

Zarah Hussain - MEASURING INFINITY

18 March – 6 May, 2017

Zarah Hussain lives and works in London (UK). Geometric shapes from the ancient Persian Empire are a source of inspiration for her drawings, paintings and reliefs. *Double Star Supernova*, in Hopstreet's Window Project #8, is an example of this.

From her interest in the image of transcendence, the artist visited and examined the *Adoration of the Lamb* by the Van Eyck brother in Ghent. Parallel to the medieval mentality, Hussain interprets art as a way for mankind to try to reproduce the universal rules related to cosmic order. In the Western artistic tradition, a desire to understand one's visible reality fomented during the autumn of the Middle Ages. The proposed world became almost tangible with the assistance of light effects, shadow work and fabric suggestion. The visual model that organises the whole image is central perspective: a mathematical system with lines of sight that converge into one or more vanishing points. An affinity between the Western and Islamic traditions originates within this underlying rational abstraction.

Hussain creates visual formulas that express universality based on mathematical instructions with rotational and mirror symmetries. The lines and areas of colour on the regular polyhedrons have a direct, instinctive attractiveness. They stimulate the observer's empathy and encourage him or her to look for deeper meaning. This meaning can be spiritual or purely expressive. This undogmatic attitude typifies her open attitude towards other people's individual convictions. Building on the legacy of Islamic culture is, for her, a rich formula that she also encounters in artists such as William Morris, Paul Klee or Kasimir Malevich. In these oeuvres, a representation of the visible world doesn't play a compelling role; choreographies develop with primary, expressive elements. Hussain strives for perfect shapes with a meticulous finish.

As a whole, *Double Star Supernova* seeks harmony with every aspect of itself. This results in the development of a compact, prismatic integration. The repetitive arrangements have a hypnotic-contemplative effect; they suggest infinity. Hussain compares it to DNA: an immeasurable quantity of possibilities and differentiations unfold *ad infinitum* from one source. It's not surprising that the artist explores the generative possibilities of the digital world. Mathematics, spirituality and beauty fuse into complex structures in her work. She investigates the discharge in today's fragile society. Through her work, she wants to contribute to an intelligent debate about universal values in our society; values that have not become less global despite a growing narrow-mindedness.

Stef Van Bellingen

Zarah Hussain lives and works in London (UK). She obtained a BA in English Literature and History from the University of Manchester and an MA in Visual Islamic and Traditional Arts from the Prince of Wales School. In addition to traditional and manual work with pencil, pigment and binding agents, Hussain also develops an oeuvre based on computer possibilities and the digital world.

Stef Van Bellingen is an independent art curator and artistic director of WARP, a contemporary art platform focusing on emerging artists and known for the organisation of the triennial *Coup de ville*. He is also active as guest lecturer at several art schools in Europe.