

Once upon a time there was our time

Same way as Lewis Carroll's character, Alice - who after drinking a magic elixir, shrinks and can walk through a tiny door - we too need to undergo a certain amount of change to be able to browse through this "Once upon a time" by Rui Castanho. This text is part of the exercise of looking for an encounter with these works through different entrances, knowing that admission is never guaranteed, and that any access is merely partial.

Artists' interest in "children's art" or "the art of madmen", ie, in their ways of doing things, is not new. The child that Rui Castanho learns from is a certain child, and very significantly and originally, he also learns from a certain type of teenager.

The child that draws Rui Castanho's attention does it childishly, of course; and, playfully; it is the child who uses small tricks and craftiness of drawing and painting, to obtain certain effects: he learns that the 2 can also be transformed into a swan, he learns magical and repeatable "formulas" to obtain other visual effects, etc.; but it is also the child who - from his own childish point of view - makes mistakes in the drawings and paintings: he has loaded the pencil too much here and marked the sheet; the marker is running out of ink or has smeared there, etc.; it is the child who "copies" the images that fill him with joy and are pleasantly accessible to his making; and it is also the child who displays, or rather shows, at every step, his perpetually unfinished work. This (other) child is not a supply of innocent freedom to which the adult can (imaginarily) return. This (other) child - or rather, his ways of doing things - acquired the right of citizenship in art.

The teenager that has caught the eye of Rui Castanho suffers the first passions and disappointments, knows the cold loneliness and warmth of a circle of friends, his senses distend between the sound, so loud that it becomes physically tangible and the absolute silence, feels the desire from the beach and love at night. This teenager, "hijacked" in these works, is also the teenager who dismisses a single identity and plays multiple characters, through recognizable appearances as in cosplay; it is the teenager who learns techniques and materials from other expressive fields such as nocturnal and threshold graffiti; is the teenager inserted in digital networks that disseminate accessible images on liquid retinal screens.

Rui Castanho uses the expressive and imaginative resources of these children and adolescents, not in their own way, but in his own way: enhancing them. The potentiation work also makes use of art resources: pop art, surrealism, and in a prominent way, art brut and poor art.

The first condition of potentiation is that the adult - Rui Castanho - foresees the set of each "construction", often playing with the basic rule of the gestalt: the gaze organizes the elements into sets, according to principles such as approximation, closure and continuity. But the type of "global" preview practiced here, to which we pay more attention, is revealed, above all, in the internal discrepancies in the images - for example, in the result produced by the material reactions (and senses) of the different substances used; or, in the non-synthetic addition of the different elements - for example, the different planes of the image are juxtaposed without merging into a uniform unity, or, the many multiple figures, like the mountain-mage-scratched (To the child, the discrepancy only happens, it's not anticipated and integrated, so she rejects it).

ONCE UPON A TIME RUI CASTANHO

29.01.22 to 12.03.22

BALCONY
CONTEMPORARY
ART GALLERY

Rua Coronel Bento Roma 12 A
1700-122 Lisbon | Portugal

T (+351) 211 339 866
M (+351) 969 847 655
M (+351) 932 380 822

info@balcony.pt
www.balcony.pt

ONCE UPON A TIME
RUI CASTANHO

29.01.22 to 12.03.22

BALCONY
CONTEMPORARY
ART GALLERY

Rua Coronel Bento Roma 12 A
1700-122 Lisbon | Portugal

T (+351) 211 339 866
M (+351) 969 847 655
M (+351) 932 380 822

info@balcony.pt
www.balcony.pt

The second condition of potentiation is a mood. The mood present in these works is a paradoxical mood: Rui Castanho shows that everything here is illusion, but even so, illusion is, and everything is always something else too... material, body.

These are drawings and paintings of imagination, not observation. But they are also drawings and paintings of an imaginary. The most evident manifestation of this potentiation is the material densification and the great dimension of the works that (together) exceed the "retinal" drawings - and we are merely employing child-like humor here - of any child. This work is also present in the dissonant affective magnitudes that the different elements of drawing and painting acquire in the works, and also, in the expansion of the scales of the gestures of this way of doing: the risk scratches giant and repeatedly, the color vibrates, the color acidifies, the color phosphoresces and shines, the matter thickens or liquefies.

These images result in a kind of happy coincidence: a fleeting encounter inside a kaleidoscope makes a fleeting magical material-image happen. They result from a balance between visual affinities that establish relationships between elements within the images: color and tone affinities, or the junction of "clippings" that are foreign to each other, play between multiple degrees of "realism effects", or, perhaps more precisely, between multiple degrees of "illusory effects", albeit concrete.

"Once upon a time" is above all a contemporary time: a time in which art images are mixed with BD images or images of very varied origin on the luminous surface of the screens; it is also a space for a certain contemporary community and a media and performative "art scene", but fundamentally, it is a present possibility for art to materially be, to exist on its own, unrepentant.

Fernando Poeiras