

OLIVER BEER

DIABOLUS IN MUSICA

PARIS PANTIN

07 Sep 2014 - 15 Nov 2014



The Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is delighted to present *Diabolus in Musica*, the first exhibition of works by Oliver Beer at our gallery and our second collaboration with him after the performance *Composition for Hearing an Architectural Space*, in October 2013.

Oliver Beer's exhibition will be exploring people's ability to imbue objects and phenomena with an emotional, poetic or simply narrative charge, through the power of the imagination. This human tendency will be given partial form in an architectural acoustic installation based on a famous mythical chord, which in musical theory is called the tritone. It is an interval of three whole tones and corresponds to a diminished fifth. It was used in musical writing in the late mediaeval period but then banned by religious leaders. The sound produced by a diminished fifth or an augmented fourth is perceived by the ear as an unpleasant sound that provokes a sense of incompleteness and unease that earned it the sobriquet 'Diabolus in Musica'. The popular collective unconscious gradually developed a tendency to think that the sound might conjure up the devil.

The interval has since been widely used in musical genres that have broken with classical tone relationships. In both jazz and Heavy Metal, for example, a number of melody lines are constructed around this association of unbalanced notes. The resulting musical experience for the listener is based on that sense of something incomplete and out of kilter, which challenges not the universal but something unusual in the sound experience. It is precisely this experience that Oliver Beer's installation offers us, with a structure that totally envelops the spectator.

The exhibition is also presenting *Reanimation I (Snow White)*, which was recently (spring 2014) previewed as part of the *Prospectif Cinema* programme at the Centre Pompidou. It is a film which, along with several sculptures and installations, translates into disturbing artistic language Beer's investigation of the tools traditionally used for identifying what people often seek to define as real. By playing around with the notions of presence and absence and interrogating the physical properties of everyday objects, Oliver Beer throws doubt on the objectivity of perception. The objects – a pipe, a firearm, railway lines –, which are ordinary and yet mysterious, seem to be possessed of a biographical dimension, partly explicable through the propensity of the human mind to invest inanimate objects and to enrich what Heidegger termed their 'being-in-the-world' through the imagination. The particular way in which they are related to the wall or the floor, which they gradually merge into, brings added richness to the potential narrative, all of which contributes to an eventual infinite regress of the magic power of those two notes capable of summoning up the Prince of Darkness.

This exhibition, which marks the beginning of the new season, comes in a year that has been particularly full for this young British artist (b. UK, 1985), whose work is devoted to forms of perception, particularly in relation to acoustic phenomena. During 2014, Oliver Beer worked with the Palais de Tokyo in their *Hors-les-Murs* cycle at the MoMA PS1, with the Villa Arson in Nice, and also with the Musée d'art contemporain in Lyon for the exhibition *Rabbit Hole*.