

AUREL SCHEIBLER



Neil Gall, *Pendulum* (detail), 2018, coloured pencil on paper, 102,5 x 77,2 cm

Neil Gall

Against Nature

Opening: 28.09.2018, 6–9 p.m.

Exhibition: 29.09. - 10.11.2018

The work by the Scottish, London-based artist Neil Gall (*1967), throughout his almost thirty-year practice, has been shaped by a close relationship between sculpture and drawing. The exhibition *Against Nature*, opening at Aurel Scheibler during the Berlin Art Week on 28 September, is the fourth solo show of the artist at the gallery and explores the cross-referencing between these two media in his newest works.

At first sight Gall's drawings are naturalistic and illusionistic to an almost uncanny degree, but soon they reveal the dimensions that lay beyond mere representation. It starts at the point where Gall chooses the subjects for his compositions. Rather than using real life images, he creates the models himself - the mock-ups made of diverse objects and household detritus and created solely for the purpose of being depicted.

Every such assemblage is clearly something made-up, phantasmic and surreal, though, every time it ends up extremely real in the drawing. It feels as if this transition from one medium to another captures something a bare eye isn't able to catch: a moment, in which incongruous fragments, when congealed together, become something new and alive as a whole.

In addition to the making process, Gall's works also bear a number of iconographic references to sculpture. The back sides of the Studio Collages - an extensive series and recently an important part of Gall's practice - bring up art historical connections. They consist of cut-out illustrations of sculptures from *The Studio* magazine from the 1950s, and the sculptural elements in the drawings are fragments of these illustrations. Some of them are reminiscent of human bodies or baroque-ish phantasy creatures.

The title of the exhibition *Against Nature* is borrowed from a novel by the French author J.K. Huysman, *À Rebours* and addresses the distinction between the natural and artificial. Written in 1884, it describes the life of an extravagant aristocrat who retires from society and everyday life to live in a kind of decadent utopia in a highly aestheticized environment. The novel became the main literary work of the symbolism and *l'art pour l'art* movements that were rapidly spreading throughout Europe at the time of the *fin de siècle*.

„Sculpture in reproduction is often better than the real thing,“ Gall is quoted in an interview describing the black and white images prevalent in the 1950's editions of *The Studio* magazine. In a photograph of a sculpture, the interplay of light and shadow emphasises the volume and spatial impression. In Gall's drawings, the three-dimensional mock-up appears vibrant and alive on the two-dimensional piece of paper. That's where looking at the drawing almost feels like touching the surface of the object - and even more so, like reaching beyond it.

Neil Gall, born in 1967 in Aberdeen, Scotland, studied at Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen, and Slade School of Art, London. His works are placed in the collections of Denver Art Museum, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, Zabłudowicz Art Trust, Aberdeen City Art Gallery, Scotland, David Roberts Arts Foundation, London, Christen Sveaas Art Collection, Oslo and other prominent international private collections. Among his most recent exhibitions are the solo shows *The Studio: Cover Versions* at Henry Moore Institute in Leeds and *Covers and Counterfeits* at Metropolitan Art Centre in Belfast.