

MAX WIGRAM GALLERY

Mustafa Hulusi

The Golden Age

15th March - 2nd May 2013

Private view 14th March 2013, 6.30 - 8.30 pm

Max Wigram Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of *The Golden Age*, an exhibition of new paintings by Mustafa Hulusi.

Hulusi here presents a darker, more somber version of his signature diptychs, which bring together large-scale, hyperreal paintings of fruit, flowers and optical abstraction. Painted with controlled gestures and refined technique, the diptychs take as inspiration *Ashik Kerib* (1988), the masterpiece by Armenian filmmaker Sergei Parajanov. Displayed against coloured walls, the suite of paintings induces a sense of another age, inviting the viewer to pause and contemplate a displaced time.

In *Golden Age*, the artist develops his inquiry into images of symbolic power and historical memory, with particular reference to his country of origin, the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. The flower offers a symbol for the earthly, mortal and figurative. *Tulipa Cypria* is an endemic tulip found in remote and unpopulated areas of Cyprus. Due to human activity, the flower is now an endangered species. Within the island's everyday language, the flower is called Cyprus Black Tulip; shortly before it perishes, its petals turn a very dark, almost black tone. This morbid yet mesmerising appearance consistently arrests the human gaze.

The gold leaf in the abstract component of the diptychs is at once auratic and an index of materiality. A mineral resource that functions as a measure of wealth, gold has strong mythic connotations. The starburst motif performs an analogous function, as both a visual convention and a potentially endless sign: a universal signifier for infinity. Together the gold leaf and starburst motif speak of the infinite drive of reproductive excess overcoming all limits.

In their juxtaposition the two elements of the paintings, the figurative and the abstract, present an imposed division between different ideologies and systems of thought, representation and value. Presented together within the frame, though the two systems theoretically conflict with each other, they share qualities of fragility and an alluring sense of shape and aesthetic form.

The Byzantine and Renaissance colouration of the paintings, consisting principally of deep blues, greens and reds, as well as gold, evokes past epochs of religiosity. While such epochs might be thought to have been superseded by a more materialist culture, Hulusi's paintings re-awaken a potential for spirituality and beauty in a secular form as experienced in art and nature.

Mustafa Hulusi (b. 1971, London, UK) lives and works in London. Hulusi's solo exhibitions include: *The EMPTY Near East*, Max Wigram Gallery, London, UK; *The EMPTY Near East*, The Page Gallery, Seoul, Korea; Galerist, Istanbul, Turkey. In 2012 he participated in exhibitions at BOZAR, Brussels, Belgium, and The Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre, Nicosia, Cyprus. Previous exhibitions include: Wellcome Trust, London, UK; Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK; Saatchi Gallery, London, UK; BALTIC, Gateshead, UK; P.S.1, New York, USA. Hulusi represented the Republic of Cyprus at the 52nd International Exhibition of Contemporary Art of La Biennale di Venezia, Italy. Hulusi is the subject of a monograph, *The Joyous, Shining and Wonderful Age* (2011), published by Koenig Book, London.

For further information, interviews, or images please contact Rebecca Gremmo on rebecca@maxwigram.com or call +44 (0)20 7495 4961.