



Press release for *Gina Fischli & Mike Kelley* at Galerie Hussenot
By Pierre-Alexandre Mateos & Charles Teyssou

On today's menu at Galerie Hussenot, Mike Kelley's landmark installation *Liquid Diet* (1989-2006) collides with a series of new sculptures by Gina Fischli.

In *Liquid Diet*, the Californian artist proposes a gargoyle-like Irish pub architecture composed of beer jerrycans, haggard shamrocks and leprechauns, sly little red and green old men from Craic folklore. This installation by CalArt's little master becomes the stage for an ethylic purge, a Christ-like scene rendered in all its triviality. The party's over and the toilets are dirty. On the walls are three videos of incarcerated Catholic IRA activists, including Bobby Sands, who embarked on a hunger strike with a fatal outcome. Sand and his comrades will smear the prison walls with trails of shit, a tragic gesture in which the body is the last political bastion in this troubled period when Catholics and Protestants clash. This banquet of civil war is a triumph of incontinence, with every orifice overflowing.

Perhaps it's the effect of Kelley's reinterpretation of Mark Rothko's Seagram Paintings on one of the walls of this fetid tavern. His horizontal formats of Dark Color Field Paintings were originally designed for the Four Seasons restaurant in New York, and were intended to make customers sick. Here, Rothko's deep greens, browns and oranges are relegated to the banal clutter of physical fluids: vomit, excrement and urine spat out by terminally ill customers. The spiritual transcendence of the abstract artist (who thought of his paintings as temples) is desacralized and reduced to earthly crudity. Kelley thus pursues his project of overturning Western metaphysics by placing the body above the mind, libidinal and Dionysian energy prevailing over cerebrality and beautiful Apollonian form. Through these networks of symbols and information, the whole machine of sublimation and desublimation dear to Mike Kelley is at work here, organic Catholic Taste¹ versus hygienism and Protestant politeness, the lower middle class versus the taste of a hushed bourgeoisie.

Overlooking this scene, Gina Fischli leads us into sugar palaces à la Antonin Carême. Her medieval or neo-Gothic German and English castle architectures are reduced to limp pastries, crude reproductions of kitchen nightmares. Her saccharine fantasies seem to be the result of a ruthless competition between overworked mothers to deliver the perfect cake. Panic in Beverly Hills.

Behind his diabetic monuments, the artist ridicules a guilty, pale aristocracy whose ornamental pretensions are as if debased by whipped cream. Her follies are, to put it with Brecht, a distinction between noble art and the amateurism of kulinärisch, opera-bouffes and hard-discount Neuschwanstein.

In their aesthetic quest, the two artists espouse a phenomenology of disgust, embarrassing the hierarchy of values. A taste of disgust, expressed in overflow and defilement for one artist, and in clumsy frivolity for the other. Excess and waste are thus eliminated in ritualized forms: a sordid Saint Patrick's Day or a contest of bad culinary plasticity. Taking loose, grimacing paths, they expose us to discounted myths, states of descent and pallid tomorrows, from which we observe the world with a severe hangover.

¹Mike Kelley : *Catholic Tastes*, Whitney Museum, 1993