

Nassim L'Ghoul

***“Three Years Later He
Was Still Dancing”***

EIGEN + ART Lab

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Under a night-black sky, glistening streets - a chessboard illuminated by floodlights - flea market stalls in the pale reflection of an invisible light source: Nassim L'Ghoul's works envelop us in the gentle, chilling waves of a 3D-modelled environment, charged by personal memories, yet completely stripped of its concrete colours and textures. We are theatrically directed through sections of surreal landscapes as if by a relentless spotlight. The bare surfaces brush against us. Their lack of haptics characterizes the atmosphere of a transitional zone of intersubjectively communicable and yet elusive experiences. The abstracted spaces open and close, thereby acting as their own counterparts.

Nassim L'Ghoul combines 3D-modelled elements and elements found in databases to "re-create" dreamed or remembered moments in the digital - giving them a new, ambiguous dynamic. The most recent work *Teapots Waltz* (2023) presents a dim flea market setting. Our gaze jumps between white sheets, undefined decorative objects and stacks of cutlery vying for our attention in the display. They look like leftover stock, the big rush already seems to be over. At the beginning of the 20th century, flea markets were already a popular place for surrealist artists to get hold of found objects - *objets trouvés*, charged with the lives, the touches of others, which, in part, after all could also have been and become their own touches, memories, dreams. We first fixate on a teapot that leisurely swings its left and right leg upwards in alternation - and yet, as we zoom in, we are inexorably diverted away and away from it, to a photo album whose cover is adorned with the image of an infant. The lifeless, eerily moving object of utility is juxtaposed with the still image and epitome of a life in the making for the future. The compilation radiates a quiet melancholy in its entanglement of seriousness and wit. Above all, L'Ghoul's mode of presentation tells us nothing about the age, the weariness, the traces of previous owners of the tableware and also of the photo collection. Both are as discarded as they are seemingly untouched, pointing ahead to something we might plunge into through them as media, as mediators between past, present and future.

All sequences revolve around encounters and confrontations - or even more: around transitions between the two, between states of opening and demarcation: between objects, body parts, proxies of persons.

A Pig From Head To Toe (2022) lets us witness the game of chess between a cut foot and a pig. The toes drum impatiently on the floor, finally rising up strikingly to checkmate. The piglet bursts into worm-like tears. But instead of looking at the situation up close, the camera suddenly pans to the knight on the board. The latter has just fallen out of his role of the played object, he changes into the observer position, contemplates the scene from some distance before he dives down, in the foaming of the programmed environment - which at this point becomes the bathtub.

Similar to how *Teapots Waltz* performs a veritable diversionary maneuver by first directing us to the dancing teapot but then stopping on the book, *A Pig From Head To Toe* also forces us to change our field of vision. The extreme brightness seems as if something should be particularly well illuminated in order to enable us to analyze it in detail. In our privileged but fixed observer position, which we cannot influence ourselves, we are rather dazzled than illuminated by the

light - similar to how the sense of sight does not always and not only provides us with an overview and sharpness of separation in complex situations, but above all it is our inner and outer movement that causes and enables positioning in the first place.

In this respect, Nassim L'Ghoul's works are also pleas to visualise past or imagined situations in different ways, to move through them by means of different senses in order to replace supposed clear-sightedness with a shift of perspectives. The aim is not to penetrate to a "core", but rather to re-perspectivise an experience from a fantastic point of view. Meticulous, forensic, yet open to versions of events that could have been or read differently.

The view gained in this way obtains its reality content precisely because it becomes divisible - divisible into many individual moments that do not produce a coherent story but an atmospheric network; communicable in the form of superficial "neutralisation" that offers an increased connectivity not for the same but for comparable experiences and sensations. The many possible meanings of a scene come to the fore. What recedes are perhaps the evaluations, weightings that we ascribe to the components of a story we have experienced or retraced ourselves.

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„*Three Years Later He Was Still Dancing*“ is an exhibition of experimental arrangements: Among other things, we associate the colour white with the atmosphere of clinically sterile rooms that are never as neutral and isolated as they appear at first glance. The "laboratory-like" situations into which L'Ghoul's video works throw us are also constructed down to the last detail; our gaze in them is predetermined and guided. The work *soft links* (2023), for example, was created on the basis of a drive simulator of the tube in Frankfurt. The scene sucks us in, but then leaves us standing in the mere detail of a possible narrative. In all the works shown, we encounter means of transport: a raft drifts by, a canoe, a bathtub that fulfils a similar function of transporting bodies and thoughts - but they remain strangely separate from us, moving alongside us while we ourselves are moved by the encircling zoom of the camera.

L'Ghoul's videos thrust us into a space where both animate and inanimate actors place their movements in relation to our passive becoming of movement through the perspective provided by the artist and the technology. While our gaze is directed towards a very specific goal, the meaning of which is (still) hidden from us, we observe the figures in rather undirected, repetitive movements leading into or "to nothing". The ostensibly goal-oriented and the apparently disorientated blur into a grey zone in which we move every day and in which possible paths only open up for us by constantly crossing the border between the two.

Press release by Ellen Wagner







