

## **Miklos Onucsan**

What I Have to Do Tomorrow I Should Have Done Yesterday

Exhibition conceived and developed by Mircea Cantor in close dialogue with the artist

**Opening** February 27, 18–21h

February 27 – April 18

Tuesday – Saturday, 11–18h

Heidestrasse 50. 10557 Berlin

Galeria Plan B is happy to present the first solo exhibition in Germany of the Romanian artist Miklos Onucsan (b. 1952 in Gherla, Romania).

“What I have to do tomorrow I should have done yesterday” is, at first sight, nothing more than a slightly critical, self-referential sentence. In the context of Miklos Onucsan’s work, this sentence can be seen as an independent piece, without becoming dissonant in relation to the whole. This is, first of all, due to its verbliness. Miklos Onucsan is an artist for whom the word, articulation, verbliness is just as much of a working material as any other he might use. The titles of the works are, in his case, more than mere dispensable names. They are born along with the idea and the option of transposing it into the material, as an organic part of the concept, and they define the specificity of the artist’s creative process while simultaneously rendering its mechanism transparent: *I Watered a Horseshoe as if It Were a Flower* (1985), *The History of Rust from its Origins until Today* (1986), *Here Rests the Grass* (2002-2008), *It’s different because it’s the same, it’s the same because it’s different II* (2008), *I Give an Adorned Hand* (2009), *Very Still Life With Flowers* (2008) etc.

This mechanism is self-generative; one of its purposes is to “catch objects in awkward situations” in order to be able to focus on them and reveal new meanings of the same world. And this is one of Miklos Onucsan’s unmistakable features: his art does not create another world, a different, individual, private one, but operates directly and unmediated with our common world, in which he discovers new semantic situations, most frequently through mere naming. It is the need for a defensive reorganization. This mechanism processes, from case to case, political, social, existential or cultural subjects, resulting in *postulates* which reorient semantically our perception. And when Onucsan acts upon the “objects he caught”, his interventions are usually minimal: *Christian Card Heart 2000*, *Here Rests the Grass*, *Shortcut*, *What Falls from the Sky is What You Throw into the Sky*, *Stiff Ballet for the End of the Century*, *Other Annual Rings* etc. The recourse to a certain material onto which the idea is to be transposed depends intrinsically on this very idea. It is not so much a process of selection, as one of determination. Along his artistic itinerary, Miklos Onucsan “came across ideas”: some of them already visually formulated, only waiting for a name, others in need of greater intervention.

A few times “the object caught in an awkward situation” was the artist himself: *Self-portrait along the way, 1982-1992*. If in 1982 we see him as a protester, in the courtyard of the handcraft cooperative where he worked, ten years later the revolt turns into “alignment”, as the artist portrays himself as

merely one of the others, one identity in an anonymous row. *Self-portrait* – through its segment in 1982 – is, chronologically, the artist's first politically committed attitude.

The *Camouflage* series, started in 1995, is also part of Miklos Onucsan's political work. *The White Camouflage*, which can be seen in the exhibition, is a *site-specific* work from this series. With the first camouflage, in earth colors, Onucsan wished he could cover the entire country, turning it into an undetectable spot on the map of Europe. *The White Camouflage* now camouflages a wall in the gallery, or, by extrapolation, a wall, in Berlin. This time the camouflage does not hide a presence, but an absence, which it thus reinstates, marking its place. It is a paradox that confirms the identity tension of the East; even though the wall is no longer there, the notion of it still separates and differentiates. And the camouflage that invokes it is white because "white can receive any colour".

If *Self-portrait* speaks about the "character", *White Camouflage* contextualizes this character to a certain degree. It legitimates a "place" and a "time" which Miklos Onucsan feels he belongs to, an artistic history of three decades.

"What I have to do tomorrow I should have done yesterday" is an exhibition which intends to show this history from the perspective of the present. Its title quotes Onucsan and it is far from a mere conjuncture statement; it is a confession, retrospective and (self) evaluative which updates the *Self-portrait* series. And if tomorrow it is too late for what should have been done yesterday, without invalidating the possibility of recuperation, the present moment is a time meant for evaluation: "I often feel as if I were a free kick played after the end of the game."

Exhibition text written by Madalina Brasoveanu, art historian based in Oradea, Romania.

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