

Stefan Tcherepnin
PRESS



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Dec 9, 2016 – Jan 28, 2017

Stefan Tcherepnin's "Stefan 'Jackson' Tcherepnin, 2014-17:
The Missing Years"

by Daniel Horn

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GALERIE FRANCESCA PIA, Zürich

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At a recent film screening in Zurich, an artist whose work was about to be premiered half-joked about the emergent trend of updating exhibition press releases with references to the recent US presidential election and the theme of imminent universal doom left behind by November's stunning outcome. Suddenly, there's a sense not so much of urgency but rather of creeping sickness and apathy, spreading from Chelsea to South Beach, a pandemic making its way to Europe's art hubs.

It's actually been quite some time—not since the aftermath of 9/11, broadly speaking—since any event in US history has had so dramatic an effect on artistic high-end manufacturing and its discourse, not to mention the economic repercussions yet to be determined (by, on the one hand, headlines such as "Ivanka Trump Loves Contemporary Art, Does It Love Her Back?" which recently appeared on [artmarketmonitor.com](#), and the pick of a scion of the founder one of Manhattan's most exclusive blue-chips for Secretary of the Treasury on the other). It remains to be seen to what extent and by what means the contemporary art world is prepared to address and defy long-term (i.e., a minimum of four years) systemic impoverishment in light of new economic policies of deregulation favorable to auction houses, collectors, dealers, and ultimately, the artists of their liking.

In Stefan Tcherepnin's exhibition "2014-2017: The Missing Years" (his solo debut in Europe, which to a degree expands on a related show at Real Fine Arts in Brooklyn in 2014), any explicit topicality of the aforementioned dreaded "new" realities is not merely shrouded in personal mythology but also temporarily warded off through communal ritual (read: group therapy). Tcherepnin, who is also known for his wide-ranging musical composition and performances, played various tunes rich in pathos on a grand piano during the exhibition's opening. Towards his last chords, visitors, friends, and strangers placed stones on the instrument's strings, a coda that invited dissonance back into the airy space, which was atmospherically lit by suspended lamp-sculptures. Made from steel welded to mimic cultish-looking wooden objects, they're titled *...half fathomed. Strung on a crooked spine* and *Chain of exquisite temper* (all works 2016). These are essentially ennobled upgrades of the grungier, actual wooden branches the artist has previously shown, and the exhibition as a whole is polished in appearance.

The oafish absurdity that is *Sesame Street's* Cookie Monster—a recurring subject within Tcherepnin's aesthetic—appears here in four different versions scattered around the galleries, and includes its transmogrification into a three-footed piano-shaped sculpture covered in actual Cookie Monster-blue fake fur, with the creature's pair of signature saucer eyes sitting atop the piano's lid. As for the other three versions, their titles alone—*Shadow Monster*, *Wrathful Deity (Rusty)*, and *Fat Frog (Phantom Tuin)*—derange this already alien subject into something more sinister and derelict.

The late 1960s Muppet proves to be an infinite source for further formal experimentation and character development. In a triptych of oils the Cookie Monster is given the Picasso-of-the-late-1920s treatment, its already amorphous anatomy liquefied into cyclopean organisms in blue. This continues into the video *Forgetting*, displayed on a flatscreen, where these forms, at times, melt away to the sound of wafting electronic harmonies and drone. But *Forgetting* is largely a work of living history narrated by—or as seen through the goggling eyes of—two Cookie-like drifters roaming Coney Island and its piers. Sleeping rough or just strung out inside the city's sewer network, they are obviously miles away from their televised original promoting eating fruits and vegetables with Michelle Obama one last time.

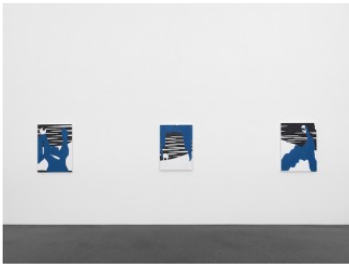
As alluded to in a text accompanying "The Missing Years," co-written with Zurich-based artist Yannic Joray, the video depicts the area of the former Steeplechase amusement park eventually acquired by Fred Trump Jr. (1905-1999). Shortly after the acquisition, Trump held a "demolition party" in 1966, inviting a select mob to smash the entire place with bricks, lest it be declared landmark status and spoil his development plans.



1 View of Stefan Tcherepnin's "Stefan 'Jackson' Tcherepnin, 2014-2017: The Missing Years," Galerie Francesca Pia, Zurich, 2017.



2 (Left) Stefan Tcherepnin, *Cosmic Worm*, 2016. (Right) Stefan Tcherepnin, *Chariot of a secret order*, 2016.



3 View of Stefan Tcherepnin's "Stefan 'Jackson' Tcherepnin, 2014-2017: The Missing Years," Galerie Francesca Pia, Zurich, 2017.



4 (Left) Stefan Tcherepnin, *Wrathful Deity (Rusty)*, 2016. (Right) Stefan Tcherepnin, *Vesper in Solitude*, 2016.

Delicate aquarelles outline psychedelically rendered scenes of semi-fictional decrepit places and ominous events of some kind, from the erstwhile *Steeplechase Park* to an unspecified *Horror Parade*. It's hard not to think, in this context, of the hordes about to descend on the National Mall this Friday, content, in the best-case scenario, with waving their little red baseball caps to cheer their leader, or alternatively, roughing up any sign, face, and body funny- and foreign-looking to their deluded cause.

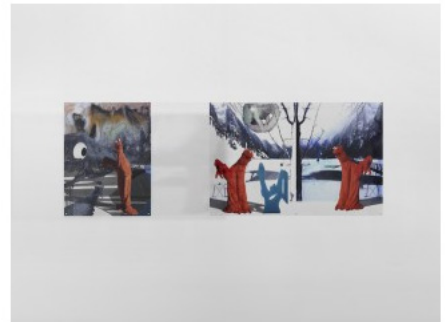
Daniel Horn is a writer based in Zurich and Berlin and a contributor to *Artforum*.



5 View of Stefan Tcherepnin's "Stefan 'Jackson' Tcherepnin, 2014–2017: The Missing Years," Galerie Francesca Pia, Zurich, 2017.



6 Stefan Tcherepnin, ...half fathomed. Strung on a crooked spine, 2016.



7 Stefan Tcherepnin, *Rebus (The Puzzle's in the Answer)*, 2016.



8 Stefan Tcherepnin, *Forgetting*, 2016.