

Zamolxis Loves You

Artist: Bogdan Luca
NAG #7 Event
May 24th – July 28th 2013

Bogdan Luca's first exhibition in Romania, *Zamolxis Loves You* started from the idea of a person who suddenly becomes conscious of being a spectator in their own life. Watching their existence unfolding from a third person perspective, they are removed from direct experience and processing events from a cool, analytical distance.

This is a condition of Western culture in the 21st century. Our world and universe are totally and instantly accessible at the level of images. More disturbingly, visuals shape our interpersonal relationships, as we see people less in physical proximity and more through some form of electronic screen. Images are seductive and carry the aura of authenticity: an index of reality we believe documents some form of true experience, out there, in the world. A spectrum exists from fake celebrity pictures or 'reality television' to cell phone images of real events unfolding in places like Tahrir Square or Syria. However, images are easily manipulated and corrupted in the service of power, as has been the case even before Plato expressed his cynicism towards artists and their illusions. Belief without the necessity of proof means faith. This form of faith in the retinal means that some images can become invested with an almost tangible emotional charge, which, in the case of religious icons, would be called spirituality. St. Augustine wrote about his awakening awareness of 'another reality' separate from that of the flesh. He was of course referring to spiritual life but, in relation to the present, he may well have meant life experienced as pictures. I think we should remember the flesh.

Several questions arise: Does the mass consumption of images create an alienation between retina/brain and body? Does the screen/window prevent us from truly participating in the world? Do images reduce our capacity for empathy and connectedness in an embodied sense? The works in *Zamolxis Loves You* operate at several levels. One is that of the literal depiction of a liminal state: a hallucination, somewhere in between a physical space and a mental one; the image is either falling apart and/or is desperately trying to pull itself together into a coherent whole. This is the labour of consciousness: having to make sense of one's personal reality. Another level of engagement is that of charged images. From the stream of visual information that we consume daily, some touches a universal nerve, and those images come to symbolize much more than the events they depict: they become markers of the specific time when the world as we knew it changed. Can painting tap into this experience of image and penetrate to the core of a viewer's humanity? I hope so. A third level of engagement is that of the pure experience of painting itself, independent of pictorial content. The medium has its own freedom and will to exist, and visual content seems to emerge as a secondary effect. Painting as material consciousness.

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Born in 1978 in Bucharest, Bogdan lives and works in Toronto, Canada. After having worked in the animation industry for a decade, he dedicated himself to an artistic career. A graduate from the Master of Visual Studies program at the University of Toronto, the artist is also a professor in the Faculty of Arts at OCAD University in Toronto. Bogdan has exhibited his work at the University of Toronto Art Centre, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Stony Brook University in Long Island NY, Galerie Zeugma in Cologne Germany, and is represented in Toronto by Neubacher Shor Contemporary Gallery.

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