



MATT MULLICAN

“WHAT DO THEY FEEL?”

Opening 21 SEPTEMBER 10 pm

21 SEPTEMBER - 16 NOVEMBER 2018

Introducing a new series of large-scale paintings, Matt Mullican’s exhibition *What Do They Feel?* dives into the molecular universe of the bodily interstices of *That Person*, namely *Glen*, the alter ego the artist has been developing since he first experimented with hypnosis in 1973. Without gender, age, or race, *That Person* has become the anonymous vehicle through which Mullican explores an expressive parallel dimension, drawn towards a cathartic gestuality. Nevertheless, this dimension has been carefully systematized and organized, revealing after a 45-year long career, a syntactic, pictorial and conceptual multiverse that configures the cosmological core of the artist’s prolific oeuvre, which spans through the fields of performance, sculpture, painting and installation.

“All I see are light patterns,” the artist said in 1972 as he dissects the light spectrum into a code: green represents the natural elements; blue, the world; yellow, culture; black and white, language; red, the mind. Two of the five levels of this cosmological order can be identified in the series of paintings *Untitled (Signs in the Elements of That Body)* (2018), representing anatomical close-ups of quasi-industrial cellular landscapes, resembling the branched complexity of an abstract urban fabric. In these paintings, which seem loosely inspired on laboratory samples, we are submerged in the psychedelic and zigzagging molecular gears of entangled tissues, lost somewhere between metabolic diagrams and bionic structures. In *What My Eyes See* (2018) we can find refractions of *That Person*’s body with the same color code, this time deconstructed through a group painted stones displayed on a wooden bed frame.

Deploying graphic reduction strategies, the formal territory of Mullican’s artistic practice proposes an interpretative space that juxtaposes Pop, Brut, Conceptual and Minimalist languages. These strategies suggest an interval between a highly codified semiotic space, where pictograms and signs create encyclopaedical alphabets, and an expressive dexterity inspired by automatic writing. Techniques like frottage – identified by the artist as the first image reproduction medium, a process through which symbolic information is translated via the transference of energy – are central to his oeuvre and here presented for the first time, on the photographic prints on canvas that make up the series *Untitled (Yellow Monster 24)* (2018).

This technique is also applied in the series *Untitled (Dead Man Nr.1-4)* (2018), giving origin to the American Civil War (1861-65) inspired abstract drawing series. Composed by stylized photographic images reduced to lines with the aid of digital means, this series of four paintings develops from a strategy of formal synthesis that fuses body and landscape into a single abstract plane. Challenging the limits of objectivity, Mullican dissects the spatial components of what is being represented, refining its content and pointing towards art's role as an interface that we can use to recode the real. The reduction of pictorial components to lines invites us to meditate upon the liminal condition of death and to participate in the ethical debate surfaced by its mass-media representation. Within this debate he explores how our excessive exposure to war imagery and its viral replication could eventually lead us into a general state of sensorial immunity; and excessive mediaticity. *Untitled (Dead Man Nr.1-4)* is reminiscent of the celebrated series *Dolls Head Posters* and of the work *Dead Man and Doll* (1973) and includes captions in the font created by the artist himself. We can find this same font in the series *That Person Lives* (2018), describing the everyday actions of *That Person* – this is, *Glen*, Mullican's intimate passenger – who is introduced to us through the rhythmic repetition of a mundane anonymity.

Margarida Mendes

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Matt Mullican was born in Santa Monica, California, and lives and works between Berlin and New York. His first major retrospective, *The Feeling of Things*, is currently showing at Hangar Bicocca, Milano." He graduated from the California Institute of the Art, Valencia, in 1974. Since that moment, he has participated in major exhibitions such as the 28th São Paulo Biennial; dOCUMENTA VII, IX, and X, Kassel; "Organizing the World", Haus der Kunst, Munich; "12 by 2", Institut d'Art Contemporain, Villeurbanne; STUK Kunstencentrum, Leuven; "Pictures Generation: 1974-1984", Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; "Matt Mullican: A Drawing Translates the Way of Thinking", The Drawing Center, NY.