



Trading Rites – Héloïse Delègue, Miriam Naeh and Ariel Narunsky

18 May – 8 June 2018

Thursday to Saturday 12–6 pm and by appointment

Private view

Friday 18 May, 6–9pm

When we get to the gallery it is already beginning to get dark, the traffic noises are muted and distant and the street is beginning to swell purple with evening shadows. I do not know the space or the artists; these are M's people and (she has told me on the bus ride here) they come from a place far removed from the repressed pseudo-academia of the art school campus where we study together. It is always amazing to me to realise that there are still whole ecosystems of gallerists, collectors and writers whose labour is hidden from you. You think that you know a city, you grow into a number of comfortable and nice social niches, and then suddenly you are exposed to a whole new version of the same, but made new, with its own fresh sets of conversations and contingencies.

The gallery is converted from the front half of a long, low house that extends back very far into the municipal block. The facade is blunt and opaque; rows of identical buildings wall off the street solidly in both directions and betray nothing of layout or purpose of the rooms and corridors inside. My first thought entering is that the interior looks like a film set – *Die Hard* or *Lost Highway*. Or *Crash* by Cronenberg: taste expensive and pared back, natural light from big glass wall panels cutting laterally through the negative space, Modern repose with works scattered eclectically through nooks and alcoves, refiguring or troubling the purity of the rooms. I am initially unsure which of these works actually constitute the show. These rooms feel cut violently away from the conservatism of neon lights and patched walls that dominates in the public galleries where my own taste has been honed. I turn to M to say something about thresholds and underworlds but she has already disappeared off into the darkened rooms further inside.

I begin to make rounds of the work on display. I can hear M moving even further in to the structure, her footsteps growing more and more faint. I cannot believe how far back the rooms go. It occurs to me that she may have left the gallery space entirely and entered the house itself. In this first room there are prints, paintings, sculptures; all of the work is clustered into small constellations or assemblages that remind me of shrines and sacral spaces, or of the miniatures that film companies would use before the widespread adoption of CGI to simulate truly enormous props: starships, industrial complexes, lost islands and cities and other epic architectures (fantasy). Some of these clusters are dramatic (metal album aesthetics, spare concrete courtyards, impoverished gestures of night vision and secret movements and of mutual blackening) and some light and absurdist: comedy matched against pathos. The jokes (visual) are clever and balanced finely against melodrama as separate modes of dramatic figuring. Gestures trace out *characters* and *scenarios*: doppelgängers, monsters, farce, seduction, mistaken identities, fast switches and commerce; a series of provisional stages and frames that repeat themselves in series. I think that each of these describes a type of ritual by putting the material conditions of performance (as in composition, theatricality, set design) on display; each one maps a series of SPECIAL EFFECTS and as I wander further inside through the corridors and rooms that branch out like a root system I realise that this mapping of narrative forms is in a type of communication with the strangely porous space of the gallery itself. I pass a photo set back in a small alcove and violently spot lit that I think must be of the three artists, two women and a man, no clothes, skin and flat muscles and features turned away or obscured, bodies without faces. So they have implicated themselves. The sun is properly gone now and the light that filters through the windows is falling quickly to the blueness of late evening. The white walls begin to glow softly purple. I find a small painting of a hybrid animal that could be a lion or some other big cat, also without a face: I wonder, is this a character or a prop?

As I move deeper inside the feeling in the rooms begins to change with the disappearing light; the constellation of works is slowly REVEALED to function something like a transformer or switch box with the photo of the three artists as battery and fuel – they are the figures, dressed and made up for their opening night, and the honeycomb structure is the stage, each tunnel and nook siphoning energy away from this young threesome and pouring it into something else, some second, greater performance, invisible for now but nonetheless present and squatting huge and silent over this little tour.

These artworks are props (I can see this now), like glass jewels or crowns or trick daggers and behind each iconic or figuring gesture sit ambiguous scripts that vacillate between visibility and a furtive darkness. I am suddenly reminded of the way that cathedrals order stained light and negative space into image sets so contagious that they trace ideas of suffering and redemption that become truly universal. But what is it that has been made universal here?

I can hear M in the distance suddenly starting to move slowly back toward me. In my mind I can see the fading light shift over her hugely muscled body as she shuffles through the space, but for some reason I cannot make out her features with clarity. I hear her clear her throat and realise that she is about to speak to someone. The sounds are muted and strange.

Silence and stillness, the things that charge the air in these rooms with horror or fantasy, that suddenly *appear* and stay on to infect the frame – even after each of these clusters of object and image and desire have played themselves out to fatigue or worse, and engineered their own unstoppable EXITS.

Héloïse Delègue, Miriam Naeh and Ariel Narunsky are in their final year of an MFA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths College in London, they graduate in July 2018.

Full bios can be found on their websites:  
[www.heloisedelegue.com](http://www.heloisedelegue.com)  
[www.miriamnaeh.com](http://www.miriamnaeh.com)  
[www.arielnarunsky.com](http://www.arielnarunsky.com)

Text by Louis Mason

Louis Mason is an Australian artist and writer currently based in London. He is midway through his MFA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths College in London. His work can be found at [www.louis-mason.com](http://www.louis-mason.com)

For all further information please contact the gallery.

© Peter von Kant 2018