



ADRIAN MELIS: 2768. 23,53. 8. 1958. 57%. 1000

20.03.–30.08.2020, Wing

2768. 23,53. 8. 1958. 57%. 1000 presents a selection of works in a wide range of media by Cuban artist **Adrian Melis**. The works address corporate and political corruption, labour markets, bureaucratic inefficiency while also reiterating real life moments that first appeared as tragedy and then recur as farce through his work. “In other words, it is possible to transform [sugar] cane into protein that may be eaten by humans and into lard that may also be used by humans,” **Fidel Castro** explained in his speech *On the Importance of Technology* (June, 1968). Some of Castro’s other plans involved attempting to grow coffee plants on the beach and genetically modifying and cross-breeding cows to compete with Dutch dairy production, leading to the extinction of cattle on the island whilst making claims that Cubans make better Camembert than the French. It is certain that Fidel Castro was often disconnected from reality, yet he effectively mobilised a nation-wide workforce for decades. His medium of choice: unfounded figures, percentages and theories. In regard to ‘Marx’s disciples,’ influential Czech art historian and theoretician **Jindřich Chaloupecký** makes a point in his essay *The Intellectual under Socialism* (1949) that rings true for the Cuban communist party: “They refuse to see reality. They are not interested in what is, but only what ought to be, and have declared their theory to be the only valid version of a truly ‘scientific world view.’ Communist ideologies prefer to teach and think primarily in universal and futuristically coloured categories.”

Adrian Melis’s work has been profoundly influenced by the normalization of the absurd and a ‘scientific world view,’ shaping his methodology and process which comprise unlikely production lines, the manufacture and manipulation of chain reactions, transformations, multiples and series; his thematic interests may well be rooted in his formative years of studying printmaking at the University of Fine Arts in Havana.

One integral element coursing through the systems developed by Melis is destruction. Physical or metaphorical destruction arises in each work through repetition, recurrence, and sequencing. In *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, first published in 1943, **Joseph A. Schumpeter** explains that “[creative destruction] is a process that incessantly revolutionises the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one. This process of Creative Destruction is the essential fact about capitalism.” Similarly, Adrian Melis’s ideas parasitize existing economic, political and cultural idiosyncrasies in an attempt to reveal their self-destructive neuroses and propose new ways of understanding them. Eight hours of recorded labour rights protests in Spain are reduced to bubbles that burst within seconds, while EU parliamentarians clap unceasingly for 23,53 minutes. In Cuba twelve women reminisce through song and dance about their lives in 1958, recalling the moment when they still believed their future would be bright and glorious, while in secret farmers purposely destroy 57% of their harvests. Somewhere in an office a single successful job applicant is employed to shred CVs submitted by the 2,768 unsuccessful applicants, while 1,000 physical Likes are produced, packaged and sent to a refugee camp. These absurd scenarios coexist within the exhibition space and raise the question whether creative destruction might be not just a by-product of numbing repetition, present within communist and capitalist structures, but also an antidote against it.

Adrian Melis (b.1985) graduated from the University of Arts (ISA), Havana in 2010. Prior he participated in the Cátedra Arte de Conducta directed by Tania Bruguera (2006-2008). He was also resident at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam (2014-2015). He is currently based in Barcelona and is represented by ADN Galeria.

The exhibition is realised in cooperation with AND Galeria.

Opening of the exhibition on Friday 20 March at 6 p.m. A tour to the exhibition with the artist and curator on Friday 20 March at 12 p.m.

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