

OUTTA LUCK
HOËL DURET

Against the little elevator music of storytelling, Hoël Duret maintains an art of narrative that leans towards a deflated epic, a picaresque that is a bit of a loser or even a “Threepenny Opera”.⁽¹⁾

At the heart of Hoël Duret’s first solo exhibition in a gallery, and in the basement of the New Galerie, is the film *Outta Luck* (2022). Three young people, slightly drunk, sitting on deckchairs, are talking about everything and nothing. They are outside, it’s night, the sky is clear - it’s even: “hyper weird”. As far as the eye can see, they have the immensity in front of their eyes, but they don’t contemplate it. They talk about it, and what they show us is the application of the different contemporary structures of meaning production to a given situation. Everything goes: fake news and post-truth, GAFAM and Bitcoins, solar system and universal love.

The language is that of small-talk, extending the mechanical chatter of the infinitesimal that the artist already explored in his last film, the feverish and glitched *Drop Out* (2020). Both are worked with attempts to confront the thick mystery of existence from the linguistic and technical tools at hand. In the artist’s work, however, the language is visual from the outset and the situation of enunciation is geared up: in the previous opus, the actors expressed themselves through animal filters that took the place of their faces; in the current one, it is still a matter of superimposition, with a long sequence shot of collective dance-trance in the background, evolving in the manner of a video clip on a forgotten or perhaps obsolete television set.

On the second floor, three screens offer a possible reading key. The scrolling text strips punctuated with emojis, in the manner of a spammed karaoke or a Discord server chat room, are taken from the 1930 opera *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* created by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. It tells the story of the birth, the apogee and the decline of the imaginary city of the same name, a trap set by three criminals to the Alaskan lumberjacks that they lure into their nets with prostitutes, alcohol and gambling. Through the self-destruction postulated as the natural slope of the organism called capitalism, it is also possible to read in it the anticipation of the theses of accelerationism, such as they will emerge at the threshold of another decade in crisis, that of the 2010s.

With *Outta Luck*, whose exhibited form integrates, according to the artist’s characteristic grammar, wall works and scenic props, Hoël Duret aggregates the parcels of narrative that surface on the surface of the present to integrate them into his narrative system: something like a cultivation of the ungrateful seeds of the present. The soil of fiction may already be sterile, and the skies of fabulation filled with celestial waste (Tesla’s guy’s cars?, the characters wonder) but the humans who inhabit it have no choice but to cultivate their need for meaning.

The new philosophers of the Garden may be quite drunk on Sky©, but ataraxia remains visible on a clear day for those who want to have the means to see it.

(1) Bertolt Brecht et Kurt Weill, *Die Dreigroschenoper* [*Threepenny Opera*], 1928.

(2) The Garden designates the philosophical school created by Epicurus in 306 B.C., open to men, women and slaves, and concerned with the search for a life without torment (*ataraxia*).