

Guillaume Paris

Miracle, Mystery and Authority

March 8 – April 25, 2008

"Modern politics is a chapter in the history of religions"

John Gray

The Nelson-Freeman Gallery is pleased to present the second personal exhibition of Guillaume Paris. Guillaume Paris was born in 1966 and grew up in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Europe. He studied in the United States at the Cooper Union, where he majored first in engineering and then in art. The anthropological perspective from which he views society and culture is closely linked to his biography.

His H.U.M.A.N.W.O.R.L.D. project – exhibited at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2003 – has developed critical ideas about multiculturalism and globalization since the beginning of the 1990s. The « Mixed Blessings » exhibition at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Strasbourg in 2002 highlighted the takeover of the religious sphere by the world of commerce. Reflecting current events, « Priceless », exhibited at the Nelson Gallery in 2003, completes the picture by adding the takeover of the religious sphere by politics, just as « Devotion », an exhibition held in Lyon in 2004, and more recently « Paved With Good Intentions » in London in 2007. His work has recently been exhibited at ZKM (Karlsruhe) and the Centraal Museum (Utrecht), and will also be exhibited at the Galerie de Multiples in Paris from March 22 to April 25, 2008. Guillaume Paris has taught at the School of Fine Arts of Paris since 2001.

The title of the exhibition, « Miracle, Mystery and Authority », seems to summarize the artist's set of thematic concerns. All his work constitutes a discursive investigation of the ideals of purity and transcendence, which are viewed with mistrust in their most varied manifestations : from the political to the religious, including marketing and advertising. All of Guillaume Paris' work thus sketches an insidious criticism, which he conveys through an indirect and composite strategy of meanings focusing on the heterogeneity of the signifiers.

For this new exhibition, presented on the second floor of the Gallery, Guillaume Paris pays special attention to the links between « power » and « the sacred ». He calls upon a whole multitude of referents from our everyday lives, from mass culture and dominant ideologies, and his stratagems lead us to the other side of the mirror into a transfigured world where familiar references send back a disturbing echo.

The computer program « Speakingintongues » reproduces randomly the code name of military operations in Irak, and the projection « Ghost (Holy) », Veronica's Veil with no images, contains a twofold reference to painting and cinema. This ghostlike canvas screen is at the interface between the motif and the medium.

The exhibition « Miracle, Mystery and Authority » plunges us into a shadowy realm favorable to meditation as well as magic, and brings together religious, political, artistic and commercial referents.

"We have corrected Your work and we have based it on miracles, mystery and authority"

The Great Inquisitor speaking to Jesus, in The Brothers Karamazov – Dostoyevsky

"So is it true that humanity demands and will always demand miracles, mystery, and authority?"

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D.H. Lawrence (in response to Dostoyevsky)