



Geist. is comprised of a series of four wall sculptures and three paintings.

The sculptures, which are arrayed in a row along the main axis of the gallery space, bear the same name as the title of the show (*Geist*) and articulate three principal elements in their construction: a crudely fashioned, 'primitive' looking head with a grinning expression, cast in resin and coated with white appliance paint; five polished, but originally rusty antique hand-wrought nails bought for a dollar a-piece at Flotsam and Jetsam on Ponsonby Road (the heads of which have crude faces, some 'happy', some 'sad' bored into them); and the new white gallery wall to which they are affixed.

The resin-cast painted heads have been fastened to the wall with a welded crossed-nail hammered through each head's left eye-hole, upon which two loose nails are balanced so that a cluster is formed that varies slightly across the series; a single nail positioned in alternating fashion to the right or left of each.

The three paintings that accompany these works are presented singly and as a pair on the walls on either side of the sculptures and have the same generic compositional format, orientation and scale, and a similarly subdued formal treatment.

(In)corporeal Schema Fig.36 is comprised of a readymade support in which I've set a screen-printed image of a diagram taken from a book called *Soft Toy Making*, published in England in the 1950's, that details the stitching pattern for the construction of a gollywog. I've subtracted this nominal designation from the image and let its numerical indexation and abbreviated characterisation as a 'figure' stand as the only textual markers of its identity. The result is an ambiguous and necessarily ambivalent 'abstract' image of a functionally 'depersonalised', schematically rendered figure, the provenance of which is repressed (erased) – this erasure being the condition for one's immediate, 'naïve' perception of the figure as generically, reductively, human.

Likewise, *Caput Mortuum (Grid)* uses a readymade support that frames a centrally placed image, in this case a print of the heads of twenty-four of the aforementioned antique nails –

twenty of which were used in the wall sculptures – made by bonding the rust covered heads of these nails to a support with strong epoxy glue, and then forcibly removing them once set, leaving the remains of their rusted patina embedded on the surface in a grid formation.

The title of this work could use a cursory explanation, through which the material and symbolic link of this work to the sculptures might be partially clarified. 'Caput Mortuum' means both 'dead head' and 'worthless remains' in Latin and was the name given to the residual substance left over from the chemical process of sublimation (an equivocal word when placed in an artistic context), among other meanings which I won't explore.

The 'Grid', of which Rosalind Krauss' interpretation serves as a useful reference in this instance, is emblematic of the equivocal, contradictory significance of Modernity in the visual arts, establishing its 'autonomy' through its formal mapping of the picture plane (the grid's materialist dimension) and also its spiritualist, symbolist obverse (embarrassing to a Greenbergian formalist) which sees the grid as a mystical 'staircase to the Universal', a sublime abstract symbol (because formal matrix) of the infinite. Krauss sees the Grid as ambivalently expressing this tension through its 'mythic' reconciliation of these two contrary senses, which in their ambivalence over-determine its core art-historical significance as a 'paradigm or model for the anti-narrative, the anti-developmental, the anti-historical'.

The third painting presented, *Zig Zag*, frames a screen-printed facsimile of a piece of A4 copy paper upon which the Arabic inscription of the word 'Halal', ('permissible' in English) has been printed, centrally positioned, and radially distorted in photoshop using the Zig Zag filter.

In all these works, both individually and in their differential articulation, I've attempted to explore some of the tensions between a certain formalist/procedural-aestheticism and a politicised semantic 'depth', the significance of which turns on the reflexive comprehension of the *meaning* of this formalism and the art-historical/theoretical codes

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it embeds. In this way I've tried to pose, through the structure of the works

themselves, the problem of approaching politics within the art-world, whilst gesturing through this immanent critique, to the dire problems of the wider social universe in which this 'autonomous, independent domain', haunted by its general social irrelevance and bourgeois character, is situated, and to which it symptomatically or consciously responds.

To grasp this theme in relation to the work on view is to be 'unhappy' in the Hegelian sense: as conscious of a contradiction which cannot be resolved from the (social-historical) standpoint of its present understanding. Put more concretely, perhaps in the end it is to become conscious of oneself as occupying the position of the *Bourgeois Intellectual*, with all the privilege, abnegation, and ambiguous freedom this entails...

Shiraz Sadikeen

Neo gracie
Level 2, Samoa House
283 Karangahape Road

Shiraz Sadikeen
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