

Pablo Schlumberger

Bar Putti Archive

24 March - 31 May 2023

Since 2018, Bar Putti has appeared and disappeared at various locations. This love child seems to pop up whenever it pleases, and is not easily tamed. It is to the merit of Schlumberger to have come up with a strategy for containing these putti and exhibiting them to the general public. Has the plan worked? Putti tend to freeze and hide in plain sight. But the moment you relax and sip your drink, they might creep up from behind to shoot their shot, adding some love potion to the mix.

Chemistry lives off the element of surprise. A smiling baby is a chemist, triggering the release of hormones in your brain. The smiling baby is also the world's most successful meme, endlessly multiplying itself via the joyful reactions of adults. Putti have survived many eras and religions, often by overtaking them from within, like in churches or on the facades of buildings. This again shows that Cupid is not just the child of Venus but also of Mars, the god of war.

Putti do not just bear witness, but subtly intervene in human affairs. Often disguised as mere decorations, they know how to break open and inhabit spaces. And as matchmakers, one of their talents is to instigate break-ups. Isn't the disturbance, the upheaval, a necessary ingredient for every "match made in heaven"? You wouldn't have made that decision, but something must have come over you that one evening.

An archive was needed, not to preserve the otherwise forgotten, but to find a temporary home for this unstoppable force. Surely, we wouldn't want these putti to run rampant across town. Perhaps the crates of this archive, then, do not preserve and rescue the objects, but preserve and rescue us by containing the objects. The point is not to document history, but to slow it down, to bring it to a standstill. Schlumberger has promised to keep the putti in check, so we can feel at ease in their surroundings. Then let's drink to that, and hope that it won't end as badly as last time...

*Mari van Stokkum with Franca Zitta*