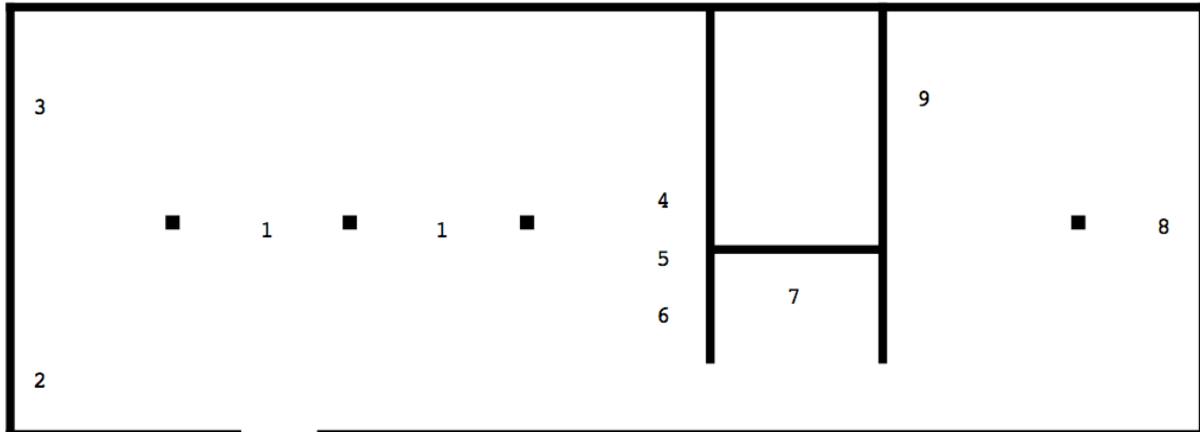


HASSAN KHAN

«EVIDENCE OF EVIDENCE»

22. Mai - 8. August 2010



TEXT BY HASSAN KHAN

The idea of the artwork as a form of evidence is related to an understanding of the process of producing forms: the process in which the artist is engaged in operations he might not fully understand, continuously testing, imagining, engaging, yet finally committing to the act of formalization.

Understanding the artwork as a form of evidence demands recognition of the historical and material aspect of culture, its economy of circulation, and the objects and meanings produced within this economy. However this evidence is also by necessity the location of surplus (beyond intentions and readings) and enigma (the condition of the art work). The artist's ambition is to embrace both positions without attempting to undo their contradiction.

This exhibition is thus interested in basic forms and what they can do, in the flattening of cultural tropes in order to use them as the raw material, or source for the work. The power of gestures and their relation to the passage of time, the search for aesthetic forms and facts, the investigation of the most basic level of politics, as well as an ongoing engagement with charged portraiture are all also part of what this exhibition is about.

This is therefore an unembarrassed engagement with big themes that uses deeply personal signifiers (statues owned by the artist since his teenage years, a portrait of an ex-partner, the artist's mother and family dog as basis for animated characters, and finally a selective retrospective of the artist's work form the past 15 years in the form of a series of etchings) to mark out its territory.

The moment of formalization is when the evidence is produced, the moment where it is placed in a relationship, where it speaks, lays claim, argues, suggests, takes risks, and becomes comprehensible.

- 1 **44 unique and repetitious markers of value, 2010**
44 solid concrete slabs
55 x 60 x 20 cm (each)

The relation of an object to the space it is in, and the way a simple intervention can rearticulate that space is a primary concern here. Another layer to this simple and monumental work involves the way in which the object identifies itself: where each unit begins and ends and where the parts coalesce to make the whole.

The minimalist tradition that is referenced here is functionalized and used to highlight the relationship between repetition and difference, which underlies the process of language formation as well as the most basic economic operations.

The material and shape being used are lifted out of the urban vernacular, which the artist uses consistently throughout his practice to learn aesthetic strategies from. The associative presence of the immediately yet subtly recognizable vernacular is also employed as part and parcel of the work, while refraining from making the work directly about the urban condition.

- 2 **GBRL, 2010**
Single-channel HD video
4' 19''

This simple yet intimate portrait of the artist's ex-partner Gabriela Daedelow who now lives in Zurich while she studies at the university was developed over a period of close work between the artist and the subject. A set of daily actions are enacted in the subject's apartment and shot in one take by the artist. All actions had previously been associated with an internalized and invisible portrait of the subject developed during a series of closed one-on-one sessions. Each movement and gesture has a special personal reference charted by subject and artist in the work that preceded the actual filming. The result is a simple yet affective and enigmatically meaningful portrait.

- 3 **evidence of evidence II, 2010**
Vinyl print (of found oil painting originally sized 34.5 x 25 cm)
350 x 298 cm

This damaged oil painting, seemingly executed by a hobbyist, was found in a house sale in the bin marked "take for free". The act of re-appropriating what was literally deemed as garbage and reintroducing it into an art context, where it acquires meaning and value from the way it is framed touches several basic operations at the same time. On one level, the work questions the location of meaning itself; in this case it happens to be precisely located at the moment the replica becomes more valuable than the original. On the other hand, the content of the source painting, a clichéd still life of flowers in a pot, is a basic gesture or prototype of a certain widespread practice and mass perception of art itself amplified by the act of magnification. This layer is in itself a culture: a reflection of a set of values and socio-economic facts being transformed or translated into aesthetic facts. Blowing up this piece of evidence, if you will, also allows us to see the very historicism of the painting itself. As it is severely damaged, every crack and chipped bit of paint, every fold of the canvas are clearly visible and the passage of time is made literal in a way that, at least for the artist, holds emotional resonance.

- 4 **Photograph of statue owned by the artist since 1989
when he was 14 years old, 2010**
C-Print on aluminium
140 x 117.5 cm
- 5 **Photograph of statue owned by the artist since 1990
when he was 15 years old, 2010**
C-Print on aluminium
140 x 117.5 cm
- 6 **Photograph of statue owned by the artist since 1992
when he was 17 years old, 2010**
C-Print on aluminium
140 x 117.5 cm

The series of three framed and mounted photographs of statues owned by the artist since his teenage years, are partially about presenting the artifact (whether cheap replica or valuable unique object) as the formalization of a clearly discernable cultural utterance. A storage-battery of values, a language whose references, even if alien to the context they have been transferred to, are still general (indicating cultural affiliation and identities).

The object is involved in a network of implications, it becomes fuel for its possessor who thus gives it a new set of references that arise out of the new context it has been put in. Therefore In a sense the work is also about how these statues operated as signifiers of alienation and difference and what they could have meant to an urban teenager growing up in a modern capital city. The significance is enhanced by the passage of time with its implications of both a public and personal history indicated by the dates mentioned in the titles.

Presenting the statues as "bare images" (figures without shadow yet possessing dimensionality and inhabiting the space they are in) on a background that is not a solid color is the artist's attempt at finding a proper format for this double bind. The double framing (both white around the image and the wood of the actual frame) enhances the sense of these being produced and designed images of objects that become newly and fully activated whenever they are placed in different contexts.

- 7 **European Stage Episode, 2010**
Single-channel HD video, silent
9' 17''

Building a relationship between the artist and the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen and allowing that source material to become a trace, an artwork, within the exhibition was the initial motivating force behind this piece. The relationship with the institution was however always envisaged as being built by engaging with the actual people working there. **European Stage Episode** was developed with the Director Giovanni Carmine, Assistant Curator Maren Brauner and the Administrator at the time of production Hildegard Zäch. Each participant developed a simple yet precise lexicon of gestures that were based upon the individual's personal history through an intensive, private and personal process of one-on-one work with the artist. That lexicon was used as a language for communication in group improvisation, as well as a means of finding stories, jokes or comments from the public sphere that each individual identified as significant. All three participants were brought together in the end to develop a general choreography that was then performed and shot on the stage of the Kellerbühne (a local theater in the city) in front of an empty auditorium.

8 **evidence of evidence I, 2010**

26 intaglio prints (a selective retrospective based on images from the artist's work over the past 15 years) and vinyl text on the wall
42 x 29.7 cm (each)

(Hand-printed by Hady Mostafa Boraey)

An attempt at finding a formally precise manner in which to engage with the artist's diverse, sometimes convoluted and constantly shifting practice. The interest is in producing a statement in its most literal sense, i.e. the ability to reduce a complexity into a system based upon serialization, repetition and difference. Again resurrecting the historical is utilized as a possible tool and a new entry point.

9 **the dead dog speaks, 2010**

Animation with dialogue
4' 2''

(Animation executed by Zanad; Chief Designer: Tariq Ali, Chief Animator: Mohamed Kamal)

Three figures; based upon the artist's mother, Tokyo, the dead family dog of his childhood, and the face of Youssef Shaaban, an Egyptian film and TV actor who in the 80s and 90s epitomized Egyptian machismo (whether playing the roles of evil or good characters), are engaged in an absurd conversation that revolves around their relation to each other. Each sentence is uttered in a different voice, thus further enhancing the operation in which a character is emptied out and discourse flows automated, gaining and losing meaning in relation to the context it is put in.

The manner in which language in conversation tends to predicate itself on what precedes it is used as the motor of this dialogue; a marker of the shifting relationship between all the subjects and their power differentials. These sets of relationships invoke the basic patinas of political action through a series of linguistic strategies: from responsibility to identification, from assignment to negotiation.

The artist's interest in employing charged character forms, yet draining them of all personal characters - from the mother figure (one of the most formative and powerful characters) to an animal that speaks, and an instantly recognizable public figure stripped of all previous associations - help to, in different ways, highlight this most enigmatic moment.

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Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen
Davidstrasse 40
CH-9000 St. Gallen
Tel.: +41 (0)71 222 10 14
Fax: +41 (0)71 222 12 76
info@k9000.ch
www.k9000.ch