

Galerie Sultana

Gavin Perry, *I believe in Jim Jones*

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Jim Jones is an iconic Evangelist who manipulated his flock through sermon into taking the ultimate leap of faith. Through a cult of personality he willed his followers into imbibing a poison cocktail that would ultimately kill most of his congregation, marking what would become the infamous Jones town Massacre. History is rife with stories of charismatic individuals and ideologies that have caused many to make the ultimate sacrifice. Often these individuals blend faith with transcendence offering the promise of redemption and eternal bliss. Mostly they conjure a type of mysticism that allows individuals to behave in ways they wouldn't normally. Withdrawing from friends and family, as well as society at large, these individuals act against their own best interests. They are mesmerized.

"I Believe in Jim Jones" is not a discussion of the phenomenon of the cult of personality as documentary, rather it is a starting point to create work that illustrates mesmerization visually.

The Work

As one stares at the silver leaf drawings, images of incised lines appear to form a lattice work of geometric forms. Reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's stained glass, Gavin Perry creates images that refer to hallucinations and other varying optical effects. Perry reflects on his personal experiences of memorization while under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD and magic mushrooms. As a child Perry remembers similar visual effects occurring both while looking at the Sun with his eyes closed as well as when he would put pressure on his eye lids with his fingers. He imagines these images as the final image one might see as they succumb to the poison and embrace rapture. Starting with a pencil drawing that is both mapped as well as improvised the drawings are created through a meticulous and repetitive process of taping individual sections and applying sizing and then the leaf itself. The result is a subtle, austere surface that is modulated by the overlapping of geometric shapes rendered in silver leaf.

The sculptures, though whimsical, reveal a slowed anesthesia and entropy. Utilizing various elements and reused material (a beach ball, wood scraps, re-bar, pigmented resin, and neon) the narrative of decay is elicited. With a nod to the famed Kool-Aid used by Jones and his flock, Perry encases these objects with transparent neon pink resin. The resin acts as both a visual screen and a device to slow their movement in time. Lastly, the neon piece washes all around it in a peculiar and apocalyptic blue hue.

It renders everything it encounters with a level otherworldliness.

Gavin Perry was born in 1971 in Philadelphia. He studied at the Tyler School of Art, Pennsylvania, where he obtained his BFA (cum laude). In the US, he is represented by Barbara Davis Gallery in Houston and Fredric Snitzer Gallery in Miami. In 2009 he won the South Florida Cultural Consortium Award. He lives and works in Miami.