

ANCIENT & MODERN

PAUL JOHNSON: ASCENSION INTO UNSELFISHNESS

PREVIEW WEDNESDAY 7 OCTOBER, 6 - 8PM
8 OCTOBER - 14 NOVEMBER 2009

ANCIENT & MODERN presents a new exhibition of painted collages and banners by Paul Johnson, his first solo exhibition at the gallery. 'Ascension into Unselfishness' focusses on the attainment of certain ideals, the artist's exploration towards the positive unearthing ideas of the lone figure existentially visualising his or her dreams whilst raising questions about the delusional and the paranoid.

Through variously sourced images, Paul Johnson creates portraits and symbols that stimulate imaginary associations, each devotionally handcrafted from intricate fragments of hand-coloured paper to leave a surface that resembles the clarity and intensity of an illuminated manuscript, evocative yet solitary and self-contained.

Felt-tip Manuscript emerges from the artist's own collection of hand-made signs. At its soul is a pre-occupation with the human desire to express internal concerns visually. Johnson suggests one can imagine the mental channel from which this street-sign or statement of protest has arisen. The awkward personal yet universal and political message relays its intention in an open, quiet way but with a peculiar sense of unease.

Three banners create a temporary shrine or homemade secular chapel at the centre of which are imaginary logos suggestive of membership of esoteric social or scientific groups. Johnson's banners are made within the influence and tradition of Ghanaian *Fante flags* and the African-American *Gee's Bend Quilters* group. The appliquéd surfaces of the former mix military imagery or signage with a vibrant sense of the everyday, while the latter have a crooked yet sophisticated sense of abstraction allowing a unique mix of colour, pattern and surface describing the quilters' landscape of Alabama. There is also an acknowledged interest in hard-edged skateboard graphics of the late 1980's, developed by *Powell Peralta*, *Santa Cruz* or *H-Street*.

Paul Johnson (b.1972) lives and works in London having studied at the Royal Academy schools and Glasgow School of Art. Recent exhibitions include 'When We're Gone Destroy Everything', One in the Other, London (2009), 'Sensitive Chaos', Mizuma Gallery, Tokyo (solos), 'Living London', Zabłudowicz Collection, 176, London, 'Brotherhoods of Subterrera', KunstBunker, Numberg, Germany (all 2008). Johnson will also participate in 'Newspeak - British Art Now', Saatchi Collection and Hermitage Museum, St.Peterberg, Russia; and in 'Collider', Margini Arte Contemporanea, Massa, Italy.

Exhibition open Thursdays - Saturdays, 12 - 6pm and by appointment
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