



# Cannibal kiss

Le 22, Nice

25.04 – 31.05.2014

Frédéric Nakache was born in Rouen in 1972. He initially benefited from the support of the members of the La Station artists' collective, and subsequently took part in two of their group shows held at their Nice exhibition area in 1997. On these occasions his work drew gallery owner Evelyne Camus's attention. A year later, she provided him with the opportunity to set up his first solo exhibition, along with a display of his video pieces at the Basel Art Fair. The videos were also added to the collaborative Young & French programming, featuring French artists' works and held at the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki. Frédéric Nakache has since continuously demonstrated his craving for creation, participating in diverse French and international contemporary art fairs, including Paris Photo, video festivals and other exhibiting events.

*« Dis-moi ce que tu penses de ma vie / De mon adolescence /  
Dis-moi ce que tu penses / J'aime aussi l'amour et la violence »  
Sébastien Tellier, « L'Amour et la Violence », *Sexuality*.*

Over the past few years, he has been questioning his art – or maybe he has done so for ever. Finding answers is not really at stake for him, and so, his reflexion has moved on to follow its very own path. So has his work : « I had to change my work routine, my lighting techniques, the way I tackle issues. But the interrogations have remained the same. » At the heart of his work, life, death, the flesh constantly keep passing and avoiding one another, as is the case with the Baiser Cannibale exhibition, which brings his usual models to the stage. This show works as a much-needed, almost life-saving return to origins, a salutary time machine; it is a sincere and sophisticated testimony of Frédéric Nakache's work. The skulls –these fetish objects have been recurring themes since he achieved his first vanitas in 1996 – haunt most of the images on display. « When I first visited Le 22 Gallery, I felt very much at home. So I made the decision to treat this exhibition as a very intimate, private matter, something dealing with my relation to art and the elaboration of my work. »

Overdoing it is not what this exhibition is about: it shows six photographs, some monochromatic Polaroid shots interspersed here and there, and some works of object installations. Obvious conclusions stem from such an approach, which tends towards the essential: colour is under control, and is so deep that it almost looks supernatural. The materials and textures are dense, a fascinating illustration of which is the way the character's hair appears in *Strelitzia*. Seldom has the photographer so fully accepted his conceptual reasearch and functional strategy. Seldom has his immoderate love for music been so deeply expressed. *La Collectionneuse* and *Fantino* are respectively named after songs by Charlotte Gainsbourg and Sébastien Tellier. Furthermore, *Baiser Cannibale* (*Cannibal Kiss*), a dramatic shot of a white vanitas sculpted in ceramics and held between two fishnet-clad legs, is the name of a Noir Désir song. « I listened to *Noir Désir* a lot while photo editing, the artist confides. It was something I had not done in a long time. I (re)discovered the gentle instrumental touch of this song, which to me deeply counterbalances the title's violence. The same paradox can also be perceived in my work, the sensuality and coldness of which are intricately interwoven. » In the artist's own words, photography is an intrusive form of aggression, and when it comes from him, it triggers some interrogations, but never in a pushy way, as demonstrated by the effect *Fantino* and its devious constructivism have on the viewer: « The scene combines various elements: some moss, a strap, with an absence of diagonal lines. Everything is offset, our gaze flows about. » The photographer's beloved figures of the skull and orchid have been added to the composition. « The orchid is a parasite flower, it infests trees, and likewise, overspreads this image. »

From *La Collectionneuse* emanates a confusion born from the relation between death and seduction. It is redolent of eroticism but that eroticism is kept at an unsettling distance by Frédéric Nakache's skilful touch. The concept of interfusing ideas predominates in *Rébecca*, which displays a body/sculpture sitting on a base, an object of flesh and blood strumming a guitar, and which mixes together such heterogeneous items as an afro, a Japanese kimono and a Mexican skull.

And there is *Strelitzia*, represented as a resolutely punk bird of paradise whose impertinent innocence is a reference to the unavoidable transition to adulthood. « I put together pieces from the material world, personal elements and elements from the history of art. With all these piecemeal fragments I strive to build a particular narrative process, which turns out to be no less than the exploration of my own experience of reality. » Far from strapping us to our day-to-day existence, this empirical stance sends us into raptures. Frédéric Nakache's images are mesmerising in a way that is quite unprecedented. They trifle with multiple interpretations, pointing to Greek Mythology as well as Seattle-style grunge. By doing so, they open the doors of a world we thought was lost forever in the dumb torpor of our memory: the world of adolescence.

Sophie Rosemont

Translation : Elisa Ferrero