

## The Good the bad and the ugly (part 3)

Contemporary visual arts are becoming more and more influenced, if not dominated, by the new media and nontraditional modes of creative expression. How come then, contemporary artists, even the ones who do not necessarily call themselves painters, still do paint? In what ways has painting become irrelevant and why does it still matter? How is painting possible today? As the objective at Gesso Artspace is the constant questioning of what art actually is, the aim of the current exhibition is to explore the above mentioned questions in order to negotiate the position of painting in contemporaneity.

The exhibition entitled *The Good the bad and the ugly (part 3)* deals primarily with the problem of painting, a practice and form of visual art that has been constantly questioned to its core at least since the modernisms of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The perpetual search for intriguing, new and old, arguments about painting has resulted in a selection of works which can be observed as material manifestations of these, often conflicting arguments. The title itself indicates the curator's concept, describable as simultaneous reexamination, celebration, and critique of painting. This concept offers a formally established and yet flexible frame, which continues and grows from the previous editions of the exhibition that are bearing the same title - with the addition *part one* for the show at Gesso Artspace in autumn 2014, *part 2* for the one held in February and March 2015 at Sarah Cottier Gallery in Sidney, and *part 2.2* for the exhibition booth presented by Gesso Artspace in September 2015 at Parallel Vienna, a contemporary art exhibition and fair. This series of exhibitions will, in all likelihood, be continued. The seriality corresponds with the widespread tendency of producing sequels, present in popular culture, especially its part created by the film and television industry. Apart from being a trend, seriality is also an opportunity to realize the need of exploring the narrative in depth, to discover the parts that might have been neglected at first, and to observe transformations that occur under the influences of time and context.

The focus here is the exploration of both the act and the result of painting, its current possibilities and forms. The display seeks to establish and deconstruct not only the connection between the audience and the exhibited art, but also the connections and disconnections among the different artworks and through them among artists themselves. Showing the work of the established, widely known artists alongside the work of the lesser known ones is the guiding principle of the show. It helps the audience to reveal the complex relationships between the objects and the arguments they carry. Sometimes the same argument about art is presented by two different artists in two very different ways. Other times two very different arguments are presented by works that seem to share a similar visual style. A painting by Carolee Schneemann, a truly radical fighter against the dominance of male artists in the institutions, the market, as well as the discourse about art, was created during one of her feminist performances and collected as a proof of that action. Schneemann's painting possesses an expressive moment which can, paradoxically and on a purely visual level, be connected with the expressivity of Georges Mathieu's piece. Nevertheless, minding the histories of the two artists, one realizes that these paintings were done from completely different reasons; Mathieu being someone feeding on the myth of the artist as a singular genius. Even opposite ideas and intentions are sometimes channeled with a similar intensity and energy that makes the final products - the paintings actually linkable.

While it is true the painting functions as the most marketable and sellable type of art and contemporary painting is often criticized as the main part of the commercial mainstream art production, it still manages to be subversive. In her painting Ann Craven often applies very bright colors and depicts motives like birds and kittens in a style similar to some souvenirs or postcards. Through this work Craven is using kitsch in order to subvert the elitist and pretentious, but often phony and tasteless parts of the art world. Throughout the history and still today, painting is continuously searching for the next new, significant or hip thing to perpetuate. In a way, what the airbrush represented for Gernot Bubenik in the 70s, the internet represents for Parker Ito today. Artists' never ending need to innovate has, in many ways, managed to overcome the limits of the traditional medium of painting and to go beyond. Painting's ability to transform is matched by its ability to reflect the current state of art. Together with the always present need for the physical act and the process of painting to be done, these abilities are maintaining its relevance.

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