

parlour

Crocodile Tears
March 20 – 21, 2009

Crocodile Tears, Parlour No. 4, invites viewers to enter the bleak, fantastical worlds of Ali Aschman and Andrzej Nowicki. The exhibition will feature collaborative works by these studio mates in addition to drawings, paintings, collages, prints, and sculptural installations of their own. *Crocodile Tears* is hosted by Stephanie Max, Liliana Penagos and Ren Sano in their Brooklyn apartment.

The title of the exhibition derives from a recurring theme in each of the artists' works: Andrzej, having been recently obsessed with crocodiles, features them in many of his drawings, whereas tears are a persistent theme in Ali's practice. However, "Crocodile Tears" is an appropriate title for other reasons. First, the term popularly refers to a disingenuous display of sadness or remorse, which is a concept that the grey areas of Ali and Andrzej's practices wish to dispute. Secondly, "Crocodile Tears" is a phrase that has been widely used in literature, media and music since the 14th century, from Shakespeare's *Henry VI* to the television series *The Smurfs*—a range that parallels the image depositories of both the artists.

Words, be they song lyrics or phrases from novels and poems, are typically the impetus for Ali Aschman's drawings, prints, sculptures and installations. A dominant theme in her work is the juxtaposition of opposites: innocence and violence, chaos and order, dreams and nightmares. Ali uses a child-like style to depict images of brutality as a way to illustrate her understanding of the human condition. A whimsical, naïve quality offsets the disturbing or melancholy mood of the images. While the works seemingly exist in a vacuum, the lack of a complete narrative prompts the viewer to finish the scene and make sense of the characters' inner turmoil.

Andrzej Nowicki, using a stable of recurring characters and sets inspired by comic books, his childhood in Poland during the 1980s, film scenes and random everyday imagery, builds sci-fi stories that can be seen to evolve throughout his drawings, paintings, prints and collages. His soft, mostly cool palette and capricious grey lines complement the ambiguous settings he depicts, which quiver between a distant memory and a future yet to be experienced. Disparate worlds are grounded in the same work much like parallel universes, bubbles of thought and context loom over the existing story, and, at times, his characters' outward appearances seem to be emblematic of their private emotions. Though Andrzej offers a more comprehensive context and storyline for his characters, his works remain enigmatic and implore the viewer to realize and acknowledge their own narrative.

Ali and Andrzej's collaborative works, the three wood cut-outs found in the center of the exhibition, are an interesting combination of the two artists' practices. The poses of the figures were achieved from a series of back-and-forth sketches between the artists. The form and basic concept of the pieces and the way in which the figures exist in a vacant space on the other hand can be seen to relate more to Ali's practice, while the color, style of painting and script are more indicative of Andrzej's. Still, the fact that the artists share a studio and have also studied and worked together so much in the past makes one wonder how much each artist subconsciously influences the work of the other—whether the effect is to pursue a particular course or distance oneself from it.

Ali Aschman and Andrzej Nowicki were both raised in South Africa and are graduates of the Michaelis School of Art, University of Cape Town. They moved to New York in 2008 and now live and work in Brooklyn. Ali (b. 1985, California) has had her work exhibited in many countries, including China, the United States, Canada and South Africa. Andrzej (b. 1981, Poland) is represented by What If The World gallery in Cape Town, South Africa and has also exhibited around the globe. *Crocodile Tears* is the first show in New York City for both artists.

Parlour is a new nomadic exhibition space that presents weekend-long exhibitions in different homes throughout New York City. Its impetus is to showcase the work of contemporary artists in a unique and dynamic setting. Parlour was conceived by Ciara Gilmartin and Leslie Rosa-Stumpf. Both are graduates of Sarah Lawrence College. Leslie additionally received her MA in Curatorial Studies from Goldsmiths College in 2006, and now works as a freelance curator. Ciara currently works for an NGO at the United Nations.

Crocodile Tears opens on Friday, March 20th from 7 – 10 PM, and can be viewed on Saturday, March 21st from 12 – 6 PM by appointment only. For more information or to make an appointment, please contact Ciara or Leslie at parlourinfo@gmail.com or visit www.parlourdoor.com.

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