



Timothée Chaillou: *Henrik, it would be good to start with your first intentions. How everything began and what were you planning with this project first shown in Oslo and Wisconsin?*

Henrik Plenge Jakobsen: The initial figure for this exhibition "Defaced" is UBUAH, which actually came about when I was doing a project in the summer 2013 at the Kunsthall Charlottenborg in Copenhagen called the "Tournament d'objet", a hybrid project between performance, exhibition and festival. This event -which had a rather medieval crusade theme- ended up with me doing a performance in a costume appropriated from West Africa as an excursion away from the Eurocentric medieval situation and into something completely different. After that, I decided to pursue this UBUAH idea and maybe one could say bring it back to Europe, and combine it with appropriations of similar European situations within folklore and ritualistic traditions. This became first the "Divorced" exhibition at The Poor Farm Experiment

in Wisconsin and a bit later another version of this -the *Hex Ubu* performance- with the Kunsthall Oslo in Norway and now "Defaced" as the last stop of its endeavour into the fluffy, feathery surface and an attempt to make some unstable hybrids in-between sculptures, costumes and actions.

TC: *Hex Ubu is a carnivalesque theatre performance with six figures dressed up in defaced costumes on a hexagonal stage, a living sculpture acting out like a ritual game. Can you please talk about its references to Alfred Jarry and Samuel Beckett?*

HPJ: The inspiration, when it comes to Samuel Beckett is primarily a play he did for German television in 1981 called *Quad I+II*, a quite abstract play, where the characters are kind of disguised in long colorful dresses almost as niqabs, and move around in geometric patterns on a small stage. The aspect of time, which is always so intriguing in Beckett's work is here stretched to a "100.000 years" in between the first and

second act in the play. But its kind of the same act, nothing happened during the 100.000 years. Alfred Jarry has always been a huge inspiration, especially the fact that he dissolved text and theatre, and that he mutated the characters almost into something beyond human, as wormlike creatures or mere abstractions. Some of the same ideas and attempts are at stake in the *Defaced* exhibition.

TC: *From which African and European folk traditions are you referring in "Defaced"?*

HPJ: Its kind of superficial reference, more out of aesthetic choices and with an interest in form and antiform. In this show there will be six figures, which derives from either central European mountain regions, like Tirol with the Feather, Bulgaria with the sheepskin figure, and the UBUAH figure I presume is somewhere from areas in Mali, but then there is two others that are just hair and Mylar, and I do not know where they came from, but somehow I have seen them before as well, I just don't recall where.

TC: *How did you start working on this performance with the Danish experimental musician Gæoudjiparl?*

HPJ: I have worked with Gæoudjiparl since 1995 when I did a show at the National Gallery in Copenhagen. I approached him since I wanted to make an "Opera" for the Circus Pentium exhibition, and I thought and still think he is one of the most interesting musicians, artist or composer I know of. Since we share some interest for robots, sounds and energies he was also the perfect artist to ask to make the soundtrack for the *Hex Ubu* performance in which he turned up with his homemade Synthesizer. However he is not present directly in the exhibition in Paris, but indirectly as a key source of stimulation.

TC: *Is there a connection with Charles Fréger's book Wilder Mann: The Image of the Savage in which he captures what he calls "tribal Europe"?*

HPJ: Yes, and no, I discovered his work a half a year ago, so not really, but of cause we share a mutual interest in the central European excess into folklore and beast alike humans or humans as beasts, and some of the same costume references also appear in his work. I tried to order his book but it never arrived to me with Amazon...

TC: *We can also think about Itt Addams a short being whose entire body is shrouded by long hair...*

HPJ: (Laughs) I never thought about the Addams family, but yes! -or the Gomez Addams on his way into the black foggy woods, or in his way to outer space.

TC: *What is Divorce?*

HPJ: Divorce is separation, in the aspect of the exhibition as separation between form and anti-form and the

rupture in-between the ludicrous and the sane or serious, and somewhat also the divorce of nature and the human.

TC: *And separation brings us to anxiety.*

HPJ: I think separation anxiety always is a driving force in the development of our life, its refers the change of conditions on a personal or general level, as the child who never wants to leave her mom, because she knows it will never be the same again without her.

TC: *What about the title of your show, Defaced?*

HPJ: The title is this word that actually stems from old French; "desfacier", which in English means mutilated or vandalized, often in conjunction with the destruction of sculptures and more recently of websites. The title is chosen due to its double reference of the mutilation and the object or figure without visage. Maybe as an allegory of faceless subjects who slowly do destroy their own environment, and subsequently has to leave their place or disintegrate.

TC: *There are six life size sculptures, six solar panels, two hairs heads (one blonde, one dark-haired), some objects hanging from the ceiling, a tissue box, some cowbells and a video of UBUAH in a cave. Are they relics or "dead things", as Mike Kelley used to say?*

HPJ: They are dead things in Kelley's term, or consequences of something that took place, since all the attires and their attributes was in a performance or spectacle once, and is now alternated into something as quiet as still objects on alienating mannequins. Somehow I would see these relics as dead souls or lost souls rather than just dead things. There is also a short film on an screen of a short action performed in a cave on a remote island in the Baltic sea, this could then be the ghostly representation of the living thing coming out of its cave after a long hypothermia. The elements that did not take place in an action are the solar cell panels and the two hair heads. They are more normal retinal art, especially the solar panels can be perceived as a contemporary attempt to make an Ad Reinhardt inspired science fiction monochrome or an austere structural painting. This technology the solar panels represent is one of the premises for satellites in orbit, without these mono crystalline silicon cells no electricity for the devices in space, so one could also see them as a disassembled satellite or components for a new one. The heads called *Defaced Heads* is made of human hair probably from poor Indian women, who then provide hair extension options for the women in the wealthy part of the world or a cynical sculpture production as mine, not very comforting and uplifting but perhaps an image of our present life condition, which embraces irresponsibility and unlimited desire for the dead things.