Soft Opening

Grace Ahlbom & Willie Stewart
"I Can Dream, Can I Not? Dreaming is Heavy Metal"
April 12 - May 6 2018
Unit 7, Piccadilly Circus Underground Station

A sound reminiscent to a buzzsaw, either from a table or a band, echoed across the fjords. Like a skipping-stone, it skidded over a vast body of water before trickling into the hot and humid farmland, soybeans and corn. To first discover it was to make contact with the devil. It had a strange allure: distorted and fast in tempo, unconventional shrieking and enveloped within a raw atmosphere. Never easy to love and and always harder to hold, but wanting to become it meant wanting to become something new.

In a place not far from where you sleep now is a graveyard of once-loved things that are out of style. This noisy purgatory is populated with a cast of fantastical characters like freckled lime-green mockingbirds and toxic pink warlocks, their floating bridges and overwound pick-ups still active and ready. To choose one is to complete yourself, bolstering a new constructed identity through a self-subscribed choice that means to join the fringe and to remove yourself from circulation.

When the time comes, you ask for help when applying your make-up for the first time. You are incensed by their round fingertips on your anxious face - gentle but deliberate - crafting your likeness into something un-normal. You amorously study your reflection in excitement, shaking your chin from side-to-side. As you move through your thoughts at the speed of light, you think that to leave here and never come back could be all that you ever wanted. On arrival, the smell of embellished leather and an audible sonic rumble has whipped a spinning mass into orbit: these are the seeds you have eaten. You spin in, you spin out, but with time you find a place within that vast trajectory. I can dream, can I not? Dreaming is heavy metal.

Grace Ahlbom (b. 1993, San Francisco, CA, USA) lives and works in New York, NY. In 2016 Ahlbom completed her BFA in Photography at Pratt Institute. Solo exhibitions include "Paris Sexy" at To Bridges, Bronx, NY (2016) and "Dig in Your Heels, Stick to Your Guns" at Pratt Institute Photography Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2016). Group exhibitions include "Muse Muse" at the Czech Center, New York (2018), "Fever Dreams" at Webber Gallery, London (2018), "Pure Desire" at Temporary Contemporary, Tokyo, Japan (2017) and "Fort Greene" at The Still House Group, Brooklyn, NY (2016). Publications include "Why Can't We Be Friends?" published with Dashwood Books (2017) and the self-published "Paris Sexy" (2017) and "Dig in Your Heels, Stick to Your Guns" (2016). In 2018 she will publish "Dreaming is Heavy Metal" with Soft Opening.

Willie Stewart (b. 1982 Gallatin, TN, USA) lives and works in New Haven, CT. After graduating from The Cooper Union in New York, Stewart went on to do his MFA at Yale University which he completed earlier this year. Solo exhibitions include "Grande Ole Opera" at Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, NY (2017), "House on Fascination Street" at Motel, Brooklyn (2016), "Runners" at Seed Space, Nashville, TN (2016), "Six Flags Part 2" at 41 Cooper Gallery, New York and "The Love You Withhold is the Pain that You Carry" at Kijidome, Boston, MA. Recent group exhibitions include "Re:Re:Re:Re:Re:Re:Re:Re:Re:" at 630 Flushing Ave, Brooklyn (2017), "Strategies in the Geometry of Homecoming" at Torrance Shipman, Brooklyn, NY (2016) and "Feelers" at Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA (2015). In 2014 he received the Alex Katz award, followed by the Yip Harburg Foundation Award in 2015 and the Elliot Lash Memorial Prize in 2016. Since 2017 Stewart has been represented by Moran Moran Gallery, Los Angeles. "I Can Dream, Can I Not? Dreaming is Heavy Metal" is his first time exhibiting work in London.

Text by Willie Stewart.
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