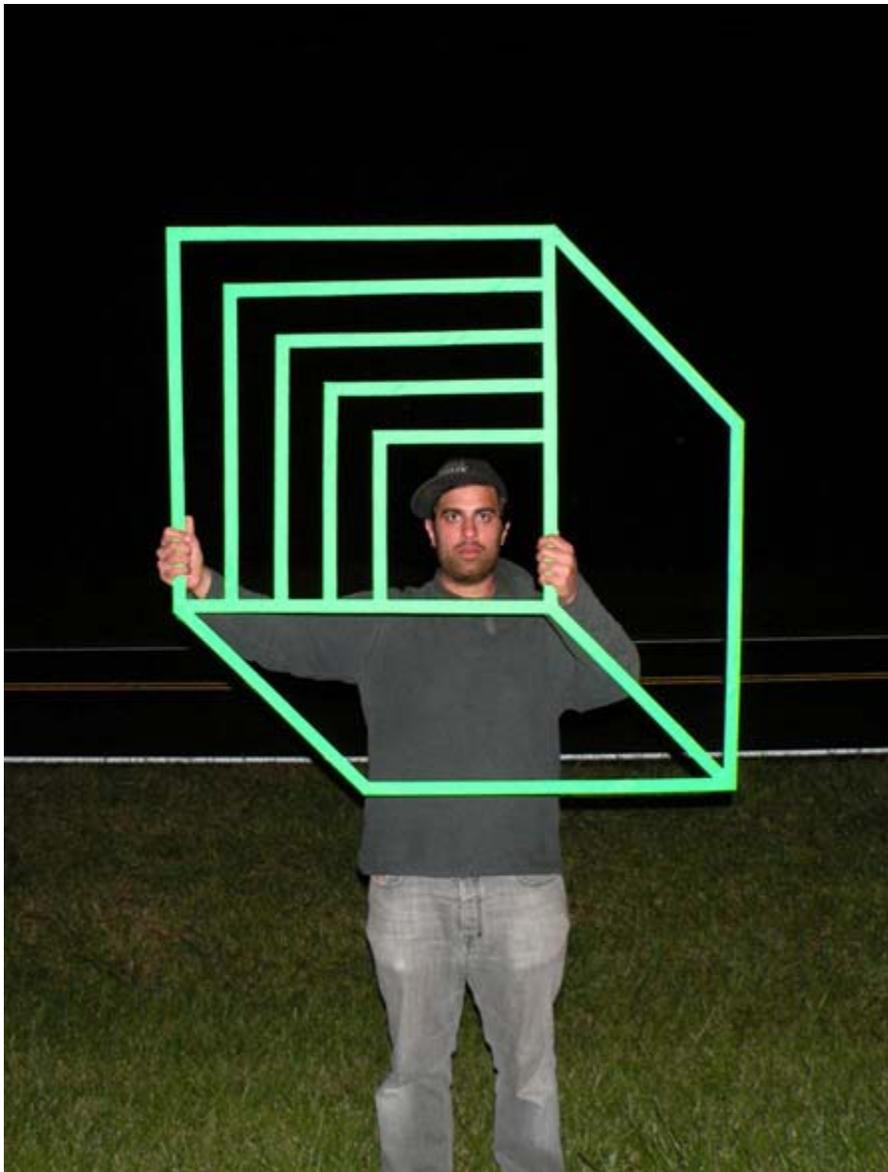


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Aakash Nihalani: The Way Things Are

Interview By Pj Smith

Whether it be his street works, constructed with naught but colourful tape and his eye for hidden shapes in public spaces, or his more traditional gallery pieces. The work of NY artist, Aakash Nihalani, invites us to re-explore our everyday surrounds and understand that the way things are isn't the way they need to be.



What was your first introduction to art? When did you first start applying your aesthetic to the street and how did this come about?

First introduction to art is a hard one. I guess I'd say when I started collecting rocks as a kid...

The tape work started in late 2007. I was part of a student exhibition at NYU where I displayed a set of silkscreen studies involving the cube. I used painter's tape to hang the prints on a wall and noticed that the shadow of a pedestal matched the shape in my prints. Instinctively, I outlined an isometric rectangle in the shadow. There were a few more trials inside before it became obvious that I had to take it outside.

You mention in your artist statement that "people need to understand that how it is isn't how it has to be." When did you first come to this realisation and how? and if you could change "how it is"... how would it be?

I think we're fed a lot of ideas of how life is supposed to play out from an early age...there's such a formula. And I don't think I came to that realization as much as I just didn't buy into it when I was younger. Recently it's manifested into public art, but I think that perspective was always there.

My "how would it be" is probably different than yours...I just hope everyone can find their own way to feel fascinated and alive.

What are the underlying differences between how you approach your street works and your studios works?

That question comes up a lot, but I'm not sure there's much of a difference other than the obvious. I'd say it's definitely nice to be able to put something outside and not worry about its permanence or value...but at the end of the day, I'm always trying to enjoy the creative process and make work I'm proud of sharing, whether it's in or outside of the studio.

Your public installations, although made simply using tape, tend to employ quite striking colours, fluores, etc. is this meant to be in contrast to the typically muted tones of the city landscape?

I'd say that's accurate. Same way you use a highlighter in a book, I'm underlining things outside that deserve a second look.

Tell us a bit about your collaborations with Poster Boy how were they realised what was the working relationship? Who approached who?

Working with Peanut Butter is pretty ying and yang. Our aesthetics are so different, our personas as "street artists" are almost diametrical, but I think there's a superb balance between form and content when we get together.

What do the NY authorities make of your work? Do they deem it the same as other un-solicited street art found in the city, or, due to its more 'concept art' driven nature do you find you're given more leniency?

I think the authorities are unsure of how to perceive the tape work and more often than not, out of ignorance, group it with vandalism. I think for now it's going to take a lot more eyes opened on an individual basis to get to where we "should be"...introduce yourself with a handshake the next time a cop stops you.

Your 'tape' work seems as though it would translate into sculpture or other 3D manifestations quite easily. Is this something you have thought about exploring?

I have a show opening this Thursday, January 21st, at [Carmichael Gallery](#) in Los Angeles with a brand new body of work, exploring that exact concept.

What projects do you have coming up that our readers should know about?

Series 4 of *Magkinetic Drawings* is coming out this spring... In general you can keep up with the tape work here on [flickr](#) and here, at [aakashnihalani.com](#).

As Aakash mentions above, simply check up on his [flickr](#) and personal website, [aakashnihalani.com](#), to stay up with his latest works, projects and exhibitions.

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