VAN DER GRINTEN GALERIE

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# Fantasia

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Taking its title from the 1940 Disney animation, the exhibition will feature new and recent sculpture that exploits Baroque forms and kitsch subjects to uncover issues around

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consumption, pleasure and desire. Using overtly sentimental subjects (perky twin bunny rabbits, a child posing with a kitten), the works are characterised by a fetishtic use of decoration that supplants or corrupts the object's original meaning. Shifting continually between the beautiful and the grotesque, the work delights in playing with expectations and assumptions of what constitutes good and bad „taste", both on an aesthetic and sensory level.

„I am concerned with both the visual experience and the meaning of excess, of sensual overload, of ornament and surface. Sculpted animals and portrait busts are cut open and the resulting wounds stuffed with fauna and fruit. Sugary white surfaces twist out like candy sticks, giving way to juicy apples and delicate roses; a liquorice-black bear is drizzled with what looks like lemon sherbert and decorated with marzipan-yellow scrolls; a lamb's head unfurls to spill glistening grapes and berries. These works are confections, served up for the viewer like bizarre delicacies from a banquet table. Influenced by the Baroque fashion for elaborate sugar sculptures, I am fascinated by the decadence and absurdity of food whose primary function is not to provide nourishment, but rather has a symbolic or celebratory purpose.

Like Disney's „Fantasia", my work is by turns charming, pastoral, unsettling and absurd. The spectacle, whilst apparently innocent, is not without unease for the viewer. The need to touch, taste or somehow physically connect with the piece, the „pull" exerted by an image of a bear cub or a human child, is laced with forbidden fruit and sticky sweetmeats. The nostalgic or sentimental longings associated with „cute" subjects are confused by a more immediate, visceral urge to consume the work, either literally, because of its likeness to cake or confectionery, or visually. The pieces can be viewed as „pretty" or „sweet", but can also be seen as expressions of primal fantasies, anxieties and desires related to sensuality, food and the body.

The Baroque can be thought of as describing not only an artistic period or style, but also certain natural patterns and forms, such as the breaking of waves on a shore or the veins running through a piece of marble. My work is driven by this almost Darwinian vision of the Baroque, associated with the profusion of nature, the processes of generation that can result in a hybrid rose, a coral reef, a mushroom or a tumour. In Disney's Fantasia, a sequence depicting the evolution of life on earth is followed by the kitsch romanticism of centaur

couples canoodling like high school sweethearts. My work seeks to articulate similar (lovely and problematic) contradictions, on the one hand trying to replicate nature, whilst on the other continually allowing fancy and sentiment to influence the work. The resulting pieces are deliberately hard to classify or describe, like curios or objects from a wunderkammer, they occupy a liminal territory, slipping between the objective and subjective, the seductive and repellent."