

Oleg Dou

Lonely Narcissus

25oct-4dec 2016

In "Lonely Narcissus" the key artistic ambition of Dou is to merge all the processes that constitute his self-identification – both as a human-being and as an artist – in a singular hyper-process. In this ideal super-process the actions performed by Dou-the-Artist will be indivisible from the actions of Dou-the-Human in respect to both their conceptual and mundane components. The unwanted division between public and private life will be also eliminated. Consequently, everything that is to be happening with Dou himself will be simultaneously real and dreamlike, important and unimportant, pronounced and disclosed; simultaneously relevant and irrelevant to life and art merged together. The actual biography of Oleg Dou at some point will begin to convert into mythology in real time. Real characters that once contributed to the peculiar formation of Dou's identity – as if to be commemorated, or on the contrary, in order to be punished – will be turned into mutants by the artist himself. With the help photography, sculpture and installation Dou will turn these people into magical creatures, various colour swatches and rags of faded sensations. Everything here will be shameless and beautiful. *To love. Unicorns. Skin. Hatred. Berries and beauty-spots. Pain and porcelain. Shady blue..* Everything here will be simultaneously Dou.

"Lonely Narcissus" is an exhibition that should be treated as a first serious attempt of Oleg Dou to reconstruct his own identity in respect to this new aesthetic order of simultaneity. Moreover, it is an attempt to do so not in a protected environment of his studio, but in a public gallery; an attempt to get drunk – or incurable poisoned? – with his own narcissism, in order to scrutinise the particular mental condition that gives a rise to this new way of self-identification. According to Dou, it is not correct to attribute narcissism to those who got much parental attention, or somehow else managed to develop self-esteem in early years. Quite on the contrary. Narcissism (so the psychoanalysts say) is the burden of those kids who were made by the others to recognise their own "uselessness", and – as a protection mechanism – later learned to trust only themselves, their own judgement, and in so doing radically left behind the influence of external opinion. These kids as if invented their own order of things, their own categories of good and bad, beautiful and ugly. These lonely Narcissuses as if invented the whole picture of the world, in which they now have to be the best versions of themselves – simply not to go mental.

For the pathological perfectionist Oleg Dou this exhibition acts as a laboratory research into the aesthetic order of things, to which he unconsciously determined himself. In this order of things, the artworks emerge as reactions of Dou-the-Artist – in response to the emotional wounds of Dou-the-Human. Thus, on the wall in the first room of the gallery you will find the work that tells the story of Dou's last relationships that ended with painful separation; the story is told in details, yet the words are replaced with a persuasive compilation of objects and photos. On this intentionally attractive wall the real scarves are covered by the artist and replaced by the new, fake ones – so the artwork itself acts as *pseudo*-biography. Intimate sensation is not presented to the viewer; it is kept safely hidden behind the suggested replacement: the exaggerated, glossy and familiar to everyone Myth of the Heart in Pain. A similar technique is applied by Dou in his "Exorcism Video". An unplanned filming of a non-rehearsed body movement (that was meaningful for Dou precisely and exclusively in the moment of its happening) undergoes a thorough post-production. The video is edited, re-

coloured, slowed down – in order to finally become the Myth of Demons' Exorcism that is as distant from Dou's initial experience as it is stylistically perfect. However, the gold medal in this "form-VS-content" battle goes to the unicorn text, just next to the gallery entrance. It perfectly works as both an introduction and a conclusion to the exhibition, and thus can be read earlier or later – in accordance with individual taste of viewers. It is written and located to replace the curatorial text; to ironise on the attempts of all curatorial texts that sick the status of the work of art. To exaggerate his joke, Dou quite literally turns the text into an artwork: by making it an autonomous object that cannot be neither trusted, no taken as a factual narration any longer. You will probably notice the joke and understand, where exactly the mutation started in the text – from meaningful into meaningless, from factual into fictional – by the end of the show, as soon as you sort out the mechanics of mythologising a-la Dou.

Thus, for a viewer the "Lonely Narcissus" exhibition acts as an invitation to participate in the game of guessing: what is really hidden behind all these myths by Oleg Dou? But beware! The invitation comes with a notice: "The removal of imaginary border between life and art – between an artist and a human being – might have some unprecedented consequences. Neither the Artist himself, nor the Exhibition Hosts are ready to take responsibility, if this super-hyper-whatever-process of mythologising disguises You, and You leave the gallery as a Unicorn." The border that used to serve as a cage will be intentionally broken – and all the sharp-teeth traumas and memories-predators that used to be kept by Dou in his zoo of the unconscious, will be granted some freedom. For the duration of "Lonely Narcissus" the gallery space will be turned into a mythic menagerie, inhabited by the personal demons of Dou. Multiple traumas and various neuroses will be enjoying themselves in the gallery space: there will be no hunters there to hurt them. Likewise, the personal bodily imperfections that are finally accepted by Dou will be also around – enjoying the celebratory status of the objects of art.

– Sasha Burkhanova, 2016.