

,The Chapel' Installation 2020

Gallery One 11
Cape Town, South Africa

Inspired by the „Rothko Chapel“, a white space was transformed to evoke the feelings experienced when visiting a so-called 'sacred' building. In the Rothko Chapel (Texas, USA) Mark Rothko incorporates elements from places of worship, temples and churches.

But he interprets it through paintings and architecture, creating a space where people are confronted with a fundamental spiritual experience, although there is no religious narrative in the art or architecture.

In „The Chapel“ installation, three long, narrow panels of multi-layered painted, backlit plastic films are vertically mounted, and suggest room height. Opposite the panels, framed by the dark steel girders of the building structure, is the „Icon“ - the image that can be read.

There is a great deal of familiarity with the type of plastic film used, as it is often used to cover huts and small houses in African townships and informal settlements.

Using the building material as a painting ground references the African-American artist Theaster Gates and his work „Roofs“, which in turn are in dialogue with the well-known paintings of Mark Rothko.

The „Icon“ is illuminated with cold light sources, while the „Windows & Prayer Niches“ are illuminated with warmer light sources. A music system, reminiscent of an altar, is placed in the far distance of the room. A loop of Abul Mogard's „Above All Dreams“, transformed by Henry Daniels, plays and acts as a spatial acoustic for the installation.

The core idea of the installation lies in art allowing us to touch the divine. Most religions make use of all forms of art and architecture - and thus of our human creative potential, the actually divine language of man. To detach this language from religious narratives, towards a belief in humanity, in a meta-human being who unites all of us and the planet, could well be important for the humanistically enlightened human being of the present and the future,

as conceived by the philosopher Karl Popper (1902-1994).

The painting process on the polyethylene foils is a battle of chemicals and colours, reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's approach with his „drip paintings“.

The process stretches over multiple days: although much happens impulsively and quickly, the paints and solvents require time to react with each other and dry again.

The painting between the plastic foils always tries to unite chaos and harmony.

The many and the uncontrolled appear controlled in the mass.

Or as the art critic Lloyd Pollock and friend of Gallery One 11 wrote in the opening speech:

„It's like a desert, it's like an ocean, like a mega city from far. Nikolai's painting is calming your soul until you are lost in its vastness“.

[LINK TO INSTALLATION VIEW](#)

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