

# HOŠEK CONTEMPORARY

— EST. 2016 —

## HUE HALE - HE WASN'T THERE

Opening reception: 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020, 6 - 10 pm

Exhibition period: 25<sup>th</sup> July - 9<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Curated by Linda Toivio

*"The conventional identity of a young man has always been unclear to me, the identity of a young queer man holds even greater mystery."*

Growing up in a world where you are not taught to love another man or shown how to function in a healthy relationship, recognising acceptable behaviour or a red flag become problematic. Although homosexuality was decriminalised in Ireland in 1993, attitudes and society's acceptance have not instinctively followed, driving many individuals into leading double lives. Relationships, especially romantic ones, often get complicated at some stage of their lifespan and when a person lives in an environment where they have to hide a significant part of their true self, it elicits further challenges. *He Wasn't There* is a self-reflective document of a young queer man in Ireland, getting caught in codependency and manipulation.

*He Wasn't There* is also a tale about love, loss and loneliness. It captures the elusive moments when you are beginning to grasp that a relationship is over, but you prefer to close your eyes because you don't want to see. The moment when the other person has not properly left, but you already feel the melancholy of their departure. Documenting various phases of artist Hue Hale's relationship without ever actually showing his partner, *He Wasn't There* draws an intimate portrait of two men's love story, although it could also be about one man's love story. The exhibition is built around photos and video footage mainly gathered during two trips, both meant to be romantic getaways, but which the artist ended up taking by himself.

*"The toxicity in our relationship permeated and as a result my partner left prior to the trip and I never saw him again."*

The project consists of three chapters, I: Moneylands, II: VIDEOBOY and III: Las Américas, which chronologically follow the unfolding of a codependent love affair. Some of the exhibited images are self-portraits while others show empty spaces highlighting the absence of the loved one. They are constant reminders that somebody else should have been there. For the viewer, not being able to see the missing person during the entire project can represent that paradoxical loneliness one might feel in a toxic relationship; when being together with someone makes you feel even lonelier. A sense of finality seems present throughout the project from the first image to the last, though at the time of shooting the first chapter, Hale still believed in a future together. Little did he know that the following months will eventually lead into him staring at an empty plane seat in the final chapter Las Américas.

For Hale, shooting self-portraits has always been a way of documenting his personal growth and using his body an intimate manner to portray his mental state. Reflecting back on his past work, he draws a feeling of satisfaction from knowing that he is no longer that same person. In *He Wasn't There*, the artist is not afraid to expose himself as he reveals the disappointment and sadness of a failed relationship. He is letting the audience into a vulnerable yet relatable space, which many of us know all too well. Falling in love with the wrong person, endlessly questioning yourself. What was real? Was anything real? Did you imagine everything, was the entire relationship one-sided? In Hale's photos, it is impossible not to sense the grieving and feelings of emptiness and longing; when deep down you already know and there is nothing you can do.

Text © Linda Toivio  
All quotes from Hue Hale

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