

Press Release

Bastiaan de Nennie – Blending Presences

18 May – 22 July 2017

Opening: 17 May, 6 pm – 9 pm, Roehrs & Boetsch, Zurich

Gallery Roehrs & Boetsch is pleased to present Bastiaan de Nennie's first solo exhibition 'Blending Presences'.

At first glance, Bastiaan de Nennie's figurative sculptural works appear familiar: their captivating colourfulness evokes images of a cheery childhood, bright with joy and naiveté; their elusive formal language seems to trace the outlines of our trusted reality, however slightly rearranged. And yet, this intuitive reading is promptly disrupted. As the objects expose their particularities, the assumed familiarity is outpaced by a sense of displacement. At first glance, this growing disorientation might originate in the environment where Bastiaan positions his practice: the intersection of the two ever more intertwining worlds of the physical and the digital.

He departs from a pre-digital reality: the world of things we have, mostly, experienced through their forms, colours, fragrances and textures. Once selected, these objects are 3D-scanned, the scans are dissected, and the components are used as building blocks for new digital creations. After a multifaceted computer-based creative process, these then reappear as a new blend of 'phygital' (physical + digital = phygital) presences materialized in the form of 3D-printed sculptures – a new creational process that is the basis for sculptures with before unknown shapes and colors.

This continuous travelling, in and out of these two presences – the physical and the digital world – raises questions about the dominance of the material over the immaterial and our belief that the atomic structure is more real than its virtual counterpart, or that the physically made is more authentic than the digitally processed; or – in its barest form – the relationship between man and machine.

In Bastiaan's first new work group 'guardians of spirits', bodies are digitally conserved and souls are digitally created. God as provider of the soul / spirit is replaced by the computer. According to Bastiaan: "by conserving the shape of dying products from nature – like vegetables and fruits – in a digital form and giving them a soul by some small digital cosmetic surgery, an aubergine or a banana become immortal." His work reflects the hoary belief that mortal bodies are inhabited by immortal souls and that the body dies when separated from the soul.

This raises the question of the role the 3D-printer. Does it give birth to the phygitally selected and defined DNA? The second new work group of so-called 'corpo-real identities' suggests that the answer is yes. According to Bastiaan: "corpo-real identities are characters, with each their own soul. The scanned bodies of their ancestors are the guideline for their appearance – the saddle of a bicycle, a pair of sneakers, a fire hydrant,

the radiator grill of a car. Their spiritual state changes while going through an objectifying virtual computer based process, before being born by the 3D-printer.”

The way Bastiaan selects his subjects carefully from the pre-digital world, preferring those things that exemplify their own banality, the things almost overlooked because of their triviality, well known and near, often with a nostalgic quality, reveals a strong relation to the real world and also an urge to preserve things and history. Something that does not exist in the virtual world. And it comes as no real surprise that it is mainly the digitally based process that guides us into a place where known things become surreal around the edge; from where we get the feeling that his work – a feast for our visual senses that embraces technological progress and its potentials – has a second side to it. A side that reveals itself through the defamiliarization of daily objects, the almost grotesque deformations and combinations. They might be seen as a warning, an ambivalent relationship with the digital world and its influences on our daily lives.

‘Blending Presences’ will comprise two new sculptural work groups: a group of ‘guardians of spirits’ and a group of ‘corpo-real identities’, divided into two sub-groups of ‘weirdos by heart’ with lovely weird features, partially lent from the artist himself, and a conclave of ‘divine idols’ with some few traces of a diviner nature which look out through their corpo-real baseness.

Bastiaan de Nennie (1990, the Netherlands) is a graduate of the Design Academy in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. He lives and works in Berlin.

In a world where craftsmanship is becoming synonymous with digital fluency, a signature style is essential to distinguish one creator from the next. In this case, the ‘phygital’ (physical + digital = phygital) virtuosity leads the way.

Bastiaan’s works can be considered as a new tradition of phygital sculptural art, dealing with the physical and digital architecture of our surroundings. In his figurative sculptures Bastiaan portrays both harmony and dualism as he merges the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of both fields into new creatures, simultaneously belonging to either sides. In his proposed colourful and playful relationship between the two converging entities, they are each other’s accomplices and prostheses that allow, expand and limit the way of working and the work itself. On a second glance, however, it is a radical bond, supporting the critical exploration of what seems to define our existence today. In this way, his work can also be considered as new media art in a wider sense, not only as a purely technologically defined genre, but as contemporary art that is concerned both in content and concept with the present-day world, which is profoundly influenced by media and technology.

Despite the fact that he only graduated in 2016, Bastiaan’s work has already been included in museum exhibitions and has made its way into international collections. WGSN – global trend forecasting agency – covers Bastiaan’s work in its market-leading trend reports in the category ‘the phygital phenomenon’.

For further information, please contact Nina Roehrs (gallery@roehrsboetsch.com) at the gallery.