## GLADSTONE GALLERY

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## UNTITLED (IF I COULD TOUCH YOUR BODY)

Given the stylistic kinkiness of the bodies he offers us— the hypertrophic femme boy oozing over a car in what could be a Balenciaga ad; the descendent of Storm from *X-Men* lording over the desolate city with her pack of rabid gargoyles— Rappeneau could be Egon Schiele rebooted, or Arthur Rackham with a thing for anime and faery girl accounts on Tumblr. He isn't a dead Victorian gentleman but he offers a similar *fantasy* version of the body: weird, skeletal, with trippy proclivities for distortion and 8K physical detail. His paintings are also littered with the neon garbage of now (iMessages in kanji, bags full of stolen Hermès, vape wands): stuff which makes us feel at home (and simultaneously kind of spooked) in this freaky parallel universe. Or that just might be a description of 2020...

Like Dürer, who was also hot for sinister hyperrealistic renderings of flesh and bone, he knows angels aren't just dreamy creatures who emit divine light pollution. The angel sheltering a sick boy in his wings by starlight looks depressive, too, chained by who knows what earthly sorrow: *Melancholia I* for the time of Xanax. Rappeneau's scenes of empty streets suggest a freaked-out memory of lockdown: house and sky in a weird swirl, trees gone **a**. But the city is sometimes stalked by giant youths like heartbroken Godzillas: they dwarf the cathedrals that surround them. This apocalyptic power fantasy will be familiar to anybody who's ingested anime such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion* where teenagers and alien beings known as Angels attack a futuristic version of Tokyo.

Mutating flesh, narcotics, melancholy and the infinite sadness: the traditional stuff of youth. Rappeneau's depictions of trashed, wan, androgynous kids probably couldn't exist without the grungy subversion of fashion photography that happened in the 1990s. R.I.P. Corinne Day. Yup, this is hardcore: hot teenage bodies getting wasted in rooms trashed by a stoned poltergeist; Gucci swag but with cum on it.

The same spooky candour swirls around Rappeneau's painting of the wraith girl cooking up heroin in a lonely park. Trees, gloom, empty swings— a pretty tragic place to get high. But time and space are getting fucked up, too: that huge wicked bubbling cauldron of a spoon floats in the sky; that pubic undergrowth mixed with dry grass below, and the rhinestone Dolce & Gabbana belt unbuckled for some woozy teenage tryst. Before the nod hits, she zones out with memories of this environment, which means goosebumps, all kinds of high (chronically spangled, opiated, spiky), innocence lost.

I don't think it's weird to relate this cultic fascination with youth near death but still radiating sexiness, anthropologically, to the early demise of Christ. 'They hung him on the cross for me', as Kurt Cobain once yowled. But what's stranger and more ravishing about Rappeneau's paintings is how they arrive at a moment when their feelings of confusion, loss and longing ache with a new kind of weirdness or sensitivity. I wish you could be with me now; I wish I could hold you tight.

- Charlie Fox, 2020

David Rappeneau (b. France) lives and works in France. Rappeneau has presented solo exhibitons at Queer Thoughts, New York and Crèvecœur, Paris. Select group exhibitions include Gladstone, New York; Peres Projects, Berlin; Centre d'Art Contemporain La Synagogue de Delme, FR; Balice Hertling, Paris; Bortolami, New York; Misako & Rosen; Tokyo; Foxy Production, New York and Arcadia Missa, London.

Shirin Neshat 515 West 24th Street January 16 – February 27, 2021 Elizabeth Peyton 130 East 64th Street November 19 - January 20

For further information, please contact Andrew Huff: ahuff@gladstonegallery.com Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm and Saturday, 12pm–6pm New York gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–6pm