

## *Man, Forgotten* - Alec Von Bargaen

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*Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! (...)*  
*The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,*  
*That ever I was born to set it right!*  
(Shakespeare, Hamlet, I, V, VV. 188-189, 77)

Shakespeare, in the Prince of Denmark - *Hamlet* - had the great ability to trace with extreme likelihood a character that expresses with the utmost mastery that fundamental existential doubt which has been lodged into the very soul of man throughout time: The "Hamletian dilemma" became both the emblem and the symbol, but especially the archetypal manifestation of man torn between the awareness of reality and his ability to abandon it.

In his most recent project, incisively titled: *Man, Forgotten (Uomo, Dimenticato)* presented for the 56th Venice Biennale, the artist Alec Von Bargaen identifies himself as a contemporary Prince of Denmark, placing himself - in an autobiographical manner - through an intimate dialogue of speculative growth.

In his continuous worldwide wanderings, Alec Von Bargaen has always placed man at the centre of his artistic research: first with the series "*The long walk home*" on display at the 54th Venice Biennale, in which he turned his gaze towards the all-time relevant and far too present international refugee crisis; later with "*Veritas Feminae*" – a Museum exhibition presented in many parts of the world – he gave voice, always through images of strength and great tension to 'marginalized' women, managing at the same time to bravely introduce specks of archetypal figures.

With this new project he places himself at the core, but at the same time, never forgets, nor ceases to focus on each and every one of us.

*Man, Forgotten* is basically an internal dialogue: the "child" becomes aware of the fact that it has become a man and finds himself continuously unfolding along the three axes of existence: the sky, man and the earth... The great mother earth, from which everything rises and to which everything returns.

The monumental installation Alec Von Bargaen presents, involves the viewer through a single, solitary figure – a figure that could be any of us - in a vast landscape almost unreal, and yet being natural, remains palpable. He creates a staging of life where man is prone to introspection and speculation.

Each viewer must imagine being alone on an immense deserted beach, where the wind and the sun scratch our face and the constant sound of the sea metaphorically punctuates time. Who knows exactly how many times throughout our growing process have we asked the following questions: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?

These three - apparently - simple questions bring us back to the pictorial masterpiece of Gauguin which he himself mutated from work by Balzac, but in reality, have we ever managed to find definite answers?

This is the focus of the dialogue and the search for Alec Von Bargaen, a dialogue in which it is never easy to find a solution or a definite answer to try to mitigate our soul. Often, unfortunately, due to the hectic pace of modern life, we forget to take the time, linger and talk to ourselves, rediscover and especially discover who we are, because we are afraid to reveal ourselves. Metaphorically, it is like looking in the mirror and not recognizing one's own reflection, to be lost in the continuing struggle between Eros and Thanatos. One carries the legacy of the past, but often without the awareness of wanting to listen to the unconscious boy, screaming from fear of growth.

The artist, in this case, embraces the 'child's' inner voice, that voice which is often brushed aside by the human being not wanting to listen. It is a metaphorical embrace with himself, with the more arcane and hidden side of his being. He holds the child close, seeking primarily to understand where he is going, scanning the world and identify where he is in the larger picture. He seeks a place with a sense of safety, where he's able to find the true identity of the essence of his existence. A tangible "kingdom" and a safe "port", a place to live, but at the same time where the inner voice is the very backbone of existence.

*Man, Forgotten* is a project conceived in full maturity, with the creator identifying himself as the nucleus of his research. Alec Von Bargaen, with his eternal pilgrimage, basically understands that the real safe place in life is within himself, found through growth and an inner wisdom.

If we could place ourselves in the role of the artist – we too - would understand that the world is immense, that we are surrounded by so many 'things', but we often forget that the world is ourselves and each of us needs to re-discover this.

For Alec Von Bargaen this is clear and in *Man, Forgotten* his eloquent dialogue makes this evident.