



FONDATION
VALMONT



PETER PAN

La nécessité
du rêve

CONTEMPORARY
ART EXHIBITION
PALAZZO BONVICINI
23.04.22 - 26.02.23

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PRESENTS

PETER PAN. LA NÉCESSITÉ DU RÊVE

A CONTEMPORARY ART EXHIBITION CURATED BY

FRANCESCA GIUBILEI AND LUCA BERTA

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF:

STEPHANIE BLAKE
DIDIER & VALENTINE GUILLON
SILVANO RUBINO
ISAO

AND SPECIAL GUEST

GAYLE CHONG KWAN

PALAZZO BONVICINI
CALLE AGNELLO 2161/A
VENICE

23.04.22 – 26.02.23

FREE ENTRY

MONDAY TO SUNDAY, 10AM – 6PM

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"To be born is to be wrecked on an island"
Peter and Wendy, 1911, J. M. Barrie

Everyday life rarely equates to paradise. But at night – at night we can dream. Everyone needs an escape hatch, somewhere they can go in their mind to forget about today's chores, yesterday's regrets and worries about tomorrow.

Peter Pan embodies **this fantasy of escape and freedom** better than anyone else. But Peter is half human, half bird. As adults and real people, our free spaces are moments of escape snatched from a cage of real – or self-imposed – needs. Unlike him, we cannot take to the air and fly over a freedom that, once gained, is forever ours. We do not have all the time in the world.

We can find what we had lost and lose what we had found, we can go back and forth to Neverland, again and again, or until we stop looking. The problem is that sometimes we just forget how children see the world.

Having no memory, Peter Pan cannot tell stories – he *is* the story. **This absolute coincidence between him and the present is what lies behind his charm**, yet at the same time it is the reason why he does not make a good prototype for an artist. Peter is always frantically seeking new adventures: previous adventures are done and dusted, already forgotten even as they are taking place, creating a constant flow of present that allows no breaks, no time to reflect on experience. All that belongs in the adult world, not in Peter's. This is why Peter can even forget his beloved Wendy, or the dreaded Captain Crook, without changing his identity in any way.

In the early 20th century, J.M. Barrie drew for us a powerful character – initially for the stage (1904), then in book form (1911), later to be followed by a film (starting with the first silent film version in 1924, right up to Disney's famous 1953 animation). Peter Pan has some condensed aspects that British society, characterised by steady industrialisation, mass consumption and rigid bourgeois conventions, could only imagine in the context of an exotic,

childish world. Peter Pan and Neverland seem to embody the artist's desire to create something totally original, something that can be neither mediated nor reproduced, before being integrated into existing symbolic codes. It is what Walter Benjamin, some thirty years later, was to call an "aura", something which, with reference to natural objects, he defined as "the unique appearance of a distance, however close it may be". There is nothing nearer, nor yet, at the same time, farther, from each of us, than the child we once were.

Peter Pan, then, is not a paradigm of an artist still in touch with the child's imagination, as many like to see it. Rather, it is **an allegory of a Dionysiac place**, governed by the ambiguity of a constantly changing reversal of values (Peter is capable of suddenly changing sides in a battle) and the desire for power of a childish unconquerable ego, free from any pretence of responsibility. And this is just the place that every artist, if artist they wish to be, must first visit then look at in the rear-view mirror: like Medusa, Peter Pan can never be looked in the eye.

For *Peter Pan. La nécessité du rêve*, we asked our four artists to work in a specific medium – **that of the moving image**. Choosing the moving image, in all its forms, means addressing the language which, according to Benjamin (who was talking about cinema in this instance), more than any other achieves total success in eliminating the aura – this is what Peter Pan and Neverland are supposed to do, according to our premise. The idea is for the inspiring principle and the means of expression to function in constant friction with each other, thereby opening unexpected faults as seen by the artist. The key difference between this and Benjamin's analysis is that, while he could already see that the coming of the era of reproducibility meant the distinction between the role of the author and that of the spectator was becoming blurred, and that "any person today can lay claim to being filmed", in today's world of technological diffusion, producing and manipulating images is within everyone's reach. In fact, it is part of everyday life. Today, people don't need to hope they might be filmed – they can simply film themselves. And with the

incessant flow of moving images, they can become the subject of a film by copying, pasting and juxtaposing other people's images with their own.

Benjamin reminds us that when the cinema first appeared, one of the objections people made was that it was a form of entertainment intended to distract, wherein the continual flow of images allowed no time to think, or to reflect, because the next image constantly occupied centre stage in the mind. The distraction effected by the cinema, agent of reproducibility, and the distraction of Peter Pan, whose mental horizon is always fully occupied by his current adventure, reveal unimagined points of contact. It would be hard not to recognise, in these now distant criticisms, an echo of the warnings about mass distraction and reducing attention spans raised by the ongoing proliferation of moving images.

The four moving image installations are intended as a distraction from this initial distraction. We asked each of the four artists to work on a theme related to the figure of Peter Pan, representing it with total freedom.

STÉPHANIE BLAKE chose to address the topic of **freedom**, taken to mean detachment from personal responsibility, and the ability to forget.

DIDIER AND VALENTINE GUILLON started with the idea of **ambivalence**, and of the changes of state between the binary oppositions of adult logic.

SILVANO RUBINO addressed the topic of **infinity**, circular temporality and the desire impulse.

ISAO was allocated the topic of **the creative equilibrium** in a field defined by anarchic chaos and rigidity of form.

Francesca Giubilei and Luca Berta for *Peter Pan. La nécessité du rêve*

WWW – STEPHANIE BLAKE

Our first meeting is with **Stephanie Blake's** video installation, entitled **WWW – Window Wings Wrecked**. For the first time in her career as an illustrator, Stephanie was invited to use video as her form of expression. She offers the visitor a trilogy of short movies shot with a mobile phone during a trip to an enchanting Mediterranean island, which, thanks to the power of its wild nature with windswept coasts, desolate landscapes and stormy sea, has almost become that imaginary, mythical place, where one might plan to escape from the real world and from oneself. Peter Pan's adventures begin when he decides to run away from home, abandoning, both literally and symbolically, the maternal nest. Flying away like a bird, he believes he has gained his much-desired freedom, that he has dissolved the constricting ties with his family of origin and can now follow whatever path he chooses. All its possibilities and potential unfold before his eyes. He no longer has roots that force him to turn to the past, but only an attention applied to a perpetual present.

Stephanie uses her very personal view of reality to record feelings that bring her closer to that desire for escape and freedom that she shares with Peter Pan.

From the porthole of her cabin on the boat, she watches the high waves of the sea, that seem able to overwhelm and destroy anything. What was previously a placid blue expanse, almost infinite, where the imagination has free rein, is now a grey-blue mass that seems to overwhelm her. Fortunately, to protect her there is the porthole, that only a short time before had seemed to be an obstacle, preventing her from realising her wishes. After a storm, however, calm always returns. The sun returns to warm the air and a light breeze gently sways the stems of the pioneer plants, perched on the rocks of the island, like wings ready to hover in the air. This yearning for freedom materialises in the third video, which finds the artist travelling alone by car. However, the *beat* imaginary of being "on the road" is transformed: Stephanie replaces the boundless blue skies of America with a leaden sky that condenses the uncertainty of the future. The artist's maturity clashes

with Peter Pan's childish worldview and the image of her escape by car in the rain resonates rather like a warning.

BLESSING IN DISGUISE – DIDIER & VALENTINE GUILLON

On this evening the chief forces of the island were disposed as follows. The lost boys were out looking for Peter, the pirates were out looking for the lost boys, the redskins were out looking for the pirates, and the beasts were out looking for the redskins. They were going round and round the island, but they did not meet because all were going at the same rate.¹

The island that does not exist is a non-place, in which different environments interpenetrate and the various characters who live there confront each other. The prairies where the Indians live extend seamlessly to the tropical bay where the pirate ship is moored and the mermaids swim. The temperate woods where Peter Pan's children sleep in underground burrows extend to the peaks of high mountains. The cycles of nature regulate everything, the rituals of different social groups and their relationships.

This imaginary world, like the real one, is pervaded by conflict and disorder, which find a counterweight only in the beauty and regularity of nature. In **Blessing in Disguise, Didier Guillon**, in collaboration with **Valentine Guillon**, recomposes this duality through a video montage of old black and white images of past conflicts, using in particular the iconographic repertoire of the Vietnam War, alongside time-lapse shots of the blossoming of brightly coloured flowers.

Metaphorically alluding to the imagery of Flower Power, a hippie counterculture movement, born in opposition to the violence of war and traditional values in the 1960s and 1970s, Didier and Valentine Guillon identify nature, in its beauty and creative strength, as the tool through which to build an earthly "paradise" to counter the unreasonableness and brutality

¹ J.M. Barrie, *Peter and Wendy*, 1911

of conflict. The artist does not flee to a non-existent island but, through his work, helps to imagine and build possible new real worlds.

TRANSITI. EROS, THANATOS, CHRONOS – SILVANO RUBINO

Peter Pan is a being in between. He lives in a perennial present, does not want to remember his past and cannot imagine his future. He is no longer an innocent child protected by his mother's arms, but nor will he ever become a responsible adult. He acts in suspended time, where his actions have no consequences and cannot have the memory of past experiences. **Silvano Rubino** returns this unique existential condition to the visitor through the work **TRANSITI. Eros, Thanatos, Chronos**.

Inspired by Greek mythology, he personifies love, death and time in his three videos; the artist, like Peter Pan, lives in a state of perpetual tension between opposing impulses (those of life and death), ignoring time and its inexorable flow, because in his work he finds the lever through which he can expand his present to infinity.

The first video represents transit as movement from one condition to another, between two points in space and time. The laboured breathing of a walking man accompanies the visitor through a forest, first when covered in snow and then during the thaw, when the brilliant green of the vegetation replaces the white of the snow. Changes in nature embody the flow of time, while the act of walking seems to unfold in a perpetual loop.

The second video is characterised by the meeting of two enigmatic presences. In a game of symbolic and physical opposites, the two characters (a young woman of florid beauty and an ageless man of dark appearance) face each other as though playing a game of existential chess. Only time separates them, still indefinitely open for her, but marked by its impending end for him. A time that transforms everything as it flows, like the ice in the third video, that melts to become water, removing the meaningful relationship of language.

SHADOWS AND FORMS – ISAO

No man will ever be able to part with his own shadow. The shadow is a part of one's identity. Peter Pan, on the other hand, loses it, handing it over to unexpected independence. In metaphorical terms, the shadow represents otherness, the unconscious, our dark side, which in Peter Pan often takes over, imprisoning him in an absence of self that flows into an eternal present. In his installation **Shadows and Forms, Isao** frees the shadows of the many characters of the story, staging a contemporary show inspired by traditional Chinese shadow theatre. Behind two screens, positioned to resemble a big, open book, the shadows of the crocodile, the pirates, Peter and Tinker Bell chase each other as though they were playing a never-ending children's game.

This chaotic world, in which the shadows of things and people have a life of their own, independent of the reality of the bodies and forms to which they should belong, represents the singular condition in which the artist moves; that particular state of mind that imagines the non-existent and transforms the real.

However, without light there is no shadow, and Tinkerbell, the little luminous fairy who accompanies Peter Pan on all his adventures, flitting around him like a butterfly, represents his alter ego. A female character, belonging to the world of dreams, but concrete and pragmatic, aware of the consequences of her actions, loyal to her friend, but thinking independently. While Peter refuses to grow up, shuns responsibility, makes up stories and lives in a world of tall tales and lies, she always tells the truth and, even if she makes mistakes, she remains loyal and responsible. A character straddling the two worlds, able to maintain contact between them thanks to her flight and her light.

THE ARTISTS



American **Stephanie Blake** lives in Paris and is an illustrator and author of children's books. In 2002 she created *Simon Super Rabbit*, published by l'École des Loisirs and translated into numerous languages, before being adapted into a cartoon in 2016.

Since 2018, Stephanie Blake has been creating clay sculptures that she immortalises in bronze, Indian ink sketches on Japanese paper, and large coloured canvases. Beneath their crude, naive and spontaneous exteriors, Stephanie Blake's works paradoxically reveal a delicate, poetic... even obvious side.

Didier Guillon comes from a long line of artists and collectors, whence the irresistible compulsion that has always inspired him to create, fostered by his insatiable curiosity and energy. He explores a wide variety of techniques, ranging from silk-



screen printing, drawing, cardboard and glass sculptures, to large-scale installations. Through his work he addresses and reflects upon important issues. For this exhibition, he is working with his daughter, **Valentine**, who has recently begun contributing to the family's artistic production.



Venetian artist **Silvano Rubino** studied at the Venice Academy of Fine Arts. His path as an artist has led him to work in a variety of disciplines: painting, stage sets, sculpture, photography, installations and video. Combining or separating these various languages, his work is always based on a conceptual approach. His works have been celebrated in many exhibitions the world over, from Venice to New York, Europe to South America. In 2018, he was awarded the Glass in Venice prize by the Veneto Institute of Science, Letters and Arts, for his artistic work with glass.

Isao is a Catalan artist inspired by Japanese calligraphy and Japan – his mother’s native country. Paintings, sculptures, illustrations, installations, animations... With very little, the lines, blocks of colour and balance in his compositions allow him to express his fascination with nature, which he represents in kaleidoscopic fashion. This well-travelled artist, who constantly strives for regeneration, has launched a number of projects that are stamped with his touch and personality.



CURATORS



Francesca Giubilei and **Luca Berta**

are both independent curators. Francesca Giubilei is an expert in contemporary glass art and artistic director of SPARC* - Spazio Arte Contemporanea, a project space dedicated to experimentation and hybridisation of the arts in Venice. Luca Berta, PhD, has written numerous

articles in international journals and several books about art, aesthetics and the philosophy of the mind, including "In Bed with Mona Lisa. Contemporary art for Commuters and Curious Minds", (London, 2014, written in collaboration with Carlo Vanoni). Together they have organised many contemporary art exhibitions and founded the *Venice Design Biennial*. Their Veniceartfactory art label has worked with major cultural institutions all over the world, including UAL (University of the Arts London); Fondation Dubuffet; *Fondation Valmont*; Arts Council England; Art Bahrain Foundation; UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees); Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere e Arti; Fondazione Querini Stampalia and Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia.

SPECIAL GUEST : **GAYLE CHONG KWAN**



Gayle Chong Kwan is an award-winning British artist whose large-scale photographs, installations, performance, and projects are exhibited nationally and internationally, both in major galleries and in public spaces. Her work is an ongoing investigation of interiority and collaboration, which she explores through immersive constructed environments and immanent activities, often working with communities, archives, waste materials, and ecological issues. Gayle

Chong Kwan is represented by Alberta Pane Gallery (Paris and Venice).

In the context of the exhibition, Fondation Valmont is entirely dedicating the room 5 to Gayle with the site-specific installation *Atlantis*. This artwork represents the mythical landscape as a city created and carved out of semi-opaque, used, plastic food packaging, collected from people who live in London, and links to concerns about waste and the environment.

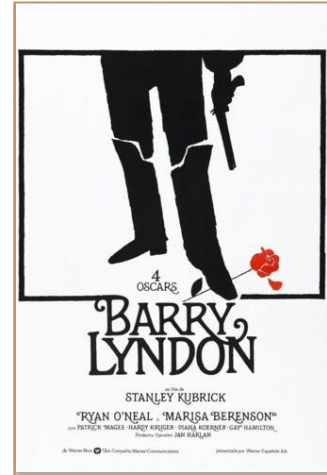
◇

The island is keyword of the *Peter Pan* project. The need of dreaming runs constantly to **Neverland**, also known as **Le pays imaginaire** or **L'isola che non c'è**. Somehow this island is the beautiful Hydra, the Greek cradle of both the Hellenistic culture and the production of Fondation Valmont artists. It is precisely in Hydra that the exhibitions come to life during creative workshops guided by the curators.

PETER PAN BY J.M. BARRIE, 1911

BARRY LYNDON BY STANLEY KUBRICK, 1975

Peter Pan and Barry Lyndon are two figures guided by impulsiveness and pride, two characteristics which are often indicative of immature behaviour. It is this very impulsiveness that leads them to fight a duel. Peter Pan is a boy who doesn't want to grow up and whose childish behaviour is normal for a child of his age. Barry Lyndon is a young man whose life choices are impulsive and immature. Always guided by his great good luck in the first half of the story, in the second half his fate is less fortunate – clearly not an example of the period in which he lives, the Age of Enlightenment. Neither of them manage to successfully integrate into society.



Theatricality

The story of Peter Pan first appeared as a stage play in 1904, following which it was published as a novel in 1911. The scenes described seem to be from different worlds: mermaid lagoon, pirate ship, Indian village, Peter Pan's tree house, etc. – they don't all appear to be on the same island. The film Barry Lyndon was made in such a way as to portray the 18th century as though it were one great stage play.

◇ *BARRY LYNDON* IS BEING SHOWN IN ROOM 6 EVERY MONDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT 11 AM. BOOKING RECOMMENDED.

FONDATION VALMONT – WHEN ART MEETS BEAUTY

Founded in 2015 to make the Valmont Group's commitment to art official, Fondation Valmont's mission is to promote art in all its forms, in accordance with the values and opportunities offered by its parent company: quality, aesthetics, generosity and sustainability.

From the Group's beginnings, Chairman Didier Guillon refused to remain trapped in the universe of cosmetics alone, and therefore built bridges with the artistic sector. His efforts were crowned with success in 2015, when



the rich depth and scope of the projects he brought about led to the birth of Fondation Valmont. In 2019, this international institution made Venice its permanent home, in a Renaissance palace built in the purest 16th century style: Palazzo Bonvicini. Alongside the international arts events that take place in Venice, and always with the aim of sharing art and making it accessible, Fondation Valmont offers a rich programme of touring exhibitions travelling the whole world: from Hydra to New York, via Berlin, Munich or Milan.

FONDATION VALMONT'S MAJOR EXHIBITIONS



- ❖ 2021-2022: *Alice in Doomedland* – Venice
- ❖ 2021: *The Room of Tears* – Munich, Berlin
- ❖ 2021: *Janus* – Venice, Hydra, Berlin
- ❖ 2020-2021: *Venetian Love* – Venice
- ❖ 2020-2021: *Tintswalo African Colors* – Munich, Berlin, Milan
- ❖ 2019-2020: *White Mirror* – Munich, Chengdu, Milan, New York, Ginza
- ❖ 2019: *Hansel & Gretel - White Traces in Search of Your Self* – Venice
- ❖ 2018-2019: *The Elegant Symmetry of the Gorilla* – Munich, New York
- ❖ 2017: *Beauty and the Beast* – Venice
- ❖ 2015: *The Dialogue of Fire* – Venice

Exhibitions planned for 2022

- ❖ *Ivo in Tanzania*, Munich, Berlin, Seoul, Shanghai
- ❖ *Blessing in Disguise*, Hydra
- ❖ *Hadrien Dussoix et Didier Guillon s’amusent*, Munich

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