

reviews: international



Marlov Barrios, untitled sculpture from the “Turbo (Avistamientos)” series, 2012, carved wood, 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 19 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Panama City Museum of Contemporary Art.

Other worthy contributions hinted at environmental disaster, such as Panama artist Darién Montañez's hypnotic video of a debris-filled river. Costa Rican artist John Juric's *Soldados* (2012) features rows of tiny, empty medicine bottles, like a down-market homage to Damien Hirst, interspersed with toy soldiers that symbolize white blood cells fighting infection. Costa Rica's peaceful tradition aside, it was startling to see a Central American artwork in which soldiers represented something other than violence or oppression, recurring themes in the region's history and its art. —**Roger Atwood**

Djordje Ozbolt

Hauser & Wirth
Zurich

Entering this exuberant exhibition of recent paintings and sculptures by London-based, Belgrade-born artist Djordje Ozbolt was like washing up on a surrealist tropical beach populated by magical hybrid beasts and dancing African fetish figures. Titled “Who Say Jah No Dread,” this phantasmagoric mixture of multicultural iconography and the artist's personal travel experiences was presented in a riot of color laced with humor.

Anchoring the show was a dazzling sculptural work of polystyrene that shared its title with the exhibition. Coated

in glass-reinforced plastic, this 2013 construction presented a stacked-up menagerie of jungle beasts in Rasta colors: a gray elephant carries a red cheetah, on whose back stands a yellow kudu supporting a green chimpanzee with a dove perched on its extended figure. Also on view was a series of seven playful landscape paintings. *The transformer* (2013) portrays a monkey dressed in tiger stripes, seated atop a beast with a tiger's head, whose body is part giraffe, part zebra. In *Dance me till the end of love* (2013), animated African sculptures—one an iconic Ashanti fertility doll—appear to waltz to Leonard Cohen's 1984 pop hit.

The mood was more somber in an adjacent room that featured a suite of seven pseudo-portraits from 2012. In these paintings, collectively titled “Gentlemen of Ngongo,” Ozbolt juxtaposes African tribal-mask heads with aristocratic clothing recalling Elizabethan finery, always



Djordje Ozbolt, *Clouds that pierce the illusion that tomorrow will be as yesterday*, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 88" x 92". Hauser & Wirth.

against a neutral gray background. Facing the portraits was a trio of mass-produced African tribal figures, which Ozbolt purchased in local markets and then decorated. His wry touches of contemporary consumerism, such as a Mercedes-Benz hood ornament and an elaborate blond wig, transformed the traditional objects into an energizing collision of cultures.

—**Mary Krienke**

Ilya Gaponov

Erarta
Zurich

In Russian artist Ilya Gaponov's still-life paintings, meticulously depicted animal and human forms are pushed to the top of the canvas together with a piece of fruit—

or the unexpected contemporary flourish of a Cuisinart blender or a box of McDonald's french fries. The remaining space is a black void crossed with descending white threads. Titled “Fressen,” a German word meaning “to devour” or “to eat like an animal,” this exhibition included eight large paintings, each approximately six feet square, and nine smaller paintings depicting abstract body parts, always hovering above that same black void.

Gaponov's darkly atmospheric paintings are said to represent his disillusionment with the undiscerning appetites of consumer culture. Among their twinned and tangled subjects are the heads of horses or zebras juxtaposed with a skeletal rib cage, an arched human torso, a Starbucks cup, and a flayed carcass, split down the center like a butterfly. The dividing line between the upper and lower portions of these canvases evokes a number of symbolic references, among them a table of depravity and a sacrificial altar bearing evidence of our indulgent society. The most graphic example of the latter is *Undiscerning Appetites No. 7* (2012), in which back-to-back animal skulls on the left of the frame are balanced by two cheeseburgers on the right.

Though these works clearly draw on the tradition of 17th-century Dutch still-life paintings, they have none of their predecessors' warm domesticity. Rendered in Kuzbass varnish—a deep, earth-toned lacquer derived from coal tar—they seem to pay homage to the Siberian coal-mining region where Gaponov was born. In their symbolic representations of economic and social values, and their apparent contemplation of life and death, these paintings can be said to plumb the depths of the Russian soul. —**Mary Krienke**



Ilya Gaponov, *Undiscerning Appetites No. 7*, 2012, oil on canvas, 71" x 71". Erarta.