

Felix Bahret
Revelge
15 November - 21 December 2019

Press Release

GAO is pleased to present Felix Bahret's second solo exhibition, *Revelge*. Named after Gustav Mahler's 1899 adaptation (a misspelling of the French *reveille* – wake-up call) from the collection of folksongs *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, *Revelge* is a new series of work in stone. In many ways, this exhibition continues to develop the artist's interest in notions of alienation, abstraction and the possibility of re-enchantment. While earlier works, despite the varying employment of power tools, have been entirely hand carved, these new sculptures are cut by industrial machines. Hand held chisels are used only at the end of the creation process, and while their marks help in bringing out the digitally fabricated shapes they also refer back to the wholeness of the stone.

Opening reception:
6-9 pm, Friday 15 November
2019

For any enquiries please
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The sculptures' repetitions echo Mahler's virtuous use of simple motives to achieve transgressive effects. The ominous "Tralali, Tralalei, Tralala" recurring in each verse of *Revelge* undermines the desperation of the wounded soldier drumming for survival. The awakening of his skeleton-comrades leads to a hollow, and their triumphant assembly at the darling's house is rendered in a way that reveals Mahler's own conflicting attitude towards the original folk song. His fascination with the 'authentic' source material is matched only by an anti-romantic desire to dramatise and hereby almost deconstruct its formal set-up:

Mahler's affinity with his texts lay less in the illusion of cosiness than in a premonition of unaltered, savage times that overtook him in his ordered late-bourgeois existence, perhaps motivated by the indigence of his youth. To his mistrust of the peace of the imperialist era, war is the normal state and human beings are press ganged soldiers.

(Theodor W. Adorno, Mahler (p. 46), University of Chicago Press)

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Bahret's concurrent preoccupation with simultaneously challenging and embracing his form's artifice results in his work occupying those paradoxical states faced by the wounded soldier, or the neo-liberal subject in general.

The use of Computer Aided Design (CAD) software presents to Bahret the opportunity, besides being able to earn a living as a full-time stone mason, to simplify his language. Mental images are synthesised into assembled geometries in order to facilitate the communicative chain between the artist-employee and his workshop, i.e. his supervisors and colleagues, as well as the machines. The income generated through manual work at a major restoration firm in Belgium is thus reinvested into the development of highly automated art production. This parasitic praxis does not eclipse the corporate system necessary to make those gains in the first place but is entirely dependent on it.

Felix Bahret (born 1989, Bühl, DE), based in Brussels, BE. Recent exhibitions include *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, AEdT, Düsseldorf, DE (2019, solo); *Petit Bleu*, GAO, London, UK (2017, solo); *Felix Bahret and Esmer Toler*, Lady-Helen, London, UK (2019, duo); *Three Works*, Scarborough, UK (2019, group); *Ascending Delight*, Glasgow International, Glasgow, UK (2018, group).

Revelge

Between three and four at dusk,
March! Us soldiers, we must,
Up and down the alleyway;
Tralali, Tralalei, Tralala,
My Darling waves farewell.

“Oh brother, now I have been shot,
The bullet has hit me very hard,
Can you carry me back?
Tralali, Tralalei, Tralala,
My camp place is not far.”

“I can’t, brother, don’t you see,
We have been beaten by the enemy.
May the lord come to your help;
Tralali, Tralalei, Tralala,
I have to march into death, myself.”

“Oh brothers, you just walk past,
As if dead and gone I was,
Here approaches the enemy;
Tralali, Tralalei, Tralala,
You, comrades, are failing me.

My drum, if I don’t keep beating,
I will lose myself, I feel it.
The brothers, thickly sown,
Tralali, Tralalei, Tralala,
They lie like they have been mown.”

On and on plays the drummer,
And awakens his silent brothers,
They are beating the enemy,
Tralali, Tralalei, Tralala,
A horror is beating the enemy.

On and on plays the drummer,
And they gather again, the brothers,
Jolly return to the town,
Tralali, Tralalei, Tralala,
They move to darling’s home.

In the morning, there are the skeletons,
In order they stand like tombstones,
The drum lies ahead of him,
Tralali, Tralalei, Tralala,