

EXHIBITION May 25 to July 14/2012 / Thur - Fri - Sat / 2pm-6pm

Dubois Friedland gallery is pleased to present in Brussels the first exhibition of paintings by Hervé Ic, living and working in Belgium

In 1995 Historian Frances Stonor Saunders made the documentary: *A Different History of Modernism*, in which she reveals the CIA was involved in the promotion and spreading of Abstract Expressionism. Hard to believe the agents of the most powerful intelligence agency of the United States would support a production most Americans at the time wouldn't even call "artistic". But at the height of the Cold War, wasn't it legitimate to support the forms of expression most apt at exalting the individual liberty of its creators in the face of artists subservient to the Communist Party? In any case, this paradoxical recognition (and quite confidential for a long time) proves the powers that be don't always consider avant-garde art as politically revolutionary and that painting, as long as it is monumental and non figurative, could help US cultural propaganda while the USSR was banking on classical dance and ballet.

Dance, power and painting, that's exactly what the new series by Hervé Ic, presented by the Dubois-Friedland Gallery, is about. Its title: *Legacy*, is meant to be ambiguous: the artist suggests one can only bequeath what one possesses, that any form of possession involves a certain control over another person. Even if the dancers - depicted originally from Internet images - seem perfectly in control of themselves, they are to Hervé Ic, a metaphor for alienation at several levels.

First, as in economics, their bodies' perfection is a shout out to the one expected from tools of production (the grotesque double portrait of two young women grimacing a smile, holding each other by the waist, seems to be the exception to the rule). Then, their choreographies become social alienation, taking place in the world of show business : as always in Hervé Ic's work, space is transparence and light comes from the background ; but the horizontal colored lines that zip through his canvasses here evoke a set's neon

tubes – we are now in the field of art subservient to show business. A large canvass, free from any human figure, exemplifies the process : white concentric circles on a red background are like spotlights focused on spectators, only the dancers are yet to come on stage.

But for whom are they performing ? Here alienation takes a political turn, a stretched out arm appearing in transparence, as if making a Hitlerian salute - and so we think of Leni Riefensthal's images and also of realist-socialist propaganda posters, in other words, of the glorification of the body, subservient to the most abject totalitarian regime. The horizontal lines take on a particular meaning : being equidistant (there again, the double portrait aforementioned is the exception to the rule which isn't happenstance), they remind us of well known images of suspects posing in front of a police yardstick, or even of some of Edward Muybridge's photographs. In any case, it is about measuring the body to better grasp it, in fact, to possess it.

So, Hervé Ic's dancers evolve in a double-constrained space : first the canvass' frame, the horizontal lines network next. Even if they seem at first sight less visually complex than his earlier works, these paintings are representative of the complexity with which the artist approaches the human figure, through transparence effects and a palette designed to mislead the gaze. In works such as "The Sleepers", or even "Lamentation about Love", the eye looks for the detail that will unlock the secrets of the composition. With the *Legacy* series, everything seems to be given to us upfront - but the message is, as we've seen, hidden (literally) between the lines. Let's say it as it is : whatever appears instantaneous in Hervé Ic's painting can only be suspect.

Pierre-Yves Desaiwe, Avril 2012
(translated by Françoise Dubois)

Reproductions of artists works and complete biographies upon e-mail or telephone request.

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