

THÉODORE MELCHIOR

PB PROJECT: *Open locks, whoever knocks*

October 31st — December 21st 2024
Opening October 31st from 6 to 9 pm

EN

In *Macbeth*, Act IV, Scene 1. The second witch speaks: “Open the locks to whoever knocks!” The plot may remain just there, a suspended invitation to a round dance of possible characters who, upon their entrance, will be adorned with all manner of costumes, even the most disreputable. This is how Théodore Melchior envisions sculpture, having emancipated it for several years now from its simple role as a theatrical performance backdrop, progressively transforming it into figures much closer to full-fledged characters. Whatever influence or reference knocks on his universe, it must take a determined form to make its incursion. Under the artist’s chisels, a gothic silhouette, a marshmallow effigy, something from Brueghel’s fantasies, the statue of the Commander, and our monuments to Great Men are carved.

Whatever the exact origin of the sculptures he presents, they are not there to parade alone. The pedestals are with them to perform their flourishes, parodying the museum or any exhibition space as a gently kitsch décor, nothing more than a pompous or bombastic scenic embellishment that could just as well serve as the backdrop for more heterodox vignettes.

Moving towards abstraction to better depart from it when the time comes, Théodore Melchior creates indulgent, dancing forms in wood, with a fully contained expressiveness, where the creamy curves are balanced by severely straight lines. The hardness of the material is apparent, yet it sometimes seems to stretch like thin skin over a backbone, or melt in a languid dripping.

For him, who has not entirely let go of his dreams of cinema, the work of the hand now counts, but it remains inseparable from image and text as vehicles for deeper narratives, for vaster fictions. Like voice-overs speaking for some unknown character—“*whoever knocks*”—or rather like silent film title cards, three texts respond to the sculptures enigmatically, embracing their knightly romanticism. A banner of resolutely *black* fabric, two pages with a symmetrical mood in which love unfolds like a battle; together, these elements endow the sculptures’ assembly with a dramatic and uniquely human charge. It is an opportunity to remind us that heroism, whether flimsy or inflated by the trumpets of a nation, is always and above all a work of fiction.

— Marilou Thiébault, art critic

Théodore Melchior, born in 1990, lives and works in Paris. He graduated from ESAD in Reims in 2017 and was a member of the collective Chevaline Corporation from 2014 to 2020. He is currently artist-in-residency at Poush Manifesto, Aubervilliers.



Spirit of the Warrior Nun, 2023
Sculpture of wood, varnish and pigment, 25 x 77,5 x 102 cm