

ARTFORUM

Ciprian Mureșan and Enric Fort Ballester

by Kate Sutton

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Ciprian Mureșan, *Untitled*, 2015, digital video, color, sound, 26 minutes.

“Once upon a time, there was a kitten. She was very dutiful.” So begins one of the tales tucked into Ciprian Mureșan’s latest film, an untitled collection of vignettes based on transcripts from puppeteering workshops that the artist conducted with children. Mureșan then hired adult puppet masters to reenact the children’s compositions, using marionettes made to look like little kids. The puppeteers appear in dark gray costumes, reading alternately as cartoon sharks, chess pawns, or big pewter penises. In a similar mix of comedy and menace, the stories they tell follow the inimitable logic of the underage playwrights. (When one character declares herself to be “a diamond princess,” her companion yelps in reply: “I am your diamond!”) This film—the puppet show itself will be performed live during the exhibition’s run—is set in contrast to Mureșan’s earlier work, *The Rhinoceros*, 2006. The latter video focuses on a handful of schoolchildren stage reading Eugène Ionesco’s 1959 play of the same title, which cloaks a very grown-up political satire in a parable about that most unlikely of invasive species.

Mureșan’s films are rounded out by a selection of works from Enric Fort Ballester, including a series of nearly microscopic drawings from 2013–15 that indulge the same gentle absurdity as the plots of Mureșan’s child playwrights. One image cuddles a cow into a bird’s nest, while another arms a CCTV security camera with two hands clasped around a pistol. Like the dutiful kitten who ends up defeating a dragon because “he was not a dragon, he was a griffin,” Ballester’s works do not so much defy logic as forge their own.

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