

Flash Art

PARIS

Fabien Verschaere at Michel Rein

"Once Upon No Time, 49 Nights for a Poem," the title of Fabien Verschaere's first solo show in Paris, immediately announces that rules will not be respected, that limits will be crossed, that children's stories will end as badly as they begin, and that the fear of death will always be stronger than the search for love. Welcome to the personal mythology of the artist who painted, on the wall just below the stars (a favorite hiding place of monsters), his imaginary bestiary. One finds a slump of skeletons, phantasms, perspiring mutilated angels, characters with unbelievably extended genitals, as well as a miniature Martian, some flowers and honey bees, hallucinogenic and atomic mushrooms — all in all, quite a likeable universe. In the center of the space there are two oversized dice

with a death's head portrayed on one of their six faces: an imposed Vanitas, a constant reminder of imminent danger which could either suddenly descend or lie in abeyance. On the walls surrounding the two sculptures, three characters in watercolor seem to pose the eternal question of which way to go.

The artist shares his childhood macrocosm, voluntarily standing on the other side of the mirror, in the sphere of fairy tales where schemas call into question the statutes and even the existence of the characters. Verschaere uses traditional drawing and watercolor techniques in a purely figurative manner, which on its own terms approaches a "dream expressionism." Together with other French artists of his generation, he takes part in reviving these techniques



FABIEN VERSCHAERE, *Once Upon No Time, 49 Nights for a Poem*, 2003.

and transposing them onto the wall, avoiding, however, becoming part of the mural tradition.

In a smaller piece, in the second exhibition space of the gallery, paintings on glass are hung along the wall, each representing a dark

and worrying character. On the ground little lewd individuals, colored sculptures, seem to run away after the explosion of a perfume bottle, the feminine presence too heavy to bear...

—Laetitia Roux