Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Tangoing with Paul & Amigos

Rick Meghiddo · Wednesday, August 30th, 2017

Tangoing with Paul & Amigos from Rick Meghiddo on Vimeo.

“Impacting” is what first comes to mind when visiting Paul McCarthy’s wood sculpture exhibition at the Hauser & Wirth Gallery in LA’s downtown Arts District.

The combination of crafted wood at a large scale and the integration of a baroque language speaking a surrealistic critique of the contemporary world signals an art mutation

McCarthy titled his works “WS Spinoffs,” ”Wood Statues” and “Brown Rothkos.” The word “spinoff” is precise. In media, a spinoff is a radio or television program, film, or any narrative work, derived from one or more already existing works, that focuses in more detail on one aspect of an original work. In this case, the Snow White tale and Rothko’s paintings.

The gallery’s website includes a well-written description of McCarthy’s show, and also an 8-minute video presentation by Donatien Grau. See: https://www.hauserwirthlosangeles.com/exhibitions/paul-mccarthy-20170701

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My reaction to the exhibition was more visceral than intellectual and so is my short documentary, “Tangoing with Paul & Amigos.” I made a sort of non-scripted “spinoff” that includes free association with like-minded artists and some memories from my Argentinean upbringing. The tango music is a metaphor of a dynamic nonlinear fluidity.

I tried to imagine the statues made out of white marble. The conflicts, sarcasms and subtleties they contain would become more evident, such as Bernini’s positioning the Rio de la Plata River sculpture in Piazza Navona as fearing that the facade of Borromini’s church of Sant’Agnese would crumble over him. But McCarthy’s choice of dark walnut wood is intentional. It makes harder to see the thematic at first sight. The eye is caught first by the craftsmanship and by the large scale as macro-layers of a complex composition.

Bernini’s Fountain of the Four Rivers at Piazza Navona. Rome

The abstraction of the hanging Brown Rothkos, made of foam and sprayable polyurethane coating,

resemble melting lava and brings a powerful contrast to the statues. They are both at architectural scale.

Brown Rothkos melting with Rothkos

Snow White in the making

Paul McCarthy

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