



PRESS RELEASE

PANTA RHEI - EVERYTHING FLOWS

SUMMER GROUP SHOW

19 JUNE – 31 JULY 2021

Husk Gallery is pleased to present *Panta Rhei – Everything flows*, the second summer group show in the gallery with Ulrike Bolenz, George De Decker, Peter Depelchin, Dirk Eelen, Nathalie Pirotte and Jan Valik. Over a period of six weeks, this curated exhibition offers meditations on the theme of 'Panta rhei' by six contemporary artists.

The aphorism 'Panta rhei' is attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who was born in Ephesus in the 6th century BC. He used the phrase 'Panta rhei kai ouden menei' or 'Everything flows, nothing stands still' to express his idea that everything in our world is in constant flux. It is one of the most famous surviving statements of the pre-Socratic natural philosopher. Although the only book Heraclitus ever wrote was destroyed, fragments were preserved by other ancient writers. Despite the fact that there are only a few hundred statements in total and many are succinctly formulated, Heraclitus' philosophy is one of the first comprehensive philosophic systems in ancient Greece. His insights relate to identity, knowledge and ethics. They were a rich source for philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, as well as Hegel and Nietzsche many centuries later.

Due to the cryptic and often ambiguous nature of his writings, Heraclitus was known to his contemporaries in ancient times as the 'dark' philosopher. His fragments are often real brain-teasers, which lend themselves perfectly to further reflection. The statements contain rich images and comparisons and offer interesting frames of interpretation for the selected works of the six contemporary artists.

For Heraclitus, multiplicity is the affirmation of unity. Although reality is in constant development and flux, the philosopher believed it was based on a certain 'logos' or guiding laws. According to Heraclitus' vision, we can become acquainted with the world in flux by unravelling its logos. The landscapes by the Slovak painter **Jan Valik** capture the flux in nature to a certain extent. His images of clouds, earth, water and wind take the viewer on an amazing pictorial journey between naturalistic and mental landscapes. In Jan Valik's oeuvre, the flux is often depicted in opposing movements that keep each other in balance.

Heraclitus' famous statement 'You cannot step into the same river twice' also offers interesting food for thought about the unity-of-opposites and permanent flux concepts. **Dirk Eelen's** series of paintings titled *Shallow Waters* (2019) literally depicts shallow waters. In each painting, the natural life moving just below the water's surface is fused with the changing reflections of the sky and trees on the water's surface. The continuous flow of water is frozen, as it were, while the riverbed remains in constant flux.

George De Decker's abstract series *Standing in the back, moving towards the front* (2018) offers a different perspective, actively inviting the viewer to dive into the 'flow' of his fleeting blue colour palette. The ephemeral lightness of the paint is in both contrast and harmony with the sturdy support in solid steel. Both the works from his series *The Forsaken Cry* (2018) also immerse us in his blue universe. De Decker found inspiration for these works in a poem by *W.H. Auden* about Brueghel's painting *'The Fall of Icarus'*, which transports us to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

The idea of a flowing and constantly changing reality is also reflected in other cultures, besides Greek culture. For example, the aphorisms *'Omnia mutantur'* (everything changes) and *'Tempora mutantur'* (times change) also circulated later, during the Roman Empire. The Heraclitus' *'Panta rhei'* concept is clearly reflected in the *'Metamorphoses'* of the Roman poet Ovid (1st century AD). His mythological stories are still an inexhaustible source of inspiration for artists.

Icarus is a recurring mythological figure in the oeuvre of **Ulrike Bolenz**. In *Ikarus – Angeschwemmt* (2020-21), a recent series of intimist drawings, she portrays, as a contemporary history painter, the fall of Icarus as a current theme. She associates the image of a young man who washes up on the beach as a result of his hubris or pride in wanting to fly with the fate of the mostly young refugees who dare to make the perilous journey across the sea on rickety boats on their way to freedom.

We can also find the youthful beauty of Ulrike Bolenz's washed-up body in **Nathalie Pirotte's** series *La sève* (2021). She painted two naked, anonymised adolescents in their burgeoning beauty with a pink palette. Nathalie Pirotte also took direct inspiration from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for her *Daphnés* (2018). To save the nymph Daphne from being overpowered by the infatuated god Apollo, her father turned her into a laurel tree at the last moment. Pirotte depicts the metamorphosis of her *Daphnés* by using fluid oil paint that renders the faces unrecognisable, with the same colour palette as the lavish floral decorum. In line with Bernini's famous 17th century sculptural group *Apollo and Daphne*, the moment of the transformation itself is depicted exactly.

The preference for the frozen metamorphosis is also clear in two works of the new 4-part etching series by **Peter Depelchin**. This series, consisting of a *Prelude* and a *Trilogy* (2021) reflects Depelchin's fascination with the nature god Pan and his entourage. In the etching *'Pan & Syrinx'*, we witness the moment when Pan grabs the water nymph just before she turns into a reed, as described in the *Metamorphoses*, among other writings. The cosmological perspective sketched in the etching *Man & Tree*, in which a man's raised hand changes into a tree branch in the middle of an infinite firmament, is reminiscent of the 'Panta rhei' concept, just like Depelchin's *Metamorphosis* (2007) installations with drawings in water. Everything in the cosmos is constantly in flux, nothing stays the same, but nothing completely disappears either.

The philosopher's ideas live on, also in contemporary art. Every era time creates its own Heraclitus.

Opening Saturday 19 June 2021 from 2 to 7 pm

Opening hours: Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 1 pm to 6 pm and by appointment

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