

HOŠEK CONTEMPORARY

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YSLAM BOYS - NYNIVE

Opening reception: 7th August 2020, 6 - 10 pm

Curated by Fabiola Mele

“WE HAVE NO MESSAGE”: this is the only refrain perpetually reiterated by collective Yslam Boys on their works, in their captions, in the answers they give when asked about their practice. Yet, it’s almost impossible not to grasp the quantity of symbolic references and citations that populate the imagery built around their personal universe. Universe that the viewer is thus left to freely decipher more or less on their own. Disruptive, irreverent, eclectic, the collective lingers in a constant state of almost uncanny mystery regarding what they do, who they are and how many : their practice spans from ready-made digital illustrations to emo-trap EPs randomly dropped on SoundCloud, from video-making to live performances like a dj-set aired from the terraces of a monastery in the Apulia region (Italy), all the way to Ynstagram, a never-ending performance consisting in social media trolling and in their unpredictable use of their Instagram account.

Yslam Boys invite you to their (allegedly) first personal exhibition, WELCOME TO YSLAM NYNIVE: “Some remains of Yslam Nynive have been discovered here in the Middle East, in this city a few km from Jerusalem, Za’Tara. Some layers deep down the present city of Za’Tara, there was found Yslam Nynive. As it is possible to understand from the ruins, the future city of Yslam Nynive is founded on certain specific dogma, some pretty univocal central axioms: Queer Existentialism, a strong inclination towards a Pink Future intense directionality, and Anal Ecology ; a strong Vocation and Idolatry of High Capitalism : in this future society, Brands and Platforms’ Logos are worshipped like the Highest Deities. A strong, Polymorphic Religiosity where divinities from the Old World have been mixed up and joined by the New Gods. Yslam Nynive doesn’t exist. Yslam Nynive is, after all, micro-fiction. Us, we essentially believe in it. Do you believe in it?”

Nynive takes its name from Nineveh (Ninive, in Latin), one of the oldest and greatest city in antiquity. This ancient city of Upper Mesopotamia, capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, is located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, on the outskirts of Mosul in modern-day northern Iraq. The archaeological site of its remains were occupied by the ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) from 2014 to 2017, during which time they bulldozed several of the monuments there. Yet, NYNIVE is not Nineveh. Despite archaeology has inspired art ever since the studies on ancient Roman ruins conducted by Humanism and Renaissance artists, and the themes of History and the Archive are playing quite a significant comeback in current discourses concerning contemporary art, what we are put in front of here is not actual archaeology, but future archaeology. In fact, when talking about NYNIVE, Yslam Boys make reference to Za’atara, rather than Mosul : it’s an imaginary city. (Za’atara is a Palestinian town located eleven km southeast of Bethlehem).

The advent of modern technology is already making us question the ways we store and process the huge amount of data we collect everyday : if, according to former Google CEO Eric Schmidt in 2010, "Every two days now we create as much information as we did from the dawn of civilisation up until 2003" (Siegler MG, 2010), what will remain of us? How will the remains of our future (and present) societies be processed and analysed? As an archaeologist collecting and cataloguing the finds of an ancient site, Yslam Boys collect and catalogue the fictitious findings of an imaginary future society. A future society, Nynive, that is still imagined in the present and, as such, has to confront itself with the perception we have today of an a hypothetical future, as much as any science-fiction stems from the speculative visions of how an era predicts its own developments will look like.

There is no moral judgement behind this particular vision, Nynive is neither dystopian nor utopian. The sculptures, installations, tarot decks and graphic designs that compose the exhibition form an eclectic summa of the idols of our present and past societies : reminiscent of the mass-produced religious icons sold in tourist shops, deformed Buddhas are placed side by side with madonnas in burqa, striped of their original significance and imbued with the turbo-queer values of a future era that might arise from the collapse of capitalism. As collapsing itself, capitalism is then idolatrized in Nynive, in the same way that any decaying society clings itself to the idealized values of its recent past. Yslam Boys' Nynive doesn't want to convey any message. It is, rather, an invitation to take a step back from the data of our present condition and to contemplate the discovery (in the present) of the ruins of a city (in the future), embracing the symbols of the new spirituality it propels with an attitude that is more akin to a leap of faith than a rational, scientific analysis.

"Za'Tara is a city a few km from the Wailing Wall. The present city is developed according to late-Persian-style urbanism. Under this city a future city is hidden. That's Incredible. Being Archaeologists of the Future means being somehow always misunderstood. Rediscovering for the first time the ruins of a city that doesn't yet exist is sometimes exhausting, paradoxical. Undoubtedly always exciting. Cataloguing its Remains and Ruins is quite fascinating to us. Dating Future Ruins arouses and stimulates desire, dreams, and questions about present societies. The inhabitants of Za'Tara know utterly nothing about Yslam Nynive. Those who do, think we are crazy. Obviously this is all science-fiction, a micro-fiction created on purpose to entertain, fundamentally because we do need, as humans, to tell each other stories, to invent something. Quite like Dylan Dog, after all you believe a bit in those monsters. We invented everything. After all we believe in it. Do you believe in it?"

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