

Adam Štech

Portrait Painting

17/3 - 9/5/10

Opening: March 16th 6 pm

Kamenická 22, Praha 7- Letná

Gallery opening hours: Tue - Fri: 1 - 6pm, Sat 2 - 6pm

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hunt kastner is pleased to present the first gallery solo exhibition of the work of Adam Štech, a recent graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. In this series of new paintings, as in his past work, Štech draws on influences and references he finds in classical painting. He deconstructs images and elements - gestures, postures, backdrops, landscapes and allegorical symbols - from reproductions of historical paintings, or even stills from classic films, dissecting and reconfiguring selected components. He collects, pores over, sifts through, and pieces the individual ingredients back together into new combinations and contexts, resulting here in vibrant, bold, Frankenstein-like grotesque portraits that possess a romantic nobility and eerie familiarity.

The seven smaller oil portraits, hung on dark red-wine colored backdrops, reminiscent of the walls of a classic portrait gallery, take works by well-known portrait painters such as Holbein, Raphael, Titian, or even a kind neo-German expressionist Vampire from the film "Dracula" by Francis Ford Coppola, as their initial starting point. Similarly, Štech's larger and more narrative and epic-like acrylic paintings, stem from works such as "Zeus and Thetis" by Ingres (*Cibule/Onion*), a Renaissance "Madonna and Child" by an unknown German painter combined with imagery from Polanski's film "The Ninth Gate" (*LCF*), or a combination of works from seemingly clashing eras and styles as in the painting *Sasquatch*, which adopts elements from English Romanticism, the High Renaissance and modern film. The artist doesn't attempt to reproduce these classical works in any formal way, but rather creates a „remix“ - as the art historian Petr Vanouš terms it: a „stylized remix“, „visual sampling“, or „VJ-ing“. Like a DJ he picks out bits and pieces from his large and varied collection of - in this case visual - material (most of which he has found and collected while surfing the internet) and fuses them back together in new combinations and formations, creating completely new and original works. The end result might initially come off as spontaneous, haphazard, or crudely slapped together, but is in fact is very well thought out and calculated, with a precise skill in the selection, sequencing and proper mixing.

„Painting is a peculiar reality.

A picture is a display.

Unidentified animals under glass in a terrarium, poised to catch one unaware.

Inside pulsing organs, shining hides outside.

Sensitivity and crudeness.

Balancing on the edge.

I am a compass.

I move along the edges of the rim, and see farther than they do.”

A.S., 2010

Adam Štech (1980, Podborany) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague from 2001-8, in the painting studios of Jiří Sopko and Vladimír Škrepl. His work has been presented in the Prague Biennale 3 in Karlín Hall and *Resetting / New Ways to Eternity*, curated by Petr Vaňous, at the Prague City Gallery in 2007, and this year was nominated as a finalist for the Art Critics Award for Young Painters. He is also preparing a solo exhibition that will take place in Karlín Studios in Prague in August-September of this year.