

Meliksetian MB Briggs

GARAGE



Since 1998, Mustafa HULUSI has been making use of cultural space that is the street. Taking command of billboards and walls around East London, HULUSI pastes imagery of flowers and decaying fruit alongside graphic geometric patterns and bold typography in an attempt to engage the public. We wanted to talk to HULUSI

Meliksetian MB Briggs

and ask him why he has decided against work for his exhibition at The Cass Gallery.



Pomegranates
2014

Nature seems to feature a great deal in the imagery that you select for your fly posters – why is this?

There are memorable scenes in a couple films that struck me when I was younger – one is the scene in *Mad Max III Beyond the Thunderdome* when they are about to fight to the death in order to enjoy the pleasure of eating a naturally grown fresh fruit. They stare at it with jaw dropping awe, similar to today for example with faces gawping at a diamond-encrusted jewellery up close.

Meliksetian MB Briggs

Another is Andrei Tarkovsky's 'Ivan's Childhood'. The lead character plays a child soldier in the Second World War. It shows the horrific treatment of child soldiers during the war and in a moment of distraction, the lead character falls asleep then begins dreaming, recalling an idyllic scene picking apples with a female lover within a beautiful, Edenic landscape.

Both films present a dystopian context yet offer an escape to bliss through becoming closer to nature.

Why did you first decide to exhibit your art in the cultural space of the street/ what were you trying to achieve?

My final degree show at my undergraduate exhibition was based around appropriating advertising images of masculinity as I was interested in the contrast between how this was defined within Middle Eastern cultures and the difference in how it was defined in Western European imagery within a public display context.

Advertising and the medias exposure via the public sphere always holds the viewer at odds with their lived experience and it is this gap I'm trying to reconcile, either by critique via estrangement or confrontational iconoclasm. John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* is probably the most popular and concise at articulating this paradox.

Meliksetian MB Briggs

Do you feel that you have made yourself more accessible as an artist or do you think passers by just disregard the works as 'another piece of advertising', not necessarily understanding what you are trying to achieve?

My aim first and foremost is to capture the imagination and not to be ignored. Or else there's not much point in trying is there? Street media is a moving target, always redefining its terms so I try to use their language as a material. Publicly displayed visual imagery has a very direct (and indirect) social impact so if one is to produce art that references the social imagination, then one has to consider the long lineage of street posters as art; turn-of-the-century Anarchist agitation; Paris '68 détournement; 70's Punk musical culture to late 80's Rave flyers.

It is interesting to read that in your exhibition at The Cass you will not be using the space as a traditional gallery space, but displaying the works as you would on the street by pasting them over the walls. Why is it that you chose not to commodify these works?

Since the dematerialization of the art object from the late 1960s onwards as defined by the term 'Conceptual art', everything can be made to be a commodity. It may not be an obvious commodity but it is a thing that can be acquired and traded none the less. According to Peter

Meliksetian MB Briggs

Osbourne in his book titled *Anywhere or Nowhere at All*, every mode of art since Conceptualism should be termed Post-Conceptual.

In partnership with Jack Arts you are launching an annual 'Outdoor Poster Competition' enabling Cass students to be exposed/advertised across the city. For an emerging artist what do you feel is more important and would lead to the greatest success – for the public to engage with your work in the social and cultural space of the street or for work to be picked up by a prevalent gallery and seen by a smaller band of people?

I think the two are connected – ideally you'd be wise to build an audience for your work as focused as possible amongst your peers and the people you respect and inspire you. This is your constituency and this should be your cause – e.g. women's equality, gay rights, anti-racism, etc. For this one has to normally do something authentic in some sense to claim your artistic territory and participate in the relevant conversations.

Galleries, museums and curators on the other hand are parasites essentially, they contribute nothing creative nor original – all they do is leech on to something artistic and claim it by association. A commercial gallery will make a

Meliksetian MB Briggs

better effort to monetise the effort of the artist. Good ones try to retain the integrity more than the lesser ones.

I like connecting with the general public because one doesn't know exactly who that might be and historically, in political terms the biggest fear of any dominant power is mob rule. This can overturn any oligarchical elite hence the huge investments in entertainment and surveillance, as repressive tools etc. But we need to make it clear; irony as a predetermined grammar within the dismal 'street art' scene needs to be consigned to the scrap heap of history.

Do you feel that in today's society galleries are becoming slowly redundant? Do you think art is entering a different dimension - with social media channels does 'art' become more accessible but more obscure?

No, I think there still needs to be a quality control and this was once the role of the critic and art journal publication. This then shifted away down towards the collector/curator axis who act in more dynamic ways by making physical their critique mainly through exhibition staging. Today this is now further moved towards online social media however, there still needs to be the physical encounter with the work. One cannot deny that as a marketing tool, social media is hugely influential.

Meliksetian MB Briggs

If an internet-based artist gets a million likes on facebook/ twitter/ instagram, does that mean his/her work is of high quality? Of course not, because ultimately art is about quality not quantity however, where does the judgment come from in this new situation of mass democracy?

To see Flyposting head to **The Cass Gallery** 59-63 Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7PF between now and 30th October.



Cypriot Olive Tree
2011