you 'have' to get new stuff.

It takes it all just a level further than the majority of art that lately illustrates that romanticism and dreaming are allowed again. But the biggest discovery on 'Fantasy Island', the perspective pencil-drawings on natural tracing-paper by David Jones, doesn't even have that much to do with the critical theme. His escape looks like a gaping void.

Text: translation from the article 'Blote bast als creatieve vluchtweg' by Sacha Bronwasser.

Published by the Volkskrant May 10, 2006