

ASHA ZERO

Untitled

21.03.15

02.05.15

smac

CAPE TOWN

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Untitled

SMAC Gallery is proud to present *Untitled*, a solo installation by the artist working under the nom de plume of Asha Zero.

Untitled consists of a single painting measuring 366 cm x 200 cm which took the artist over a year to complete. The work invokes a seamy urban landscape, a stretch of a downtown battered wall covered in flaking paint, dense palimpsests of peeling branded posters, torn advertisements, faded graffiti and all the signs of wear, tear and abuse whereby time transfers a blank space into a portrait of past life.

This is Asha Zero's first exhibition to be hosted by SMAC and marks a significant watershed in the artist's career, showcasing the largest, most abstract piece he has yet produced.

Untitled, 2015
Acrylic on Board
200 x 366 cm

"Man's first expression, like his first dream, was an aesthetic one. Speech was a poetic outcry rather than a demand for communication. Original man, shouting his consonants, did so in yells of awe and anger at his tragic state, at his own self-awareness and at his own helplessness before the void".

~ Barnett Newman.

Today. No more poetic outcries. The notion of man no longer implies the heroic, honorable or virtuous. Tragedy and pathos are superseded by sensory deprivation and overstimulation. Reverberated, delayed, distorted, modulated, sampled and randomised, the omnipresence of the void. No movement, no consciousness, no original. The authentic now scrambled, filtered, a facsimile. Reproduced and remixed, mashed-up and hacked. Cut and pasted, the accumulation and acceleration of networks, surrounded by constructed environments.

The city, an extension of the original network – the nervous system. Substrata, layer upon layer upon layer. Mutated neural paths, differed dreams, fragmented, schizophrenic.

From this seeming meaninglessness, Asha Zero paints the ebb and flow of information, the stratification of signification, sedimentation of communication, a topology of a euphoric historication. Every surface a piece of history, transition, transmission, nothing is without meaning, the ecstasy of communication. In the silence noise - static, anomalies, glitches. A palimpsest. It is a testament to a simultaneous absence (in the wake of anything authentic or original) and presence (in the form of simulacra and iteration). At this point an absolute ubiquity, an endless repetition of the original subject. Random pattern, melody pulverised into drone, where proximity and promiscuity merge and ambiguously evolve. A singularity crafted from a world founded on immediate communication and instant gratification. Always on, connected, addicted.

In *Untitled*, Asha Zero represents this void, the ever-present, hyper-real. A copy of a copy of a copy. Abstract and formless. Layered and composited, superimposed as a new form of realism. Realism juxtaposed with abstraction. Collage, grottage, frottage – an assemblage.

Identifying with a state of terminal identity, masked, pasted, buffed, burned, bombed, torn and tagged. Obese, always feeding, always connected. A century ago this may have been seen as a moral crisis, presently it is utterly normal. Routine, respite. Sheer anarchy turned absolute normalcy. Nameless, a quasi-exquisite corpse existing as a superficial conventionalism. Pure War. Ground Zero. Minimalism.

The value of deception and the virtue of ubiquity, concurrently accessible and uncensored yet adulterated and corrupted. Schizophrenia and anxiety are habitual, 'natural' responses to the surrounding mediasphere. Asha Zero's painting contribute more than just the sum of all parts. Trompe l'oeil here resigns to the conceptual underpinnings of collage - confronting painting under the rubric of collage. Welcoming erasure, interference, trace and artifice as the status quo. Here, Asha Zero symbolises an 'indifference-in-difference' prompted by Dada and Surrealism, stemming from Realism and Impressionism, effectively combining the opposing ideologies of Pop Art and Abstract Expressionism. By proxy Posthuman, remaining unmarked by humdrum humanist politics or outdated capitalist polemics.

Untitled is no precarious appropriation of established Modernist notions in the tradition of art for arts sake. Nor does the work partake in the pretensions of the Postmodern. Asha Zero steals from all, a concurrent Abstractionist and Realist account. Hacked, chimera. The Realists depicted the everyday original subject in contemporary situations, portraying individuals at their source. Painting as figuration, sentimentality, connected to the real. Abstract Expressionism was the epitome of aesthetic and moral values set forth by the Realists – the other side of the spectrum where painting became 'pure', concentrated. Painting as abstract, formal, gestural, disconnected from the real. Sublime, pellucid, spectacle.

Asha Zero moves through these narratives and languages, inserting hyphens and splices. Appropriation, automatism, cut-up, a machine-aesthetic. Asha Zero reverses these once anarchic avant-garde ideas. Merging all such 'truths', hard wiring established Modernist givens to suite the desires of the 'post-post-'. Assembling a cacophony of occidental perceptions, Eurocentric diaspora, lost in the post-.

The world is no longer binary, imploding, getting smaller. Hierarchies and oppositions, none of this stuff. Critical mass, it is anarchic, Rhizomatic. The original subject has evolved into an indecipherable cipher. A milieu of cellular automata. In-between, juxtaposed. Surfaces are as numbing as they are stimulating. Scratched and scrambled topologies, simultaneously multiple and singular, combining the ability to differ and to defer. Embodied and embedded, disassembled and reprogrammed, anonymity is chosen over autonomy. Unfixing signifiers, turbulent, entangled, alienated. A clear-cut message: the age-old distinctions between the authentic and inauthentic, in and out, then and now, them and us, all obsolete. Null and void.

"I have studied the art of the ancients and the art of the moderns, avoiding any preconceived system and without prejudice. I no longer wanted to imitate the one than to copy the other; nor, furthermore, was it my intention to attain the trivial goal of 'art for art's sake'."

~ Gustav Courbet.

Shane de Lange
2015

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Untitled
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Untitled | Installation View

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