

**ILEANA
TOUNTA**

CONTEMPORARY
ART CENTER

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UP AGAINST THE WALL

Curated by: Rita de Alencar Pinto

15/10/09 – 14/11/09

***UP AGAINST THE WALL*, a group show curated by Rita de Alencar Pinto, is scheduled to open on Thursday, 15th October, at 19:30, at the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center. The show will run until 14th November 2009.**

Participating artists: Maya Attoun, Adam Cvijanovic, Marta Dell'Angelo, Francesco Simeti, Luca Trevisani, Alterazioni Video and Jonathan Yeo.

If the beginning and end point of life is clearly defined by birth and death, then it is the middle, the process, the storyline, that we hope to trace throughout this exhibition. The interconnectivity of our mind and our body, physically and spiritually, is a central theme here. Seven internationally based artists have been invited to engage this theme both through the transposition of their work into wallpaper and in the creation of sculptural objects that will stand against the imagery on the walls and amplify the tactility of the medium and the viewer's experience. Our intent is to create a context in which a duality exists between how we perceive and how we experience the work, and our hope is that that duality will be productive of a moment of pause, or reflection, through which one is able to absorb the underlying messages abstracted by the decorative nature and scale of the wallpaper.

Maya Attoun and **Marta dell'Angello** work with the brain and the body in a biological and metaphysical context. Attoun mutates images derived from the central nervous system and poetically re-interprets them with distinct narratives. Her work organically weaves together themes of self-reflection and corporeality. By removing the body from its natural mapping system and erasing the imagined anatomical borders between human beings on the one hand and nature and space on the other, Attoun creates an alternative space for the representation of the human body.

Marta dell'Angello is inspired by the physiological mechanisms that guide our movements and actions. Through on-going research on the female body, she has isolated various postures that give shape to specific states of mind. Her early experience as a life model informs this research, as she notes: "while

others are looking intensely at your body, it feels like it doesn't belong to you. You focus on the posture." Empathy plays a significant role in assigning associative feelings to these postures, as if they were a means of conversing with the viewer.

The acutely incendiary work of **Alterazioni Video** is also central to this kind of conversation. *Violent Attitudes* (2009) delves into the collective's shared or "hive" mind by documenting its Skype conversations over the course of years of working together while the members were widely distributed around the world. The work traces the collective's process, its arguments and its compromises. "Violent Attitudes, is the sink where every thing goes; in the storage room where noises and lyrics sit together and on the back stage of their violent, desperate waste of energy." To function as a working collective and maintain one voice is the irony within *Violent Attitude*. Here the artists reveal themselves as individuals with opinions and vibrant personalities, whereas in other work, the collective is consistent in its message—of pushing cultural boundaries and evoking the absurdity of politics and social agendas—and maintains a clear persona.

Jonathan Yeo's work reveals the corporeality of human sexuality. In a nod to Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Yeo re-imagines the genre of portraiture by synthesizing pornographic images taken from low-fi, cheaply printed magazines produced in Germany and Asia. These images are not intended for shock value but instead are used as a palette, as if painting the figures and drawing on skin-toned paper, which makes the bodies appear almost sculptural, like the paintings of Lucian Freud or Jenny Saville. The use of benign classical subjects and postures neutralizes the pornographic images and allows for a revised interpretation of the imagery.

All theoretical writing on the sublime is deeply rooted in the experience of nature in its raw, awe-inspiring state. It is in the awe of nature that philosophers such as Kant and Burke believe that spirituality, or God, can be experienced. **Adam Cvijanovic's** 75-foot murals depicting breathtaking sun-bleached landscapes, made monolithic to the viewer, are equally invested in the sublime. The artist's use of scale, through depictions of waterfalls and glaciers, as well as multiple vanishing points and extremes in perspective, engulfs the viewer and creates a sense of heightened spatial awareness. The work recalls a sense of the transcendental pantheism that the German Romanticist, Caspar David Friedrich, alluded to in works such as *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818). Drawing on a tradition of landscape and mural painting where scale is used to incite the magnanimity of nature, Cvijanovic offers an additional resonance in chaos. Just as Burke referred to Astonishment as a suspended degree of horror, Cvijanovic paints natural disasters, meant to have metaphoric and symbolic parallels, where homes are suspended in tornado-like explosions. Cvijanovic, who is completely self-taught, uses a variety of acrylic and latex household paints on Tyvek (the DuPont material used in FedEx envelopes). By adhering the painted paper directly to the wall, his vast images become transportable frescoes, or

giant architectural interventions.

Francesco Simeti's work operates under the assumption that the relationship between the spectator and the artwork is something that the artist can only hypothesize. Central to his practice, derived from a rich archive of imagery, is the role of juxtaposed images and patterns and their ability to create subtle tensions. Here is where the viewer takes on the role of witness and the artist as subtle instigator. Humanity is central to the discourse and hence reverberates back to the broader theme of life and experience throughout the wallpapers and sculptures in this exhibition.

All aspects of life influence **Luca Trevisani**; his childhood and experiences, his research and findings, are all part of a reinterpretation and transmutation that the artist deftly envisages in sculptures, videos, and installations. Trevisani's keen sense of materials allows for an organic interpretation of the works and subsequent hypotheses derived from his sources reveal curious and oftentimes exquisite findings.

The seven artists chosen to participate in this exhibition are at pivotal moments in their careers. They are all moving steadfast in their practice and have received substantial recognition. At this crossroad we can see an exciting opportunity for them to come together and make work inspired by the themes of life and the human body.