

Matt Mullican

“Love, Work, Truth and Beauty”

September 10 – October 22, 2005

Matt Mullican, American born, lives and works in New York. His works were exhibited at the Porto Serralves Museum in 2000 under the title *More Details from an Imaginary Universe*. The show was thereafter presented at the Barcelona Antoni Tàpies Foundation and the Oxford Museum of Modern Art. More recently, his works were to be seen at the FRAC de Picardie in Amiens and the Cologne Ludwig Museum, in the context of an exhibition entitled *Learning from that Person's Work*. From the seventies onward, Mullican has worked on symbolic representations formalized in a language based on both international signposting and symbols of his own invention. Through experiments carried out under hypnosis, he has endeavored to achieve a new definition of “reality”.

For his second exhibition at the Nelson Gallery, Matt Mullican has suggested a two-step itinerary. Entering the first floor, the viewer passing the front door is immediately confronted with two tables facing each other. In the somewhat experimental space thus created, two antithetic propositions face and complete each other. On one hand, the artist deals with his fundamental preoccupations, i.e. life and death (a video presents the animated film of his cosmology). On the other hand, four plates (two of plaster, two of tin) feature two visions of the Earth, one fictional, the other real. On the wall a cosmology made up of 48 drawing presents the world; each colors is associated with a specific register: green is associated with “Nature”, red with “Subjectivity”, yellow with “Arts and Sciences”, blue with “Daily life”, black for “Signs” and ultimately white with “Language”. This color code appears in a wide variety of works, the best example of which is the largest cosmology on canvas, hanging on the back wall of the Gallery. This work, swarming with a multitude of decipherable signs, was painted in the eighties. It shows namely the Middle Ages division of the world, with Paradise and Hell. A film (realized in Geneva), presented on a plasma screen, features the artist's performance while under hypnosis. In this kind of experiments, the artist gives free will to his subconscious feelings and emotions, revealing thereby the existence of another “self” or “persona”.

On the second floor, the artist presents works he has precisely realized under the influence of this other “persona”, a “persona” fond of Sinatra, of the ethics of work and love, as confirmed by the large panels. The subconscious reveals this other “self” and his own (generally suppressed) values. One may admit that experiences stored in one's subconscious as the years go by, come back to light in this manner. Matt Mullican asks the question: what is reality? In the *Stick Figures* series, for instance — drawings achieved in the seventies — a character carried out by his emotions seem to take life in front of us: we all experience the same “live” representation although it has no real existence. The fictitious reality is thus definitely real in our mind only. The video (entitled *Closet*) accompanying the untitled drawing series become a metaphor of the intellect. In the real world, the artist films the dark corners of a closet, the interior of a pocket or of a hat. In a like manner, the “Other” who lives in him is on the quest of elements hidden in the far recesses of his subconscious.

Words and signs follow one another, get superimposed or intertwined, managing to lead us into a world between reality and fiction. Pictograms, cartography, maps, calligraphies, images borrowed from cartoons are all incentives for a re-interpretation of the world and what is at stake in it. For Matt Mullican hypnosis is a way to incite us to peruse the question of the essence of being, which in turn leads to peruse the notions of reality and realities