

Body: Part III

Murat Önen: *re-form*

August 5 - August 30

Ballon Rouge's vitrine

2 Place du Jardin aux Fleurs

Brussels 1000

on view 24/7

Ballon Rouge is pleased to present *Body*, a series of solo exhibitions at our Club's vitrine in Brussels, with work by Tessa Perutz (June 6 - July 5), Samantha Rosenwald (July 8 - August 2), and Murat Önen (August 5 - 30). The exhibitions will be on view 24/7 in our vitrine at Place du Jardin aux Fleurs 2.

Initially, *Body* was a group exhibition set to open in June in Istanbul; a sexy summer show about the body, the gaze, and desire.

Despite COVID's destructive path, the concept has not changed - yet, inadvertently the relative meaning has changed very much. This series of exhibitions remains about the body and the gaze, but now Murat Önen's works, while they relate to those topics, they also can be read in line with the new construction of bodies in our current moment.

From Istanbul and based in Düsseldorf, the work Murat produces is born of neither world. In the past many of his works have been a take on his experience with Berlin club culture, particularly it's Queer scenes. The paintings depict anonymous, stylized and softly lit men; the lighting undoubtedly evokes the sense of club lighting; blue and orange hues, and strong shadows - a snapshot or memory from a bustling night. A pulsing scene suddenly made still. The men are sometimes alone, sometimes in an embrace, and sometimes in a BDSM style harness. Both about masculinity and sexuality, Murat's works manage to be ethereal.

The two new paintings in "re-form" as part of the *Body* series reflect a turn in Murat's work - perhaps a reaction to the club scene closing for the early part of COVID and the self-reflection involved in our collectively having stayed in for longer than most of us are used to. While his past work did have a sense of lingering loneliness to them, these works suggest the relationship between loneliness and creation in a more exuberant way. These are no longer lit by the club lighting, they are naturally lit, and the figure or figures in the work are no longer stationary.

The figures in the works are coming alive before our eyes. We see the artist's hand come into the painting itself, a dropped brush, or his hand holding a tube of paint in action, all the while we try to read and decipher the newly created body, already seemingly at work on its own form at a home gym. They are paintings within paintings. We are watching the painting be made, and watching the very creation of masculinity and sexuality and Queerness that can be seen in his other works. Perhaps these works are a prequel, the creation of the characters that populate the scenes in his past works - or maybe not. Maybe this is Murat's deep-dive further into Queer theory, and Judith Butlerian ideas of gender performativity. In an essay written just before her famous 1990 work "Gender Trouble," Butler wrote that gender is, "an act [in a play] which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualised and reproduced as reality once again'."

Murat Önen (b. 1993, Istanbul, Turkey) lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany. Since 2018 he has been studying in the Painting Department of Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. His previous exhibitions include: 2020: Hallöchen, Robert Grünenberg, Berlin (Duo); 2019: Prospektive, Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna, My Gay Eye, The Ballery, Berlin, Looking for NOW, Oberüber Karger, Dresden (Solo), Secret Sundays, Bruch & Dallas, Cologne, Rundgang, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf; 2018: Abnormale Kunst, 196tm, Leipzig; 2017: Academy Positions, POSITIONS, Berlin, Diploma Exhibition, Oktogon HfBK Dresden, Tabu & Bruch, Im Frieze e.V., Kirschau, Kalter Osten, Künstlermesse, Dresden; 2016: I Woke Up Like This, Senatssaal HfBK Dresden, Murat Önen & Thomas Fröhlich, Malerei, Fotografie, Galerie Holger John, Dresden (Duo); 2014: Pornceptual does Somos, Galerie SomoS, Berlin, Annual Exhibition, HfBK Dresden