



Lloyd Pollak

The Dada South exhibition confirmed the vision of the curators of the Menippean Uprising, Hentie van der Merwe and Pierre Fouche, vindicating their love of fantasy, and inspiring them to bypass the glum, issue-driven art of our past. Instead they struck out toward the enticing subjunctive realms of perhaps, if and maybe, and as soon as we clap eyes on Adriaan de Villier's fantastic tower of swirling, bulbous silhouette, inspired by the trickled sand-castle spires of Gaudi's Sagrada Familia, we know we have tumbled down a rabbit hole into Wonderland.

Like a ring around a gemstone, the over-sized baroque frames enclosing the miniaturized, photographic collages that comprise Mendisa Pantsi's 'Wanneer die Tokkerlossie ...', underline the wonder of this encounter with the supernatural, and force us to peer, as if through a peephole, at their contents. In this gender-bending imagery, Pantsi photographs herself, and collages the tokolosh over her own likeness, so the two become one, and the bogeyman of tradition metamorphosises into a benign black fertility goddess.

Niklas Wittenberg applies his eclectic blend of drawing, painting and photographic collage to diminutive, intimate formats that usher us into his droll and whimsical daydream world. His trademark is a quirky, but sophisticated, faux naïf style in which the stylization of comics and the wonky charm of child art are charmingly refracted through a sensibility steeped in ooh-la-la and campy hanky-panky.

Even though presented in fragmentary, unfinished form, Pierre Fouche's 'Aiden's Metamorphosis', is a show-stopper that realizes every ideal the curators aim to achieve in the art of the twenty first century. A traditional feminine craft is applied to a homoerotic theme, and Fouche's manual skill, flawless aesthetic sense and intensely poetic imagination bring off this chimerical reification of yearning, nostalgia, desire and absence.



The commission revolves around a fleeting, but passionate, seaside romance between two men who parted never to see each other again. Aiden, the lost lover, has dissolved into a tissue of remembrance, and the frailty and transparent voids of the lace give dissolving memories, and inconsolable loss consummate expression, resonating the elegiac poignancy of the marble effigies of Hadrian's drowned paramour, Antinous. Conscious or unconscious allusions to these Hellenistic masterpieces in which a grief-stricken Emperor unceasingly commemorated his grande passion, definitively inscribe the work in the history of queer imagery.



Three lace panels, suspended from the ceiling, and tiered one behind the other, lend a sculptural dimension to the head and torso of the naked Aiden who the artist reconstructed from an old B & W photograph, reproducing the contrasts of the tonal gradations by decreasing or increasing the size of the apertures in the lace patterns. Hung before a black rectangle on the gallery wall, the supporting cotton threads become invisible, and Aiden's body asserts an immaterial presence like



a wisp of spider's web or a shred of gossamer. Lace is the lightest of substances, and even the faintest current animates the cotton phantom which appears to breathe as he glories in his virile splendor.

Belinda Blignaut's funsy-wunsky exercise in mastication permeates the entire space with the cheap scent of the chewed bubble gum she has lumped all over a door which erupts in pustules and boils,



making the inanimate, animate, and prone to all the disgusting ailments to which flesh is heir. The gum, manually wrenched into lubricious vaginal and anal shapes, brought back my itchy-twitchy pubertal years of undirected libido and disconcerting erections. The work invites intimate erotic exploration and provides multiple fleshy, pink apertures for the randy index finger to probe, at last bringing the sex toy into the art gallery.



Dale Washkansky's examination of the roots of Nazism embedded within traditional German culture; Liza Grobelaar's winged skull adduced as proof incontrovertible of the existence of miraculous beings; and Hentie van der Merwe's dreamy matelot all reveal the curator's support for a creative approach in which tensions relax, and the imagination takes wing in exotic and sensual materials - mohair, lace, velvet, lapis lazuli, gold and mercury. Although such art may at first appear inconsequential, it remains rooted in the myths, dreams and legends that fill the Jungian collective unconscious and nothing could be more relevant than that.