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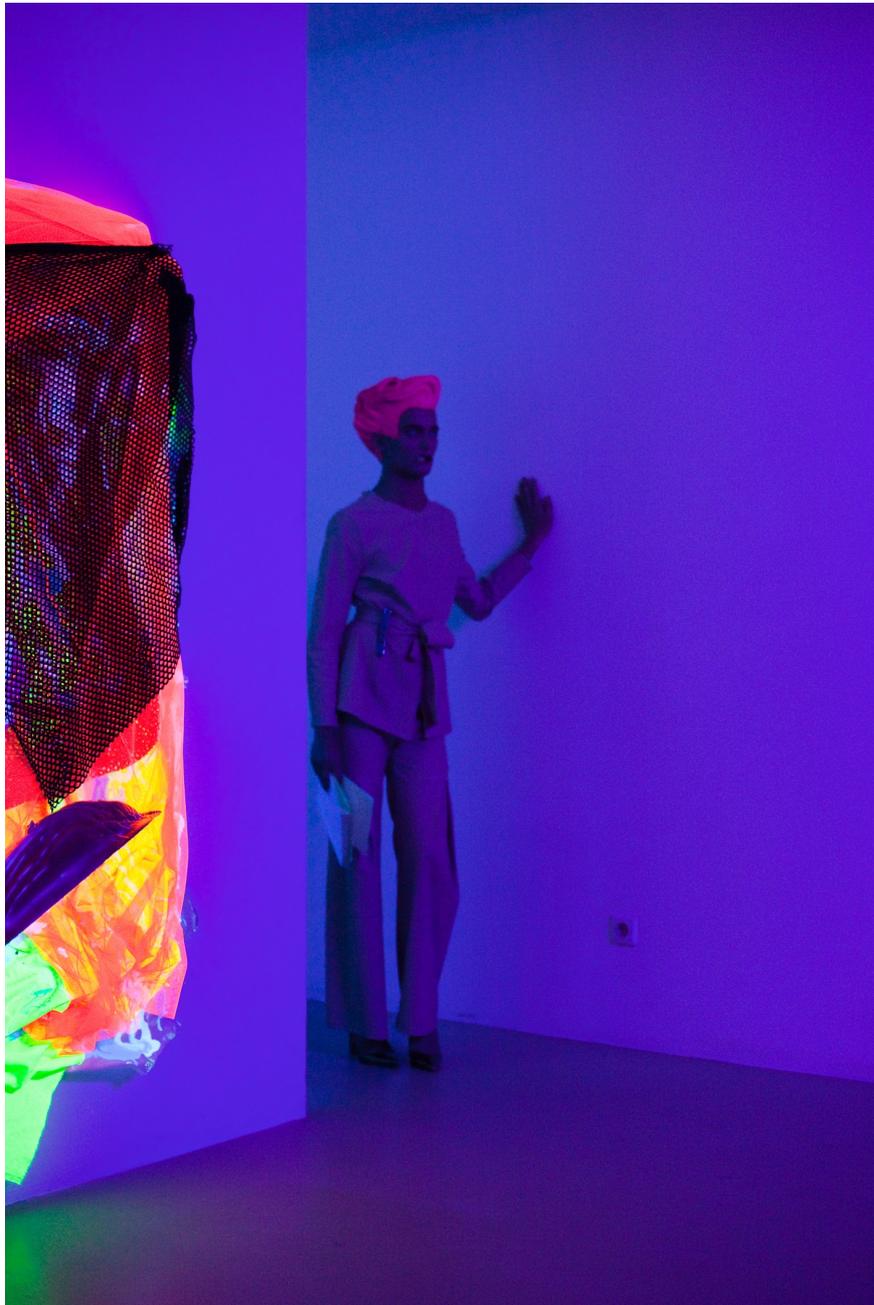
Swashbuckling
**Astrit Ismaili, Sophie Serber and Florian
& Michael Quistrebent**
24 November 2017 - 6 January 2018

Within *Swashbuckling* you are caught up in a slightly sinister, yet spontaneous clash of performative demeanors of works by artists Astrit Ismaili, Sophie Serber and the Quistrebent brothers, entangling heroic yet vulnerable (meta)narratives on family affairs, gender, and body politics and the parameters of the flat surface.

Love research is a one take video by Astrit Ismaili (1991, Kosovo), wherein the artist sings a song and is dressed up as a highly pregnant Venus-like persona, surrounded by a crowd of elderly admirers performing a synchronized choreography. Within his practice



Installation view, *Swashbuckling*, Florian & Michael Quistrebent and Sophie Serber (audio work), 2017.



Performance by Astrit Ismaili program organised in collaboration with Vleeshal during Amsterdam Art Weekend 2017

Ismaili operates between visual art, theatre and pop culture, and is interested in the concept of 'becoming' against the backdrop of the moral standards of society.

In his performative works Ismaili often creates melancholic utopias for the urban landscape, by using the potential of the abandoned space as a stage, and by profiling the

self - and others surrounding the artists in his work - as a non-excluding collage of gender, age and being.

In the gallery Ismaili's soft and whispering singing voice dissolves into the sound of an ultra monotonous monologue, coming from Sophie Serber's sound piece *not remain* located in the back of the space. Within this work the artist reads out loud pages from a book written by her mother, whereby her voice has been distorted, and is slightly modified in slow motion, resulting in an unheimisch, and yawning kind of mantra. The sound work is part of a series of works Serber made for her final presentation at the Rietveld academy last summer, for which she won the GRA Award for autonomous art. The series consists of tapestries of colouring books, an air conditioner and monochrome peanut butter surfaces, that arose out of an obligated period of minimized brain activity to recover from a concussion. The attitude deriving from the pace of her voice balances between boredom and contains a post-modernist and rebellious attitude against the artistic endeavour of her ancestors, in this case her own mother. An act of ridiculing existing relationships as part of the coming to age, or coming to whatever you take a stand for, which is also strongly present in Ismaili's work and that of the Quistrebent Brothers.



Installation view, Swashbuckling, 'Love Research' (4'20 min) video, performance by Astrit Ismaili (2016) and works by Sophie Serber, each 152,4 x 127 cm, cotton (2017).

The art practice of Florian & Michael Quistrebert is rooted in the tradition of geometrical-abstract art and opt-art from the sixties and seventies, translated to the post-everything era within the parameters of the painterly surface. At the back of the gallery space, alongside Serber's distorted voice, the brothers present a new body of paintings combined with fabrics, that are enhanced through black light. The black light highlights the works as being in the spot light, and minimalizes the presence of their surroundings, leaving merely no other than the surface itself and its legendary aura for further contemplation. The Quistreberts often 'entertain' or activate the flat surface in a performative manner, and deliberately push and mystify the boundaries between what is considered 'high' and 'low' art.

Swashbuckling is a literature and film genre, portraying a moralist, often armed, hero. The clash of the three practices within this exhibition, creates a spooky suspense, that might be reminiscent of a haunted scene requesting a heroic swashbuckler. Not necessarily to rescue you from the unknown, but to tell you it is all fine when things do not make any sense to you. As it will always do make sense to someone else.

Jeanine Hofland

Artist bios:

Astrit Ismaili (1991, Kosovo) is a performance artist operating between visual art and theatre. In 2016 he graduated from the MA-Program at DasArts - Master of Theater in Amsterdam. Ismaili has won several awards, including Young Visual Artist Award/Artist of Tomorrow Award (Stacion Center for Contemporary Art, Prishtina, Kosovo, 2011), Best Director at the Skena Up International Student Festival (2011) and Best Video Performance at Video Fest (2014). He has shown his work at, amongst others, NeuNow Festival (2017) and FLAM - Forum of Live Art Amsterdam (2016).

Sophie Serber (1993, USA) started her studies fine arts at Pratt Institute, NYC (Dean's List) and continued them at Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, where she received the GRA Fine Arts Prize and was nominated for the Thesis Prize. Serber's recent exhibitions include *Gravity Sucks Again* at CAVE3000, Berlin and *JUNE* at 114 Beach Street, Far Rockaway, USA and a forthcoming exhibition at Mother Culture.love, Los Angeles, USA.

Florian & Michael Quistrebert (1982/1976, France) live and work between Amsterdam and Nantes. Their practice consists of painting and video. The brothers participated in several residencies in France, The United States and The Netherlands, including Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam (2011/12). Recent solo exhibitions include *The Light of the Light* at Palais de Tokyo,

Paris (2016) and *Visions of Void* at Dundee Contemporary Arts, UK (2015). Recent group shows include *Close Up* at EYE Film Institute, Amsterdam (2016) and *Superficial Hygiene* at De Hallen, Haarlem (2014). They were nominated for Prix Marcel Duchamp, Paris (2014) and won the NN Group Art Award, at Art Rotterdam 2017. Their work can be found in prominent international collections, such as ABN AMRO art collection, and the Frédéric de Goldschmidt Collection.