

Press release of artist's statement for Bureau Publik, Copenhagen.

"The failure of pictures is a failure of their agency in history but being outside of effective time might be a form of success. Being outside of time is a little scary because it is also being outside of progress, where it is no longer possible to occupy the certain singularities of national or religious identities. Without the archive's direction, I am in an emergency, I could become inappropriately joined to those to whom I am not related; we could take on histories not our own; obsess over the wrong love-object and so - forget what we are supposed to do. Finding uses for a body that will no longer contain a rationalized future is something that is physically felt in the body – and sometimes demands that body be re-stylized in thought or in reality. And although this might feel like being close to death, it might be closer to life in its requirement that we love the drive to depart from the world that can't accept the full implications of our mind. It is probably why efforts to see history as a set of flexible gestures parallel to the emotional contradictions of being, puts a body, on the 'verge of insanity.'

What if behind every abstract form in a room of paintings there was a group of people, a hidden association or constituency – collected in madness like a family in disarray, collapsing and reorganizing itself according to an unrecognizable politics? Surely this might disorganize the dark abstract state of affairs we cope with in the civil war waged against life by finance. As human life is imprisoned into the unstable connections built by debt, we present new entities in the face of such slavery, perhaps even more unstable, by proposing our own "state of emergency." This is a state that I think I tried to describe in this last set of paintings is now a more ambivalent effort – to present individuation, the making of a person today, as always already a disaster.

Perhaps the tension between social and aesthetic practice is only ever material in its institutional reflection. And this is where my romantic collapsing of sensual rupture and political change may fall apart. The real product of this tension can't really be made material – at least not in the rationalizing contexts of display we live in. Definitely not in contemporary art's "system." And yet we do know this unconsciously, right? – feelings that can be organized around the unrecognizable face of another: a stranger for whom we construct ourselves in anticipation of a change in life. Who are you? Who will you be? Will you or will you not kill me?"

From: "The Non-Human Being" Doug Ashford, 2014.

---