

A woman staring at her reflection in the mirror; a couple entangled in rituals of seduction; a human figure engaging in an uneven fight with a dog. Settings are abstracted, as if time has frozen and spatiality has evaporated, drawing attention to the core themes that traverse Vassilis H.'s oeuvre: corporality and sensibility, sexuality and perversion, pleasure and abuse, vanity and existential anguish. In short: what it is to be human. The Greek artist, born in 1977, draws inspiration from his vast collection of magazines, fanzines, films, and photographs from the '70s and '80s. Against the dictates of a constant need for innovation, novelty, and the always cutting-edge, his work hints to the slower temporalities of an analogue era, without though falling into the pitfalls of romanticism or nostalgia. The exploration of the problematics of the present-day seems integral to the artist's creative practice: if an all-pervasive spectacular culture has accelerated the manipulation of desires, what does this mean for the constitution of subjectivity, the structure of recognition, and our very self-understanding? How can we gain agency over our body and its semiotic construction in a society saturated by images, unrealistic beauty standards, and narcissistic syndromes?

Vassilis H.'s oil and acrylic paintings depict scenes of quotidian life, serving as glimpses into the contours of domesticity and human relations. Figures are captured in intimate encounters and their private moments are meticulously staged. By being extracted from broader narratives, these snapshots do not announce their protagonists' intentions and desires, but rather invite diverse interpretations about what is unfolding. At the same time though, they confront us with our own voyeuristic tendencies to sneak into the private sphere of the other.

In these investigations into the intricacies of the human condition, an everyday object can be perceived not only as a sex toy, a prosthetic device, a sign of libidinal drive and lust, but also as a symbol of hostility and aggression. A disfigured nose alludes both to a distinctive facial feature and an imminent threat. The choreography of dancing bodies conveys sensuality, playfulness, and intimacy, coupled with covert brutality, violence, and distress. The uncanny feeling is further enhanced by an element of humour and absurdity, since the plasticity of movements is often deliberately distorted, out of proportion, or unbalanced. The same goes for the power interplay between actors that is often obscured, reversed or self-contradicted.

A series of sculptures that experiment with the materiality of bronze and three-dimensional space comprise the most recent work in Vassilis H.'s trajectory. The anatomy of expressions invokes the same unresolved tensions between estrangement and familiarity, as well as the multiple connotations that private gestures can take, especially when exposed to the public eye. The palpable ambiguity and mystery transcend the figurative and become a statement about the complexity of human nature, while the reflective surfaces invite us to unmask our very own.

-Konstantinos Pittas