

Dreamworld and Catastrophe

Some of us has an unquenchable thirst for fantastic realism, thinking the most sensitive readings of today can be traced from disasters, wars and victories taking place in the breach of time and space created within those narratives. Emre Hüner's complex, sensitive and dexterous work arrests the time's flow in the form of a speculating narrative's disrupted episodes. A recently emerging artist from Turkish contemporary art scene, Hüner has attracted the attention of many by his two-dimensional dystopic, post-Virilio visions of Panoptikon (2005), shown in 10th International Istanbul Biennial and Manifesta 7 besides some other international art events. Hüner works intimately with a keyword oriented archive of second hand photos, books, films and various image materials acquired through internet. History, modernism, naturalism, colonialism, technical inventions are some of his keywords. This close relationship becomes clearer with the artist book Bent 003 (2007). The tempera-on-paper drawings of curious objects, nature parts and architectural components are re-assembled as (un)familiar and ambivalent scenes suggesting a future embedded in parallel universes; reminding the viewer of diverse times, spaces and memories about a colonialist pioneer society in their no-time limbo. Hüner's wunderkammer of casual archaeology continues to grow, images and films related with mass-utopia architecture have the majority of recent add-ups. Through this rich lexicon the artist hints us his "dreamworld" built upon the betrayal of a history that shattered "the dreams of modernity--of social utopia, historical progress, and material plenty for all" in Susan Buck-Morss' words arguing the fall of mass-utopias in east and west. The Benjaminian concept of the "dreamworld" refers to a collective mental state inextricably linked to the reenchantment of the world. Hüner's overly aestheticized re-assembled universe offers us a mental state speculating about such a re-enchanted afterlife; after the catastrophe caused by the betrayal, i.e the post-industrial, the postcapital. Shot after Panoptikon mostly in and around Istanbul as a personal response to German sociologist Ulrich Beck's Risk Society, Boumont (2006) brings a no-time catastrophe struck future, obviously hit by the mass cycles of production and consumption. In his first video, Hüner edits abstracted and detached city-views to construct this sci-fi looking wasteland place in complete melancholy. The protagonist -like the male prisoner in La Jetee (1962) sent to the past and the future to summon them for the present- arrives from an unknown departure point and traces his past by the help of some old photos. With every step he takes, Hüner seems to work on one major oeuvre. From the miniature based Foucauldian architecture of Panoptikon, he arrives to Total Realm (2008), especially produced for city-screens, which reveals his attraction to the structures of fallen mass-utopias, of fascism and socialism, and to the images of totalitarianism. The retro-futuristic feeling reminds us the Kafkaesque dystopic state created by Terry Gilliam in Brazil (1985). With this work, it is more clearly felt that the outcomes of Hüner's detailed artistic process function as viewer's interface to enter his sophisticated and puzzling dreamworld with its art-historical, filmic, literary and philosophical reference system. During one of our conversations the artist said Istanbul is a city where he feels himself more like a foreigner. For me, this statement refers to his multi-layered vision of men and modernism through which he is already interpreting the city's experience on a particular aesthetic level. Hüner brought a fresh breathe for the contemporary art scene in Istanbul. It seems his dreamworld, murmuring different episodes, will keep re-enchancing us. However, some parts of his wunderkammer will remain a mystery.

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