Beat: Arts

BASIM MAGDY - Egyptian Artist at JEU DE PAUME Museum in PARIS

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USPA NEWS - Some of Basim MAGDY's films could be described as surrealistic visual essays that capture the absorbing space between hollow desires and delusions. They are humorous reflections of scepticism towards utopian states, suspicion of scientific facts and the expectations of dystoipan outcomes...

Some of Basim MAGDY's films could be described as surrealistic visual essays that capture the absorbing space between hollow desires and delusions. They are humorous reflections of scepticism towards utopian states, suspicion of scientific facts and the expectations of dystoipan outcomes. The narratives in his films are usually situated at the moment just before the failure of an idealized future becomes apparent. MAGDY adopts the position of an outsider-spectator, and from this vantage point he is interested in the human impulse of communal myth-making.

The storylines in his works expose the aspirations and ideologies that fuel actions geared towards constructing a group's uniqueness, either by exaggerating a foundational tale or, inversely, by creating the idea of a glorious future. This dynamic, which has a tendency to embellish fact with bits of fiction, can serve in the same way as nation state histories or family saggas to emphasise a particularity that justifies exceptions in the present.

In MAGDY's accounts, the outcome of working towards a loftier goal is almost always met with disappointment once the grand schemes are tested by reality and people are forced to accept the mundane everyday without anything more. In No 'Shooting Stars' MADGY covers a territory that has no founding legend, namely the vast oceanic space. Water space is present in most religious creation narratives and scientifically is even considered to be the source of life itself.

Yet once water's role of life-giver is played out, land-based civilizations attach little or no importance to the oceans. Oceanic territory lays dormant at the margins of our awarness and does not enter into history books since no group has an interest in glorifying it as a home base. On the contrary, psychologically open seas are caught in a land-water dichotomy that makes them the only place of designation for vagabonds and prisoners, thus figuring as a negative counter image for the order that reigns on the land.

MAGDY's new work is built around the personal narrative of someone whose identity is vested in the ocean, an entity that is willing to unveil the secrets of an underwater world. As the film progresses, images merge and dream-like scenes drift in dissonance with a narration. Some imagery shows what happens underwater, although most images are made up of spaces that are all affected by the ocean's mystery but bring no enlightenment. The narrator's tale meanders like a poem, and intensifies existing feeling rather than offering an explanation that is anticipated, running the story through many loops of imagination.

The ocean's surface is relatively known - it has been crossed by numerous explorers and cargo ships for many centuries - but the depths under the surface have never been mapped out. According to psychoanalyst Carl Jung, the ocean symbolises our unconscious, the bigger part of our brain that we do not control. The voice of the narrator - could it be a sea monster, a mermaid or an old sea turtle - has an enticing familiarity, but the image that is built of the narrator slips away as soon as it takes shape, reflecting the logic of the unstable ground of water space.

The title 'No Shooting Stars' refers to the line in the film 'Down heer there are no shooting stars, no desire to make your wishes come true'. In his earlier work, MAGDY addressed a disenchantment with reality when expectations are not met, but in 'No Shooting Stars' he shows a respect for the unknown. Adopting a perspective of awe, MAGDY recognises the limits of our knowledge & alludes to a type of knowledge that we do not have and might never have. In turn, he abandons the quest to capture the essence of the water territories, and the film becomes a meditation on the glimpses of its mystery.

Source : Heidi BALLET - Curator of Exhibition

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