

nicola von senger

„Hello darkness, my old friend,
I've come to talk with you again,
Because a vision softly creeping,
Left its seeds while I was sleeping,
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains within the sound of silence."
Simon and Garfunkel "The Sound of Silence"

After Olaf Breuning's solo show at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Zurich which was comprised of a considerable number of new photographs, drawings, sculptures as well as a new video, Galerie Nicola von Senger is pleased to present *Hello Darkness*, an installation that dates back to 2002, but has never before been shown in Switzerland. The installation was previously exhibited at the Swiss Institute in New York (2002), the Magasin Grenoble (2003), and the Bregenzer Kunstverein (2004) and is Breuning's latest installation to date.

Hello Darkness is a very important work in the artist's oeuvre. The elements which are so typical of Breuning's early work and which quickly earned him recognition, first in Switzerland and then internationally, come alive in this installation in a particularly concentrated manner. The entrance to the installation is a hole smashed into the gallery wall that creates a passage into a monumental remix of contemporary cultural fragments. Breuning's horror / shock aesthetics, his deliberately amateurish production, the use of copies and quotations and the mixing up of sounds and images from popular culture meet a subject that has experienced numerous incarnations from the medieval dance of death over the poem by Matthias Claudius to the film by Roman Polanski: *Death and the Maiden*.

Breuning most recently made use of this motif in his exhibition at the Migros Museum. *Woman and Death* shows the protagonists on a see saw. A happy, rosy-cheeked, blonde girl outweighing a pathetic, helpless skeleton humorously tips the balance of this dance of death in favour of life. *Hello Darkness* serves up a more somber version. In a dark room replete with fog, light effects, and ominous music a smoke machine and stroboscope are reminiscent of night clubs, a coffin, skeleton, and axe evoke haunted houses and B-movies and a cell phone ring tone echoes the sound of everyday life. In this scenario, Breuning's maiden does not have a virginal innocence as in the paintings of Hans Baldung but is instead presented as a state-of-the-art sex doll. Already lying in a luxurious coffin she holds an axe in her hand which might explain both the hole in the wall and the havoc that has been wreaked across the room. She holds counsel with death - a plastic skeleton from anatomy class sitting on a heap of dirt. The substitution of the protagonists with commodities, the maiden's malice and the innocuous plastic death, take the drama out of the story and replace it with a post-religious allegory that takes place in a limbo (between life and death, reality and fantasy, between the genuine and the artificial). This allegory concerns less body and soul than a cultural moment - a moment which seems to quote from Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*: "In a world that is *really upside down*, the true is a moment of the false."

Gregor Staiger, October 2007

For further information and images please contact the gallery:
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