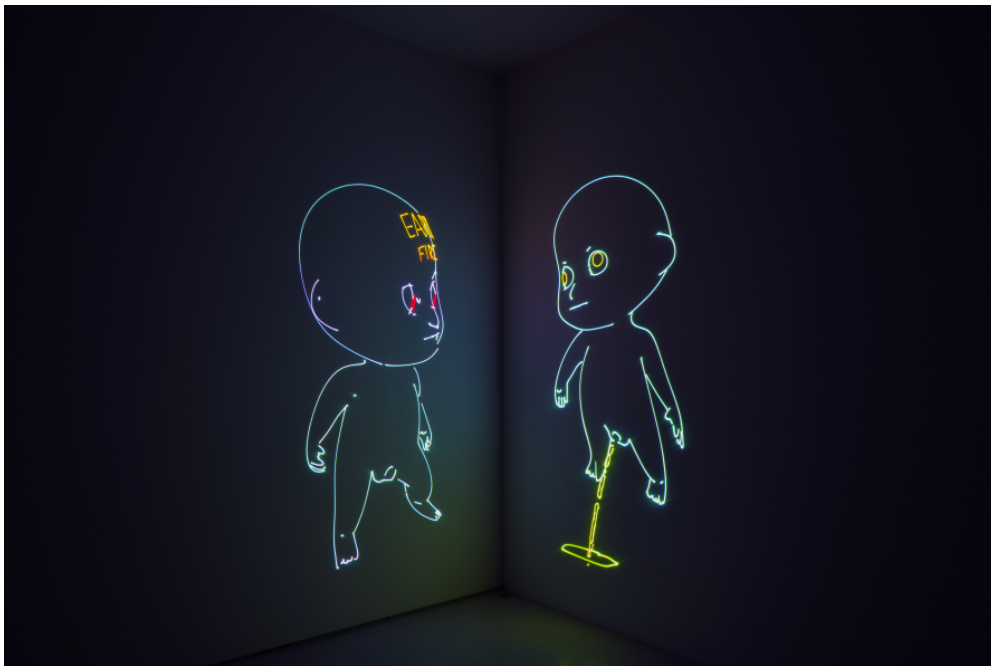


Matt Copson Animates Psychoactive Frescoes



Words

Matt Copson's *Coming of Age* trilogy of operatic animations are each titled with a different permutation of those same three words: "coming," "age" and "of." They follow an adorably cartoonish baby beginning to make sense of the world around him and himself as he comes, sometimes bluntly, into contact with the surrounding reality. The idea for the series first began to germinate in Copson's mind when, on a trip to Italy, he was struck by the sheer number of *bambini* to be found in the paintings and frescoes of the Renaissance. Once a central figure in art, children have become increasingly rare as subject matter in the centuries since, raising the question "Where have all the babies gone?" In a culture so hysterically dedicated to youth, and in an age marked by social and technological forces of infantilization, why has the purest symbol of natality, of birth and its infinite possibilities, all but disappeared from the images we make of ourselves?



Matt Copson, *Coming of Age*, 2020, High Art, Paris, installation view. Courtesy of the artist and High Art.

Copson's animations fall, like much of his older work, somewhere between fables and deadpan comedy, using fantastical beings to communicate basic truths about human experience. Scored by his longtime collaborator and partner, the musician Caroline Polachek, the simple line animation is projected using the same laser machines that pulse beams of electric light into crowded concerts and clubs. Last year's exhibition "Coming of Age" found its ideal audience in the huddled masses of teenagers who flocked to High Art in Paris, where the work was shown, to make TikToks against the backdrop of Copson's psychoactive frescoes, posting thousands of videos from the space; the virality of content rubbing up against the natality of the newborn.



Abroad for a show at C L E A R I N G gallery, Copson photographed by sometimes collaborator and partner Caroline Polachek.

The craze that these untidy images and the ideas behind them induced in Parisian Gen Zers speaks, consciously or not, to the relevance of Copson's investigation of our cultural acceptance of a foreclosed-upon future, and the commonplace nihilism that comes along with that. His follow-up exhibition, "Age of Coming," opened at C L E A R I N G gallery in Brussels in the fall of 2021, and his animations were also shown at Art Basel in September. Born in the UK, Copson now splits his time between London and Los Angeles, where in addition to making his own artwork, he is working on projects such as an opera at the Royal Opera House (to premiere next year) and music videos with Polachek, which allow him to engage an extensive

audience. But even on the big stage, the voltaic brilliance of his big pop visions are undercut with the existential fidgeting and theological searching of a Blakean humanist.

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