

SUR LE DANDYSME AUJOURD'HUI



15 January - 21 March 2010
Press Conference: 15 January,
12h / Opening: 20h

From Shop Window Mannequin to Media Star

The Old Regime has fallen to the rhythm of the guillotine, equality is established as a principle, industrialisation modifies uses and customs, as well as imposing a new social class, the cities are illuminated at night and the

avenues are widened to become the stages of a new life.

In the mid 19th century, European society made its way towards modernity flying the idea of progress as a flag. Its advance was resisted by only a few figures, rather nostalgic, somewhat decadent and fairly melancholic. The dandy, the heroic figure who resists the changes of modernity with the knot of his tie and libraries full of the best titles of every era of every country, confronts homogeneity with distinction; the masses with the most absolute self.

The most common definition of dandyism only makes reference to good taste, to which was perhaps added a certain eccentricity, precursor of new styles. But the dandies of the 19th century were much more and have survived to our days through the myth, becoming characters in novels and subjects of treatises and essays, and also through certain strategies which were taken up by the avant-garde and that are perceptible in the work of many contemporary artists.

The narration of the exhibition is articulated through three paradigmatic figures — George Bryan Brummell, Charles Baudelaire and Oscar Wilde — to highlight the contributions each of them made to this peculiar genealogy of dandyism. The measured attitude of the Brummellian dandy is the necessary affirmation of the self as the only demonstrable truth, which converts the rest into a constructed reality, malleable according to the taste of those willing to do so. The Baudelairean builds a melancholic world, “the last spark of decadence”, decadent in itself, demonstrating its uniqueness in the manipulation of the principles of the incipient homogenising democracy. The Wildean dandy is the icon of modernity, the one who links identity to the ambiguous or excessive manipulation of appearance and who endows the term with the connotations with which it reaches the 20th century, those of celebrity and glamour.