

EXHIBITION NOTES

THE OVERMAN IS A BEARDED, SEMI-NAKED MAN*by Littlewhitehead for La Caja Blanca*

"The Overman is a bearded, semi-naked man" is the title of Littlewhitehead's first solo exhibition in Spain.

The show brings together a series of works sculptures, drawings on paper and a two channel video installation produced by the artists within the framework of La Caja Blanca's guest artist residency programme, which on this occasion has been supported by Creative Scotland.

Echoing Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, The Overman is the protagonist in a collection of eerily familiar three-dimensional scenes, where the main characters appear to be suspended in an ominous state of pause; a split instant away from taking a nose-dive into a spiral of delirious, unhinged events.

Inspired by the aesthetics of popular Hollywood films and video-nasties from the 1980's and 1990's, and soaked in

Glaswegian humour, the scenes presented by Littlewhitehead at La Caja Blanca, draw the visitor into an orgy of assaults on contemporary society's pretentious hypocrisy, submission to mass manipulation through mass culture, and its pathetic addiction to recreating itself through virtual identities.

As Overman acts out his fantasies, the artists invite us into a space which acts as a labyrinth of mirrors, where the line between the monstrous images reflected by the warped reflections, and the lucid images conjured as portraits of our reality, appear blurred and undistinguishable.

"The Overman developed by emulating the tactics of our time.

By creating an artificial identity we are mirroring the society in which we exist.

People create heightened version of themselves, a digitalisation of their identity that exists in an undead state in an ethereal digital realm"

Littlewhitehead, 2015.

Artist: Littlewhitehead

Exhibition dates: 11th April to 6th June 2015

Exhibition: La Caja Blanca, Calle Can Verí 9, Palma de Mallorca 07001, Baleares, España.

Video-installation: DP Magazine, Costa de Sa Pols, 6. Local 16, Palma.Mallorca. Baleares, España

More information: T. +34.971.722.364 | info@lacajablanca.com | www.lacajablanca.com

LA CAJA BLANCA

PALMA - Calle Can Verí 9, Palma de Mallorca 07001, España. Tel. +34971722364
LONDRES - 100 Broadwalk Court, 79 Palace Gardens Terrace, London W8 4EQ, UK. +442071935481
Email. info@lacajablanca.com - Web. www.lacajablanca.com

About the artists:

Littlewhitehead is an artist duo formed of Craig Little (born 1980, Glasgow, Scotland), and Blake Whitehead (born 1985, Lanark, Scotland). They graduated from Glasgow School of Art and have exhibited widely to much international acclaim. A selection of recent exhibitions include “Nothing Comes to Mind”, Concordia; “Inner Refuge”, Linden Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; “Unfinished Business”, Marine Contemporary, Marine Contemporary, Los Angeles; “Revenge of the Pleasure Principle”, KT Contemporary, Dublin; “Modern British Sculpture”, Gimpel Fils, London; “Newspeak: British Art Now”, Saatchi Gallery, London; “*The Weak Sex*”, Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern; “Kulturhuset”, Stockholm; “*British Art Now*”, Museum of South Australia; “*The Hermitage*”, St Petersburg, Russia; and “*Bloomberg New Contemporaries*”, London. In 2014, the spent a period of research in Palma de Mallorca, as guest artists within La Caja Blanca's international residency programme.

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About the artwork:

The works presented at La Caja Blanca are the first of a new body of work based upon *The Overman*, 2012.

“The Overman is a bearded, semi-naked man with a towel around his hips and his neck as well as one boxing glove. He wears rubber sandals, appearing like has entered a spa or swimming pool. The groomed face marks a stark contrast to his childlike torso. The absurd combination makes reference to and undermines Friedrich Nietzsche’s theory of the Übermensch. Nietzsche’s Übermensch is seen as a cynical and inflated version of man without any illusions, for whom god is dead and who substitutes his own will for belief in god in order to make sense of the world. Along with reference to the the ironic, pseudo-anthropological short film *The Perfect Human* by Danish filmmaker Jorgen Leth or to Virtruvius’s notes on the ideal human proportions, the Overman satirises the idea of human perfection. The Overman delivers a comic commentary on the low points of human existence, the daily existential uncertainties, and the omnipresent pressure on expectations on the individual. In the comic figure, the work also bundle criticism on the fathers’ generations, which permitted the ideology of coldly calculating people of will and success to flourish to such an extent that humaneness or solidarity in society and the economy have practically disappeared” – Dr Kathleen Buhler, *The Weak Sex: How art pictures the new male*, (Switzerland, Kunstmuseum Bern) 174-175.



“The Overman”, 2012.

Courtesy of Littlewhitehead and Saatchi Gallery.

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About the project at La Caja Blanca

The sculptures

Since its creation, The Overman has been exhibited widely (Paris, London, Bern, featured in magazines, publications and blogs), generating interest from media and gallery visitors, which has produced a gentle wake of content in the digital realm. By 2014, he had reached a stage where paradoxically he both existed and did not exist. During their residency with La Caja Blanca, Littlewhitehead felt it was the right time to return to him and allow him to become their muse through which they would attempt to decipher and understand the world they occupy.

Thus, the artists unleash The Overman, inner musings, and allow him to enact his fantasies, conjuring fragments of an autobiography, with strangely unhinged scenes with which the visitor engages in; initially as uncanny intruder, and into complicit bystander, sooner than they stop to realise.

“The Overman developed by emulating the tactics of our time. By creating an artificial identity we are mirroring the society in which we exist. People create heightened version of themselves, a digitalisation of their identity that exists in an un-dead state in an ethereal digital realm. Through digital media, people control the mediated image of themselves in what consequently constructs a mythical, digital identity” Littlewhitehead.

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“Everything is mad” shows three figures attacking a fourth. The work was inspired by images from 1970s children’s television and Isis hostage snapshots. The piece is intended to be equally naive and sinister: is this children playing, mimicking the actions of adults, or adults being carried away with an immature enthusiasm for collective violence?



Everything's Mad, 2014

Courtesy of Littlewhitehead and La Caja Blanca

Dimensions: 200 x 200 x 120 cm approx

One of the works included in the exhibition "The Overman is a bearded, semi-naked man"

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“Mirrors” shows a figure standing in a pine coffin staring into a handheld vanity mirror whilst another figure takes a photograph. The work is intended as a mirror within a mirror within a mirror.



Everything's Mad, 2014

Courtesy of Littlewhitehead and La Caja Blanca

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“Real Love” shows a figure dressed only in white y-front underpants and a watch. He is holding a deflated sex doll and waving a knife. The artists conjure images of sex and violence as activities we can engage in to almost limitless excess through artificial digital identities in an ethereal digital space.

“It should appear absurd to engage in real violence against an unreal object. To hate, love, desire the artificial seems absurd yet it is something almost everyone is guilty of.” Littlewhitehead



Everything's Mad, 2014

Courtesy of Littlewhitehead and La Caja Blanca

Dimensions: 60 x 60 x 120 cm approx

One of the works included in the exhibition "The Overman is a bearded, semi-naked man"

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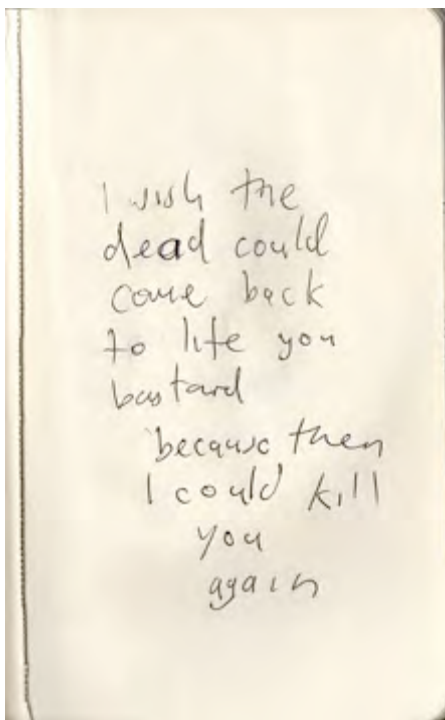
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Works on paper

While the sculptures claim much of the visual protagonism, this new body of work is predominantly grounded in The Overman's online diary, a collection of absurd musings and drawings.

All works on paper are entitled with the date and time they were posted online; referencing the moment they became part of the digital space, an ethereal space it occupied before display within the physical gallery.

The Overman diaries blog: <http://theovermandiaries.wordpress.com>



November 15, 2014

Courtesy of Littlewhitehead and La Caja Blanca

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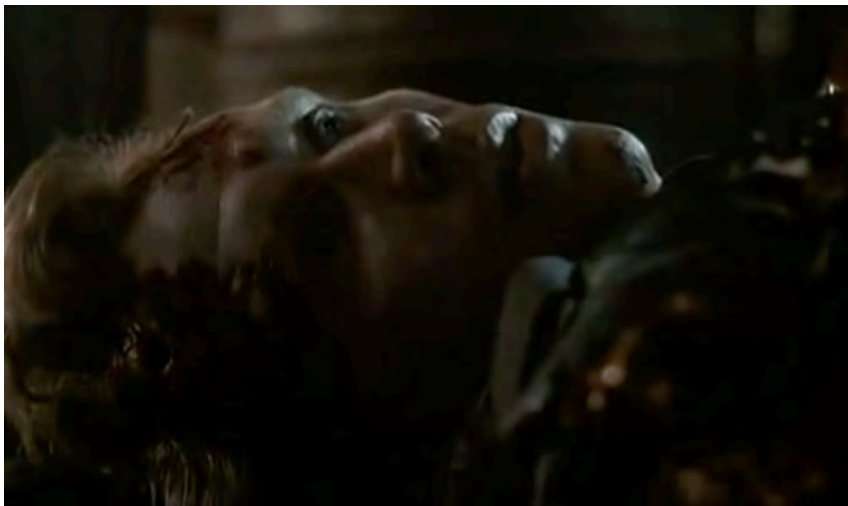
Video Installation

“Do you wanna live forever?” is the artists’ first video installation. It occupies a projection-space external to the gallery, which has been transformed temporarily into a dark-room for the occasion.

The video installation shows fragments of two versions of the holywood film *Robocop*; one released in 1989 and the other one released in 2014. Both visions are blasted sequentially, one after the other, depicting the scene in which the main hero is destroyed, only to resurrect as a superior man, granted immortality.

Littlewhitehead intentionally evoke references to Nietzsche’s Übermensch, a Christian crucifixion scene followed by resurrection, and bloodthirsty popular culture; the celebration of violence so present in the 1980’s and 1990’s video nasties, and the videoing moments of torturous executions which have become a tactic used by extremist armed groups to combat western culture.

Both *Robocop* and *The Overman*, allude to notions of masculinity, and the creation myths which surround the origins of the super human. Both works examine the blurring between real human identity and a digital/robotic identity. The contrast between the two visions of death, resurrection and immortality are symptomatic of the changes in values and political correctness within western society which have taken place over the last 27 years. The gruesome torture of the 80s is no longer acceptable in cinemas today; these nightmarish scenarios have been shifted away from the physical realm to become part of internet culture.



“Do you wanna live forever?” Screenshot from the video installation presented in 2015
 Courtesy of Littlewhitehead and La Caja Blanca
 One of the works included in the exhibition “The Overman is a bearded, semi-naked man”

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Acknowledgements

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