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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

ALTERNATIVE FACTS
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stop to see the copper mines of New Mexico and Arizona. “I was already working with copper plates, and I was so curious to discover the origin of this material and how it is extracted from the earth,” Mesquita explains.

Projected onto the back of *The Wing Tip*, Mesquita’s digital video *The Ballad* pictures the artist in a series of disguises (worthy of the early work of Cindy Sherman) that correspond to each of the sculpture’s titles. The pilot—a neat moustache and gold-trimmed epaulets give the character away—is the first to emerge from what appears to be a makeshift airplane body fashioned from metal tubing and loosely attached sheets of white-plastic film. The musical accompaniment is non-lyrical, structured by orchestral crescendos and diminuendos and a rhythmic pulsing of drums, bells, and wind instruments. Mesquita displays a palpable exuberance in role-playing, a visible pleasure in costuming and makeup, and a sense of humor that seems to motivate her movements and the stop-motion animation that brings her metallic sculptures alive. The sculptor’s body and the sculpted bodies intimately, at times perversely or violently, interact in a battle between creator and created. When the sharp edges of her sculptures push against her skin, they leave marks on her face and ankles. Streaks of red paint remind the viewer how easily blood could have been drawn.

The early twenty-first century has seen planes fall from the sky, and the monsters such disasters have made of humankind. In the physical and existential rubble that defines the territory that is 2017, Mesquita’s sculptures are charged with a potential for life, one that must be negotiated with those already alive. She shows us beautiful bodies, and an encounter that is more than messy. She asks that we do not look away.

—Lillian Davies

BERLIN

Dan Attoe

PERES PROJECTS

“I never thought I would be a landscape painter,” Dan Attoe once remarked—and yet landscapes have played a role in all his work to date, as settings for figures in action. Attoe grew up in nature, his parents working as foresters around the country, so he is familiar with the often spectacular natural settings of the United States. Yet as a small-town kid he is also used to being bored, feeling alienated, or “doing crazy shit” (as he put it in a 2014 lecture). His early experiences have poured into his oeuvre of the past decades, which comprises highly detailed figure paintings depicting slightly absurd scenes of everyday life in the countryside. The seven works in his recent exhibition “Natural Selections” show Attoe shifting focus, bringing the experience of nature to the fore.

Visitor Center with Pines (all works 2016) depicts a one-story building in a natural setting, a kind of portal with an elevated roof pierced by horizontal rays of light, behind which we can glimpse what looks like a natural park, the work conjuring a sense of supernatural wonder. The play of light is just as significant in other paintings, defining the mood of each one, albeit in less dramatic ways. A subtle glow illuminates the valleys between the mountains in *Landscape with Free Time and Money*. Bright sunlight pours down in *Beach with Cliff*, in which some tiny figures play around in the sand. Attoe’s technique of using thin layers of transparent color, affords him a wide and differentiated range of expression in handling luminosity. All his paintings are basically orchestrations of two main contrasting colors: blue and yellow. The same hues are visible in each work, but in a variety of combinations and tonalities.

What role do humans still play in this scenery? Written words, sometimes emanating from the characters’ mouths, remind us of daily conversations. A tiny female figure next to the visitor center remarks



Dan Attoe, *Visitor Center with Pines*, 2016, oil on canvas, 48 x 48”.

EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT—perhaps she is trying not to be overwhelmed by the feelings of awe caused by the spectacular light. In *Mountain with Stage*, a majestic view of a mountain appears as a scenery flat, lending distance to the landscape experience. In the lower part of the painting four actors, framed by curtains, occupy a stage. I CAN’T CONCENTRATE, one of them says. IT’S OKAY NOBODY CAN, replies another.

Technically, the brushstrokes are at times loose, the figuration less precise and controlled compared to Attoe’s previous work; drips are part of how a tree looks. While in his earlier paintings an ironic and detached worldview was hard to miss, in these works it becomes a question mark: How ironically should we take these natural wonders? Or are they really and truly sublime? The works contain moments of alienation, a sense of absurd loneliness, and yet they seem to spring from an authentic appreciation of nature. The disparity in scale between the tiny humans and their surroundings seems to tip the balance in favor of nature. The result is a feeling of melancholy. People *are* nature, one would think in such a setting, but they are also a species that says no to nature. They cannot help but think their trivial and neurotic thoughts. In the bigger picture, though—or so the paintings seem to say—our little cares are insignificant and transient. The paintings communicate a spiritual lightness unaffected by the psychological gravity or felt isolation of the people populating them. Nature is just too strong and inclusive for that. Attoe really has become a landscape painter.

—Jurriaan Benschop

George Condo

MUSEUM BERGGRUEN

“George Condo. Confrontation” nestled 129 works—paintings, drawings, and sculpture—made by the American painter over the past thirty-eight years amid the Museum Berggruen’s rich modernist holdings: Picasso, Klee, Matisse, and Giacometti, inter alia. At the entrance of all this was *The Great Schizoid*, 1984. The artist’s surname is blazoned across its mottled gray background, the o’s formed by twin globes: Condo containing multitudes. “Schizoid” makes sense. While himself