



Un Nouveau Ideal

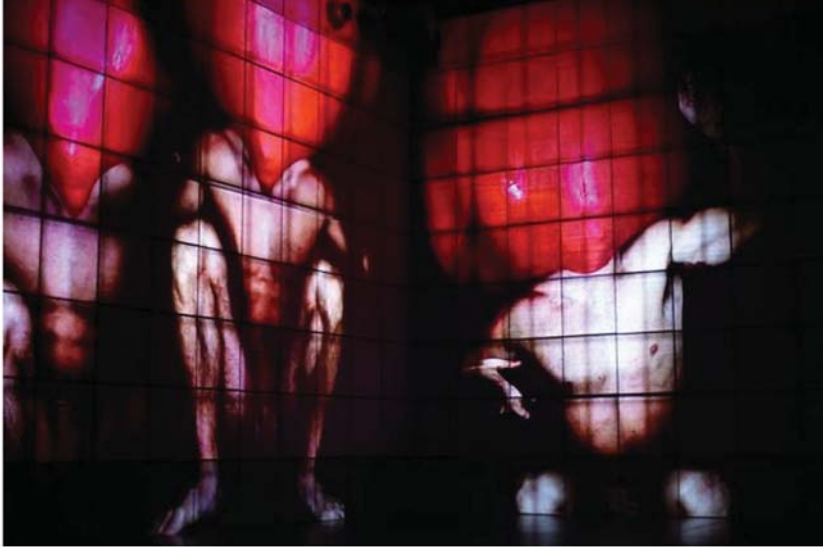
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Wednesday, February 13, 2013

"THE RAINBOW IS A MONSTER": VASSILIS ZIDIANAKIS talks to ANTOINE ASSERAF

Arrrgh follows Rrrrip. "Arrrgh – Monsters in Fashion", a fashion exhibition featuring the clothes of Bernhard Willhelm, Walter Van Beirendonck, Rick Owens, Filep Motwary & Maria Mastori, Maison Martin Margiela, Hyères graduates Jean Paul Lespagnard, Mareunrol and Mads Dinesen, and a 360 degree film installation from Bart Hess, is now opening at the Gaîté Lyrique digital center in Paris. "Arrrgh" follows in the footsteps of "Rrrrip – Paper Fashion", another internationally touring exhibit by Greek collective Atopos, whose founding member and curator, Vassilis Zidianakis, we met before the exhibit opening. Conversation and photographs courtesy of The Stimuleye.





Antoine Asseraf: What was the starting point for this exhibit ?

Vassilis Zidianakis: In Hyères in 2006, where I was in the fashion jury. One of the designers, Amandine Labidoire, had a sketchbook with characters that started something in my head. Then I asked Pictoplasma to write a text on character design, they saw my research on the subject and instead proposed to do a whole book about that idea, which became NOT A TOY, and then led to this exhibit.



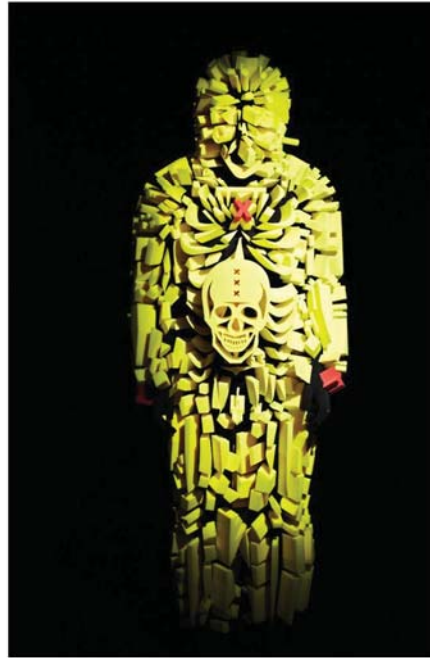
AA: When does this phenomenon start, in the 90's with Leigh Bowery, Margiela, Walter Van Beirendonck... ?

VZ: Internet is the real starting point – avatars, different identities. People don't show their face and instead create a character. In fashion, you could say it started with Comme Des Garçons for the shape, and Margiela for the face – because when you hide the face you create a monster. But Schiaparelli, who was close to the surrealists, had already tried that, and you find it a lot in ethnographic clothing: each civilization has costumes to dress up and become someone else. Today, it's become a bit like Halloween, and clothes that are not meant to be worn on the street, but to go to parties, take pictures, it's very marketing associated. Character design as a whole comes from marketing, in the US and Japan – products talk to you, like yogurt, clothes, Michelin... You also have to see the evolution of what we consider "monstrous". For example, hoop dresses from the 18th century which are too wide to fit through a door – don't you find that monstrous ?



AA: Besides the rise of internet, the 90's are also a decade of video games becoming mainstream, the emergence of adult animation...

VZ: It's the idea we wanted to explore with NOT A TOY, which led to this exhibition. If you read vinyl objects, it says "THIS IS NOT A TOY", it's for grown-ups. Ultimately I'm very happy to show this outside of a fashion context, in a place like Gaîté Lyrique which is more technology related. The exhibit isn't directly linked to technology, but shows the influence of technology on our bodies.



AA: What is different about this exhibit than what was shown in Athens ?

VZ: After 3 years of research, we made a show at the Benaki Museum in Athens. Since then, a lot of new things have been produced around the idea, so for the Gaîté Lyrique we doubled the number of exhibited pieces on display. We also commissioned Bart Hess a video for the 360° room, a special costume from Craig Green which serves as visual identity for the exhibition, and the fashion show of Jean-Paul Lescagnard which will be part of the parallel program.



AA: Tell me more about the ancient Greek notion of “monster”...

VZ: Today “monster” has a negative connotation. But the original Greek word, “teras” (which gave “teratogen” and “teratology”) indicates a physical phenomenon in need of an explanation. So for example, to the ancient Greeks, a rainbow was a “monster”.

AA: A bit like a UFO?

VZ: Yes, unidentified, and needing to be explained by us. the theme of the monster is really about difference, about what we’re capable of accepting, because we’re attracted to strange things, but don’t know how to communicate with them. **ARRRGH!**



MONSTERS IN FASHION

February 13 to April 7, 2013 Gaité Lyrique 3 bis rue Papin, Paris.