



Anthea Hamilton

LET'S GO

27TH July- 14th September 2013

'Putting suncream on you is like rubbing custard into a carpet.'

'Word on the street' Time Out London, July 23 – 29 2013

A delightful notion, I came across this statement on my way to the Bloomberg Space, when I looked through the window at Anthea Hamilton's show and saw the gargantuan woman bounding out confidently from between the stripes in the wallpaper, everything fell into place. The image that is conjured with that sentence provokes utter repulsion as well as a peculiar curiosity, I can't help but imagine how fascinatingly gross it would be to experience the tactility of rubbing sun lotion into an immensely hairy back. This haptic touch is implicit in the viewing of Hamilton's work, feeling the walls and objects with our 'fingery eyes', following the contours of the seamlessly yellow pipes with oil black interiors and counting the toes implied by the ribbed socks-in-sandals of our protagonist. The 7 metre high wallpaper mimics a vertical blind, one that can be parted and stepped through, a Japanese garden glimpsed between the blocks of colour and the lavender dash of light that pours through the doorway.

There is a material paradox present in much of Hamilton's work, the leather office blind for example; equal parts luscious and ridiculous, the dark hides only stretching so far without a seam to reach the distance. We are again reminded of skin and surface, though this time in an 'adult shop meets Italian leather chair' kind of way. There is a priority of surfaces, the blackness poses a refusal to provide detail whilst the strident colours feel deadpan, a matter of fact attitude. Hamilton antagonises the simultaneity of nice and nasty, stretching the crude to unbearable heights and mass but somehow unable to escape the fundamentally attractive and pleasant. It is a pile up of elements and gestures, this *and* this *and* this, you are not offered options, everything plays at the same volume.

Ugly things are dealt with in a beautiful way and while the initial reaction to the Amazonian woman striding across the wall is one of perplexity, the residing feeling is a warmth and friendliness in her sanguine smile. Hamilton and her reference to Robert Crumb's hairy lady are unabashedly collaborating in this explosion of colour and form, they are in cahoots about where they are taking us,

what they can make us feel. Everything is offered on their terms, an equilibrium between comfort and style, sexy in her own skin, there's no guessing what size sandals she might take.

Despite the immersion of the vast image wrapping the space, this is unusually pared down for Hamilton. With only four elements to the exhibition it comes together as an augmentation of a year or so of work, the seed of which, perhaps, was her 2012 performance at TATE tanks. Entitled 'KABUKI' some elements are echoed here, a 30 metre long curtain made from strips of coloured silk crepe dominated the stage for the first 15 minutes of the performance before being billowed across to reveal a series of male performers dressed in kimonos made from PVC banners, painted bubble wrap and colour photocopies of Andy Warhol's 'Flowers'. They each navigated the space in the Japanese Kabuki style merged with the repetition of *kata* and the rhythm of hip hop, creating tableaux and throwing shapes on the stage. It felt like an incredibly slow catwalk, the costumes were the sculptures and the people inside them were just present to show the clothes at their best angle.

This is perhaps the sculptural manifestation of that performance. With the kimono on show here, the performer has been removed entirely, in fact, even the possibility of wearing is denied, the costume has no entry point, no reveal. A silent, zip-mouthed presence, its back is turned to you at all angles.

The elusive fourth element is a performance, Gervais Cedric Njonga Bitjoka a performer with whom Hamilton worked at the TATE and his dance partner, Jordan Johnhope, have been invited to create a new work, performed in tandem with one full cycle of the moon. Periodically over the lunar month, the yellow pipes become speakers, like giant saxophones or Centre Pompidou air vents whilst the two men dressed in *hakama* pants and karate jackets slink around the space, incorporating hip hop dance with an adapted form of krumping. The pipes themselves remain as static dance moves, knotted into position with tilted necks and poised with tensed muscles like a body that has popped and never popped back.

There is a muscular emphasis here, a vastness, limpness and stability, flexing the sculptural sinews, reaching as high as the ceiling and caressing the ground. A play on precarity that provokes unease and unrest while maintaining complete control. There is a forward lunge, a thrust towards somewhere else, what's behind the curtain? What's inside the kimono? What's beyond the wallpaper?

The grass is always hairier on the other side so, LET'S GO.

Lauren Godfrey, 2013

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