

DAG ERIK ELGIN

22 October, 2020 – 20 November, 2020

The exhibition “La Collection Moderne (Čiurlionis)” is a solo presentation of works by the Norwegian artist Dag Erik Elgin consisting of text paintings developed for this exhibition in dialogue with works by the Lithuanian painter and composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911). The text paintings will be exhibited in the context of two of Elgin’s painterly reenactments; “The Black Sun” (1909) by Čiurlionis and “The Black Square” (1915) by Kazimir Malevich.

“La Collection Moderne” is a longstanding painterly investigation of iconic modernist paintings, their provenance and the contextual and visual content of museum labels. The series has been presented at venues such as The National Museum Oslo, Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin, Fondation Hippocréne Paris and Nordic Museum Seattle. The present series is based on the museum labels and curatorial registrations of a selection of M. K. Čiurlionis works presently in The M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum in Kaunas, with titles referring to music and sound like “Sonata No. 5 (Sonata of the Sea) Finale” and “Sonata No. 6 (Sonata of the Stars) Allegro”.

Accordingly, the text painting, “La Collection Moderne (Munch)”, a painted version of the Oslo National Gallery’s museum label for Edvard Munch’s “The Scream” (1893) will be on display. Painted on a black square canvas, the work unites two artistic positions, frequently considered incompatible within the reception of the historical Avant-garde: while “The Scream” is seen as expressive and psychological, “The Black Square” has been considered conceptual and formally reduced. It is historically documented that Malevich was influenced by the work of Čiurlionis on 1890-1911, and the present exhibition further develops “La Collection Moderne’s” investigation of the reception of Malevich iconic painting.

During the Russian revolution, a number of Čiurlionis works disappeared, among them “The Black Sun” (1909) in the possession of Igor Stravinsky. Today, this painting is known only from a black and white illustration in the art magazine Apollo in 1911. Elgin’s painting “Originals (Čiurlionis Black Sun)”, a reenactment based on the illustration, will be on display together with the painting “La Collection Moderne (Malevich)”, the English version of the label for “Originals (Čiurlionis Black Sun)”, translated into Cyrillic.

Technically the majority of Čiurlionis works were, like Munch’s “The Scream”, executed in the media crayon and pastel. Čiurlionis who trained as a composer, also shared Munch’s affinity for referring to sound in the titles of his paintings. Although Munch and Čiurlionis developed individual pictorial universes, both artists have been ascribed roles as heroic modernist figures in the national narratives of their respective countries, crucial for Lithuania’s and Norway’s struggle for independence.

Dag Erik Elgin is a Norwegian artist born in 1962. He is currently living and working in Oslo. The artist studied philosophy and law at the University of Oslo, and continued his studies at

the Oslo National College of Art and Design, the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and the Norwegian National Academy of Fine Arts.

Elgin's work is informed by an ongoing investigation into the history of painting, modernist ideals and contemporary visual culture. He has established a practice where the specific physical qualities of painting, historical analysis and personal production are continuously negotiated. His projects engage in an explorative dialogue with the history of art practices, interpretation, provenance and reception. Recent projects like "In Order of Appearance", "Originals Grisaille" and "La Collection Moderne" introduce text-based works and repetitive strategies as catalysts for exploring modernism's ongoing affair with current cultural and aesthetic representations. A parallel text production accompanies the visual investigations.

Elgin has exhibited extensively nationally and internationally at museums and art institutions including: Albertinum, Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Dresden; National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo; Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum for Gegenwart, Berlin and Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden. In 2014 he was awarded the Carnegie Art Award first prize for his monumental work 'Balance of Painters'. Elgin was professor at the Academy of Fine Art - Oslo National Academy of the Arts 2010-2016.