



Theo Michael

Smoke from the Edge of the Known

8 October - 7 November 2009

AMP is pleased to announce Smoke from the Edge of the Known, the first solo presentation of Greek artist Theo Michael.

By Dani Admiss*

Theo Michael operates within the layers of history, popular culture and myth making. He weaves together ancient relics, artifacts, popular leitmotifs, and signs of the ancient and modern world to present the viewer with a newly assembled depository of archives and documents. He does this whilst actively resisting the idea of a written and visual history as a fixed thing.

For his first solo exhibition at AMP WORKS Michael presents a series of prints and drawings that act as palimpsests on vintage paper. They are shown alongside three dimensional objects and vitrines, which house theatrical props of antediluvian and otherworldly figurines, and prints of bricolaged archives. These depict fictional theological, historical, and cultural milieus. His use of humour combined with an uncanny employment of montage and scene construction draws the viewer into a spectrum of complex worlds and settings.

Michaels' work plays with the inception and annunciation of the archival using the tropes of seventies science fiction, telluric ancient monuments or mythos, and celestial exploration. Through extensive research and databanks of images he creates emergent constellations that combine relics of prehistoric and symbolic cultural memory. These newly composed archives of deeds and cabinets of curiosities, documents and anthropological collections are testimony to the fallacy inherent in the processes of historicization. Simultaneously they include the genres of modern popular culture, political figures, or character-like idols; cultural stereotypes that infer the fetishistic allure of staged representation within human consciousness.

Representation is questioned, as it is shown to be deeply embedded within a substratum of superstitions, or fantasy fictions. Our initial recognition of an iconoclastic scenario is quickly challenged by the seemingly odd, but familiar intervention of an oversized basketball alongside prehistoric reptiles, or a bonafied mummy with a drag car. Rather than using this tactic to jar our sensibilities the results offer a familiar ocularcentric pattern of discovering worlds within worlds, or meaning in metaphor. In other words, the foundation of storytelling, through histories such as mythology are employed and altered by Michael to illustrate that understanding is derived from a prolonged chain of interpretation and assimilation. Space and time collapse, overlap and fold into each other in a variety of overwhelming and visually abundant molecular expressions, and time is represented as a rupture that reveals residual, eternal or otherworldly matter.

Michaels' use of magnitude and scale relates to his fascination with the spatial model and scale of the cosmos. His cosmos maps are a manifestation of this. A plethora of modern cult images such as gremlins, computers, or Michael Jordan, clutter the canvas. The images float freely on a galactical planes and each artefact shares similarities and differences with its neighbour. The overall composition can be compared to a flow chart or spider web mapping a hierarchy of energy. The result is a series of pictorially exuberant megacosms.

The work of Theo Michael abstains from didactic representation, or any continuation of a history of hermetics, precisely by playing with the enormity and limitations of these ideologies. He questions these methodologies by using mimesis as a type of camouflage. A sense of pleasure traces the artefact through to perverse artifice. Through revealing and concealing the transparent yet, essentialist nature of dogmas, he moves towards a code free communication.

Theo Michael lives and works in London.

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Please contact the gallery at info@a-m-p.gr for further information.