

# mathis gasser / marta riniker-radich

Curated by Manuella Denogent

Exhibition March 12 - April 30, 2016

Opening March 12, 2016, starting at 3 p.m.

The Xippas Gallery is happy to present two solo exhibitions by two young Swiss artists, Mathis Gasser (\*1984 Zurich) and Marta Riniker-Radich (\*1982 Bern). Both of these artists began their artistic careers a little more than five years ago and quickly emerged on the Swiss art scenes – on the French as well as the German-speaking one.

## Mathis Gasser

Mathis Gasser is essentially a painter, above all else, who also practices video and performance. His prolific pictorial production is based nevertheless on standard canvas formats (80 cm high by 50 to 50 cm large) and a relatively neutral element – he paints with acrylics and oils – and doesn't aim to create, in his works, pictorial virtuosity.

The body of his works consists of several large series, thematically developed over time. He draws on iconic references to his subjects and themes taken from already existent sources, such as posters, books, television series, films, and also video games. And in art too, which Mathis Gasser approaches in his own personal manner, transcending historical categories and incorporating such different artists as Georges Folmer, Winslow Homer, Wassily Kandinsky, Fernand Léger, Konstantin Rozhdestvensky, and Atsuko Tanaka. Sometimes, he might even create his own images.

Even though a quick glance might liken Mathis Gasser's approach to strategies of appropriation, he nevertheless distinguishes himself by moving beyond the detached posture that usually characterizes citations and reproductions.

In fact the problematic he engages in the form of his thematic-based series indicates a critical viewpoint of the pluridimensional excess of present-day capitalist society. His series of life-sized portraits *Heroes and Ghosts*, that groups together antiheroes (started in 2007 and still being developed), is emblematic of his off-beat vision and indirect critique: he prefers digressions in the form of forays into neighboring cultural "zones," redrawing the outlines of a different and alternative world. Science fiction – with its narratives that invent possible futures for humanity and incredibly rich iconography – is logically one of the themes that interests him.

In addition to his critical investigations, Mathis Gasser instills the deep influence of our subconscious in these images to create a sort of subliminal cultural effect. And actually, they seem to exercise on him a real fascination in turn. In fact, since Mathis Gasser is part of the Internet generation, he lives in a world of images. His abundant production and his use of standard formats references the flux of millions of thumbnail images screened by his eyes and his computer.

In the context of society sliding into the iconify of everything, the images selected by Mathis Gasser are themselves already the result of successive reproductions and transpositions. By capturing in his paintings this flux of endlessly

reproduced photographic images, and rearranging them into a network around certain perpetuating fictions, Mathis Gasser reinvents and renders more complex the act of pictorial appropriation.

The exhibition also presents *In The Museum 1* (2011-2012) which was part of a series with the same title started in 2010, and that also included paintings and prints on paper, as well as a second video.

The video depicts the figure of Christopher Walken, the artist's favorite actor, walking inside the Museum of Contemporary Art and giving a synthesized vision of the art history from the 1960s. However, the actor is constantly attacked by an endless stream of zombies who never relent. In a conversation that Mathis Gasser had with Fabrice Stroun and Tenzing Barshee during his show at the Kunsthalle Bern in 2013, he explains that the museum must be understood in his video as "a living entity that constantly integrates developments of a larger socio-economical sphere." In this scenario, "the zombies are a perfect fictional vehicle to consider potential large-scale destabilization... [and] act as a metaphor that permits [us] to reflect on [the] dystopian nature of our culture at large." The video also suggests that, "the museum itself is in essence a place for the living-dead – a place where the lines that separate the dead zone from the plane of the living must constantly be renegotiated."

Manuella Denogent, curator

**Mathis Gasser was born in 1984 in Zurich, Switzerland. He lives and works in London. After graduating from HEAD (Haute Ecole d'Art et de Design de Genève) and the Royal College of Art in London, he was granted residence at Kunsthalle Fri-Art, in Fribourg (Suisse) in 2014.**

**His artworks have been shown in numerous galleries and art centres in Europe and United States : Swiss Institute, New York (2016 and 2015), Centre for Contemporary Edition, Geneva (2015), Centre Pasqu'Art, Biel (2015), Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva (2014), Kunsthalle Fri-Art, Fribourg (2014), La Salle de Bains, Lyon (2013), Kunsthalle Bern (2012)...**

## Marta Riniker-Radich

Marta Riniker–Radich’s artistic practice is essentially figurative design with a few forays into the universe of monochromes and installations, but also (more recently during her present residence at the Swiss Institute in Rome), into video.

The patterns of her drawings – color pencil on A4 peach paper – emerge slowly from the patient and meticulous superimposition of colors, which enables her to create both transparency and depth as well as very particular hues. Her talent as a colorist is revealed in the expressive juxtaposition of colors, sometimes even disharmonious, and the image of skies always bathed in twilight; it endows her scenes with a supernatural feeling. The world in Marta Riniker–Radich’s mind is strange, fantastic, worrying, and toxic. In addition to the colors, the subjects of her carefully composed drawings also reinforce this strange universe: in these outdoor landscapes and interior scenes, architecture plays a dominant role. Her references draw on utopist architecture, directly citing John Lautner and Richard Neutra’s works, and in a more general fashion, Californian and American Art Deco architecture. Marta Riniker–Radich combines them to build her eclectic and unusual universe. Similarly to Brunelleschi, her views are always in perspective and are strongly structured by the lines that escape her constructions in an awkward manner that draws attention to their artificial and strange nature. Depicted with complex ornamental details, these interior architectures seem like Hollywood sets that create an atmosphere of decadence, which is further emphasized in the outdoor landscapes where the facades are held prisoner by lush tropical vegetation and skies are weighed down with color. However, sometimes these images are composed of simplified elements of various colors and the balancing act created by their different volumes. Both the domestic interiors or outdoor scenes are haunted by the complete absence of human figures, which casts the environments as sets or even as futuristic sets and allows the surrealism of an image to wield its strong power of fascination on the onlooker.

The exhibition also allows us to discover a series of three drawings *SWEAT POURS ONTO THE DUSTY GROUND AND TURNS IT INTO SALTY MUCK* (2015) originally part of Marta Riniker–Radich’s artist book *Black Gold Wives*. Interested by the oil industry and its mining techniques, the artist constructed her publication on a series of short texts, accompanying them with large-scale photographs of oil in motion and three drawings (shown in this exhibition) based on three drill heads. These objects – which in real life are worrisome – here float on a white background and are depicted with such minute detail that they become precious and strange jewels. In fact, Marta Riniker–Radich also explores the effects of close-up shots and moves into abstraction: she produces collages by inserting into her drawings a third dimension through close-up photographic elements, in order to endow them with a two dimensional effect. Drawing and photography, here exploited in a dimension contradictory to that which is inherent to their mediums, once juxtaposed (as in the piece *Little Shop of Horrors* (2011)), creates a feeling of strangeness. And this feeling of strangeness is, without a doubt, what best defines Marta Riniker–Radich’s work.

Manuella Denogent, curator

**Marta Riniker-Radich was born in 1982 in Berne, Switzerland. She lives and works in Lausanne. After graduating from HEAD (Haute Ecole d’Art et de Design de Genève), she was granted residence at Istituto Svizzero in Rome (2015/2016). She had numerous exhibitions: La Salle de Bains, Lyon (2015), Centre Pasqu’Art, Biel (2015), Kunsthau Glarus (2014), Kunsthau Lagenthal (2013), Aargauer Kunsthau, Aarau (2012), Centre d’Art Contemporain, Genève (2011), Manoir de Martigny (2011), to name the most recent ones.**