

Saturday, January 27, 2007

Anastasi's Army

One of the most interesting assignments I ever had came in the summer of 2003 through my volunteering at the White Box gallery in Chelsea.

I found the director, Juan, and his staff to be very committed to showcasing pertinent confrontational political art by bringing it to the front and center of today's art world.

Below is a piece I and many other volunteers worked dilligently on-- in fact, in this view you can see a lot of mistakes that we volunteers made from Wiliam Anastasi's original concept.



Several times we'd run out of tape, or a certain color (hence, the predominance of gray in the piece). Other times we'd find ourselves rushing through certain areas because the deadline was fast approaching.

The only thing I could compare it to is the panicky feeling you get backstage at a fashion show-- I've been in them as a youngster, planned them, and accidentally got drafted to "dress" a supermodel in 1996 during NY Fashion week.

It felt right at home for me-- I always seem to thrive with deadlines fast approaching-- normally, not moving an inch when I have enough time to actually commit to something.

I even took it upon myself to do a hidden "dove of peace" on the floor in the darker green. I suppose if you looked hard enough you could make it out, but I seriously doubt it.

<http://lamgelinaoly.blogspot.com/2007/01/my-time-as-anastasi-assistant.html>

As an artist myself, I felt a bit angry at the task at hand-- basically, to me, it was "doing someone else's work for them."

Truly the thinking of a newbie to the art world-- (I guess I hadn't yet heard of Warhol, or Koons, or Murakami, or Barney.)

But what I do find the most harrowing about this exhibit is not just the interesting take on "camouflaging an interior", thus defeating the purpose of the usual usage of camouflage... it's more the fact that the Annex gallery itself has no windows-- no natural light; much the way it must feel in the Iraqi trenches amidst night battle.

I truly expected Martin Sheen to pop out of the corner at any point in a frantic hunt for Kurtz.

With the memory of this event, I recently did a search for one of the artists who volunteered at this event, Ethan Shoshan.

He truly stunned me with his earnest commitment to the thankless back- and neck-breaking task of squatting for hours in the heavy paint fumes.

Ethan has done some very great work in the past few years himself- dabbling still in the art of "words," experimental music, handmade paper, and performance art.

Below is an image from a 2005 fashion show/performance piece in New York at Le Petit Versailles.

Note the shattered body groveling in front of the soldier-- a sacrifice to the aggressive masculinity of Americana around the world; an in-your-face desexualization, perhaps a needed emasculation of testosterone at its highest form.

You can check out the amazing full video performance of this event at:

<http://engenderedspeciesart.com/catalogue.html>



Here's the poster from his Washington, D.C., "Paper Bombs" performance.

The tiny origami works bring a sense of hope and color into such a dark and violence-obsessed world-- a "make bombs, not war" message done tongue-in-cheek.

Just all around stunning work.

Proud to have met this person and hope he goes to the top of today's young art scene.

He's got a great future ahead.

Posted by Oly at [8:50 PM](#)



Ethan Shoshan

"Bombing" the White House and other institutions;
Providing protection and reducing fear in this American moment.
Site specific performances around DC

November 1-7, 2005

Joint Exhibition part of the
American Studies Association "Groundworks" Conference

Nov 3-6 at:

The Renaissance Hotel
999 9th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Panel Session: Performance
Friday, Nov 4 from 2:00pm - 3:45pm

"Bombings": bombings around Washington DC for the ASA conference represent current American ideals and realities; that past and present wars reflect a history and spirit of our own identities. By "bombing" institutions, I am playing with American imperialism (the idea of preserving our own way of life) and making visible the absurdity in this act. As part of the ASA conference, I feel this work is a form of irony for the idea of "space & place in American cultures," by performing what American heritage is based on, and how we use war as a mobilizing force for controlling others by pretending to protect American "freedoms" while ignoring others.

For more information contact disiterate@yahoo.com

note that images used are found from the internet and edited (except paper bombs)

