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H A S H A N C O O R A Y

27.06.24 - 20.07.24

SASKIA FERNANDO GALLERY

'Dystopia' encapsulates the essence of an Orwellian dream: where freedom is imaginary, resistance is futile, and individual autonomy is absent. Hashan Cooray confronts the complex relationship between an individual and the sociocultural and political systems within which they exist, as he brings to focus the blurred boundaries between conscious control and the subconscious mind. Cooray's work explores the inherent struggles of the human condition and the psychosis it leads to as these structures exert their influence on our cognition.

Informed by the artist's expert knowledge of advertising and the impact subliminal messages can have on our choices and perceptions, the exhibition voices his observation on the lack of free will in modern society. By repurposing propaganda posters and commercial advertisements to confront the web of nationalist, capitalist, and consumerist influences, he urges the viewer to consider the extent of their entanglement.

Cooray's commentary on consumption takes the form of psychosis that an individual experiences when they realise the inability to escape from the constant barrage. He leans on gestural visual language characterised by strong, defiant brushstrokes that contest against the surface on which he paints. Colours forcefully collide with each assured stroke occupying a distinct space in its attempt to break away from the normative. The resulting portraits, rather than depicting identifiable features of the human face, morph into mutations.

Elements from popular culture such as graffiti and lettering styles used in graphic novels feature in the artist's compositions, occasionally eclipsing the humanoid figures, or appearing as a shadow presence. The mechanical and the sterile, having gained character and personality through associations to human emotions, exist alongside Cooray's unfiltered expressions. The sharp contrast it offers aims to probe the viewer to deliberate on the relationship between identity and consumerism, and inadvertently an individual's sense of self.

The crisis of autonomy is drawn out through a nostalgic reference to childhood in the installation work, Hopscotch. A reminder of innocent, carefree days, the square outline pushed upright against the wall serves as a metaphor for the constraints individuals experience as they mature and integrate into society. The work deliberates on a slow but gradual transition, as they are expected to abide by the rules of a normative world.

Hashan offers a mirror through which the viewer can reflect on oppressive forces, bringing the conversation closer to home in the installation Printed Barricade. Featuring sixty metres of chronologically arranged newspaper headlines, the installation invites the viewer to contemplate transitions in power. Inspired by the aftermath of the Aragalaya, the artist examines the citizen's right to express dissent in authoritarian regimes.

'Dystopia' is grounded in the artist's engagement with a sector that is driven by capitalism and consumerism. Through this lens, the exhibition encourages an examination of control that exists across different strata of everyday existence. While on one hand, the artist challenges the viewer to reconsider their participation in and attitudes toward a consumer-centric world, it also questions how much of our thought process is our own and how much of it has been shaped by the society we live in.



Printed Barricade, 2024, Installation, Stencilled Tape and Iron Structure, Dimensions Variable



Dance with God, 2024, Oil and Acrylic on Canvas, 77cm x 87cm



Dance with God II, 2024, Oil and Acrylic on Canvas, 77cm x 87cm



Devil Dancers, 2024, Oil and Acrylic on Canvas, 121 cm x 152cm



The Lost Member, 2024, Oil and Acrylic on Canvas, 121cm x 152cm



Untitled I, 2024, Oil and Acrylic on Canvas, 121cm x 152cm



Untitled V, 2024, Oil and Acrylic on Canvas, 101cm x 119cm



Unknown Creature, 2024, Oil and Acrylic on Canvas, 56cm x 49cm



Face Behind the Mask, 2024, Oil and Acrylic on Canvas, 77cm x 87cm



Flesh Out, 2024, Oil and Acrylic on Canvas, 44cm x 38cm



Hopscotch 2024, Installation, Emulsion Paint, Dimensions Variable



HASHA
COOKAY₂₄

Disorganised Attachment II, 2024, Charcoal on Paper, 63cm x 48cm



Untitled IV, 2024, Charcoal on Paper, 63cm x 48cm

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HASHAN
2024

Untitled IX, 2024, Charcoal on Paper, 63cm x 48cm



Untitled VI, 2024, Charcoal on Paper, 63cm x 48cm



Untitled V, 2024, Charcoal on Paper, 63cm x 48cm



Untitled VIII, 2024, Charcoal on Paper, 63cm x 48cm



Untitled VII, 2024, Charcoal on Paper, 63cm x 48cm



Untitled VIII, 2024, Charcoal on Paper, 63cm x 48cm

HASHAN COORAY b. 1987

Solo Exhibitions

- 2022 Stick No Bills | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2020 Desire | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2019 Parahuman | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2017 Labrats | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Group Exhibitions

- 2019 Leo Art | Lionel Wendt Art Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2018 Embodying Power | Sapumal Foundation, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2018 Island Mentality | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2018 Nawa Kalakaruwo | JDA Perera Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2017 Nawa Kalakaruwo | JDA Perera Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2016 Imago Mundi Book Project | Published by the Bennetton Foundation
- 2015 Nawa Kalakaruwo | JDA Perera Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2014 Nawa Kalakaruwo | JDA Perera Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka

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