

David Zink Yi -- *HORROR VACUI*

January 29 - March 19, 2011

Midway Contemporary Art is pleased to present a new exhibition, *Horror Vacui*, featuring a selection of recent work by the Berlin-based David Zink Yi. Over the past decade, the artist has been using natural forms, ritual, music and dance to explore the complexity of identity and natural motifs as constructed within cultural traditions. For this exhibition at Midway, the artist presents a video installation, a large ceramic sculpture modeled after a dead giant squid, and a series of color photographs.

The artist has transformed Midway's back gallery into *Horror Vacui*, a two channel video installation which juxtaposes footage of De Adentro y Afuera (the artist's Cuban band) rehearsing with the sounds and images of groups performing the Cajon, Tambor Batá and Wiro Afro-Cuban rituals that originated in the Palo Monte and Yoruba religions. Filmed in Havana in 2006, this documentary video is the culmination of a five year collaborative relationship between the artist and the band, which he co-founded. Dance, song, and the polyrhythms of the Afro-Cuban music tradition have played a significant role in Zink Yi's practice over the past decade. He is particularly interested in the way the body both produces and experiences music and dance. In *Horror Vacui*, we see the performers improvising their way through several songs, three of which were written with the artist. Scenes of rituals are woven through the band rehearsal, creating an "extended picture".

Zink Yi's meticulously edited documentary lacks a traditional narrative structure. Instead, many of its short vignettes begin with fragmented close-up shots of individuals performing various parts of the songs and rituals. Backs of heads, feet, hands beating out rhythms, and mouths enunciating lyrics coalesce to create layered temporal and spatial structures, filling the empty void with detail (as the title implies). The sense of fragmentation becomes more complex as the projected images play across the different surfaces of the gallery's architecture, hindering our ability to grasp the totality of either the rehearsal or the rituals. Instead we are able to step at any moment into a prolonged mediation on the abstract way a moment is constructed through social relations and bodily expression.

Like the performers in *Horror Vacui*, the photographs and sculpture that comprise the rest of the exhibition rely on a play between fullness and emptiness; here, that dialectic emerges from a chromatic blackness. In three large color photographs, darkness envelops the branches of a cedar tree. From each angle, Zink Yi's positioning of the camera eliminates any reference points (the tree trunk, its surroundings) that would ground our relationship to the object. By limiting our apprehension of the whole, we are left to focus instead on elements of color and blurry forms, creating uncanny images that push towards abstraction. The subtle, dull light that seems to emanate from within the photographs creates a psychological effect reminiscent of that described by Jun'ichirō Tanizaki in his 1933 essay *In Praise of Shadows*. In this meditation on western and eastern aesthetics, he writes, "we find beauty not in the thing itself but in the patterns of shadows, the light and the darkness, that one thing against another creates."

In the middle of the same gallery, a large sculptural form is left unlit on floor, resonating as wholly foreign. Over the past few years, Zink Yi has worked within the ceramic tradition to create a series of sculptures modeled on *Architeuthis*, the deep-sea-dwelling giant squid, an elusive creature prominent

in myth and legend. Until only a few years ago, the giant squid had never been encountered alive; human experience of this life form was limited to corpses we discovered washed up on beaches. In his largest ceramic sculpture to date, Zink Yi uses transformative power of heat and pressure to create a handcrafted creature that we understand only through knowledge of its surface –a body without depth or animus. Lead and copper glazes play off of each other to create variation within its metallic surface. The 16' deflated form rests in a blackened pool of liquid, provoking the viewer into a powerful encounter with the grotesque.

David Zink Yi (b. 1973, Lima, Peru) has had solo exhibitions with MAK, Vienna; Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St. Gallen; Kunsthalle Düsseldorf; Johann König Gallery, Berlin; Galleria Francosoffiantino Artecontemporanea, Turin; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; FRAC Champagne-Ardennes, Reims; Kunstraum Innsbruck; Künstlerhaus, Bremen; and Hauser and Wirth, Zürich. He has exhibited in numerous group exhibitions, including: Gladstone Gallery, New York; Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig; Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin; Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Malmö Konthall, Malmö and Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin. He studied at Berufsfachschule, Munich; Kunst Akademie, Munich; and the Universität der Künste, Berlin. He lives and works in Berlin.

Works courtesy of Johann König Gallery and Hauser and Wirth.

HORROR VACUI

Camera: Frank Peter Lehmann

Sound: Matthias Millhoff

Musicians: Michel Alonso Castro, Alberto Cuadra Molina, Yuliesky González Guerra, Wiljoph Mounkassa Williams, Adonis Panter Calderón, Jari Rojas Ramirez, Yusleidi Sosa Blen, Alexei Garcia, Leonardo Varela Poey, José Luís Quintana, Luisito, Franky Valentty Betancourt Serrano, Wicho, Suazo, Gerardo, Padrino, Yoaimis Campis Devergel, Odalys, Michel, Perengó, Felix, and Moro