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“Hueless” at Mallick Williams

By: Simmy Swinder

Mallick Williams is currently hosting its fourth exhibition since its recent launch in November 2010. Spearheaded by Director Jeremy Kaplan, who previously worked for Shepard Fairey’s Subliminal Projects in Los Angeles, “Hueless” draws together nineteen street artists of varying degrees of fame and popularity, from Curtis Kulig and D*Face to Lindsey de Ovies and Sam Ske.

Unlike many other gallery shows that strive to create a conceptual or visual link between one artwork and the next, or a retrospective exhibit that focuses on providing a range of works or one memorable work by a single artist, the works in “Hueless” are grouped by the lack of color.



Lindsey de Ovies, TAADAA!, 2010, 8”x 8” x 9,” bronze. Courtesy Mallick Williams & Co.



Katsu, A Psycho, 2011, 48”x48”, oil on canvas. Courtesy Mallick Williams & Co.

In addition to this shared trait, each piece is executed and presented in a well-polished, collection-ready manner. That is, though the artists are active street artists, the works in “Hueless” have an air of white-cube aspiration, and certainly placing them at Mallick Williams helps the cause. In fact, a mixed-media wall work by NTEL is reminiscent of collage work by Robert Rauschenberg or an Edward Kienholz assemblage while the photorealistic renditions by Dirk Dzimirsky and Lu Gold continue the tradition of documenting contemporary Americana paintings like those by Richard Phillips and Raplh Goings.



*Dirk Dzimirsky, Drawn Face V (Nicole), 18.1" x 25.2," graphite on canvas.
Courtesy Mallick Williams & Co.*

But this comes with a price. D*Face said in a 2008 interview with Fecal Face, "...the more aware the public becomes of street art the less applicable it seems to be." No longer are their political commentary about advertising, consumerism and the government the crux of their message, their names and fame are. This has led the art world—which has allowed street art to prosper commercially via gallery shows—to question whether it is possible to monetize and thus privatize an art object that was meant to be seen by the public, free of cost. Street artists also face this problem; they must walk a tightrope between integrity and profitability, between being recognized for their artistry and selling out. There is no right or wrong answer because there is no moral arbiter in the art world and thus everyone shares the responsibility of keeping art, to some extent, sacred.

Other artists in "Hueless" include Distort, Erik Haze, Marissa Textor, Pete Watts, FAUST, Marco Zamora, Katsu, Nicholas Forker, Michael M. Koehler, Nathan Pickett, Russell Young and Skullphone.



*NTEL, A Prestige of Materials, 2011, 40" x 60," mixed media.
Courtesy Mallick Williams & Co.*

After numerous gallery shows of art by street artists, the next logical step is moving those works into the ivory tower of the art world, the art museum. Jeffrey Deitch, a longtime supporter of the street art movement, has taken initiative through his still recent appointment at MOCA Los Angeles. His show, Art on the Streets, curated by Aaron Rose, Roger Gastman and Fred Brathwaite finally gives those artists, and those aspiring to work within the street art genre, the legitimacy and historical presence they seek.

"Hueless" runs through April 15th
150 11th Avenue (Between 21st and 22nd St)
Take the A,C, or E train to 23rd Street and/or the M23 bus to 11th Avenue
Gallery Hours: Tues-F, 10-6; Sat, 11-6
Gallery Website: <http://www.mallickwilliams.com>