Unconscious

NADER RAHMAN

"The "unconscious intelligence" can both remember and reason, that is, it has the two properties most characteristic of consciousness"

William James Sidis

When one thinks of Mustafa Zaman's work a lot comes to mind, the surreal and the real, banality and originality and now the conscious and the unconscious. As an artist he keeps recreating himself and his most recent metamorphosis can be seen at the Alliance Francaise till June 11, where he has set up shop for a dive into what can only be called the mind's eye. His newest exhibition titled Regaining Unconsciousness offers one a look into his creative process and into his art, yet surprisingly does not reveal much about the man behind the art. One could say the art created by him is the clearest expression of his artistic vision, yet it stops short of revealing him as a person, separate from his art. It does not feel contrived, yet it does feel like he is pulling our strings, almost as if he is in control of the game and the audience is merely a spectator to his sport. His intelligence is put on display in the most creative ways possible, yet there still seems to be a clear separation between Mustafa Zaman the artist and Mustafa Zaman the average man. The notes in his catalogue clearly show his preoccupation with the self-other dialectic, and in a way that is also mirrored in his title, Regaining Unconsciousness. This exhibition is his treatise on the human mind by interchangeably defining the conscious and the unconscious as the self and other.

The first piece that catches the eye is titled Romantic Cloud Packaged for Sale. A red cap is stuffed with cotton wool which has been spray painted red. Placed on top of a small wooden table, its presentation elicits a reply from all who come before it. It explores his fascination for packaged art, where the price is the main focal point. This is an issue that vexes most contemporary artists and Mustafa takes the topic by horns with his own packaged art without the price tag. I would suggest that you make him an offer.

In Space by Duality a picture out of an instructional yoga booklet is blown up with-smiley face smeared over the face. The picture itself is about as banal as one can get, the boy evokes an image of rural, yet the red smiley face speared over it gives it a modern edge. The picture borders on absurdity and one feels embarrassed for the boy, quite obviously forced into that position and that photo. But by hanging the same picture twice (just reversing the image), the boy is facing himself. The duality of his image is similar to what Mustafa tries to delve into with his self and other imagery.

The Order of Things Between Sin and Unseen is an unsettling piece where the eyes of a picture of a baby have been blotted out. On the floor the same picture is spread out with toys placed on the eyes. The genteel image of the baby is raped with the eyes blotted out and the title alluring to Michel Foucault 1966 masterpiece The Order of Things is easy to understand. Unreading a Book Against Nature is the first of six pieces that uses the mirror as the centre of his art. A large mirror has a single stone glued to it and beneath it an open book with earth piled on its open pages rests. It poses the question, why must one unread a book against nature? Is unreading the process of unlearning? Is a return to nature the process of unlearning what humanity has taught us, is that in a way a return to our id, if one were to locate our id would it be in our unconsciousness? The questions are endless and looking into the mirror only adds to mystery, we end up questioning ourselves. In Maa Cosmo-Kaali and the Asteroid Portraiture, the mirror is used to represent space, not just outer space but the space between our thoughts. With a mouth and ears separated by a large group of stone asteroids on the mirror one is left to ponder what goes on in the human mind. The cerebral imagery continues as a black haired wig is glued to a black spot on the mirror thus creating the image of the mirror as the brain.



Mirrored Reality: Speeding across the Reflection-1, mirror and dissected toy.