

The Horizontal Within, The Horizontal Without

Lubomirov/Angus Hughes

Curated by Stephen Lee and Peter Suchin



Richard Grayson, *The Magic Mountain*, video still of work in progress.

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Maria Chevska, *MC, Telepath iv*, paper & plinth, 2016

Private View: Friday, 13th January, 2017 6-9pm
Exhibition Continues: 14th January - Sunday 5th February, 2017,
Friday - Sunday 12-6pm, or by appointment.
Gallery talk: Sunday 5th February, 2017 at 2pm

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The title of this exhibition adapts a line from Thomas Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain* (1924). Having spent the day wrapped in blankets on recliners out of doors, patients at the sanatorium at Davos in the Swiss Alps move to their beds at night, where they 'exchange the horizontal without for the horizontal within' (Secker & Warburg, 1954, p. 90).



Liane Lang, *In the Bush*, pigment print on Hahnemühle paper, acrylic and charcoal, 2016

The sanatorium's inmates often dryly comment on their horizontal lives. The subconscious becomes a heightened force as the cloistered tuberculosis patients exchange dreams, observe slips of the tongue, conduct séances, and engage in philosophical debates that reflect political events in the rapidly shifting European landscape below the mountain.

Nine artists have been asked to respond to this quotation and its source by creating artworks that interpret the form and content of the novel with an eye to today's political and ethical discontents. The idea for the exhibition originated through collaborative reading and discussion, which has shown Mann's immersive, multi-layered text to be a rich compendium of arguments, themes and insights of deep relevance to present-day issues, and it is hoped that the exhibition visitor experiences aspects of these complex exchanges. The show may be read as a kind of conversation in which the overall effect is one of a protracted or distended sense of time, akin to that experienced in, and exemplified by, the novel itself.

The artists have asked many interpretive questions: Why is the mountain 'magical'? Perhaps it suggests timelessness and lack of realpolitik. How does the book relate to today's cultures, which are themselves often in strange and febrile conditions? What exactly does this desire to hide from the world mean - a retreat, perhaps, from its aggression and endless demands? Is the novel and the place it describes a paradox or conundrum, the mountain being a place of death, self-deception, the comic and the erotic, and yet also one of learning and aspiration?

Within the framework of the exhibition a discrete display has been 'sub-curated', in a manner similar to a play within a play. Based in part upon a reconstruction of a personal library and studio, where several artists have been invited to make work for this elaborate literary environment which forms the entrance to the show.

Overall, the exhibition traces the relationship between visual art and literature and questions the meaning and validity of connecting the expanded, post-medium field of contemporary art to this dialectical novel. It attempts to broach the difficult relation between the individual unconscious and its manifestations in what is today an increasingly invasive - and highly-problematic - mass culture.



Stephen Lee, *The Hill*, tar bleed through paper, detail of work in progress