

MATT COPSON

*Down Boy*

March 3 – April 7, 2019

Reena Spaulings presents *Down Boy*, a laser light show by Matt Copson. An animated drawing of a fox, transmitted via two laser projectors, interacts with its own double or reflection at the intersection of two gallery walls. This split creature performs a monologue written and voiced by the artist – addressing itself, or its other self, in the haranguing, commanding tone of a master training its dog. The fox starts to move and behave like a dog and sometimes like a human boy. Aggressing and loving itself at the same time, the mirrored fox is immediately caught in a double bind: while to obey is to give up its devilish foxy nature, to refuse or flee is to forfeit self-mastery. Neither option seems autonomous. Is the dog a reduction and simplification of the fox, or is there a more advanced, complex possibility in this divided and neurotic creature? A dog is how the fox talks back to and calls itself out.

While installing this show, Copson mentioned that Disney once tried to adapt the medieval *Reynard the Fox* legend but aborted that picture when the fox's devilish character was judged unsuitable for mainstream popularity: Reynard became a pile of drawings that was later recycled for *Robin Hood*. A peasant trickster figure who deceived and outwitted the institutional powers of the aristocracy and clergy for his own advantage, Reynard also returns in a poem by Goethe and later in Nietzsche's *The Twilight of the Idols* as an example of a "dialectician." Like the Native American coyote character, Reynard is a loveable folk villain and master of disguise who is never finally equal to himself. If the fox is flight from identity and the law, the dog invents another kind of flight within the fox and the human. Good boy.

For the production of *Down Boy*, Copson made numerous drawings of a fox which were used as the basis for a 3D model. In order to become the laser show on view, the drawings were reduced and simplified, translating as sharp, bright beam paths on the gallery wall. Doubling this simplification, Copson imagineers a comic book-like, ravey *son-et-lumière* allegory for this moment. Reprogramming himself for moral and luminous clarity, the fox becomes a visual pet and a sort of performing avatar. A chandelier made of cast human femurs illuminates another corner of the gallery.

Matt Copson (b. Oxford, UK). Solo exhibitions include *Blorange*, Fondation Louis Vuitton (2018), *Transcend and Die*, Mönchehaus Museum Goslar (2018), *Eggy and Seedy*(with Alastair Mackinven), Reading International (2017), *Sob Story*, High Art, Paris (2016), *A Woodland Truce for The Magazine Sessions*, Serpentine Sackler Gallery (2016) and *Reynard Reforms*, Vilma Gold (2015).

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