

Mike Nelson

Cloak of rags (Tale of a dismembered bank, rendered in blue)

6 February – 25 March 2017

Cloak of rags (Tale of a dismembered bank, rendered in blue), is an exhibition whose genesis began in another place, in another building, the bank in the title. Before being fully renovated, the headquarters of UBS - a nine-storey building situated in Monaco - became in fact an artwork by Mike Nelson, an exhibition commissioned by the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco that opened in July 2016.

Every surface inside the building - from the architectural parts to the objects and furniture left there - was spray painted blue and the whole interior became an environment entitled *Cloak*. The affect was that of immersion akin to being underwater, or trapped within the blue screen of some unnamed device, aggravating one's sense of perception and reality.

Cloak was a response to the building, a meditation on its status, or currency, as both a bank in Monaco and also in anticipation of its existence as an artwork. The relationship between art and money, entwined with the constantly shifting geographies of world powers and economies, led Nelson to look at the currency of pigment or colour. Returning to basic art history he was reminded of the high price paid for the rarest of blue pigment: Ultramarine. Its literal translation - 'beyond the sea' - referred to the mines of North Eastern Afghanistan from the perspective of the Italian traders who first brought it to the West in the 14th and 15th centuries. Ultramarine was widely used in Renaissance and Baroque paintings, usually reserved to depict the flowing robe or 'cloak' of the Virgin Mary. However the pigment had been used for long before this date, having been found in Neolithic burial mounds and the tombs of Egypt, Sumer and Ur amongst others. The semi-precious stone from which the pigment is derived, lapis lazuli, has been mined in the mountains of North East Afghanistan for millennia - recently providing the second largest income for the Taliban, after opium.

In Torino a new series of sculptural works is the aftermath of the exhibition in Monaco, where some architectural artefacts have been ripped out right before the full renovation of the interior of the building and the disposal of its materials.

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Cloak of rags could be seen as a continuation of Nelson's interest in self consumption, or cannibalism of his own oeuvre, one that resonates beyond the wider panoramas of ancient through to recent histories and their varying rates of exchange.

As if it was an ancient ruin bearing the marks of its own history - splendour, decay, re-use, and sometimes sacking and theft - Nelson and his assistants have removed sections and objects from the dwelling, in order for them to continue existing in a different realm and context. However the building in terms of its very fabric has no exceptional value in itself, in terms of real estate, of what it held, and the customers it served, its economic value was huge, though the detritus now purports to represent a set of different values - those that are loosely termed art.

As we pass through the reinstalled doors of the former bank in Torino and look down upon the sections of building roughly cut from itself, we may be reminded of a strangely picturesque ruin, and yet underpinning this aesthetic is a complicated web of associations both everyday and peculiar.

Mike Nelson (born in Loughborough, England) lives and works in London. Nelson represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2011 and his work has been presented in major group and solo exhibitions throughout the world, among which: 'A Psychic Vacuum', Creative Time, New York 2007; Turner Prize, Tate Liverpool, 2007; 'Eclipse: Art in a Dark Age', Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 2008; 'Kristus och Judas: a structural conceit (a performance in three parts)', Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark; Tate Triennial 2009; 'Psycho Buildings', Hayward Gallery 2008; 'September 11', MoMA PS1, 2011; '408 tons of imperfect geometry', Malmö Konsthall, 2012; 'M6', Eastside Projects, Birmingham, 2013; CAG, Vancouver, Canada; 'Amnesiac Hide', The Power Plant, Toronto, Canada, 2014; 'Studio apparatus for Kunsthalle Munster', Kunsthalle Munster, Germany, 2014; '80 Circles through Canada', Tramway, Glasgow, 2014; 'Sensory Spaces 8', Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 2016; 'Imperfect geometry for a concrete quarry', Kalkbrottet, Limhamn, Malmö; 2016, 'Wanderlust', High Line, New York, 2016. He has been invited to participate to the Biennales of: Venice 2001, Sydney 2002, Istanbul 2003, São Paulo 2004, Singapore 2011, Lyon 2015.

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Monday and Saturday 3.00 – 7.00 pm

Tue-Wed-Thur-Fri 11.00 am to 7.00 pm

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