

American artist Matt Mullican is a unique figure in today's contemporary art scene. For over three decades, he has created a complex body of work concerned with systems of knowledge, meaning, language, and signification. Ranging from schematic diagrams and arcane symbols to explicit text-based drawings, installations, and self-created cosmologies, Mullican's work classifies orders, describes, maps, and represents an understanding of the world. His works can only be read in relation to each other; a relation that exists through language and signs, through repetition, rhyme and association.

The subject of Mullican's third solo show at ProjecteSD is the city. In an intricate extraordinary installation of more than 400 individual works, including never-before-shown drawings, sketches, all sort of prints, photocopies, material extracted from notebooks, rubbings, video, and computer generated works, most of them works on paper, the exhibition is a dazzling comprehensive presentation of Mullican's research on his idea of the "city".

The city, according to Mullican, "is an abstraction of ways of understanding things. It's like the interface of our experience that represents the ways that we experience things".

Strongly linked to Mullican's view of the notion of "city" and "architecture" is the idea of the chart and his vocabulary of signs, devised in an attempt to create models of understanding processes which determine orientation in reality and their structuring. The chart, according to the artist, represents a map of the world. Mullican's earliest charts where he showed architecture date back to the mid-seventies. There were also gouaches with pavilions from this time. But it is since the mid-eighties, that the artist sketches models and plans of imaginary cities. Mullican's cities are maps as well as layouts and encyclopaedical charts. They are abstract prototypes, attempts to appropriate systematically to the world, by using all sorts of methods and instruments, from simple diagrams to advanced computer animation.

Collected photographs of real cities, photographs xeroxed from books, documentation, preliminary sketches for public projects, the computer project city, maps, plans, buildings, train stations, older and new prints, notes, texts, blueprints of city charts, line drawings, plotter drawings, rubbings on canvas, the virtual environment, an old movie showing New York city in 1935 and countless city charts that repeat themselves throughout the show. An endless range of material, information, details, in all media which constitute and try to portrait the process, the work and the development of Mullican's complex body of work around the idea of his imaginary city. A city which cannot be defined as a place or a site, but as a way to perceive reality, a memory of an experience and a system constructed in accordance with Mullican's personal visual vocabulary and cosmological order.

The exhibition is in equal parts a visceral experience and intellectual exercise, and shows clearly Mullican's preoccupation with cataloguing and a compulsion to order the world that is so strong it seems to edge back into chaos. Through its complexity, Mullican's oeuvre contains a strange melancholy moment, which finally exposes man's impetus to classify the world as a utopia.

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