

MARTIN LE CHEVALLIER

La stratégie du râteau*

What is the *rake strategy*? It is the political-cum-artistic method that Martin Le Chevallier has decided to adopt. It consists in failing, both constantly and goodhumouredly.

For his new show at the Jousse Entreprise gallery, he is presenting three series of works based on a wit involving failure and catastrophe. He duly invites us to join him beyond the world, beyond time, and beyond the economy.

But what are you going to do in a gallery if you free yourself from the economy? Herein lies one of the paradoxes of this exhibition and it is the subject of **Obsolete Heroes**. This series was produced for an exhibition at Le Jeu de Paume** and challenged collectors: could you buy an artwork which won't outlast you? Which won't have more than two winters? These portraits of "heroes of inbuilt obsolescence" in fact have a shelf-like similar to that of a printer or a nylon stocking. The artist provides the purchaser with a one-year guarantee. Once that year is up, he warns the purchaser that the image will soon catch fire spontaneously. So whenever the image's owner looks at it, that will possibly be the last time he does so.

Second series: **Here, in days gone by**. During the first lockdown, the artist saw in shops that were closed because they were "non-essential" a utopia suddenly achieved. So he affixed notices to explain those bygone activities to us: "Here, in days gone by, people had their hair cut", "Here, in days gone by, people bought clothes they didn't need", "Here, in days gone by, our gazes were sold..." The city thus became a museum of bygone times, testimony of a strange age when people had hair pulled out, tanned their skin in the sun, and bought chimaeras.

The third series is the one which really sets *the rake strategy* in motion. For several years now, Martin Le Chevallier has been collecting **Rejected projects**. After he had had several projects rejected for unexplained reasons, he in fact decided to turn the unacceptable into a speciality. He suggested that the Institut français should sell its pavilion at the Venice Biennale, he suggested that Audi should apologize for its rigged engines, and he suggested that the political party "La République en Marche" should set up anti-homeless devices on roundabouts the better to guard against the 'yellow vests' ("gilets jaunes" protesters)... And the refusals has been coming in thick and fast. Proposal after proposal, this reverse success has been unending. And if, through bad luck, one of his projects was accepted, the victory would be a consolation.

Using a rhetoric of reversal and returning-to-sender, the exhibition *La stratégie du râteau* thus sings the praises of joyous failure and tired heroes: lightbulb makers, people gloriously bemedalled, non-essential shops and businesses, diesel engines, the French nuclear industry, full employment, thermo-capitalism, the patriarchy, etc.

Translated from french by Simon Pleasance

*The Rake Strategy

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