

LEITE RUIM, mauvais lait

Jean-François Krebs

curated by Carolina Trigueiros

Jean-François Krebs works with different media, such as video, photography, installation or performance. Memories - often uneasy - run through his work as a source of creation and deconstruction of a cloudy past. Based on these autobiographical experiences, we are challenged by a work made of dualities. Not only by the choice of delicate materials in comparison with the crudeness of their finitude, but for the manifestations both erotic and grotesque; innocent and precious; artificial and organic. We are confronted with a hybrid *oeuvre*, both in style and genre.

In his second exhibition at the studio, and one year after his stay as a resident, the works that Jean-François presents are divided around two central themes. On the one hand, the embodiment of early memories and its inherent ambiguity, on the other, the shaping of healing and self-reconciliation structures in the face of trauma, loss or pain. *Leite Ruim - Mauvais Lait* (meaning "Evil/Bad Milk"), refers to a premature awakening of dark horizons, without necessarily representing them too literally. It is in this flirtation between extremes and contradictory states that the artist navigates through in his practice.

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Throughout the space, the installation made of glass, liquid, ashes and dust, alludes to an organic universe, close to a state of gestation. The artist seeks to recreate the experience of a womb, where the limits between the "self" and the "other" are blurred. They are bodily objects that convey an apparent intimacy, as if this same immersion or dissolution of the body - through mucous membranes with warm and circular walls - could be reenacted.

Combining the complexity of this experience with the use of unconventional materials - such as urine, saliva, milk or, metaphorically, wine - Krebs evokes the quiet aura of this moment.

However, this innocent notion of shelter is quickly replaced by a sense of claustrophobia and

disgust. There is a latent crudity in the pieces, and they seem to reveal a sinister past. The zigzagging layout and irregular disposition weaves a hypothetical circle of events. This liquidity, maybe the ideal state of existence, is simultaneously the genesis of a mortal body.

Moreover, this liquidity, so often considered by Zygmunt Bauman, also points to the inconstancy and uncertainty of points of reference, or orientation. Like someone who walks adrift, looking for his partner, in relationships that can flow between our fingers, that can be lost in the gloom of the night. Everything is as volatile as our convictions, identities, loves, fears ...

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In a second moment, we are called upon by the solidity of the metal. As in the sculpture, our skin also has wounds. Our skin is also exposed to the erosion of time, the human eye and the understanding of others. The skin is thus a possible border with the outside, but also a map of events. Every sign, scar, wrinkle or stain constitutes the cartography of our self and becomes, to some extent, a revival of our memory. Like the patina that is created around the copper, the skin is also exposed to oxidation; we are exposed as well to weather corrosion, degradation and death.

However, it is important to take a closer look at these scars and the stories they tell. The repetition of forms and their human scale creates a secret language, like an internal alphabet, in which we can penetrate. The marks personify the impressions of each act, of each cut. As in the scarification of trees.

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When certain species of trees are wounded, their bark being scarified, natural resin is being produced to protect the wound from infections, and to start the healing process. Some of these resins, *Benzoin*, *Myrrha*, *Frankincense*, are burned as incense in various religious traditions. The

exhibited chestnuts are made of these same resins. When put in the *carrinho de castanhas* (chestnuts cart), they melt and return to a liquid state in an aromatic smoke.

The roasting of chestnuts, a tradition associated with the popular festivals of the *Magusto*, is itself a habit wrapped in mystique, even as a possible vestige of an ancient sacrifice in honor of the dead. In turn, the appropriation of the *carrinho de castanhas* as an *incensário* (censer) switches from the popular use to a ritualistic one, reinforcing the fog and ambiguity of events. Ultimately, the melting resin echoes the silent bleeding copper.

Yet, as with the faults inherent to memory, there is also a detached attitude in this burning performance, a fluid posture, full of spontaneity and humor. As one who frees himself from past ghosts. Smoke envelops works, people, and

memories. Like a touch – reoccurring element in Krebs' performances – smoke evokes the presence of a body.

In this conjecture, it is possible to foresee a transversality to the whole exhibition. A note of reconciliation, harmony and empathic relations. By accepting the dream, the permeability, the mutation, and the failure, it is possible to build a world of healing, touch.

- Carolina Trigueiros, 2018

Jean-Francois Krebs (France, 1987) studied landscape architecture in Edinburgh College of Art, in Ecole Nationale Supérieure du Paysage de Versailles, and in Ecole d'Horticulture du Breuil in Paris. He did Maumus independent study program in Lisbon (2018), and an exchange in Malmö Art Academy in Sweden (2018).

Recently he participated in the exhibition *Désirer un coin de soi-même inconnu*, Galerie du Granit, Belfort, France and in *Le Grand Monnayage*, 8ème Biennale Internationale d'Art Contemporain de Melle, France. He was invited to be part of the Art Therapy project that was held by the Association EDVO in FIAC 2018, Paris

Opening

Wednesday 28.11.18

22h

[23h . burning performance]

Exhibition

Thursday 29.11.18 - Sunday 2.12.18

17h - 21h

[ongoing burning performance]

Thank you to Kim Baraka - João Estêvão - Clara Imbert - Frédéric Legros - Afonso Leitão - Daniel Martins - Manuela Pais - Catarina Portugal - Quentin Stievenard - Julien Thierry - and many more.