

INTERVIEW
with
MUSTAFA HULUSI



[EUGEN BOLSHAKOV] What significance for an artist, in contemporary world, does nationality, place of life and birth play or, in other words, what significance has the gap between them?

[MUSTAFA HULUSI] Making art is a cultural act and all the above considerations are the ingredients of culture. Who you are and where you are from dictates what culture you come from (or belong to) therefore what forms your ideas take.

When we fly over Europe, it strikes that there is so much of cultivated and cultured land with small islands of woods, which resemble parks, so small in area that you get an impression that you can walk through them in a couple of hours at most. Will we ever be able to reconcile with the green only on

either our houses' roofs or in specially designated areas, as it has often been described in dystopias; or have we already come in terms with all this?

It is amazing to consider that Europe was once entirely covered in a deep, ancient forest and within a few hundred years it became nearly totally destroyed. It says a lot about what the West considers 'development' or 'progress'. I was recently in Devon on the moors and was told how it was



there was an old forest that covered the whole area. It was all cut down to build the sailing ships that traveled the trade routes to create the British Empire.

[E.B.] Your art goes against the usual conceptions of our environments, allows to see the absurdity of many common things and actions suggesting to think what is acquired for a limited time only and what is lost forever, thus it gets rather vivid political and social implications. What in social domain attracts most of your attention?

[M. H.] I am interested in how nature can only now be perceived in terms of an estranged relationship to it. Meticulous images on screen savers of flowers or idyllic tropical beaches somehow become our only contact with the idea of nature. The same conceptual leap was made with the invention of

the railways; they were like time travel to those people who first rode them. Today, information technology does a superb job of reprogramming our minds to understand complex abstractions but to be blind to more human understandings.

[E.B.] Mustafa, could you, please, tell how you come to the idea to combine in your art hypnotic black and white abstractions with realistic images of ripe fruit and blossoming plants?

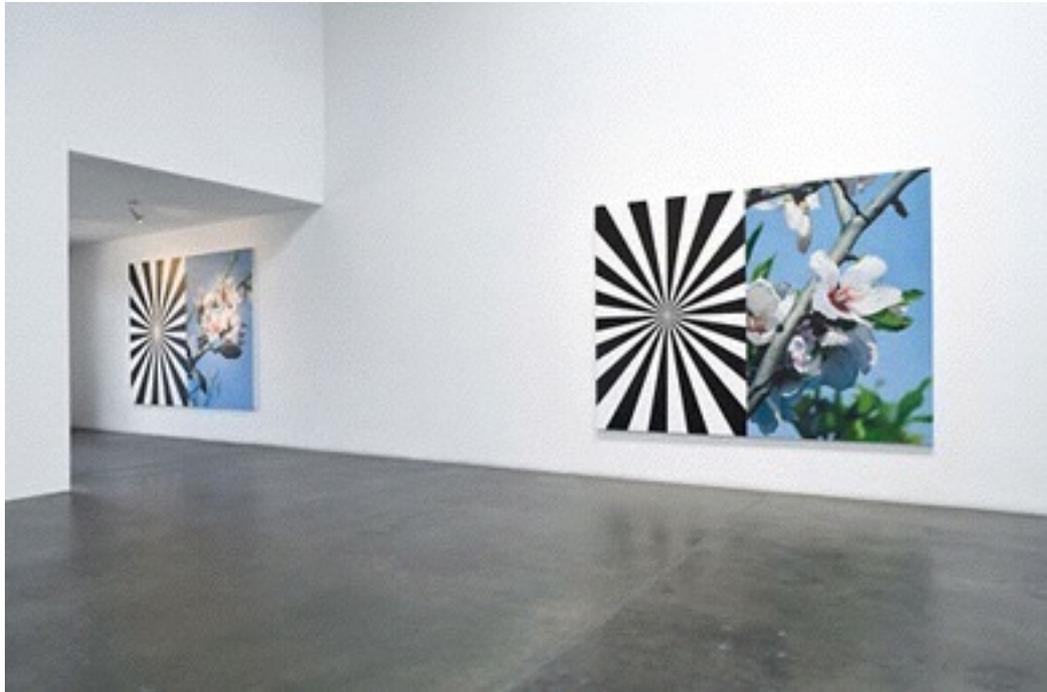
[M. H.] Five years ago I curated an exhibition in London called Expander where I observed two trends in art making practice at that time; abstract and figurative. Both were, strangely, talking about the same urban experience of alienation however used two different languages to articulate this.



[E.B.] Do you feel in aesthetic opposition to the artistic mainstream?

[M. H.] I don't believe there's one specific mainstream, but many smaller discussions. I see there being many different strands however, the most powerful of these at the moment comes from the institutions, and they have very specific taste (e.g. intellectual, visually austere, socially considerate etc) – better known as 'Relational Aesthetics'. I think it is too conservative however, institutions are conservative in nature so they way it ticks all those boxes in disconcerting for me.

[E.B.] What do you think about such genre in contemporary art as Altermodern? You are named as one of the bright representatives of the trend, conceptually founded by Nicolas Bourriaud.



[M. H.] I was not included in that show, nor was I mentioned in any publications so I don't think I am part of that movement – if that is it exists.

[E.B.] Your artistic practices vary a lot – you work with urban environments and, for example, create street posters. What features of megalopolises, such as London, have special significance for you?

[M. H.] I like the old London, dusty old buildings, with grime still left over from the fifties – old cafes, old warehouses, strange derelict buildings. Whatever's left of it anyway. I used to consistently dream of the abandoned space on York Way, behind Kings Cross station.

[E.B.] Your work and biography are, to a certain degree, a conflict of opposites. What are, in your opinion, the main differences between the east and the west, urban spaces and nature, abstraction and figurative art; what are their points of reconciliation?

[M. H.] The point of reconciliation is 'to hybridize'. My answer is to amalgamate the best of both. Looking with two sets of eyes, thinking with two sets of minds but to speak using one language.



[E.B.] Must a contemporary artist be 'sociological'?

[M. H.] I think it is inevitable. How can one not be sociological? You are a product of your environment and speak of it, without consciously.

[E.B.] What, in your view, is the difference between creativity and art?

[M. H.] I think creativity can be anything however art has to make itself manifest (and be contained) within an object and context – whereas creativity is simply a process.

[E.B.] Who among contemporary artist is most interesting for you?

[M. H.] Mark Lecky, Toby Ziegler, Jamie Shovlin are the first names that come to mind.

It is easy to see the ways in which contemporary art depends on digital technologies and new media. To which extent can contemporary art in general and your art in particular be interpreted as free from digital design; it is at all important for you?

Technically, my work could have been made 100 years ago. There is nothing 'digital' about my work however, without digital technology, my work would not exist; my digital camera and inkjet printer, vinyl cutting machines, are used to produce the work and I feel this is apparent in the work. There is paradox, which is interesting.



[E.B.] How would you describe the mood of the world of Mustafa Hulusi?

[M. H.] Bleak and optimistic.

[E.B.] And that question *sine qua* we cannot, what project are you working on right now?

[M. H.] Marble statues of ruined Roman Goddess's for a two person show in a artist run warehouse show in September titled – THE WORSHIPPERS.

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