

Architectural graveyard about Lukas Hofer's Melonflesh Monument

Lukas Hofer's *Melonflesh Monument* is a shanty town of make-shift structures, haunted signs, and frigid light. Inspired by Pieter Bruegel's "Tower of Babel", Hofer has assembled a series of destabilized constructions and printed images that call to mind the transient and conflicted nature of contemporary reality.

The structures of Hofer's work are made with the materials used for lite building projects. The largest three-dimensional element is a combination of scaffolding parts, clamps, poly sheeting, and wooden elements. Other structures are made with flimsy sawhorses, warped tables, printed Plexiglas, and draped or wadded plastic. His constructions are unsound, but do manage to hold together with clamps, tape, and ties. It is an architecture made of tools with a focus that shifts from end result to constant, unstable process. Looming in a dark space, illuminated by small, cold fluorescent lights, the assemblages become morbid. Draped plastic takes on a ghostly quality; the linear elements are skeletal; the light is unearthly.

There are two printed images found throughout *Melonflesh Monument*. One is a centralized portrait of a young, attractive, edgy-looking Japanese man whose head is flanked by a pair of men's feet in New Balance sneakers. This image has been altered and reprinted in numerous ways; sometimes it resembles a death mask with wings, at others a celebrity figure on a note of currency. It also calls to mind trendy images of Japanese street fashion. Three of these printed are on Plexiglas the color of watermelon-flesh, lending a type of kitsch eroticism.

The other image is a mirrored picture of a line of female legs, clad in stockings and wearing high-heeled shoes. The original picture looks like a vintage photo of a staged chorus line routine. It shows us the female body, organized and sexualized by the entertainment industry. In the hands of Hofer, it has become a macabre, ironically humorous creation, a dark translation of Broadway.

The two images are like pop-cultural representations of beauty, sexuality, and footwear. Beyond this there is a schism. The images struggle for dominance like competing advertisement signage. In what is arguably the dominant form of the installation, a towering outline of the column of female legs, rendered in a taped outline on the wall behind the structures, looms over all. It is a giant in a village.

On a bent table stand three small sculptures underlit by flashing LED lights. The size of these sculptures is inconsistent with the rest of the proportions in *Melonflesh Monument*. They look like models for the construction of a potentially massive monument. Yet, these also show signs structural weaknesses indicating unsound planning, or a plan to be unsound.

Hofer's combination of mass-produced pop cultural images and make shift architecture of tools and cheap materials is a dystopian vision grounded in realities of contemporary urban existence. Sculpturally it is beautiful, and the tension he creates is compelling. With his warped sense of proportion and construction Hofer has intentional destabilized his forms and their relations to each other, creating incongruities that confound ones sense of reason.

by Jeff Grant